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APRIL 27, 2025 | ISSUE 623

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## BNF wants two VPs under UDC Govt

- Motion to be proposed at the BNF upcoming July Congress
- UDC to weigh on idea at constitutional congress in October
- Ndaba, AP could vehemently oppose the two VPs proposal



Dr Patrick Molutsi [PIC:PINO KILANO]

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**I**N ITS QUEST TO INCREASE ITS control of the Umbrella for Democratic Change's (UDC) government, the Botswana National Front (BNF) is toying with the idea of having two vice presidents under the coalition government.

According to sources within the party, BNF is likely to present this motion at the UDC special constitutional congress to be held later this year.

Information gathered by this publication is that BNF believes that two vice presidents are necessary under the UDC government, with the intention of having the two offices of vice president speeding up

efficiency in government as it races against time to meet the electoral pledges it made to voters during the 2024 General Elections.

The vice presidency position is currently held by Ndaba Gaolathe, who doubles as the Minister of Finance.

Gaolathe is the leader of the Alliance for Progressives (AP), a UDC contracting partner together with the Botswana Peoples Party (BPP) under the leadership of Motlatsi Molapisi.

TO PAGE 3

## Toying with PEOPLE'S LIVES

... As doctors, Govt fight in court

- Matter resume today (Sunday), Judgement due on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025
- Govt interdicts doctors' reduced calls move; but doesn't go for arbitration
- Fears mount that patients' lives are at risks as the impasse continues

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**T**HE MATTER BETWEEN THE Botswana Doctors Union (BDU) and Directorate Public Service Management (DPSM) over the emergency call to duty allowances resume today (27th April) before Gaborone Industrial court.

The matter resumes after Judge Isaac Bahuma granted an application for postponement in favour of DPSM as its attorney Advocate Otsile Rammidi said he was only instructed on Thursday by DPSM to represent it after the initial attorney had to attend a family emergency in Johannesburg.

Rammidi told the court that he was supposed to familiarise himself with the matter first, a move that was initially rejected by the BDU legal team before the judge moved to grant



Botswana Doctors Union officials and their legal team outside court on Friday

[PIC:PINO KILANO]

TO PAGE 3

### US TARRIFS

## Jobs bloodbath looms

- Manufacturing, mining sectors threatened by US tariffs
- Botswana industries worry of reduced business activity
- Private sector wants Govt to negotiate for zero tariff hike
- Botswana advised to look at alternatives markets like China

**A**S THE GOVERNMENT IS expected to start negotiations with the United States of America over the tariff imposed on Botswana exports, leaders of different sectors of the economy have urged government to negotiate for zero tariff so as to dodge sharp bullet of looming massive job losses locally.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 9

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# ISBS taps into BHRDS Career Fair to advance skills agenda

THE IMPERIAL SCHOOL OF Business and Science (ISBS) used its presence at the recent 2025 Botswana Human Resource Development Skills (BHRDS) Fair and Career Clinics to amplify its role in the country's skills development strategy and forge new international academic partnerships, as student interest in future-focused qualifications reached new highs.

ISBS Managing Director Nidheesh Sharma described the institution's participation as a strategic success, pointing to strong engagement from students and encouraging feedback from parents and stakeholders.

"Our presence at the fair reaffirmed what we have known for years—that Botswana's youth are hungry for practical, market-relevant education that sets them up for long-term career success," Sharma said. "ISBS is responding to this need with programmes designed to match national economic priorities and global standards."

A citizen-owned institution established in 2003, ISBS offers a range of BQA-accredited

■ ISBS drives job-ready education at national career fair ■ Sharma: Global relevance and local impact remain our focus. ■ Offers BCom Finance and Banking, BBA in Entrepreneurship, BBA in Logistics and Transport Management, BBA in Tourism Management



ISBS Managing Director Nidheesh Sharma

[PIC:PINO KILANO]

qualifications spanning Certificates, Diplomas, Undergraduate Degrees, Postgraduate programmes, and globally recognised professional certifications such as ACCA,

AAT, and CIM. At this year's fair, the institution emphasised its technical and vocational education and training (TVET) portfolio, particularly in tourism, public health,

occupational health and safety, and logistics management.

"The BHRDS's theme on leveraging TVET to support economic growth directly aligns with our institutional

approach," Sharma added. "We ensure our students are not only academically prepared but also practically equipped to contribute meaningfully in a fast-evolving economy."

Despite positive engagement at the fair, Sharma expressed concern over the decision to limit the 2025 fair to Gaborone, excluding traditional locations like Francistown and Maun. "This limited the reach of the initiative, and many students in the north were left out. To address this, we're preparing a nationwide roadshow to ensure we close that gap."

One of the key highlights for ISBS at the fair was its interaction with several international universities. Discussions centred on the potential for joint academic programmes, student exchange initiatives, and collaborative research—moves Sharma says are part of a broader ambition to internationalise ISBS's offerings.

"Botswana's students deserve access to education that is not only affordable but globally relevant," he said. "We're focused on forging partnerships that expand horizons and bring the world to our classrooms."

The institution also received a wave of positive feedback from the public, with many parents and students praising ISBS's steady growth, affordability, and focus on employability. Students showed particular interest in newer offerings such as the Bachelor of Commerce in Digital Marketing and the Bachelor of Science in Public Health, reflecting a shift toward emerging fields. As Botswana continues its push for economic diversification and upskilling of its workforce, Sharma says ISBS is positioning itself as an engine of empowerment. "Our role is not just to educate, but to uplift. We're preparing the next generation to lead, innovate, and compete—locally and globally." ISBS offers flexible study options including full-time, part-time, and distance learning, catering to a broad spectrum of learners across the country.

# 9 African leaders make TIME100 most influential people list

SOLOMON EKANEM

THE TIME100 MOST Influential People of 2025 honors African changemakers and individuals who are driving change and shaping the future across various sectors across the globe.

From political leaders who are redefining governance to cultural icons and trailblazing scientists, these individuals represent the diverse forces driving Africa's development and global impact.

Their recognition showcases Africa's increasing role in global discussions on health, technology, leadership, and cultural exchange.

These figures are not just influential in their home countries but are setting trends and inspiring change worldwide.

Speaking on the 2025 TIME100 list, Chief Executive Officer Jessica Sibley said, "The list recognizes the leaders shaping the world today and defining its future."

TIME Editor in Chief Sam Jacobs added in his letter to readers that "the 2025 list includes six members of the Trump Administration, 16 corporate CEOs—a record—and a sign of the emergence of business leaders filling a leadership void, alongside nine leaders fighting for justice, equality, and democracy, at a moment when the rights of so many are at stake. Members of the list come from 32 countries."

Donald Trump makes his seventh appearance on the list, the most of any individual this year. Other repeat honorees include Elon Musk (6), Mark Zuckerberg (5), Serena Williams (3), Lorne Michaels (3), Simone Biles (3), Kristen Wiig (2), Ed Sheeran (2), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (2), Demis Hassabis (2), Scarlett Johansson (2), Megyn Kelly (2), Blake Lively (2), Javier Milei (2), Miuccia Prada (2), Joe Rogan (2), and Ted Sarandos (2).

The 9 most influential Africans

These individuals exemplify the diverse talents and contributions of Africans on the global stage, each making significant strides in their respective fields.

1. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus – Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)  
Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus – the first African Director-General of the World Health Organization

As the first African to lead the WHO, Dr. Tedros (Ethiopia) has been instrumental in global health initiatives, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. His leadership has been pivotal in steering international health policies and ensuring equitable access to vaccines and medical resources.

2. Advocate Duma Boko – President of Botswana

Last October, Boko ousted the party that had ruled the nation since its independence from Britain nearly 60 years ago.

Boko's tenure as Botswana's president has been marked by progressive reforms aimed at enhancing democratic governance and economic diversification. His policies focus on sustainable development, education, and technological innovation, positioning Botswana as a model for good governance in Africa.

3. Mo Abudu – Nigerian Media Mogul

Mo launched the \$50 million Afro Film Fund last year and cares deeply about the African narrative. Often referred to as the "Oprah of Africa," Mo Abudu has revolutionized African media through her company, EbonyLife Media. She has played a crucial role in showcasing African stories on global platforms, including Netflix and international film festivals, thereby elevating African narratives in global



Mo Abudu – Nigerian Media Mogul

media.

4. Dr. Christian Happi – Nigerian Scientist and Genomics Pioneer

Dr. Christian Happi, director of the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases and professor of molecular biology and genomics at Redeemer's University in Nigeria

Dr. Happi is renowned for his groundbreaking work in genomics and infectious diseases. His research has been instrumental in developing diagnostic tools and treatments for diseases prevalent in Africa, contributing significantly to the continent's healthcare advancements.

5. Dr. Ismahane Elouafi – Moroccan Agricultural Biotechnologist

Ismahane Elouafi is the Executive Managing Director of CGIAR. CGIAR helps millions of people grow stronger, healthier crops; restore damaged soil; and more

As a leading figure in agricultural biotechnology, Dr. Elouafi's work focuses on enhancing food security through sustainable agricultural practices. Her research aims to develop drought-resistant crops, which are vital for combating food insecurity in arid regions of Africa.

6. Kwame Onwuachi – Nigerian-American Chef and Culinary Innovator

Kwame Onwuachi is rewriting the narrative in spaces that once overlooked Black chefs and has brought his story into each of his restaurants

Chef Onwuachi has gained acclaim for his innovative approach to African and Caribbean cuisine. His culinary creations blend traditional flavors with contemporary techniques, offering a unique dining experience that celebrates African heritage.

7. Mickalene Thomas – African-American Artist  
Mickalene Thomas plays in all realms—photography, painting, video, fashion, furniture—and creates stunning, dynamic worlds in every one.

While American by nationality, Mickalene Thomas' work is deeply influenced by African culture. Her vibrant and textured portraits celebrate African-American womanhood and identity, drawing inspiration from African art traditions and aesthetics.

8. Fatou Baldeh – Gambian women's rights activist

Fatou Baldeh is a Gambian women's rights activist who campaigns to end female genital mutilation

Fatou Baldeh, has been honored as one of TIME's Women of the Year 2025. She is recognized for her unwavering commitment to ending female genital mutilation (FGM) in The Gambia.

9. Angeline Murimirwa – CEO, CAMFED

Angeline Murimirwa, CEO of CAMFED, is recognized among a group of extraordinary leaders transforming education in Africa

Angeline (Zimbabwe), an Africa Education Medal 2024 finalist, is the CEO of CAMFED, helping millions of girls go to school in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Just like her, these young women may also be tomorrow's leaders. [africa.businessinsider.com]

# PPC supports learners at Camphill Trust

PPC BOTSWANA, A leading provider of quality building materials, in collaboration with the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education, has donated essential toiletries worth P16,000 to Camphill Trust in Otse. The donation is part of PPC's ongoing commitment to building inclusive communities and supporting vulnerable groups across Botswana.

The handover ceremony, held at Camphill Trust, was attended by a delegation from the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education led by Head of Department, E Schools, Mr Lentswe Chibane. The event was graced by Tuelo Bothole, Head of PPC's Botswana Business Unit, who expressed deep personal and corporate pride in contributing to the wellbeing of learners at Rankoromane School and Motse Wa Badiri Training

Centre, two institutions under the Camphill Trust umbrella.

Speaking at the event, Bothole remarked, "We're a company that builds, yes, but not just buildings and roads. We build people. We build communities. We build possibility. And today, we build hope, hope for an inclusive future where every child is seen, heard, and celebrated."

Mr Chibane praised the donation as a timely and thoughtful gesture

that embodies the spirit of partnership between the public and private sectors.

"This collaboration with PPC Botswana is a shining example of what can be achieved when we work together to uplift the most vulnerable members of our society. The learners at Camphill Trust are full of potential, and with continued support like this, they can thrive in ways many once thought impossible," he said.

This initiative aligns with



PPC's broader social investment philosophy, which prioritises uplifting communities through sustainable and inclusive development. The company has established a strong presence in Botswana through depots in Gaborone, Palapye, and Francistown, and it remains dedicated to empowering Botswana not only through employment and local partnerships but also through community initiatives like this one. Camphill Trust supports children and young people with intellectual and developmental challenges, providing them with education, life skills, and a nurturing environment. The donation by PPC Botswana is intended to

directly improve the day-to-day comfort and dignity of the 65 learners currently enrolled. Bothole extended heartfelt appreciation to the caregivers and educators at Camphill, acknowledging their tireless dedication: "What you do every day is beyond teaching. You are holding dreams in your hands and watering seeds of possibility." This latest gesture follows PPC Botswana's longstanding tradition of supporting education and social causes across the country. The company has previously partnered with schools and clinics, reinforcing its role as a corporate citizen committed to meaningful change. [PRESS RELEASE]

## E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Choppies is looking for a highly skilled and qualified E-commerce Development Manager, who will be responsible for managing the technical aspects of our e-commerce system, overseeing platform development, integrations, and performance.

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- Lead the development and maintenance of the company's e-commerce supporting systems.
- Manage relationships with development agencies, platform providers, and third-party vendors.
- Ensure seamless integration of e-commerce platforms with inventory, ERP and other key systems.
- Oversee the rollout of new features, enhancements, and site optimizations based on performance insights and user feedback.
- Collaborate with marketing and product teams to ensure alignment on campaigns and digital strategies.
- Monitor site performance, troubleshoot issues, and ensure optimal uptime and speed.
- Stay current with e-commerce trends, technologies, and best practices to keep the company ahead of the curve.

### Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree in Commerce, Business, or related field.
- 5+ years of experience in e-commerce development/management, preferably within retail.
- Strong understanding of e-commerce plat forms.
- Project management experience with an agile or hybrid methodology.
- Data-driven mindset with strong analytical and problem-solving skills.

Interested candidates should forward their CV and qualifications to [vacancies@choppies.co.bw](mailto:vacancies@choppies.co.bw), referenced "E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER" not later than the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2025.

# WIMBO Pitso Third Annual Conference



Kanaimba-Senai

[PIC:PINO KILANO]

WOMEN IN MINING Botswana (WIMBO) will be hosting its third annual Pitso on the 14-15th May 2025 at the Grand Aria Hotel in Gaborone. The Pitso will be officially opened by the Minister of Minerals and Energy, Honourable Bogolo Joy Kenewendo. Briefing the media in Gaborone on Wednesday, Esther V. Kanaimba-Senai WIMBO Chairperson said the preparations are progressing

well, adding that the third edition will be bigger and better.

Entry to the conference will be free for WIMBO members while non-members will pay P1,000. WIMBO annual membership is P500.

"Join us for an enriching experience at the conference. We encourage attendees to consider WIMBO membership to enjoy complimentary access and additional benefits," said Kanaimba-Senai.

# Boko warned against meddling in procurement

BAKANG TIRO  
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... As Namibian company gets 3000 houses construction tender

**P**RESIDENT ADVOCATE DUMA Boko's stand of spearheading direct appointment for some projects has sparked mixed reactions across the public and business community, a development which political observers and some members of his party Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) label as very suicidal.

The new UDC government is fast at work implementing some major development projects cutting across different sectors of the economy. Observers are questioning how tenders are being awarded, warning that direct appointment by government ministries was tantamount to aiding corruption and denying competitive bidding.

Addressing Kgotla meeting in Lerala last week, Boko justified the need for direct appointment in some tenders saying constant litigation in competitive bidding was delaying the implementation of projects.

He said he would use his presidential powers to award jobs as opposed to following established competitive bidding process determined by Public Regulatory Authority (PPRA).

