

The Experience of Sub-Regional Planning in Botswana: Achievements and Challenges

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Abstract

Botswana, with a population of nearly two million is a democratic, landlocked and prosperous country with one of the highest economic growth rates in the world with the bulk of its economy coming from minerals and cattle. Social and line infrastructure has reached most people in the country. This development has been brought about through careful national development planning as well as through sub national planning. Sub national planning, the subject of this paper, has been through the preparation of economic development plans (district development plans), spatial regional plans (district settlement strategic plans, regional plans and land use plans) and specific subject area plans. Through these plans, in which rural communities fully participate in their planning and implementation, the rural areas have seen marked change and natural resources have been carefully exploited for the benefit of all people. However, in spite of these achievements, their implementation has faced limitations, constraints and challenges which are difficult to overcome. The constraints relate to plan formulation, implementation and monitoring, administrative guidance and problems with vertical and horizontal communication that has created a gap between the intention and reality of bottom-up planning. The paper concludes by putting forward suggestions on how to overcome these problems and chart a way forward for rural development.

Key words

Regional planning, rural development, land use planning, sub-regional planning, Botswana.

Background and socio-economic conditions

Botswana is landlocked and shares borders with Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Zambia. The country covers a total land surface area of 582,000 km² but about two thirds of it is covered with thick sand layers of the Kalahari Desert. There is almost complete absence of surface water. Poor soils and unreliable rains discourage arable agriculture, though this is precisely what needs to be developed. Drought is a regular occurrence and disastrously affects the fragile food and agricultural situation in the country. Before the discovery of minerals, 90% of Botswana's exports were beef and beef products.

When Botswana became independent in 1966, its GDP per capita was one of the lowest in the world, and the country was grouped among the least developed. With independence, the government set off on a course of socio-economic development which has resulted in rapid growth within a short period of time. The discovery of diamonds in the late sixties set off a course of rapid socio-economic development.

Botswana's economy boomed at unprecedented rates compared to other states in sub-Saharan Africa. The GDP increased fourfold in real terms from 1966 to 1991. In 1966 Botswana's GDP was 313 million Pula, (2007, 1US\$=6.2 Pula) and by 1993 it had grown to a total of 8,329 million Pula^{1/}. GDP growth has averaged around 6% per annum over the entire post-independence period. In 2004/2005, the GDP grew significantly by

8.3% compared to a growth rate of 3.4% recorded during the previous year ^{2/} The GDP per capita in 2004/05 was US\$4700.

The economy is dominated by the mineral sector, which as shown above has continued to expand. This sector has stimulated infrastructure development and financed the expansion of government services. As a result of rapid economic development, Botswana was ranked 71st out of 178 countries on the UNDP's Human Development Index ^{3/}. However, in 2001 Botswana's HDI rank had fallen to 114 out of 162 countries ^{4/} largely due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Unfortunately, however, the rapid economic growth has been accompanied by high income inequality and the persistence of poverty, both absolute and relative particularly, in the rural and peri-urban areas ^{5/}. The 1985/86 Household Income and expenditure Survey estimated that 64% of the households were living below the poverty datum line ^{6/}. In this paper we look at the experience of sub-regional planning in Botswana and is organized as follows. Section one provides the background to Botswana highlighting on the administrative setup and the social-economic conditions of the country. This provides the setting for section two which looks at the framework, machinery and process of sub-regional planning, the types of plans prepared at sub-regional level (spatial as well as economic) and their main characteristics. Section three evaluates the strengths, limitations, constraints and challenges faced in sub national planning. The paper then concludes in section four by looking at the way forward for sub-national planning.

Administrative set up

The Nature of Decentralized Governance in Botswana

After independence, Botswana established a democratic political framework. The public administrative machinery consists of a number of ministries headed by the cabinet ministers and served by a hierarchy of civil servants led by Permanent Secretaries.

Below the central level, Botswana has local government structures. Local government at the district level is understood to include four organizations of devolution and/or deconcentration: District Administration (established by 1965 Act of Parliament), District/Town Councils (1965 Act), Land Boards (established by 1968/1970 Act) and Tribal Administration (1965 Act).

District Administration (headed by a District Commissioner), is an instrument of deconcentration. It exercises delegated authority from the central government and performs a central role in district level governance. The District Commissioner plays a key role in rural development and the government has assigned a key role to the office of the DC in the coordination of formulation, implementation, and monitoring of district development plans.

District Councils are statutory bodies and perform the following duties: administration of primary education, primary health services, construction and maintenance of rural roads, village water supply, community development and social welfare. They are also responsible for sanitation services, administration of self-help housing agencies, the remote area development programme and labour intensive drought relief projects. The councilors are elected every five years during parliamentary elections.

A presidential directive established the District Development Committee (DDC) in 1970, under the chairmanship of the DC. It is the most significant institution at the district level for coordination of development activities. In order for the DDC to function well it has

the support of many other sub-committees, which usually report their activities during meetings.

Land Boards were established in Botswana in 1970 as statutory bodies under the Tribal Land Act, which took away the exclusive powers of chiefs for allocation of tribal land and gave them to these newly elected bodies. The Land Boards, elected every 5 years, hold tribal land in trust and allocate it for residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial and general development purposes. Chiefs are still involved in land management through Land Overseers.

