



Botswana:

Trends and Opportunities to Advance Gender Equality

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Executive Summary

Context

Botswana has achieved impressive economic growth, attaining upper-middle-income country status in 2005; however, it continues to struggle with high rates of inequality and persistent gender gaps. Inequality in the distribution of wealth has increased over time and Botswana is now one of the top 10 most unequal countries in the world, as measured by the Gini index.¹ Less than half of all households in Botswana are headed by women but female-headed households account for more than half of the poor (World Bank 2024).

There has nonetheless been significant progress in addressing several gender challenges in Botswana, notably parity in school enrollment, broad uptake of family planning, high rates of female entrepreneurship, and strong leadership of women in the public sector. The government of Botswana has also strengthened the policy and legislative framework to advance gender equality, for example through the Abolition of Marital Powers Act (2004), the National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) (2015), the Domestic Violence Act (2008) and the Land Policy (2015), as well as the establishment of an advisory body, the Gender Commission, in 2022.

However, important challenges remain, including low levels of women's political representation in the National Assembly, a significant gender gap in labor force participation, and high rates of maternal mortality and gender-based violence (GBV). While Botswana performs well on several gender-related human development indicators relative to the averages for Sub-Saharan Africa, it generally ranks poorly in comparison to the averages for upper-middle-income countries (UNDP 2024). Inequalities in key poverty and human development indicators between language groups and regions result in significant marginalization of some groups. These groups tend to reside in the poorest and most rural areas of the country. In general, women and girls in rural areas have lower levels and education and experience higher levels of unemployment. Those from marginalized groups, women and girls living with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other gender diverse (LGBTQI+) persons face additional challenges.

The primary objective of this study is to provide a high-level assessment of key gender gaps in the country through the lens of the three domains of gender inequality, namely human endowments, economic inclusion, and voice and agency.² Specifically, the study seeks to address four main questions:

1. What are the key gender gaps and challenges across the three domains of human endowment, economic inclusion, and voice and agency in Botswana?
2. How have these gender gaps changed over time and across different groups?
3. What are the barriers that constrain advancements in gender equality?
4. What are the priority areas where urgent actions are needed to support bridging key gender gaps and barriers?

¹ The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution.

² This assessment is not intended as a comprehensive sectoral gap assessment.

The analysis draws from existing research and reports, and a series of consultations with government of Botswana officials and representatives, development partners, and civil society organizations conducted in March and May 2023. Data and information presented in the report are based on information available as of March 1, 2025. The target audience of the report is the government of Botswana, civil society organizations, policy think tanks, academia, and the World Bank and development partners.

Data Limitations

Recent and gender-disaggregated data are lacking in several key areas. Updated demographic household survey data are needed, as the latest available information comes from the 2017 Botswana Demographic Survey and the 2018 National Relationships Study. Furthermore, these surveys do not provide the full range of information collected through a standard Demographic and Health Survey,³ which would provide updated information on adolescent pregnancy, GBV attitudes and behaviors, family planning, women's health-seeking behavior, women's decision-making within the household, and other indicators. Gender analysis of data collected in the 2023 Enterprise Surveys (World Bank 2023) is needed as there is a general lack of disaggregated data on firm productivity, growth, and access to financial services. More gender-disaggregated data on time use, agricultural productivity, and climate change impact would enable closer gender analysis in these areas. Finally, gender disaggregation of data by region, language group, disability, and other dimensions of vulnerability are not readily available, making it challenging to assess the gender gaps and barriers facing these populations.

Study Findings

Gender gaps in Botswana shift across the different life-cycle stages. In the early stages of life, boys face disadvantages in relation to under-5 mortality rates and stunting, and evidence from elsewhere suggests that they are likely to be more disadvantaged than girls by low levels of access to early childhood care, development, and education (ECCDE). During the school years, Botswana has achieved nearly universal access to primary education and gender parity at all levels of schooling, although enrollment rates start dropping at secondary level. Boys generally perform worse on test scores and are more likely to repeat grades than girls. At secondary school, as dropout rates increase, gender dynamics start coming into focus more clearly, with adolescent pregnancy being a significant driver of girls' dropout rates, while many boys, especially those from poor households, leave school to contribute to the family's income.

As girls transition from adolescence into adulthood and enter the reproductive phase of their life cycle, gender gaps become starker as women take on a disproportionate burden of domestic labor and childcare, limiting their opportunities to continue their education and skills development and constraining their economic opportunities. During these years, more young women than young men are not in employment, education, or training, and the female labor force participation rate overall is significantly lower than that of men, with gender gaps varying by age, education level, marital status, and disability status. Though their levels of education match and even exceed those of their male counterparts, women receive lower returns on their education, work in less remunerative sectors and occupations, and earn less than men in comparable jobs. Moreover, they are less likely to hold positions of leadership (particularly in the private sector) and are more likely to work in the informal sector, with a higher degree of economic insecurity. Furthermore, climate change and other shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic have had disproportionate impacts on women, largely due to these structural inequalities.

Persistent health challenges continue to plague women in Botswana, despite advancements in sexual and reproductive care. Although access to sexual and reproductive health care has improved significantly in Botswana, adolescent fertility and maternal mortality rates remain high, while rates of HIV/AIDS are

³ See <https://dhsprogram.com/> for more information on the Demographic and Health Surveys Program of the United States Agency for International Development.

almost twice as high among women than men. Furthermore, Botswana women and girls experience GBV at alarming rates, while reporting rates remain low and the availability of survivor support services is uneven. While Botswana men have lower life expectancy than women, women are more likely to be affected by chronic illness and disability. Across almost all these dimensions, poor and marginalized groups are even further disadvantaged.

Human Capital Development

Botswana has made important progress on several human development indicators, but gender gaps and challenges remain. While, on average, gender parity has been achieved or surpassed in gross enrollment at both primary and secondary school levels, in earlier grades boys begin lagging behind girls in both learning outcomes and retention, which then continues through the remaining years of schooling. In upper years, girls and boys start dropping out of school for different reasons: boys are often pressured to engage in income generation, while high rates of adolescent pregnancy lead many girls to drop out of school and restrictive policies limit their reentry, putting them on a trajectory of low levels of education and limited economic opportunities. Gender intersects with other dimensions of marginalization whereby students from minority language groups, those with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ students face additional inclusion challenges. For example, Basarwa and other minorities living away from the more populated south and southeast areas of the country face particular difficulties in education resulting from a legacy of language and cultural barriers, the scarcity of upper secondary schools, and challenges in transportation and accommodation (OHCHR 2018a).

High rates of adolescent pregnancy continue to constrain many girls' opportunities in life, and even though nearly all births take place in health facilities, the country's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) remains stubbornly high.⁴ Statistics Botswana estimated the country's MMR at 130.5 per 100,000 live births in 2020⁵—lower than the World Development Indicators modelled estimate of 186 for that year, though both values are higher than the average of 62 for upper-middle-income countries and well above the Sustainable Development Goal target of 70. The main causes of maternal mortality in Botswana include abortion complications, infection, antepartum and postpartum hemorrhage, and hypertension. Although Botswana's 2022 adolescent fertility rate of 54.6 births per 1,000 adolescents ages 15–19 years is lower than the Sub-Saharan average of 94.4 births per 1,000 adolescents ages 15–19, it is more than double the average for upper-middle-income countries of 23.9 per 1,000 adolescents ages 15–19.⁶ Adolescent pregnancy has negative health impacts for both mother and child, with higher MMR among adolescent pregnancies, while babies born to adolescent mothers have higher rates of birth injuries (Letamo and Majelantle 2001) and lower birth weights (Statistics Botswana 2021a).

Botswana has one of the highest rates of HIV infection globally, with the social and health impacts falling heavily on women and girls. Over a fifth of the population is living with HIV and nearly double the proportion of women (ages 15–64 years) (26 percent) are infected compared to men (15 percent) (Statistics Botswana 2022). Women also bear a disproportionate burden of care for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Social norms and unequal gender power dynamics within sexual relations make it difficult for adolescents and women to negotiate safer sex. Intimate partner violence (IPV), transactional sex, and alcohol abuse are additional risk factors. Over half of both men and women reported having sex with a nonmarital and non-cohabitating partner in the 12 months prior to the survey (56.5 percent of men and 55.3 percent of women). While Botswana has one of the highest condom distribution rates globally, nearly a quarter of these men (22.2 percent) and a third of these women (30.2 percent) had not used a condom (Government of Botswana 2023).

⁴ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

⁵ Statistics Botswana. <https://www.statsbots.org.bw/health>

⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

Economic Inclusion

While gender gaps have largely closed in basic education and women outnumber men in tertiary education, these advantages are lost in transitioning to the labor market. Women participate in the labor force at lower rates than men (63.4 percent versus 73.2 percent),⁷ and the share of young women (ages 15–24 years) in Botswana who are not in employment, education, or training is significantly higher among young women (40.4 percent) than among young men (34.8 percent).⁸ As women are less likely to have studied science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in postsecondary education, fewer women than men are entering the most dynamic sectors of the economy. Sectoral segregation, childcare and domestic labor burdens, and concentration in lower-status jobs and in the informal sector all contribute to lower earnings, resulting in a persistent wage gap whereby women earn an average 88 percent of what men earn in Botswana (Statistics Botswana 2024).

Despite legal advancements, entrenched social norms and informal barriers limit women's full economic inclusion. Women-owned businesses are more likely to be operating in the informal sector than businesses owned by men, and although there are no legal restrictions, women have less access to finance. The Abolition of Marital Powers Act (2004), the Land Policy (2015), and recent court rulings (Botswana Court of Appeal 2012) have all leveled the playing field in terms of establishing women's right to sign contracts, inherit property, and engage in business independently. However, social norms and informal practices persist, constraining women's full autonomy in their economic activities. While the legal and policy environment is generally favorable toward women's engagement in employment and entrepreneurship, there is room for improvement, including adding general prohibition of employment discrimination (Government of Botswana n.d.), mandating equal pay for work of equal value (ILO 1951), improving access to childcare, and introducing public financing of maternity leave (to remove disincentives to hire women of reproductive age).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and negative impact on the economy and labor force of Botswana. A greater number of women than men lost jobs or businesses due to the pandemic (Statistics Botswana 2021b). Statistics Botswana estimates that 53 percent of people who lost their job or business due to the economic impacts of the pandemic were women, and 47 percent were men. Moreover, data collected by the Red Cross and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2021 indicated that marginalized women in remote and rural areas were contracting coronavirus at higher rates than men, and that their incomes were much reduced due to the decline in tourism.

Gender disparities in economic opportunities intersect with other forms of vulnerability. Besides gender differences, other sources of vulnerability, including disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, or being from a minority language group, are significant markers of inequality, particularly in terms of rate of unemployment and access to assets (Martorano et al. 2021). Furthermore, the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women and girls because of gender gaps in access to resources for climate adaptation and other underlying gender inequalities. In rural areas where climate change effects are felt directly, women's income is less diversified than men's, increasing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and economic shocks.

Voice and Agency

Although Botswana women in government, civil society, and academia hold important leadership positions, the representation of women in politics is low. As of the 2024 elections, women hold only 6 of 69 seats in the National Assembly (IPU 2025), and they fare only slightly better in local government constituting 15 percent of all local counselors (Gender Links 2025). Representation in traditional structures remains extremely low: of the 34 tribal chiefs sitting in the Ntlo ya Dikgosi (House of Chiefs, a parliamentary advisory body), only two are women. Botswana's dual legal system of customary and

⁷ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

⁸ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

common law generally disadvantages women, although the courts have recently upheld challenges to customary law based on the constitutional principle of nondiscrimination.⁹ However, in matters of personal and family law, the Constitution and other statutes, such as the Abolition of Marital Powers Act (2004), do not apply to customary and religious law.

Batswana women experience very high levels of GBV, with 37 percent of women having experienced some form of GBV and 30 percent of men admitting to having perpetrated GBV (Chiramba, Musariri, and Rasesigo 2018). Intersecting vulnerabilities mean that certain groups of women, such as women living with disabilities and LGBTQI+ persons, are at particular risk of experiencing GBV. Support services—health, social services, police, and judiciary—available to GBV survivors remain poorly coordinated and there are insufficient shelter facilities across the country. There is no integrated surveillance mechanism to track incidents and cases of GBV are reported to different services, with limited coordination between them.

While there is a strong policy framework for integrating gender issues across government, notably through the NPGAD (2015), implementation remains a challenge. In April 2022, the government of Botswana released a stand-alone gender-responsive Public Financial Management (PFM) assessment (PEFA 2022). The assessment found that there was much progress to be made in order to ensure that the PFM system could assist in gender-responsive budgeting for programs, as well as their implementation and regular reporting. The drafting process currently under way for National Development Plan (NDP) 12 offers a unique opportunity to operationalize gender equality commitments and ensure that capacity for mainstreaming across planning and budgeting departments, as well as within the National Development Commission, is strengthened. It will also be important to strengthen the recently established National Gender Commission's capacity and resources to fulfill its important advisory and monitoring functions.

⁹ In *Mmusi and Others v. Ramantele and Another* (Botswana Court of Appeal 2012), the Botswana Court of Appeal ruled that customary laws that prioritized male inheritance were unconstitutional.

Strategic Priorities and Recommendations

Findings of the present assessment point to trends and opportunities to help narrow persisting gender gaps that are holding men and women, boys and girls in Botswana from reaching their full potential. Each of the five strategic priorities identified responds to key challenges and builds on national priorities, in particular the NPGAD and the Second Transitional NDP.

Priority 1: Increase women's participation in decision-making at local and national levels and strengthen gender equality under the law

- a. Provide support for women's participation in politics, including by considering the introduction of legislated minimum quotas for women's representation in Parliament, requiring political parties to field minimum numbers of female candidates, and providing direct support to female candidates (such as facilitating access to campaign financing, networking, capacity-building opportunities, and mentoring).
- b. Build support for women's effective participation in local decision-making processes (such as village development committees, local gender committees, and tribal councils) including through introducing social behavior change programs to reduce the informal barriers to women's participation.
- c. Undertake a comprehensive review of common and customary law systems recognized under the Customary Law Act (1969) to ensure conformity with nondiscrimination guarantees enshrined in the Constitution (1966). In addition, raise awareness of women's rights under both common and customary law and of available avenue for legal recourse, and provide legal aid to individuals seeking redress from discrimination.

Priority 2: Strengthen capacity for all-of-government gender mainstreaming

- a. Build capacity for gender-responsive budgeting, planning, and auditing in the Ministries of Finance and Economic Development and of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs, as well as other ministries addressing weaknesses identified by the gender-responsive Public Financial Management (PFM) assessment (PEFA report, 2022) and other sectoral gender audit reports.
- b. Strengthen capacity of National Planning Commission to integrate the priorities and programs of the National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) into the design of National Development Plan (NDP) 12, including targets and indicators, and build capacity for monitoring and evaluation of progress toward achieving targets.
- c. Empower the Department of Gender Affairs with sufficient human and financial resources to undertake its work and consider restructuring the department to become a full ministry. Additionally, direct all ministries and agencies to adopt a gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and auditing and build the capacity for doing so.
- d. Strengthen the legal status of the National Gender Commission by statute and consider investing it with independent powers to review government actions.
- e. Strengthen the capacities of Statistics Botswana and all ministries to collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender and demographic characteristics, such as geographic location, disability status, language group, and other dimensions of marginalization to support achievement of the government of Botswana's Vision 2036 aims of "achieving prosperity for all" and "leaving no one behind".

Priority 3: Reduce high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and improve access to justice and to integrated GBV survivor support services

- a. Designate high rates of sexual and gender-based violence as a national epidemic (similar to HIV/AIDS).
- b. Introduce behavior change programs and advocacy campaigns at the national and local levels to address harmful gender norms that perpetuate GBV.
- c. Increase women's access to income-generating activities and social protection programs to reduce their dependence on partners.
- d. Improve access to justice, provide legal aid, and improve functioning of special courts and police units.
- e. Expand access to survivor-centered GBV support services (health, social services, police, and the judiciary), including by increasing the number of one-stop centers and shelters available throughout the country.
- f. Improve the integration of referral, reporting, and surveillance mechanisms between government agencies and nongovernmental organizations providing support to GBV survivors.
- g. Update data on GBV and women's empowerment collected through the 2018 National Relationships Study using standard Demographic and Health Survey modules.¹⁰

Priority 4: Support girls and boys to reach their full human capital potential

- a. Close gender gaps in education that disadvantage boys in learning outcomes and grade progression and expand targeted poverty reduction programs to marginalized groups and households that create incentives for school retention. Expand provision of and access to early childhood care, development, and education.
- b. Ensure that schools provide a safe and inclusive learning environment including through the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in schools and of discrimination or stigmatization of students with disabilities, with non-conforming sexual orientation and gender identities, or other marginalized groups. Accelerate introduction of teaching in minority languages and undertake a review school discipline policies to eliminate corporal punishment and strengthen positive discipline.
- c. Increase girls' participation and success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, including through provision of scholarships, mentorship, networking opportunities, and information on potential earnings in STEM careers.
- d. Reduce high rates of adolescent pregnancy and related school dropout, including through the provision of comprehensive sexuality education (for both in-school and out-of-school children), improved access to adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, and the removal of barriers to continued access to education for pregnant and parenting students, including removing restrictions under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development guidelines for readmission in "ex-pregnancy cases", and by addressing the childcare support needs of parenting students.
- e. Reduce the high maternal mortality ratio (MMR) through the provision of timely and quality emergency obstetric care (especially in rural areas), safer abortion and post-abortion care, and improved delivery of antenatal and postnatal services to underserved groups.

¹⁰ See information on standard Demographic and Health Survey modules and questionnaires at <https://dhsprogram.com/Methodology/Survey-Types/DHS.cfm>.

- f. Reduce the disproportionate impacts of HIV/AIDS on women and girls by addressing the underlying drivers, such as gender power imbalances in negotiating safer sex, men's risky behaviors, intimate partner violence, and by increasing social protection support for carers of orphans, HIV/AIDS-affected family members, and child-headed households. Increase access to and use of condoms.

Priority 5: Close wage and productivity gender gaps in entrepreneurship and employment

- a. Increase access to formal financial services through banks and nonbank financial institutions tailored to women entrepreneurs' needs.
- b. Provide support and incentives for the formalization of women-owned businesses and improve internet and cellular network coverage in rural areas to increase access to government and private sector services.
- c. Increase women's access to productive resources, including land, water, and climate-smart technologies.
- d. Increase access to childcare and flexible work arrangements, consider public financing of parental leave, and provide incentives such as access to parental leave to increase men's engagement in parenting.
- e. Address gender pay gaps by enacting legislation mandating equal pay for work of equal value and prohibiting discrimination in wages.
- f. Increase women's entry into male-dominated trades and STEM industries (by providing role models, networking opportunities, information on potential earnings, and exposure to male-dominated sectors and occupations) and monitor women's participation in the key sectors of mining, energy, tourism, and agriculture.
- g. Address gender-specific aspects of climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- h. Monitor and address intersecting drivers of disparities among women from different language minority groups and other vulnerable populations.
- i. Undertake regular enterprise surveys and multi-topic household surveys collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data to better understand women's time use, access to household resources, access to finance, and other determinants of factors affecting women's economic activities.

Creating conditions for success in these areas will require the allocation of adequate financial and human resources for the short, medium, and long term, linked to efforts to promote an overall gender budgeting process. It will also entail ensuring the integration of specific interventions, particularly medium- to longer-term opportunities, into annual and strategic plans of relevant government departments. To be able to track progress, capacity for the collection, monitoring, and evaluation of data and information disaggregated by gender will need to be strengthened across government.

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Abbreviations

BAIS	Botswana AIDS Impact Survey
CSO	civil society organization
ECCDE	early childhood care, development, and education
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GRB	gender-responsive budgeting
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPV	intimate partner violence
LGBTQI+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other gender-diverse (people, persons)
MMR	maternal mortality ratio
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NPGAD	National Policy on Gender and Development
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PFM	Public Financial Management
PPP	purchasing power parity
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SOGI	sexual orientation and gender identity
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UMIC	upper middle-income country
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



1

Introduction

1.1. Context

Botswana's track record of strong growth and economic and political stability transformed it from one of the world's poorest countries into a stable upper-middle-income country. Fast growth following independence lifted many Botswana out of poverty and helped them climb the income ranks. The country has used public revenue generated from the mining sector to lay the foundation for sustained economic development, including through key investments in the social sector expanding access to health, education, and social protection (World Bank et al. 2019). However, while the existing model has served the country well for several decades, it has not been conducive to strong inclusion (World Bank 2017). The share of the population still in poverty has remained high and is well above the norm for an upper-middle-income country. At 13.5 percent, Botswana's estimated poverty rate for 2019 (as per the international poverty line of US\$2.15 PPP)¹¹ was over four times higher than what was predicted by its gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (World Bank 2024b).

Botswana also remains among the top 10 most unequal countries in the world, and inequality has a strong spatial dimension. Although it is declining, inequality in income or consumption, as measured by the Gini coefficient,¹² was 54.9 percent in 2016 (World Bank 2024b). Among its structural peers,¹³ only South Africa and Namibia register worse inequality rates. Inequality has a strong spatial dimension: between 2009 and 2016, rural poverty increased and the urban–rural gap widened, with rural poverty rates 2.5 times higher than in urban areas. Poverty also has a clear gender dimension, with a higher proportion of female-headed households living in poverty than male-headed households. While 47 percent of households are female-headed, 57 percent of the poor live in female-headed households (World Bank 2024b). Furthermore, remote-area dwellers and minority linguistic groups do particularly poorly on several key human development, poverty, and economic inclusion indicators (Statistics Botswana 2014).

Nonetheless, Botswana has made significant strides in addressing gender equality in recent years. For example, Botswana has achieved gender parity in enrollment in primary education, increased the uptake of family planning services, and achieved high rates of female entrepreneurship. The government of Botswana has undertaken legislative and policy initiatives to advance gender equality, notably through the adoption of the Abolition of Marital Powers Act (2004), establishing equal spousal rights; strengthening protection under the Domestic Violence Act (2008); preparing the National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) (2015), which sets out a series of key policy priorities and which is currently being updated; and expanding women's access to land through revisions to the Land Policy (2015), among other initiatives. In addition, the government has recently established important institutions to promote gender equality, such as the National Gender Commission and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Empowering women and girls by increasing their human capital, labor market participation, and access to productive inputs will be key to reducing poverty and inequality in the country. However, several challenges need to be overcome to achieve this, particularly in rural areas. Botswana has made progress in closing gender gaps at lower levels of education; however, boys are now falling behind and dropping out at higher rates than girls. Although girls generally perform better in school, many of these gains are

¹¹ PPP = purchasing power parity.

¹² The Gini coefficient measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A coefficient of 0 expresses perfect equality where everyone has the same income or consumption level, while a coefficient of 100 expresses full inequality where only one person has all the income or consumption goods.

¹³ "Structural peers" refers to countries that share similar economic characteristics based on 20 indicators from the World Development Indicators database, including GDP and its composition, population characteristics, and labor market indicators. For Botswana, eight countries were identified as structural peers, robust to different combinations of the indicators: Gabon, Georgia, Lebanon, Mongolia, Namibia, the Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Tunisia.

lost in the transition to the labor market, with a higher number of young women than young men ages 15–24 years not in education, employment, or training. As women are less likely to have studied science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in postsecondary education, fewer women are entering the most dynamic sectors of the economy, which, along with the unequal division of domestic labor and concentration in the informal sector, leads to wage gaps. Women and girls in Botswana also experience high rates of GBV, carry a disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS, and have less access to financial and productive resources. To accelerate economic diversification in Botswana from a growth model dependent on extractives and the public sector to a diversified private sector-led model, it will be important to ensure that barriers to women's and girls' full economic, social, and legal equality are addressed.

While Botswana performs well on several gender-related human development indicators relative to averages for Sub-Saharan Africa (such as gender parity in school enrollment, maternal mortality ratio (MMR), and adolescent fertility rates), in relation to the averages for upper-middle-income countries, it generally ranks poorly. The 2024 Gender Inequality Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which integrates labor force and political participation rates as well as health and education outcomes, ranks Botswana's progress toward gender equality as 120th out of 193 countries ranked (UNDP 2024). With an index of 0.73 (with 1 indicating full parity), the country ranks 57th out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum 2024 Global Gender Gap Index¹⁴ and 11th in Sub-Saharan Africa (below neighboring Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa) (World Economic Forum 2024). Botswana ranks particularly poorly on the Index measures of women's political empowerment (125th out of 146 countries).

1.2. Objectives of the Gender Assessment

The primary objective of this study is to provide a high-level assessment of key gender gaps in Botswana through the lens of the three domains of gender inequality, namely human endowments, economic inclusion, and voice and agency. Noting that the gender equality landscape is shifting and changing, and thus national policies, laws, and strategies must respond accordingly, this report aims to gather evidence that will identify priorities and actions by stakeholders toward positively influencing, scaling up, and accelerating progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in Botswana. Specifically, the study seeks to address four main questions:

1. What are the key gender gaps and challenges across the three domains of human endowment, economic inclusion, and voice and agency in Botswana?
2. How have these gender gaps changed over time and across different groups?
3. What are the barriers that constrain advancements in gender equality?
4. What are the priority areas where urgent actions are needed to support bridging key gender gaps and barriers?

1.3. Conceptual Framework

The gender assessment is informed by the conceptual framework of the *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (World Bank 2012) and the *World Bank Group Gender Strategy (FY16–23): Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, and Inclusive Growth* (World Bank 2015a). Gender is understood as the social, behavioral, and cultural attributes, expectations, and norms associated with being male or female. Accordingly, to address gender gaps, focus is required on socially determined gender inequalities, which are deeply rooted in attitudes, institutions, and market forces in any society.

¹⁴ The Global Gender Gap Index includes measures of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Men and women are not homogeneous groups but are stratified by race, ethnicity, language, disability, and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), which, together with income level and geographic location, lead to multiple and overlapping layers of vulnerability, discrimination, and missed opportunity.

This conceptual framework posits that gender equality can be achieved when there is measurable progress across three domains: (a) human endowment, especially with regard to health and education; (b) economic inclusion, in terms of participation in economic activities and access to and control of key productive assets; and (c) voice and agency, as reflected in political participation, freedom from GBV, and the ability to make key decisions. Further, it holds that households, markets, and institutions (both formal and informal), and the interactions between them, all influence gender equality and economic development and are in turn shaped by them, ultimately influencing gender outcomes. Figure 1.1 depicts the interconnectedness between the three domains (as represented by the arrows); the potential of programmatic interventions to tackle specific issues in these domains (as represented on the right of the figure); and, in a world facing recurring climatic disasters and conflict-related shocks, the interactions between households, markets, and institutions that influence growth, poverty reduction, and resilience.

Using this conceptual framework, the assessment identifies high-level gaps in each of the three domains, focusing on those gaps that remained persistent or intensified in recent years and highlighting areas for action that intersect at the household, market, law and policy, and institutional levels. Further, to assess issues of gender inequality in relation to human capital development, the study has adopted a life-cycle framework that recognizes the continuities and interlinkages across the different stages and domains of an individual's life, namely early childhood, school-age years, and adolescence to adulthood.

1.4. Methodology

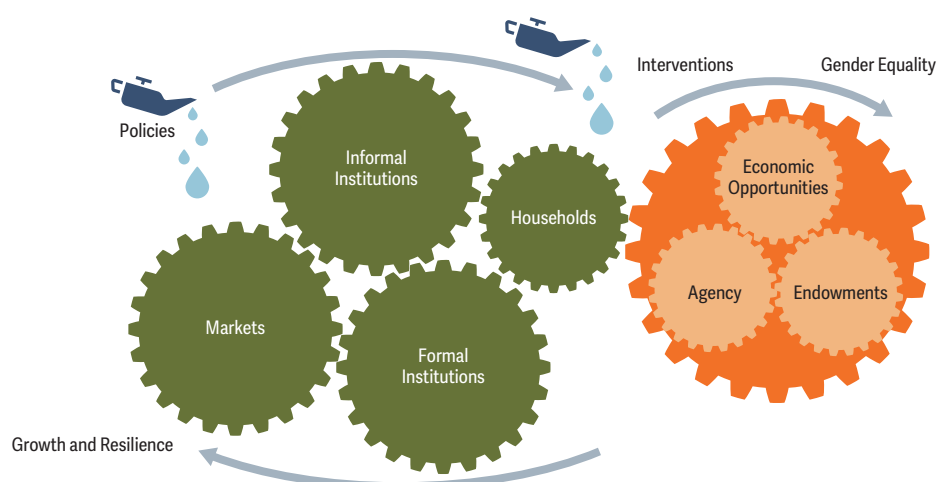
The assessment is based on the application of a mixed methods approach using primary and secondary research to enable the triangulation of results. The assessment combines an extensive review of secondary literature, including analysis of available data and statistics, and primary research in the form of interviews and consultations with stakeholders representing the government of Botswana, donor agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), financial institutions, and development partners. The information garnered from consultations shaped the recommendations in this report and helped to strengthen the information contained herein. All data in this report reflect availability as of March 1, 2025, unless otherwise specified.

1.5. Data Limitations

Recent and gender-disaggregated data are lacking in several key areas. Updated demographic household survey data are needed, as the latest available information comes from the 2017 Botswana Demographic Survey and the 2018 National Relationships Study. Furthermore, these surveys do not provide the full range of information collected through a standard Demographic and Health Survey,¹⁵ which would provide updated information on adolescent pregnancy, GBV attitudes and behaviors, family planning, women's health-seeking behavior, women's decision-making within the household, and other indicators. Data from and analysis of the 2022 population census were not available at the time of writing and will also provide important updated information when available. Gender analysis of data collected in the 2023 Enterprise Surveys (World Bank 2023) is needed as there is a general lack of disaggregated data on firm productivity, growth, and access to financial services. More gender-disaggregated data on time use, agricultural

¹⁵ See <https://dhsprogram.com/> for more information on the Demographic and Health Surveys Program of the United States Agency for International Development.

