

addition, many Basarwa children go to school while their parents seek employment in the public and private sectors.

From the consultations which have been carried out with the District Local Authorities, including the Basarwa themselves, it has become apparent that there are inherent weaknesses in the current policy on the Remote Area Development programme. This policy is consequently being reviewed in order to address these weaknesses.

Some of the key areas which will receive attention as part of the review process are as follows

- (a) The need to initiate educational programmes aimed at improving the accessibility of land to the Basarwa.
- (b) The need to ensure an increased access of the Basarwa to education and training so as to improve their access to employment opportunities.
- (c) The need to involve Basarwa in the decision-making process on matters relating to their Communities. It has been realized that most of the development activities which have been carried out in the remote settlements to date have largely been prescribed by government, without direct input from the beneficiaries.
- (d) The need to ensure social acceptance of Basarwa by the general populace and to promote the Basarwa's assertiveness.
- (e) The need to promote production-oriented, income and employment generating activities in the remote settlements.
- (f) The need to recognise and preserve the unique culture and traditions of the Basarwa.

The finalization of the policy on the Remote Area Development programme and the convening of a Regional Conference on the San People later this year in Botswana will constitute the highlights of the International Year of Indigenous Peoples.

It is hoped that all these developments will result in tremendous changes and improvements in the living conditions of the Basarwa in the next decade.

Conference on Indigenous Peoples of Africa  
(1993, June, Denmark)  
"... Never Drink from the Same Cup"

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eds. H. Ueber, J. Dahl, G. Wilson +  
E. Waehle

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JOHN KATÉ HARDBATTLE

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## STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THE KALAHARI

*THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THE KALAHARI, KGEIKANI KWENI came into being after the Botswana Society workshop on sustainable rural development and before the subsequent meeting with the MLGL&H, its members being drawn from the Nharo, the T/aokwe, the G//anakwe, the G//wikwe and the #Au//ae.*

*The aims of the first people are:*

*The recognition of the N/oakwe as one people.*

*The creation of a National Council for the N/oakwe through duly elected representatives, to work for the recognition of land rights for our different peoples.*

*The invigoration of the culture as well as the individual identification with the culture of the N/oakwe in order to strengthen the multiple forms of expressions which are significant of our culture.*

*The establishing of an office to print and distribute information world-wide as well as amongst ourselves, to contact and strengthen links with other first peoples, to create an archive and film, video and tape library, to map the territorial distribution of tsgôre (sip well i.e. territory) as they are the centres of our ancient lands. An office that would be a meeting place for the N/oakwe to come together, with their problems, to find funding for scholarships, get legal aid, to facilitate development initiatives by the people etc.*

*The first stumbling block which is still in our path has been our failure to get funding from local donor agencies.*

*To move freely amongst the N/oakwe scattered all over Gomghe, the Sand Face, which is our known world, is essential. To monitor, report and keep up to date with the situation, a massive subsidy on fuel and 4 x 4 vehicles are needed for this is the only form of communication available to link the various peoples together.*

*We want to break through the apathy imposed on us through the loss of our ancestral lands, our rights to water, the gathering of peoples in settlements, the dependency of living off the drought relief. Through this National council we can also benefit the country as a people capable of creating our own development plans in co-operation with the government.*

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N/oakwe of Botswana are today a people who have found a voice. A voice which was raised for the first time at the Botswana Society Workshop for sustainable rural development in Gaborone April 1992. There issues were raised like

- 1) forced resettlement of the people from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR),
- 2) an appropriate name for the N/oakwe instead of derogatory names like *Tengyanateng*<sup>1</sup>, *Basarwa*<sup>2</sup>, *Batshobanaga*.
- 3) Burning issues like early school dropouts because of physical punishment, unwanted teenage pregnancies at secondary schools<sup>3</sup>,
- 4) unknown diseases,
- 5) alienation from land and natural resources.

The Botswana government was not amused. A meeting was called to „discuss“ these issues between a N/oakwe delegation and the minister of local government, lands and housing (MLGL&H). This was to be a meeting between the minister (Mr. Chapman Butale) and a representative N/oakwe delegation, chaired by the then permanent secretary, (Mrs Pelonomi Venson).

The meeting did not go as expected. Instead of meeting with the minister and the P.S. as agreed, what confronted the delegation was a line-up of two Assistant Ministers, the Ghanzi D.C., GD CS, three Councillors from the District, the MP for Ghanzi and others.