This development according to insiders in the government is not sitting well with the local business community particularly in the construction industry after government decided to award the 3 000 Bonno Housing Project to a Namibian company, Ongos Valley.

Some UDC Members of Parliament (MPs) have expressed dissatisfaction over direct appointments of tenders favouring expatriate companies, saying that will

- Rigged tenders, cronyism & kickbacks rocking Govt procurement
- Boko shown strong will for direct appointment on some tenders
- Ndaba's attempts to promote transparent procurement defeated
- Boko must not abuse presidential powers to aid corruption- BCP



President Boko

[PIC:PINO KILANO]

result in voters' backlash against the government.

While Boko was in Lerala, his

Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe was launching the new 2024-28 strategy for PPRA where he committed

to ensuring transparency and inclusive public procurement – a pronouncement that is exactly

opposite of his leader declared. Gaolathe said at the core of PPRA strategy lies a powerful proposition:

“Doing Things Right. Not just doing things, but doing them right, the first time, every time. The strategic plan’s core goal is to establish a “sustainable and inclusive public procurement system.”

Gaolathe said there is a need for a system anchored in transparency, equity, fairness, service excellence, innovation and high impact and a system where compliance is not an aspiration but a minimum requirement.

### Curse

Political science lecturer at University of Botswana (UB), Dr Adam Mfundisi said the genesis of what is unfolding is the British crafted Constitution for Botswana which provided intensive and extensive powers to an unelected Executive, in particular the President. Dr Mfundisi said as the adage says, “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”, we are seeing the arrays of that in the behaviour of the executive”. Dr Mfundisi has observed that some political statements of President Boko are worrisome in that he is following the footsteps of former president Mokgweetsi Masisi who interfered in the procurement of goods and services through OP’s direct appointment of providers of products or services to the Botswana government.

According to him, both competitive and direct appointment of vendors have pros and cons and therefore require judicious examination, adding that the award of a Namibian company in a national project is unfortunate and concerning. “We have local companies that can deliver 3000 houses as required, probably at lower

costs even. Employment creation should be the priority of this UDC regime, and this should be done through citizen empowerment policies. The Dubai Audit firm, too, without competitive bidding triggers suspicion and calls into question the issue of ethics and accountability of government,” said Dr Mfundisi.

Dr Mfundisi said allegations of corruption and maladministration will affect the fortunes of the UDC, advising that it should move away from the BDP behaviour in public procurement of goods and services.

### BCP

Botswana Congress Party’s (BCP) shadow minister of Transport and Infrastructure Kgoberego Nkwana said Botswana had been overlooked on the construction of Bonno housing project.

Nkwana, who is the MP for Selebi Phikwe East, said the BCP hasn’t no problem with Boko awarding tenders on direct appointment as the law permits that but he should desist from overdoing it. “We are talking about a foreign company that would repatriate the money back to Namibia. We are also yet to inform ourselves if this company would be bringing its own labour or will prioritise Botswana for the employment opportunities. On our view is that this contractor’s appointment was rushed,” said Nkwana. Nkwana said the country is currently battling economic hardships because in the past under the BDP administration big construction projects were awarded to Asian companies which later on repatriated billions of Pula back to their countries living the country with less benefits in the form of tax revenue.

## People’s lives



Dr Modise [PIC:PINO KILANO]

tell this honourable court,” said Dr Molatlhegi. Bahuma while delivering the ruling said the DPSM should bear the costs for Friday’s sitting, adding that he would listen to the matter today (Sunday) and ensure that heads of arguments are brought to finality. Judge Bahuma said he will deliver his final judgement on May 2, 2025.

BDU and DPSM are at loggerheads over the emergency call to duty as BDU demands the employer to improve on the doctors’ conditions of service demanding a better pay instead of current 15% allowance rate.

### Minister

Minister of Health Dr Stephen Modise while addressing the media on Monday said his ministry and DPSM are committed to resolving the emergency service impasse with the doctor’s union.

He regretted that there seems to be a back and forth between the government and the doctors through the Botswana Doctors Union. “Our position as Government is that no issue is too big to be resolved. This Botswana belongs to us all. We should all endeavour to do anything to keep our nation alive and cared for,” said Dr Modise. He also said he is fully aware that the doctors say they are not on strike but will just be doing one call per month.

“We all know that one call per month, is not what could keep our people alive. We are not saying doctors should be exploited. In fact, no health worker, or any worker at all, should be exploited. That will be inhumane and unethical. That will be a violation of the rights of the workers,” he added.

### FROM PAGE 1

DPSM a favour. BDU lawyer Dr Baathodi Molatlhegi blasted DPSM for demonstrating incompetence after it brought the matter before court on urgency, adding that the court should not entertain the incompetence of DPSM. Dr Molatlhegi said DPSM is currently enjoying the benefits of the rule nisi which it obtained under urgency a week ago while it is a prejudice to their client, the doctors.

“There is nothing before the court that explains the absence of the lead attorney in this matter. We demand seriousness from the applicant or if they don’t deem this matter to be urgent, they should

## BNF wants two VPs under UDC Govt

### FROM PAGE 1

“The idea is that the other office of Vice President would focus on Finance and Economics affairs and that would be the portfolio manned by Gaolathe. The other office would be responsible for governance and administration affairs, focusing on implementation of government programmes,” said an impeccable source. It the BNF proposals see the light of the day at the party’s elective congress, they would be taken further to the UDC special constitutional congress.

Under the targeted proposed UDC constitutional amendment, it said powers will be vested on UDC president Duma Boko on whom he would appoint his preferred vice president from across the UDC coalition partners.

Another proposed amendment is the introduction of the position of Secretary General position in the coalition which is expected to work closely with ministries in implementing programmes and national projects the party promised



Saleshando

the electorates. The UDC had two Vice Presidents briefly when the BCP joined the UDC after the 2014 General Elections. It was Gaolathe from the Botswana Movement for Democratic (BMD) Change and Dumelang Saleshando of the BCP before the BMD split that resulted



Gaolathe

with Gaolathe forming the Alliance for Progressives and leaving the UDC. Commenting on the developments, BNF Chairperson and UDC Executive Secretary Dr Patrick Molutsi said he was not aware of such proposals as BNF members canvass votes for the elective congress. Dr Molutsi said

he wouldn’t understand how the proposal to have two offices of the vice president would change the government from the current shape that it is on. “There is a national UDC constitution and for BNF to take its proposals there, it would not be just as easy as one could think. We are a collective government as the UDC,” said Dr Molutsi; hesitating to confirm if UDC would have a constitutional congress later this year or not.

### Contentious

Political analyst, Kitso Morekisi said the establishment of two offices of the vice president would be a contentious issue, especially in the coalition as it could cause divisions on who will be senior or junior.

Morekisi said the arrangement of two vice presidents was once discussed in the UDC while Botswana Congress Party (BCP) joined the UDC in 2017 but Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) was totally against it at the time while Gaolathe was the incumbent vice to Duma Boko.

“The coalition government is broad on nature as all the parties under UDC expect their members to benefit equally from the government opportunities either jobs and this alone makes the coalition public service big. Having two vice presidents in my view would be a burden to public coffers,” said Morekisi. He said Zimbabwe is currently having the arrangement of two vice presidents being the first and second vice president but their roles are not clearly defined under the ZANU-PF Government.

Meanwhile, AP is likely to oppose the idea of two vice presidents with some of its MPs, saying that such an idea by the BNF would be meant to undermine positions held by other UDC partners in government.

One MP said: “We have been observing how BNF cadres in Parliament and outside undermine Gaolathe’s position as the VP. We are all equal members in the government. If the second vice presidency post is created, would it be for BNF, AP or BPP?”

## Maun hosts HATAB AGM

**T**HE 2025 HOSPITALITY AND Tourism Association of Botswana (HATAB) Annual General Meeting took place at Cresta Maun, drawing together key players in the tourism sector for two days of



robust engagement on the future of the industry.

President Duma Boko in his official opening message assured the key players in the sector of Government’s commitment to do all



necessary to see the performance of the sector improving.

He said they could be a need to create new laws that helps the sector improve including among others ensuring that multinational



companies that are domiciled abroad who make money out selling local tourism commodity pay local taxes as well.

This year’s AGM is focused on navigating both the challenges and



opportunities in the sector, with participation from a broad range of stakeholders including the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, Botswana Power Corporation (BPC), and TENTUM Services.

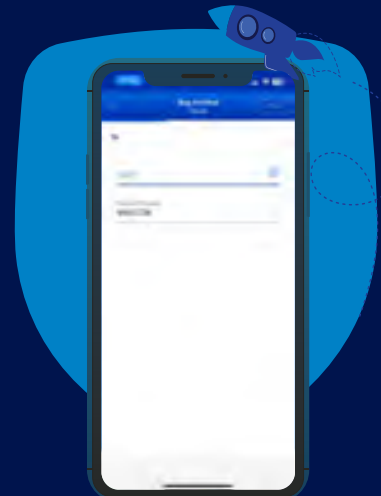


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# African Agriculture needs a data revolution

**CANDICE KROUTZ-KABONGO,**  
Digital Innovations Lead, Solidaridad

**T**HE FUTURE OF AFRICA'S agricultural sector hinges on its ability to leverage data for innovation, efficiency, and resilience. Across the continent, smallholder farmers—who produce 70-80% of the region's food—face mounting challenges, from climate change which include but not limited to increased frequency of extreme weather events, soil degradation, loss of biodiversity and changing ecosystems; to volatile market dynamics including limited market options and very little bargaining power. - That's according to Candice Kroutz-Kabongo, Digital Innovations Lead, Solidaridad.

In response, digital tools and data-driven solutions have emerged as powerful catalysts for agricultural transformation. However, a critical roadblock threatens to undermine this potential: the adoption of Western-style data ownership models that prioritize individual control over collective benefit. If African governments fail to implement a collective consent approach to data governance—one that recognizes the unique realities of African agriculture—then the promise of an open data ecosystem will remain out of reach.

Unlike in Western economies, where digital literacy and widespread connectivity enable individuals to actively manage their personal data, Africa's digital divide presents a starkly different reality. Many farmers operate in low-connectivity regions, with limited access to digital platforms or the technical know-how to navigate complex data policies. Enforcing individual consent-based models in this context risks excluding the very people who should be the primary beneficiaries of agricultural data

innovations. Instead, Africa must embrace a governance model that enables farmer cooperatives, local institutions, and trusted intermediaries to collectively manage data access and use in a way that aligns with the continent's socio-economic realities, leveraging on social assets that fuel collective gain within the smallholder farmer sector include various forms of social capital, networks, and shared resources that enable farmers to improve productivity, resilience, and market access

The urgency of this shift cannot be overstated. With climate change accelerating risks to food security and market imbalances keeping smallholders at a disadvantage, an open data ecosystem—rooted in collective governance—can unlock efficiency gains, drive innovation, and ensure that smallholder farmers are players in this digital ecosystem, but that they get to define their collective interest and retain control over how data serves their interests. If Africa is to harness the power of data for agricultural transformation, its governments must craft policies that are context-sensitive, inclusive, and built on shared ownership rather than isolated individualism.

Unlocking the Potential of an Open Data Ecosystem

An open data ecosystem has the power to revolutionize Africa's agricultural sector by addressing systemic inefficiencies that currently undermine farmer support initiatives. At present, farmer-facing organizations—ranging from government extension services to NGOs and agribusinesses—operate in silos, each gathering and managing data independently. This fragmentation leads to duplication, inefficiency, and suboptimal decision-making, ultimately failing to deliver the



impact that farmers need.

One glaring inefficiency is the repetitive process of farmer registration. Many smallholder farmers are required to provide their personal and farm-related information multiple times to different organizations, each maintaining its own separate records. Not only is this an administrative burden on farmers, but it also results in inconsistent and incomplete datasets that fail to capture a farmer's full history of engagement with support programs. Without a centralized and shared data infrastructure, organizations lack visibility into past interventions, making it difficult to tailor support effectively.

This lack of coordination extends to agricultural training and extension services, where competing organizations often deliver conflicting advice. Farmers may receive contradictory recommendations on soil management, pest control, or crop selection, leading to confusion and poor adoption of

best practices. A well-integrated data system would enable farmer support organizations to align their messaging, ensuring consistency and maximizing the effectiveness of interventions. Moreover, historical data on past interventions could inform which strategies work best in different contexts, allowing for more evidence-based decision-making.

Another critical challenge is the cost of data collection. Gathering, verifying, and maintaining farmer data is an expensive process, and given the continually shrinking funding budgets, farmer support organizations must find more cost-effective and collaborative ways to manage data. Rather than duplicating efforts, organizations can pool resources and share data, reducing the financial burden while increasing the reach and impact of agricultural programs. A shared data ecosystem would allow different stakeholders—governments, NGOs, and the private sector—to leverage existing information,

eliminating redundancy and directing funds towards higher-impact initiatives.

Empowering Farmers Through Open Data

While the benefits of an open data system extend to organizations, farmers stand to gain the most from a more coordinated and transparent agricultural data ecosystem. Currently, many smallholders have little access to data that could help them make better farming and market decisions. Under a collective data governance model, farmers—either individually or through cooperatives—could access insights on market prices, climate trends, and best agricultural practices, enabling them to make informed choices about their crops, inputs, and selling strategies.

Moreover, open data could

unlock new services tailored specifically to farmers' needs. Fintech companies could use aggregated farming data to develop credit scoring models, making it easier for smallholders to access loans and insurance. Precision agriculture startups could design affordable advisory tools that use real-time data to optimize planting schedules and resource use. Rather than being passive recipients of fragmented interventions, farmers could become active participants in a digital agricultural ecosystem that works for them.

A shared data infrastructure would also enhance farmers' bargaining power. With greater transparency in pricing, supply chains, and demand trends, smallholders would be less vulnerable to market exploitation and would

have stronger leverage in negotiations with buyers and input suppliers. Additionally, cooperatives and farmer groups could use data to advocate for better government policies, resource allocation, and infrastructure investments that directly impact their livelihoods.

A Shared Asset for Sustainable Growth

Beyond streamlining existing support mechanisms, an open data ecosystem could drive new waves of innovation and entrepreneurship. With better access to sector-wide insights, tech startups and agribusinesses could develop tailored digital solutions—from precision farming tools to financial services that cater to farmers' specific needs. Governments, too, would stand to benefit, using aggregated data for more accurate policy planning, resource allocation, and climate adaptation strategies.

By embracing a collective data governance model, Africa can create an agricultural landscape where data serves as a shared asset, unlocking efficiencies, fostering collaboration, and ultimately driving sustainable growth for both farmers and the organizations that support them. However, for this to succeed, farmers must be at the center of the data revolution—ensuring that digital tools, platforms, and policies are built to empower them first and foremost.

Conclusion: Building a Future-Ready Data Governance Framework

The potential of an open data ecosystem to transform Africa's agricultural sector is undeniable. By fostering collaboration among farmer

support organizations, entrepreneurs, and governments, such a system could eliminate inefficiencies, improve farmer services, and unlock new economic opportunities. However, realizing this vision requires more than just technical innovation—it demands a policy and regulatory environment that prioritizes Africa's unique needs.

Too often, African governments adopt data protection laws modeled after Western frameworks, prioritizing individual data ownership and strict compliance with international standards. While data security and privacy are critical, these one-size-fits-all approaches risk stifling the very innovations that could drive agricultural transformation.

Instead of being shaped by external compliance pressures, Africa's data governance policies must be guided by the continent's own economic, social, and agricultural realities. A collective consent model, designed to balance data protection with accessibility, would allow farmers and farmer support organizations to harness the power of shared data while ensuring that control remains in the hands of local stakeholders.