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework

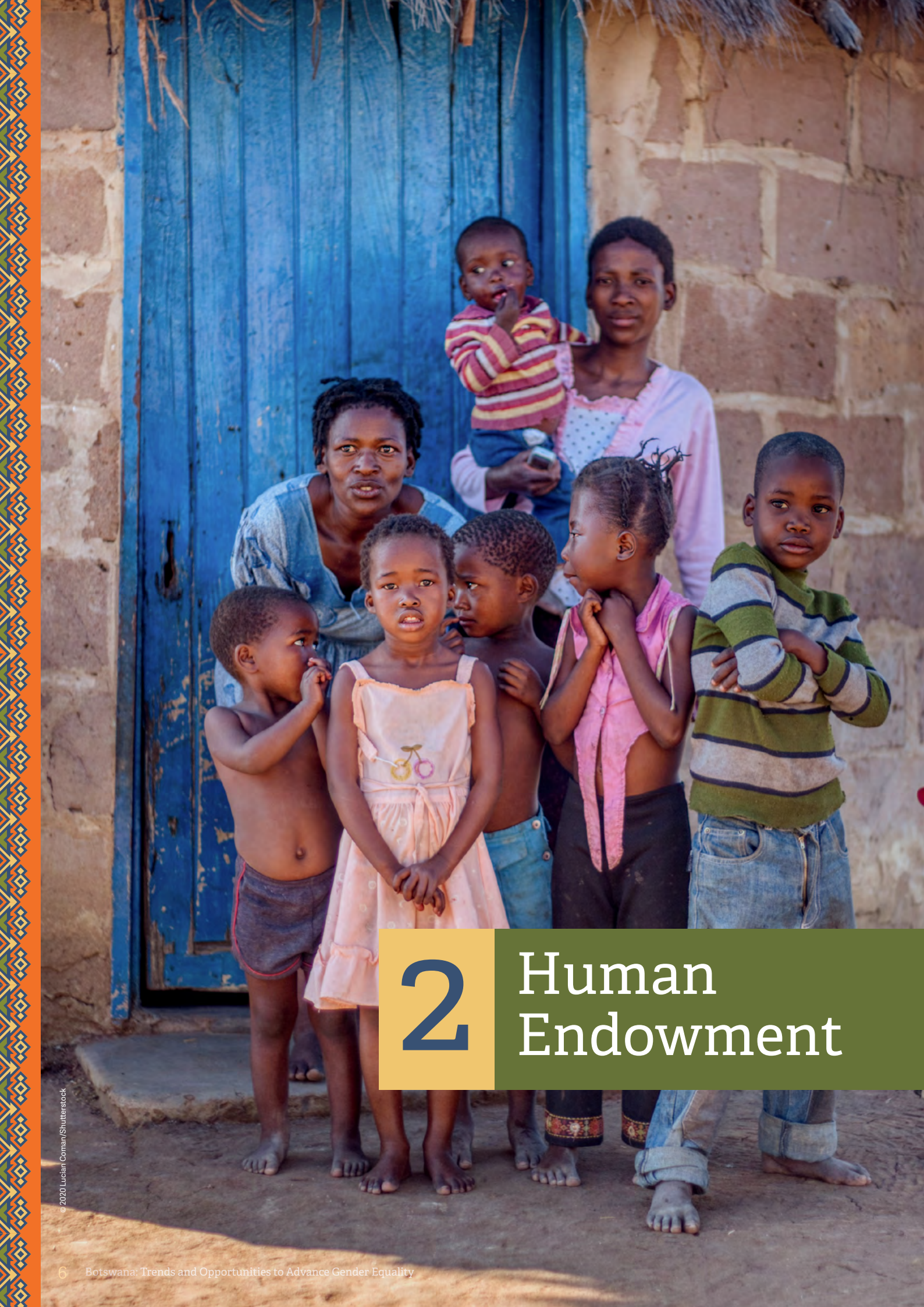


Source: World Bank 2015a.

productivity, and climate change impact would enable closer gender analysis in these areas. Finally, gender disaggregation of data by region, language group, disability, and other dimensions of vulnerability are not readily available, making it challenging to assess the gender gaps and barriers facing these populations.

1.6. Structure of the Report

The report consists of four substantive chapters and a final chapter on strategic priorities and related recommendations. Chapter 2 presents an overview of key gender gaps in human endowments (primarily health and education) using a life-cycle approach to human capital development. Chapter 3 examines gender gaps in economic inclusion, with a focus on gender gaps in labor market outcomes, including cross-cutting constraints on women's labor force participation, sectoral segregation and income, and productivity gaps in employment and entrepreneurship. It also analyzes gender gaps in access to and ownership of key financial and nonfinancial assets, including land and climate change adaptation technologies. Chapter 4 highlights cross-cutting issues affecting women's voice and agency in Botswana, including social norms, legal and policy frameworks, women's participation in politics and governance, high rates of GBV, and intersectionality with disability, inequality and SOGI. Chapter 5 identifies five strategic priorities for closing gender gaps and supporting women's empowerment in Botswana and their links to key national policies and frameworks.



2

Human Endowment

While Botswana has made considerable progress in various measures of human capital development, gender gaps persist in several areas that limit both girls and boys from reaching their full potential. To assess these gender gaps in human endowments, a life-cycle framework that recognizes the continuities and interlinkages across the different stages of an individual's life provides a good approach. Using this framework, this assessment focuses on three critical stages of the life cycle: (a) early childhood; (b) school-age years; and (c) adolescence to adulthood. The findings of the assessment reveal a complex picture, with both men and women facing different sets of disadvantages at different stages of their life cycle. The approach also reveals interconnected constraints that are rooted in poverty, rurality, gender norms, cultural practices, and gaps in the provision of services as important drivers of gender inequality in human capital outcomes.

2.1. Early Childhood

Early childhood lays the foundation for lifelong health, learning, and economic productivity, and inequalities that manifest at this stage have long-term implications that are often costly to mitigate later. In Botswana, while there have been some improvements in the last two decades, both boys and girls face significant disadvantages in the early years of their lives, particularly those living in poor and vulnerable households, in remote and rural areas, and among marginalized language groups. To thrive in this important stage of the life cycle, children need to be safe and secure, be provided with the right nutrition and timely vaccinations, and receive stimulation and learning support from their parents or caregivers. The multidimensional nature of early childhood development shows the need for multisectoral engagement and support, involving the health and nutrition, education, and social protection sectors.

Botswana's progress in improving child survival is slowing and its performance continues to lag behind its income group peers. Gender gaps disadvantaging boys persist. Although there has been a steady decline in the under-5 mortality rate (U5MR) from 58.7 to 38.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, between 2010 and 2022, it remains three times higher than the average for upper-middle-income countries (UMICs).¹⁶ Boys in Botswana face a higher mortality rate in early childhood (a global phenomenon attributed to both biological and environmental factors) (Pongou 2013), and though the difference has narrowed over the last decade, the gender gap remains higher than the average for UMICs (figure 2.1). In 2022, the U5MR per 1,000 live births was 42.3 for boys compared to 35.1 for girls, a gender gap which puts Botswana significantly behind its UMIC peers, although U5MRs and gender gaps are similar in neighboring South Africa (37.2 and 31.8 per 1,000 live births for boys and girls, respectively) and Namibia (41.3 and 34.1 per 1,000 live births for boys and girls, respectively). These high rates in Botswana persist notwithstanding high levels of immunization with diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus vaccine (95 percent in 2023),¹⁷ which suggests near-universal access to primary care services.

Botswana's double burden of overnutrition and undernutrition contributes to the slowed progress in ensuring child survival, and there are notable gender gaps. Rates of stunting among under 5-year-olds is declining only slowly from 25.1 percent in 2010 to 21.6 percent in 2022. During the same time period,

¹⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

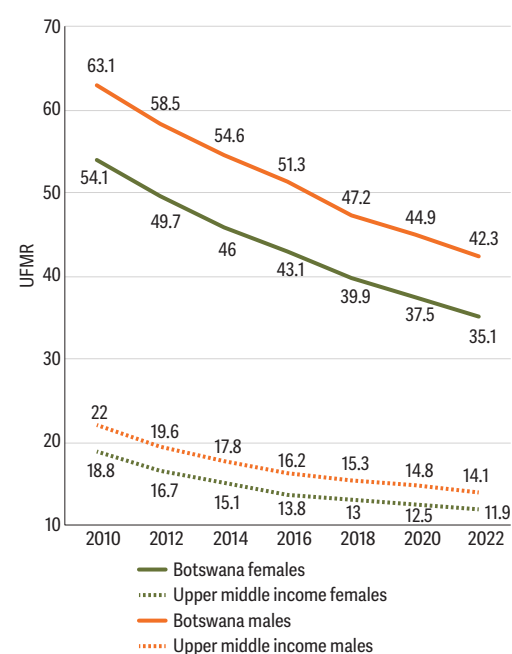
¹⁷ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

rates in Namibia fell from 26.1 to 16.8 percent.¹⁸ At the same time, 11.0 percent of girls and 4.6 of boys under 5 years were projected to be overweight by 2020, while among older children ages 5-19, 27.7 percent of girls and 12.6 percent of boys were projected to be overweight by 2019 leading to significant adverse lifetime health impacts Global Nutrition Report 2023. Rates of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months were roughly equal in boys (31.9 percent) and girls (28.1 percent) in 2017 (UNICEF 2024) having fallen from an average rate of 48.3 percent (boys and girls combined) in 2013.¹⁹

Access to early childhood care, development, and education (ECCDE) remains a challenge among younger age groups. The majority (81.6 percent) of government primary schools in Botswana have implemented the national pre-primary program (provision of one year of pre-primary or reception classes) (Pillar and Haricharan 2023). As a result, enrollment among 5 year olds has increased to 89.5 percent (Statistics Botswana 2024). However, enrollment rates among 3 and 4 year olds (19.2 and 38.8 percent respectively), suggest the need to expand access for this age group. While gender gaps in enrollment are small, earlier data had found that gaps based on residence were significant (Statistics Botswana 2018). Analysis of recent enrollment data would be needed to assess any progress in closing these gaps. Evidence from other countries suggests that boys are more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of poor-quality early childhood environments than girls (García, Heckman, and Ziff 2018; Golding and Fitzgerald 2017; Schore 2017). This suggests that any access or quality gaps in ECCDE in Botswana are likely to have a bigger adverse impact on boys. However, more data and further analysis are needed to examine in depth the gender differences that emerge in this stage of the life cycle and the driving factors in Botswana.

The importance of early childhood development is well recognized in Botswana, but policy initiatives and implementation strategies have not yet yielded the desired results in terms of ECCDE outcomes. The Policy Framework for Holistic Early Childhood Development has fully articulated the need to focus on early childhood development, and the Botswana Nutrition Strategy is an important document in moving the nutrition agenda forward. However, neither of those policy documents has yet to find its way into social protection programming on any scale (World Bank 2021a). For example, Botswana does not have a cash-based child support grant for poor households. This is despite the global evidence showing that child-targeted grants, especially in female-headed households, contribute to covering child-related costs such as buying school uniforms and supplies, presenting the child for health checkups, and increasing the nutritional value of meals. Recently, the government of Botswana has been making progress in devising a strategy to align its main social assistance programs with the life-cycle stages, including the early years (Government of Botswana 2020). This may involve considering a cash-based child grant by building on the Vulnerable Groups Feeding Programme, the Destitute Persons Programme, and the Orphan Care Programme. Such a program would provide the opportunity to integrate parenting education that promotes fathers' engagement, which has been shown to improve ECCDE outcomes (Barker et al. 2021). It is also an opportunity to counter gender stereotypes related to how boys and girls are raised.

Figure 2.1. Under-5 Mortality Rate for Botswana and Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMIC), by Gender



Source: World Bank using data from World Development Indicators.

¹⁸ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.
¹⁹ *Ibid.*

2.2. School-Age Years

At the primary level, Botswana has achieved universal access to schooling and gender parity in enrollment. Basic education, which covers the first 10 years of schooling (comprising primary and junior secondary school), is free. This has helped improve enrollment rates for all groups and contributed to the advancement of gender parity. In 2017, the gross enrollment ratio²⁰ (GER) at the primary level was 103 percent for girls and 105 percent for male students, with a gender parity index of 0.98, which falls within the parity threshold (figure 2.2).

At the junior secondary level gender gaps begin to open, with a GER in 2020 of 95 percent for girls and 92 percent for boys. Moving into senior secondary level (grades 11 and 12), enrollment rates drop drastically for both boys and girls and gender gaps widen, with GER of 60 percent for girls and 46 percent for boys. Female students are less prone to repeating grades than their male counterparts; in 2015, 68 percent of primary repeaters and 65 percent of secondary repeaters were boys (World Bank et al. 2019). For both boys and girls, net enrollment ratios are significantly lower than gross enrollment rates, pointing to the high rate of overage enrollment in schools (figure 2.3).

Figure 2.2. Gross Enrollment Ratio by Gender and Level

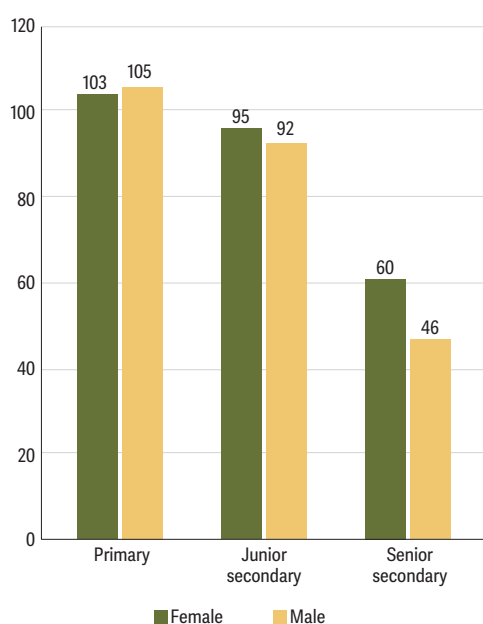
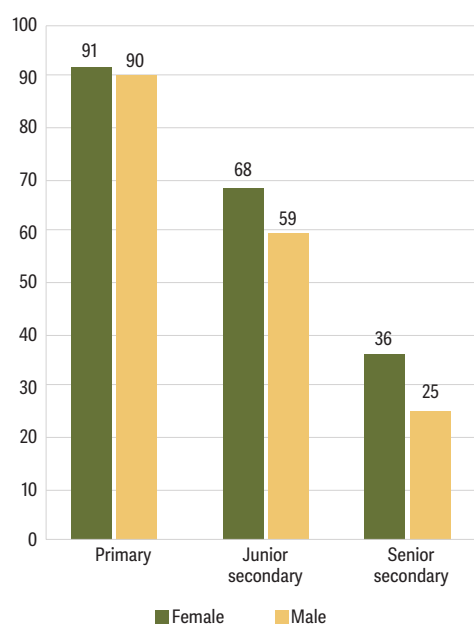


Figure 2.3. Net Enrollment Ratio by Gender and Level



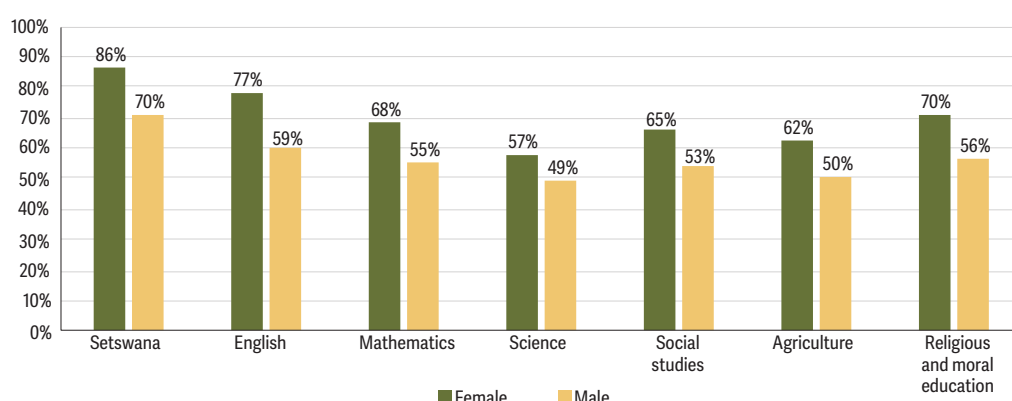
Source: Estimated using enrollment data from Statistics Botswana, 2017 (for primary level), and Statistics Botswana, 2020, for secondary level (Statistics Botswana 2021b), and school-age population data for relevant years from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics.

National examination results at the end of primary school show girls outperforming boys across all subject areas (figure 2.4). Seventy-eight percent of girls achieve an overall credit pass compared to 63 percent of boys. The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality²¹ test results reveal a significant gap in learning outcomes in mathematics and English reading among sixth graders based on household income levels. In Botswana, there is a 68-point difference between the score for the poorest quartile and the average score—significantly higher than the difference in Namibia (39 points) and not far behind that in South Africa (72 points).

²⁰ The gross enrollment ratio (GER) is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown. In cases where late school entry and repetition rates are high, the GER can be higher than 1.0, as classes will include overage children in addition to those who are of grade-level age.

²¹ For more information on Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) examinations, see <https://www.epdc.org/node/4692.html>.

Figure 2.4. Subject Primary School Leaving Examination Credit Pass Grades (%) (A–C) by Gender, 2022



Source: Replicated from Botswana Examination Council 2022a.

Gender gaps that opened at the primary level continue to grow at the junior secondary level. Overall performance at junior secondary drops significantly, with only 32.7 percent of children achieving grade C or better in Junior Certificate of Education. While about 40 percent of girls achieve pass grades, grade C or better, only 25 percent of boys do so. Girls' learning advantages are apparent across all subjects (Botswana Examinations Council 2022b).

At senior secondary level, gender gaps in learning outcomes become less pronounced and begin to shift. Results from the 2022 Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education show that females still outperform their male counterparts overall, with 32.9 percent of female examination takers achieving grade A–C compared to 29 percent of male examination takers (Botswana Examinations Council 2022c). Subject examination results reveal that although boys continue to lag in languages and social sciences, they catch up with girls in mathematics, biology, and chemistry, while girls fall behind in physics.

More efforts are needed to understand the drivers of boys' underachievement in education and high rates of dropout in Botswana. Both in-school and out-of-school factors have been identified as possible drivers for boys' underachievement and dropout. Poverty is an important driver of school dropout for both boys and girls, but more research is needed to understand the different effects on boys' and girls' school retention and what other factors come into play. There are also gender differences in the learning environment that contribute to boys dropping out. Interviews and focus group discussions with students and teachers in eight junior secondary schools in Gaborone and Kweneng district (thus including urban, peri-urban, and rural settings) found that the experiences of boys and girls in schools differed. Student and teacher perceptions of boys' and girls' aptitude for school tended to disfavor boys. Participants explained that boys were more disruptive in class and subsequently subject to harsher discipline (corporal punishment). Boys in turn expressed less confidence and motivation to excel in school and reported that teachers favored girls (Mungoo 2017).

Unfortunately, schools do not always provide a safe learning environment for all students, with bullying and sexual harassment experienced by many students. A 2012 youth risk behavioral survey found that 40 percent of children ages 10–19 years had experienced bullying in the 30 days prior to the survey (Ministry of Education and Skills Development 2012), and more recent analysis has found that bullying contributes to achievement gaps among students (World Bank et al. 2019). Other research suggests that LGBTQI+ students are at particular risk of bullying and psychological and physical violence, which leads to a higher school dropout rate among this group (Arcus Foundation 2019). Encouragingly, awareness is growing, with 44 percent of students and teachers in Botswana in 2016 aware of diversity-related violence in schools (UNESCO 2016). Concerningly, the 2018 National Relationships Study found that 4.5 percent of adult women and 2.2 percent of adult men had experienced sexual harassment at school (Government of Botswana 2023b), and more recent reports suggest that this remains a widespread problem (United States Department of State 2022). The Botswana Education Policy prohibits teachers and other school

staff members from having sexual relationships with students and provides for strict penalties (Republic of Botswana 2019), and the Public Service Act, No. 13 of 1998, prohibits sexual harassment by members of the Public Service both during and outside work hours. However, the law does not set criminal penalties for or procedures to report or handle such cases. Instead, penalties include termination, forfeiture of retirement benefits, loss of pay or benefits, reduction in rank or pay, or a disciplinary reprimand.

Early pregnancy remains a key driver of female dropout rates in higher grades (Republic of Botswana 2015). An average school risks losing the equivalent of a class of girls (30) every year (UNFPA Botswana 2017), yet current policy prevents adolescent mothers from attending school during the first six months following childbirth (Ministry of Education and Skills Development 2022). Even then the student must apply for readmission, which is only permitted at the beginning of the school year, upon presentation of a medical certificate of fitness and at the discretion of the school head, as per Ministry of Education and Skills Development guidelines for readmission in “ex-pregnancy cases”. There is also a need to address the childcare needs of parenting students in the interest of both the young parents and their children. Concern that high rates of pregnancy-related dropout were compromising girls’ education and perpetuating the cycle of poverty was expressed to Parliament in 2022 by the then Assistant Minister of Education (Thobega 2022a). There is also concern, as expressed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, that adolescent mothers are encouraged to enter technical and vocational education and training (TVET) rather than reentering general education (United Nations Botswana 2021). Earlier studies suggest that higher pregnancy-related dropout rates of adolescents in rural areas compared to urban settings is probably linked to higher poverty rates at the time and less access to information and sexual and reproductive health services (Molosiwa and Moswela 2012). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has likely led to increased numbers of dropouts, particularly among at-risk children, many of whom are unfortunately unlikely to return to school (UNESCO 2020). Although the specific impacts of school closures in Botswana have yet to be measured, across Sub-Saharan Africa dropout rates linked to pregnancy and child marriage increased as a result of prolonged school closures (Moscoviz and Evans 2022).

Evidence from Botswana has already shown that keeping girls in school longer can lead to lower rates of teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection, while expanding comprehensive sexuality education further enhances these reductions (WHO 2023). Following the 1996 education reform shifting grade 10 from senior secondary to junior secondary school by one year, thereby making schooling free for an additional year, boys stayed in school on average half a year longer, while girls stayed almost a year longer (Lindskog and Durevall 2021). This additional year of schooling led to delayed sexual debut and having less children at young ages. It also led to reduced rates of HIV infection among young women ages 18–24 years by as much as 6.4 percentage points (Lindskog and Durevall 2021). To the extent that sexuality education has been included in the curriculum in Botswana, it has largely been taught during religious and moral education classes. There are growing calls to expand comprehensive sexuality education (Kgosiemang 2023), and efforts are currently under way to expand teaching of comprehensive sexuality education by guidance teachers, which has been shown to increase condom use, reduce unplanned adolescent pregnancies, and increase HIV testing, especially when linked to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services (UNFPA Botswana 2021).

Children living with disabilities continue to face challenges accessing basic education, leading to long-term disadvantages. In 2017, about half of the school-aged population with disabilities was reported to have left school, while around a third (32.9 percent) never attended school at all (Statistics Botswana 2018). This exclusion during school-age years is reflected in education levels among the general population. The 2016 National Disability Survey showed that only 60 percent of persons living with disabilities had ever attended school, compared to 88 percent of the nondisabled population (Eide and Mmatli 2016). While there are a small number of centers providing dedicated care services, and classes for children with special needs have been established in a few schools, these services are insufficient to meet the level of need (UNFPA 2021a). Many schools do not have teachers trained in sign language or teachers who are trained in methods adapted to the educational needs of those with hearing disabilities (United States Department of State 2021). In response, the government of Botswana introduced in 2022 a new Languages in Education Policy, which includes provisions for sign language instruction, and the government’s Second Transitional National Development Plan (2023–2025) recognizes the need for further investment in special needs education.

Children from poor and vulnerable households are also much less likely to be in school than their peers. Characteristics of vulnerable households include being large, rural households headed by women or girls with low education, and at least one family member who is HIV-positive, disabled, or both (UNICEF 2018). Poverty is particularly high in these groups. To address this issue, the government of Botswana is providing free primary and secondary school feeding programs and a special allowance to orphaned children to assist them to stay in school.

Poverty intersects with other types of marginalization, resulting in children from some linguistic minority groups having poorer educational outcomes. Statistics Botswana noted that data from the 2011 population census indicate that “access to education and educational attainment was lower among populations residing in remote areas as well as linguistic minorities, more so that they are likely to reside in remote areas” (Statistics Botswana 2014).²² Inclusion challenges are long standing and reflected in the significant gaps in levels of adult education between linguistic groups. Among speakers of Setswana (language spoken by the majority Tswana people), less than 20 percent of household heads had no education, compared with Sesarwa speakers (language of the minority Basarwa people), among whom more than 63 percent of household heads reported never attending school in the 2011 census (table 2.1) (Martorano et al. 2021). Other minority linguistic groups, notably Seyeyi and Sembukushu speakers, are also significantly less likely to have ever gone to school. Similar analysis of the recently released 2022 Census Survey data would help understand the evolution of these gaps. The legacy of girls’ lower rates of school attendance is usually manifested by lower levels of adult women’s educational attainment and literacy. In order to identify any gender gaps in educational attainment within linguistic groups in Botswana, data on the level of education of household heads within each linguistic group would need to be further disaggregated by gender.

Table 2.1. Household Head’s Educational Attainment, by Linguistic Group, 2011 (% Share)

Language	Never attended	Primary	Secondary	Beyond secondary
Setswana	18.8	24.9	31.7	24.5
English	1.7	4.2	30.7	63.4
Sekalanga	14.8	32.2	32.9	20.1
Shekgalagadi	34.7	23.4	29.0	12.9
Sesubiya	14.3	29.0	36.5	20.2
Sesarwa	63.2	20.7	13.6	2.6
Seyeyi	52.9	19.3	18.1	9.6
Sembukushu	47.7	22.3	24.0	6.0
Afrikaans	11.0	27.8	33.4	27.8
Ndebele	5.4	22.7	56.9	15.0
Zezuru/Shona	7.1	6.0	58.7	28.1
Seherero	24.0	23.0	35.7	16.8

Source: Census 2011, as reported in Martorano et al. 2021.

Children from marginalized groups face several challenges to accessing education.²³ Because they often live in more remote areas, they may have to move from rural settlements to go to school in towns, where they are separated from their families and culture. A 2019 Public Expenditure Review of the Basic Education Sector in Botswana, undertaken jointly by the World Bank, UNICEF, and the Ministries of Basic Education and of Finance and Economic Development, concluded that conditions in boarding schools can discourage students from continuing to higher education levels (World Bank et al. 2019). In

²² Statistics Botswana 2014, page 243. The report further clarifies that “in order to stall any divisive tendencies inherent in ethnic identity, Botswana has made a deliberate decision not to collect data on ethnicity. As a result, the language spoken at home was used as a proxy for membership of linguistic and by extension, ethnic groupings.”

²³ Meeting with the Botswana Centre for Human Rights (Ditshwanelo), March 28, 2023.

particular, boarding schools can be particularly difficult for children from minority language groups. In his statement following a 2018 official visit to Botswana, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, while recognizing Botswana's strong human rights record, pointed to persistent challenges for minority groups and expressed concern at the system of hostels where minority children are sent to attend school (OHCHR 2018b).

The government of Botswana is expanding its policy on languages of instruction to meet the educational needs of children from minority language groups, who have historically faced challenges (Chebanne 2022; Mokibelo 2016). In 2022, after a broad national consultation process undertaken jointly with the University of Botswana, the government of Botswana adopted the new Languages in Education Policy, introducing 10 new local languages of instruction,²⁴ which had previously been limited to Setswana and English, “to promote language development and quality education that is accessible, equitable and relevant to all learners,” according to the then Minister of Basic Education (Thobega 2022b). Instruction in sign language is also being expanded. In its 2022 final report, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution recommended that the Languages Policy of 2022 be implemented as a matter of urgency and that the policy be formalized through an Act of Parliament (Constitution Review Commission 2022, paragraph 20.1.19). Further nuancing of education policy will be needed to ensure children from minority language groups can benefit from public education without losing their unique cultural identity.

2.3 Adolescence to Adulthood

2.3.1 Sexual and Reproductive Health

Botswana has made steady progress in improving women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, but high rates of adolescent pregnancy continue to constrain many girls' opportunities in life. Although Botswana's 2022 adolescent fertility rate (54.6 births per 1,000 women ages 15–19 years) sits between those of South Africa and Namibia (51.7 and 66.9 births per 1,000 women ages 15–19, respectively), it is more than double the average for UMICs (23.9 per 1,000 women ages 15–19).²⁵ This translates to about 1 in 10 (9.7 percent) adolescent girls in Botswana becoming pregnant before they turn 20 (UNFPA Botswana 2019). This relatively high adolescent fertility rate and low uptake of family planning suggests that targeted strategies will be needed, including access to reproductive health services that are adolescent and youth friendly, expansion of comprehensive sexuality education for both in-school and out-of-school youths, and efforts to reduce the stigma and misinformation that hinders young people's exercise of their reproductive rights.

Adolescent pregnancy has negative health impacts for both mother and child. Adolescents tend to have lower antenatal care attendance rates, and babies born to adolescent mothers have higher rates of birth injuries (Letamo and Majelantle 2001) and lower birth weights (Statistics Botswana 2021a). HIV prevalence is also high among the same age group, contributing to worse health outcomes for themselves and their offspring. One study found that adolescents living with HIV had an increased likelihood of anemia in pregnancy, preterm birth, and infants being underweight at birth (Jackson-Gibson et al. 2022).

Becoming pregnant at a young age leads to early school leaving and higher lifetime fertility, both leading to less opportunities in the labor market. The continuing high numbers of births among the age group 15–19 years contributes to the persistence of a high child dependency burden, which limits women's opportunities and the availability of resources for savings and future investment (United Nations Botswana 2021). Not all groups are equally affected — adolescents in rural areas are 50 percent more likely to be pregnant or have had children than their counterparts in cities and urban villages (Statistics Botswana 2018). Orphans and vulnerable children are less likely than other children to report receiving sexual and reproductive health services but are more likely to report being pregnant or having ever been pregnant (UNFPA 2021a).