We soon found out that the intention was not to discuss any of the issues raised by the N/oakwe at the workshop. I want to describe this meeting in some detail since it was the first official meeting between a Botswana Ministry and a representative delegation of N/oakwe. It all went sadly wrong:

Although I was invited by the MLGL&H to bring the N/oakwe delegation to Gaborone, I could not fully participate in the meeting, since I am unable to speak Setswana. And it was insisted that the meeting should be conducted in Setswana, contrary to the laws of Botswana, and despite the fact that none of the members of the delegation are literate or fluent in Setswana. I made an appeal that the meeting should be held in English, which is a national language, making it possible for me to translate for the N/oakwe. This appeal was rejected.

Since it was now clear to us that we had not been invited to discuss issues we had raised before, but to an interrogation, we

called for a recess so we could evaluate our position. We then agreed to hand over the statement we had previously written in anticipation of possible problems. When we presented the statement to the P.S. it was rejected with the words: „ We don't accept it since we do not know who wrote it.”

It seemed that all they wanted was to find out which foreign agencies had put these wild ideas into the heads of the N/oakwe.

A remark made at the meeting by one of the Ass. Ministers will show the tone: „You think that these outsiders will always help you (meaning the donor agencies), well, one of these days they will be gone and there will only be us, and we own you and we will own you till the end of time and you will not achieve what you want“.

The chair then wanted to hear from each member of the delegation whatever he had to say even if it was in poor Setswana. The meeting carried on with the delegation under great duress and stress, with questions fired at them from the up to ten powerful figures opposite. The meeting closed in deadlock after four hours. None of the delegation present at the meeting was included in the „San“ Conference which took place the following month in Windhoek, Namibia.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the problems facing the N/oakwe today are the huge distances between the settlements causing the lack of communication between the different peoples. Up to 100% illiteracy amongst the middle-aged and old people, landlessness, lack of water and the forced deprivation of the traditional subsistence base, which has caused great poverty and hunger and the subsequent diseases.<sup>5</sup>

The lack of an economic base in the settlements hinders the movement of the people and prevents them from coming together for discussions about their problems amongst themselves.

An important aspect and role of the local NGOs would be to fill the communication gap by providing the necessary logistics.

4 x 4 vehicles are the most important tool to physically go to distant areas for face to face meetings amongst the N/oakwe. E.g. it took ten days to get the seven delegates to the meeting in Gaborone. Accurate reporting to the people on the current situation country-wide would only be possible if perhaps up to 3/4 of Botswana were travelled by 4 x 4 vehicles as the only means of communication.

The urgent need to monitor and report the on-going situation in the CKGR

Since the beginnings of the 80s a very subtle but effective programme of intimidation was started to force the inhabitants out of the GKGR, the majority of the people being G/wikwe and G//anakwe. The threats to the residents were to cut off all services including water, clinics, transport and threats of physical violence to force the residents to move to Xade which then was to be degazetted from the Game Reserve. It must be obvious to anybody how the people living in Molapo, Metsiamaong, Gope feel being threatened to make them leave their ancient lands as well as the severe stress it will add to the people already living in Xade. Notwithstanding that these people never were consulted or promised any compensation.

In all fairness there seems to be no official discrimination, however there are some worrying statements made by the government.

1. When asked by the land development committee 1978 what the rights of Basarwa occupants of tribal land were the attorney general's chambers litigation consultant replied „that the Basarwas has no right except those of hunting“. (Opinion in re: common law leases of tribal lands, January 23, 1978, ML GL & H file 2/1/1) This opinion has never been revoked.

2. When the opposition party raised the question in parliament of what plans the government had for 1993, the year of indigenous peoples, the Minister of MLGL&H answered: „none, this is because, as far as we are concerned, all Batswana are indigenous to Botswana, except those who may have required citizenship by registration. In addition, the government development program's assistance schemes do not draw any distinction among the country's citizens“ (Daily News, March 5, 1993 BOPA).

The N/oakwe then are not officially recognized as an indigenous people. This may be the reason why the RAD programme is failing as the N/oakwe are the major target group in this programme.

