



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

REVISED NATIONAL POLICY ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

(DRAFT FINAL)

**MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
GABORONE, BOTSWANA**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Access Benefit Sharing
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AU	African Union
ACGS	Agriculture Credit Guarantee Scheme
BDIH	Botswana Digital and Innovation Hub
BITRI	Botswana Institute for Technology, Research, and Innovation
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resources Management
CBS	Community Based Strategy
CS	Council Secretary
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DDCs	District Development Committees
DETs	District Extension Teams
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FHH	Female Headed Households
GAIA	Generative Artificial Intelligence for Agricultural Advisory Extension
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HWC	Human Wildlife Conflict
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IDP	Industrial Development Policy
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
ISPAAD	Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development
LED	Local Economic Development
LIMID	Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDPs	National Development Plans
NGC	National Gender Commission
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NMES	National Monitoring and Evaluation System
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSAs	Non State Actors
NSP	National Spatial Plan
NSPF	National Social Protection Framework
NTS	National Transformation Strategy
MLGTA	Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PWDs	People with disability
RADs	Remote Area Dwellers
RDC	Rural Development Council
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RNPRD	Revised National Policy on Rural Development
RSTI	Research, Science, Technology, and Innovation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEZA	Special Economic Zones Authority
SHHA	Self-Help Housing Agency
SMMEs	Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises

SPPs	Social Protection Programmes
TNDP	Transitional National Development Plan
UN	United Nations
VDCs	Village Development Committees
VETs	Village Extension Teams

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Globally, rural development is critical because it promotes sustainable development, addresses poverty, unemployment and inequalities, fosters economic growth and stability. In many developing nations, rural development is essential for poverty eradication and employment creation because the two are largely concentrated in rural areas. To this end, there exists a firm consensus that investments in rural areas can significantly increase productivity and improve livelihoods in the rural areas, as well as improve national well-being. Furthermore, rural development is vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs - particularly those related to poverty, hunger, health, education, and environmental sustainability) and ensuring that no-one is left behind. It is within this broader context, that the Botswana government initiated the development of the Revised National Policy on Rural Development.

Botswana's rural areas, particularly the smaller remote villages are faced with persistent challenges of underdevelopment. On the one hand, the bigger urban villages and peri-urban villages, particularly those located on the eastern part of the country have better infrastructural, economic and social services and opportunities while, smaller remote villages have limited or no opportunities at all. The Revised National Policy on Rural Development of 2002 (RNPRD) sought to identify and respond to rural underdevelopment with a specific goal to improve the quality of life of the people living in the rural areas to the standard enjoyed by those living in both peri-urban and urban areas. The RNPRD has generally been successful in achieving the objective of improving the quality of life in the rural areas. This is largely reflected by the high levels of modernisation and urbanisation of some rural areas. To date, there has been significant socioeconomic transformation of Botswana's rural areas, compared to 1972/73, when the first rural development policy was implemented. In 1972, approximately 90¹ percent of Botswana lived in the rural areas, but this has since declined to approximately 28 percent² in 2022. This is a clear indication that the urban population has grown exponentially with the result that approximately 72 percent of Botswana currently live in urban areas. While modernisation and urbanisation of rural areas cannot be attributed only to the RNPRD, it is considered a significant

¹ The World Bank. Rural population (% of total population) – Botswana.

<https://ata.worldbank.org/indicators/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=BW>

² Statistics Botswana (2022). Population and housing Census. Statistics Botswana. Gaborone.

contributor and has provided a solid framework that guided rural development since the first Rural Development Policy of 1973.

Notably, the RNPRD is commended for its success in the fight against poverty over the years. For example, the national poverty head count has declined from 59 percent in 1985/86 to 30.6 percent in 2002/03 and to 16.3 percent in 2015/16. Extreme poverty declined from 23.4 percent in 2002/03 to 6.4 percent in 2009/10 and to 5.8 percent in 2015/16 (Statistics Botswana, 2015). Despite significant reductions in poverty rates, it remains a major challenge. Available research evidence suggests that Botswana's poverty rates are significantly higher compared to other upper-middle income countries' average of 1.5 percent of the population (poverty head count at \$2.15 per day 2017).³ This notwithstanding, a survey conducted by Statistics Botswana in 2015/16 shows that the incidence of poverty was significantly higher in rural areas at 24.2 percent, compared to 13.3 percent in urban villages, and much lower in the cities and towns at 9.4 percent. Further, there were concerns that almost 40 percent (37.48 percent) of the rural population were multidimensional poor compared to 14.05 percent in urban villages and 5.34 percent in cities and towns in 2020. This is a clear demonstration that poverty is concentrated in the rural areas. Extreme poverty limits access to essential services, and hinders social and economic development in the rural areas. The effect has been a cycle of deprivation, poor living conditions, inadequate education, healthcare, housing, water and sanitation, access to social protection programmes and limited employment opportunities. These challenges perpetuate poverty in the rural areas.