²⁴ These are Sheyeyi, ThiMbukushu, Ikalanga, Shekgalagari, Chikuhane (Sesubiya), IsiNdebele, Afrikaans, Nama/Naro (Sesarwa), Shona, and Otjiherero.
²⁵ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.



Perceptions that women living with disabilities are or should be sexually inactive lead to their exclusion from receiving basic sexual and reproductive health services and information. Health care workers may not be aware of the needs of adolescent girls and women with disabilities (Hanass-Hancock et al. 2018). Also, adolescents with hearing impairments struggle to access health services, as few health professionals are able to use sign language (Mukhopadhyay and Moswela 2019). Such exclusion, in addition to other factors, contributes to the higher incidence of poor physical and mental health among women and men living with disabilities (Eide and Mmatli 2016).

There has been some progress in increasing access to health care for LGBTQI+ people, although they continue to face challenges. A multicountry study that included Botswana found that discrimination, stigma, and marginalization related to SOGI place LGBTQI+ people at higher risk of mental health concerns and violence (Müller and Daskilewicz 2019). Although the 2019 Antidiscrimination Law, which applies to the provision of goods and services, prohibits discrimination on the basis of SOGI, LGBTQI+ persons report that they experience difficulties accessing health care services (Black Queer Docx 2019), and that in their interactions with health care providers they are stigmatized and treated in an abusive and derogatory manner (Arcus Foundation 2019). However, a recent study revealed increasing trust in the Botswana health care system, evident in the frequency of SOGI disclosure to health care providers (Müller and Daskilewicz 2019).

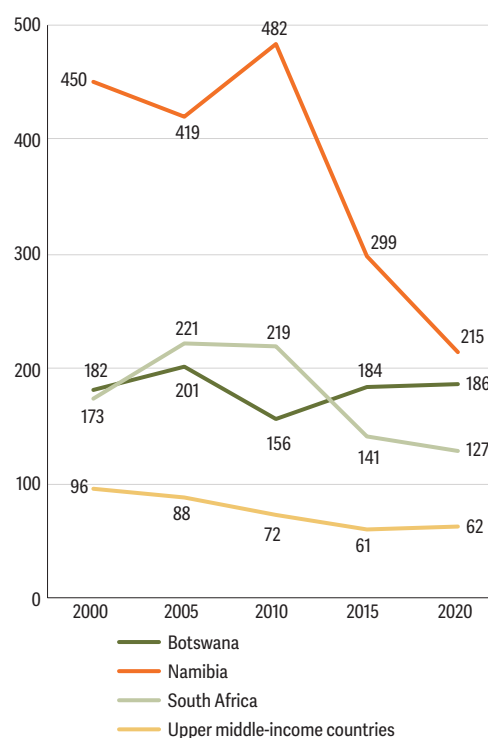
2.3.2 *Maternal Health*

The total fertility rate, which represents the average number of births during a woman's lifetime, declined from 3.18 births per woman in 2002 to 2.75 in 2022.²⁶ This has been largely attributed to increased access to and uptake of family planning, increased age of first birth, and improved child survival (United Nations Botswana 2021). Declining birth rates drove a demographic dividend that boosted living standards by 24 percent between 1990 and 2015. However, the magnitude of the dividend peaked in 2008 and further improvements in living standards will need to be driven by investments in human capital development (UNFPA 2018).

²⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) per 100,000 live births has continued to decline but remains high relative to comparator countries. Statistics Botswana estimated the MMR at 130.5 per 100,000 live births in 2020, which is lower than the International Labour Organization (ILO) modelled estimate of 186 in the same year, though both values are higher than the UMIC average of 62 (figure 2.5). Comparing numbers of maternal deaths reported between February and April 2020 to the same period in 2019, a 28 percent increase was observed - a time when Covid-19 was causing disruptions in access to maternal care services (UNFPA and UN Women 2021). The main causes of maternal mortality include abortion complications, infection, antepartum and postpartum hemorrhage, and hypertension. Even with almost all births (99.8 percent) happening in health facilities, the MMR has remained high, suggesting that current strategies need reexamination. Problems such as absence of or failure to implement protocols, poor organizational management, delays in ordering tests or performing interventions, delays in consulting or availability of senior clinical staff, and stock-outs of essential supplies, have been cited as factors that may impede good clinical outcomes, when coupled with delayed health seeking, including for antenatal care (Madzimbamuto et al. 2014).

Figure 2.5. Maternal Mortality Ratio: Botswana, UMICs, and Comparator Countries, 2010-2020



Source: World Bank using data from WHO et al. 2023.

Lack of access to safe abortion, resulting in serious abortion complications, is also a main driver of Botswana's high rates of maternal mortality. Abortion in Botswana is criminalized except in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman, or severe fetal impairment.²⁷ Anyone who seeks an abortion or who administers an abortion illegally can be punished by up to seven years in prison (United States Department of State 2021). As a result, many women who undergo unsafe abortion and suffer complications do not seek medical attention due to fear of prosecution (United Nations Botswana 2021). Those who have sufficient means can travel to South Africa for safe abortion care. Thus, it is primarily poor women and adolescents and those living in remote areas who are most at risk of undergoing unsafe abortion and, when complications arise, are less likely to have access to emergency obstetric care. Recognizing that women often cross borders to terminate pregnancies safely or resort to illegal means that can lead to death, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution recommended that termination of pregnancy be legalized (Constitution Review Commission 2022).

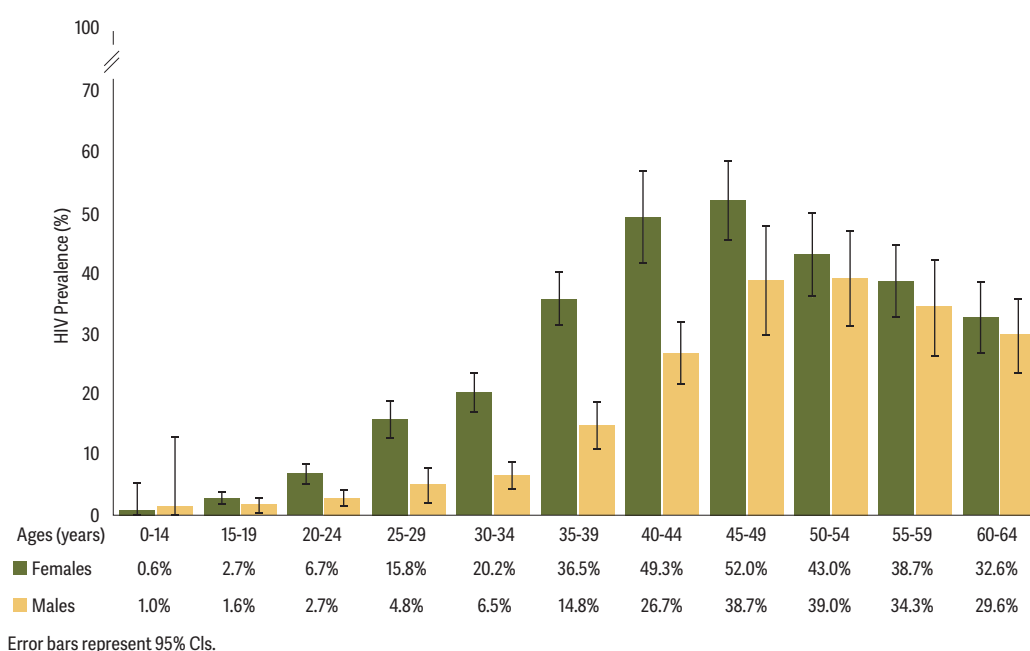
Botswana women's agency to seek health care generally is often undermined by gender norms and access constraints. Excluding wanting to get pregnant, husband or partner disapproval is the third most cited reason amongst married women ages 15–29 years for not using contraception, after health problems and religion (Statistics Botswana 2018). A study on the role of self-efficacy in women's health-seeking behaviors in northern Botswana found that travel time, frequency of visits, and sexual violence all negatively impacted women's health seeking. Women who had experienced recent sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) were over 2.5 times more likely to have foregone medical care compared with those who had not recently experienced violence (Dougherty et al. 2018). To try to reach women living in isolated areas, Botswana recently started piloting the use of drones to deliver critical medical supplies, including blood and medications for emergency obstetric interventions (UNFPA 2021b).

²⁷ Penal Code Act, 1991.

2.3.3. The Female Face of HIV/AIDS

Botswana has the fourth highest rate of HIV infection globally, with very pronounced gender differences in the burden of disease and its impacts.²⁸ Over a fifth of the population of Botswana is living with HIV and nearly double the proportion of women ages 15–64 years are affected compared to men (26 percent versus 15 percent) (Statistics Botswana 2022a). Significant gender gaps in HIV prevalence appear during adolescence and continue to grow into adulthood (figure 2.6). HIV prevalence among adolescent girls (ages 15–19 years) is nearly double that of adolescent boys. This gender gap continues to widen, with prevalence rates more than three times as high among women ages 30–34 than men (Statistics Botswana 2022a). Adolescents and young people, particularly women, are thought to account for more than a third of new infections (National AIDS and Health Promotion Agency 2019). Birth outcomes for adolescent girls living with HIV are worse than for older women living with HIV, and than for adolescents who are not HIV infected (Jackson-Gibson et al. 2022). Intergenerational relationships are also common, with a third of sexually active adolescents and young women reporting having a partner five years or more older than them (UNAIDS 2020). Such age disparities have been shown to increase HIV risks among adolescent girls (Topazian et al. 2020).

Figure 2.6. HIV Prevalence by Age and Sex, 2021



Source: Statistics Botswana 2022a.

The impacts of HIV fall heavily on women and girls in Botswana. National statistics on causes of death show that women also pay a heavy price, with 70 percent of deaths (largely preventable) among women ages 15–49 years caused by HIV/AIDS, a rate almost 40 percent higher than for men.²⁹ Women also experience gender-specific secondary health impacts, with more than 50 percent of all cervical cancers attributed to HIV/AIDS, one of the highest rates in the world (UNAIDS 2021). Difficult access to sexual and reproductive health services in some regions further increases the risks of HIV infection and lowers uptake of antiretroviral therapy in areas already more highly affected by HIV (Statistics Botswana 2022a). Furthermore, women in Botswana disproportionately shoulder the burden of caring for persons living with HIV/AIDS and children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, limiting their own opportunities to pursue education, training, or employment (Makina 2009).

²⁸ UNAIDS databank. <https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>

²⁹ In comparison, 50 percent of deaths among men in the 15–49 age group was attributable to HIV/AIDS (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/>).

Botswana is among the highest-ranked countries in terms of condoms distributed per person per year (Whande 2020). However, the 2021 BAIS V (Statistics Botswana 2023) showed that both men and women were not consistently using condoms with nonregular partners. Over half of both men and women reported having sex with a nonmarital and non-cohabitating partner in the 12 months prior to the survey (56.5 percent of men and 55.3 percent of women). Nearly a quarter of these men (22.2 percent) and a third of these women (30.2 percent) had not used a condom (Government of Botswana 2023a). Likewise, a recent study of sexual behavioral patterns and condom use among 17–24-year-old university students showed that among sexually active young people, a third had unprotected sex during the month prior to the survey (Mpeta, Moroke, and Gabaitiri 2021).

Sexual behaviors are heavily influenced by social norms, misinformation, power differentials, and coercion, limiting the ability of adolescents and young women to negotiate safer sex. A study to understand the reasons for inconsistent condom use by young adults in Mahalapye district found that while all study participants acknowledged the importance of utilizing condoms to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, there were several factors that prevented their consistent use (Kanda and Mash 2018). These included lack of knowledge of benefits, reduced fear of contracting HIV/AIDS as it can now be controlled with widely available antiretroviral therapy, influence of tradition, alcohol and drug abuse, peer pressure, gender and power dynamics (including transactional relationships), and the refusal of the partner. Girls who start sexual activity earlier are more likely to report having experienced sexual coercion and having more than one sexual partner (Keetile and Rakgoasi 2019). Other factors that reduce women's agency to negotiate safer sex have been documented among women whose partners are 10 or more years older, who are abused, and who are economically dependent on their partners (Langen 2005). These and other findings suggest the need for specially targeted interventions to reduce risky sexual behaviors among adolescents and young people with specific attention to gender dynamics. For example, the "No Sugar" program providing information to adolescent girls on the risks of "sugar daddy" transactional sex led to large and significant reductions in risky sexual behavior (Youth Impact 2022).

Although Botswana demonstrate the highest levels of tolerance of persons living with HIV/AIDS, vulnerable groups and key populations continue to face stigma and higher risks. In Botswana, tolerance of persons living with HIV/AIDS is the highest of any country in Africa, with 96 percent of Afrobarometer 2016 respondents indicating that they would be comfortable living next to a person living with HIV/AIDS (Dulani, Sambo, and Dionne 2016). The Second National Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS 2010–2017/2018 has also highlighted that access to health and social support services must be given regardless of sexual orientation. However, LGBTQI+ persons frequently face bias in the delivery of health services and stigma associated with HIV (and recently also COVID-19) (UNDP 2021). Yet, vulnerable groups and key populations, including SOGI minorities, sex workers and men who have sex with men (MSM), face additional risks of HIV infection. The 2013 BAIS IV indicated declines in condom use among key populations. Specifically, consistent condom use with clients among female sex workers dropped from 61.7 percent (already lower than among the general population) to 47.9 percent, while condom use among men who have sex with men dropped from 77.5 percent to 59.4 percent.

2.3.4 Lifespan and Healthspan

Botswana's life expectancy at birth has improved but still lags behind that of peer countries, and gender gaps persist. Women enjoy a longer life expectancy at birth than men in Botswana—68.4 versus 63.3 years in 2022. Each gender had gained about five years over the last decade, though this trend was reversed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The gap between women and men grew from 3.7 years in 2010 to 5.1 years in 2022. However, Botswana's life expectancy at birth remains much lower than the UMIC average for both genders (78.5 for women; 73 for men) (figure 2.7).

Botswana is concurrently experiencing a significant burden of noncommunicable diseases and injuries, with different risks for men and women. The Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 lists ischemic heart disease, stroke, road injuries, diabetes, and interpersonal violence among the top 10 causes of death and disability in Botswana (GBD 2019 Diseases and Injuries Collaborators 2019).

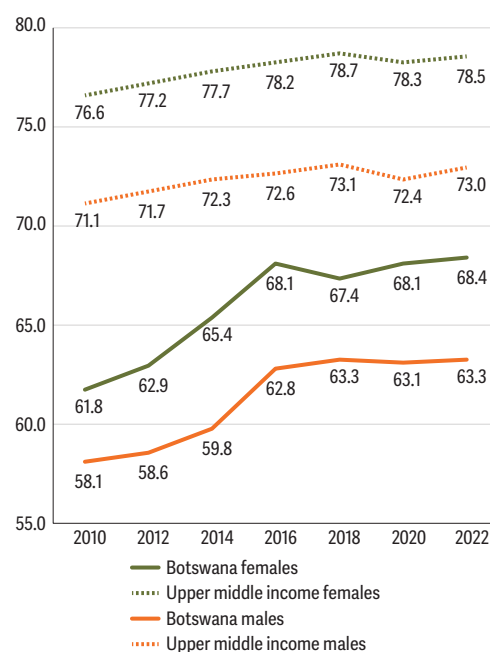
Female adults were three times more likely to be obese than males (26 versus 7 percent) but had similar levels of elevated blood pressure (23 percent for each) (WHO 2018). Other evidence suggests that women have three times greater odds of self-reported multiple morbidity with noncommunicable diseases³⁰ than men (Keetile, Navaneetham, and Letamo 2020).

Cervical cancer is the leading cause of new cases of and death from cancer in the whole population in Botswana, highlighting the gendered burden of noncommunicable diseases (Global Cancer Observatory 2020). Female breast cancer is the second leading cause of new cases of cancer, and *Kaposi sarcoma*, which occurs in both males and females, is third. Prostate cancer, on the other hand, is the leading cause of cancer in men. Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination was introduced in 2015, and coverage with one dose at age 15 for females was 97 percent in 2018. Since then, coverage has declined, with a coverage for one dose at 73 percent in 2022 (WHO 2022a). At the same time, modelling suggests that Botswana would need to increase its cancer screening activities by a factor of 1.8 to attain a coverage of 70 percent of females ages 35–45 years (Bruni et al. 2022). Botswana has prioritized 30–49-year-olds for screening, aiming to attain 80 percent coverage by 2023 from a baseline of 19 percent in 2016. The expiry of the Botswana Noncommunicable Disease Strategy in 2023 provides an opportunity to assess progress and consider additional approaches, including lowering the age at which screening commences (Ramogola-Masire et al. 2022).

Disability affects a higher number of women than men in Botswana, and women bear a disproportionate burden of care for other persons living with disabilities. An estimated 4.2 percent of Botswana are disabled, with the most common form of disability being visual impairment (49.4 percent) (Statistics Botswana 2018). More women (4.7 percent) than men (3.7 percent) have a disability, and households with persons living with disabilities rank lower than average households in property assets, practice of dietary diversity, and access to health care (UNDP 2021). Government policy mandates equal access for persons living with disabilities in all aspects of life and requires that public buildings and transportation be made accessible to persons living with disabilities, but in practice there remain many barriers (United States Department of State 2022). The government of Botswana's 2022 update to the National Disability Policy seeks to strengthen the provision of services and protection of persons living with disabilities and to codify these provisions in a National Disability Act, which is currently being drafted.³¹ In addition, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution recommended that section 15 of the Constitution be amended to include nondiscrimination on the basis of disability to promote equal access, opportunity, participation, and reasonable accommodation of persons living with disabilities (Constitution Review Commission 2022, paragraphs 26.4.4 and 26.4.6).

Climate change can also create specific risks to the health and well-being of women and girls. A metareview of 130 studies found that globally, climate change has a disproportionate impact on the health of women and girls compared to that of men and boys (Dunne 2020). Botswana is expected to

Figure 2.7. Life Expectancy at Birth, Botswana and UMICs, by Gender, 2010–2021



Source: World Bank using data from World Development Indicators.

³⁰ Conditions assessed in the study were stroke, angina, diabetes, chronic lung disease, asthma, hypertension, eye/vision problem, nerves problem, skin problem, and depression.

³¹ Email communication with the Office of the Attorney General, May 29, 2023.

experience significant adverse health effects due to climate change, primarily in relation to the expected increased incidence of rising temperatures, floods, and droughts, and changing disease patterns (World Bank 2021b). These are likely to have disproportionate effects on women and girls as well as other vulnerable groups, such as poor people, elderly people, and persons living with disabilities. Declines in food consumption are commonly concentrated among women and girls when resources are scarce (Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health 2014). These effects are then transmitted to the next generation through the negative impacts of fetal stress on birth weight, neonatal morbidity, and mortality, and longer-term child behavioral and cognitive outcomes (Glover 2019). Climate change also disproportionately affects girls' education: lower levels of rainfall and the resulting income shocks have more significant negative impacts on girls' test scores and school enrollment than on boys' (Zimmermann 2020; Björkman-Nyqvist 2013; Dasgupta and Karandikar 2021; Kwauk and Braga 2017). Girls are more likely to drop out or attend school infrequently when parents either are unable to afford the tuition or need help with domestic tasks, which may become more time consuming, for example to access potable water (Kwauk and Braga 2017; Erman et al. 2021). However, research is needed to better understand the gendered effects of climate change specific to Botswana to design evidence-based policies and programs.

2.4. Data and Knowledge Gaps

An updated demographic household survey is needed, as the latest available information comes from the 2017 Botswana Demographic Survey. Furthermore, this survey does not provide the full range of health and education information collected through standard Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.³² More regional and district-level disaggregation of administrative health data would help identify groups experiencing particular challenges in accessing health services and experiencing different health outcomes to better target focused demand- and supply-side interventions and investments. Disaggregation of educational outcomes based on language group would also help better target additional efforts, and research to better understand the drivers of boys' poor early childhood development and learning outcomes, as well as dropout rates, is needed. Finally, gender disaggregation of health and education data within different language groups is needed to identify intra-group gender gaps to be able to design interventions addressing any overlapping gender and language-specific drivers of poor human development outcomes.

³² See information on standard Demographic and Health Survey modules and questionnaires at <https://dhsprogram.com/Methodology/Survey-Types/DHS.cfm> and on standard Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey modules and questionnaires at <https://mics.unicef.org/tools>.

3

Economic Inclusion



Achieving gender equality in terms of economic opportunity requires removing constraints on creating more and better jobs for women and improving their ownership of and control over assets. Accordingly, this chapter examines key labor force issues, including (a) challenges in transitioning from education to the labor market; (b) gender gaps in labor force participation; and (c) cross-cutting constraints, such as the burden of care and women's concentration in the informal sector. The section also examines gender gaps in employment (including wage gaps and occupational and sectoral segregation) and in entrepreneurship, linked largely to women's concentration in the informal sector and unequal access to finance and nonfinancial assets such as land. Finally, the section considers climate change challenges and highlights key sectors (both established and emerging) where there are opportunities to close gender gaps, including mining, tourism, renewable energy, and agriculture.

3.1. Labor Force Participation

3.1.1. *Transitioning into the Labor Market*

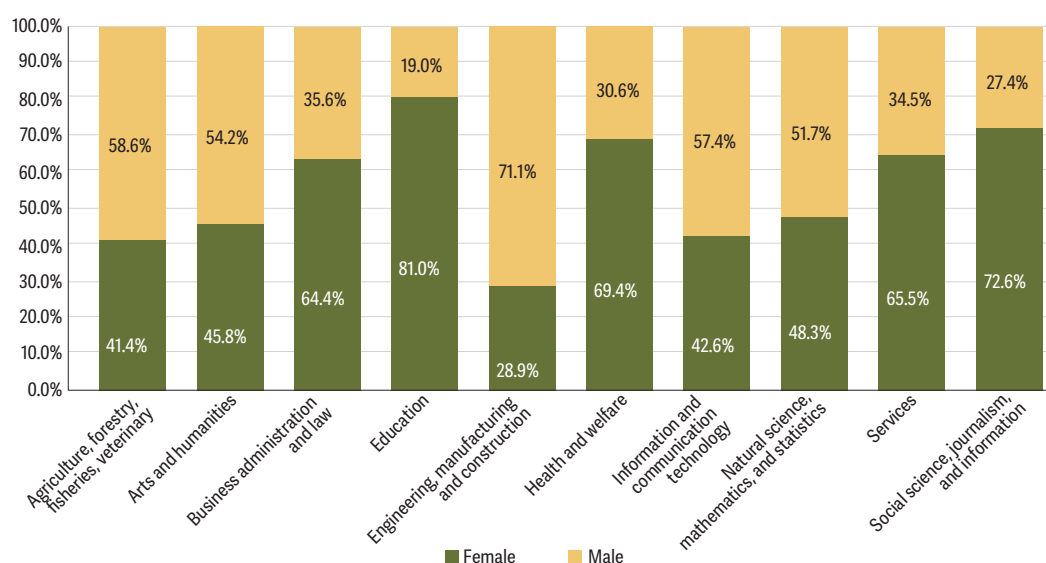
While gender gaps in education have largely closed, this has not translated into similar gains in the labor market where gaps in labor force participation, wages, profits and profitability of enterprises persist. Concerns have been raised regarding the relevance of tertiary education generally and the alignment of the educational system outputs with labor market needs. These concerns are evidenced by an increase from 10 percent in 2005 to 18 percent in 2010 in employers citing insufficient skills as the most important labor market constraint (World Bank 2014a). Despite high unemployment rates, firms take considerable time to fill vacancies, indicating that the available labor does not possess the skill set sought by employers. This skills mismatch is likely more prevalent among young female jobseekers—although women are overrepresented at tertiary-level education, they are significantly less likely to be educated or trained in technical fields where the labor demands are growing. The occurrence of high unemployment alongside difficulties in filling vacancies may also reflect inefficient labor allocation mechanisms, such as employment services and career counseling in the education sector (World Bank 2014b).

Although women outnumber men in tertiary education, they are underrepresented in key STEM subjects, resulting in fewer opportunities to enter higher-earning sectors of the labor market. In Botswana, postsecondary education comprises public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. In 2023, the female gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education was 27.1 percent, while the rate for males was 16.6 percent.³³ Women make up the majority of students at undergraduate (58 percent) diploma (69 percent), and masters (58 percent) levels, but constitute only 36 percent of doctoral students.³⁴ Although girls perform similarly well in mathematics and sciences at senior secondary school, they are less likely to enter key STEM fields, including engineering, manufacturing and construction, and information and communications technology (figure 3.1). For the recently established Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science, and Technology to achieve its mission to transform Botswana from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy through enhanced science-based careers, special attention will need to be paid to attracting more young women into STEM studies.

33 World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

34 *Ibid.*

Figure 3.1. Tertiary Enrollment by Sex and International Standard Classification of Education Fields of Education, 2021

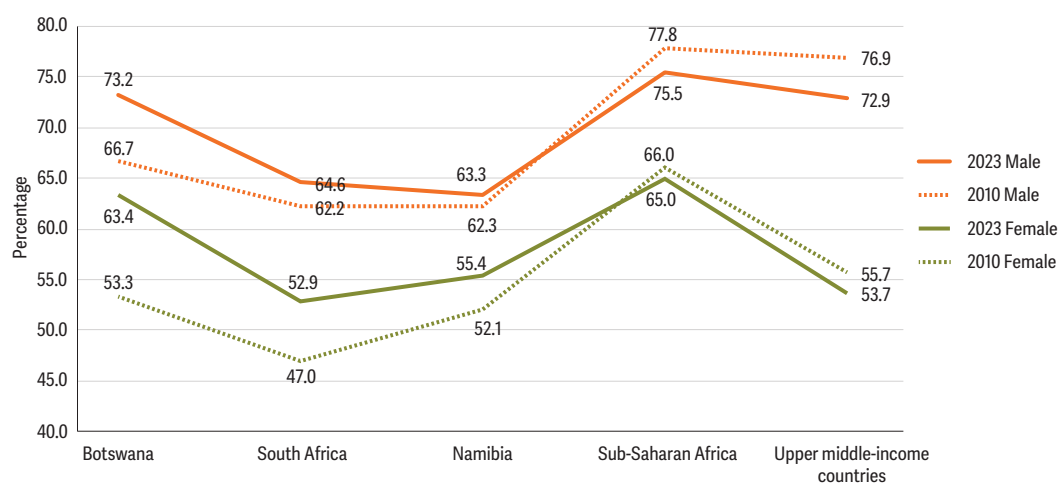


Source: Human Resource Development Council, 2021.

3.1.2. Gender gaps in Labor Force Participation

Despite improvements in Botswana women's participation in the labor force, there continues to be a gender gap in the country's labor force participation rates. In 2023, 63.4 percent of women ages 15 years and above versus 73.2 percent of men in the same age group participated in the labor force.³⁵ Furthermore, the gender gap in labor force participation has been narrowing only slowly from 13.4 percentage points in 2020 to 9.8 percentage points in 2023, suggesting the constraints on women's labor force participation have not changed significantly. Nonetheless, this gap compares reasonably well with comparator countries and is much smaller than the average gender gap in UMICs (figure 3.2). Given that increased labor income is the main driver of poverty reduction in urban areas (and conversely the decline in the share of employed adults in rural households pushes poverty higher), closing the gender gap in labor force participation and earnings is key to accelerating poverty reduction in Botswana (World Bank 2024b).

Figure 3.2. Labor Force Participation Rates (Ages 15+), Botswana and Comparator Countries, by Gender, 2010 -2022



Source: World Bank using data from World Development Indicators.

³⁵ Ibid.

Figure 3.3. Sector of Employment, Men

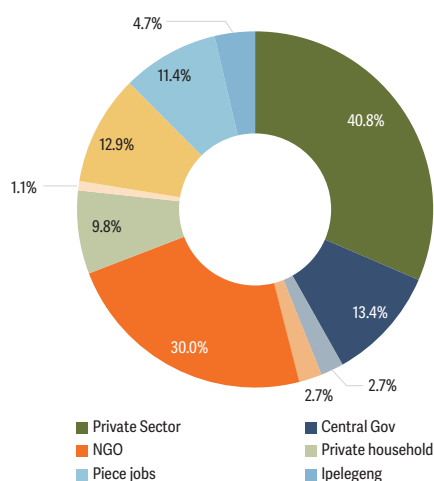
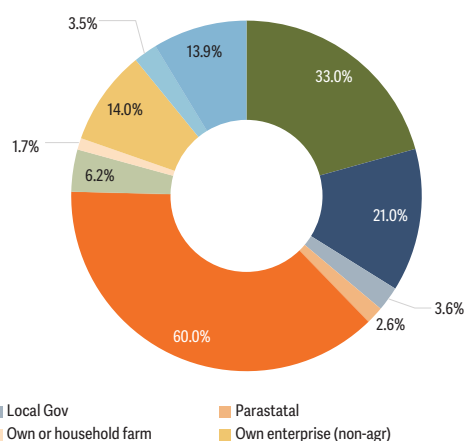


Figure 3.4. Sector of Employment, Women



Source: Statistics Botswana, 2024.

As elsewhere, the gender gap in labor force participation in Botswana varies by age, marital status, and education level. Gender gaps in labor force participation are largest at younger ages. Among 15-17 year olds, boys (10.7 percent) are almost twice as likely as girls (3.3 percent) to already be in the labor force. At ages 18-19 almost half of boys (46.4 percent) are working while a third of girls are (32.8 percent). Although smaller, there continues to be a gender gap at ages 20-24 (men are 15 percent more likely to be working than women) and then drops sharply and remains low until age 65, after which gaps are significant. (Statistics Botswana 2024). Earlier data found, the smallest gender gap among the never married, with male labor force participation 6 percentage points higher, while the largest gender gaps were between married women and married men (25 percentage points) or cohabitating men and women (19 percentage points) (World Bank 2015b). The strong correlations between gender gaps in labor force participation with age and marital status suggests that women either do not enter or leave the labor force when they get married and begin having children, while men stay in the labor force during this phase. In addition to women staying out of the workforce to have and care for children, time constraints due to childcare and domestic responsibilities also prevent women from furthering their education and building the skills they need to become more economically productive and enter higher-earning sectors. The earlier data also showed the gender gap in labor force participation also correlating with level of education. The largest gender gap was among those with primary education (17 percentage points), and decreased with additional years of education, narrowing to 6 percentage points for those with postsecondary education.