Tribal Administration is the fourth major local government institution in Botswana. Chiefs head tribal administration. Although the powers and functions of chiefs have been reduced over a period of time since independence, they continue to perform significant functions. They provide leadership in maintaining their communities' customs and traditions, serve as spokespersons for their communities on issues of custom, preside over traditional course and preside over the *Kgotla* (traditional meeting forum) where community views are sought.

The Ministry of Local Government is the focal point in the central government for planning and coordination of local authorities. This minister coordinates national policies related to local government activities and liaises with other central government ministries.

Vertical and horizontal linkages: Central Local Government Relations

The ideal balance between centralization and decentralization has been difficult to realize in practice and centralization has been a dominant feature of the nature of governance in African countries. Although Botswana has a good track record of democratic governance and the government has formally committed itself to promoting democratic decentralization, the strength of decentralized institutions remains limited⁷². Central-local government relations in Botswana continue to be characterized by a strong and dominant centre. The capacity of local government remains limited due to its dependence on the central government for financial resources and manpower, the nature of financial and personnel management, inadequate local level leadership, dependence on the contribution of central government ministries; ineffective vertical and horizontal linkages, and inadequate grassroots participation. (*ibid*)

The financial strength of local government in Botswana is limited. Although the recurrent expenditure of local government units has been growing steadily, their own independent sources of revenue are limited. They do receive 100% and between 45-65% grants from central government for capital and recurrent expenditure respectively. Scarcity of qualified staff has been a constraint on local authorities. Local Government Service Management helps the local authorities in meeting their personnel requirements. The recruitment, training, posting, promotion, discipline and conditions of service are handled by the Local Government Service Management

The District as a Sub-National level Unit for Regional Development Planning

For administrative purposes, Botswana is divided into 16 districts, of which ten are rural and six are urban. Districts are the second tier of administration after Central Government. They have been adopted as units for decentralized development planning. Districts are considered viable planning units as they have settled patterns of

administration with a high degree of internal consistency, and well established administrative relationships that have grown and become established over time. A long history of district administration has created citizen awareness of administrative processes within the district and has developed a sense of belonging to that unit. District Councils, as institutions of local government are also district based.

Framework, Machinery and Process of Regional Planning in Botswana.

Nature and Characteristics of Development Planning in Botswana

Development planning in Botswana is undertaken within the framework of a mixed economy in which the private sector plays a significant role. The government welcomes foreign investment and offers incentives to attract foreign investment and to promote domestic investment. The government's overall economic strategy is to reinvest returns from mining in the non-mining sectors, especially the social sector, to improve the living standards of those who do not benefit directly from mining. Thus, the government policies emphasize the complimentary themes of employment creation and rural development, including improvements in infrastructure, education and health.

Botswana has formulated nine National Development Plans since independence in 1966. Local authorities have concurrently produced their development plans, whose timing now covers the period of the National Plan. This facilitates greater coordination between Local Authority Plans and National Plans. The Urban Authorities also produced plans for the first time so that they too, can have a medium term horizon of development in a coherent framework that can allow interested stakeholders to objectively evaluate their policies, plans and programmes^{8/}

Central Planning in Botswana

The administrative planning machinery for development in Botswana consists of a number of organizations, including the political, executive, ministries, inter-ministerial committees, public enterprises, the private sector, local government, district level organizations, NGOs and CBOs. Planning in Botswana is an outcome of communications and coordinated effort of a number of organizations operating vertically and horizontally in central government and the periphery.

The cabinet led by the President and the Parliament, have the highest authority for public policy making and development planning. Below this level, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning plays a central role. Staffs from this ministry are seconded to planning units in line ministries. These units are responsible for project preparation and evaluation, plan preparation and policy advice in line ministries.

The Rural Development Council (RDC) is charged with coordinating rural development activities, a task that cuts across the activities of virtually all ministries.

The District and Urban Development Planning Machinery:

District Development planning is the collective effort of a number of district level organisations. District Administration (District Commissioner's Office), District Council, Land Board, Tribal Administration, and District Development Committee are the main organisations involved in district development planning. In addition, forums like Village

Development Committees, the *Kgotla*, National District Development Conference, NGOs and CBOs also make their contribution to the local level planning.

The District commissioner plays a central role in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of district development plans. As Chairperson of the District Development Committee, he/she is responsible for co-ordination of rural development activities.

The District Council consists of elected representatives at the district level and performs certain statutory functions as cited earlier. The value of District Councils in district planning therefore becomes obvious. The Councilors as representatives of people are expected to articulate their needs, problems and priorities so that the district plans can provide relevant responses. The District Council gives the final formal approval of the District Plan after it is finalized by the DDC.

As Land Boards have the authority to allocate tribal land for residential, arable, commercial, agricultural or development purposes, they assume a significant role in district development planning. Land Boards are represented in DDCs.

Traditional leaders (Chiefs and headmen) also make a contribution in the process of planning and development in their own areas. They serve as a two-way channel of communication between the government and the people. They give leadership on matters of custom and tradition. The *Kgotla* has traditionally been a forum for communication and consultation with the community and continues to play this role in the formulation of district development plans.