In view of the challenges referred to above, there is an urgent need for the Government of Botswana to respond by way of this Policy. The review of the Revised National Policy on Rural Development is intended to provide a transformative policy framework with potential to facilitate, optimise, strengthen, and deliver positive rural development outcomes. Most importantly, the RNPRD will deliver a policy framework that provides transformative solutions to the challenges of rural underdevelopment, stimulate growth, innovation, resilience, strategic collaborations and sustainability of the rural sector.

³ The World Bank (2019). [Upper middle income | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/Upper-middle-income)

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE REVISED RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Rural development is fundamental to deepening inclusive and sustainable development. The overarching aim of rural development is to improve the quality of life for people resident in the rural areas. This is done by creating employment opportunities, eradication of poverty and inequality, transforming agricultural productivity, addressing challenges posed by climate change, as well as fostering inclusive growth. By investing in rural areas, Botswana can address regional, districts, local, and urban-rural imbalances and disparities, create economic opportunities, and ensure a more equitable distribution of resources and benefits across the country. Rural development, therefore, has a profound effect on national development and delivery of positive development outcomes for all. When national resources are equitably distributed, regardless of geographic location, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic standing, chances are no one will be left behind and national prosperity will be equitably shared.

Available research data and anecdotal evidence suggest that the quality of life of rural populations has improved significantly because of a deliberate government policy decisions to reinvest proceeds from mineral revenues into social development. The effect was a significant transformation of rural areas, with many rural villages becoming modernised and some urbanised. Provision of infrastructure and other social amenities such as water, sanitation, roads, electricity, schools, clinics, and, more recently, internet connectivity have been hailed as catalyst to rural development. This has resulted in the erstwhile rural villages of Serowe, Palapye, Mahalapye, Maun, Molepolole, Kanye, Mochudi, Masunga, Ramotswa, Tsabong, Kasane, Ghanzi, Mogoditshane, and Tlokweng transforming and subsequently re-categorised as urban villages. These developments, demonstrate positive contribution rural development efforts have borne over time. However, there are concerns that inequality (an ever-widening gap between the rich and poor), is on the increase, and rural urban migration continues persistently as demonstrated by the exponential growth of peri-urban settlements. Therefore, this Policy pays immediate attention to these gaps.

The above notwithstanding, there are concerns about the country's declining economic performance. Botswana's economy post-COVID-19 has become sluggish largely due to a decline in diamond trading, mining activities and stiff competition from synthetic or lab grown diamonds. Botswana's failure to diversify away from over-reliance on diamond mining for the past several decades has undermined the attainment of some national development objectives.

These challenges run counter to national aspirations of attaining high-income status by the year 2036, which requires 5.7 percent annual economic growth rate between 2016 and 2036. Under the circumstances, Botswana must intensify her efforts to diversify the economy, create more jobs, and address the disparities between the rural and urban areas. To this end, responding decisively to rural development transformation is crucial for long-term sustainable economic development.

In response to prolonged socio-economic challenges, and the existential threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, Botswana initiated a raft of socioeconomic programmes and recovery plans, and related reforms to inform and guide the rural development trajectory. Some of the initiatives included, among others:

- a) The National Spatial Plan 2036 (year): The Plan sought to promote an approach that integrates sectoral (economic, ecological, social, and cultural) policies in regional development. It calls on national development planning authorities to pay attention to balanced regional development and physical organisation of space.
- b) Draft National Decentralisation Policy of 2021. The policy sought to promote the principles of subsidiarity, local participation, and economic empowerment of local authorities.
- c) The National Planning Commission (NPC) was established in 2022 as the primary authority for development planning in Botswana. The NPC is responsible for development planning while the function of fiscal policy remains with the Ministry of Finance.
- d) The National Transformation Strategy of 2023 aims to transform Botswana from an upper middle-income to a high-income country by 2036. It focuses on achieving sustainable economic development by transforming key sectors and improving the overall quality of life for Botswana.
- e) The National Employment Policy of Botswana, was developed in 2021 with the aim among others to address youth unemployment. The policy proposes strengthening of employment programmes, as well as upscaling and implementation of the Local Economic Development (LED) programmes.

- f) The proposed Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) Bill 2022⁴ seeks to, among other things, ensure establishment of a dedicated CBNRM Department for effective and efficient coordination of natural resources exploitation in the country.