Women and men tend to work in different sectors of employment with the public sector (central and local government and parastatals) accounting for 27.2 percent of female employment compared to 18.8 percent of men's (figure 3.3 and figure 3.4). Conversely, men are more likely to work in the private sector (40.8 percent) than are women (33.0 percent). There are multiple factors likely driving this pattern including public sector jobs generally offer greater security and more opportunities for women's advancement (figure 3.5), while success in the private sector is often linked to tolerance for higher risk taking, better access to finance and to business networks and may be difficult to balance with childcare responsibilities.

Women are more likely to be unemployed than men in the general population, and among young people. In 2023, the female unemployment rate was 27.1 percent, compared to 20.1 percent for men.³⁶ Among young people ages 15-24 years, the unemployment rate was 50 percent for young women and 39.6 percent for young men and the share of young women ages 15-24 in Botswana who were not in employment, education, or training was also higher among young women (40.4 percent) than among young men (34.8 percent). This is likely linked, at least in part, to their responsibility of caring for children during the reproductive phase of their life cycle, preventing them from gaining skills and work

36 World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

experience. The rate of unemployment among sexual and gender minorities remains significantly higher than the national unemployment rate: about 40 percent of sexual and gender minorities reported being unemployed in 2018 (Müller and Daskilewicz 2019).

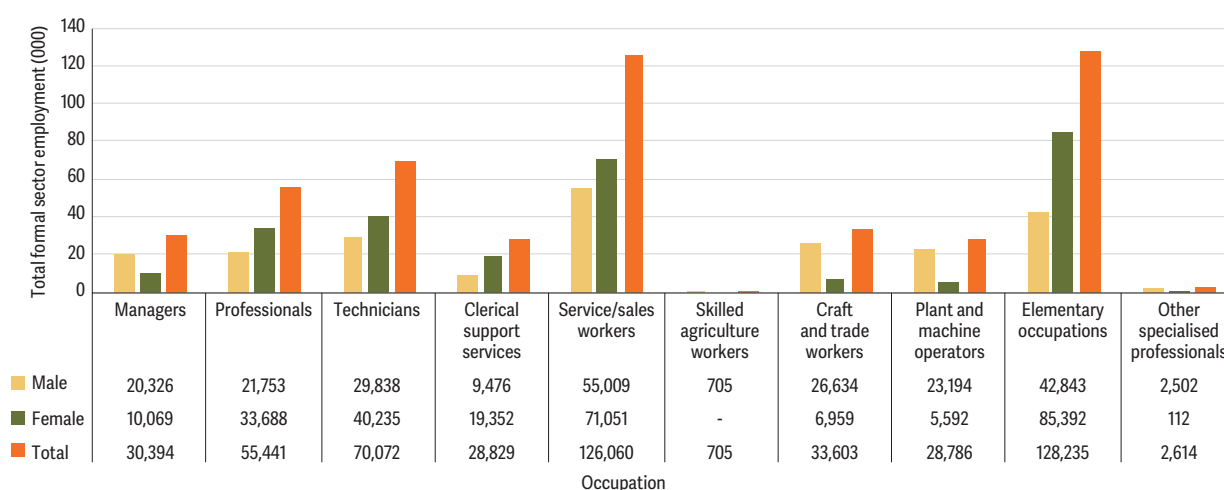
There are also gender gaps in unemployment among persons living with disabilities. The estimated unemployment rate for men with disabilities was 19 percent in 2021, and 25 percent for women with disabilities (Statistics Botswana 2022b). In cities, towns, and urban villages, disabled women had higher unemployment rates than men, while the unemployment rate was higher for disabled men in rural areas, perhaps because disabilities interfere directly with the ability to engage in agricultural activities, in which most rural men are involved. However, the seemingly low unemployment rate should be interpreted with caution, because while the total number of persons living with disability identified in the 2022 Census is just over 77 000 (all ages), latest labor force data finds that more than 45,000 of those ages 15 years and over are outside of the labor force altogether. Thus, while the unemployment rate of persons living with disability compares well with the general population, most adults living with disabilities are outside of the labor force.

Almost 8 percent of employed persons in Botswana are underemployed and this is heavily skewed toward women who represent 72.6 percent of the underemployed population (Statistics Botswana 2024). The government of Botswana's signature social protection and public works program—Ipelegeng—seeks to address this providing employment to 76.9 percent of the underemployed population. Ipelegeng is a labor-intensive public works scheme that provides short-term employment support to carry out community-identified projects. For women, it is the fourth highest source of employment in Botswana after the private sector (33 percent), the central government (21 percent), and own non-agricultural enterprise (14 percent) (figure 3.4). One of the strongest features of the program is the high participation rate of women.

3.2. Wage Employment

Just over half of all workers are women, but they earn 88 percent of what men earn (Statistics Botswana 2024). The wage gap is highest in the formal sector where on average women earn 76 percent of men's wages. The majority of women work in sales and services or in low-skilled elementary occupations (such as cleaners or laborers), where they earn 72 percent and 81 percent, respectively, of what men earn doing similar jobs. Across all job categories, women earn less on average than men, with the exception of those in other specialized professional services, where women are very few in number but higher paid (Statistics Botswana 2024). Wage gaps are linked, in part, to sectoral segregation whereby women are concentrated in less lucrative sectors. While more women than men workers are employed as relatively higher-paid professionals and technicians, women still earn less in these jobs than men (figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Formal Sector Employment by Occupation and Gender, 2024



Source: Statistics Botswana 2024.

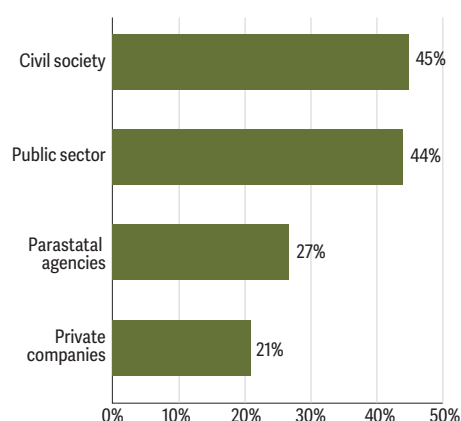
The public sector offers women a greater chance of holding decision-making positions, though they still hold fewer managerial positions than men (figure 3.6) (Honde 2018). Women are similarly more likely to hold decision-making positions in civil society although, in both cases, men are still the majority of decision-makers. The relatively low percentage of decision-making positions help by women in private companies and parastatal agencies suggests that the glass ceiling remains particularly hard to break in these workplaces. The presence of fewer women in decision-making positions in the private sector compared to the public sector is evident across many countries in the region (SADC 2022). A possible explanation for the trend is that employment policy employment terms and benefits in the public sector are more conducive to balancing work and domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore, there is even less enforcement of labor laws in the informal sector, where the majority of Botswana women are working. Thus, greater formalization within the private sector could reduce the discrepancy between gender wage gaps in the private and public sectors if this results in greater enforcement of employment law, although the gap with the public sector would likely still remain without further effort to advance women in the private sector more generally.

Legislation supporting women's full participation in the workforce could be strengthened. The World Bank's *Women, Business, and the Law 2024* report found that there are legal shortcomings in Botswana are indicators related to gender equality in the workplace, including lack provisions in labor legislation prohibiting gender-based discrimination or mandating equal remuneration for work of equal value (see appendix A) (World Bank 2024a). The 2010 Employment Act provides 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for working mothers, of which six weeks should be taken before childbirth and the remaining six weeks immediately after childbirth³⁷ (falling only two weeks short of the 14-week ILO standard). Additionally, the act mandates that employers pay maternity leave of no less than 50 percent of the employee's salary. However, maternity leave must be paid for by the employer, which acts as an informal disincentive to hire women. The mandatory division of six weeks prior to and six weeks after confinement, as opposed to the woman choosing when to take this leave, coupled with the lack of legislation prohibiting the dismissal of pregnant workers except during the final three months of pregnancy, likely contribute to the attrition of women from the workforce (World Bank 2022). There is also no provision for paternity leave for fathers, which de facto requires women to be the primary caregiver, thus reinforcing gender stereotypes and undermining efforts to encourage a more equitable sharing of child caring. Research suggests that when fathers at least take leave for a short period following a child's birth, their involvement with young children increases (with multiple positive knock-on effects), which can have a positive effect on gender equality in the home and at work (ILO 2014).

Labor law in Botswana lacks a general prohibition of discrimination in employment, though several specific grounds are prohibited. While discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation (but not gender identity), health status (including HIV/AIDS), marital status, race, or tribe is prohibited in the termination of contracts under the 2010 Employment Act, the law in Botswana does not contain a general prohibition of discrimination in employment.³⁸ Nor does the law mandate "equal remuneration for work of equal value," as per ILO guidelines (ILO 1951). The Public Services Act of 1998 was amended in 2000 to prohibit sexual harassment and delineate penalties (Khaufelo et al. 2023). Finally, it is important to remember that employment legislation provisions regulate formal employment contracts and workplaces; thus, in principle, they do not provide protection for the majority of female workers who are engaged in informal sector activities.

Figure 3.6. Women in decision-making positions (%), 2018



Source: Honde 2018.

37 Botswana Employment (Amendment) Act 2010 (Act 10 of 2010), Part XII.

38 Botswana Employment (Amendment) Act 2010 (Act 10 of 2010), para. 23(d).

3.3. Entrepreneurship

Botswana has the second highest rate of female entrepreneurship in Africa, but gender gaps are pervasive across the sector. Women entrepreneurs are more likely to be engaged in less remunerative sectors and low-return activities, and are overrepresented in the informal economy (MasterCard 2021). As a result, female-owned enterprises are on average less productive and less profitable than those of their male counterparts (Rudhumbu, du Plessis, and Mahosa 2020). Gender-specific constraints that curtail women's entrepreneurial success include a lack of access to finance, assets (as productive inputs and collateral), skills, education, training, and networks. Women entrepreneurs are also constrained by traditional gender norms and stereotypes, and a gendered burden of domestic labor, resulting in women having less time to devote to their enterprises, possessing lower risk tolerance than men, and often being segregated into less productive roles and sectors of the economy.

Women in Botswana are largely engaged in entrepreneurship out of necessity, given constraints on engagement in wage labor and the need to provide for their families. Of all entrepreneurs in Botswana, both male and female, about four out of five are necessity entrepreneurs (self-employed as a means of survival), while only one in five is an opportunity entrepreneur (driven by entrepreneurial ambition or having found good business opportunities). Opportunity entrepreneurs tend to be younger, better educated, and engaged in higher value-added businesses (World Bank 2017). However, key characteristics of female entrepreneurs are more aligned with those of necessity entrepreneurs. Quantitative analysis finds that among survey participants, most female entrepreneurs are over age 30 (73 percent), are not married but have children (60 percent), have a secondary level of education (61 percent), and have 10 years or less of entrepreneurial experience, indicating that most female entrepreneurs are still in the learning process (Rudhumbu, du Plessis, and Mahosa 2020).

Lower levels of business skill training and of exposure to male-dominated sectors, as well as gender stereotyping, push women entrepreneurs into less lucrative economic sectors. Women entrepreneurs are more likely to lack entrepreneurial training and technical skills, create business plans, successfully market their business, and possess the business skills to manage their business efficiently (Rudhumbu, du Plessis, and Mahosa 2020). Evidence indicates that female entrepreneurs are also more likely to use ineffective marketing strategies, have limited business networks, and have less access to information technology. Additional qualitative evidence from Botswana finds that a lack of entrepreneurial skills, including financial management and record keeping, negatively impacts women-run enterprises (Muchuchuti and Mahambo 2020). Recent country-level evidence finds that women who operate microenterprises in male-dominated sectors, such as auto maintenance and construction, earn higher profits and hire more employees than women entrepreneurs in female-concentrated sectors, such as textile manufacturing and food and beverages. The same study found that women's level of education, and their exposure to and work experience in male-dominated sectors, impacts the likelihood of female entrepreneurs entering more profitable, male-dominated sectors (Cherchi and Kirkwood 2019).

Traditional expectations that women respect male authority also constraints women's entrepreneurship in Botswana. Qualitative research suggests that the decision for a woman to become an entrepreneur often relied on a husband's or male relative's agreement, and female participants in the study reported needing permission from their husband or a male relative to travel for their enterprise (Ntseane 2004). Quantitative evidence also identified the importance of spousal support in women's entrepreneurship, finding that women who enter male-dominated sectors are likely to have a supportive spouse who often assists in the enterprise formally or informally (Cherchi and Kirkwood 2019).

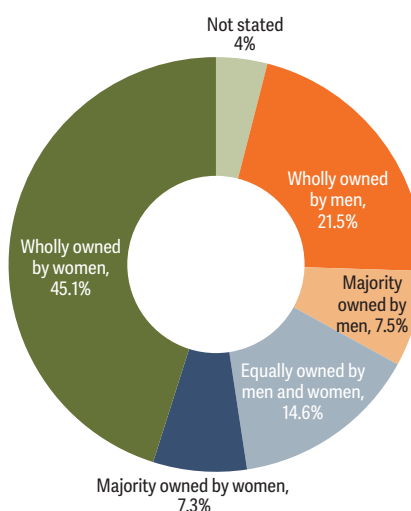
Other gender biases, such as the belief that women are less capable entrepreneurs, additionally frustrate women's efforts to become successful entrepreneurs. The view that women are less capable entrepreneurs limits family support and leads to discrimination in the market from other businesses persons and customers alike. Such biased gender norms have been cited as a reason that drives women to stay in the informal sector rather than shift into the formal sector, with women having either internalized these norms themselves or believing that such norms will prevent them from growing their business (Ntseane 2004).



Women entrepreneurs are also more concentrated in the informal sector. Of all businesses operating in the informal sector, 52 percent are wholly or largely owned by women, while only 29 percent are wholly or largely owned by men (figure 3.7). This contrasts with the formal sector where only 35 percent of firms with at least five employees have any female participation in ownership (World Bank 2023c). Working in the informal sector provides limited security and can be a significant barrier to accessing credit from formal financial institutions. For example, loan applications require proof of employment (either as a wage worker or self-employed worker), which entrepreneurs working in the informal sector do not have (Bank of Botswana 2022).

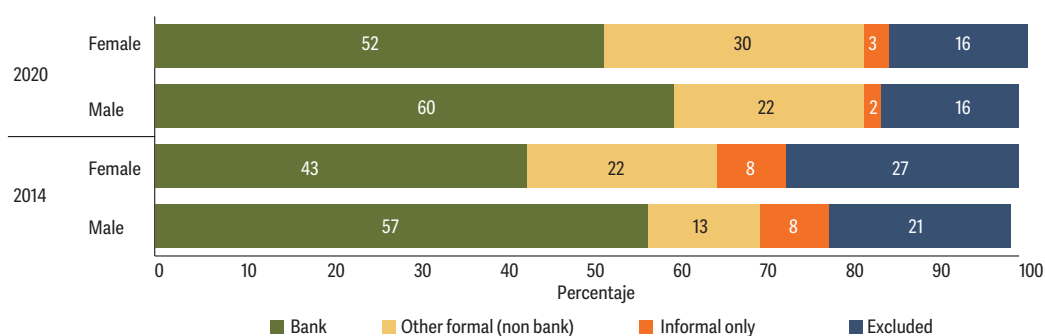
Gender gaps in financial inclusion, although narrowing, continue to disadvantage female entrepreneurs. While the proportion of women using formal banking services in Botswana grew between 2014 and 2020, men are still more likely to use banks than women (60 percent versus 52 percent) (figure 3.8). Interestingly, while fewer women use banks, their higher use of nonbank financial institutions, such as savings and credit cooperatives, closes the gender gap in terms of access to finance. While nonbank financial institutions have increased women's financial inclusion, there are also disadvantages, such as more limited resources restricted to social networks, or a lack of more long-term borrowing options that can hinder the growth of enterprises (Madestam 2014).

Figure 3.7. Informal Sector Businesses by Gender of Ownership



Source: Botswana National Informal Sector Recovery Plan, 2020.

Figure 3.8. Access to Finance by Gender, 2021

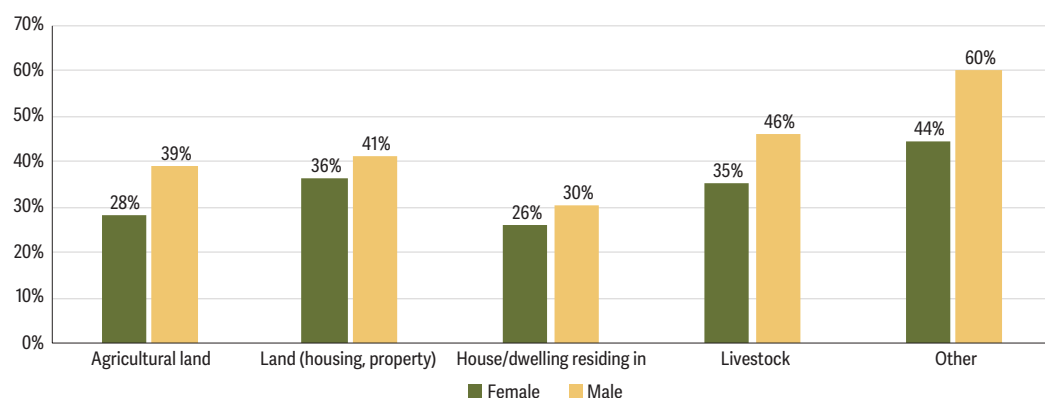


Source: UNCDF 2021.

Rates of borrowing in Botswana are generally low, and women are less likely than men to access credit from formal institutions. In 2020, only 15 percent of women borrowed either formally or informally, compared to 20 percent of men, highlighting the low uptake of credit overall (UNCDF 2021). While there are no legal provisions restricting women becoming entrepreneurs in the same way as men, the law does not prohibit discrimination in access to credit based on gender (World Bank 2024a). For microenterprises there are limited options, with only one small deposit-taking microfinance institution under the Bank of Botswana's supervision and operating based on a regulatory exemption. Also, Women's Finance House Botswana runs a saving and lending program and business training for women in small and medium-sized enterprises. Small groups of three to five women save small amounts daily for three months. The savings then make the women eligible for an initial small loan. Subject to good credit and repayment performance, the women graduate and ultimately qualify for (relatively) larger loans (World Bank 2021c).

Unequal control over assets can be an obstacle to receiving credit from financial institutions (Rudhumbu, du Plessis, and Mahosa 2020). Figure 3.9 depicts gender gaps in decision-making power over key household assets. Such assets are often needed as collateral to secure loans from formal financial institutions. Also, formal financial institutions have requirements for documents that may be more difficult for women to procure. For example, residential plots are more likely to be held in men's names, making it more difficult for women to provide proof of residence or ownership of joint assets (Bahta and Malope 2015).

Figure 3.9. Control of Assets: Ability to Sell without Permission, by Gender

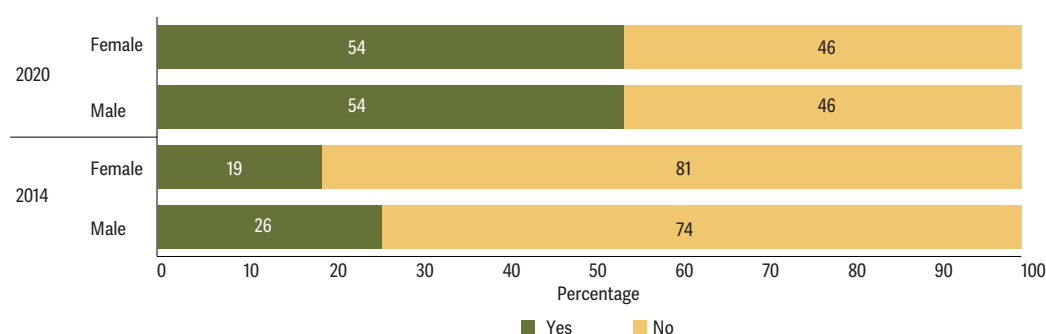


Source: FinMark Trust and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2020.

Given the generally low levels of access to credit, Botswana entrepreneurs rely more on savings to start and grow their businesses, and women are more likely to rely on informal savings. The number of people saving money in Botswana increased by 11 percent from 2014 to 2020 (UNCDF 2021). However, this increase is due mostly to informal savings, which are less secure than savings with a financial institution. While the proportions of men and women who save is around 70 percent, men are more likely to save at banks than women (28 percent versus 23 percent), while women are more likely to save informally than men (44 percent versus 34 percent). Informal financial services, unlike formal, are often embedded in interpersonal relationships and take the form of credit and savings groups, monetary gift giving and borrowing between individuals, or saving money at home. In addition, there is a significant difference between urban and rural areas regarding savings. In rural areas, 40 percent of people do not save, and 15 percent save at home, compared to 25 percent and 6 percent, respectively, in urban areas.

Mobile money has played a significant role in increasing financial inclusion in Botswana and has had a gender-equalizing effect, although it still offers far fewer financial services than banks or nonbank financial institutions. Mobile money usage increased significantly between 2014 and 2020, with the result that an equal proportion of women now use mobile money as do men (figure 3.10). However, while mobile money can be used to promote savings, this service remains nascent in Botswana and interest is not provided on these accounts (UNCDF 2021).

Figure 3.10. Mobile Money Use



Source: UNCDF 2021.

While the use of mobile money has been increasing rapidly, challenges remain in the adoption and use of the technology, and access is also unequal. Ninety-seven percent of the country has some network coverage, yet as a vast and sparsely populated country, rural areas have slower and more limited 2G coverage than higher capacity in urban areas (UNCDF 2021). Slower connectivity outside urban areas limits the use of digital applications in rural areas, underlining the inequality of financial inclusion. The government of Botswana has made strides to address the urban and rural digital divide. In 2018, the government launched the National Broadband Strategy, which aims to increase access to high-speed internet in underserved areas, increase competition among mobile network providers, and increase demand amongst citizens through increased digital literacy (Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority 2018). In addition, the cost of data is high, limiting the use of mobile money due to transaction costs. Botswana is tied with Namibia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa for the sixth most expensive data prices in Africa. As a result, poorer women and women in rural areas face greater barriers to using mobile money than do less poor women and those in urban areas.

3.4. Key Economic Sectors: Mining, Tourism, Energy, and Agriculture

Historically, women have not had equal access to opportunities in key sectors of the Botswana economy (World Bank 2021d). Botswana's extractive model of development has delivered strong GDP growth but, as elsewhere, this model of development has not created significant numbers of jobs, with women less likely than men to have opportunities in the extractives sector. Recently, the importance of the diamond mining sector to the national economy has lessened as the tourism and hospitality, financial, and digital services sectors have grown. The Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis found that access to information communication technology has a positive impact on employment in the country (Tshukudu 2019), pointing to the importance of identifying and taking steps to close digital divides along various dimensions. However, as in the case of the mining industry, these growing economic sectors have been found to contribute to inequality and are not equally accessible to women in the workforce (Martorano et al. 2021). For women to benefit from the growth of these sectors, they will need to gain the relevant skills, particularly in STEM fields. Meanwhile, though agriculture's contribution to GDP is small, a significant percentage of women work in the agriculture sector, where they have less access to productive inputs and technologies than men.

3.4.1. Mining

In Botswana, the mining industry is highly lucrative, but male dominated. While the mining industry has brought significant development to the country, that development has been highly unequal, as both infrastructure and consumption are concentrated in mining areas, while other regions lag (Martorano et al. 2021). Beyond regional inequality, women bear the brunt of the negative social, economic, and environmental impacts of the industry (Thévoz and Pilliard 2020). Women are significantly less likely to be employed by or benefit from the mining industry, which accounts for 0.3 percent of female employment and 2.3 percent of male employment (Statistics Botswana 2024). Interestingly, the mining sector is one of the few in Botswana in which there is a gender pay gap favoring women. However, there remains a significant gender gap in terms of participation, reflecting the limited employment opportunities for Botswana women in the industry. While evidence from Botswana is limited, global analysis also highlights women's underrepresentation at all levels within the mining industry (McKinsey & Company 2021). Globally, mining has one of the largest female dropout rates from entry level to executive across all industries, and only 13 percent of mining company executive roles are occupied by women. The 2022 Botswana Minerals Policy did not include reference to increasing women's participation in the mining industry. However, in January 2023, the Minister of Mineral Resources, Green Technology, and Energy Security spoke of women's low participation in mining and the challenges they face and signaled his intent to increase their engagement in the sector (Mosikare 2023; Kologwe 2023).

3.4.2. Tourism

The services sector of the economy has grown to be one of the most important in the country; tourism alone accounted for 11 percent of GDP in 2017 (Martorano et al. 2021). The tourism industry in Botswana has been expanding since the Tourism Policy of 1990 was adopted (Stone, Stone, and Mbaiwa 2017), and since the industry itself is mainly centered around wildlife habitats in the northern part of the country, the growth of the sector has been closely tied to the Wildlife Conservation Policy of 1966 and the National Parks Act of 1967, both of which encouraged the development of the industry. Currently, 39 percent of the land in Botswana is dedicated to nature-based tourism (17 percent national parks and 22 percent wildlife management areas). Research from elsewhere on women's participation in tourism indicates that women are more likely to be employed in part-time, seasonal, and low-paying positions compared to men (Stone, Stone, and Mbaiwa 2017). However, there is a dearth of evidence from Botswana on women in the tourism industry, though language around women and gender inclusion has been included in national tourism policies. Nonetheless, there are indications suggesting that indigenous communities have been experiencing challenges in accessing land due to the expansion of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, the seizure of land in the Okavango Delta, and other developments that advocates have warned may endanger access to the ancestral lands of the Basarwa people (Zenda 2023). Restrictions on access

to land usually impact men and women differently given pre-existing gendered constraints to access; however, more research is needed to understand the specific gendered impacts these developments may be having in Botswana.

3.4.3. Energy

The energy sector is of critical importance to the women of Botswana, as a resource as well as an opportunity for economic inclusion. Access to energy services is critical for economic development and gains in human capital, while energy poverty has a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls (Cecelski 2000). The 2021 National Energy Policy primarily includes reference to women as energy consumers rather than industry actors, and language is lacking on ensuring the participation of women in the formulation and implementation of energy interventions so that they are more gender-responsive. Beyond the importance of energy to women as consumers, the burgeoning renewable energy sector is an opportunity to increase women's economic opportunities. Specifically, Botswana's Integrated Resource Plan, launched in 2020, aims to increase renewable energy use to 15 percent of all energy use by 2030 and to 50 percent renewable energy contribution by 2036 (International Renewable Energy Agency 2021). In a country with significant unexploited renewable energy potential—especially from solar, wind, and bioenergy—such industry growth creates a significant opportunity to meaningfully integrate women in an important expanding sector. Yet, as discussed previously, women are underrepresented in STEM education and STEM jobs. As a result, enhancing the participation and engagement of women in STEM will be critical to not only expanding the renewable energy sector in Botswana but also ensuring that women are able to reap the benefits of the sector's expansion.

3.4.4. Agriculture

Though the agriculture sector contributed only 1.6 percent of GDP in 2023,³⁹ a significant number of Botswana (23 percent) (World Bank 2023b) work in the sector. Agriculture in Botswana represents 17 percent of the total female and 25 percent of the total male labor force (United Nations Botswana 2021). Although there are fewer women in agriculture than men (39 percent of the agricultural workforce are women), women are more likely than men to be running informal agriculture businesses (Gender Links 2016). Further, between 2016 and 2022, 56 percent of employment growth came from the agriculture sector, so closing gender gaps in agricultural productivity remains important (World Bank 2024b). Livestock farming is the dominant agricultural activity, and crop production is a vital supplier of raw materials to agro-industries (FAO 2018). Food imports account for 80 percent of consumption in Botswana, and increasing women's productivity in the agricultural sector could be instrumental to increasing the country's self-sufficiency (World Bank 2017). Women in Botswana own 46 percent of agricultural holdings or 41 percent of the country's land area (Statistics Botswana 2016b). Women produce most crops for consumption throughout the country, due mainly to owning more arable land than men (FAO 2018). However, despite owning more arable land than men, women tend to harvest less than their male counterparts due to limited access to technological and agricultural inputs, resulting in reduced productivity. Socio-cultural factors and time constraints due to women's care burden, compounded by more difficult access to water resources, also contribute to lower levels of productivity per acre owned by women. Furthermore, land owned by male-headed households is 40 percent more valuable per acre than land owned by female-headed households (Martorano et al. 2021; Bahta and Malope 2015). The reason for the value discrepancy is unknown; however, it likely contributes to lower levels of productivity, and land that is less valuable or undervalued has less value as collateral needed to secure financing to grow women's activities.

There is also significant gender segregation across agricultural value chains, with men predominantly engaged in more lucrative large livestock farming, while women are more involved in crop production and less valuable livestock farming (FAO 2018). Sixty percent of agricultural value added comes from livestock, mainly cattle, contributing to the beef value chain, which has historically been Botswana's second largest export. This highly lucrative value chain, dominated by men, remains largely dependent on traditional

39 World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>



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management through communal grazing, and is reliant on subsidized veterinary services. Livestock are important household assets and sources of agricultural draught power, and provide food, by-products, social status, and financial investment. However, men generally own more livestock of greater value, as they have more resources to invest in livestock, while women make up the majority of the resource-poor population and produce mainly small stock such as chickens. This is at least partly a reflection of the fact that production of small stock aligns with women's traditional home-based gender roles (FAO 2018).