The District Development Committee (DDC) is one of the most significant district levels structures for the formulation, co-ordination, monitoring and implementation of district plans. The DDC is a forum for communication among district level structures involved in rural development.

The Features and Processes of Decentralized District and Urban Development Planning.

The Government of Botswana is committed to decentralize planning. According to the District Planning Hand book of the Government of Botswana “one of the primary aims of the district planning process is to ensure that people are involved in rural development, so that planning addresses the problems, opportunities and priorities as identified by the communities development is intended to benefit. The Hand book further argues that “The overriding aim of the District Planning process is to provide a decentralized planning and implementation capacity which is sensitive and responsive to needs, problems and priorities of local communities. It must recognize the need for a high level of local participation if development activities are to have an impact and to be sustained over the long run. The concept is one of “bottom-up” planning and development that will have critical inputs into the formulation of national policies and programmes”.^{9/}

The process of district development initiated in the 1970s has continued to improve. In previous plan periods, DDPs were prepared every three years as against the six years covered by national plans. This method was premised on the notion that one DDP would be based on existing NDP sectoral plans and financial ceilings while the second DDP would provide some basis for determining the priorities of the next NDP. Due to the conflicting time line the time was changed to 6 years just like the NDP.

The urban areas prepared Urban Development Plans One (UDP1s) for the first time in 1997, covering the national development plan period. Before then, urban districts produced physical plans in terms of the Towns and Country Planning Act. Today, some capacity constraints are being experienced in the urban areas, where an adequate economic and land use planners does not exist, but consultants have come to the rescue for now.^{10/}

Rural Development Policy and its role in sub-regional planning

For one to appreciate the role and impact of sub-regional plans in rural development, there is need to familiarize readers with the main policy that guides rural development in Botswana.

Rural development has always been an integral part of Botswana's planning strategies since in the past 75% of the population lived in rural areas (today it is only 55%). The first Rural Development Policy did take many years to implement due largely to a lack of capacity and to limited resources available domestically and from aid programmes.

A new policy was adopted in 2002 whose objectives are to reduce poverty; provide opportunities for income generation and involvement in economic activities; to create employment; and to enhance popular participation in the development planning and implementation process as a basis for broad-based, balanced and sustainable development. More specifically, the objectives of the Rural Development Policy are to stimulate rural development and income generation through identification and exploitation of profitable alternatives to livestock such as rural industries, services, and crafts; attraction of skilled youth; promotion of private sector initiatives; increase agricultural productivity; improve the rural development extension services; and develop an integrated approach towards the reduction of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The substance of the policy takes cognizance of demographic trends; the comparative advantages of agro-economic zones; the need to focus and target the beneficiaries of the policy, to minimize duplication and waste, and to avoid the creation or perpetuation of dependence.

Sub-national planning and plans in operation in Botswana.

Sub regional plans in Botswana are composed of both economic and physical plans. Some cover one or several administrative areas whilst others cover non-geographical areas which are smaller or larger in size at times. In this section, we present an overview of these plans highlighting their main features and roles in fostering rural development.

Physical Plans

Three types of physical plans are in existence and these are: Regional Master Plans, District Settlement Strategic Plans and District Integrated Land Use Plans. These are prepared for different areas and the form, content and adopted mapping scales vary accordingly.

(a) District Settlement Strategic Plans (DSS)

The first type of regional physical planning in Botswana is for administrative district and sub-district areas. This is a requirement of the National Settlement Policy (NSP) for every district. The overall goal of this policy is to develop a strategy for national physical planning and to provide a framework for the distribution of investment in a way that

reflects the settlement size, population, economic potential, level of infrastructure and their role as services.

The main feature of the NSP is the Settlement Hierarchy which was created to facilitate the implementation of the policy. The criteria for the designation of the settlement hierarchy was population, distance, role of settlement as a service centre, development potential etc. This settlement hierarchy also facilitates the growth of both rural and urban settlements in support of agriculture and other productive activities. There are three levels in this settlement hierarchy, namely, primary centers (main urban centres), secondary centres (small towns and major settlements) and tertiary centres. The latter, are in turn divided into four levels.

The DSSs are an elaboration of the NSP at district level, defining the appropriate settlement hierarchy in the district and dividing it into sub-areas or production zones. They are complimentary to the District Development Plan. Whilst the DDP outlines the economic development of the district and the division of district financial resources for various sectoral activities, the DSS is concerned with geographic location of development activities particularly infrastructure and services. The time span for these plans is between 10-15 years.

The main goal of the DSS plans is to guide local authorities and prioritizing development opportunities within the district. The strategy specifically addresses many things among which are to :- (i) Determine a settlement hierarchy within the district and identify settlements within each hierarchy in accordance with the NSP; (ii) Determine the priority and level of services and infrastructure provision to each settlements hierarchy in accordance with NSP; (iii) Assess existing land use plans and land use planning activities and make appropriate recommendations leading to a more sustainable land use and development; (v) Carry out spatial analysis of the population, settlements, and natural resources and determine the direction of population movements etc, and finally (vi) Identify all unrecognized settlements and the infrastructure and services provided for each and suggest future provision of the services.