Other crucial national initiatives geared towards promoting rural development include; the Reset and Reclaim Agenda. This initiative was envisaged to deliver reforms in the public sector with a view to effectively deliver the aspirations of both Vision 2036 and the SDGs. It sought to promote effective and efficient service delivery, enhanced local economic development. This is done through implementation of the Economic Inclusion Act of 2021, value chain development and digitalisation in critical sectors such as mining, tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing. It is anticipated that this will be achieved by promoting mind-set change with a view to ensure no-one is left behind and that prosperity is widely shared.

It is against the above background that the Government of Botswana sought to address rural underdevelopment with greater emphasis on poverty eradication. The aim is to promote sustainable local economic development, sustainable rural livelihoods, job creation, social harmony, political stability, and protection of peace and democracy.

1.3 THE EVOLUTION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN BOTSWANA

Since Botswana gained independence in 1966, rural development has always been a priority to the Government of Botswana. To promote effective socio-economic development in the rural areas, a well-coordinated framework for rural development is an imperative. Implementation of Botswana's socioeconomic development programmes within the broader policy framework of rural development was seen as the answer to rural underdevelopment, employment creation, eradication of poverty and addressing inequalities. The reality is that, in the context of these challenges, rural populations continue to earn a living primarily through agriculture, informal employment, remittances, provision of social services and wide network of social protection programmes provided by the Government, private sector, CSOs, NGOs, CBOs and international development partners. However, these have proved inadequate to address rural underdevelopment and hence the need to develop an overarching policy framework for rural development.

⁴ Government of Botswana (2022). The CBNRM Bill, 2022. Government Printer. Gaborone.

The evolution of rural development policy in Botswana can be traced through key government White Papers (documents), programmes, strategies and several project initiatives geared towards improving the quality of life of the poor and vulnerable population groups living in the rural areas. For example, in 1971 a committee was appointed to draft a rural development policy. A draft was produced in 1972, from a report titled Rural Development in Botswana. The publication of Government Paper No. 1 of 1972 on Rural Development in Botswana marked the beginning of a process which culminated in the development of the Rural Development Policy of 1973. Government Paper No.1 of 1972 outlined the government's principles, institutional and administrative structures for rural development. It was anchored on three key areas: 1) increasing basic social services; 2) halting the deterioration of the land through grazing; and 3) promoting social justice. The Report on Rural Development was released by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in 1973. This was followed by the Government White Paper which set the tone for rural development throughout the 1970s. While Government faced resource constraints in the early 1970s to significantly improve rural livelihoods, agriculture, especially cattle rearing played a significant role in improving the rural economy. The challenge has always been with arable farming which is the mainstay of the rural economy and a source of livelihood for majority of the people living in the rural areas. Regrettably, arable farming has proved very unreliable due to erratic rainfall patterns and frequent droughts⁵.

Following the launch of the Transitional Plan for Socioeconomic Development (1966-1969), National Development Plans (NDPs) 1 and 2 (1968/73 and 1970/75) were developed and implemented to inform and guide emerging developmental priorities. Successive National Development Plans played a crucial role in shaping the initial approach to rural development. In the 1970s, the initial focus was on establishing basic infrastructure and services in rural areas, including water, roads, healthcare and schools. The Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), was also launched in the 1970s. The programmes aim was to address the dire needs of people living in remote areas, particularly the Basarwa.

In recognition of other pressing needs during NDP 3 (1973 - 1978), Botswana's development planning shifted to embrace the establishment and creation of Local Authorities. Towns and

⁵ Picard, Louis (1988). The Politics of Development in Botswana: A Model for Success? Lynne Rienner Publishers. Boulder & London.

district councils were created. District Councils' specific mandate was to promote rural development where the majority of Batswana lived during this planning period, much emphasis was placed on improving the quality of life of rural populations through the development and expansion of physical infrastructure. The focus was on the construction of social amenities such as schools, health care facilities, roads, and water reticulation.

Successive NDPs in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, 2000 and beyond continued to prioritise rural development, resulting in significant socio-economic progress in key social sectors such as education, health, water, and roads. These developments propelled the country to achieve lower middle-income status in 1987 and later Upper Middle-Income status in 1991 (World Bank, 2014). While the country has been able to make profound economic advancements as reflected by high levels of modernisation and urbanisation, some pressing challenges such as high levels of poverty remain, especially in the rural areas. Government is determined to reduce both relative and absolute poverty through several initiatives, including improved environmental and natural resources management, infrastructural development, skills development, community participation, improved targeting of government programmes, modernisation and urbanisation of rural areas, synchronisation of policies to eliminate duplication and wastage, and the Labour Based Relief Programme. Additionally, government has committed to reducing dependency on government handouts, which has become a major impediment to self-reliance. This is a priority to be addressed in rural development.