In the face of growing climate change impacts, doing agriculture better and smarter will be crucial, particularly for women farmers, who generally have less access to the resources and technologies for climate adaptation. Pressure is increasing on the limited amount of arable land available in Botswana to support agriculture and livestock production, and the effects of climate change are accelerating the loss of arable land (World Bank 2017). Climate change impacts crop cultivation, as yields from rain-fed agriculture are falling as a consequence of increasingly erratic and reduced rainfall. The high cost of water for irrigation acts as a barrier to entry into the more valuable agricultural value chains for women engaged in small agribusiness. Women are also less likely than men to have access to the agricultural knowledge and resources necessary to invest in climate-smart agricultural practices (World Bank 2017). Female farmers are most vulnerable to the negative impact of climate change, as arable farming is a predominantly female activity. As small-scale crop production (intended chiefly for consumption) is dependent on rainwater and water harvesting from rivers, expanding women's access to climate-smart agricultural practices and crop choices will be vital moving forward (Omari 2014).

3.5. Cross-Cutting Gender Constraints

There are several cross-cutting constraints contributing to gender gaps in economic inclusion in Botswana. Some of the most widespread constraints include the unequal division of unpaid domestic labor; the disproportionate care burden placed on women and girls for young children, the elderly, and disabled and chronically ill family members; sectoral and occupational segregation; and women's concentration in the informal sector. Furthermore, women from some language minority groups, those living with disabilities, and those from the LGBTQI+ community face additional employment discrimination and barriers.⁴⁰

Unpaid domestic labor is a significant constraint on women's ability to engage in economic activities. Women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid work and the time spent on unpaid domestic labor is done at the cost of devoting time to economic activities, and women on average spend fewer hours per week in paid employment than men (Raju and Nxumalo 2021). In addition, pregnancy and childcare responsibilities prevent women from furthering their education or training and create time constraints that inhibit their ability to pursue the skill development needed to be more productive. Women's domestic labor responsibilities, especially in poor and rural households where they are also responsible for collecting firewood and water in addition to regular household and childcare responsibilities, lead to significant daily time constraints. Women and girls perform these time-consuming activities in place of educational, training, or economic opportunities. In addition, it is expected that the time women spend collecting resources such as water and firewood will increase due to climate change and the resultant resource scarcity, requiring women to travel further distances in search of those resources (Omari 2014).

The unequal division of domestic labor leads women to engage in work that is lower paid or in less lucrative sectors, if it provides more flexibility (Rubiano-Matulevich and Viollaz 2019). For example, women are less likely to be engaged in raising more valuable livestock such as cattle, which requires significant time spent herding far from the household. Instead, they are more likely to invest in livestock with lower returns, such as chickens or goats, which allows women to stay closer to home (FAO 2018). Gender roles assigning the bulk of unpaid domestic work to women also negatively impact the success of women's enterprises (Rudhumbu, du Plessis, and Maphosa 2020). Such time constraints contribute to women becoming necessity entrepreneurs. Furthermore, women are less likely than men to separate their business resources from household assets, and thus are less likely to use business assets to grow their businesses.

Compounding the burden of unpaid domestic labor, the AIDS epidemic has had a disproportionate economic and social impact on women. In their traditional role as primary caregivers, women are responsible for caring for family members who are ill, often at the expense of taking advantage of economic, education, or training opportunities. Regional evidence from southern African countries with high burdens of HIV highlight that when a member of the household is ill with AIDS, the amount of time women and girls spend on domestic and care work increases disproportionately compared to men (Makina 2009). In addition to the immediate economic impact of women having less time to earn an income, girls are socialized to be caregivers, often at the expense of their education. In fact, in cases where a girl is an orphaned head of the household, they often leave school altogether to care for their family members.

Women are also more likely to be working in the informal sector than men. The average worker in the informal sector is young and female, with low educational attainment and high vulnerability to shocks. The services sector is the largest informal sector, and 76 percent of workers in the sector are women (UNDP 2020a). The most common occupations for women in the informal services sector include catering, hairdressing, selling clothes, selling cellular data, selling baked goods, fruits, and vegetables, street vending, and laundering clothes. The most common occupations for men in the informal services sector are more likely to require specialized skills, including tire services, welding, pipefitting, glass fixing, and auto mechanic (although they are also engaged in low-skilled work, such as cleaning services and transport). As a result, women working in the informal services sector tend to earn less than men month to month.

40 Consultation with Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LEGABIBO), April 2023.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and negative impact on the economy, and women were disproportionately affected. Statistics Botswana estimates that 53 percent of people who lost their job or business due to the economic impacts of the pandemic were women, and 47 percent were men (Statistics Botswana 2021d). By the end of 2021, only 8.2 percent of those who had lost jobs or businesses had been able to find a new job or start a business, and women returned to work at half the rate of men (34 percent of those who returned to work were women and 65 percent were men) (UNCDF 2021). In addition, more female-owned enterprises defaulted on their loans due to the pandemic than male-owned enterprises—60 percent and 48 percent, respectively (FinMark Trust 2021). The Women in Business Association of Botswana reported that female micro and small business owners had used family assets such as homestead land as collateral, and thus foreclosures had affected many vulnerable households.⁴¹

Gender gaps in economic opportunities overlap with other sources of vulnerability. Minority groups in Botswana face challenges in accessing higher education due to their marginalization (both physical and cultural) and subsequently, exhibit poorer performance against economic indicators (Makwinja 2020). Notably, the two languages that presented the lowest educational levels, Sesarwa and Seyeyi, also show the highest levels of unemployment among household heads (45 percent and 40 percent, respectively). Analysis conducted for the UNDP's 2021 report on inequality reveals stark differences in asset ownership by linguistic group (table 3.1) and significant gaps in unemployment rates (table 3.2) (Martorano et al. 2021). These disadvantages overlay gender gaps, compounding women's economic precariousness among minority language groups. Similar disaggregation of the 2022 census data to identify any gender-gaps within these language-groups across indicators of social and economic vulnerability would help in the government's efforts to reduce inequalities in Botswana and achieve its Vision 2036 aims of "achieving prosperity for all" and "leaving no one behind."

Table 3.1. Household Asset Index, by Linguistic Group, 2011 (% Share)

Main household language	Average asset index	% in bottom quintile of asset index	% in top quintile of asset index
Setswana	2.530	18	21
English	2.937	15	29
Sekalanga	2.478	19	20
Shekgalagadi	2.090	26	14
Sesubiya	2.114	20	12
Sesarwa	1.080	54	3
Seyeyi	1.737	35	8
Sembukushu	1.394	40	4
Afrikaans	3.134	15	34
Ndebele	1.371	46	7
Zezuru/Shona	1.526	38	6
Seherero	2.682	14	21

Source: Census 2011, as reported in Martorano et al. 2021.

Table 3.2. Unemployment and Employment Sector among Household Heads, by Linguistic Group, 2011 (% Share)

Language of household head	Unemployed	Public sector	Private sector
Setswana	31.0	13.6	55.3
English	13.4	5.7	80.9
Sekalanga	32.9	11.1	56.0
Shekgalagadi	39.2	16.1	44.7
Sesubiya	27.7	21.5	50.7
Sesarwa	45.4	9.9	44.7
Seyeyi	40.2	6.9	52.9
Sembukushu	42.8	6.9	50.3
Afrikaans	26.9	8.7	64.4
Ndebele	19.8	1.8	78.4
Zezuru/Shona	20.3	1.1	78.7
Seherero	36.8	12.0	51.2

Source: Census 2011, as reported in Martorano et al. 2021.

41 Meeting with Women in Business Association, April 2023.

3.6. Climate Change Challenges

Botswana is highly vulnerable to climate change—socially, economically, and environmentally (World Bank 2021e). Changes in rainfall are likely to impact Botswana’s agricultural sectors, water systems, biodiversity, and ecosystems.⁴² Where climate change results in increased rainfall, this is linked to increased risk of flooding destroying crops, and of reduced water availability and quality. Where it results in droughts, this is linked to negative impacts on food security and supply, particularly for small-scale farmers, who are predominately women. Extreme temperatures are also likely to affect Botswana, with negative impacts on ecosystems (due to increased incidence of veld fires and the destruction of pastures) and human health, and increased spread of climate-related diseases, including malaria (Gender Links n.d.).

The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women and girls, because they have less access to resources for adaptation. In rural areas where climate change effects are felt directly, female-headed households are less wealthy, limiting their resilience capabilities and increasing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Specifically, women in Botswana have had less access to and control over productive resources, reducing their capacity to adapt to climate shocks and stressors. Women are more likely to be responsible for gathering and providing water for their household, and with water scarcity and rainfall variability being a likely impact of climate change, women’s and girls’ household labor increases as gathering water becomes more difficult. One case study conducted in Ramotswa, South-East District, and in Xhumanga, Central District, found that women were more concerned than men about the impact of climate change on their ability to access water and the implications of this for well-being (Makwatse et al. 2022). Further, as mentioned above, arable farming, a predominantly female activity, is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with crop yields being affected significantly due to erratic and unpredictable rainfall. Women farmers are more vulnerable to climate shocks, as they are less likely to adopt adaptation measures such as weather or index insurance, and have less access to or knowledge of climate-smart agricultural practices (Twyman et al. 2014; Delavallade et al. 2015). The changing rainfall will also likely affect women who are self-employed in the field of harvesting veld products and basket weaving. However, the study in Ramotswa and Xhumanga found that women were less likely than men to seek or access support from the government when adapting to the impact of climate change (Makwatse et al. 2022).

Botswana’s key climate policy documents highlight the importance of a gender-responsive approach to climate change. The broader development policy framework, including NDP 11 and the NPGAD, also supports a gender-responsive approach to climate change, noting that there are differentiated gendered impacts of climate change that require gender-responsive policies and projects (for more details, see appendix B: Botswana Climate Policy and Gender Actions). These policies note that the gendered characteristics of poverty and income disparities are evident in the differential impacts of the environment on security and livelihoods, and that women are most affected by climate change because they are more dependent on natural resources for household livelihoods. Implementing policies to ensure women’s equal participation in climate change decision-making and governance more generally will be important to ensuring Botswana’s just transition toward renewable energy. Evidence shows that countries with higher female representation in government are more likely to set aside protected land and ratify environmental agreements (UNDP 2017).

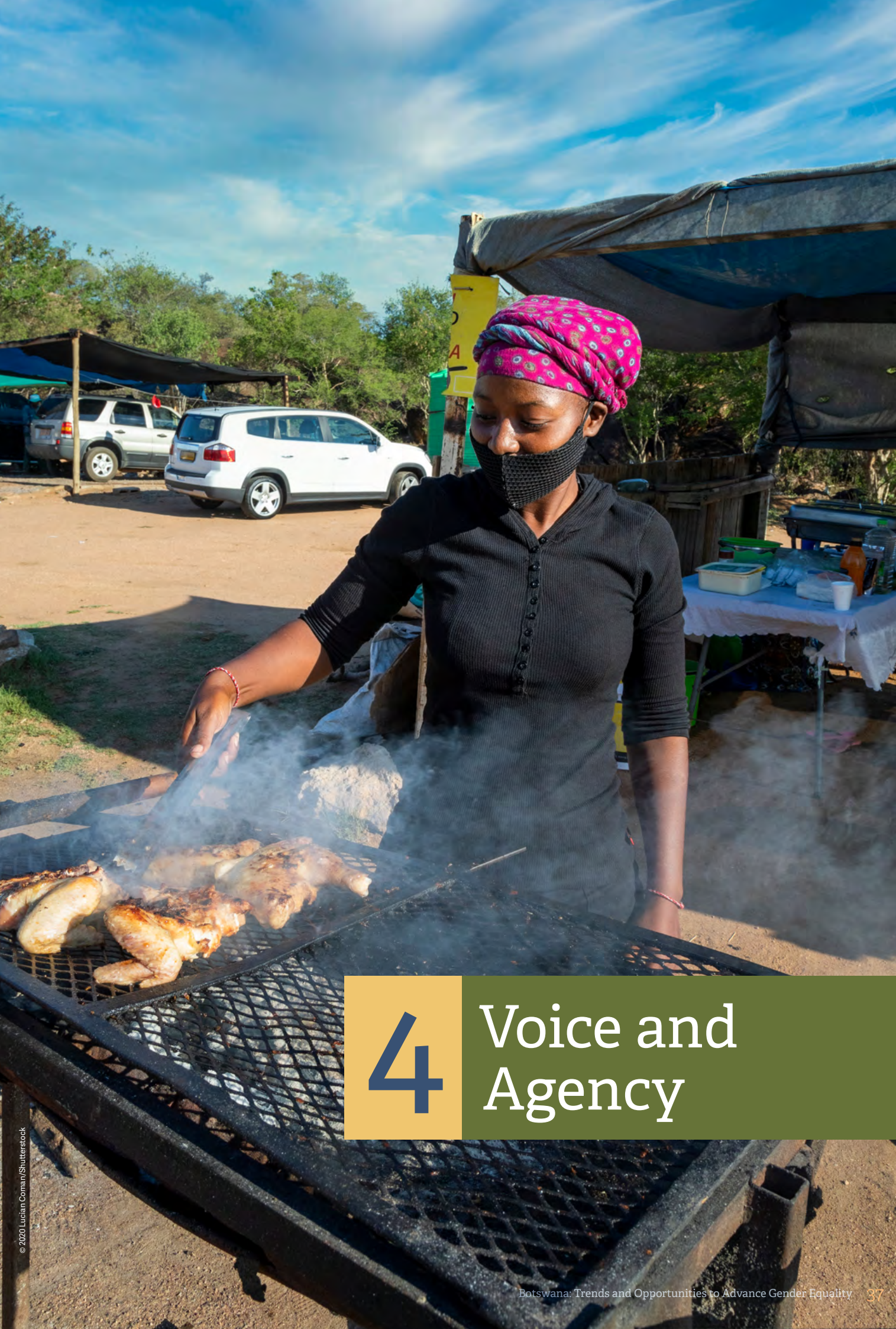


⁴² Botswana Climate Change Response Policy, draft version 2. [https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/BWA/DRAFT%20CLIMATE%20CHANGE%20RESPONSE%20POLICY%20version%202%20\(2\).doc](https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/BWA/DRAFT%20CLIMATE%20CHANGE%20RESPONSE%20POLICY%20version%202%20(2).doc).

3.7. Data and Knowledge Gaps

Further research on women's role in the labor force is needed to measure and identify drivers of gender gaps in the economy, including opportunities in the emerging renewable energy sector. Gender analysis of data collected in the 2023 Enterprise Surveys (World Bank 2023) is needed as there is a general lack of disaggregated data on firm productivity, growth, and access to financial services. As well, information currently being collected through the new Multi-Topic Household Survey would enable further analysis of the informal sector in Botswana to encourage the transition of female-owned enterprises into the formal sector. A Living Standards Measurement Study⁴³ would be highly useful to identify the drivers of women's low productivity in agriculture. A Demographic and Health Survey would add to the knowledge of Botswana women's asset ownership and autonomy to take advantage of economic opportunities. A time use survey would enable the identification of gender gaps in time availability to participate in economic activities for improved targeting. Additionally, gender disaggregated financial inclusion data and analysis could be used to increase access to and use of formal financial services (FAO 2020).⁴⁴

⁴³ See description of Living Standards Measurement Study at <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/lsms/?page=1&ps=15&repo=lsms>.
⁴⁴ FAO 2020 presents a strong example of such an analysis.



4

Voice and Agency

Although women in Botswana hold important leadership positions in the public sector, civil society, and academia, and their levels of education are on a par with or exceed those of their male counterparts, women's representation in Parliament is one of the lowest in Africa. This is largely a legacy of mutually reinforcing patriarchal norms within Botswana society, nearly exclusively male traditional leadership, and the country's modern political system. While the Constitution (1966) includes equality and nondiscrimination provisions, women still face disadvantages in both the common law and customary legal systems, although recent legislative reform and High Court rulings have advanced equality under both legal traditions. Successive governments have established a gender machinery and key policy frameworks to advance gender equality, and preparation of a new National Development Plan offers an opportunity to put key policies into practice and ensure women and girls can achieve their full potential to accelerate the economic transition to an inclusive high-income country.

Batswana hold somewhat incongruous views regarding gender equality and tend to believe that there is more gender equality than evidence suggests. According to the 2017 Afrobarometer survey, two thirds of Batswana (about equal numbers of men and women) feel that equal opportunities for and treatment of women have improved in recent years (Jacobs and Isbell 2019). Large majorities of Batswana assert that women already enjoy the same opportunities as men when it comes to earning an income (85 percent), securing a paid job (84 percent), and owning or inheriting land (82 percent), and gender differences on these views are small. With regard to gender equality in the workforce, over three quarters (77 percent—82 percent of women and 72 percent of men) of Batswana support gender equality in hiring and reject the idea that “when jobs are scarce, men should be given priority” (Mooketsane et al. 2023). Yet, as discussed in section 3.1, women's labor force participation (60.0 percent) is more than 10 percentage points lower than men's labor force participation (70.2 percent). Further, the 2022 Afrobarometer survey found considerable reporting of positive attitudes towards gender equality in household decision-making and land issues (Mooketsane et al. 2023). With regard to household decision-making, a larger proportion of women (58 percent) than men (52 percent) said that they made independent decisions regarding how household money was spent. Only 6 percent of women and 9 percent of men said that household financial decisions were made by their spouse or another family member without their input. In terms of land, nine in ten citizens (91 percent of men and 92 percent of women) agreed that women should have the same rights as men to own and inherit land. However, as will be discussed below, these attitudes and perceptions have not translated into greater equality in terms of women's voice and agency in public spheres.

4.1 Governance and Political Participation

While opinion surveys suggest that there is popular support for women in politics, this has not been translated into greater representation of women in Parliament (Mooketsane et al. 2023). In the 2019 elections there were only 11 women among the 210 candidates who ran for office at national level (SADC 2022). In contrast, almost nine out of ten Batswana (86 percent) agree or strongly agree that women should have the same chance as men to be elected to public office, with only 13 percent saying that men make better political leaders. Six in ten (63 percent) of Batswana believe that a woman and her family will gain standing in the community if she runs for elected office. Women are slightly more likely than men (89 percent versus 84 percent) to support gender equality in politics; yet, four in ten citizens believe that a woman running for office will be criticized, called names, or harassed by others in the community (43 percent), and that she may face problems in her family (40 percent) pointing to general awareness of underlying social constraints to women's political participation. In addition, even though more women are registered to vote than men,⁴⁵ they are more likely to vote for men than for other women (Gender Links 2020).

⁴⁵ Data from the Independent Electoral Commission.

Representation of Botswana women in politics remains very low, with only 8.7 percent of seats in the National Assembly held by women as of the 2024 elections. Furthermore, only three of the 6 sitting female members in the National Assembly were elected in the 2024 elections, while the remaining three were specially appointed.⁴⁶ In 2024, the World Economic Forum ranked Botswana 125th out of 146 countries in terms of political empowerment—lower than all other African countries except for Comoros, The Gambia, Algeria, Nigeria, and Sudan (World Economic Forum 2024).⁴⁷ The Inter-Parliamentary Union ranked Botswana 170th of 190 countries ranked on women’s representation in Parliament below all African countries except The Gambia, Algeria, Nigeria, Eritrea and Niger (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2025). There are currently no legislative quotas for women’s representation in the National Assembly,⁴⁸ although some political parties have adopted voluntary quotas (IDEA 2021; World Economic Forum 2022).⁴⁹ In fact, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution recently recommended that this practice of adopting quotas become law, requiring political parties to field a minimum of 30 percent female candidates in primary, local government, and parliamentary elections (Constitution Review Commission 2022).⁵⁰ Furthermore, the commission recommended that improvements be made in the targeting of marginalized, special, and underrepresented groups (in both the National Assembly and local government).⁵¹ Box 4.1 presents country examples of the introduction of quotas in different electoral systems. Doing so in Botswana would be in keeping with the country’s commitments under the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (Article 12), which Botswana signed in 2017 and through which State Parties endeavor to ensure that at least 50 percent of decision-making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women, including through the use of affirmative action measures.

As of November 2024, only three of 19 cabinet positions were held by women (the Ministers of Child Welfare and Basic Education, of Youth and Gender Affairs, and of Minerals and Energy) revealing that women continue to be under-represented at the highest levels of government. Within the judiciary, women are making progress including at the highest level of the judiciary where a woman sits as the Judge President of the Court of Appeal, the highest court in the country. In addition, 19 percent of judges and 69 percent of magistrates were women as of 2022 (SADC 2022). Botswana has significantly increased the representation of women in the Independent Electoral Commission since 2011. Women now make up 50 percent of electoral commissioners (three of six) compared to 14.3 percent in 2011 (one of seven) (SADC 2022).

Botswana women are only slightly better represented in local government.⁵² Following the 2024 elections, 116 of 762 (15 percent) of council seats were held by women (table 4.1). Research in Botswana suggests that higher levels of women’s participation in decision-making positions not only enhances gender equality but can also contribute to reducing corruption, thereby improving governance (Omotoye 2019).

Table 4.1. Representation of Women in Government

	Total no. of seats	No. of seats held by women	% women’s representation
National Assembly	69	6	8.7%
Local government	762	116	15%

Sources: Gender Links 2025; IPU 2025.

⁴⁶ Botswana has a unicameral Parliament consisting of 61 members who are directly elected in single-member constituencies using a first past the post system. Parliament elects the President, who then has the mandate to nominate six specially elected members for election by the National Assembly Inter-Parliamentary Union. Parline. <https://data.ipu.org/>.

⁴⁷ This ranking considers women in Parliament, women in ministerial positions, and years with a female head of State in the last 50 years.

⁴⁸ As of 2023, none of the laws that guide electoral processes in Botswana (Electoral Act of 2012, Local Government Act of 2012, or Referendum Act of 2001) includes special measures or requirements to facilitate women’s representation (SADC 2022).

⁴⁹ The Botswana Congress Party and the Botswana National Front both have a 30 percent party quota (IDEA 2021).

⁵⁰ Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana, paragraph 26.3.7.

⁵¹ Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana, paragraphs 21.1.8 and 23.6.3.

⁵² Botswana is divided into 10 administrative districts, two cities, five towns, and 11 subdistricts. These are administered by 16 local authorities (district councils, city councils, or town councils).

Box 4.1 Legislated Quotas to Promote Women's Political Participation

Across the world, 138 countries have constitutional, electoral, or political party quotas to promote women's political representation. In countries with legislated candidate quotas, women's representation is 5 percentage points and 7 percentage points higher in Parliaments and local government, respectively, compared to countries without such legislation (UN Women 2023). While the impacts on policy are complex, empirical work suggests that quotas result in increased legislative attention to issues related to women's rights, public health (particularly children's health), and poverty alleviation (and in agrarian rural contexts, access to potable water) (Clayton 2021).

In Africa, political parties in 17 countries, including Botswana, have voluntary political party quotas. However, while the Botswana Congress Party and the Botswana National Front introduced 30 percent quotas, neither of the political parties have consistently met this quota, and the quotas have not translated to equal representation of women in Parliament. In neighboring South Africa, the African National Congress, which has governed between the end of Apartheid and the 2024 elections, introduced a gender quota in the first democratic elections in 1994. As of the 2019 national elections, women make up 45.5 percent of the lower house and 44.4 percent of the upper chamber, with the result that South Africa is ranked second in Africa in terms of women's representation in Parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2025).

Rwanda provides an example of the introduction of parliamentary quotas in proportional representation systems, where it is easier to do so than in first past the post systems, as it is a matter of simply alternating male and female candidates on the electoral party lists. The 2003 Constitution introduced a quota requiring 30 percent of positions in all decision-making organs to be held by women. Prior to the introduction of the quota, 25.7 percent of seats in parliament had been held by women. In 2003, female representation in parliament jumped to 49.8 percent and as of the 2024 elections, women hold 63.8 percent of seats in parliament.⁵³ With this, Rwanda has the highest representation of women in Parliament the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2025).

While more challenging, there are examples of positive impacts from introducing reserved seats in a first past the post electoral system. In some cases, quotas in that system are achieved by having a number of appointed seats in Parliament for women and other minority or special groups. For example, the Eswatini Constitution makes provisions for the King, as head of State, to appoint members of Parliament to "balance views" in the legislative process and ensure that special interests—such as chiefs, women, the business community, and civil society—are represented. In Tanzania the Constitution was amended in 1992 to ensure that 30 percent of seats in the National Assembly are occupied by women. Political parties nominate female representatives on the basis of the proportion of votes obtained by each party in the parliamentary election. As of the 2020 elections, Tanzania has 37.8 percent women in the National Assembly (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2025).

Despite the strong public support for women to hold elected office, socio-cultural perceptions are a barrier to women's political participation. Barriers include widely held beliefs about women's role being primarily in the private sphere, a lack of confidence in women as leaders, women's own lack of self-confidence in their leadership ability, the perception of politics in Botswana as a "male space," and stigma and public scrutiny surrounding women who do participate in politics. Such biases are reflected in the media, in which the coverage of women candidates is more limited than that of male candidates (IDEA 2021). Tolerance of women's low representation may also be a barrier—addressing gender in representation is not considered a priority issue for Botswana, with only 14 percent of citizens surveyed indicating that this was the most important issue for the government of Botswana to address

⁵³ World Bank, World Development Indicators database: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators> and Inter-Parliamentary Union Parline database: <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/RW/RW-LC01/data-on-women/>

(Mooketsane et al. 2023). In addition to lacking the same political networks as men enjoy, the cost of running individual campaigns in each electoral district under the first past the post system (as opposed to proportional representation, whereby political parties put forth lists of candidates) is also noted as a barrier for female candidates. In the budget speech of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development to the National Assembly, on February 5, 2024, the government proposed introducing political party funding of 34.6 million pula to further enhance the country's democratic principles, creating an opportunity to set incentives for political parties to field more women candidates.

Traditional leadership structures are heavily male dominated. In addition to the National Assembly, Botswana also has the Ntlo ya Dikgosi (House of Chiefs), made up of 35 traditional leaders, which acts as an advisory body to Parliament. Although it has no legislative or veto powers, all bills affecting tribal affairs, customary law, and the administration of customary courts must go through the Ntlo ya Dikgosi before being discussed in the National Assembly. The House of Chiefs must also be consulted when the Constitution is being reviewed or amended. Of the 33 chiefs currently sitting in the Ntlo ya Dikgosi, only two are women after a third recently stepped down to allow her brother to take her seat.⁵⁴ At the local level, tribal chiefs and community councils (kgotla), which have significant influence over community life, are also heavily male dominated (Martorano et al. 2021). In 2022, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution recommended training for the *dikgosi* (chiefs) with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and productivity in the customary court system (Constitution Review Commission 2022).⁵⁵ Doing so may provide an entry point for awareness raising among traditional leaders on the primacy of the Constitution's provisions regarding nondiscrimination and equality before the law.

Besides being underrepresented in the traditional chieftaincy system, women from under-represented groups face particular challenges in having their voices heard. Constitutional amendments have increased the number of tribes represented in the Ntlo ya Dikgosi from the eight principal tribes of the Tswana nation that were originally recognized. However, there are various other smaller tribal groups who are not represented (United States Department of State 2022). While an estimated 2.9 percent of the population of Botswana identifies as belonging to an indigenous group (IWGIA 2022), the government of Botswana has not yet recognized any group or tribe as indigenous, although Botswana did sign the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations General Assembly 2007). Nonetheless, building on its commitment to "achieving prosperity for all" and "leaving no one behind" put forward in Vision 2036, the government of Botswana has been implementing several initiatives to reduce inequalities that particularly affect marginalized groups, for example in expanding access to education and economic development efforts in remote and rural areas.

4.2. Legal Framework for Gender Equality

The Constitution of Botswana (1966) confers fundamental freedoms on all citizens irrespective of "race, tribe, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex," and further stipulates that "no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory" on these grounds. Although this clause establishes the principle of nondiscrimination, the Constitution also specifies that it does not apply to customary law, including in matters of "adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death, or other matters of personal law" (OECD 2019). This can undermine women's equality, as customary law often contains discriminatory provisions when it comes to women's marital and property rights, voice, and agency. For example, under the Matrimonial Causes Act (1973), men and women have equal rights to initiate and finalize divorce processes; however, this provision does not apply to customary marriages, within which women have limited ability to initiate divorce. Furthermore, the antidiscrimination clause in the Constitution does not apply to the grounds for divorce, leading to the unequal distribution of resources in divorce proceedings (OECD 2019).

⁵⁴ Interview with Dr Valencia Mogegeh, Managing Director, Gender Perspectives (Pty) Ltd., April 20, 2023.

⁵⁵ Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana, paragraph 24.1.15.