In essence, the plans provide a framework for the equitable distribution of investments, services, development efforts and resources throughout each district. The end product of the DSS is a written statement, diagrams and illustration maps.

To-date, such plans have been prepared and are being implemented with some success in the following districts: Central, Chobe, Kgalagadi, Kweneng, Kgatleng, Ngamiland, North East, North West, South East and Southern districts.

However, there are some issues of concern in the implementation of the DSS plans and these include the following:- (i) Of late there has been some establishment of villages in some places without due regard to designated land use zoning, availability of water and other environmental consequences. This phenomenon is encouraged by public representation (political pressure), implementation of government programmes like drought relief, provision of schools, health facilities and gazettelement of headmen/chiefs etc (ii) Poor economic base of most of the small settlements which sometimes leads to their disintegration (iii) Lack of coordinated locational criteria for the provision of infrastructure and services (iv) Poor implementation of village physical development plans by local authorities which has resulted in village sprawl and haphazard land

allocation (v) Slow development of infrastructure in rural Primary Centres due to inadequate funds and the lack of cost recovery (vi) The land tenure system coupled with the non-legally surveyed plots is a constrain for private sector investment particularly in securing loans from commercial banks and finally (vi) Inadequate coordination of government, parastatal and private organizations, infrastructure programmes in the provision of services.

(b) Regional Master Plans

The second type of sub-national plans are “regional master plans” prepared in response to the National Settlement Policy, which has divided the country into four planning regions, each region comprising of a number of administrative districts. Such plans are broad brush in nature aimed at tackling issues having an impact on wide areas. They provide an overall framework for all district settlement and local plans setting general directions for district and settlement development, infrastructure and social services provision, economic/financial requirements and appropriate land utilization. They also provide policies and strategies for utilizing regional natural resources. Their objective is, therefore, to provide a framework for the spatial distribution of resources and to facilitate the creation of incentives for increased production through investment by the private and public sectors. The regional master plan is composed of (a) a written statement consisting of land use zoning, and locational proposals for settlement, social and line infrastructure and (b) maps and illustrations. So far, two such plans have been completed, the Western Region Master Plan and the South-Eastern Region Master Plan and their implementation is ongoing. The Western Region Master plan covers two administrative districts, viz: Ghanzi and Kgalagadi. On the other hand, the South-Eastern Regional Master Plan comprises of four districts, namely, Southern, South East, Kweneng and Kgatleng districts.

(c) District Integrated Land Use Plans (DILUP)

An Integrated District Land Use Plan (IDLUP) is a plan which deals with spatial aspects and potentials for social and economic development of a district or part of a district based on its land and soil suitability and capability. Its written statement consists of a) survey background study and b) planning report with maps showing the arrangement of different land use zone designations.

The IDLUP serves two broad goals: first to protect people and property from natural and man-made hazards and second, to protect and maintain important natural and man-made values. The IDLUP applies land use analysis to identify various alternative sites for different types of land use activities and developments. The land use suitability analysis applied in IDLUP includes four main steps: 1) selecting and defining a classification system for all resources (natural and man-made) within a district land area; 2) classifying the land area according to the system; 3) selecting and defining a classification system for land use; and 4) comparing each of the classified land uses to each of the classified land areas.

Proposals should indicate the general nature of the proposed development or land use change, its justification and implementation schedule including responsibilities. This information is presented in graphical, tabular or chart form. Maps are used for illustration.

Completed plans under implementation include: Central District, Mmamashia (part of Kgatleng district) and Otse/Mogobane (part of South East district)

(d) Village Development plans

Like other types of physical planning, there was little or no village planning during the colonial era. In fact, no plans to guide the development of villages were prepared prior to 1970. Despite the physical planning manpower shortages in the country, several village plans are prepared every year and their implementation is ongoing with some success in guiding village development.

A village development plan is primarily a physical land use plan which guides the development of a village for 10 to 15 years. It deals mainly with the existing village built-up areas and the areas likely to be required for new development and new facilities. Detailed layouts are subsequently prepared for smaller areas. During the preparation of the plan, a Village Planning Committee(VPC) is usually instituted to work with the physical planners. Extensive public participation is done to ensure that the ideas of the villagers are taken on board and projects are prioritized according to their needs. After preparation, the plan is presented to various committees and authorities for approval.

For a long time, the implementation of village development plans has faced several problems that have resulted in the plans, including detailed layouts, being white elephants 11

Some of the problems of plan implementation are:-

- (i) Lack of financial backing for the plans. In most cases no funds are set aside for implementation of village development plans in both DDPs and Council Annual Plans.
- (ii) Property owners sometimes do not accept or are dissatisfied with the assessed values of their properties leading to procrastination at times and delays in project implementation.
- (iii) Coordination of activities among Council departments is quite weak and has impacted on the implementation of several village plans
- (iv) There have been delays in extension of village water works boundaries
- (v) There is also an issue with the legality of plans as currently, the Town and Country Planning Act is not yet applicable to major villages, hence village plans are only advisory to the land boards. Any land use violation in the plan is not subject to legal enforcement. This loophole has given the land boards two choices, adherence and non-adherence to the plan.
- (vi) Due to lack of manpower, there is usually not much monitoring of the implementation of the village development plans. This is a serious omission because implementation would be much better if there is someone to coordinate the whole process.