As Botswana urbanized, the nature and needs of rural areas changed, necessitating a review of rural development policies, programmes and strategies. There is now a greater emphasis on diversification of rural economies and addressing issues such as chronic poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and vulnerability which persist in rural areas. The new approach to the implementation of the RNPRD commenced during NDP 9 through the Consolidated Sectoral plans 2003-2006. While many of the sectoral plans were developed and yearly reports presented to Cabinet by the RDC, many service providers consulted during the review of the RNPRD 2002 were not aware that they were implementing the RNPRD. Lack of awareness by sectoral ministries and departments about implementation of the RNPRD has resulted in implementation gaps. Noticeable gaps that needed to be filled include, among others, lack of coherence, poor coverage, poor targeting and poor planning and execution. Combined, these challenges resulted in poor coordination in the implementation of the Policy.

The Mid-Term Review of NDP 11 (2020/21 – 2022/23) noted slow pace of development in rural areas and recommended a review of the RNPRD to determine its adequacy, relevance, and alignment with the new initiatives such as the Transformation Agenda, Reset/Reclaim Agenda, Vision 2036, and the Draft Decentralisation Policy, among others.

It is important to point out that the review of the Revised National Policy on Rural Development of 2002 culminated at a critical juncture in Botswana's development trajectory. The Policy builds and delivers the aspiration of the new Botswana – "*Botswana o Mosha*" that emphasises "inclusive growth" and "quality lives." The six (6) pillars of the new government; i) democracy, governance and security, ii) building a "deep economy" that offers Botswana opportunities for a happy and fulfilled life, iii) land, housing, environment, climate change and green economy, iv) education, research and human resources development, v) healthcare, social protection, gender equality, children and youth, and vi) international relations and global trade, clearly spell out all the challenges facing the country, articulate their causes and consequences and suggests durable solutions. All the issues raised by the government have a direct bearing on rural development and are clear on what ought to be done to address rural underdevelopment and safeguard the wellbeing and human rights of the people living in the rural areas.

2 RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

During the implementation of successive National Development Plans (NDPs) after the Rural Development Policy of 1973, Government has and continues to grapple with several developmental challenges that have hitherto undermined rural development efforts. These include, among others; unemployment (youth unemployment), poverty, gender inequality, and limited social and economic inclusion of vulnerable population groups, and inequities between rural and urban communities leading to poor educational and health outcomes for the rural populations. The review of the RNPRD was therefore motivated by the need **to improve the quality of life of Botswana citizens resident in the rural and remote areas**. To deliver on this broad outcome (improving quality of life) Government initiated several interventions to respond to those who are disadvantaged. Major policy shifts revolved around poverty eradication, increased agricultural productivity through agricultural subsidies, social protection programmes, local economic development (LED), RDC Projects, Economic Diversification Drive, and more recently, Economic Inclusion Act (2021), National Social Protection Framework (2021) and implementation of the Draft Decentralisation Policy of 2025.

The above challenges have motivated Government's decision to continue the pursuit of rural development. Government commitment is to improve the quality of life in rural areas through the creation of economically vibrant and socially resilient communities. Creating economically vibrant communities is important for several reasons:

- a) It creates local economic and employment opportunities, which in turn reduce rural-urban migration and associated challenges such as increased poverty and unemployment in both rural and urban areas, increased pressure on social services and infrastructure, emergence of squatter settlements, breakdown of families, rising crime among the youth, and the weakening of local communities and more recently increased gender-based violence.
- b) A stronger local economy, with jobs created locally and retained, means a reduction of the Government's welfare bill, poverty reduction, a decline in criminal activities and GBV.
- c) Local economic growth means that businesses are attracted to relevant localities, bringing modern technologies, and creating more demand for local goods and services and more jobs and thus reducing rural-urban migration.

- d) Resilient and empowered rural communities with capacity to sustain rural development in the face of declining Government fiscal support.