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Under Botswana's pluralist legal system, customary and common law can come into conflict in the area of the protection of women's rights. Both the Customary Law Act (1969) and Customary Courts Act (1961) prioritize the application of customary law for most civil cases within tribal groups. Customary law is not codified, and its content varies between tribal groups within Botswana. Although the Customary Law Act requires that customary law should be compatible with the Constitution, in practice customary courts do not always interpret the law so as to protect women's rights (United Nations Botswana 2021). For instance, under the customary law of some tribal groups, women are treated as legal minors within marriage, unmarried women are considered under the guardianship of their fathers, husbands may use corporal punishment against their wives and children (who are considered a father's property), and inheritance has traditionally been conferred through the male lineage (Botswana Court of Appeal 2012; Nkhata and Kalunga 2015). However, there have been some encouraging legal developments strengthening women's rights under customary law. For example, in the case of *Mmusi and Others v. Ramantele and Another*, the High Court of Botswana ruled that customary law provisions restricting women's inheritance rights were unconstitutional, and the case was subsequently upheld in the Court of Appeal.⁵⁶

The evolution of land tenure in Botswana has improved women's access to land, though gender gaps continue to exist as a legacy of historically discriminatory laws and customs pertaining to women's land ownership. There are three types of land tenure systems in Botswana: (a) tribal land, which accounts for 71 percent of the land; (b) freehold, which includes about 3 percent of the land; and (c) state land, which comprises 26 percent of the country's land (Polity 2017). Historically, women only had access to land through their male relatives. To address this historical bias, a series of legislative and policy reforms have been introduced to strengthen women's access to land. Though women gained the right to apply to be granted land independently through a 1993 amendment to the Tribal Land Act, widespread social expectations that women access land through their husbands persist and can bias the review of women's applications for land by regional land boards (FAO 2018). In 2004, under the Abolition of Marital Powers Act, women were granted equal rights to administer a joint estate when married in community of property, meaning that husband and wife agree at their time of marriage to share all property rather than retaining individual ownership; however, the law does not apply to customary and religious marriages (Polity 2017). The 2015 Land Policy granted to unmarried women, for the first time, the right to own land, and the Revised Botswana Land policy of 2019 gave married women the right to own land independently, regardless of their husband's land ownership or lack thereof (UNCDF 2021). Previously, only unmarried women or wives of men who were not landowners could apply for land grants leaving significant numbers of women without access to secure land title. However, some groups face additional challenges, as women from marginalized groups report further difficulties in securing legal tenure rights over land for residential, agricultural, or business purposes (IWGIA 2022).

⁵⁶ In this case three sisters disputed their nephew's right to inherit the family home under customary law. The High Court ruled that these laws were unconstitutional, and thus asserted women's right to inherit property for the first time.

Several court rulings and legal reforms have advanced gender equality in Botswana. The amendment of the Deeds Registry Act (1996) enabled the registration of title deeds in the woman's name for women married in community of property. The case of *Unity Dow v. Attorney-General* (1991) advanced citizenship rights by affirming sections 4 and 5 of the Citizenship Act (1982), thus ensuring that mothers, as well as fathers, are able to pass on their citizenship to their children. The case of *Mmusi and Others v. Ramantele and Another* advanced women's inheritance rights by ruling that customary laws that prioritized male inheritance were unconstitutional (Chiepe et al. 2016).

The courts have also moved to protect equality for sexual orientation and gender identity minorities. The 2016 case of *Attorney-General v. Rammoge and 19 Others* confirmed that every person in Botswana is protected by the Constitution and entitled to constitutional rights, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Moreover, in the 2017 case of *ND v. Attorney-General of Botswana*, the High Court ruled that the State has a duty to protect the rights of transgender individuals, and indicated that not having identity documents that matches a person's gender identity exposes that person to unwanted embarrassment and "forces them into recurring situations of tension with officials and institutions when required to present identity documents" (SALC and LEGABIBO 2020). In 2019, the Botswana High Court ruled that criminalization of homosexuality was unconstitutional and that Penal Code provisions criminalizing same-sex relations between men was a breach of their privacy (Botswana Court of Appeal 2019). Following this ruling, the government of Botswana presented legislation repealing colonial era provisions of the Penal Code to decriminalize same-sex sexual relations (Chingono 2021).⁵⁷ However, following protests from conservative groups, the government suspended debate in Parliament in August 2023 in order to allow further consultations, and indicated that the legislation would be reintroduced at a later date (Dube 2023).

Marital equality has been established for civil marriages but does not apply to customary and religious marriages or to de facto and informal unions. The Abolition of Marital Powers Act (2004) established women's equal rights within marriage, clarifying that women are not required to obey their husbands and have the same rights to be head of the household and make familial and economic decisions (OECD 2019). The act also establishes women's equal rights of guardianship over their children. However, the act does not apply to customary and religious marriages,⁵⁸ and it is unclear what proportion of all marriages in Botswana fall into this category (Statistics Botswana 2021c). Although the practice is uncommon, polygamy remains legal under customary law⁵⁹ (while civil marriages are limited to a union of a man and a woman) (Constitution Review Commission 2022). Furthermore, protections under the Marriage Act (2001) do not extend to de facto or informal unions, which are becoming increasingly common in Botswana (OECD 2019). The Marriage Act also does not make provision for same-sex marriage; nor does it explicitly prohibit it.

Despite the important Constitutional provisions for the protection of gender equality and nondiscrimination (section 15), these provisions have not been codified into law, resulting in a lack of clarity as to their application and enforceability. The lack of codification of these provisions by statute enables the perpetuation of discriminatory policies and rulings (particularly at customary court level), as it leaves interpretation of nondiscrimination to the courts on an individual case-by-case basis (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Institute 2023). Furthermore, there remains a lack of clear process for transferring cases from customary courts to civil courts, which can accord stronger legal protections for women.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution, established in 2021, recommended several reforms that would advance gender equality. The commission's final report was published in September 2022 and 92 recommendations were made to the President for reform in law and policy, and for the introduction of campaigns and programs to challenge practices that limited human rights. Specifically, the commission's report recommended several legislative and policy reviews that would advance gender equality, including amendments to the Constitution to enhance protection from discrimination and advance the right to land; recommendations to advance the representation of women and persons with disabilities, particularly at national and local levels; and criminal reform to increase penalties for sexual violence. In addition, the commission recommended that section 15 of

⁵⁷ Penal Code Amendment Bill, No. 29 of 2022.

⁵⁸ Abolition of Marital Powers Act (2024), Section 3 "Application of the Act".

⁵⁹ Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana, paragraph 28.3.5.

the Constitution be expanded to include intersex and disability as grounds for nondiscrimination. In March 2024, the government introduced a constitutional amendment bill which includes provisions that would protect and prohibit the discrimination against intersex persons and persons with disabilities.⁶⁰ An overview of the commission's recommendations regarding gender issues is presented in appendix C.

4.3. Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

4.3.1. *Prevalence, Attitudes, and Costs*

Batswana women experience very high levels of GBV—primarily intimate partner violence (IPV), as well as early and forced sexual initiation, child marriage, and nonpartner violence. The 2018 National Relationships Study found that 37 percent of women had experienced some form of GBV, and that 30 percent of men admitted to having perpetrated GBV (Chiramba, Musariri, and Rasesigo 2018; Republic of Botswana 2019). Almost half of men (48 percent) and more than half of women (52 percent) surveyed said that they thought it was very common or somewhat common for men to use violence against women and girls in the home or their community (Afrobarometer 2023). IPV is the most prevalent form of GBV experienced by women and most commonly takes the form of emotional violence followed by physical, economic, and sexual violence (Chiramba, Musariri, and Rasesigo 2018). Few cases of marital rape reach the courts for several reasons, including the weight of social norms that discourage reporting, while the police response to domestic violence cases is slow and such cases are given low priority (UNDP 2020b). In addition, GBV cases take a long time to finalize; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Institute (2023) estimates three to four years and conviction rates remain low, which may serve as a further disincentive to report.

High levels of GBV impose significant costs not only on the health and well-being of women and girls who bear the brunt of the violence, but on the country as a whole. Global research has shown that GBV can impose significant economic costs on a country due to lost productivity and lower human capital accumulation, in addition to the direct costs of health, social, justice, and police services for survivors. Higher levels of violence against women and girls are associated with lower economic development—an analysis of data from 18 Sub-Saharan African countries found that an increase in the share of women subjected to violence by 1 percentage point can reduce nightlights-based economic activities by up to 8.7 percent (Ouedraogo and Stenzel 2021). A recent study in Finland found that women in abusive relationships had employment rates 12 percentage points lower and earnings 26 percentage points lower than similar women with nonabusive partners. (Adams-Prassl et al. 2022). While data on the scale of GBV-related economic losses in Botswana could not be located, they are likely to be significant. In neighboring countries with similar levels of GBV, the cost of GBV to the economy has been estimated at 1.2–1.3 percent of GDP annually (1.23 percent in Lesotho, and 1.3 percent in South Africa) (KPMG 2017; Commonwealth Secretariat 2020).

Batswana do not generally condone IPV and recognize it as a significant problem. A large majority of Batswana (88 percent of men and 92 percent of women) think that it is never justified for a man to use physical discipline against his wife (Afrobarometer 2023). In addition, most Batswana (85 percent) agree that domestic violence is a criminal matter whose full resolution requires the involvement of law enforcement agencies, and that it is likely or somewhat likely (83 percent) that if a woman reported a rape or domestic violence by her husband, the police would take her case seriously. Yet, the 2018 National Relationships Study found that 24 percent of women and 31 percent of men agree that if a man has paid a bride price (*lobola*) for his wife, she must have sex when he wants it. Furthermore, 45 percent of men and 24 percent of women believe that by paying *lobola*, a man owns his wife (Republic of Botswana 2019).

60 Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024 – Bill No. 4 of 2024]

Children are vulnerable to violence and exploitation, which are experienced differently by boys and girls. Twenty-eight percent of female and 43 percent of male children in Botswana experience physical violence before the age of 18, largely by parents, caregivers, and relatives, but also by peers, particularly in the case of boys (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development 2019). In 2016, the Ministry of Basic Education reported that 33 percent of adolescents in school had had their first sexual encounter before age 13, and 22 percent reported that their first sexual experience had been forced, particularly girls under 15 years (United Nations Botswana 2021). Similarly, the 2016 Violence Against Children Survey found that among respondents ages 18-24 whose first sexual intercourse was prior to age 18, 9.8 percent of women and 1.7 percent of men reported their first incidence of sexual intercourse was unwanted (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development 2019). Children and adolescents also report feeling unsafe in their home and communities some or all of the time, with orphans and vulnerable children more likely than other children to feel unsafe (UNFPA 2021). In addition to the direct harm caused to children, these incidents also undermine efforts to reduce adolescent pregnancy and the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

There is limited information on the extent of the practice of child marriage in Botswana, and these marriages are not routinely reported to the police. Since the coming into effect of the Children's Act (2009), the minimum age of marriage is set at 18 years, and there are no exceptions, as previously allowed with the consent of a parent or guardian as under the Marriage Act (2001). These provisions apply to both common law and customary and religious marriages.⁶¹ Marriages of minors solemnized prior to the coming into force of the Children's Act (2009) are voidable. However, many customary marriages and informal unions are unregistered, and the practice continues in some areas. The 2022 Population and Housing Census found that among 20-24 year old women, 12.5 percent had been married before age 18 and 9.7 percent were married before age 15 (Statistics Botswana 2023). However, the problem varies significantly by region and is reportedly higher, for example, in the Maun region of North West District than in the urban south (Ramambu 2020) and higher amongst certain tribes.⁶²

People whose sexual orientation and gender identity does not conform to traditional gender norms continue to face stigmatization, harassment, discrimination, and violence in Botswana. The topic of homosexuality is taboo in Botswana society, and it is rare for LGBTQI+ people to live openly.⁶³ Public intolerance remains widespread, with less than half of Botswana (45 percent) indicating that they would be comfortable with having a homosexual neighbor (Afrobarometer 2023). Transgender women are particularly at risk of sexual violence, with a small survey finding that 45 percent had experienced sexual violence at some point in their lifetime, and 25 percent within the year prior to a survey (Müller and Daskilewicz 2019). However, victims of such incidents seldom filed police reports, primarily due to stigma and, in some cases, because of overt official intimidation (United States Department of State 2022). Police have been reported to both perpetrate violations of LGBTQI+ persons and withhold protection against violations (Arcus Foundation 2019).

Women and children with disabilities are also particularly vulnerable to GBV. UNFPA estimates that women with disabilities in Botswana are up to 10 times more likely to experience GBV. In addition, many endure coercive health care practices that constitute GBV, for instance forced sterilization and abortion, as well as having to endure abusive treatment (UNFPA 2022). There are low rates of reporting amongst this population group due to stigma as well as limited accessibility of the criminal justice system, including lack of accessible infrastructure in courtrooms and police stations, nonavailability of sign language interpreters at police stations, and compromised confidentiality in court, as sign language interpreters are appointed by the government (UNDP 2020b). There are also limited disability-friendly support services for survivors of violence.⁶⁴

GBV reporting rates are generally low, and government statistics likely reflect only a small portion of actual incidents of violence. The 2018 National Relationships Study indicated that just one in nine people who were raped reported this to the police (Chiramba, Musariri, and Rasesigo 2018; Republic of Botswana 2019). GBV court cases take a long time to finalize and conviction rates remain low, which may serve as a further

61 Children's Act, 2009, Act No. 8 of 2009, section 62.

62 Meeting with Botswana Centre for Human Rights, March 2023.

63 Amera International, Botswana LGBTI Resources: <https://www.amerainternational.org/botswana-lgbti-resources/>.

64 Meeting with Botswana Council for the Disabled, April 2023.

disincentive to reporting (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Institute 2023). Reluctance to report GBV is not surprising given the pervasive attitudes that disempower and blame the victim. The 2018 National Relationship Study found that 45 percent of men believe that in any rape case, the “promiscuity” of victims is a relevant consideration; 34 percent of men affirmed that in some rape cases, women want it to happen; and 41 percent of men believe that if a woman does not fight back, it is not rape (United Nations Botswana 2021).

Drivers of GBV in Botswana are complex and intersecting. They include alcohol and drug use, patriarchal gender norms and attitudes, community and cultural beliefs and values, expectation that women be submissive, and normalization of the harsh treatment of children (Machisa and van Dorp 2012). Almost a quarter of men (24 percent) who had perpetrated IPV in the past 12 months also reported consuming alcohol in the same period, and of those who consumed alcohol, 19 percent perpetrated IPV (Ramsoor-Hariparsaad and Maker-Diedericks 2021). Likewise, in the 2018 National Relationships Study, 45 percent of respondents reported experiencing abuse while their partner was drunk (Chiramba, Musariri, and Rasesigo 2018).

Box 4.2 present a summary of interventions including men and boys that can help in combating GBV.

4.3.2. GBV: Prevention, Response, and Legal Protection

Botswana has introduced robust legislation to address multiple forms of GBV. However, challenges with implementation and public awareness of the relevant laws hamper their effectiveness. In 2008, the government of Botswana passed the Domestic Violence Act, which defined domestic violence as physical, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse; the law also includes provisions related to harassment and stalking. However, the law does not explicitly include marital rape under “sexual violence,” and it does not prohibit mediation between perpetrator and victim. Furthermore, protection orders under the act do not include any provisions on child custody or financial support. Additionally, the law does not name any relevant ministry or government agency as relevant authorities with the mandate to oversee the implementation of the law, and does not refer to the adoption of training mechanisms or budget. Recognizing high levels of GBV in Botswana, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution recommended increasing penalties for sexual violence, although some harsher penalties may be contrary to international human rights standards (Constitution Review Commission 2022). A review of gender mainstreaming in the criminal justice system identified other areas for strengthening to address new challenges such as cyber harassment (Khaufelo et al. 2023). This same report recommends increasing access to legal aid for GBV survivors, who face multiple obstacles in accessing justice.

Box 4.2 The Role of Men and Boys in Taking Action to End GBV

Recent evidence shows that well-designed interventions that include men and boys in ending IPV and GBV more broadly have been successful in shifting attitudes and behaviors related to domestic and sexual violence. This includes having positive effects such as weakening violence-supportive attitudes, increasing victim empathy, and lessening adherence to rape myths (UN Women 2020). In addition, where economic empowerment interventions are introduced to reduce violence against women and girls, engaging male partners and husbands in these interventions is shown to enhance their effectiveness and lessen the likelihood of male backlash. In fact, existing evidence shows that it is important to include men in these programs from the outset, using concurrent strategies to deconstruct harmful masculinities while empowering women and girls (Sonke Gender Justice 2011).

In South Africa, the Phaphama Men intervention involved a five-session program that examined the personal and community consequences of GBV and HIV, explored behavior alternatives, and focused on building skills in behavior alternatives. Men living in townships in Cape Town participated in the program. Postintervention evaluations showed that men who participated in the program were less likely to have lost their temper with a woman, less likely to have hit or pushed an intimate partner, and more likely to have talked about condoms with a sexual partner (UN Women 2020).

The law's effectiveness in addressing GBV is also limited by the existence of the dual legal system and the reality that most GBV cases are heard in male-dominated customary courts, which perpetuate traditional attitudes that normalize IPV. For instance, customary law holds that sex within a marriage is always consensual (ARISA and BONELA 2020), and under customary practices, men are perceived to have the right to "chastise" their wives (UNDP 2020b). The UNDP estimates that approximately 85 percent of GBV cases are brought before chiefs or customary courts and just 15 percent are tried in common law courts.⁶⁵ According to consultations, cases of GBV that appear before customary courts are not handled in a gender-sensitive manner, and often the rulings disadvantage the victim (for instance by instructing a victim of domestic violence to "be nicer" to their spouse to avoid further violence).⁶⁶ Recognizing that many Batswana seek justice in customary courts, the government of Botswana has sought to develop training and capacity-building programs on GBV for *dikgosi*, including through the 2018 Dikgosi GBV Action Plan. In addition, as of 2022, the government is also in the process of finalizing guidelines on child welfare and abuse to assist *dikgosi* on handling issues of child abuse. A 2023 report prepared by the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis as an input for the development of guidelines on gender mainstreaming states that in the justice system, "gender equality ... [is] often at variance with the traditional value system in Botswana, hence the need for greater involvement in traditional leadership, such as Bogosi. Dikgosi hold both community leadership and judicial officer roles. Rethinking these challenges in view of the shifting nature of the problem is critical" (Khaufelo et al. 2023).

The government of Botswana has criminalized trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking, but it is unclear whether the State's response to trafficking is effective. Government efforts to address trafficking include the Anti-Human Trafficking Act (2014), an Anti-Human Trafficking National Action Plan (2018–2022), an anti-trafficking unit in the Ministry of Defence, Justice, and Security, and establishment of the Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary of Defence, Justice, and Security. Some groups of children are particularly at risk of exploitation, such as Basarwa children who have been subjected to forced labor on cattle farms. According to the United States Department of State report on trafficking, although law enforcement and labor inspectors are aware of this issue, they do not make concerted efforts to investigate the crime, and the government of Botswana still lacks formal procedures to identify victims and refer them to care (United States Department of State 2022).

In recent years, the government of Botswana has made several efforts to respond to GBV at a policy and institutional level. It published the National Strategy towards Ending Gender Based Violence in Botswana (2016–2020), which outlined critical areas of concern to be addressed and set five priorities: the prevention of new GBV incidents; comprehensive protection, care, and support for GBV survivors; strengthening national capacity to address GBV; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the coordination and management of the national GBV response; and strategic information and knowledge management (Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs 2016). The strategy is currently being updated. Following the publication of the 2018 National Relationships Study finding high levels of GBV in Botswana, in 2021 the government of Botswana constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender-Based Violence⁶⁷ to provide overarching strategic guidance and coordination in response to GBV. However, this committee was established in lieu of a commission of inquiry, as proposed in Parliament, and only one of the six ministers appointed to the committee was a woman, drawing criticism from civil society (Makati 2021). The Second Transitional NDP includes an emphasis on GBV, including interventions such as establishing a GBV case management system that will use information and communication technology, and setting up more safe havens across the country (Government of Botswana 2023b).⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Meeting with UNDP and UNFPA April 2023.

⁶⁶ Meeting with Women Against Rape, April 2023.

⁶⁷ The Inter-Ministerial Committee includes the Ministers of Presidential Affairs, Governance, and Public Administration; Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs; Defence, Justice, and Security; Health and Wellness; Local Government and Rural Development; and Basic Education.

⁶⁸ Government of Botswana, Second Transitional NDP, sections 9.107 and 9.108.

Access to support services for survivors of GBV remains very limited in Botswana. As of 2020, only six women's shelters were operating with limited capacity during the April–May 2020 COVID-19 national lockdown (United Nations Botswana 2021). According to the NGOs running these services, the financial sustainability of the centers is at constant risk. Furthermore, coordination between services and referral systems are weak, and GBV information management is inadequate, as there is no national database or integrated GBV surveillance system.

The government of Botswana is taking steps to increase access to services, protection, and justice for survivors of GBV through better provision of services. Between 2015 and 2017 the Department of Gender Affairs undertook a pilot project at four sites in two districts⁶⁹ to improve referrals between GBV service providers such as police, social workers, health facilities, and domestic violence shelters. An endline evaluation of the pilot found that there were improvements related to GBV in intervention communities when compared with nonintervention sites. These improvements included women reporting GBV more frequently, providers being more supportive to survivors when providing care, increased awareness of community activities taking place around GBV, and fewer cases of GBV incidents. In addition, service providers indicated a higher level of understanding of GBV, increased comfort handling cases, and increased trust and collaboration between providers in the referral system (Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs n.d.).

Signaling the government of Botswana's recognition that GBV constitutes a serious problem in Botswana, President Masisi made a public statement on September 20, 2020, identifying several critical issues regarding GBV. Issues and concerns raised by the President included inadequate resourcing for GBV response; limited implementation of strategies targeting gender norms and standards; lack of an effective and integrated response system that brings together key players; inadequate reporting of offenses by the victims and their families and communities; inadequate reporting on gender issues by the media; and inadequate child-friendly settings in the justice and law enforcement systems (United Nations Botswana 2021). The President also announced that the Botswana Police Service would develop standardized operating procedures for dealing with GBV and new specialized services would be introduced to handle such procedures. Following the President's statement, several new services have been introduced, for example, the Gender and Child Protection Unit with focal points in police stations, a special hotline for victims, operating procedures that require victims to be interviewed in private spaces (United States Department of State 2021), 25 specialized GBV courts, and the introduction of mobile courts (United Nations Botswana 2021). In 2021, the government of Botswana undertook a feasibility study on strengthening and establishing safe havens in Botswana (Government of Botswana 2022). The Department of Gender Affairs was finalizing this study at the time of writing of the present report. Additionally, the Second Transitional NDP includes a commitment to establishing more safe havens (Government of Botswana 2023b).⁷⁰

4.4 Gender Policy and Institutional Framework

The National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) (2015), currently being updated, is the government of Botswana's overarching policy document setting out its aspirations in terms of gender equality and equity. The NPGAD outlines five national development areas for gender mainstreaming. These are (a) economic development, prosperity, and poverty eradication to achieve sustainable development; (b) social protection and social services, with prioritized social protection programs focusing on health, adequate sanitation and safe housing, improved well-being, access to quality education, training, and information, and consideration for addressing issues of energy and climate change for a sustainable environment; (c) political power, democratic governance, and decision-making; (d) access to justice, protection of human rights, and freedom from violence; and (e) special measures targeting vulnerable groups of men, women, boys, and girls cutting across the other national development areas. The NPGAD also includes commitments to support better data collection and gender-responsive

⁶⁹ The sites were Maun, Shorobe, Artesia, and Mochudi.

⁷⁰ Government of Botswana, Second Transitional NDP, section 9.108.ii.

programming. This includes the use of sex-disaggregated data for budgeting and programming, and for developing gender-sensitive indicators across all departments (more details are provided in appendix D on NPGAD development priorities). Additionally, the NPGAD outlines the coordination structures for the implementation of the policy, including the establishment of the National Gender Commission.

The commitments of the NPGAD were echoed in National Development Plan 11 (NDP 11, 2017–2023), which provided for gender mainstreaming and the prevention and elimination of GBV (Arcus Foundation 2019). Building on NDP 11, Botswana's Second Transitional NDP (2023–2025)⁷¹ includes a commitment to set performance indicators for and collect data on gender and vulnerable groups and to ensure that policies, programs, projects, systems, and plans are informed by these data. It also includes a section on proposed gender-related interventions, which focus on introducing gender-responsive budgeting, establishing a GBV case management system, establishing more safe havens, and implementing the next iteration of the National Relationship Study (Government of Botswana 2023b).⁷² The National Planning Commission has primary responsibility for the development of the country's national development plans and for monitoring their implementation. Thus, building the NPC's capacity for gender-responsive planning, and budgeting, as well as for monitoring and evaluation will be key to ensuring that government programs and policies mainstream gender and track results.

The Department of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs is responsible for the implementation of the NPGAD. The department is also broadly responsible for the promotion of gender equity and for the coordination and facilitation of various aspects of gender policy development.⁷³ However, limited human and financial resources and difficulty coordinating across government ministries are challenges to fulfilling its core mandate.⁷⁴ The public is aware of this challenge. Perceptions of the government's efforts to promote gender equality suggest that there is room for improvement, with less than half (42 percent) of citizens saying that the government is doing "fairly well" or "very well" in its efforts to promote equal rights and opportunities for women. A large majority (80 percent) say that the government needs to do more to enhance gender equality (Mooketsane et al. 2023).

To oversee the implementation of the NPGAD, the government of Botswana established a National Gender Commission in 2022. The commission functions as an advisory body to government on policy development and service delivery; monitors the implementation of the NPGAD; liaises with the Department of Gender Affairs to provide guidance and support within government and externally on the promotion of gender equality and gender justice; and liaises with the Department of Gender Affairs and stakeholders in the private sector, parastatal organizations, and civil society to develop appropriate programs, strategies, and mechanisms for enhancing gender equality.⁷⁵ Commissioners are appointed by the minister responsible for gender and development from government, the private sector, academia, the faith-based community, and civil society. The commission is supported by the Advisory Committee on Men's/Boys' and Women's/Girls' Issues, which provides technical and policy advice to the National Gender Commission, articulates policy issues, supports stakeholders' interpretation of the policy provisions and translation thereof into actionable items, and supports the technical initiatives of the commission, including research, periodic surveys, and evaluation.

However, the National Gender Commission was not established by statute and only has the status of an advisory body. Thus, it does not have any authority to enforce nondiscrimination protections or to compel government to meet gender targets; unlike, for example, South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality, which is a constitutional entity empowered to investigate gender complaints and refer them to relevant authorities.⁷⁶ While advocates have applauded the government of Botswana's actions in establishing the commission, there are growing calls for it be empowered in a similar manner to the South African commission.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Botswana's First Transitional Development Plan covered the period immediately after independence, from 1966 to 1968.

⁷² Government of Botswana, Second Transitional NDP, sections 9.107 and 9.108.

⁷³ Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs: <https://www.gov.bw/ministries/ministry-nationality-immigration-and-gender-affairs>.

⁷⁴ As cited in multiple stakeholder consultations and meetings, March and April 2023, Gaborone.

⁷⁵ National Policy on Gender and Development, 2015, page 18.

⁷⁶ Commission for Gender Equality Act (Act No. 39 of 1996), South Africa.

⁷⁷ Meeting with the Department of Gender Affairs, April 2023.

In April 2022, the government of Botswana undertook its fourth Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment alongside its first stand-alone gender-responsive Public Financial Management (PFM) assessment (PEFA 2022). The purpose was to evaluate the adequacy of the country's public finance systems to implement gender policies and associated laws. The results aim to improve the government's PFM systems in terms of the equitable distribution of resources, particularly at the level of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The report noted that although the government of Botswana was committed to gender equality and development, there was no evidence of the formal adoption of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), and that was a gap that needed to be addressed. The assessment found that there was much progress to be made in making sure that the PFM system can assist in GRB for programs, their implementation, and related reporting. The PEFA and gender-responsive PFM assessments also identified weaknesses in terms of coordination of gender equality policies, with a lack of well-structured oversight, and data for tracking gender mainstreaming across service delivery centers (see appendix E on the *PEFA Gender Responsive Public Financial Management Assessment Report*).

Box 4.3 outlines the gender-related content of the 2024 budget speech of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, while box 4.4 presents information on the effectiveness of GRB.

Box 4.3 2024 and 2025 Budget Speeches: Gender-Related Content

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development's 2024 budget speech delivered to the National Assembly on February 5, 2024, reaffirmed the government's commitment to promoting equal opportunity, equitable distribution of resources, and access to development benefits by all. To this end, The minister proposed an increase in the budget for gender mainstreaming of 536.5 percent, for the Youth Development Fund of 92.3 percent, and for social protection programs of 13.8 percent. The minister also pointed to the finding of the 2022 PEFA that more needs to be done to align the government's commitments to gender issues with the PFM cycle and daily operational decision-making. In the 2025 budget speech delivered to the National Assembly on 10 February 2025, the Minister of Finance reaffirmed the Government's commitment to gender mainstreaming across all sectors and committed to institutionalizing Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Box 4.4 Making Gender-Responsive Budgeting Work

GRB can be an effective tool within a more comprehensive set of initiatives to address gender inequalities. Research by the International Monetary Fund shows that leadership by the ministry of finance is an essential component of successful GRB initiatives, as is advocacy for gender budgeting from NGOs and parliamentary bodies (IMF 2016).

In Uganda and Rwanda, where the first GRB initiative began in the late 1990s and early 2000s respectively, GRB has enabled the government to make improvements in addressing gender gaps in enrollment in education, reducing maternal mortality, and improving government's performance on gender inequality indices. Accordingly, both Uganda and Rwanda have achieved success in their efforts to integrate GRB into their budgets, policies, and programs. In these countries, ministries of finance have mandated that other ministries and levels of government responsible for social welfare and women's development address gender gaps and women's needs in their budgets.

Parliamentarians and other government officials are important stakeholders, with research showing that where there is consensus amongst government officials, GRB is more effectively implemented and even contributes to the well-being of society. Other African countries, such as Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, have implemented GRB programs or initiatives over the past three decades with positive impacts on gender targets, including adopting fiscal policies designed to assist women (IMF 2016).



4.5. Data and Knowledge Gaps

There is a lack of updated national prevalence data on GBV (currently available data are from the 2018 National Relationships Study) or systematic surveillance data collected through service providers (police, judiciary, or health and social services). There also has not been an assessment of the economic costs of GBV in Botswana.

Research is needed to better understand the social and economic drivers of child marriage in different regions and settings in order to design strategies to combat the practice. The 2022 United Nations *Botswana 2022 Voluntary National Review Report* (Government of Botswana 2022) indicated that data on child marriages would be generated by the 2022 population and housing census, but at the time of writing this report, those data had not been released publicly. To get a better grasp of the extent of the problem of child marriage in Botswana, age-disaggregated data on marital status are also needed.⁷⁸

As noted in the UNDP's 2021 report *Inequality in Botswana*, available data "only gives a limited snapshot of the current situation of vulnerable groups in Botswana" (Martorano et al. 2021). Data are not routinely collected on the access of people with disabilities or LGBTQI+ persons to basic services (for instance health and education). In addition, data on the situation of women in marginalized groups in Botswana are very limited. Inequality and gender analysis of data collected in the 2022 Population Census would provide important insights.