An enabling legislative environment must prioritize innovation, farmer empowerment, and sector-wide collaboration over rigid compliance. The opportunity is clear: Africa must define its own path to agricultural data governance, one that embraces collective consent, fosters innovation, and puts farmers first.

## Rising water levels threaten Ditshiping



**MPHO MOTSAITING**  
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

**T**HE COMMUNITIES AND safari camps around Ditshiping in the Okavango Delta are bracing themselves for rising floodwaters as annual floods approach. Over the past few days, a team led by Kalahari Breeze Safaris, Honey

Guide Trust, Amber Camp, and the Ditshiping Village Development Committee (VDC) has been conducting a physical and visual assessment of bridges and access points into Ditshiping.

The findings are alarming: many of the existing bridges are already weakened from years of wear and tear. One key crossing has already been overtaken by

floodwaters, making it unsafe for vehicles, and others are quickly deteriorating.

Without urgent intervention, access into Ditshiping and surrounding communities could be cut off entirely in the coming weeks.

While some camps have stepped in to support the efforts, others—including tour operators and key

stakeholders—are yet to come forward. Meanwhile, internal issues within OKMCT have stalled broader collaboration.

The goal of this initiative is not just to repair the bridges, but to fortify them for sustainable, long-term use, ensuring that both residents and the tourism industry remain connected even as the Delta swells with life-giving water.

## Putin, Trump envoy had constructive meeting – aide says

**U**S ENVOY STEVE Witkoff and Russian President Vladimir Putin had "constructive" talks in Moscow on Friday lasting three hours, according to an aide of Putin's.

Yuri Ushakov said the possibility of Russia and Ukraine resuming direct talks was a particular point of discussion.

The US has not released details of what was discussed

during the meeting, but as it took place US President Donald Trump hinted the two sides were close to reaching a deal.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged allies to apply more pressure on Russia, blaming Moscow for failing to agree to a previous temporary ceasefire presented by the US.

Traffic was halted as a convoy of cars carrying Witkoff arrived in central Moscow, as he made

his fourth visit to Russia since the start of the year.

The three-hour talks were described as "constructive and very useful" by Putin aide Ushakov.

It had brought the "Russian and US positions closer together not just on Ukraine but also on a range of other international issues", he said.

"Specifically on the Ukrainian crisis, the possibility of resuming direct talks between

Russian and Ukrainian representatives was in particular discussed," he added.

Earlier this week, Putin signalled for the first time since the early stages of the war that he was open to talks with Zelensky.

His remarks were believed to be in response to a proposal by the Ukrainian president for the 30-hour Easter truce to be extended for 30 days. No truce has yet been agreed on. [BBC]

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# A tribute to Pope Francis: A Shepherd of Mercy

**DR. DIMAKATSO MICHELLE POLOKELO**

**T**HE PASSING OF POPE FRANCIS marks a solemn moment for the Catholic Church. He served as the Pontiff during a time of many changes both within the Church and the world at large. His Pontificate was marked by a desire to bring the Church closer to the realities of the people's lives, the struggles of the families, the wounds of poverty, the effects of war and the longing for mercy and belonging.

Although I had the privilege of attending an Easter Sunday Mass he presided over in St. Peter's Square in 2024, it is not the grandeur of the liturgy that remains etched in my heart, but the countless quiet moments I spent with him through his writings, homilies, encyclicals and speeches.

My favourite of his teachings is his insistence that "the name of God is mercy." This theme, reflected in his papal motto "Misericordiam atque eligendo" translated to "By having mercy and by choosing him" originates from a homily of St. Bede on the calling of St. Matthew. It reflects the way he understood his own vocation and the heart of the Church's mission.

In 2015, he declared the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, urging the Church to renew its witness to God's forgiveness and love. His vision of mercy was not theoretical but pastoral, calling priests and bishops to welcome penitents, accompany the suffering, and meet people where they are.

Whether speaking about migrants, the imprisoned, the poor, the divorced or those living on society's margins, Francis continuously emphasized that the Church is not a museum for the perfect, but a field hospital for the wounded. Throughout his Papacy, he reminded us that mercy is not weakness, it is the power to walk with others patiently, even when they are far from grace. It is mercy that can heal our fractured societies, and it is mercy that can guide the Church in times of complexity and division.

## THE SYNOD ON SYNODALITY: A CHALLENGE AND INVITATION TO AFRICA

Among Pope Francis' most significant contributions to the Church is his call for synodality, a way of being Church that listens deeply, discerns together and walks side by side. The Synod on Synodality, launched in 2021, marked a shift from a strictly top-down model of governance to one that seeks genuine participation from all the People of God: laypersons, religious, clergy and bishops.

Pope Francis described synodality as the "art of encounter." It is

not merely about meetings and consultations but rather, about cultivating a Church where all voices matter including those often excluded due to social status, disability, age or other conditions. It is a call to rediscover communion and to create space where the Spirit speaks through diverse experiences.

For Africa, this is both an opportunity and a challenge. While African cultures are often praised for their sense of community and respect for family, it would be inaccurate to claim that synodality is fully alive in practice. Traditional leadership structures, such as chieftaincy and even clerical authority in some parts of the continent, have too often mirrored hierarchical models that silence dissent, sideline women and expect blind loyalty rather than mutual discernment. The saying, "children are to be seen, not heard," is still widespread in some countries, reflecting a culture where authority is rarely questioned and listening is often limited.

In some parts of Africa, the clergy may act like tribal chiefs, giving commands, expecting admiration and operating above accountability. This clericalism is precisely what Pope Francis warns against. He challenges the Church in Africa to move away from power-driven leadership and towards pastoral models rooted in humility, dialogue and service.

Yet there is still hope. The African Church remains vibrant and spiritually rich. It is called to embrace Pope Francis' invitation to conversion. Our communities must learn to listen to youth, to women, to the poor and to one another. Synodality begins in parish halls, youth groups, women's sodalities, and diocesan assemblies where true listening and collaborative discernment can take root.

Africa can be a witness to the global Church not because it has already arrived, but because it is willing to walk the path of reform. The Synod calls us to repentance where we have failed to listen, and to courage where we need to build a new ecclesial culture. A synodal Church is not built overnight, but it is built step by step, with ears open to the Spirit and to each other.

## AMORIS LAETITIA: REBUILDING SOCIETY THROUGH THE FAMILY

One of the most popular apostolic exhortations of Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love, 2016), emerged from the two Synods on the Family. It addresses the real conditions of family life, balancing the beauty of love with the pain of human fragility. It reaffirms Church teaching with a strong pastoral orientation rooted in compassion and realism.



Pope Francis



Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson-Ghanian



Peter Erdo - Hungarian



Angelo Scola - Italian



Robert Sarah - Guinean



Fridolin Ambongo Besungu - Congolese



Pietro Parolin - Italian



Robert Prevost - American



Michael Czerny - Canadian



Pierbattista Pizzaballa - Italian



Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle - Filipino



Reinhard Marx - German



Marc Ouellet - Canadian

can heal, grow and become the foundation of a more just and caring society.

## A BLEEDING HEART FOR GAZA: A PLEA FOR PEACE

One of the most moving aspects of Pope Francis' papacy was his consistent voice for peace, particularly in the Holy Land. His regular phone calls and messages to the Catholic priest in Gaza during times of war revealed a Pope who stood with the suffering in silence and solidarity.

His compassion toward Gaza, his appeals for a ceasefire, and his prayers for children and civilians affected by violence, speak to the heart of his pastoral mission. He reminded the world that we cannot be indifferent to suffering. His outreach to Gaza is a model of how the Church should respond, not only in prayer, but in presence, advocacy and accompaniment.

For Africa, including regions affected by political instability, conflict and economic exclusion, Pope Francis' example calls us to be peacemakers. It challenges the Church to stand with victims, to speak with clarity about justice, and to promote reconciliation. His leadership reminds us that peace is not simply the absence of war, but the presence of dignity, dialogue and human solidarity.

## THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

Pope Francis leaves behind a Church more conscious of the need for compassion, inclusion and integrity. His emphasis on synodality, mercy and the family provides a foundation for renewal across continents especially in Africa, where the Church is growing both in numbers and in influence.

His legacy is an invitation to listen more deeply, accompany more patiently and respond to social challenges with a heart formed by the Gospel.

As we mourn his passing, we also carry forward his vision: a Church that walks with its people, that brings mercy to the margins and that restores hope where it is fading.

The loss of Pope Francis is deeply felt but his legacy is not sealed in marble statues or Vatican documents, it lives in the Spirit-filled people of God he formed. As the Church now turns to prayer and discernment for his successor, may we carry forward his dream: of a Church and a society that listens, serves, includes and dares to hope. Let us continue to walk together — synodally, joyfully, mercifully. For in doing so, we not only honour the memory of Pope Francis, we honour Christ Himself.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.

# First images shot by BOTSAT-1 due in weeks

**H**OW I BECAME THE PROJECT Lead:

I was appointed the Project Lead for BOTSAT-1 due to my academic background in computing science, my prior leadership in national innovation initiatives such as Drones for Health, and my long-standing advocacy for Botswana's entry into space technology. I have led the technical and institutional coordination of the project since 2020. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. O. Totolo, set up a team of seconded volunteers from within BIUST to run with the project, extra load.

## Was space part of my vision?

Interestingly, yes. While I did not initially foresee leading a satellite project, I have always believed that Botswana must participate in frontier technologies. The vision matured over time, especially after being involved in several continental and global technology dialogues.

## Highs, lows and key moments:

The major high was the successful launch on March 15, 2025, aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9. A challenging low was navigating procurement and licensing bottlenecks locally and internationally. A key moment was witnessing our engineers integrate the satellite in Bulgaria — a defining milestone for our national capability.

## Personal meaning and professional

BOTSAT-1 Project Lead, Dr Dimane Mpoeleng fields questions on the recent launch of Botswana's first Satellite — a watershed moment in Botswana's quest to be big player in the space technology sector.



President Duma Boko [C] Prof Otlogetswe Totolo and Dr Dimane Mpoeleng at the launch of BOTSAT - 1



BOTSAT-1 Project Lead, Dr Dimane Mpoeleng

## growth:

Leading BOTSAT-1 has been the highlight of my professional career. It has stretched me intellectually, administratively, and diplomatically. I am now focusing on space data applications, AI-driven satellite analytics, and contributing to Botswana's space policy framework.

## What BOTSAT-1 provides for the country

family bonds and deeply troubling acts of violence within relationships. Botswana has witnessed an increase in gender-based violence, including passion killings and child abuse, often committed by individuals unable to handle rejection or emotional distress. These acts point to a crisis in emotional and moral formation and the urgent need to rebuild the family as a space of safety and love.

The Pope reminds us that: "No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love." (AL 325). He acknowledges the challenges facing modern families such as economic stress, changing social norms, divorce and generational gaps and calls the Church to be present in those situations.

This pastoral approach is particularly relevant to Botswana, where the family, once the bedrock of society, is under growing pressure. There has been a noticeable rise in social challenges: increased rates of divorce, the weakening of extended

people for relationships marked by maturity, patience, and sacrificial love, "Love needs time and space; everything else is secondary." (AL 224). In Botswana, this message invites the Church and society to invest in the emotional education of young people. Programs on communication, emotional resilience, parenting and healthy relationships must be strengthened in parishes, schools, and communities. The Pope also calls for the Church to accompany families pastorally, to walk with those experiencing separation, crisis or difficulty, without abandoning them. This accompaniment is

not permissiveness. Rather, it is a reflection of how grace works even in imperfection, and how love is not merely an ideal, but a daily task and vocation. As Pope Francis says, "The Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love." (AL 291)

In our African context, where family remains central to identity and culture, *Amoris Laetitia* offers a challenge and a hope. It challenges us to preserve the strengths of our family systems while confronting new and difficult realities. And it offers hope that even in pain, families

a small sat rideshare programme. BOTSAT-1 will provide crucial Earth Observation data for the country's national development priorities: food security, environmental conservation and urban planning.

## Significance for Botswana and Africa:

Botswana becomes one of the few African nations with its own Earth observation satellite. Others include South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Kenya, Ghana, Egypt, and Rwanda. This is a strategic leap for national security, research, and digital transformation.

## Immediate benefits post-launch:

In the short time since launch, we've tested telemetry, stabilized the satellite. We have not started taking images as we are still in the post launch operations. In a few weeks we will be able to receive images.

Monitoring team location: The satellite is monitored from Botswana, specifically from our ground station at BIUST. The public can also track BOTSAT-1 using a number of third-party satellite trackers and our BOTSAT-1 NORAD ID 63216. Example: <https://www.satcat.com/sats/63216>

What's next after launch? We are now planning for BOTSAT Phase 2, focusing on mineral discovery, AI applications, and expanded hyperspectral imaging.

## BIUST's role in student motivation:

BIUST offers programmes related to Space Science, Electrical and Telecommunications Engineering, and AI. Through BOTSAT, we launched a scholarship scheme for postgraduates and will host high school STEM exhibitions ahead of the satellite's official commissioning.

On STEM uptake and gender: There's notable progress in STEM enrolment, but the gender gap remains. We need more structured mentorship and early intervention programmes targeting young girls, especially from rural areas.

## Additional reflections:

BOTSAT-1 is more than a satellite; it is a platform for human capital development, policy transformation, and a signal to the world that Botswana is ready to innovate at scale. I invite the nation's youth to see themselves as contributors to future missions.

## My Qualifications:

I hold a MSc, and PhD in Computing Science from Newcastle University (UK), a and a BSc in Computer Science from the University of Botswana. I am in also in Computing and Informatics department and involved several interdisciplinary initiatives in space science and AI. I also teach and supervise master and PhD students, and have graduated more than 30.

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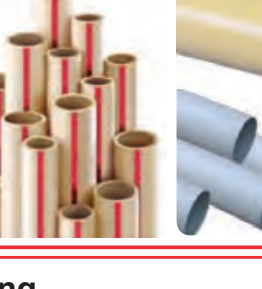
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# Opinions, Reviews & Analysis

## Comment

IT IS OFTEN SAID WHEN TWO bulls fight it is the grass that suffers. This is the case in the current stand-off between the Botswana Doctors Union (BDU) and the Botswana Government – through the Department of Public Service Management (DPSM) – on the other side.

There is no question that its is important for the employer to constantly provide necessary environment for the employees to do their work well without any inhibitions or concern. This is even more serious if such work is about caring for the lives of individuals. Doctors carry the heavy weight of saving lives by healing the sick or wounded. They are often called often called to

# Listen to the doctors!

work at odd hours and sometimes even longer than the human body could bear. Yet they have often dug in and given it all to rescue and heal the most desperate.

We know the high level of dilapidation of our health infrastructure with most hospitals operating without the most basic of equipment. Take Princess Marina Hospital for example – the only referral hospital south of Dibebe. The care and maintenance level of almost about anything that ought to be maintained leaves a lot to be desired. Patients often sleep in sheets, blankets and pillows that should have long been replaced. Various life

saving machines are malfunctioning and even more serious they often have to outsource the X-ray machine; even when the patient's life demands an immediate action.

Staff is highly demoralised – which is why we have seen them escaping in hundreds to the United Kingdom. In particular, it is the nurses that have taken this route. This doesn't mean that our doctors could not have found placement abroad. It is for this reason that we ought to act with caution when they make a demand – which one would trust is reasonable. Even if the doctors were over board with their demands, the fact that they have to take care

of human life warrants that the matter is handled with the necessary sensitivity.