District Economic Development Plans (*District Development Plans (DDPs)*)

The DDP is a basic strategic planning document for all development to be carried out in rural administrative districts (District Development Plans) and urban centres (Urban Development Plans) of Botswana and does cover a period of 6 years just like the National Development Plans. District development planning was initiated in the early 1970s

(1969-72), and to-date 6 plans have been prepared and implemented with the current plan being DDP6 (2003-2009). Previously urban centers only produced physical plans in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act of 1977.

Its scope is comprehensive, including all sectors whether the responsibility of central government or a local authority, and it also shows how the public sector will assist private development. The DDP provides policy guidance and a framework for all levels of development effort whether they are implementation of a national programme or work with an individual farmers group at the village level. This is not to imply that the DDP should detail every single project or initiative. Rather it should set overall goals, direction and priorities with which all development should conform. The preparation of the DDP is the responsibility of the DDC. The plan has to be approved by the District Council before being transmitted to central government. The planning model is bottom-up in that projects are hatched from consultations held at village and community level and prioritized according to needs.

DDPs are valuable tools for sectoral plans; they contain a wealth of information on strategies and projects which should be extensively used in drafting sectoral chapters. The DDP is the one document which comprehensively describes a District's characteristics, progress to date, future goals and specific sectoral requirements. DDPs provide up-to-date data, often more detailed than that which is available centrally, on sectoral needs in each district. These plans have always guided rural development in the country and are invaluable as tools of bringing social and line infrastructure to the rural folks. Like most plans, they also have faced problems in their preparation, implementation and monitoring due largely to lack of funds, poor coordination and poor management in some instances.

Strengths, limitations, and challenges of sub-national planning and implementation

Strengths of the current plans

The system of district planning in Botswana is relevant to the circumstances of the country and based on a practical experience pertaining to the country rather than a foreign model. It is flexible in its approach and provides room for receiving inputs from the village level^{12/}. Operating from an institutional framework, it allows for the outlining of broad programmes based on consultation with the people.

These days, the government programmes and strategies are geared towards promoting community involvement and participation in the development of their lives. Thus it is now seen that central and district planning organizations, as well as the communities themselves are increasingly beginning to accept the principle of bottom up planning as something real in the planning process. Through the consultation processes, public education is gradually gaining momentum.

The synchronization of the national development plan and the local plans as a procedure for plan formulation, implementation and monitoring is considerably a right step in the right direction. One prominent feature of this synchronization is the Local Authorities Planning Matrix common with the current district and urban development plans. The matrix comprises of spreadsheets designed to show details of financial allocations for Local Plans (i.e. DDP6 and UDP2) against NDP9, for each project, from each ministry, to each district or urban area. The matrix is a detailed breakdown of the NDP9 financial

allocations, by area and disaggregated both by components of specific projects and where it has been possible into five annual phases of the plan period.

The other aspect to note is the flexibility of changing priorities during the implementation of the plan, that is, if all stakeholders agree. This takes into consideration the felt needs of the people and is possible especially during the annual district project planning and mid-term reviews.

Another notable strength of most plans is that they move from the drawing board to the ground in terms of implementation, as once approved, funding of projects is normally given, though sometimes delays occur due to capacity problems. Several players at the local level are involved in the implementation and management of the district plans. They include planners and project managers, both at the district and at the centre, service departments and parastatals and the private sector, especially the contractors that are involved in the construction industry.

Once the departments are ready for implementation, the District Development Committee takes the responsibility for overseeing their implementation. The plans are managed and monitored through annual plans, progress reports and project reviews both annual and mid term. The annual plans are derived from the district development plan, and are easier to draw when the district development plans have been phased on annual basis. Annual plans are discussed before they are taken to full Council for approval.

Further a computerization system has been established to monitor projects. The government of Botswana has adopted and introduced a Government Project Monitoring System (GPMS) which is a database system that contains information about development projects. The system can be used to generate quarterly and annual project monitoring reports as well as any other information that might be required on projects. This same system is used by district planning officers in all districts. Information is shared (by disc) and compiled electronically in the Ministry of Local Government (responsible for all Local Authority Councils) before a hard copy is produced. The system is developed in Dbase IV and offers all of the powerful data manipulation, organization and representation capabilities of that package. With this system, project information can be maintained with the system, quarterly monitoring reports generated and any other number of other ad hoc information requests or reports produced.

Lastly, the sub regional plans so far implemented in the country have achieved their objectives of bringing some economic development, employment opportunities, industrial diversification and provision of social services in the rural areas of the country following the provisions and guidance of the various plans for these areas. This is an envy of most other countries in the Third World. For example poverty has been reduced through instituting rural development projects and rural urban population migration has been stemmed to some extent due to the creation of secondary centres and the introduction of policies and programmes of improving rural areas, village infrastructure programmes, and the preparation of master plans for most villages have avoided piecemeal development and have guided development to the right areas

Limitations, Constraints and Challenges

Regional development planning has been faced with a number of limitations, constraints and challenges. The constraints relate to plan formulation, implementation and monitoring; administrative guidance; and vertical and horizontal communication that has

created a gap between the intention and the reality of 'bottom-up planning'. However, the country is constantly learning from experience and improvements are being registered. This can be discerned from the relationship between the weaknesses pointed out by the Ellison (Consultancy) Report in 1990,^{13/} and subsequent improvements noted by the Phaleng and Peer (Consultancy) Report in 1997.