Despite Botswana's commitments to a gender-responsive approach to climate change, its most recent climate change statistics are not gender disaggregated (Statistics Botswana 2022d). There are also limited data available on household's adaptive behaviors, including their gender dimensions.

⁷⁸ Statistics from the *Botswana 2018 Demographic Survey Report* on marital status aggregate the entire population ages 12 years and older, and thus it is not possible to know how many married individuals were under 19 years.



5

Strategic Priorities

The report identifies trends and opportunities to further narrow persisting gender gaps where they exist, while also identifying constraints that are holding men and women, boys and girls in Botswana from reaching their full potential. The opportunities identified will improve women's agency by increasing their participation and access to decision-making structures, strengthen the government of Botswana's ability to mainstream gender across policies and programs, improve access to human capital with a focus on education and health, work to close gaps in entrepreneurship to improve women's economic inclusion, and respond to GBV to promote women's voice and agency.

Each strategic priority responds to key challenges identified in the report and builds on national priorities, in particular the NPGAD and the Second Transitional NDP. Appendix F provides more details on the links between the government of Botswana's policy commitments and the strategic priorities recommended in this report. These are consolidated in table 5.1, which also identifies key government counterparts and stakeholders linked to different proposed actions. Evidence to support the proposed actions is presented in appendix G on evidence-based program interventions.

The following selection criteria informed the narrowing down of the areas of action:

- Gender gaps and issues where reliable data are available.
- Areas of action that could be validated during the consultative process and were informed by the feedback and inputs of stakeholders.
- Issues that are already on the government's agenda and reforms or initiatives that are already in progress. In this regard, strategic priorities are well aligned with the government's NPGAD and Second Transitional NDP.

Key considerations for success of the areas of action include the following:

- Support for key policy and legal reforms that remove gender-based constraints to the full realization of women's and girls' potential.
- Allocation of adequate financial and human resources for the short, medium, and long term, linked to efforts to promote an overall gender budgeting process.
- Integration of specific interventions, particularly medium- to longer-term opportunities, into annual and strategic plans of relevant government departments to ensure human and financial resources are allocated toward their achievement.
- Collection, monitoring, and evaluation of data and information disaggregated by gender.
- Publicly accessible monitoring and tracking of the government of Botswana's commitments made with gender-specific targets.
- Greater integration and partnership within and between government ministries, departments, and agencies, as well as with the private sector and civil society.
- Involvement of men and boys in efforts to achieve gender equality, reduce GBV, and empower women and girls.

Table 5.1. Strategic Priorities

Strategic priority 1: Increase women's participation in decision-making at local and national levels and strengthen gender equality under the law				
Challenge: Although there is broad public support for women's representation in the public sphere, this has not translated into gains for women in political leadership. Women remain poorly represented at the level of Parliament, in traditional structures, and in local governments. Further, despite the strong constitutional guarantees of gender equality, these are not systematically respected in the customary legal system.				
Gender gaps	Drivers	Policy actions	Program interventions	Stakeholders
1.1 Provide support for women's effective participation in politics at the national and local levels				
Low representation of women in national and local government Low representation of women in traditional leadership	• Social norms discouraging women from running for office and restricting female representation in politics and traditional leadership • Limited political party quotas to promote female candidates (only two parties have such quotas) • Lack of resources for female candidates to enter politics	1. Implement recommendation 26.3.7 of the <i>Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana</i> (2022) that 30 percent of candidates fielded by political parties in primary, local government, and parliamentary elections should be women. 2. Consider introducing a legislative quota system to ensure minimum levels of women's representation in the National Assembly and in local government. 3. Ensure local gender committees established under NPGAD are functional.	1. Provide direct support to existing and potential female candidates (including training, capacity building, mentorship) and facilitate access to campaign financing and political networks at national and local levels. 2. Introduce social behavior change programs that (a) engage local and national leaders in public advocacy campaigns to promote equal representation of men and women in elected government; and (b) engage in community dialogue to reduce informal barriers to women's participation in politics, governance, and traditional leadership.	• Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development • Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs • Independent Electoral Commission • Political parties • Traditional leaders
1.2 Strengthen gender equality under common and customary law as per constitutional guarantees regarding nondiscrimination and equality				
Unequal treatment of men and women in both common and customary legal systems	• Historical legacy of women's unequal status under common and customary law	1. Undertake a comprehensive review of common and customary law systems and content to ensure conformity with constitutional nondiscrimination guarantees (section 15) and requirements under the Customary Law Act (1969) to conform with the Constitution (1966).^a	1. Provide legal aid to individuals seeking redress from discrimination under common and customary legal systems. 2. Raise awareness of women's rights under common and customary law and avenues for legal recourse through public campaigns and direct outreach.	• Attorney General's Office • Law Society of Botswana • Ntlo ya Dikgosi and traditional leaders
Strategic priority 2: Strengthen capacity for all-of-government gender mainstreaming				
Challenge: Although the government of Botswana has introduced a new National Policy on Gender and Development and established the National Gender Commission, gender equality is not mainstreamed across all government ministries and agencies or public programs, and gender audits have found inconsistent and insufficient allocation of resources to ensure gender mainstreaming in ministry budgets and programs.				
2.1 Strengthen capacity for gender-responsive planning and budgeting across government ministries, agencies, and planning commissions				
Limited gender mainstreaming across government programs	• Limited capacity for gender-responsive planning and budgeting • Insufficient human and financial resources allocated to the Department of Gender Affairs	1. Direct all ministries and agencies to adopt a gender-responsive planning and budgeting framework.	1. Strengthen capacity of the National Planning Commission to integrate key priorities of the NPGAD and to mainstream gender in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of NDP 12.	• Ministry of Finance and Economic Development • Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Governance, and Public Administration • Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs

		2. Address the weaknesses identified by the gender-responsive Public Financial Management (PFM) assessment (PEFA report, 2022) and other sectoral gender audit reports. 3. Consider restructuring the Department of Gender Affairs to become a full government ministry. 4. Consider establishing the National Gender Commission by statute as an independent institution with powers to review government actions.	5. Build capacity for gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and auditing in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and all line ministries. 6. Strengthen capacity of the Department of Gender Affairs and ensure allocation of sufficient resources.	• National Planning Commission • National Gender Commission • Statistics Botswana
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Gender gaps	Drivers	Policy actions	Program interventions	Stakeholders
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2.2 Strengthen collection, analysis, and use of gender-disaggregated data

Lack of data disaggregated by gender and other marginalized group demographics	• Lack of clear policy directive and capacity of government on collection and use of data disaggregated by gender and other marginalized group demographics	1. Mandate the collection and use of indicators disaggregated by gender and other characteristics of marginalized groups (including language, disability status, SOGI, among others) in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of government programs and core functions.	1. Strengthen capacities of Statistics Botswana and all ministries to collect and analyze data disaggregated by gender and by other demographic characteristics such as disability status and language group, to support identification of the most marginalized groups of women and facilitate better targeting of government programs and resources to meet Vision 2036 aims of “achieving prosperity for all” and “leaving no one behind”.	• Statistics Botswana • Planning, monitoring, and evaluation departments of all ministries and government agencies
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Strategic priority 3: Reduce high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and improve access to justice and to integrated GBV survivor support services

Challenge: The government of Botswana has a strong legal and policy framework for the prevention of and response to GBV but rates of GBV remain very high and low numbers of survivors seek help or legal recourse. Most cases of intimate partner violence (the most prevalent form of GBV) are initially heard in customary courts, and common law rights and protections are not consistently enforced. Certain groups, including women and children with disabilities and LGBTQ+ persons, are particularly vulnerable to GBV and less likely to access protection or support services.

3.1 Reduce high rates of sexual and gender-based violence

High rates of sexual and gender-based violence	• Gender norms that tolerate GBV, particularly in intimate partner relationships • Social norms that discourage reporting of sexual abuse and harassment and GBV	1. Designate high rates of sexual and gender-based violence as a national epidemic (similar to HIV/AIDS).	2. Integrate behavior change interventions in households and communities (for example through school curricula, girls' clubs, community engagement, and social services), ensuring engagement of men and boys to delegitimize GBV and address norms that stigmatize victims. 3. Expand advocacy campaigns against GBV, engaging national and local leaders. 4. Increase women's access to income-generating activities and social protection programs to reduce their dependence on partners.	• Ministry of Education • Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs • Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport, and Culture Development • Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Department of Social Protection) • Inter-Ministerial Committee on GBV
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3.2 Reduce high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and improve access to justice and to integrated GBV survivor support services

Low rates of reporting, particularly among stigmatized groups (persons living with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons)	• Impunity and lack of confidence in justice system • GBV cases largely heard in male-dominated customary courts that are not survivor-centered and perpetuate traditional gender norms and biases	1. Implement the recommendations of the NPGAD re duty bearers in the criminal justice system. 2. Finalize updates to the National Strategy towards Ending Gender Based Violence in Botswana (2016–2020) based on the five priorities identified in relation to prevention, protection, and response.	1. Undertake an audit of existing special vehicles (including specialized GBV and children's courts and police units) to address barriers to their effective functioning and develop a response plan. 2. Provide legal aid to survivors of GBV to improve their ability to access the criminal justice system as per recommendations of the 2023 <i>Situational Analysis for the Development of Gender Mainstreaming in the Criminal Justice System</i>. 3. Train service providers (health, social services, police, justice system) on survivor-centric and gender- and disability-inclusive responses to GBV.	• Botswana Police Service • Attorney General • Ministry of Defence, Justice, and Security • Ministry of Finance and Economic Development • Inter-Ministerial Committee on GBV • National Gender Commission • NGO and CSO service providers
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Gender gaps	Drivers	Policy actions	Program interventions	Stakeholders
Inadequate and fragmented provision of survivor support services	• Limited coordination between health, social services, police, and justice system in the provision of support to GBV survivors • Gaps in access to support services	1. Strengthen sections of the Domestic Violence Act (2008) related to the provision of services to GBV survivors (specifying which services are to be made available and who is responsible for their delivery).	1. Implement the recommendations in the Second Transitional NDP regarding increasing numbers of shelters and one-stop centers. 2. Establish integrated referral mechanisms between government and NGO service providers in all districts based on the pilot GBV referral system. 3. Ensure sufficient human and financial resources allocated to GBV protection and support services in all regions.	

3.3 Strengthen GBV data collection, monitoring, and analysis

Lack of statistics on GBV prevalence Lack of real-time monitoring of reported GBV cases	• Outdated national GBV household surveys on GBV prevalence, attitudes, and help-seeking behaviors • Lack of integrated national GBV surveillance system		1. Conduct follow-up survey to the 2018 National Relationship Study using the standard Demographic and Health Survey modules. 2. Implement the commitments of the Second Transitional NDP regarding establishing an integrated digital GBV case management and reporting system between all service providers.	• Statistics Botswana • Ministry of Nationality, Immigration, and Gender Affairs • Ministry of Health and Wellness • Botswana Police Service • Attorney General • Ministry of Defence, Justice, and Security • NGO and CSO service providers
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Strategic priority 4: Support girls and boys to reach their full human capital potential

Challenge: Despite important public investment and progress in access to education and health services, gender gaps persist in educational outcomes for boys; girls underperform in STEM; rates of adolescent fertility, pregnancy-related dropout, and maternal mortality remain high; and HIV/AIDS negatively impacts significantly more women and adolescent girls than men and adolescent boys. Furthermore, marginalized minority language groups face specific challenges in accessing services.

4.1 Keep girls in school, prevent adolescent pregnancy and child marriage

High rates of adolescent pregnancy and related school dropout	- Poverty and lack of economic opportunities - Lack of sufficient access to comprehensive and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health service - Limited number of schools providing a safe and inclusive learning environment	- Review Ministry of Education and Skills Development guidelines for readmission in ex-pregnancy cases to ensure continued access to education for pregnant and parenting students and address childcare needs of parenting students. - Strengthen systems for the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in schools.	- Expand targeted poverty reduction programs with incentives for school retention. - Expand community-based, accessible, and inclusive sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and youths. - Ensure broad access to age-appropriate (rather than grade-based, given the high numbers of overage students) and gender-inclusive comprehensive sexuality education for both in-school and out-of-school adolescents.	- Ministry of Basic Education - Ministry of Health and Wellness - Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Department of Social Protection)
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4.2 Close gender gaps in education and ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment

Learning outcomes, grade repetition, and dropout rates worse among boys than girls Girls not pursuing STEM education Lower levels of education among remote and marginalized communities	- Classroom environment not sufficiently inclusive or adapted to boys' learning needs - Lack of information, role models, and incentives for girls to pursue STEM careers - Legacy of former education policies undermining the cultural identities of children from marginalized groups and educating them far from their communities	- Review school discipline policies to eliminate corporal punishment and strengthen positive discipline (see for example the Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training guidelines on school discipline).^b - Accelerate introduction of teaching in minority languages and review boarding school policies to protect cultural identities of students from marginalized groups.	- Expand provisions of and access to ECCDE, including through cash grants to vulnerable households (for example, expanding the Vulnerable Groups Feeding Programme) to improve school retention. - Train educators on fostering a gender-inclusive and nonviolent learning environment. - Conduct research to understand drivers of boys' early school leaving.	- Ministry of Basic Education - Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Department of Social Protection) - Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science, and Technology - Ministry of Employment, Labour Productivity, and Skills Development
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Gender gaps	Drivers	Policy actions	Program interventions	Stakeholders
			- Provide scholarships and introduce mentorship programs for girls to pursue STEM in tertiary education. - Provide students with exposure to women in STEM as role models, and share information on earning potentials in STEM.	

4.3 Reduce high rates of maternal mortality and the disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS on women and girls

High maternal mortality rates	- Inadequate access to timely emergency obstetric care in rural areas and uptake of antenatal and postnatal care by underserved groups - High rates of unsafe abortions and insufficient postabortion care	Consider implementing the recommendations of the <i>Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana</i> with regard to pregnancy termination (paragraph 26.3.11) to align with WHO maternal health and safety global guidelines.	- Increase uptake of sexual, reproductive, and maternal health services, particularly among adolescents and other underserved groups. - Provide timely and quality emergency obstetric care, especially in rural areas. - Improve delivery of antenatal and postnatal services to underserved areas and groups	- Ministry of Health and Wellness - Office of the Attorney General
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HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects women and girls	• Women's and girls' lack of agency to negotiate safer sex • Inconsistent condom use, and men's and boys' risky behaviors • High rates of sexual violence • Women and girls responsible for care of sick and orphaned relatives		1. Implement social and behavior change interventions to address the underlying drivers of HIV/AIDS infection, including risky behaviors, IPV, multiple partners, transactional sex, and alcohol abuse. 2. Increase access to and use of condoms, including for vulnerable groups and key populations (including men who have sex with men, sex workers, migrant workers, and prisoners). 3. Increase support to vulnerable children and households, including by expanding targeted social protection programs (for example, the Destitute Persons Programme and the Orphan Care Programme).	• Ministry of Health and Wellness • Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Department of Social Protection)
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Strategic priority 5: Close wage and productivity gender gaps in entrepreneurship and employment

Challenge: Despite the relatively robust legal framework for women's economic inclusion and advances in closing the gender gap in labor force participation, women continue to be active in the labor market at lower rates than men, and the share of young women who are not in education, employment, or training is significantly higher than among young men. Significant gender wage gaps persist among workers, and productivity and profit gaps between male- and female-owned businesses are also significant. Women entrepreneurs are overrepresented in the informal sector, face challenges in accessing credit, and carry a disproportionate burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities, which limit their opportunities to engage in skill development or income-generating activities.

5.1 Increase women entrepreneurs' access to finance, assets, land, and climate-smart technologies

Women-owned businesses starting and staying small	• High levels of informality among women-owned businesses • Constraints to accessing credit due to lack of collateral ownership, minimum business size, and other requirements that disadvantage women • Low levels of financial literacy and lack of access to networks and information about available financial services	1. Encourage the Bank of Botswana to require banks and nonbank financial institutions to provide gender-disaggregated data on access to finance by micro, small, and medium enterprises. 2. Adopt the National Social Security Policy to reduce vulnerability of women working in the informal economy.	1. Increase women's access to formal financial services (banks and nonbank financial institutions) by providing products and services tailored to women entrepreneurs' needs (including weather or index insurance). 2. Improve internet and cellular network coverage in rural areas to increase access to mobile banking, market information, extension services, and dissemination of information on government programs.	• Ministry of Finance and Economic Development • Bank of Botswana • Ministry of Communications, Knowledge, and Technology • Banks and nonbank financial institutions • Cellular and internet service providers • Training providers
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Gender gaps	Drivers	Policy actions	Program interventions	Stakeholders
			3. Increase women's access to productive resources, including land, water, and climate-smart technologies. 4. Provide business and personal initiative training for female entrepreneurs and support their transition to the formal sector.	

5.2 Support women's equal participation and equal pay in all sectors of the economy

Gender pay gaps and lower rates of women's participation in more profitable and dynamic sectors of the labor market	• Women carry unequal domestic labor burden, pushing them into the informal sector and jobs with greater flexibility and lower pay • Lack of publicly financed maternity and paternity leave • Limited access to affordable childcare • Social norms and informal discrimination preventing women's equal participation in STEM and other key male-dominated sectors such as mining, energy, agriculture, and tourism	1. Provide publicly financed parental leave (to remove employer disincentives to hiring women and encourage men to take parental leave). 2. Enact and implement legislation mandating equal remuneration for work of equal value, prohibiting gender discrimination in wages and dismissal of pregnant workers.	1. Reduce the burden of childcare by (a) increasing access to affordable childcare; (b) incentivizing employer provision of childcare or childcare subsidies and allowing flexible schedules; and (c) implementing behavior change programs to encourage more male involvement in parenting. 2. Increase women's entry into male-dominated trades and STEM industries by providing role models, networking opportunities, information on potential earnings, and exposure to male-dominated sectors and occupations. 3. Undertake regular enterprise surveys and multi-topic household surveys to better understand women's time use, access to household resources, access to finance, and other determinants of factors affecting women's economic activities. 4. Monitor women's participation in the key sectors of mining, energy, tourism, and agriculture and address gender-specific aspects of climate change mitigation and adaptation. 5. Monitor and address intersecting drivers of disparities among women from different language and minority groups and other vulnerable populations.	• Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science, and Technology • Ministry of Employment, Labour Productivity, and Skills Development • Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Department of Social Protection) • Bank of Botswana
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a. This undertaking can build on previous reviews, including that of former Attorney General Dr Athaliah Molokomme.

b. <https://www.unicef.org/eswatini/reports/school-discipline-guidelines>.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Women, Business, and the Law 2.0 Indexes

In 2024, WBL introduced an expanded series of indexes that identify barriers for women's economic empowerment in three areas: women's legal rights; policy, regulatory and administrative mechanisms designed to support the implementation of these rights; and an expert assessment of how these rights are realized in practice. For that purpose, three new WBL 2.0 indexes are presented for ten indicators in three areas: (1) legal frameworks, (2) supportive frameworks, and (3) expert opinions. Overall country-level legal and supportive frameworks scores are then calculated by taking the average of each indicator in 190 countries, with 100 representing the highest possible score. The expert opinions index is created for a total of 164 economies. The WBL 2.0 legal frameworks score for Botswana (52.5 out of 100.0) is lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average (57.4). The WBL 2.0 supportive frameworks score for Botswana (13.3 out of 100.0) is lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average (24.5). The WBL 2.0 expert opinions score for Botswana (57.5 out of 100.0) is higher than the Sub-Saharan Africa regional average (54.6). Questions used to determine these ratings on each index are presented below.

WBL2.0 legal frameworks data

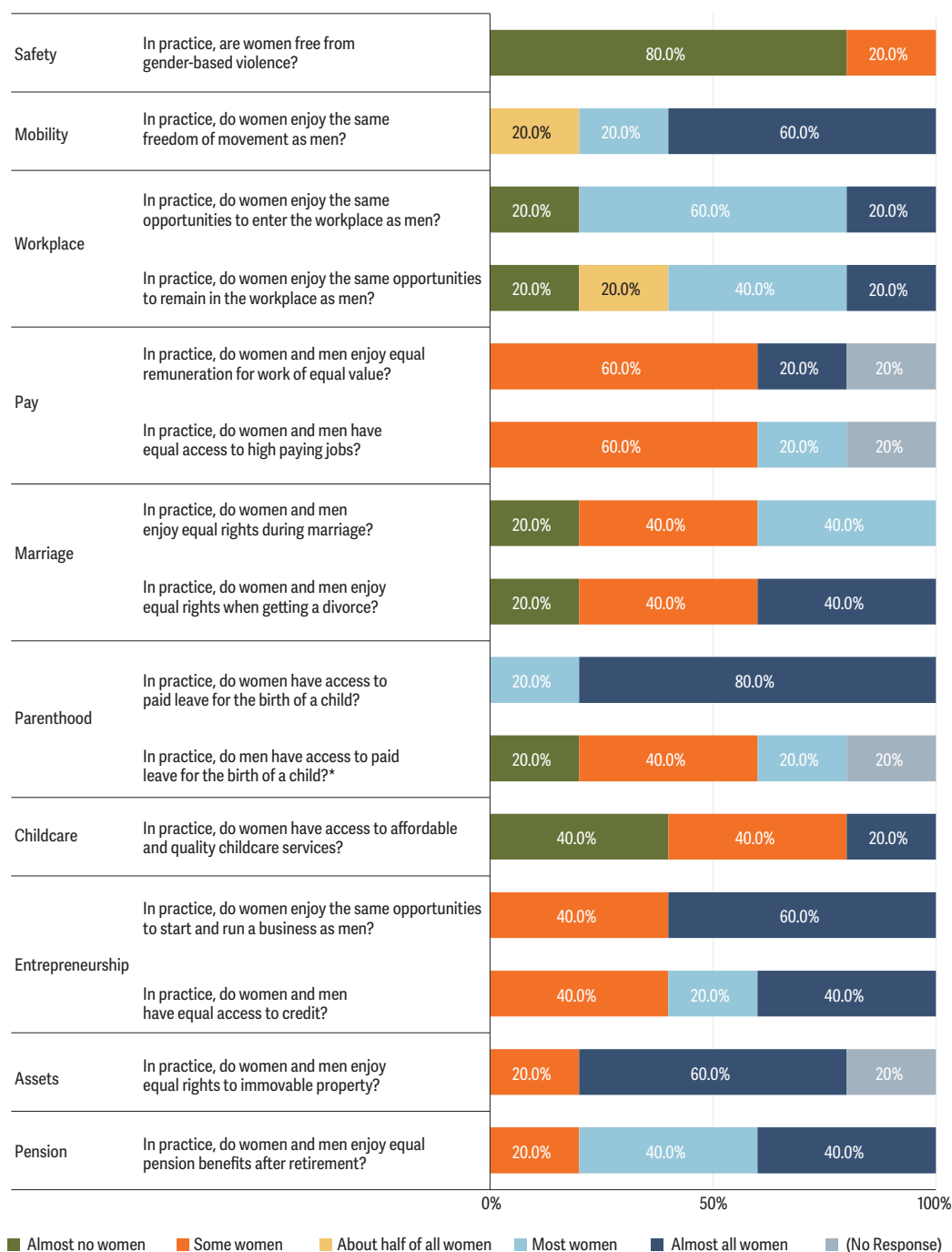
Question	Answer	Legal Basis
Safety		
Is there legislation on domestic violence?	Yes	Domestic Violence Act, Sec. 2 and Part II; Penal Code, Sec. 141
Is there legislation on femicide?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Is there comprehensive legislation on sexual harassment?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Is there legislation on child marriage?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Mobility		
Can a woman travel internationally in the same way as a man?	Yes	No restrictions could be located
Can a woman choose where to live in the same way as a man?	Yes	Abolition of Marital Power Act, Art. 16
Can a woman travel outside her home in the same way as a man?	Yes	No restrictions could be located
Do women and men have equal rights to confer citizenship to their spouses and their children?	Yes	Citizenship Act, Arts. 4(1), 5(1) and 14
Workplace		
Can a woman get a job in the same way as a man?	Yes	Abolition of Marital Power Act, Arts. 4, 5 and 11
Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Does the law prohibit discrimination in recruitment based on marital status, parental status, and age?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Does the law allow employees to request flexible work?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Pay		
Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Can a woman work at night in the same way as a man?	Yes	No restrictions could be located
Can a woman work in an industrial job in the same way as a man?	Yes	No restrictions could be located
Can a woman work in a job deemed dangerous in the same way as a man?	Yes	No restrictions could be located

Question	Answer	Legal Basis
Marriage		
Can a woman be “head of household” or “head of family” in the same way as a man?	Yes	Abolition of Marital Power Act, Arts. 4 and 5
Is the law free of legal provisions that require a married woman to obey her husband?	Yes	No applicable provisions could be located
Can a woman obtain a judgment of divorce in the same way as a man?	Yes	Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, Arts. 7 and 19
Does a woman have the same rights to remarry as a man?	Yes	No restrictions could be located
Parenthood		
Is paid leave of at least 14 weeks available to mothers?	No	Employment Act, Sec. 117
Are leave benefits for mothers paid solely by the government?	No	Employment Act, Sec. 117
Is there paid leave available to fathers?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Is dismissal of pregnant workers prohibited?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Childcare		
Does the law establish provision of childcare services in center-based settings?	Yes	Gaborone Council Daycare Center By-Laws, Secs. 2, 3 and 6
Does the law establish any form of support to families for childcare services?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Does the law establish any form of support to non-state childcare providers?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Does the law establish quality standards for the provision of childcare services in center-based settings?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Entrepreneurship		
Can a woman undertake entrepreneurial activities in the same way as a man?	Yes	Abolition of Marital Power Act, Arts. 4, 5 and 11
Does the law prohibit discrimination in access to credit based on gender?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Does the law prescribe a gender quota on corporate boards?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Does the law include gender-sensitive procurement provisions for public procurement processes?	No	No applicable provisions could be located
Assets		
Do men and women have equal administrative power and ownership rights to immovable property, including land?	Yes	Married Persons Property Act, Art. 4(1); The Deeds Registry Act 1996, Sec. 18(3); Abolition of Marital Power Act, Arts. 4 and 5; Botswana Land Policy
Do sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit assets from their parents?	No	Administration of Estates Act, Ch. 31:01, Sec. 3; Customary Law Act, Ch. 16:01, Sec. 4
Do male and female surviving spouses have equal rights to inherit assets?	Yes	Succession Act, Ch. 31:03, Sec. 4
Does the law provide for the valuation of nonmonetary contributions?	No	Married Persons Property Act, Art. 4(1)
Pension		
Are the ages at which men and women can retire with full pension benefits equal?	Yes	Universal Pension and Orphan Care Act 1996
Are the ages at which men and women can retire with partial pension benefits equal?	Yes	No applicable provisions could be located

Question	Answer	Legal Basis
Is the mandatory retirement age for men and women equal?	Yes	No applicable provisions could be located
Are periods of absence due to childcare accounted for in pension benefits?	Yes	Universal Pension and Orphan Care Act 1996
Safety		
Has the government developed comprehensive mechanisms to address violence against women?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Are there special procedures for cases of sexual harassment?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is there a government entity responsible for the monitoring and implementation of national services, plans and programmes addressing violence against women?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is there an annual budgetary allocation towards violence against women risk mitigation, prevention and response programs?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Mobility		
Are passport application processes the same for women and men?	No	Passport application form; Passport application procedures
Are the application processes for official identity documents the same for women and men?	Yes	ID application procedures
Is there a current policy or plan that explicitly considers the specific mobility needs of women in public transportation?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Workplace		
Has the government published guidelines on non-discrimination based on gender in recruitment?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Has the government published guidelines on flexible work arrangements?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is there a specialized body that receives complaints about gender discrimination in employment?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Pay		
Are there pay transparency measures or enforcement mechanisms to address the gender pay gap?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is sex-disaggregated data on employment in different industries or sectors published at least on an annual basis?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Marriage		
Is there a fast-track process or procedure for family law disputes?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Are there specialized family courts?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is legal aid available for family law disputes?	Yes	Legal Aid Botswana - Family Law Unit
Parenthood		
Is it possible to apply for maternity benefits through a single government application process?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Are incentives in place to encourage fathers to take paternity leave on the birth of a child?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Has sex-disaggregated data on unpaid care work been published?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Childcare		
Is there a publicly available registry or database of childcare providers?	No	Insufficient evidence located

Question	Answer	Legal Basis
Is there a clearly outlined application procedure to request financial support from the government for childcare services by parents?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is there a clearly outlined application procedure to request financial support from the government for childcare services by non-state childcare providers?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Has the government published any reports on quality of childcare services within the last 3 years?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Entrepreneurship		
Is sex-disaggregated data on business activities, entrepreneurship, or women-owned businesses published on a regular basis?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Are there government-led programs that provide support to female entrepreneurs such as access to finance or regarding agency and empowerment?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is there a current national government plan or strategy with a focus on women's access to financial services?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Assets		
Are there mechanisms or incentives to encourage women to register immovable property?	Yes	Deeds Registry (Amendment) Act, Sec. 43
Are there awareness measures in place to improve women's access to information about marital and inheritance rights?	Yes	Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs
Is anonymized sex-disaggregated data on property ownership published on a regular basis?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Pension		
Are there incentives in place to increase women's retirement benefits?	No	Insufficient evidence located
Is there a procedure in place for pension beneficiaries to challenge the decisions of the competent authority regarding their benefits?	No	Insufficient evidence located

WBL 2.0 distribution of expert opinion responses



*Note: The response options for the second Parenthood question above are formatted as almost no men, some men, about half of all men, most men, almost all men.