Holding fort on the side of the people, government should exercise their power in such a way that any reasonable person would believe they acted in their best interests. Going to court as in the ongoing matter could have been appropriate. However, that perhaps should have been only to safeguard the situation from going out of hand. From there they should have taken the matter for negotiation at an arbitration level. Government has made its case that it doesn't have enough financial resources at its disposal due to the

decline in diamonds sales and now faces even more trying time with the US having imposed tariffs. The doctors are well educated to know what this means.

Seating down with the doctors' union to hammer a win-win agreement where even as everyone waits for recovery in the economy, they understand that there is something to work hard for. A payment plan or some form of full commitment to addressing the situation is urgently required. The fear by the UDC government to sit across the table with the union is not well premised. The minister should not choose to talk to the doctors

through a media conference. He has to fully engage and show the necessary level of empathy with the circumstances of his colleagues.

At risk are the lives that need to be protected. We are a nation that often prides itself with our consultation and engagement practices. The current stand-off doesn't reflect that. The ball is in government's court to play it wisely. Again, this is a government that is led by a human rights lawyer who has instructed his officials to desist from unnecessary litigation. Every Thebe lost in this case, should otherwise be going to at least one of the doctors.



**ADAM PHETLHE**  
ON SUNDAY!

A PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION OF Inquiry has been established to find the reasons why the BCL mine was closed in October 2016 by former President Ian Khama and other related matters. The official reason proffered by the Khama administration back then was largely that government had reached a conclusion that the mine was no longer economically viable to operate and that copper and nickel prices had significantly dropped. The mine closure has since then become a topical issue highly criticised by opposition parties at every given opportunity particularly in parliament. The current Speaker of the National Assembly Rre Dithapelo Keorapetse who was the then Member of Parliament of Selebi-Phikwe West constituency, became the notable voice on the issue where he, at some point, called for the establishment of an inquiry on the mine closure. He must be delighted in his private corner that such has been established.

As the mine closure became a topical issue in the political cycles and elsewhere, it did so from Business Botswana under which a Task Team was established to, according to the government-owned Daily News newspaper dated 21 March 2017,

## Khama in crosshairs of BCL inquiry

'investigate circumstances surrounding BCL closure.' Seemingly in agreement with the reasons proffered by government to close the mine, the newspaper continued that 'Presenting the Task Team report, Business Botswana Chief Executive Officer Dr Raciuous Moatshe said government decision to place BCL, Tati Nickel Mining Company and related entities under provincial liquidation in October 2016 was ostensibly made to minimise losses to the shareholder as the mine was fast spiralling towards a state of bankruptcy.' However, the Task Team major recommendation was that '... the mine should not be completely shut down as it still had the potential to be mined profitably with some restructuring and change of ownership.'

The point of departure should be that the mine closure by Khama was reckless in that there was on the face of it, no extensive consultation prior to the closure, with one of the key stakeholders being the Botswana Mine Workers Union whose members I will argue, formed the bulk of the labour force at the mine. It is estimated that about 5000 mine workers lost their jobs and by extension livelihoods to many of their immediate and extended families. The socio-economic devastation to other businesses, large and small, cannot be understated wherein the effects are still felt to this day. It is in this respect that Khama is in the crosshairs of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the closure of BCL mine owing principally to the decision he took to do so. It is highly likely the Inquiry will make this finding which fortunately, we already know. The question arising should be what recommendation it



**Khama**

will make in this regard in so far as holding him legally liable for mine closure and the subsequent after effects should it be permissible in law.

When announcing the establishment of the Inquiry, President Advocate Boko said one of the terms of the Inquiry will be to '... inquire into whether any of the previous Presidents has however influenced anyone

in the public sector in relation to winding up of the BCL Group of Companies, liquidation processes related to the BCL companies and or the affairs of the BCL.' It would appear from this statement that he probably knows more to the mine closure than would have been publicly made by the Khama administration.

Khama is likely to defend himself by

stating he took the decision upon receiving recommendations to close the mine from those he had tasked to look into the matter. He will have to present documentary and any other evidence to that effect for verification. He is also likely to refer to Section 47 of the Constitution which empowers the President of the Republic to take a discretionary decision on any matter without consulting anyone if he so desires. This is the same law that President Boko used to identify and appoint Alvarez & Marsal Holdings to perform the forensic audit on government and its State-Owned Enterprises. From my layman's point of view, I am not sure whether or not an executive decision taken by the President of the Republic in view of the provisions of Section 47 can legally be considered challengeable. It is common cause that Khama will not deny that he took the decision to close the mine and that he in fact sent his then Vice President Mokgweetsi Masisi to deliver the devastating news to the BCL employees. I am therefore struggling to ascertain what the purpose and end result of determining who ordered the mine closure and the reasons thereof when such information has been in the public domain from day one and crucially that such has not been disputed.

Digressing a bit, let me make this point. A trend is being created by the President that Botswana institutions like the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) and the Financial Intelligence Agency (FIA) are unable to investigate high value corruption and illicit financial transactions by outsourcing these functions to external entities as it currently obtains in the current investigations. And the reason

is that the President is trying to avoid 'home made investigations, findings and decisions.' We may very well be descending into a situation where the judiciary is also outsourced for the same reasons. Even if these institutions were perceived rightly or wrongly that political pressure and influence were exerted on them by the previous BDP administrations, is the argument that there are no men and women of integrity who can investigate the BCL matter and the wrongdoing in government by home-grown investigators? Should the President be viewed as someone who despises home-grown investigators in order to bring in his external friends? Your guess is as good as mine.

Former President Khama will undoubtedly be the main focus of the BCL inquiry given that he is the one who closed the mine and in the process, caused untold suffering and harm to Selebi-Phikwe and its neighbourhood. While this is so, and accompanied by the fact that the decision was manifestly irrational if it can be established the closure was not backed by any empirical evidence, I don't believe his blameworthiness can go beyond the point that it was an irrational decision. His blameworthiness if anything, could be established if he corruptly influenced the liquidation process in one way or the other in order to gain financial benefit for himself or others close to him. I am prepared to be persuaded otherwise as always. Judge for Yourself!

\*On a sad note, condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the late former Mmegi reporter Rre Lebogang Mosikare. God Bless. [adamphetlhe08@gmail.com](mailto:adamphetlhe08@gmail.com)

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We invite readers to write Letters to the Editor on various issues, be they social, political, economic or entertainment related. Although we support and encourage healthy debates and sharing of alternative views, we will not publish any letter that is slanderous or libelous.

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## BMWU cites BPC for delays in BR-BB workers' terminal benefits

BOTSWANA MINE WORKERS UNION (BMWU) finds itself yet again in the middle of another institutional tug of war, this time, between Botswana Power Corporation (BPC), Morupule Coal Mine (MCM) and BR-BB Joint Venture (Pty)Ltd, in respect of the non payment of BR-BB JV employees terminal benefits following its services contract termination by MCM.

On the 12 December 2024, Morupule Coal Mine terminated its services agreement with its subcontractor BR-BB Joint Venture, citing cash-flow challenges. Before termination of the contract, BR-BB JV had raised concerns with MCM over its monthly payment defaults, which had culminated in the sub-contractors' inability to pay its workers. As of 18th April 2025, the amount owed workers by BR-BB JV is approximately over P9 million. MCM is yet to fulfill its termination obligations at the instance of BR-BB JV such that the subcontractor has failed to honour its employment obligations to employees in the form of terminal benefits. MCM has deferred its responsibility for the settlement of this liability to Botswana Power Corporation.

On the 31st of March 2025, in her parliamentary brief on the power supply challenges in Botswana, the Minister of Minerals and Energy, Honourable Bogolo Kenewendo, highlighted the operational and technical inefficiencies which has run the state-owned power distribution facility into escalating debt. She pointed out to the impact which Morupule



**Gaekgotswwe**

Coal Mine has felt from the non-payment of the huge sums of money amounting to over seven hundred million pula, (P700 000 000) owed by BPC which have resulted in the non-production of coal at the mine and the intermittency of electricity generation at BPC power plants.

During a tripartite meeting between Morupule Coal Mine, BR-BB JV and the Union, it became apparent that the subcontractor will not get paid

by Morupule Coal Mine, until BPC honours its payment obligations. This essentially means, workers will not get paid their terminal benefits until the inefficiencies at BPC are resolved.

On the face of it, Morupule Coal Mine is under no obligation to cause the payment of terminal benefits of workers who are in the supply chain, as they are not directly employed by it. This situation is similar to that of Minergy Coal Mine and BCL, where a state-owned enterprise, due to mismanagement and inefficiencies, squandered its finances, got liquidated and the workers walked away empty handed.

MCM and BPC are both state owned enterprises. The Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Minerals and Energy, should request cabinet to issue a directive for the settlement of BR-BB JV employees terminal benefits. After all, the inefficiencies at BPC are attributed to Government in so far as its responsibility in appointing the leadership of these SOE's and approving tenders awarded companies responsible for managing the technical and maintenance operations of these facilities.

We call on the Government of Botswana through MCM and BPC to pay the terminal benefits of BR-BB Joint Venture employees which are overdue.

ISSUED BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE  
**Mbiganyi Gaekgotswwe**  
General Secretary

## CFE condemns Zimbabwean Journalist Blessed Mhlanga's continued detention

MONDAY MARKED ZIMBABWEAN journalist Blessed Mhlanga's 50th day behind bars. His unlawful arrest and detention is but one of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's many attempts to silence the press and criminalize speech under unconstitutional laws.

Mhlanga, a senior journalist at Heart and Soul TV, has been charged with inciting violence and unrest after interviews with liberation veteran and former ZANU-PF politician Blessed Geza. Geza accused Mnangagwa of corruption and called for his immediate resignation in the November 2024 and January 2025 interviews Mhlanga conducted with Geza.

Since his arrest on 24 February 2025 for having purportedly violated a section of the criminal law which prohibits transmission of date, Mhlanga has been denied bail an extraordinary three times on the flimsiest of pretexts – including that he might interfere with state witnesses whose identities are not known to him.

Mhlanga also suffered arrest in 2022, again seemingly for simply doing his job -- covering the attempted arrest of an opposition politician. His arrest and continued detention at present represents the furtherance of a campaign both Mnangagwa and his predecessor, Robert Mugabe, have long waged: ruthlessly targeting independent media and suppressing critical voices.

Nicole Fritz, executive director of the Campaign for Free Expression (CFE), said, "It is high-time that Blessed Mhlanga have his freedom restored, be returned to his family and



**Mhlanga**

be able to conduct his profession unhindered. It is long overdue that the Mnangagwa government cease its relentless suppression of freedom of expression and allow Zimbabweans both to call and organise for better government. We call on the diplomatic community, and on South Africa in particular, to make Blessed Mhlanga's continued incarceration a matter for general engagement on Zimbabwe-related issues."

**Nicole Fritz**  
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# Leveraging PPPs for massive transformation, economic diversification

A Case Study of Saudi Arabia

MARK MUZINDA  
INNOLEAD CONSULTING

**P**UBLIC-PRIVATE Partnerships (PPPs) have emerged as a powerful tool for economic transformation, diversification, and infrastructure development across the globe. In the case of Botswana, a country with a heavy reliance on the diamond industry and facing challenges in diversifying its economy, the potential of PPPs to catalyze change is substantial. By examining Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 plan, we can glean valuable insights on how Botswana might harness the power of PPPs to drive its own economic and infrastructural evolution.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, launched in 2016, set the stage for a monumental shift in the kingdom's economic landscape. The primary focus of this plan is economic diversification away from oil dependence. Central to this diversification strategy is the aggressive pursuit of PPPs to drive infrastructure development and create a more sustainable, diversified

economy. As part of this vision, Saudi Arabia has embarked on a massive program of reforms, including the introduction of investor-friendly regulations, pro-business laws, and an expansive infrastructure investment plan.

One of the main drivers of this transformation has been the National Center for Privatization & PPP (NCP), which has launched over 200 projects across various sectors such as transport, healthcare, and energy. These projects, combined with the strategic role of the Public Investment Fund (PIF), with over \$700 billion in assets, have made Saudi Arabia one of the most attractive PPP markets globally. The PPP model has enabled Saudi Arabia to tap into private sector expertise and investment, which has been essential in bringing large-scale infrastructure projects to life, including major initiatives like the Diriyah redevelopment and the Riyadh Metro.

PPPs: A Pathway for Botswana's Growth

For Botswana, PPPs present



Mark Muzinda

an opportunity to address several key challenges that hinder the country's growth. With its diamond industry facing market stagnation, the government is seeking ways to diversify the economy and build

infrastructure that will support future growth. The PPP model, as demonstrated by Saudi Arabia, can be the key to unlocking substantial investment and facilitating rapid development in critical sectors.

To achieve this, Botswana can take a cue from Saudi Arabia's proactive approach to PPPs. For instance, the establishment of a central PPP authority, similar to Saudi Arabia's NCP, could

streamline the process of managing and implementing PPP projects across the country.

This would not only reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies but also create a transparent and predictable environment for private investors. The creation of clear regulations, such as a Private Sector Participation Law and an Investment Law, would be crucial to ensure a business-friendly climate where local and foreign investors can thrive.

### Diversifying Through Infrastructure Development

Saudi Arabia's focus on infrastructure development through PPPs has proven effective in both economic diversification and job creation. In particular, projects like the \$50 billion Red Sea Project, which focuses on sustainable tourism, and the \$22.5 billion Riyadh Metro, demonstrate the kingdom's commitment to large-scale investments that benefit both the economy and society. Botswana, similarly, could leverage PPPs to diversify its economy by developing large-scale infrastructure projects in sectors such as renewable energy, healthcare, and tourism. With vast natural resources and a relatively stable political environment, Botswana has the potential to attract foreign investors for projects such as solar and wind energy farms, which would not only contribute to the country's energy independence but also help in meeting global sustainability goals. Additionally, leveraging PPPs in the tourism sector, by investing in infrastructure that promotes eco-tourism and cultural heritage, could significantly boost the country's economy.

### Building a Sustainable Investment Ecosystem

A crucial lesson from Saudi Arabia's success is the creation of a conducive investment ecosystem. Saudi Arabia's massive infrastructure projects are backed by financial incentives such as tax exemptions, reduced corporate tax rates, and simplified labour regulations. These incentives have attracted global investors to the kingdom, making it a hub for international business and investment. For Botswana, offering similar incentives in key sectors could help attract the necessary foreign investment for PPP projects. Moreover, establishing a strong regulatory framework for dispute resolution, project financing, and risk-sharing would reduce uncertainties and make Botswana a more attractive destination for international investors.

### The Role of Technology and Innovation

Another important aspect of Saudi Arabia's approach is its focus on digital transformation, which has streamlined business processes and regulatory frameworks. Botswana could replicate this approach by integrating digital technologies into its own infrastructure development projects, making it easier for investors to navigate the PPP landscape. Furthermore, technological innovation in areas such as smart cities, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure could position Botswana as a leader in sustainable and forward-thinking development in Africa.