Furthermore, the motivation for the development of this revised rural development policy stemmed from the need to:

- 1) Align rural development to national aspirations and priorities contained in Vision 2036, NDP 12 (2025 – 2029) – (to be officially re-named National Transformation Programme (NTP) in October), and the SDGs. In addition, the prevailing socioeconomic imperatives and policy shifts necessitated a review and update of the RNPRD 2002 so that it remains relevant to, and addresses, the current developmental challenges and opportunities. Most importantly, the Policy is aligned to other strategic policy documents such as; the National Transformation Strategy, 2023; National Social Protection Framework, 2021; Economic Inclusion Act, 2021, the Draft National Poverty Eradication Policy, 2019; the National Policy on Persons with Disability, 2021; the Draft National Decentralization Policy, 2020; the National Employment Policy for Botswana, 2021; the Review of the National NGO Policy, 2012; the National Policy on Gender and Development, 2015; Industrial Development Policy, 2014; Draft Strategy for Growing the Middle Class, 2021; Botswana Intellectual Property Policy, 2021, National Entrepreneurship Policy, 2019; and the Revised National Youth Policy, 2010 And related policies and strategies.
- 2) A commitment to eradicate poverty and create employment opportunities, particularly for the youth is central to the policy. Available research evidence shows that poverty and unemployment are severest in rural areas, in particular, among young people (not in education, training, and employment), people living with disabilities, and female-headed households are the most negatively impacted. Persistent poverty is a concern given Botswana's upper middle-income status, and aspirations to achieve a high-income status by 2036. For Botswana's prosperity to be shared by all, rural poverty must be addressed urgently. Particular attention should be directed at women and youth who, respectively, constitute the majority of the poor and unemployed yet represent a combined high potential as direct contributors to national development and rural development.
- 3) Botswana's rural areas have fewer and lower quality amenities than urban centres. Urban centres comparatively provide better opportunities for public health, communications,

sewage and waste disposal, and other amenities. Addressing inequities between rural and urban areas will place demand on the provision of basic social services (social safety nets, education, health and housing), high quality infrastructure (electrification and water reticulation), digitalisation, and creating an enabling environment for business in the rural areas. Measures must be put in place to promote equal access to opportunities for rural youth, women, and men and other poor and most vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and people living with disability to effectively facilitate sustainable livelihoods.

- 4) Appropriate institutional design – from a clear mandate on infrastructure provision in the 1970s, rural development in Botswana has become more complex in response to the current socioeconomic realities. Rural development has not only grown in terms of complexity but is faced with several challenges that undermine its effectiveness. For instance, institutional landscape for rural development has become highly fragmented. Multiple institutions have taken interest in the implementation of rural development policies, programmes, strategies and projects. Efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, and economy in rural development have become more important as resources continue to decline, in the context of increased and competing demands. Improving the level and quality of Government investment in different sectors of the economy requires robust and effective institutional arrangements. It is through appropriate institutional arrangements that rural development can be optimised.

In summary, it is important to point out that when the new government took over state power following the 30th October 2024 elections, a Ministry responsible for Local Government and Rural Development changed name to become the Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs. In doing so, the government underscored its commitment to promote rural development in collaboration with traditional leaders. It affirmed an important role played by traditional leaders and other local authorities in promoting inclusive growth and improving quality of life. This is consistent with the new national aspiration which seeks to promote inclusive growth anchored on human rights principles. The emphasis is that no-one should be left behind and that prosperity must be equally shared – a minimum social democratic principle. This Policy underscores the centrality of rural development in improving livelihoods and protecting the rights of the poor and most vulnerable populations living in the rural areas. Government has declared that “poverty is a violation of human rights.” That poor people’s rights are also human rights and hence the need to promote equitable access to social services

such as food, shelter, water and sanitation, health care, education and security for people living in rural areas. Fundamentally, the revised policy on rural development, not only responds to the challenges faced by vulnerable population groups, but also provides solutions based on the challenges they face. The policy ensures that the current framework within which rural underdevelopment is being addressed is being strengthened.

This responsibility places the primary obligation on the government to develop policies (such as the current one) that are transformative in nature and anchored on human rights principles. Effective implementation of the policy places an obligation on the government to provide the necessary resources to protect and support the poor and most vulnerable living in rural areas. To achieve these noble objectives, effective implementation of the revised policy demands a multi-stakeholder approach, leveraging on the strengths of the various government institutions, traditional leaders, private sector, CSOs and international development partners to deliver high impact interventions. The primary focus is on strengthening social protection mechanisms, addressing socioeconomic inequalities, provision of basic rural development programmes, creation of economic opportunities, and promoting access to agricultural productive activities and essential services.

3 CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BOTSWANA

This chapter describes the broad international, regional, and national frameworks and instruments that have a bearing on the Policy on rural development in Botswana.

3.1 INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Botswana is an active member of the international community and has committed to many international obligations that seek to promote human rights and sustainable development. Globally, rural areas are comparatively disadvantaged compared to urban areas. In the context of rural development, Botswana's commitment to redress imbalances and disparities in socio-economic development between the rural and urban areas, motivated the review of the RNPRD of 2002 and the development of this new policy. It is envisaged the revised policy will respond decisively to extreme poverty, high levels of unemployment, inequality, poor service delivery, poorer infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities. Further, this policy will transform lives and livelihoods of people living in rural areas.

