

## Research And Development In Botswana's Remote Areas: A Research Note

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Since independence, the Republic of Botswana has been concerned with enhancing rural development and promoting economic opportunities for people residing in remote areas. In the 1970s, the Botswana Government embarked on an Accelerated Rural Development Programme (ARDP) which served to expand social and physical infrastructure in rural parts of the country. The current National Development Plan (NDP VI, 1985-91) places major emphasis on increasing production, employment, and incomes in rural areas.

People residing in extremely remote areas have faced significant constraints in terms of gaining access to development assistance. It has not been as easy as was originally hoped to raise incomes and create employment for remote area groups, in part because people with low incomes did not qualify for some of the development programmes the Government had initiated (e.g. the Financial Assistance Policy).

In addition, the remoteness of many communities meant that general extension services of District Councils and Central Government sometimes failed to reach people in need of assistance. The drought relief efforts of the 1980s, however, did manage to extend itself to very remote areas, and there are indications that nutritional difficulties and economic hardships were reduced as a result.

Research and development work between 1974 and 1984 by the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands enabled a substantial number of remote area dwellers (RADs) to attend school, receive health assistance and agricultural advice, and gain access to water. The implementation of the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) after 1975 brought further attention to the needs of people who live outside established villages. Surveys related to TGLP revealed the presence of large numbers of small-scale agropastoralists and part-time hunter-gatherers in remote parts of the country. In several cases, some of the land needs of these people were met through the establishment of Communal Service Centres and settlement schemes, such as those at Mmaletswai in Central District and East and West Hanahai in Ghanzi District.

People living outside established villages in the communal areas and in those places designated under land use plans (such as Wildlife Management Areas or WMAs) continue to have relatively low incomes, and in some cases their subsistence base is eroding. Because of this, the Botswana Government began in 1984 to seek assistance for an expanded Remote Area Development Programme.

An assessment of the programme and its requirements

was carried out by a team of Norwegian and Botswana researchers, and recommendations were made to the Government of Botswana and the Kingdom of Norway concerning the establishment of an expanded remote area development effort. Special emphasis was placed on the need for land, the expansion of public services, and the enhancement and diversification of economic opportunities.

The overall goals of the new Accelerated Remote Area Development Programme (ARADP) include: (1) the establishment of self-reliance among remote area dwellers, (2) the improvement of the political and administrative capacity of remote area communities, (3) the overcoming of development constraints (such as lack of access to markets, capital, and tools), and (4) enhancement of planning, coordination, and project implementation capacity at Central Government, district, and local levels. On 24 September, 1987, a Presidential Directive (CAB. 28/87) was issued that authorised the launching of this accelerated remote area development effort.

Meetings between the Botswana Government and the Kingdom of Norway in 1987-88 led to the drawing up of an agreement between the two countries on financial and technical support to the programme. Part of this agreement included the setting up of a monitoring system which would gather baseline data on remote area populations and development activities and assess trends. Implementation monitoring of the programme would be part of the overall district-level planning process and would be the responsibility of both District and Ministry of Local Government and Lands staff. Impact monitoring would be done by Botswana government institutions, such as the Applied Research Unit or by individuals who would conduct surveys and carry out special investigations.

In order to set up the monitoring system, a consultancy was carried out between May and July, 1988. It consisted of three phases: (1) interviews of Government officers, non-government organisations (NGOs), and individuals involved in remote area research and development, (2) field work, including brief surveys and interviews of remote area residents in several districts, and (3) the analysis of data on remote area populations and their development activities, preparation of reports and drawing up of recommendations. This work was guided by a reference group consisting of central Government and district-level officials. Financial and logistical support for the work was provided by the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD).

The consultancy activities, which are on-going, include the determination of the numbers of people who are

to be the target beneficiaries of the Accelerated Remote Area Development Programme.

According to the 1981 population census, the number of people who live in settlements of less than 100 persons is 121,770. The number of remote area dwellers in the seven districts in which the programme operates is estimated at 50,933, according to the 1986 NORAD report. Assessments of population figures from censuses, TGLP-related surveys, and findings of rural development personnel and social scientists suggest that the numbers of people who reside in the remote areas may run as high as 180,000. Many of these people live below the Poverty Datum Line and thus pose special problems for any government assistance efforts.

Future monitoring, research, and development-related work under the Accelerated Remote Area Development Programme will be concerned not only with identifying people most in need of help, but will also attempt to assess changes in their socio-economic status. Special attention will be paid to a number of issues, including the impacts of settlement on hunter-gatherers, the effects of rural industrial programmes, and changes in rural employment and wages with the commercialisation of the livestock industry.

It is hoped that the monitoring system will ensure that both positive and negative trends can be identified quickly. If this can be done, development strategies that are both balanced and equitable will be put into place in the remote areas of Botswana.

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