### Conclusion

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 offers a valuable case study for Botswana, demonstrating how PPPs can drive massive transformation, economic diversification, and infrastructure development. By fostering a business-friendly environment, offering incentives for investment, and focusing on large-scale infrastructure projects, Botswana can create the conditions necessary for long-term economic growth. Through strategic partnerships with the private sector, the country has the opportunity to diversify its economy, build critical infrastructure, and position itself as a competitive player in the global market. For Botswana, the future lies in embracing PPPs as a vehicle for transformation—one that can bring in the investment, expertise, and innovation necessary to propel the country towards a prosperous and diversified future. By looking at Saudi Arabia's success in this area, Botswana can take the first steps towards unlocking its own potential for massive economic growth and development. [Innolead Consulting]

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# Business

## US TARRIFS

# Jobs bloodbath looms

- Manufacturing, mining sectors threatened by US tariffs
- Botswana industries worry of reduced business activity
- Private sector wants Govt to negotiate for zero tariff hike
- Botswana advised to look at alternatives markets like China

**BAKANG TIRO**  
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

AS THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED to start negotiations with the United States of America over the tariff imposed on Botswana exports, leaders of different sectors of the economy have urged government to negotiate for zero tariff so as to dodge sharp bullet of looming massive job losses locally.

The USA under president Donald Trump administration announced tariffs on commodities supplied by the key markets such as Botswana, a move that has created uncertainty despite the implementation of such being on hold for 90 days from two weeks ago.

Speaking during Business Botswana breakfast session to discuss the impact of 37% tariff on Botswana imports, the Chairperson of Manufacturing Subcommittee Tecla Evans-Mokone warned that the tariffs are very bad.

Evans warned that the manufacturing sector that has been struggling to export textiles in significant value to the USA under the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) would suffer more with the tariffs that have been announced.

According to Evans-Mokone, the 37% tariff rate would make the manufacturing sector less competitive and result in high cost of production.

"AGOA was duty free on Botswana products and the textile industry was exempted. We are going to have a difficult time in exporting to the USA because other markets with less tariffs rate would excel and do better than us as a country. This would be difficult for businesses and some in the already struggling manufacturing sector could be forced to retrench employees and subsequently shut operations," she said.

She said it is very important for the manufacturing sector to ensure that it adopts technology that can improve the quality of products exported to the USA, adding that it's also equally important to upgrade skills of the workforce.

Botswana Chamber of Mines CEO, Charles Siwawa, said the mining industry would be much affected by the tariffs and that would affect jobs and government revenues too.

He said the USA is a key market for Botswana rough diamonds and the higher the tariffs rate would mean that Botswana would not be selling as much as it used to in that market.

Siwawa said the tariffs have no positive impact in any economy, adding that that they are terrible to any business.

"They will increase the production costs and this would bring down profitability as businesses wouldn't be generating



Panelists discussing the impact of US Tarrifs on Botswana's exports to US. The panel discussion was organized by Business Botswana. [L-R] Gihan Ilangakoon, Secretary- Botswana Diamond Manufacturers Association, Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis Dr Kedibonye Thompson, Economist and Researcher Dr Pelotshweu Moepeng and Chairperson of Manufacturing Subcommittee Tecla Evans-Mokone

enough revenue. With reduced profitability, its either businesses even in the mining sector cuts staff or shutdown. Some new mines expected to operate soon locally are disadvantaged," he said.

Siwawa also said government revenue would be impacted significantly more so that most of it comes from the minerals sector (diamonds) which are currently not doing well with regards to sales due to the weakened global demand.

He said government revenue would be lessened by the tariffs as money would be now channelled towards marketing of rough diamonds who are facing competition from lab grown in the US market.

The session reached a consensus on the urgent need for the government to create a more conducive environment for

exporters and to diversify into alternative export markets. Going forward, a private sector position paper will be developed and submitted to the government to support its ongoing negotiations with the United States.

### EXPERTS VIEWS

Economic experts have called on Botswana to look for an alternative markets, including considering China.

Renowned Economist and Researcher Dr Pelotshweu Moepeng has said the US is very critical to Botswana's economy as it is one the biggest consumers of her products especially diamonds.

Dr Moepeng said figures indicate that in 2023 alone, Botswana's exports to USA were valued at P110 million buttressing that USA is amongst top 10 lucrative destinations of

Botswana's exports globally.

"Our competitiveness would be highly affected. We are going to have revenue challenge from the government perspective. These tariffs would have ripple effects in the economy. We need funds as a country for infrastructure development, health and education sectors. The future is bleak," he said.

Another economist and research fellow at Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA) Dr Kedibonye Thompson said the tariffs are used by USA as trade barrier and political tool to achieve some agenda.

Dr Thompson said the tariffs would result in economic uncertainty for Botswana, adding that it is high time Botswana focuses on looking for an alternative market where

she can export in large volumes apart from the USA.

She said China boast of potential to become Botswana's largest exports destination not just on the diamonds but other products.

"There is uncertainty coming out the tariffs and uncertainty affects investor confidence. We will also see volatility on our commodity products (diamonds) and this will put pressure on our fiscal position as a country," said Dr Thompson.

In addition, Dr Thompson said local firms might hold production with the hope that uncertainty will go down but in the medium to long term this would affect employment and profits.

Meanwhile, Gihan Ilangakoon, Secretary- Botswana Diamond Manufacturers

Association (BDMA) said the diamond industry would be negatively affected by the tariffs amidst slump in sales of rough diamonds.

He said the infiltration of the synthetic diamonds in the key US markets are making the situation very difficult for the rough diamonds, buttressing that tariffs would negatively impact diamond industry.

"We need lot of smart thinking to navigate the situation. The industry is quite suppressed at the moment and the economy of Botswana is affected negatively.

The money would be needed to launch a campaign to market rough diamonds against synthetics but the problem is where would such money come from while the rough diamonds sales aren't performing well at the moment," said Ilangakoon.

# GAIA lists on the BSE

**STAFF WRITER**  
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

THE SECONDARY LISTING OF GAIA Renewables 1 Limited Ten (10) Million of the Funds Class B Preference Shares on the Botswana Stock Exchange (BSE) Foreign Main Board has been hailed as a groundbreaking as it stands to revolutionise the local financial markets landscape.

The company's primary listing is on the Cape Town Stock Exchange (CTSE).

Welcoming the company on the local bourse on Wednesday, BSE CEO, Aupa Monyatsi said: "This issuance demonstrates the exchange's dynamism and ability to attract products primary listed in other markets. We also hope, through this listing, to strengthen regional collaboration by deepening ties between BSE and CTSE,

encouraging harmonization of listing requirements and financial instruments across SADC exchanges and also opening the door for Botswana-originated infrastructure products to also seek regional listings".

He said the listing was also particularly important for the BSE as it represents the first listing of preference shares of this nature on the exchange, marking a potential milestone in the diversification of the Exchange's product offerings, expanding the scope of available investment instruments on the Exchange to enhance the depth of the capital market.

"Indeed, this listing echoes our strategic thrust of being a world class stock exchange offering diverse products for issuers and investors. The fact that GR1 Class B Preference Shares provide investors with exposure to income-generating green

infrastructure projects in South Africa is an important element. This will allow Botswana institutional Investors to gain exposure to regional economic growth through renewable infrastructures therefore diversifying their respective portfolios," he said.

Monyatsi assured GAIA that they chose the right market to secondary list your product.

"Our vision as an exchange extends beyond just the existing products, but it encompasses the broader goal of issuer attraction across State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), family-owned businesses, domestic and international companies, and SMES on both equity and debt. We are also focusing our strategy on wider investor attraction while using technology to facilitate and onboard investors in their diversity. We are also working around the clock to attract

new products to list on the exchange, as well as attract the right partnerships. Our partnerships will cut across segments, from investors for our SME Fund, stock exchanges to promote dual listings and cross border trade, investment promotion agencies, global custodians and Technology providers to name a few," he said.

Gaia projects itself as a company that "provides access to attractive South African and Sub-Saharan African opportunities delivering its investors with predictable, inflation linked, long term cash yielding returns via listed and unlisted investment vehicles. As a specialist asset manager, Gaia focuses exclusively on infrastructure and agriculture investments and prides itself on its unique engineering, project development and finance skills to execute upon the investment options throughout the project lifecycle".



BELL RINGING: BSE CEO, Aupa Monyatsi [C] with GAIA executives

# Botala in successful placement

Raises A\$1,250,000 to expand exploration

**B**OTALA ENERGY LTD HAS RECEIVED firm commitments from institutional, sophisticated and professional investors for a placement of fully paid ordinary shares in the capital of Botala to raise a total of A\$1,250,000 (before costs) at an issue price of A\$0.059 per New Share. The issue price of A\$0.059 per share is at a discount of 11% to its last traded price of A\$0.066 per share. Approximately 21.2 million New Shares will be issued under the Placement which will comprise 8.2 million New Shares under Botala's remaining capacity under Listing Rule 7.1 and approximately 13 million additional New Shares will be issued on the same terms to members of the Board (or their respective nominees) subject to the receipt of shareholder approval to be sought at a General Meeting of Botala. The issue of New Shares under the Placement (excluding shares to the Board which as set out above will be subject to shareholder approval) is expected to occur on or around 28 April 2025. New Shares to be issued pursuant



Kris Martinick, Chief Executive Officer, Botala Energy Ltd

to the Placement will rank equally with Botala's existing fully paid ordinary shares on issue. Use of funds Funds raised from the Placement will be used to continue flow-rate testing at Project Pitse, expansion of the exploration and appraisal programme and the next phase of the Bankable Feasibility Study to produce Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to the Greater Johannesburg market. Kris Martinick, Chief Executive Officer, Botala Energy Ltd commented: "In what is a very tough market it has been encouraging to see support for the Serowe CBM Project based on an extremely successful March Quarter as Botala transitions from exploration to production. Management continues to focus on the CBM Pilot Programme targeting commercial production of LNG, securing strategic development partners and additional offtake agreements. "We are encouraged by our ongoing negotiations." Palomar Advisory Pty Ltd (Palomar) acted as lead manager to the Placement.

## Dr. Priya Ravi Iyer joins Absa board

**A**BSA BANK BOTSWANA HAS announced the appointment of Dr Priya Ravi Iyer as an Independent Non-Executive Director of the Company with effect from 15 April 2025. The appointment is subject to conclusion of the voting of shareholders at the Company's Annual General Meeting in June 2025. Dr Iyer is a Chartered Accountant by profession, with over 30 years of experience in financial management, strategic leadership, education, compliance and risk management. She is currently the Pro Vice Chancellor at Botho University, where among other deliverables, she oversees graduate employability, finance, ESG reporting and operational efficiency. She previously served as an Associate Director at PricewaterhouseCoopers Botswana, where she led major consultancy projects. She was not only an Executive Officer at the helm of the Botswana Institute of Accountants (now Botswana Institute of Chartered Accountants), successfully leading the merger to form the Botswana Accountancy College; but also served as the first female president of the Botswana Institute of Accountants. During her early career, Dr Iyer held various roles at Fraser & Ross in India. Dr Iyer's work with the World Bank as a consultant during the implementation of the Financial Reporting Act and the Accountants Act of 2010, as well as her experience on various boards and committees of organisations such as the Professional Accounting Organisations Programme Oversight Committee, Pan African



Dr Priya Ravi Iyer

Federation of Accountants, Professional Accounting Organisation Development Advisory Group International Federation of Accountants and the Validation Panel of the Botswana Tertiary Educational Programme, will undoubtedly be invaluable to the Company. Dr Iyer holds a Doctor of Education (University of Liverpool, UK) and a Bachelor of Commerce (University of Calicut, India). On behalf of Management, Employees and Stakeholders of the Company, the Board welcomes Dr Iyer into this new role and is confident that her wealth of experience will inspire further delivery of the Company's ambitions and resolve to provide shareholder value and contribute to the communities in which we operate. [bse.co.bw]

## StanChart on sale of its WRB business



the rest of the investing community are urged to continue exercising caution and to consult their investment advisors when dealing in the Company's securities until a full announcement is made. [bse.co.bw]

**S**HAREHOLDERS ARE REFERRED TO THE First Cautionary Announcement issued on 27 November 2024 and the Further Cautionary Announcements issued since then, wherein the Board of Directors

of the Company informed the shareholders and the market that the Company intends to explore options for the sale of its wealth and retail banking business which, if implemented, may have a material effect on

the price of the Company's securities. The Board wishes to inform the shareholders and the market that the Company is still exploring options for the sale of its WRB business. Accordingly, shareholders and

## Know Your Corporate Leader

**Full Name:** Kagiso Balopi  
**Position:** Head of Risk  
**Institution:** BBS Bank  
**Date Started:** March 2023  
**Nature of business:** Banking



## The hidden power of Unit Trusts in retirement planning

KAMOGELO MAHUPELA

**H**AVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED whether your current financial plan will support your desired standard of living in retirement? Are you concerned that your existing retirement scheme may not be sufficient in fulfilling your future needs? Or, are you self-employed without a retirement plan in place? If any of these questions resonate with you, this article is a must-read.

Planning for retirement is a significant financial challenge that most Batswana face which often involves balancing the need for financial security in the future with the desire to enjoy life in the present. While traditional retirement funds are essential components of retirement planning, they may not always be sufficient to ensure a comfortable retirement. This is where unit trusts come into play, offering a strategic opportunity to set you up for the future or supplement your existing retirement scheme.

In this article, we explore how investing in a unit trust can be a strategic addition to an existing retirement scheme for those who are formally employed. For the self-employed and employees on contracts, it presents a compelling alternative to traditional retirement savings options. We explore how unit trusts can provide both diversification benefits and growth potential, enhancing financial security for those looking to secure their future, regardless of employment status.

Unit trusts are an affordable and ideal investment vehicle for diversifying your retirement portfolio. By pooling your money with other like-minded investors, they offer access to a wide range of assets, such as stocks, bonds, property, amongst other asset classes. Diversification helps spread risk and reduces the impact of market volatility on your investments, providing greater stability and security for your retirement funds.

Unit trusts are managed by investment professionals who make informed decisions about asset allocation, buying and selling securities, and portfolio management. This level of expertise can be particularly beneficial for investors who may not have the expertise or time to actively manage their retirement investments.

Unit trusts provide a valuable opportunity for your retirement savings



Mahupela

to grow through the power of compound interest. Over time, the returns earned on your investments are reinvested, leading to exponential growth. This compounding effect can significantly boost the value of your retirement funds while helping you achieve your financial goals.

Many unit trusts offerings have the option of regular income distributions, which can be attractive for retirees. These distributions can provide a steady stream of income to supplement other retirement income sources, such as annuity payments (pensions) or social grants. The additional income can help maintain your desired lifestyle during retirement.

Unit Trusts are accessible to all types of investors, regardless of their income status or net worth. You can start with a relatively small investment, making it an affordable option for those looking to supplement their existing retirement schemes. This accessibility makes unit trusts an all-inclusive and convenient choice for retirement planning.

To use a simplified example of how you can use unit trusts to augment your retirement plan: Meet Katlego, a 58-year-old Retiree who has just started enjoying her retirement benefits. Thirty years ago, Katlego made a decision to augment her current retirement plan with her employer, with personal unit trusts investments.

She began by researching various unit trusts offerings and consulted with a financial advisor to select one that aligned with her long-term investment goals and risk appetite. Katlego chose to start off by investing in a well-diversified medium to

high-risk unit trusts fund that primarily invests in a mix of stocks and bonds, as it matched her risk appetite and investment horizon at the time. The chosen unit trusts fund is diversified across various asset classes, spreading the risk accordingly. Katlego committed to making monthly contributions of BWP 3,000.00 into her unit trusts account. These contributions were deducted automatically from her bank account, which ensured consistency in her investment contributions and benefitted from Pula-cost Averaging effect by lowering the average purchase cost of units over time. Diversification helped reduce the impact of market volatility on Katlego's investments and provided a more stable and consistent growth trajectory. Katlego's unit trust generated returns through dividends paid from stocks, interest from bonds, and capital gains from the fund's underlying assets. She chose to reinvest her earnings rather than taking them as cash, which helped accelerate the growth of her investment over time.