The Challenge of Translating "Bottom-Up Planning" into Desired Outcomes.

Translating 'bottom-up planning' into desired outcome remains a serious challenge. In the first instance, the planning process in Botswana is not fully decentralized. Development plans in the past have been formulated at the centre where policies have been determined with regard to the allocation of resources. However, the contribution of district level organisations has increased steadily as can be discerned from the observation of Phaleng and Peer Consultancy Report on the preparation of DDP 5 and UDP 1 in 1997 that "the institutional structure in Botswana for development planning at local level is quite good" ^{14/} .

Integration of District and Urban Development Plans with National Development Plans:

In the past the DDPs were prepared after the NDP had already been finalized. This procedure made integration of district development plans into national plans difficult. This has improved as NDPs and DDPs now follow the same calendar. The integration of the two components, however, needs further improvement. Effective co-ordination of DDPs and NDPs depends to a considerable extent on relationship between the centre and the districts and satisfactory two-way communication. In order that the national development plans and rural development policies are in keeping with the needs, problems and priorities of the people, the centre has to communicate more effectively with the public and their representative organisations.

The district level organisations and the population have to be adequately informed about nationally determined strategies, resource position, national priorities and constraints so that they can organize their own efforts and make a worthwhile input into the formulation and implementation of rural development programmes. The machinery for formulating district development plans and urban development plans and the processes for their integration into National Development Plans are being improved constantly.

Overcoming Organizational and Implementation Constraints: The preparation of DDP 5s and UDP 1s at the time as NDP 8 produced considerable improvement^{15/} In 1990; Kenneth Ellison had identified a number of organizational and implementation constraints in the district planning process. He observed that project implementation was adversely affected by infrequent consultation with district staff and was delayed by inflexible bureaucratic structures.

Project implementation was not properly co-ordinated because of the exceedingly autonomous operations of sectoral ministries at the district level. There were delays in implementation because districts did not have financial resources commensurate with their responsibilities. Significant advances were made in land use planning in many districts, but implementation of these plans was constrained by lack of integrated development planning and project design capacity.^{16/}

Overcoming horizontal Linkage Constraints

Just as organizational deficiencies and unsatisfactory vertical linkages create problems in district development planning, ineffective horizontal linkages and co-ordination also pose serious challenges. As District level planning machinery consists of a number of organisations (particularly District Administration, District Council, Land Board, and Tribal Administration) a harmonious and co-ordinated relationship among them is essential for effective district development planning. These issues were identified in NDP 8. The Government in 2001 constituted a Presidential Commission to address them and the situation is slowly improving.

The Role of District Development Committees

The DDC has served as a worthwhile structure for co-ordination of district development plans, however, many problems and weaknesses have continued to hamper its operation. The DDC's membership continues to be quite large and unwieldy. Its membership needs to be reviewed to reduce it to a smaller, more manageable size. The District Commissioner as chairperson of the DDC has found it difficult to get the co-operation of all the members because of the fact that he/she does not have supervisory powers over all members of the DDC. The DC has to depend on persuasion, human relations, and leadership qualities for developing team spirit among his colleagues who are members of DDC.

Effectiveness of Community Participation

Despite the earlier mentioned strengths of involving people in the planning process, some people^{17/} have argued that lip service is being paid to grassroots participation in development planning and programme implementation. They argue that although there is some consultation with district level organizations, such consultation is just a formality. Priorities indicated by districts are often changed at the centre and in most cases ministerial offices in the districts receive communication about the contents of their plans from the centre in the form of instructions. Hence people are being consulted to rubber stamp plans and decisions made without their inputs and it would seem they remain on the receiving end in most cases. If this can be allowed to continue the whole notion of people's participation and bottom up planning will remain a fallacy^{18/}.

If 'planning from below' has to be a reality, popular and substantive participation in the formulation and implementation of development plans is essential. The decentralized planning machinery has been organized in Botswana at district level with these objectives. Even so, however, the effective participation of people in formulation and implementation of development plans remains a challenge.

To enhance popular participation, the planning process has to be decentralized not only up to the district level but also further down to the village level. The district level organisations have to do more to promote such further decentralization, which could strengthen bodies such as Village Development Committees and NGOs. Decentralization will be incomplete if it stops at the district level. Thus, village level structures have to be empowered to participate in district development planning.

In Botswana's experience, the performance of Village Development Committees (VDCs), which were created in 1968 to encourage the spirit of self-help in village communities, has varied. Some have been quite active but others have contributed very little. Communication between District Councils, government ministries and VDCs needs to be strengthened. VDCs need to be integrated into the mainstream of decision-making and development planning. They generally continue to operate on their own. Councilors, members of parliament, traditional authorities, and extension and community development workers need to extend more positive assistance to the VDCs.