A poor Batswana needs only sufficient money to be on a par with other Batswana with all that means of equal land rights etc. A poor N/oakwe does not only need clever development plans on which he has never been consulted. He is expected to forget and to discard one of the oldest and gentlest cultures on earth. He is expected to overcome the destruction of his own culture and in less than two decades to integrate into a society which has always discriminated

against him. Many among the elite today still consider them no more than serfs since they „inherited“ them from their forebears. The Setswana word for serf is used even today, being *malata*.

He is expected to be equal in stature and opportunity to all other Batswana without the benefit of respect for his culture, language, land rights, social standing, education, economic base and political power. But he is expected to compete as an equal in a marketplace in which he has not the first inkling of the rules of the games.

The image that emerges of the present day N/oakwe then is of a shadow people who raise their hands at election time to vote for a councillor and for a member of parliament. Quite often the same councillor who should then represent them and their interests turns and ruthlessly exploits them in the name of business.

In this way he becomes rich and powerful in the settlement and dominates

the will of the people. For instance, a Batswana is brought to the settlement by a political party, where the people are told to vote for this man: „Here is your party representative, if you don't like him, you don't have to vote for him the next time (in four years time)“. He is elected. The first thing he does is to get a hawker's license (to help his constituents) and he physically moves to the settlement.

Instead of selling his goods at reasonable prices, his prices are quite often the double of shops in the nearest town. He also sells alcohol, which is illegal. However the profits are bigger, he gives credits easily, but is ruthless in collecting debts. Very quickly he is a livestock owner in the settlement. All the cash from drought relief programmes( fencing, labour intensive roads etc.) goes directly to him on pay-days. He owns 4 x 4 vehicle so he may exploit the people more by collecting firewood, veldfoods, thatching grass for houses, and offering lifts into town for exorbitant fees (Morama episode). These same exploited people are then called apathetic, lazy, useless drunks, when the development programme fails, by those who exploit them.

#### Notes

1. The meaning of *tengyanateng* is „those who are deep within deep“
2. The pronunciation of *Basarwa* should in fact be 'ba-sa-rua', meaning „those who do not own“.

3. Pupils describe the primary school years as „the crying years“ because of their fear, shame and homesickness. They are beaten, terrorised and abused in the hostels by anybody, being unable to defend or protect themselves.
4. When the question arose of who would be allowed to go the San conference in Windhoek, Namibia, again it was stated „That we the government will pick the delegation, we will use our vehicles to get them, and we will give them food and we will brief them to praise Botswana, because Botswana is better than other countries.“
5. The growth rate factor of tuberculosis among our people is the highest in Africa. The diarrhoea among children is one of the main contributing factors to child mortality.

*The First People  
of The Kalahari  
May 17, 1992*

*The Honourable Minister  
Ministry of Local Government,  
Lands & Housing  
Mr. C. Butale*

*26 years of independence have brought Botswana forwards and us, the first people of the Kalahari, backwards.*

*The problem is that the Government has not been able to identify representatives with whom they can work in order to adapt the development programmes of the Botswana Government to meet the special needs of the N/ oakhwe (the Ju/twasi), who have been consistently marginalized.*

*We now feel the need for the Government to acknowledge us as One People, recognizing the diversity in terms of language and territorial ownership.*

*When we had control of our territories there was a network, a constant interaction and contact amongst us. Territorial rights were recognized, whilst sharing resources with neighbouring groups.*

*In order to meet the development objectives of the Botswana Government we propose that new ways are tried out to create representative structures.*

*To meet these objectives we therefore propose to set up a national council and ask the Government to recognize this council as a legitimate negotiating partner.*

*We suggest a vote be set aside to cover consultations amongst us in order to establish this council.*

*We also strongly ask that on-going or further alienation of land be halted, either through resettlement or fencing, until the council has been established.*

*We therefore ask you to bring our words to the Government so that these words can be considered. And we would like a meeting so that we can negotiate and settle this before we attend the conference in Namibia on June 16-18, 1992.*

*Komtsa Komtsu  
of the Nharo*

*Roy Sesan  
of the G/annakwe*

*Saikuta  
of the G/wihve*

*Tsao  
of the Ju/twasi*

*Gomme Kgao  
of the Ju/twasi*

*Aaron Johannis  
of the Nharo*

*(translated by John Hardbattle)*

*contact address: First People of the Kalahari, P.O.Box 173,  
Ghanzi*