After 25 years, with monthly contributions of BWP 3,000.00 and an average annual rate of return of 9.6%, the value of Katlego's investments amounted to approximately BWP 1.4 million. Katlego regularly reviewed her unit trusts' performance with guidance from her financial advisor. Given that she was closer to retirement, she sought advice to switch to a more conservative unit trusts fund to protect her gains and reduce risk. With only 5 years to retirement, she chose to invest her BWP 1.4 million in a local money market investment fund earning approximately 5.6% per annum on average. After 5 years, her investments grew to nearly BWP 1.8 million.



### VACANCY

Bagpiper Pty Ltd wishes to employ a

#### PRODUCTION MANAGER

Who will report to the General Manager and be based at our Block 3 factory

##### PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY

- Manage the operational, quality, maintenance logistics and fiscal activities of the factory
- Implementing and maintaining ISO9001, GMPs, HACCP and FSSC22000
- Contribute to the strategic planning and policy development
- Raw material planning, procurement and Logistics
- New Product development
- Managing Laboratory activities

##### KNOWLEDGE & SKILL REQUIREMENTS

- Beverage manufacturing background including Packaging, blending processes, quality control, plant and equipment maintenance management (Filling lines & Blow Molders)
- ISO9001:2015 Quality management Systems and HACCP, GMPS
- Food Safety – FSSC22000
- Occupation Health and safety
- Logistic- Purchasing and planning
- Plant productivity and efficiency
- Project management
- Managerial Skills with the ability to motivate teams to produce quality work within tight timeframes
- Experience with regulated products and handling BOBS compliance requirements
- Negotiating, problem solving, proficiency in Microsoft office suite and Tally accounting system

##### Qualifications.

- Degree in Food Science or related field and minimum 5 years production management experience in Beverage industry.

##### APPLICATIONS

Please send your written applications including your CVs to :  
**General Manager, Bagpiper PTY Ltd P Bag 0055, Broadhurst Gaborone.**

Closing date for receipt of application is **12 May 2025**

# Why Botswana needs a new Banking Playbook



**WABO MOSWATE**  
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER  
BOTSWANA SAVINGS BANK

“THE NEXT ERA OF BANKING IN Botswana will not be won by balance sheets. It will be shaped by leaders who build systems that unlock ownership, expand access, and shift our people from survival to prosperity.”

**Botswana's banking sector stands on a precipice.**

We have strong regulation, solid balance sheets, and growing digital capabilities—but we also have deep systemic gaps. Too many citizens are underbanked. Too many businesses are unfunded. Too many people still view banks as intimidating, rigid, or simply inaccessible. If we are to be fit for the future, we must fundamentally rethink the purpose, structure, and priorities of our banks. We must write a new playbook—one that puts impact before image, access before excess, and people before products.

**1. From Transactions to Transformation**

“The era of banking that focuses solely on deposits, disbursements, and quarterly returns is over. What Botswana needs now is a banking system that transforms lives—not just accounts.” For far too long, banks

have measured success by the size of their balance sheets and the number of accounts opened. But a healthy financial sector must be more than just profitable—it must be purposeful.

The time has come for banks in Botswana to embrace a new identity: not just as financial intermediaries, but as architects of national progress.

That means making inclusive banking the cornerstone of strategy, not an afterthought. It means designing systems and solutions that: Enable homeownership for the majority—not the privileged few—so that teachers, nurses, and junior officers can build generational wealth through property; Support small businesses with meaningful funding and development support—not just token overdrafts; Formalise and fund the informal sector, which employs thousands yet remains largely excluded from the financial ecosystem; Drive universal financial access, ensuring that every Motswana, regardless of location or income, can interact meaningfully with banking platforms; Elevate financial literacy, empowering individuals to budget, save, invest, and build—not just borrow and spend. The goal is no longer to simply grow account numbers—it's to grow ownership, resilience, and long-term economic empowerment.

We must rewire our society from being consumption-focused to one that is investment-minded, entrepreneurship-driven, and wealth-conscious. This is the transformation Botswana needs.

**2. Inclusion Must Be Engineered Into the Business Model**

“Inclusion is not charity. It is the foundation of a sustainable and scalable financial system.” Botswana's

population is predominantly middle to low income. Yet, banking products and lending criteria continue to serve the top tier, creating exclusion at the very point where transformation should begin. Banks must move beyond one-size-fits-all models and intentionally design offerings for: Government and parastatal employees earning less than P10,000; Informal entrepreneurs, street vendors, and service providers; Entry-level youth entering the workforce with no credit history; Rural customers seeking dignity, not complexity, in financial interactions.

This isn't about lowering standards—it's about redesigning access pathways. We need alternative credit scoring models that reward behavioral consistency over formal employment history. We need pricing models that don't punish the poor for being poor. We need products that meet people where they are—and take them where they want to go. Inclusion is not a CSR initiative. It is a national imperative.

**3. Digital Must Be Human—Not Just High-Tech**

“True digital transformation in banking is not about how sophisticated our platforms are—it's about how well they serve the daily needs of the people they were built for.”

In the current era, digital banking must go far beyond glossy apps and login screens. Real digital transformation requires end-to-end usability, accessibility, and interoperability—especially in a country like Botswana where the population is digitally connected but economically underserved.

We must build a digital ecosystem that is so seamless, so integrated, and

so intuitive that banking becomes invisible—but ever-present.

Imagine a customer: Applying for a loan on a Sunday evening from their phone in Maun; Receiving approval and disbursement in minutes; Paying for electricity, groceries, insurance, and school fees—all from one wallet; Accessing government services (like Omang renewal or vehicle licensing) without ever stepping into a queue. This is not a futuristic dream—it's a feasible outcome when banks, fintechs, government, MNOs, and retailers stop competing in silos and start collaborating for the customer.

**Seamless Interoperability is No Longer Optional**

The true test of our digital transformation is not in downloads—it's in mobility. In how easily money, data, and services can flow between systems, institutions, and people.

Today, customers still face friction: Difficulty moving funds between mobile wallets and bank accounts; Poor integration between service providers; Manual paperwork for services that should be digital; Limited access to multi-service platforms.

Botswana's digital financial future requires: Full interoperability between banks, wallets, and fintech apps; A unified payments infrastructure that allows real-time, low-cost transactions across all players; Open API frameworks that allow innovation to flourish while protecting consumer data; Shared digital identity platforms to simplify KYC and onboarding across sectors.

**Digital Inclusion is National Inclusion**

We must ensure that every

Motswana—rural or urban, young or old—can use digital platforms to enhance their quality of life. This will require: Local language interfaces; Offline transaction capabilities; Smartphone affordability strategies; Targeted digital literacy campaigns (especially for women, the elderly, and youth).

Without intentional design, digital progress can deepen exclusion. But with it, we can unlock one of the greatest enablers of inclusion in our nation's history.

**The Imperative to Partner Across Ecosystems**

“No single institution owns the customer. Every player in the ecosystem is a piece of their daily life.” To truly serve customers, banks must stop seeing themselves as service endpoints and start acting as orchestrators of financial convenience. That means: Partnering with retailers to embed payments and credit into everyday commerce; Integrating with MNOs to create hybrid experiences that combine wallet convenience with banking security; Collaborating with government to digitize public services—from tax, to utilities, to health insurance. When a bank becomes the bridge between a customer and everything they value, it becomes indispensable.

**Where Botswana Can Lead**

Our digital maturity, coupled with our manageable population size and progressive regulatory environment, gives Botswana a unique opportunity to become a regional pioneer in inclusive digital banking.

Imagine: A national interoperable wallet system; One-click access to

credit, utilities, government services, and savings; Unified identity and payment systems powered by blockchain and AI; Data-driven credit scoring that empowers the informal sector; A financially literate population actively building wealth—not just transacting. We don't need to wait for the world to define this future. We can build it—for Botswana, by Botswana.

**4. Banks Must Become Partners in National Development**

“Banks don't just support the economy—they shape its trajectory.” It's time for our financial sector to actively align with Botswana's development goals. The banking system must be seen—and act—as an enabler of: Vision 2036; Economic diversification and citizen empowerment.

We must: Finance affordable housing at scale, to support national targets; Enable productive lending in sectors like agriculture, health, logistics, and digital enterprise; Facilitate public-private financing models that expand infrastructure and community assets; Support government-backed education and skills programs through tailored credit, scholarships, and savings plans.

Banks must also build local capacity, not just chase foreign deposits. We must invest in people, platforms, and purpose that uplift Botswana. If we are serious about national transformation, then banks must stop operating in silos and start building in sync—with government, entrepreneurs, and communities.

**5. The Future Requires Purpose-Driven Leadership**

“It's no longer enough to be technically competent. The next generation of bank leaders must be

system shapers, nation builders, and legacy creators.” Banking leadership must evolve. Today's challenges—rising customer expectations, capital constraints, economic pressures—require more than operational discipline. They demand clarity of purpose, boldness of thought, and humility in execution.

We need leaders who can: Rethink banking from the ground up, not just optimize the status quo; Inspire internal culture transformation, not just manage KPIs; Bridge the gap between strategy and service, between Boardroom and branch; Build institutions that outlive them, measured not just in profit—but in impact.

Leadership is not about the office you sit in—it's about the lives you influence and the futures you shape. The banks of the future will be led by those who understand that banking is not just a profession—it's a calling to steward national progress.

**Final Word: It's Time to Write a New Playbook**

Botswana has the talent, the tools, and the regulatory foundation to build a world-class financial system. But it will require courage. The courage to let go of outdated models. The courage to serve those who have been underserved. The courage to put people before products, and legacy before ego. This is not the job of one leader. It is the responsibility of all of us—bankers, policymakers, business owners, and citizens. Let's stop building institutions that look impressive but don't transform lives. Let's build a banking system that is accessible, inclusive, and impactful. Let's write a new playbook—together.

# The invisible stalker



**DR DIMAKATSO POLOKELO**

YOU WAKE UP AND CHECK YOUR phone. As you scroll through social media, an ad appears for the same shoes you looked at online yesterday. Later, while having lunch with a friend, you mention wanting to visit Japan. By that evening, travel ads for Tokyo and Kyoto fill your feed.

This isn't paranoia. This is real. They're the result of sophisticated AI systems that collect and analyse vast amounts of data about your behaviour. Every search query, every app you open, every location you visit—all of this information is tracked, stored and used to predict your interests and needs.

The tracking extends beyond your online activity. Smartphones log your physical movements through GPS and Wi-Fi signals. Voice assistants process spoken words to improve their services. Even your typing patterns and how long you view certain content provide data points for algorithms. This constant data collection enables the personalised experiences we've come to expect - recommended products, curated news feeds, and targeted advertisements. While convenient, it raises important questions about privacy and consent. Most people are unaware of how much

information they're sharing or how it might be used in the future. The technology continues to advance. New systems can analyse facial expressions, track eye movements, and predict behaviour with increasing accuracy. As these capabilities grow, so do concerns about how much influence they should have over our choices and access to information. Understanding how these systems work is the first step in making informed decisions about our digital lives. While we may not be able to avoid all tracking, we can take steps to control what we share and how it's used - from adjusting privacy settings to being more mindful about what we do online.

The challenge moving forward will be balancing the benefits of personalised technology with maintaining meaningful control over our personal data and digital autonomy. This constant data collection

happens through multiple channels. Our smartphones record location pings whenever we move, log every app we open and for how long, and even track subtle behaviours like how quickly we type or swipe. Voice assistants process our spoken requests to complete tasks, while device microphones may passively capture ambient sounds during normal operation - a side effect of being always-on devices ready for voice commands. In public spaces, cameras with facial recognition capabilities can identify individuals and analyse expressions. Social media platforms use similar technology to tag photos and study engagement patterns. These systems recognize who we are and track how we respond to different content, building psychological profiles based on what holds our attention or elicits reactions. The resulting behavioural models enable the precise targeting we've all

experienced. An ad appears for a product similar to one we recently viewed online. Our social feeds fill with content related to conversations we've had. These aren't coincidences, but rather the output of algorithms correlating our digital footprints with predictable behavioural patterns. The system doesn't need to “listen” to our conversations, it can infer interests from the people we interact with, places we visit and content we consume. These recommendation systems now curate much of our digital experience. The videos streaming services suggest, the news articles prioritized in our feeds, even the products that appear first in search results - all are shaped by algorithms designed to capture and maintain our attention. While convenient, this creates a feedback loop where we're increasingly shown content that aligns with (and reinforces) our existing preferences and behaviours. The implications extend beyond just seeing relevant ads. As these systems become more sophisticated, they influence what information we encounter, which perspectives we're

exposed to, and ultimately how we understand the world around us. The same data used to recommend products could potentially inform decisions about credit approvals, insurance rates or employment opportunities - all based on algorithmic assessments of our behaviours and predicted risks. This creates important questions about transparency and agency in our digital lives. While personalized experiences offer convenience, they also mean our choices are being shaped by systems whose inner workings remain largely opaque. Understanding how these mechanisms function is the first step toward making informed decisions about our participation in digital spaces. Imagine a file. A massive file. Inside it: every website you've ever visited, every embarrassing search you've ever made, every purchase, every late-night impulse buy, every private message. This file exists. Corporations have it. Governments can access it. Hackers want it. And once it's out there? It's forever. Data breaches happen daily, leaking intimate details about millions of people, details that can be used for blackmail,

fraud, or manipulation. Even if you delete something, it's never truly gone. The internet has a perfect memory, and AI never forgets. The worst part? This is just the beginning. AI is evolving, fast. Predictive policing algorithms claim to guess who might commit a crime before it happens. Employers and advertisers use emotion-detection software to analyse your facial expressions, judging your reactions in real time. Some companies are even working toward “digital immortality,” where an AI could simulate you, your speech, your thoughts, your mannerisms long after you're gone. So, can you escape the watcher? Not completely. But you can fight back. Limit data sharing where possible. Use privacy tools like VPNs, encrypted messaging and ad blockers. Stay paranoid; question every “personalised” suggestion. Who benefits? Who profits? The AI stalker isn't going away. But if enough people wake up to its presence, maybe, just maybe, we can force it back into the shadows. Until then? It's watching.

# Elevating women's entrepreneurship in Botswana



**BAKANG PHUTHEGO**  
BUSINESS WITH BK

BOTSWANA STANDS AT A pivotal moment in its economic development. For three consecutive years, our nation has proudly held the title of global leader in women's entrepreneurship, with an impressive 38.5% of businesses owned by women according to the 2021 Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs. This remarkable achievement places Botswana ahead of both developing nations and advanced economies, showcasing the incredible potential of our female business leaders. However, this leadership position represents not just an accomplishment to celebrate, but a foundation upon which we must build a more inclusive and prosperous economic future for all Botswana.

The current landscape presents both extraordinary opportunities and significant challenges. While Botswana's women are creating businesses at unprecedented rates, World Bank data reveals that many remain concentrated in traditional sectors like retail and hospitality, which often offer limited growth

potential and lower profit margins. At the same time, the African Development Bank has identified a staggering \$42 billion funding gap for women entrepreneurs across the continent, a barrier that prevents many promising ventures from scaling and reaching their full potential. Perhaps most importantly, women remain significantly underrepresented in high-value sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and professional services - the very industries that will drive Botswana's economic diversification and future competitiveness.

What makes this moment particularly significant is that Botswana already possesses all the necessary institutional tools to transform this situation. Our existing ecosystem of development organizations and funding mechanisms - including the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA), Citizen Entrepreneur Development Agency (CEDA), Youth Development Fund (YDF), and various research funds - forms a powerful infrastructure that, with strategic realignment and enhanced coordination, could unleash a new wave of women-led economic growth. The challenge before us is not one of creating new systems from scratch, but rather of optimizing and focusing our current resources to maximize their impact on women entrepreneurs.

