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## STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LANDS & HOUSING, BOTSWANA

The Basarwa, commonly known as „Bushmen“, are believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the present day Botswana.

Much of their early history and culture are recorded in rock paintings and folk tales, as well as in a number of anthropological studies which have been conducted from time to time.

The Basarwa in Botswana are estimated at around 50,000. They are mostly in the Kgalegadi, Ghanzi, North West and Central Districts.

Traditionally, the Basarwa lived in groups which consisted of a number of related families. They lived entirely by hunting wildlife and gathering veld products.

They had no established homes. They moved frequently and settled for short periods in areas where melons, nuts, wildfruits and other veld products were abundant.

Because of intermarriage and social integration with the rest of the population the Basarwa's traditional life style has undergone tremendous change.

There are probably less than 3,000 Basarwa who still depend entirely on hunting and gathering for their survival.

Starting from 1974, the Government instituted a special programme called the Remote Area Development programme, whose main objective was to facilitate the social integration of the marginalised sections of the population into the mainstream of the society.

Large-scale rehabilitation projects have to date been undertaken under this programme, with the aim of developing and integrating Basarwa and other Remote Area Dwellers into the mainstream of modern Botswana society.

Most of the settlements inhabited by Basarwa have access to basic social facilities such as a school, clinic and potable water. In

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.

JOHN KATÉ HARDBATTLE

## 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 Gomghue, 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.*