Civil society organisations have been growing in Botswana in numbers and in strength. The Government recognizes the role Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) can play a role in the process of governance and service delivery. There are now many societies, community groups, church-based agencies, and other NGOs representing a wide range of interests and concerns, including gender, youth, culture, human rights, disabled, entrepreneurs, agriculture, environment, HIV/AIDS, etc. These need more coordination.

Financial dependence of the Local Authorities on the Centre is a problem.

The dependence of local authorities on central government for development, maintenance, human resources, recruitment and training needs is a hindrance in efficient implementation of plans. Planning by local authorities is frustrating as it is not normally clear what a district will get in the next budget.

While a majority of districts show evidence of plan implementation, a few are slowed down due to a shortage of funds; late releases of funds from the center or start up time taken before projects get started. Local authorities are at the mercy of central government who make decisions affecting local authorities on official matters. Councils need to be given power to create their own sources of revenue. The need to broaden the revenue base of local authorities should be rigorously pursued to reduce dependency on central government by local authorities.

Capacity constraints – The Shortage of Manpower.

Lack of manpower has also been cited as one of the main capacity constraints of local authorities and adversely affects plan implementation of many projects. This is due to the zero growth manpower policy currently in place which has adversely affected service delivery. Councils should consider outsourcing of maintenance and operations of the completed projects as this will ease the problem of manpower constraints.

For example the projects that are both completed and ongoing do not have manpower to man them. Some districts have no key officers like District Development officers, police, doctors, nurses, architects, engineers etc. Some of the implementing departments are seriously in shortage of human resources. This has shown to be one of the most disturbing situations since the implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects proved to be difficult during plan implementation.

Thus, for as long as the districts receive development funds unaccompanied by their manpower connotations, the existing manpower can only be stretched to a point where the quality of production is compromised. Further there is need for in-house training courses to empower the current manpower in the districts.

Administration and Management Issues.

Some weaknesses are evident in relation to management of projects, transparency of project selection and prioritization. There is need for a more formalized review process for project appraisals where the basis for the original decisions has changed, due to changes in costs or changes in the external environment. In many cases, the extent to which project selection guidelines have been followed is questionable.

In a number of areas of expenditure where the state is subsidizing “desirable” economic activity, the local authority has limited information on the likely rates of return for different projects. One way of dealing with this information gap is to develop a competitive process as under such a regime those who have a good case, have an incentive to provide the best possible information to the deciding authority. There is therefore, need to upgrade the capacity of implementing departments to conduct and to appraise cost benefit studies.

Weaknesses in project management are manifested, both in excess costs and in delayed project delivery. Management structures do not always “enable” management of the programmes. For example, sanctions are not imposed on non-performing measures. There has been varied reporting of performance indicators across all programmes and this has affected monitoring and evaluation.

Without such monitoring, the effective management of the measures is very difficult. The programme structures do not provide for unified executive and budgeting responsibility and accounting ability for the councils as a whole.

Given the managing authorities and their existing very limited resources, they have performed satisfactorily. However, for an investment plan of this magnitude the resources available to the managers need increasing.

Lack of Continuity

Another problem, especially regarding implementation of plans, is lack of continuity and familiarization with plans. The contributory factor is the high staff turn over caused by unnecessary transfers and stagnation of officers. Officers never have time to implement plans they have prepared because of frequent transfers. Regarding stagnation, officers opt to quit in search of greener pastures, thus creating vacancies, which take time to fill.

Further, recruitment delays are experienced in filling critical posts which play a major role in project implementation and monitoring, like quantity surveyors, architects to name but a few. There is need to speed up the decentralization of recruitment procedures to give authority to L.A heads of departments to recruit for their institutions. Local authorities should have a say in the training of their personnel for efficient use of resources. These institutions should be allowed to identify critical areas which need further training to strengthen their institutions.

Size of districts and plan implementation

The size of certain districts, in terms of the population and the legal area, poses a hindrance to smooth implementation of projects^{19/}. This, coupled with political influence, has a bearing on the funds allocated each financial year since a wide area has to be covered for with significant backlog. This implies that most components continue to be carried over from year to year.

The distance one has to travel between the projects locations and the rough terrain makes accessibility difficult in most cases and a lot of valuable time and resources are wasted.

Lack of projects ownership by the community

Despite the bottom-up planning process efforts which have been introduced, project ownership by the communities is yet to be realized. Because of this lack of ownership, communities do not exert any efforts to ensure that projects are implemented as planned. The increasing realization that projects that do not concern themselves with the beneficiaries are less successful than those that actively involve the intended beneficiaries pushes community participation to the forefront of planning and project management. There is need to intensify community involvement/consultation throughout the project cycle so as to enhance their project ownership.

Politics and planning

Some projects and/or programmes fail to be implemented because of lack of political will/support. In some instances it has been reported that there is political interference in project implementation. If planners can get used to involving politicians and even the community starting from the planning stage, this problem can be minimized to a greater extent. Planners should always try to live with politics because it is part of planning and this will lead to harmony. Moreover a planner and a politician have common goals. They both work towards improving the welfare of the people and achieving the national and developmental goals²⁰⁷.

The way forward for Sub-national Development Planning in Botswana.