Consider the potential if we were to fully mobilize the Local Enterprise Authority as a nationwide hub for women's business incubation. Drawing lessons from successful models like Morocco's Women's Enterprise for Sustainability program - which achieved a 76% success

rate with ILO support - LEA could establish specialized incubators in every district, each tailored to the economic opportunities of its region. These hubs would do more than just provide workspace; they would offer sector-specific training programs aligned with Botswana's economic diversification goals, from renewable energy technologies to advanced manufacturing processes. By partnering with research institutions, these incubators could help bridge the critical gap between academic innovation and commercial application, ensuring that women entrepreneurs have access to cutting-edge technologies and business solutions.

The financial piece of this puzzle presents another significant opportunity. CEDA, with its established funding mechanisms and nationwide reach, is uniquely positioned to become the engine of growth for women-led enterprises. Imagine a scenario where 40% of CEDA's portfolio was dedicated to women-owned businesses, offering not just loans but a range of financial products including grants for early-stage ventures, convertible notes for scaling businesses, and equity-like instruments for high-growth potential startups. By working in partnership with commercial banks to develop loan guarantee schemes and with international organizations like the African Development Bank to access additional capital, CEDA could help close the financing gap that currently holds back so many women entrepreneurs. The success of Nigeria's AWE Fund, which achieved 35% average revenue growth among its portfolio companies, demonstrates what's possible when

women entrepreneurs gain access to appropriate financial products.

Youth development represents another critical piece of this ecosystem. The Youth Development Fund has the potential to serve as a powerful pipeline for the next generation of women business leaders. By refocusing a portion of its grants specifically toward sustainable, women-led enterprises and creating structured mentorship programs that connect young entrepreneurs with established business owners, YDF could help ensure a steady flow of new talent into Botswana's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Digital skills development should form a core component of this effort, as e-commerce and fintech solutions become increasingly vital for business success in all sectors.

The sectoral transformation needed to fully leverage women's entrepreneurial potential requires deliberate strategy and coordination. While celebrating the successes of women in traditional sectors, we must also create pathways for their advancement into higher-value industries that will drive Botswana's future economy. This means developing targeted programs to prepare and support women entrepreneurs entering fields like mining services, diamond beneficiation, renewable energy technologies, advanced manufacturing, and digital services. Each of these sectors presents unique opportunities for growth and innovation, but also requires specific technical knowledge and access to specialized networks - support that our national institutions are well-positioned to provide.

Creating an enabling environment

for women's entrepreneurship extends beyond direct business support. Critical ecosystem elements include implementing gender-responsive public procurement policies with clear targets for women-owned suppliers, encouraging corporate supplier development programs that actively include women-led businesses, and developing a comprehensive national database of women entrepreneurs to enable more targeted support services. Streamlining business registration and licensing processes can remove unnecessary barriers, while improved data collection will help measure progress and identify remaining gaps in support.

The success stories emerging from across the globe offer Botswana both inspiration and tangible models for action. Consider Morocco's groundbreaking Women's Enterprise for Sustainability initiative, which has become a benchmark for effective intervention. By combining sector-specific training with comprehensive business support, the program has enabled thousands of women to venture into non-traditional industries, generating an impressive \$3.50 in economic value for every dollar invested. This remarkable return demonstrates how strategic, well-designed programs can create powerful ripple effects throughout an economy.

Looking beyond Morocco, we find equally compelling examples in diverse national contexts. In Rwanda, the combination of gender-sensitive policymaking and grassroots business development has propelled women's participation in high-growth sectors. Sweden's focus on work-life balance infrastructure has removed

systemic barriers to women's business growth. Chile's innovative public-private partnerships have created unprecedented access to markets for women-owned enterprises. While each nation's approach reflects its unique cultural and economic context, they all share four foundational pillars that Botswana can adapt: robust financial access mechanisms, tailored capacity-building programs, strategic market connections, and thoughtfully designed policy frameworks.

These international case studies prove that supporting women entrepreneurs isn't just good social policy - it's sound economic strategy with measurable, scalable impacts. The critical lesson for Botswana is that we don't need to reinvent the wheel, but rather adapt these proven principles to our national context, building on our existing institutional strengths and cultural advantages. By learning from these global pioneers while maintaining our distinct Botswana perspective, we can develop an even more effective model that could, in turn, become a new benchmark for other nations to follow. Realizing this vision will require coordinated action across all sectors of society. Government must provide leadership by establishing a high-level Women's Entrepreneurship Task Force with representation from all relevant ministries and a direct reporting line to the highest levels of decision-making. The private sector has an equally critical role to play, particularly through commitments to source from women-owned businesses and through partnerships that provide mentorship and market access. International development partners can offer both technical

assistance and financial resources, while local academic institutions can contribute research and innovation capabilities. What makes Botswana's situation unique is that we are not starting from scratch. Unlike many nations that must build their support systems from the ground up, we have the advantage of strong existing institutions and a proven track record of women's entrepreneurial success. The pieces of the puzzle are all here; what's needed now is the vision and the will to put them together in new, more powerful configurations.

As we look to the future, the potential rewards extend far beyond maintaining our top ranking in global indices. By fully unleashing the power of women's entrepreneurship, Botswana can pioneer a new model of inclusive economic growth - one that harnesses the talents of all its citizens, diversifies its economic base, and creates prosperity that is both broader and more sustainable. The time for this transformation is now, and the tools are in our hands. The question is whether we will seize this historic opportunity to redefine what's possible for Botswana's economy and for generations of Botswana women to come.

The world is watching Botswana's success in women's entrepreneurship with admiration. Now is the moment to build on that success in ways that will resonate through our economy and society for decades. By taking bold, coordinated action today, we can ensure that our current leadership position becomes not just a momentary achievement, but the foundation for a new era of shared prosperity and economic innovation. The path forward is clear; the time for action is now

# Economic growth accelerates amid an uncertain global environment

VOLUME 31  
AFRICA'S PULSE

**E**CONOMIC ACTIVITY IN SUB-Saharan Africa is projected to edge up from 3.3 percent in 2024 to 3.5 percent in 2025 and further accelerate to 4.3 percent in 2026–27. The region's economic performance is still dragged down by some of its largest countries—namely, Angola, Nigeria, and South Africa. Excluding these countries, the rest of the subcontinent is expected to grow at 4.6 percent in 2025 and speed up to 5.7 percent in 2026–27. This outlook is subject to heightened risks arising from global policy uncertainty.

As inflation cools down and converges to targets, and (global and domestic) financial conditions remain accommodative, it is expected that household consumption and investment will support the region's growth acceleration. The contribution of government consumption will remain modest as the public sector continues to balance revenues and expenditures while

managing painful trade-offs between servicing the debt burden and investing in social and physical infrastructure. Across sectors of economic activity, the contribution of services is expected to remain robust in 2025–27, primarily driven by recoveries in information and communications technology, the financial sector, and tourism. Agriculture is expected to pick up from its lows in 2023–24, thanks to improved climate conditions, infrastructure, and technology.

Despite the baseline forecasts of growth acceleration in the region during 2025–27, risks to the outlook remain tilted to the downside. Sub-Saharan African economies will navigate an uncertain landscape amid greater policy uncertainty, which may lead to changes in the world trade order; ongoing (regional and national) geopolitical shifts that may affect commodity prices, disrupt international relations, and yield further fragmentation; reduced foreign aid budgets worldwide; and challenges posed by extreme weather events. While this issue of Africa's Pulse

does not analyze country-level impacts of potential trade disruptions on growth, preliminary analysis suggests that for the region as a whole, the indirect impacts of prolonged policy uncertainty may be more severe than the direct impacts.

In per capita terms, growth in the region has been inadequate to yield significant reductions in extreme poverty. Real income per capita in 2025 is expected to be around 2 percent below its most recent peak in 2015. The per capita growth acceleration expected in 2025–27, at an annual average rate of 1.8 percent, will contribute to a modest decline in the poverty rate. Forecasts indicate that after reaching a peak of 43.9 percent in 2025, poverty, measured at \$2.15 per capita per day in 2017 international purchasing power parity, will drop to 43.2 percent in 2027. Limited investments in income-generating sectors for the poor, lingering effects of past inflation, and the probable reduction of donor aid budgets worldwide pose a challenge for poverty reduction.

The path of disinflation in Sub-Saharan

Africa is moving forward, with risks to the upside. The median inflation rate in Sub-Saharan Africa declined from 7.1 percent in 2023 to 4.5 percent in 2024, and it is projected to bounce back slightly to an annual average rate of 4.6 percent in 2025–27. A deceleration of inflation was recorded by about 70 percent of the countries in the region in 2024. The drop for most countries can be explained by the gradual easing of supply chain pressures, the effects of contractionary monetary and fiscal policy, as well as greater currency stability. However, the variability of inflation across countries remains high: of 47 countries in the region, 14 still have inflation rates of two digits or more—including Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, among others. By 2027, the number of countries with two-digit or higher inflation rates is expected to fall to six.

The monetary policy stance remains differentiated across Sub-Saharan African countries, although most central banks have started to cut interest rates or have

paused their hiking cycle for several months. A few central banks in the region have raised rates due to a recent flare up in inflation. Although the path of convergence to inflation targets will continue across countries, it will hit some bumps along the way if upside risks to inflation are realized—for instance, policies that increase trade costs worldwide (including import tariffs and retaliatory measures). This would delay the easing cycle that has already started in many advanced and developing economies, thus rendering higher-for-longer interest rates. It could weaken African currencies and hence raise inflation—although the impact would depend on the magnitudes of the tariffs and the pass-through to consumer prices.

Primary balances are gradually narrowing amid government spending trade-offs

Primary deficits have gradually narrowed as a result of African governments' ongoing fiscal consolidation efforts. By 2025, the region's primary deficit is expected to narrow slightly to 0.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), from 0.5 percent in 2024. Further actions to increase revenues and retrench (non-interest) expenditures are expected to shift the primary deficit into an average surplus of 0.1 percent of GDP in 2026–27. As primary deficits become balanced, governments' elevated gross financing needs are mainly driven by mounting debt service payments. Government efforts to balance revenues and expenditures are forestalled by rising interest payments—which are expected to be 3.4 percent of GDP, on average, in 2025–27. This tension is forcing governments to divert funds away from essential public services. Twenty of the 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa paid more in debt service than for healthcare and education combined in 2024.

Total public debt service more than doubled prior to the pandemic (from 16 percent of government revenues in 2012 to 39 percent in 2019) and appears to have stabilized at a record high of about 50 percent of government revenues in 2024. As a result of debt restructuring and reprofiling efforts, total public debt service may start declining this year—although its future trajectory remains uncertain. Governments need to continue conducting liability management operations, improving fiscal balances, and implementing growth-enhancing structural reforms to reduce debt levels and debt vulnerabilities.

The changing composition of external creditors has led to rising interest payments and principal repayments. By 2025, Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to pay about US\$20 billion in interest on outstanding public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) external debt—of which nearly three-quarters is owed to private creditors, and China's official and private lenders. At the same time, principal repayments on the PPG external debt have increased at a faster pace than disbursements since 2016—thus leading to a sharp decline in net financial flows into the region. Net external debt flows into Sub-Saharan Africa have dropped dramatically, from an average annual amount of US\$37.7 billion in 2016–19 to US\$18.4 billion in 2023. As net financial flows from China and bondholders have decreased (turning into net outflows by the early 2020s), multilateral lending has surged, accounting for 80 percent of the financing flows into the region since the pandemic crisis.

Growth prospects in the region are held back by the inadequacy of preventive and coping strategies to address conflict and climate change

The incidence and severity of conflict and violence across areas of the subcontinent increased throughout 2024 and the start of this year. Almost two years into the conflict that began in April 2023, the war in Sudan continues to take an enormous toll on lives and livelihoods. An estimated 12.9 million people have been forcibly displaced since the outbreak of the conflict, including 8.9 million internally and 3.8 million in neighboring countries. Mineral-rich areas in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have become battlegrounds for armed groups. Hostilities between Congolese troops and M23 rebels have surged, and the rebels have taken control of the North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. The conflict has affected 14 percent of the Democratic Republic of Congo's population and has led to a surge in internally displaced persons. In 2024, fatalities caused by the Islamist insurgency remained at an all-time high, with the Sahel accounting for more than half of the Islamist activity on the subcontinent. The rise in conflict has led to acute food insecurity and a rapid increase in food emergencies. Recent estimations suggest that around 120 million Africans

face acute food insecurity, of which 80 percent live in countries experiencing conflict. This situation will be compounded by reduced official development assistance for emergency response.

Rising temperatures, anomalous rainfall patterns, and multiyear extreme weather events are repeatedly battering Sub-Saharan African countries. Devastating floods as a result of unprecedented rainfall in the third quarter of last year hit large parts of Central and West Africa (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria). The impacts of floods in Sudan were compounded by the complex humanitarian crisis that has weakened aid organizations' capacity to respond. Unpredictable growing conditions are adversely affecting not only the cocoa harvest and prices in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, but also stockpiles in the world marketplace. On average, the response to extreme weather events such as droughts and floods has diverted up to 9 percent of African governments' budgets and rendered losses of 2 to 5 percent of economic activity. It has been estimated that adapting to climate change will cost Sub-Saharan Africa between US\$30 billion and US\$50 billion per year over the next decade (2 to 3 percent of the region's GDP). This impact would hit the poor more than proportionally, as it harms crop yields and food supply and exacerbates food insecurity.

Accelerating and sustaining growth in the region requires governance reforms that support a functioning market economy that delivers wage jobs

The failure of the state to deliver on its basic functions—such as guaranteeing peace, security, and economic stability—and to support an ecosystem that creates jobs and opportunities for the population has led to protests across African nations, the rise of nonstate armed groups, the militarization of politics, and a surge of coups since the start of this decade. Violent events in the region have shifted from interstate to intrastate, involving terrorist groups, criminal networks, vigilantism, ethnic militias, and insurgency. These conflicts compound challenges such as declining investments, low productivity, widespread poverty, and poor service delivery.

Governance reforms may contribute to creating broad-based opportunities in the region through three interrelated channels. The first is strengthening the fiscal contract with African citizens by fostering fair and transparent management of public resources. People are more willing to pay their taxes if they perceive that the tax system is fair and accessible and delivers high-quality public services—from peace and social order to human and physical infrastructure. The second channel is supporting market confidence by strengthening legal institutions, courts, police, and regulatory agencies, among others. Having an institutional framework that protects property rights and enforces contracts, as well as an efficient court system for dispute resolution, is critical to facilitate investment and trade. The third channel is enhancing economic oversight by strengthening institutions that support the market economy and managing the benefits and risks from trade and financial openness, including through independent institutions enforcing competition laws. The economic transformation of African economies would then require designing and implementing regulatory frameworks that foster competition and innovation.

Fueled by a lack of economic opportunity, political turmoil has been on the rise

Political protests have increased by 12 percent on average each year over the past decade, and the number of coups in the region has increased substantially since 2000. Unfortunately, this has also translated into violent conflict in places, with a 2.7-fold increase in casualties from conflicts between state forces and militias between 2014 and 2024.