Concerned about poor quality of life emanating from chronic poverty, high levels of unemployment, inequalities and associated socioeconomic challenges around the globe, the international community has over the years responded by developing several strategic documents, including; the SDGs, New Urban Agenda, Smart Cities and Communities and UN Declaration on Human Rights. Similar initiatives were also developed in the African region. These include, the African Union Agenda 2063 and SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). Taken together, these strategic documents sought to come up with impactful, efficient, effective responses to address challenges of under-development, particularly in the rural areas. As an active member of the international community, Botswana has embraced these initiatives and delivered on her obligations to the SDGs. These are briefly discussed below.

Sustainable Development Goals: International instruments that Botswana has acceded to such as the United Nations' (UN) Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development provide frameworks for addressing national developmental challenges across the world. Of relevance to rural

development in the SDGs are primarily SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. The United Nations, as articulated in SDG 11, sees urbanisation as the key factor in improving the living standards of the world's populations. Other relevant SDGs support SDG 11, key among these are: SDG 1 (7 no poverty), SDG 2 (5 zero hunger), SDG 3 (13 Good health and well-being), SDG 4 (9 quality education), SDG 5 (9 gender equality), SDG 6 (8 clean water and sanitation), SDG 10 (6 reduce inequalities), and SDG 13 (limit and adapt to climate change). The goals that Botswana domesticated, and their associated targets contain aspirations that relate broadly to challenges faced by people living in rural areas such as; poverty, hunger, unemployment, and inequalities.

New Urban Agenda: The United Nations' New Urban Agenda focuses on challenges anticipated to arise from the exploding global urban population expected to double by the year 2050. It acknowledges the intertwined relationships between urban and rural areas, both adjacent and remote. It is these urban-rural linkages that are of interest to this Policy.

Specifically, the New Urban Agenda states:

- i. There is commitment to supporting territorial systems that integrate urban and rural functions into the national and sub national spatial frameworks (clause 49).
- ii. Support to the implementation of integrated and balanced territorial development policies and plans, encouraging cooperation and mutual support among different scales of cities and human settlements across the urban-rural continuum (clause 95).
- iii. Implementation of sustainable urban and territorial planning should encourage synergies and interactions among urban areas of all sizes and their peri-urban and rural surroundings (clause 96).
- iv. Promotion of integrated urban and territorial planning, including planned urban extensions based on the principles of equitable, efficient, and sustainable use of land and natural resources (clause 98).

The New Urban Agenda promotes an integrated approach to urban planning and rural development and recognises the symbiotic potentials that can be leveraged if urban and rural development are addressed appropriately.

Smart Cities and Communities: this involves the use of electronic and digital technologies in the delivery of better services to citizens. A smart city or community aims to improve the wellbeing of its inhabitants, businesses, and service organisations, and environmental sustainability through digitally enabled services. Smart services may help in the management

of resources such as water, and can also promote interactive and responsive administrations, engage citizens in decision and policy making, and addressing the needs of various population groups. Smart services will reduce the digital divide between urban and rural dwellers, promote personalised and more intuitive services and experiences, as well as environmental sustainability.

African Union Agenda 2063: Agenda 2063 is the African Union's blueprint for achievement of inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development. The aspirations enshrined in AU's Agenda 2063 are relevant to this Policy. Aspiration number 1 which is about a prosperous Africa, advocates for inclusive growth and sustainable development, with goals to attain a high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens, and modernised liveable habitats with basic quality services. Aspirations 2, 3, and 4 include; education for citizens, health, nutrition and sustainable inclusive economies. Aspiration 3, in particular, addresses good governance, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Among some of its priority areas that are relevant for rural development include human rights, transformative leadership and participatory development, and local governance. Aspiration 5 envisions Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values, and ethics, while Aspiration 6 puts more emphasis on people driven development, relying on the potential offered by its people, especially women and youth. It is explicit on gender equality in all spheres of life and youth and children's empowerment. Aspiration 7 is on environmental sustainability and climate resilient economies and communities, which are all critical for sustainable rural livelihoods and rural development.

Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and SADC Vision 2050: The SADC region has two strategic plans, the RISDP 2020-2030 and the SADC Vision 2050, which lay a framework for the region's integration and socio-economic development. While these are based on broad strategic foundations of peace, security, and democratic governance, they provide a framework for implementation of development in the rural areas as fundamental to enjoyment of human rights and benefits accruing to their citizens in both rural and urban areas.