Vertical and Horizontal Co-ordination: For District development planning to work effectively, it will require well coordinated efforts of a large number of governmental and non-governmental organizations at the central and local levels of government. The input of all these organizations has to be harmonized in the process of formulation and implementation of development plans.

Effective two-way communication mechanisms are required to build a healthy partnership between the central, the districts and the urban centres. Even the grass-roots organizations below the district level have also to be taken into the fold. In order to ensure that national development plans are in line with the needs, problems, and priorities of the people, the central planning machinery has to establish mechanisms of communication with the district level organizations and urban centres. The district and urban planning machinery on the other hand has to remain informed of the nationally determined strategy, resource situation, and national priorities so that they can organize their own plans accordingly and provide a worthwhile input into the national planning process.

Structural and procedural reforms have to continue to be introduced to improve the existing situation. Greater sensitivity on the part of the central government to the problems and expectations of the lower levels and more effective guidance to the local level organizations from above will be a requirement for good governance at the local level.

Strengthening the Human and Financial Resources of Local Authorities:

As already noted, shortage of qualified staff is a major constraint on local governance and implementation of plans. There is a widespread concern about the continuing shortages of qualified staff in district and local level organizations and the quality of training available to them at present.

Besides the need for strengthening education and training, local authorities require a personnel management system and service conditions that can attract, retain and motivate staff of good standing. Local authorities continue to lose well-qualified staff to competitors in the labour market. Innovative measures could help in retaining deserving staff and in keeping them motivated. The Local Government Service Management (which is responsible for recruitment, placement, transfers, training and discipline of all employees of local authorities in the country) has made significant improvements in the conditions of service of this cadre; however, the service (LGSM) needs to be further strengthened. Personnel management of local authorities needs greater autonomy from the controls exercised from the centre, and further decentralization of personnel management and training function within the local authorities.

The financial strength of local government in Botswana is also limited as observed before. "Local Authorities are almost wholly dependent upon Central Government for their revenue. In 1995/96 for instance, Revenue Support Grant from the Central Government represented 64%, 92%, and 91% of the recurrent income of Urban Councils, District Councils and Land Boards respectively. In addition, councils receive 100% of their development funds in the form of grants from Central Government"^{21/}. Given local authorities' limited financial resources and dependence on grants, decentralization remains handicapped.

The NDP8 has correctly argued that "the financial dependence of Local Authorities upon the centre places a considerable constraint on decentralization. It breeds an unhealthy reliance upon Central Government, forcing Local Authorities to look to the Central Government for advice and direction on even the smallest matters. It reverses the desirable direction of accountability, making Local Authorities less responsive to the needs of their constituents. Decreasing the financial dependence of local authorities upon the Central Government, and thereby increasing their autonomy and accountability to their own constituents, is a primary policy goal of MLGLH during NDP8".

The Government of Botswana has initiated a number of measures in this area. A new system of formula-determined Revenue Support Grants was approved in 1994 and was first implemented during the financial year 1996/97. The formula provides a specific level of support from the Central Government to Local Authorities, which can be calculated well in advance by Local Authorities themselves. The intention of the new system, according to NDP8 "is to change the financial incentives that Local Authorities face, forcing them to finance incremental expenditure from increased revenue from their own sources or else from cost savings"^{22/}.

The financial strength of local authorities will depend not only on the availability of finances, but also on their management capacities. Sound management of local government finance requires qualified personnel with high standards of professionalism and integrity. Recruitment, promotions, placements, and general conduct of staff concerned with financial management will have to continue to emphasize the principles of merit and objectivity. The autonomy of local authorities will have to be backed by a

well-established system of public accountability. Independent audit machinery will have a vital role in enforcing accountability.

Accountable, Responsible and Responsive Public Service

Good governance requires a responsible, responsive, sensitive, and caring public service accountable to the community. Responsible behavior by the public service implies an adequate understanding by public servants of their roles, functions and authority. The public expects demands and deserves satisfactory service from government. Thus, public servants need to have a proper appreciation of the problems faced by the public. Public administrators at the district level and below need those qualities in order to become effective agents for planning and implementation of rural development programmes for regional development. The public bureaucracy in Botswana has undergone considerable reorientation since independence in its attitude towards the public.

Commitment of the Political and Administrative Leadership: To strengthen the implementation of development planning in rural and urban areas, strong commitment of the political and administrative leadership at the highest level of government is essential. They must own the projects and be part of their implementation. The political and public service executives will have to adopt concrete measures to promote effective decentralization of authority and avail resources for strengthening local governance. The commitment of local level political leaders is also essential.

As the structures of local-government are in their infancy, it may be unrealistic to expect the same high standards, which can be found in well-established institutions in other countries. It is hoped that with the passage of time, the organization experience, and leadership roles of politicians in these organizations will improve. The elected politicians and the public servants also need to work as a team with proper appreciation of each other's roles and responsibilities. The public servants have to operate as politically neutral advisers to politicians and execute the policies made collectively by them. The politicians operate as representatives of the people and articulate their needs. The public servants on the other hand inform and advise the elected politicians on procedures, regulations and implications of different policies or decisions. This is to be understood by both sides.

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