Appendix B. Botswana Climate Policy and Gender Actions

Botswana's key climate policy documents highlight the importance of a gender-responsive approach to climate change, recognizing that women face specific challenges but are also drivers of climate resilience.⁷⁹ Key gender aspects of the 2018 Climate Change Strategy are outlined in box B.1. Botswana's National Adaptation Plan Framework (2020) recognizes that certain women-dominated economic sectors will be hard hit by climate change, including arable farming and veld products (Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation, and Tourism 2020). The 2021 National Climate Change Policy identifies the need to mainstream gender into development planning and to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, children, and people living with disabilities. It identifies three mechanisms to do so: (a) empowering communities, especially women, young people, and people living with disabilities, to actively participate in the implementation of climate change response measures in rural and urban areas; (b) adoption strategies that are targeted at increasing resilience of most vulnerable groups, such as women, youths, children, and people living with disabilities, to climate change impacts through provision of means of implementation, such as technologies, finance, and capacity building; and (c) including gender and climate change in the academic curriculum at all levels (Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation, and Tourism 2021).⁸⁰

The broader National Development Plan (NDP) 11 and the National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) also support a gender-responsive approach to climate change. NDP 11 speaks to climate change and adaptation, noting that there are differentiated gendered impacts of climate change that require gender-responsive policies and projects. It commits the government to take gender mainstreaming into consideration at all levels and to ensure that all disaster risk reduction policies, programs, and projects are gender-responsive and address gender-related impacts of disasters. The NPGAD includes "climate change for a sustainable environment" among the prioritized national development areas for gender mainstreaming. It reflects the fact that the gendered characteristics of poverty and income disparities are evident in the differential impacts of the environment on security and livelihoods, and that women are most affected by climate change because they are more dependent on natural resources for household livelihoods.⁸¹

The representation of women in key climate change decision-making bodies is important to promote a gender-responsive climate change response. Botswana has a National Committee on Climate Change, which was established in 1999 and serves as an advisory body to the government. There are also subnational multisectoral committees (district committees on climate change). The level of women's representation and participation in these important bodies is unclear.

⁷⁹ Key policy documents include the Climate Change Strategy (2018), the National Adaptation Plan Framework (2020), and the National Climate Change Policy (2021). Note that at the time of writing a National Adaptation Plan was not yet available.

⁸⁰ Botswana Climate Change Policy, section 8.1.10.

⁸¹ NPGAD, page 14.

Box B.1 Gender and Botswana's Climate Change Strategy (2018)

Botswana's Climate Change Strategy (2018) identifies gender as a cross-cutting theme that is integral to the climate change response in Botswana. It identifies six key gender-based strategies:

- Strategic intervention S19.1: By 2020 develop a national climate change gender action plan with an emphasis on women as drivers of climate resilience, and women's role in water, energy, and health care provision in households.
- Strategic intervention S19.2: Promote equitable participation of women farmers and female-headed households in climate-smart agriculture programs, agritourism, and access to conservation agricultural technologies.
- Strategic intervention S19.3: Ensure equitable gender access to the proposed endowment fund providing low-cost finance to climate change adaptation projects, aligned to existing similar projects.
- Strategic intervention S19.4: Ensure that women's voices are included in natural resource management through their equitable participation in the Community-Based Natural Resources Management Programme processes.
- Strategic intervention S19.5: Ensure that gendered differences of climate change are mainstreamed into climate change education.
- Strategic intervention S19.6: Ensure the full participation of women and female-headed households in disaster management public gatherings, to address both the higher vulnerability of women and children, and to plan for the higher post-disaster burden placed on women due to their dual roles as producers and carers.

Appendix C. Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of Constitution of Botswana

In December 2021, the President of Botswana established a Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution of Botswana. The final report was published in September 2022.

The commission had a mandate to (a) consult with the people of Botswana, and solicit their views on the operation of the Constitution and its strengths and weaknesses; (b) assess the adequacy of the Constitution; (c) articulate the concerns of the people of Botswana regarding any constitutional amendments that may be required; (d) conduct inquiries and obtain information from relevant sources; (e) make recommendations on the review or amendment of the Constitution based on a–d; and (f) produce a report and submit this to the President. The commission was granted nine months to undertake the review. Between February and July 2022, the commission undertook consultations in all 57 constituencies, using both English and Setswana to explain the process. The commission held meetings with interest groups representing a broad range of stakeholders, including LGBTQI+ groups, women's groups, and people with disabilities. The commission also made provisions for submissions by email and post.

Some matters discussed in the report with gender implications include the following.

In terms of human capital protection, the commission recommended that:

- The right to health, right to land, and right to education be enshrined in the Constitution;
- Termination of pregnancy be legalized.

In terms of inclusion, the commission recommended that:

- Section 15 of the Constitution be amended to include intersex as a ground for nondiscrimination, and to include nondiscrimination on the basis of disability;
- The rights of people with disabilities be enshrined in the Constitution to promote equal access, equal opportunity, participation, and reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities;
- Paragraph 4(1) of the First Schedule to the Constitution be amended to stipulate that one of the six candidates nominated by the President in case of a general election shall be a person with disabilities;
- The Languages Policy of 2022 be implemented as a matter of urgency, and that the Ministry of Education and Skills Development sensitize affected communities on the plans to start the teaching of several languages in primary schools in 2023, including sign language;
- That the Births and Deaths Registration Act be amended to provide for delayed selection of gender marks for intersex people until the individual is fully developed to choose their preferred gender mark.

In terms of access to land, the commission recommended that:

- The right to land be enshrined in the Constitution;
- Public awareness campaigns be undertaken to sensitize the public about the provisions of the Succession (Rights of the Surviving Spouse and Inheritance Family Provisions) Act and the Dissolution of Marriages of Persons Subject to Customary Law (Disposal of Property) Act.

In terms of political participation, the commission recommended that:

- The specially elected members of the National Assembly provision in the Constitution be retained and that improvements be made in targeting marginalized, special, and underrepresented groups;
- The specially nominated councillors provision in the Local Government Act be retained and reserved for special, marginalized, and underrepresented groups;
- Thirty percent of candidates fielded by political parties in primary, local government, and parliamentary elections be women.

In terms of GBV, the commission recommended that:

- The government introduce programs and initiatives to sensitize Batswana about the provisions of the Penal Code (Amendment) Act, 2021, which prescribe penalties for those convicted of sexual offenses and GBV;
- Increased Penal Code penalties be introduced for sexual offense offenders, including preclusion of release on bail and death sentence for persons convicted of raping children age under 12 years (which would not be in conformity with international human rights law);
- Trainings be carried out for the *dikgosi* with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and productivity in the customary court system, which could increase women's access to justice in GBV cases.

Since publication of the report in September 2022, the Second Transitional NDP (2023) has noted that amendments to Botswana's Constitution will be a major priority.

Appendix D. NPGAD Development Priorities

The National Policy on Gender and Development (NPGAD) includes five development priorities, namely:

- a. Advocate gender equality and equity in Botswana;
- b. Create and strengthen an enabling and supportive environment for an effective national gender response;
- c. Adopt and apply affirmative measures, as necessary, to address identified gender gaps;
- d. Provide guidance on gender mainstreaming to all sectors, that is, public and private sectors and civil society organizations;
- e. Advocate and support strengthening of national capacity for gender mainstreaming in sector policies, programs and operations.

The NPGAD identifies the following strategic objectives:

- a. Eliminate all forms of gender discrimination as a strategy to achieve gender equality and equity, through the development and implementation of gender-responsive legislation, policies, programs, and projects;
- b. Establish standards, targets, and indicators, and adopt quality regulatory measures to ensure uniform promotion of minimum standard performance in gender equality initiatives;
- c. Address existing gender issues and concerns as they are identified to ensure that policies and programs are compliant with gender equity objectives, and to prevent the emergence of new gender-based imbalances;
- d. Set realistic, measurable targets, time frames, and indicators for achieving gender equality and equity;
- e. Promote research to enhance evidence-based programming;
- f. Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress made toward gender equality at 5- and 10-year intervals;
- g. Strengthen community capacity building.

In terms of committing the government to better use of gender-disaggregated data, paragraph 67 of the NPGAD seeks to accelerate sectoral gender mainstreaming through the use of sex-disaggregated data for evidence-based decision-making and resource allocation. In addition, paragraph 70 commits to building capacity and strengthening systems within the government to undertake gender mainstreaming, including by developing gender-sensitive indicators and data collection tools. Paragraph 80 assigns the responsibility for gender mainstreaming to the Department of Gender Affairs, including supporting other sectors and stakeholders in developing appropriate gender-mainstreaming strategies, monitoring, and data collection tools. The department is also responsible for strengthening the national capacity for gender mainstreaming.

Appendix E. PEFA Gender-Responsive Public Financial Management Assessment Report

The Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) gender-responsive Public Financial Management (PFM) assessment of Botswana (2022) identified a number of key weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to implement effective gender-responsive planning and budgeting in the public sector, including the following.

- Budget policy proposals do not indicate the impact of policy changes on gender equity.
- Gender impacts of public investment projects are not fully tracked, reported upon, or published.
- Annual budget circulars do not request information on gender impacts in budget submissions.
- The government accounting and budgeting system is not designed to provide accounting on the gender effects of spending, as it does not link budget estimates to policies or programs.
- Legislative scrutiny of the budget or audits cannot focus on gender because that information is not systematically included in the documents provided to the legislative body; nor does it form part of parliamentary committees' agendas.
- Existing frameworks are not designed to track gender mainstreaming across government; hence, the government is not able to report on the impact and outcomes of policy changes or overall performance of the ongoing policies.
- Government sets gender-related policy priorities but also faces competing demands during implementation that can undermine the policy's gender-related goals. Hence, there is the need for more participation of the private sector and civil society organizations to hold government accountable for enacting its own policies.
- There is limited research on and general evaluation of the country performance on budget alignment with gender mainstreaming for Botswana.

The assessment also found insufficient transparency and collaboration between the Department of Gender Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and other ministries, and limited execution of the gender policy in alignment with the budget preparation, execution, and budget reports. It noted that the Botswana PFM system performs better when it comes to providing performance information related to service delivery, and the evaluation of the gender aspects of service delivery (for example, the Ministry of Health and Wellness review of outpatient and preventive health services from a gender perspective, or the gender analysis of the technical and vocational education and training sector).

Appendix F. Policy Linkages to Recommendations

Strategic priority	Link to NPGAD	Link to Second Transitional NDP	Link to budget speech
Strategic priority 1: Increase women's participation in decision-making at local and national levels and strengthen gender equality under the law	The NPGAD indicates (paragraph 53) that advocacy will be intensified to promote equal representation of men, women, and youths, as well as other vulnerable groups, at all levels of governance and leadership structures, such as Parliament, local authorities, the public service, parastatal organizations, the private sector, and CSOs.	The Second Transitional NDP notes that the low representation of women in Parliament remains a concern. It specifies that to increase electoral participation, outreach programs specific to representation of youths and women in political leadership and decision-making must be prioritized. It further emphasizes the importance of gender-responsive budgeting as a tool to improve women's representation in political leadership.	The 2024/25 budget commits to introducing political party funding to the amount of 34.6 million pula.
Strategic priority 2: Strengthen capacity for all-of-government gender mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming is identified as a core development strategy for the advancement of gender equality in Botswana. Amongst the five developmental priorities of the NPGAD, two focus on gender mainstreaming: provide guidance on gender mainstreaming to all sectors (public sector, private sector, and civil society); and advocate and support strengthening of national capacity for gender mainstreaming in sector policies, programs, and operations (paragraph 8). The NPGAD indicates that individual development sectors should, among other things, facilitate gender-based planning and budgeting for specific interventions, and develop relevant gender-sensitive indicators to measure performance and track gender-related results (paragraph 67). Priority areas for capacity development on gender mainstreaming include gender analysis and gender auditing, gender planning and gender budgeting, policy analysis using a gender lens, development of gender-sensitive indicators and data collection tools, gender reporting and accountability, strengthening the capacity to use gender-related evidence in decision-making, planning, programming, and resource allocation, and gender-sensitive advocacy and communication. The Department of Gender Affairs is assigned the responsibility for facilitating capacity development (paragraphs 70–72).	The Second Transitional NDP notes that as a key intervention to reduce poverty amongst women and improve their representation in political leadership, gender-responsive budgeting will be implemented. In addition, it commits the government to developing relevant performance indicators for gender, people living with disabilities, youths, children, and the elderly, with a view to ensuring that these data will inform the design of policies, programs, projects, systems, and plans for relevant demographic groups.	The 2024/25 budget speech highlights that more needs to be done to align and recognize gender issues within the public finance management cycle and daily operational decision-making. It notes that, in addition, the coordination of gender equality policies and the implementation of the budget need to be strengthened to produce well-structured data for tracking gender mainstreaming across all sectors. The Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport, and Culture Development received a 19.4 percent increase on the 2023/24 budget. Separate to this, the budget speech commits to promoting equality for all and granting equal opportunities to women, men, girls, and boys to participate in the economic development of the country. The budget proposes a 536.5 percent increase in the budget for gender mainstreaming.

Strategic priority	Link to NPGAD	Link to Second Transitional NDP	Link to budget speech
Strategic priority 3: Reduce high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) and improve access to justice and to integrated GBV survivor support services	The NPGAD commits stakeholders (including government and civil society) to intensify advocacy, awareness, and legal literacy in order to improve the understanding of gender issues, including GBV. It also indicates that duty bearers in the criminal justice system will undergo capacity building to strengthen their ability to protect vulnerable men, women, boys, and girls. It also commits to the effective implementation of interventions in terms of access to justice, protection of human rights, and freedom from violence (paragraphs 55–60).	The NDP notes that a multisectoral approach involving government, the faith-based sector, internal security organs, and other stakeholders is urgently needed to address the rape problem. In addition, it identifies the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting as being instrumental in reducing GBV and HIV/AIDS. In addition, the NDP proposes establishing a GBV case management system that will utilize information and communication technology and other technologies, establishing more safe havens to augment existing ones operated by CSOs, and running the next iteration of the National Relationship Study.	
Strategic priority 4: Support girls and boys to reach their full human capital potential	The NPGAD identifies unplanned pregnancies and exposure to HIV as a challenge and commits the government through the Ministry of Education and Skills Development to exploring and mainstreaming appropriate interventions to address this (paragraph 43). In terms of STEM, the NPGAD commits the government to working to ensure equitable and accessible quality education for boys and girls, especially in STEM fields (paragraph 44). In terms of social protection for vulnerable groups, the NPGAD commits to strengthening social protection programs to create more inclusive opportunities for learning, especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners and adults (paragraph 44). In addition, it commits to an expansion of the social protection system by putting in place a comprehensive social protection framework comprising transformative, preventive, protective, and promotive interventions with the aim of alleviating extreme poverty and deprivation (paragraph 37).	The Second Transitional NDP notes that gender-responsive budgeting will be an important strategy to contribute to reducing GBV and HIV/AIDS among young women and adolescent girls. In terms of HIV, it suggests a multipronged approach that targets the risk factors that increase exposure to HIV, with a particular focus on behavior change and service provision to priority populations. It further notes that students will be encouraged to study STEM subjects at school. However, it does not identify specific plans or programs targeting pregnant adolescents or increasing the number of female students entering STEM fields. The Wealth Creation Programme aims to eradicate poverty and reduce vulnerability.	“Education and human capital development” is identified as one of nine medium-term strategic objectives in the 2024/25 budget speech. The budget speech commits the government to continuing to direct resources toward transforming and enhancing the delivery of education and training to address the mismatch between available human capital and the requirements of the economy. The government intends to introduce projects to enhance the alignment between educational qualifications and the evolving demands of the labor market. The curriculum will be reviewed to support outcome-based education. The Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2015–2020 will be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
Strategic priority 5: Close wage and productivity gender gaps in entrepreneurship and employment	The NPGAD highlights economic development, prosperity, and poverty eradication as priority areas for improved gender outcomes. A significant emphasis is placed on improving gender analysis in Botswana and developing sector-specific strategic operational plans and gender interventions. However, the NPGAD does not address inequalities in entrepreneurship or women’s access to credit and finance. It also does not address access to parental leave, or access to childcare. In terms of climate change, the NPGAD does not address agricultural interventions. It also does not address equitable participation in male-dominated economic sectors and activities.	The Second Transitional NDP commits the government to implementing the Gender in Agriculture Strategy to achieve gender equity and equality for all farmers by providing equal access to productive resources.	The 2024/25 budget speech identifies nine medium-term strategic priorities, including supporting the private sector through business environment reforms and value chain development, innovation and digital transformation, and tourism development. The budget also notes that the 2019 Informal Sector Strategy will be reviewed in the 2024/25 financial year to consider how government can facilitate decent places of operation for informal businesses, provide capacity building that is essential for skills enhancement, improve market access, and find ways to formalize the informal sector.

Appendix G. Evidence-Based Program Interventions (Selected)

The following table does not present a comprehensive literature review but provides examples of interventions that have been found to have had positive effects in the strategic priority areas proposed in appendix F. It also provides several metareviews of these areas of intervention.

Gender issue	Driver	Evidence-based program interventions
What works to increase women's agency and reduce GBV		
Gender-based violence (GBV)	Poverty and lack of economic opportunity	A review of global evidence finds that cash transfer programs, economic empowerment (such as microfinance) + gender-transformative programs, couples' interventions, parenting programs, community engagement, and school-based interventions (such as girls' clubs) have all been found to reduce GBV when properly implemented (Kerr-Wilson et al. 2020). Cash transfers can mitigate intimate partner violence (IPV), or enable women to leave or not engage in violent relationships (Pettifor et al. 2005).
	Gender norms	Training for boys on sexual and reproductive health behaviors and relationships with girlfriends can mitigate GBV and IPV (Shah et al. 2023). Gender-transformative couples' interventions for expectant or current fathers and their partners in small group discussions can reduce IPV (Doyle et al. 2018).
Personal agency	Poverty	Unconditional cash transfers to out-of-school girls has worked to delay marriage and childbearing (Baird, McIntosh, and Özler 2021).
	Gender norms	Safe spaces, empowerment, and livelihood training for girls can increase bodily autonomy and delay marriage and childbirth (Bandiera et al. 2018).
Women's low representation in government	Lack of legal quotas Social norms	Introducing gender quotas can increase women's participation and representation in politics, although these must be adapted to local context to be effective (Schramm 2019; International IDEA n.d.).
Metareviews		
Jewkes, Rachel, Samantha Willan, Lori Heise, Laura Washington, Nwabisa Shai, Alice Kerr-Wilson, and Nicola Christofides. 2020. <i>Effective Design and Implementation Elements in Interventions to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls: What Works to Prevent VAWG?</i> Global Programme Synthesis Product Series. Pretoria: South African Medical Research Council.		
Kerr-Wilson, Alice, Andrew Gibbs, Erika McAslan Fraser, Leane Ramsoomar, Anna Parke, Hussain M.A. Khuwaja, and Rachel Jewkes. 2020. <i>A Rigorous Global Evidence Review of Interventions to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls</i> . Pretoria, South Africa: What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Global Programme.		
Malhotra, Anju, and Shatha Elnakib. "20 Years of Evidence Base on What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Systematic Review." <i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i> 68 (5): 847–62. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X20306868 .		
What works to close gender gaps in education		
Gender gaps in education outcomes emerging at each level of education	Boys early childhood care, development, and education (ECCDE) and learning school outcomes worse	Access to quality ECCDE for all and improving the capacity of ECCD practitioners can support children who are falling behind, including boys (Schweinhart et al. 2005; Reynolds et al. 2011; UNESCO 2022).
		Increasing fathers' engagement and carers' interaction with young children can improve outcomes of children (Barker et al. 2021).
	Girls' lower learning outcomes and levels of enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)	An increased numbers of role models and women teaching STEM can influence more girls to pursue STEM fields (González-Pérez, Mateos de Cabo, and Sáinz 2020; Drury, Siy, and Cheryan 2011). ⁸² Increased access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and encouragement to enroll in traditionally male-dominated trades can increase the rate of women crossing over to male-dominated trades (Hicks et al. 2011). ⁸³

⁸² The study by González-Pérez, Mateos de Cabo, and Sáinz (2020) found that on average, the role model intervention has a positive and significant effect on mathematics enjoyment, importance attached to mathematics, expectations of success in mathematics, and girls' aspirations in STEM, and a negative effect on gender stereotypes. Additionally, the female role model sessions significantly increase the positive impact of expectations of success on STEM choices. The study by Drury, Siy, and Cheryan (2011) found that female role models are important for retention of women and girls in STEM fields but that for recruitment, male and female role models are equally effective.

⁸³ A vocational training program in Kenya that provided vouchers to out-of-school youths to help overcome cost barriers to TVET found that the returns on investment, that is, the increase in earnings following completion of the course, were greater for young women than men (Hicks et al. 2011).

Gender issue	Driver	Evidence-based program interventions
	School insufficiently safe and inclusive	Increased safety, improved accessibility, and reduced discrimination at school can be accomplished through monitoring and reporting mechanisms (Kazianga et al. 2013; UNESCO 2016). ⁸⁴
		Girls' and boys' clubs focusing on girl's empowerment and positive male models of masculinity, GBV, HIV/AIDS, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and enhanced life skills can make schools safer and foster more inclusive environments (Population Council et al. 2020; Baylor College of Medicine Swaziland and UNICEF 2018).

Metareviews

Bergstrom, Katy, and Berk Özler. 2021. *Improving the Well-Being of Adolescent Girls in Developing Countries*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36478>.

Evans, David K., and Fei Yuan. 2021. "What We Learn about Girls' Education from Interventions That Do Not Focus on Girls." *World Bank Economic Review* 36 (1): 244–67.

Sampa, Mutale, Mwiche Musukuma, Ronald Fisa, Patrick Musonda, and Taryn Young. 2021. "Interventions for Keeping Adolescent Girls in School in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Scoping Review." *Frontiers in Education*. 5: 614297. doi:10.3389/feduc.2020.614297.

What works to improve sexual, reproductive, and maternal health outcomes

Poor access to and outcomes from sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls	Adolescent pregnancy	Keeping girls in school and facilitating their return to school or alternative training can decrease rates of adolescent pregnancy (Bergstrom and Özler 2021; Evans and Yuan 2021). ⁸⁵
		Increasing adolescent- and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services via outreach and mobile services can lower adolescent pregnancy (Gottschalk and Ortayli 2014; Evans and Acosta 2020).
		Age-appropriate sex education (regardless of grade) can lower adolescent pregnancy rates (Committee on Adolescent Health Care 2016).
	High maternal mortality rates	Improved coverage of quality essential health care services, including timely antenatal care, emergency obstetric and newborn care, and postnatal care, can lower maternal mortality rates. Improved governance through better monitoring of services and better management of resources can lower maternal mortality rates.
		Ensuring universal access to modern contraceptives can prevent unwanted pregnancies. Removing legal restrictions and ensuring access to safe abortion and postabortion care following WHO standards can lower maternal mortality rates (WHO 2022b; SAfAIDS 2018; Singh et al. 2018).
	Higher rates of HIV/AIDS among women and adolescent girls	Increasing women's and adolescent girls' empowerment and reducing (men's) risky behaviors can lower risk of HIV/AIDS among women and girls (Harrison et al. 2010; Hallman and Roca 2011). Providing comprehensive and empowering sex-positive education to both in-school and out-of-school adolescents can lower risk of HIV/AIDS among women and girls (Zaneva et al. 2022; Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer 2015; Gottschalk and Ortayli 2014; Haberland 2015). Providing conditional cash transfers linked to attending school and testing negative for HIV/AIDS can lower risk of HIV/AIDS (Gorgens et al. 2020).

Metareviews

Bertrand, Jane T., Kevin O'Reilly, Julie Denison, Rebecca Anhang, and Michael Sweat. 2006. "Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Mass Communication Programs to Change HIV/AIDS-Related Behaviors in Developing Countries." *Health Education Research* 21 (4): 567–97.

Black, Robert, Ramanan Laxminarayan, Merleen Temmerman, and Neff Walker, editors. 2016. *Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: Disease Control Priorities, Third Edition, Volume 2*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/23833>.

Gottschalk, Lindsey B., and Nuriye Ortayli. 2014. "Interventions to Improve Adolescents' Contraceptive Behaviors in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Review of the Evidence Base." *Contraception* 90 (3): 211–25. doi:10.1016/j.contraception.2014.04.017.

HIP (Family Planning: High Impact Practices). n.d. *Creating the Greatest Impact: Explore the Evidence*. <http://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/>.

⁸⁴ A "girl-friendly" primary school expansion program (separate latrines, more female teachers, and gender sensitivity training) led to large gains in girls' educational attainment and learning in Burkina Faso (Kazianga et al. 2013).

⁸⁵ Bergstrom and Özler 2021: see live database of all interventions reviewed at https://rrmaximiliano.shinyapps.io/asa_ado_app/.

Gender issue	Driver	Evidence-based program interventions
What work to increase women's economic inclusion		
Gender gap in economic productivity	Women concentrated in lower-paying occupations and positions	Utilizing mobile technology can improve adult education and access to employment information (Aker, Ksoll, and Lybbert 2012).
		Increasing skill levels and knowledge of earnings in male-dominated sectors can increase the number of women crossing over into male-dominated trades (World Bank 2022b; Gassier, Rouanet, and Traore 2022).
		Increasing employers' knowledge of female applicants' qualifications can overcome gender biases in securing employment (Martin, Burger, and Piraino 2017).
		Increased exposure to lucrative industries through mentorship and experience can increase the number of women entering male-dominated trades (Cucagna and Rubiano-Matulevich 2020).
	Increased vulnerability to, and unequal impact from, climate change	Increased adoption of climate adaptation strategies, such as income diversification, climate-smart agricultural practices, and social protection programming, can increase resilience to climate change.
		Involving women in development of climate change strategies and disaster risk management can improve impact of strategies to address impacts of climate change and increase women's resiliency (Hemachandra, Amaratunga, and Haigh 2018).
		Investing in infrastructure, public services, and training can increase women's resilience to shocks by reducing women's time poverty and increasing their ability to engage in economically productive activities (SADC 2018; Bahia et al. 2021).
	Social norms and unequal domestic burdens	Engaging men to increase their share of domestic and childcare responsibilities can reduce women's time poverty and increase their ability to engage in economically productive activities (Alemann, Garg, and Vlahovicova 2022; Doyle et al. 2018; Vaillant et al. 2020).
		Sharing information regarding widespread support for women working outside the home can increase individual men's support for their partner to engage in economic activities (Bursztyn, González, and Yanagizawa-Drott 2020).
		Increasing access to affordable childcare and early childhood education can reduce women's time poverty and increase women's ability to engage in economically productive activities (Martinez, Naudeau, and Pereira 2012; Clark et al. 2019; de Barros et al 2013).
		Increasing the prevalence of support mechanisms in the workplace (flexible work schedules, childcare) can increase their ability to engage in formal employment (Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality 2022).
	Insufficient access to capital	Increasing women's use of secure savings mechanisms can increase productivity and control of their income (Carranza et al. 2018; Dupas and Robinson 2013).
		In-kind grants, cash transfers, and complementary training for women entrepreneurs can increase access to capital (Fafchamps et al. 2014; FAO 2016; Bastian, Goldstein, and Papineni 2017).
		Mid-sized loans for growth-oriented women-owned firms can accelerate business growth (Alibhai, Buehren, and Papineni 2018).
Metareviews		
Banerjee, Raka, Kajal Gulati, Michael B. O'Sullivan, Arathi Srijaya Rao, and Margaux Laurence Vinez. 2014. <i>Levelling the Field: Improving Opportunities for Women Farmers in Africa</i> . Washington, DC: World Bank. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/579161468007198488/Levelling-the-field-improving-opportunities-for-women-farmers-in-Africa . Campos, Francisco Moraes Leitao, Rachel Dawn Coleman, Adriana Conconi, Aletheia Amalia Donald, Marine Gassier, Markus P. Goldstein, Zenaida L. Chavez, Joanna Mikulski, Annamaria Milazzo, Maliheh Paryavi, Rachael Susan Pierotti, Michael B. O'Sullivan, and Julia Vaillant. 2019. <i>Profiting from Parity: Unlocking the Potential of Women's Businesses in Africa: Main Report</i> . Washington, DC: World Bank. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/501971553025918098/Main-Report . World Bank. 2022. <i>Breaking Barriers: Female Entrepreneurs Who Cross Over to Male-Dominated Sectors</i> . Washington, DC: World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/36106601-3d89-54b2-9475-853c7e569302 .		

Appendix H. Stakeholders Consulted

No.	Government Ministries, Departments and Parastatals
1	Ministry of Youth, Gender, Sport and Culture, Gender Affairs Department
2	Ministry of Finance, Development and Budget and Economic and Finance Policy divisions
3	Statistics Botswana
4	National Planning Commission
5	Attorney General's Office, Legislative Drafting Office
6	Bank of Botswana
7	Local Enterprise Authority
8	Business Development Corporation
9	Botswana National Gender Commission
10	Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry
No.	Development Agencies
11	USAID
12	UNDP
13	GIZ
14	UNFPA
15	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
No.	Civil society, Academia and Private sector
16	LEGABIBO (Lesbians, Gays & Bisexuals of Botswana)
17	Botswana Institute for Policy Analysis
18	Accelerated women owned microenterprise program
19	Men For Health & Gender Justice
20	Women Against Rape (WAR)
21	Botswana Network on Ethics Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA)
22	Botswana Council for the Disabled
23	Botswana Family Welfare Association
24	Botswana Gender Based Violence Prevention & Support Centre
25	Women Against Rape
26	BOFWA (Botswana Family Welfare Association)
27	SOS Botswana Children's villages.
28	Childline
29	SOS Children's Villages
30	Botswana National Youth Council
31	Ngamiland Council of NGOs Botswana
32	Emang Basadi
33	Genderlinks
34	Ditshwanelo – The Botswana Centre for Human Rights
35	Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis
36	Business Botswana- Women in Business Association
37	Botswana Research Crime Institute
38	Accelerated women owned microenterprise program