The United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): The UN's Declaration of Human Rights espouses a rights based approach to development especially articles 21(2), 25(1), 26(1), and 27 on the right to access to public services; standard of living that is adequate for health, and wellness, food, clothing, housing, medical care, and social services; education;

as well as culture, respectively. These are important aspects of life that affect rural dwellers in the same way they do for urban dwellers. In the context of a rights based approach to development, everybody irrespective of where they live should have access to quality public services and other development benefits that include improved living standards, improved public health, economic opportunities, increased access to quality education, etc.

3.2 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The national context that influences rural development policies and programmes is critical. To be relevant, Botswana's rural development policy is aligned to a raft of national policies and strategic documents, including, among others: Vision 2036; successive NDPs; the Revised National Settlement Policy (2004); National Spatial Plan 2036 (2019); Revised Land Policy (2019); Draft National Policy on Poverty Eradication (2019); and Draft National Decentralisation Policy (2021); National Transformation Strategy (2023 – 2030); Economic Inclusion Act, 2021; NSPF, 2021; National Policy on Climate Change (2021); Industrial Development Policy (2014). These are briefly discussed below.

Botswana's **Vision 2036** is aimed at ensuring prosperity for all. Through Pillar # 1: Sustainable Economic Development, Botswana aspires to become a high-income country characterised by diversified, inclusive, and sustainable growth. The pillar emphasizes development of human capital and infrastructure since they both play an essential role in the economy. Under Pillar 2: Human and Social Development, Vision 2036 underscores the need for people-centred development by focussing on gender equality (and equity), social inclusion, promotion of cultural heritage, and health. Pillar 3: Sustainable Environment, recognizes that rural areas exist in environmentally challenged areas, which are often overgrazed or degraded, vulnerable to natural disasters, and residents' livelihoods depend on the natural environment. The Governance Peace, and Security pillar underscores the key social investments that rural communities thrive on. Experience from other countries shows that in the event of civil wars, it is usually the rural areas that are affected the most, hence they need particular attention as well. The Rural Development Policy will facilitate these under specific and relevant thematic areas.

National Development Plans (NDPs) and District/Urban Development Plans (DDPs/UDPs) are medium term policy frameworks that provide strategic planning meant to deliver national aspirations contained in Vision 2036. For example, the just ended NDP 11 (2017-2023) with the theme “*Inclusive Growth for Realisation of Employment Creation and Poverty Eradication*” was the first such Plan meant to steer Botswana towards the attainment of Vision 2036 aspirations. Common between the two (NDP11 and RNPRD) were the objectives to eradicate poverty through social protection programmes. The prevailing Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) (2023-2025) which is meant to provide a seamless transition to NDP 12 in 2025 is a reform agenda for the national development planning system. It sought to align development planning period to legislative, electoral cycles, and presidential terms. Although the subject of rural development seems to have been deemphasised in NDPs that came after NDP 9, Botswana has always been committed to developing rural areas, and the Government will make deliberate effort to reinstate it as a key aspect of NDPs. A particular strategy to attain this aim is through building linkages between the Rural Development Council (RDC), and the National Planning Commission (NPC) to ensure that the latter includes creation and tracking of rural development indicators, as well as financial and other planning variables.

The National Transformation Strategy (2023-2030): the National Transformation Strategy (NTS) is a key instrument for attaining the goals of both NDP 12 (National Transformation Plan) and Vision 2036. As a single strategy reference document, NTS primarily addresses the longstanding complex challenges in policy formulation and implementation facing Botswana. The NTS lays the groundwork for the type of transformations required for Botswana to deliver the aims of NTP. It approaches national development through the 1+3 model based on the pillars of Vision 2036, where Pillar No. 1: Sustainable Economic Development is regarded as central to the achievement of other three pillars of the Vision, namely Human and Social Development, Sustainable Environment, and Governance, Peace, and Security.

The Revised National Settlement Policy (2004): The policy objectives align well with the themes of the rural development policy, having established that rural areas are characterised by few livelihoods strategies and declining share of total population due to among others, migration in search of economic opportunities in urban areas and the urbanisation of other rural settlements. Overall, the revised National Settlement Policy seeks to promote the conservation of natural resources for the benefit of the present and future generations and to reduce the rate of migration to towns.

The National Spatial Plan (NSP) 2036 is also aligned to Vision 2036 and provides a framework for efficient allocation and utilisation of the country's resources to attain sustainable socio-economic development. The NSP has nine objectives that cover four broad areas of: spatial governance; spatial structure; sustainable environment, and economic development. These objectives are anchored on a set of principles, key among them, is the recognition of the unique needs and characteristics of places, sustainable socio-economic and environmental effects, and inclusivity in decision making processes.