The causality between economic grievance and political stability runs both ways: poor economic opportunity exacerbates political discontent, while the risk of conflict and violence can severely undermine economic activity and investment. Where power is concentrated, decision makers have skewed incentives to privilege elites and divert from broad-based public resources. Incentives around transparency and accountability are especially important for making government functions equitable and accessible. Corruption is lower and the performance of service delivery is higher when leaders face re-election incentives, although electoral politics can create perverse incentives to invest in clientelism rather than public goods. [APRIL 2025 | VOLUME 31 AFRICA'S PULSE]



## PUBLIC NOTICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: 22 April 2025



### EXPIRY OF THE ACCOUNTANTS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2020 TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS – 31ST DECEMBER 2025

The Botswana Institute of Chartered Accountants (BICA) hereby notifies the public that the transitional arrangements established under the Accountants (Amendment) Act, 2020 will expire on 31st December 2025. These arrangements were designed to facilitate compliance with membership requirements, and all affected individuals and employers are urged to take immediate action to meet the stipulated deadlines.

#### Key Reminders for Compliance

- Individuals Without Relevant Academic Qualifications**
  - Those currently providing accountancy services with a minimum of two (2) years of relevant work experience but lacking academic qualifications were granted a 3-year period (April 2022–April 2025) to obtain the necessary qualifications.
  - All affected individuals must register for BICA membership by 31st December 2025 upon completing their studies. No extensions will be granted beyond this deadline.
- Individuals With Qualifications but Lacking Work Experience**
  - Individuals holding relevant academic qualifications but lacking the required two (2) years of practical work experience must register with BICA to obtain a Trainee Accountant certificate.
  - This certificate enables them to gain the necessary experience, after which they must apply for full BICA membership.
- Employer Compliance**
  - Employers are reminded that Section 30 (1) (b) of the Accountants (Amendment) Act, 2020 mandates the employment or engagement of accountancy services exclusively from BICA members in good standing.

#### BICA Membership Classes

BICA registers members under the following classes, as outlined in the BICA Rules Part 2 (3):

- Fellow and Associate: Designated as Professional Accountants, including Chartered Accountants and Certified Professional Accountants.
- Accounting Technicians: Members with at least two (2) years of relevant work experience and one of the following qualifications:
  - Association of Accounting Technician (AAT)
  - Diploma in Accounting and Business Studies (DABS)
  - Diploma/Degree in Public Finance
  - Higher National Diploma (HND) from BIAC
  - International Accounting Technician Qualification (IATQ) from the Botswana Institute of Accountants
  - Degree in Accounting (equivalent to University of Botswana's Bachelor of Accounting)
  - Diploma/Degree in Finance and Banking
  - Membership in the Chartered Institute of Secretaries (CIS)
  - Finalist of a recognized professional accountancy qualification (e.g., ACCA, CIMA)
  - Other Council-approved qualifications

BICA emphasizes the importance of adhering to these requirements before the 31st December 2025 deadline. Failure to comply may result in legal consequences for individuals and employers alike. Non-compliance is a criminal offense, punishable by a fine of up to P500,000, imprisonment for up to 10 years, or both, as per Section 30 (6) of the Act.

For further clarification or assistance, please contact:  
Botswana Institute of Chartered Accountants (BICA)  
Email: bica.memberships@bica.org.bw  
Phone: +267 370 2327/329/308

END

Issued by:  
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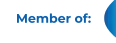
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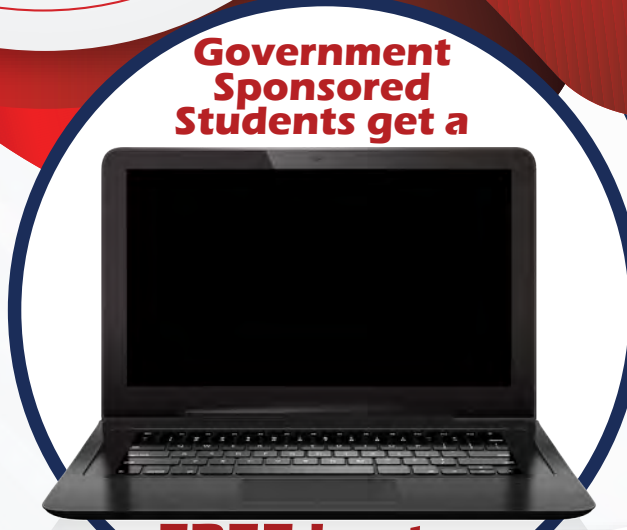
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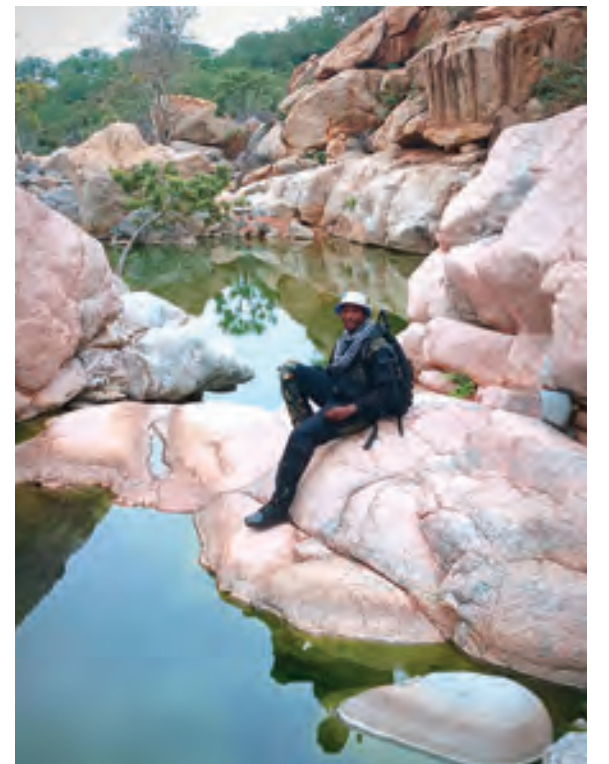
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# lifestyle



## Lesoso hiking

**O**VER THE EASTER HOLIDAYS, HIKERS FROM ACROSS the country invaded the hilly village of Shoshong – a central district village which boasts of a rich history, having been the capital of the Bangwato tribe under Kgosi Sekgoma I. Hikers came to explore the hills and learn about the rich cultural history of the village. Although this was the inaugural event of its kind, hikers across the country turned up in large numbers and the organisers are looking at suggestions to make it an annual event. The MP for the area Hon Moneedi Bagaisamang graced the event, which was organised by Lesoso Explorers, a newly established hiking club in the village.



### Cleaning of eyes with a tongue is unhealthy

**T**HE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IS aware of some members of the public who claim to have special knowledge of using their tongues to heal, treat or remove foreign bodies from people's eyes. This is not only unhealthy, but also very dangerous and may lead to permanent damage to the eyes of whoever may have had their eyes licked. The eye is a very delicate human body organ made of very sensitive structures that can be easily damaged.

Eye licking or using the tongue to clean the eye, exposes the eye to many diseases, some of which may cause permanent blindness or even loss of the eye itself as a human body part. The tongue can spread diseases of the mouth to the eye such as canker sores, herpes/cold sores, oral thrush, cancer and gum diseases. This can then lead to eye conditions such as pink eye/conjunctivitis, corneal scarring, corneal ulcers and perforation, and ultimately blurred and or poor vision, and possible permanent vision loss.

Furthermore, the person performing the cleaning/licking of the eye, can also be affected as the eye being licked may also have some disease-causing bacteria and viruses, putting them at risk of developing some oral health issues or even threaten their general health.

The public is therefore, advised to desist from seeking eye care services from individuals claiming to have specialized tongue skills to clean their eyes. Instead, the public should always seek medical attention at health facilities whenever they experience any eye problems.

**Dr Christopher Nyanga**  
MoH Spokesperson



## Botswana joins the Wings for Life World Run

– Be part of a global record and help find a cure for spinal cord injury

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME EVER, Botswana will join the globally celebrated Wings for Life World Run, taking place in Gaborone. This event marks a significant expansion of the event across Southern Africa, and local participants now have a chance to contribute to a global cause and help break a world record — all by running for those who can't.

With just a few more registrations needed to surpass the current record of 265,818 participants, every entry counts toward making history. Even more inspiring, 100% of all entry fees and donations go directly to spinal cord research. Botswanans now have

the opportunity to be part of this momentous world run by registering to run from wherever they may be located.

What makes the run special? Unlike traditional races, the Wings for Life World Run has no fixed finish line. Instead, participants of all fitness levels are pursued by the event's signature "Catcher Car" — a moving finish line that makes the race inclusive, fun, and completely unique. Whether you run, walk or roll, the goal is simply to stay ahead of the car for as long as you can.

Join global supporters such as Jürgen Klopp, Eileen Gu, Primož Roglič, and a host of other sporting

legends as they take part in this one-of-a-kind event. Now, Botswana joins the list of over 400 locations worldwide taking part in this massive show of solidarity, with already over 400 registered participants.

Why it matters

To date, over 1.55 million people from 195 nationalities have run in the Wings for Life World Run, collectively raising €51.93 million (approx. BWP 801 million). These funds have gone directly to 213 spinal cord research projects, including clinical trials where participants have regained use of their hands and even taken steps again after paralysis.

Just last year, the run's 265,818 participants collectively covered 2,036,495 km and raised €8.1 million (approx. BWP 124.9 million) for spinal cord research. These efforts are helping individuals like Michel Roccati, who, after a life-altering accident, regained the ability to walk through a trial funded by the run.

"To stand up and walk again means liberty – independence in daily life," Roccati shared. "The Wings for Life World Run gives hope, and it's fun to participate in."

Says passionate local ambassador for Wings for Life (SA): and motorcycle accident survivor, Sandile Mkhize: "Every stride I take in the

Wings for Life World Run is not just for me, but for every life waiting to move freely again. As a South African – and proudly African, I run with hope, purpose, and the unshakable belief that together, we can cross the finish line for those who can't." Be part of the movement

With Flagship Runs in cities like Munich, Vienna and Ljubljana filling up quickly, Botswana offers a unique opportunity to be part of a world record-setting movement from Southern Africa. Runners in Gaborone will be joining others from Tokyo, Sydney, London, Dubai, Cape Town and beyond, all taking off simultaneously around

the world. Whether you run solo or with friends using the Wings for Life World Run App or gather at the Township Rollers FC venue for the official event, you'll be running for something bigger than yourself.

How to register

There's still time to sign up and be part of this global moment. The Wings for Life World Run starts at 11:00am UTC (1PM Botswana Time) on Sunday, 4 May 2025, with registration open until one hour before the race begins. Register now at [www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com](http://www.wingsforlifeworldrun.com) and help bring the world closer to a cure for spinal cord injury. **[PRESS RELEASE]**



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# Sport

## The nation mourns Big Stan

STAFF WRITER  
editors@thepatriot.co.bw

**B**OTSWANA FOOTBALL FRATERNITY woke up to the sad news of the passing of veteran coach Stanley Tshosane on Friday morning. Tshosane is a national icon as the first local coach to oversee the qualification and participation of the national soccer team in its first Africa Cup of Nations final.

The former BDF XI coach took the Zebras to its maiden AFCON finals in 2012 hosted by Mali. He is said to have succumbed to a long illness at Gaborone Private Hospital (GPH) where had been hospitalised.

The Botswana Football Association (BFA) said in a statement: "It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved parent, mentor, and friend, Mr. Stanley Tshosane, fondly known to many as Bra Stan. The family has confirmed that he departed from us this morning.

"Mr. Tshosane was not only a dedicated family man, but also a national icon in football – having served as both player and coach for BDF XI and later leading the Botswana National Team (The Zebras) to their historic first qualification for the Africa Cup of Nations in 2012. His legacy in Botswana football will live on through generations.

"Let us stand in solidarity with his family during this difficult time. We extend our deepest condolences and pray that they find strength and peace. May Bra Stan's soul rest in eternal peace."

Tshosane played for BDF XI before ascending to the coaching ranks. His first big mark with the national team was when he worked as then assistant coach to Serbian Veselin Jelusic in the early 2000s where they turned around the fortunes of the national team – ensuring the team



Stanley Tshosane

[PIC.PRESSPHOTO]

defeated some of the neighbouring sides which had dominated it for years.

He went a long way when he assumed reigns as the head coach to wash off the debilitating tag of "The Whipping Boys of Africa" that the Zebras had carried due to the countless losses they suffered across the continent.

### Mamelodi's condolences

Ashford Mamelodi, the veteran football administrator who worked with Stan for years had this to say: "The passing of Stanley 'Hunter' Tshosane has by all accounts sent shock waves across the football fraternity and beyond in Botswana. He will best be remembered for leading the Zebras to her maiden appearance at the Africa Cup of Nations in 2012, which was won by Zambia for the first time. Stanley has previously served Botswana Football as an assistant coach at National level under amongst others the late Major David Bright and Veselin Jelusic. He was therefore sufficiently experienced to lead the Zebras on the 2012 AFCON campaign. Away from football Stanley was an absolute gentleman who had served as an army officer for many years. He was a likeable character with a good sense of humour. A typical military man, Tshosane was very principled and always ready to call out what he perceived as wrong. I enjoyed the close engagements we had every time we had the opportunity. Although he led the Zebras to their first AFCON Finals he was unceremoniously let go of after the competition. The football authorities by this ill-advised action denied themselves an opportunity to build on the 2012 experience under the guidance of Stanley. This resulted in a long 13-year wait for the Zebras second appearance at Africa's premier football show piece. I pray that the soul of Stan Tshosane should rest. May his family be comforted during this difficult time. Fare thee well bro!"

## De Beers launches Talent Unearthed

... A programme to shine light on Botswana's leading athletes

**T**HE WORLD'S LEADING DIAMOND company De Beers has launched a Talent Unearthed initiative which stands to boost talent identification and foster growth and excellence in education and sports.

Letsile Tebogo, De Beers Group Global Ambassador and 2024 Male World Athlete of the Year, said of the initiative: 'As I stand here, I'm reminded that my journey as an athlete hasn't just been about hard work and training - it's also about where I come from, and what has helped make this journey possible. For me, that's Botswana — and the diamonds beneath our soil. The same resources that helped build the schools I went to, the tracks I ran on, and the communities that raised me.'

Through Talent Unearthed, Tebogo hopes to not only share his story, but also shine a light on other rising stars and the next



Letsile Tebogo, De Beers Group Global Ambassador

generation of champions. The first episode of Talent Unearthed, featuring Letsile Tebogo was shared on LinkedIn on the 22nd of April.

Forged from pressure, and a legacy that shines forever: "we are pleased to reveal the trailer to hashtag#TalentUnearthed, our initiative to shine a light on Botswana's talents".

The programme will feature Botswana athletes whose strength and resilience shine as brightly as diamonds: De Beers Group Global Ambassador Letsile Tebogo, Botswana's first gold medalist; Ouname Mhotsha, the golfer nurturing Botswana's next generation of talent; and Naledi and Ntungamili Raguin, the country's sibling tennis prodigies.

"Talent has been unearthed all over the African continent —now we just need to unveil it." – Letsile Tebogo. [De Beers Group]

## DTCB hosts Minister of Sports



**T**HE MINISTER OF SPORT AND ARTS Jacob Kelebeg paid a visit to the Diamond Trading Company -Botswana (DTCB) early this week to engage on how they can partner with Ministry of Sport and Arts (MOSA). The Minister pleaded with DTCB to consider partnering with the Ministry to grow

sports. DTCB is already a leading sponsor of women football, as they run an annual football tournament. They also sponsor the swimming sports code. DTCB Managing Director Sedireng Serumola briefed the Minister and his delegation about the activities of the company and its various social investment programmes.



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