The Revised Land Policy (2019): the policy aims to protect and promote the land rights of all landholders and promote sustainable human settlements. The specific objectives of the land policy relevant to rural development include; (a) to guide all land operations for sustainable human settlements, land utilisation and socio-economic development, and (b) to promote access, equity, efficiency, land rights security and transparency in land management and administration. The Rural Development Policy will facilitate these through its objective of poverty eradication.

Draft National Agriculture Policy (2025): the policy is still in draft form. However, it consolidates the various agricultural policies. Agriculture constitutes one of the many social protection programmes that are government funded. Many poor households, especially those in the rural areas depend on some of these agricultural subsidies and grants to earn a decent living. Some of the well-known agriculture based social protection programmes include LIMID, NAMPAD, Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme, to name a few. Many poor rural dwellers are not able to access some of the agriculture based social protection programmes, and it is the intention of government to address some of these challenges to ensure that these programmes benefit low income beneficiaries as well, and are well-targeted.

The Draft National Decentralisation Policy (2021) seeks to transfer decision making powers to local authorities and empower citizens to participate effectively in decision-making processes. The Policy is premised on a set of 12 principles, of which three are particularly relevant to rural development. These are *participation, subsidiarity, and socio-economic*

justice. It is important to create economic opportunities for all Batswana and allow them to be fully involved in economic and social activities to improve the quality of their lives.

The Draft National Poverty Eradication Policy (2019) is equally important in promoting sustainable rural livelihoods. Poverty is severest in the rural areas. The Draft National Poverty Eradication Policy is guided by six (6) principles, three (3) are particularly relevant to the Rural Development Policy. These are the principles of: *leave no-one behind; vulnerability, inclusion, and sustainability of interventions*.

The alignment of the RNPRD and other government initiatives is important for ensuring efficient coordination of the implementation of the other policies, to avoid duplication of efforts, enhance policy effectiveness, and reduce the cost of public administration.

Industrial Development Policy (2014): The Industrial Development Policy (IDP) provides a high-level framework for policies, initiatives, laws and regulations governing the development of industry – broadly defined to include manufacturing and services. On the other hand, the RNPRD focuses on enhancing the quality of life for Batswana living in the rural areas. Therefore, there is a direct correlation between IDP 2014 and RNPRD given that both their strategic focus and objectives are mutually reinforcing and emphasise on improving overall quality of life for Batswana, economic diversification, employment creation, and poverty eradication.

National Policy on Climate Change (2021): The Botswana climate change policy acknowledges the challenges brought by climate change such as the decline in key economic sectors that are reliant on the climate system. Agriculture, water, and tourism sectors which are the mainstays of the rural economy are the hardest hit, hence the policy aims at stabilisation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to the required levels to ensure that rural livelihoods are protected from adverse climatic conditions. Therefore, this policy is at the core of rural development because its successful implementation will result in the attainment of sustainable rural livelihoods.

Economic Inclusion Act (2021): the Act is aimed at promoting the participation of citizens in the economic growth and development of the economy, and seeks to ensure the enforcement of the economic empowerment initiatives.

4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BOTSWANA

The key principles guiding this Policy are as follows:

Botho: Botho envisages a well-rounded, well mannered, courteous, and disciplined individual who is ready, capable, and willing to serve the community to which he or she belongs.

Ipelegeng (self-reliance): This principle encapsulates the spirit of self-reliance, which motivated people “to carry their own weight” through the difficult formative years of Botswana. Ipelegeng is a value and catchphrase meant to inspire independence, creativity, resilience, resourcefulness, and drive in effective delivery of Botswana government mandate for rural development.

Therisano: Means consultation (*morero*) and is a key principle in *Setswana* culture that requires the full involvement of stakeholders in the design, and implementation of community development initiatives. Through this principle, Botswana will cultivate the spirit of ownership and sustainability of rural development interventions. Therisano imbues the essence of participatory development in which the principle underlies the development process.

Human rights and dignity: The Constitution of Botswana recognises and protects the rights of all citizens and residents regardless of their socioeconomic standing, location, gender, and other attributes often used to discriminate and disadvantage people in society. This Policy adopts a rights-based approach to the provision of public goods and services particularly as it relates to rural development.

Equity and social justice: These are principles that are central to, and have guided, Botswana’s development planning since independence in 1966. It is through the application of social justice and equity that all citizens of Botswana, irrespective of geographic location, political affiliation, economic status, gender, age, or physical ability among others have equal access to socioeconomic development opportunities. This is particularly important for historically disadvantaged populations residing in the rural areas. This policy promotes diversity and seeks to accommodate all in the name of social justice.

Inclusive growth: The assurance that the benefits of development are equally shared and anchored on the SDGs principle of “leave no one behind.” Purposeful inclusive growth is a catalyst for socioeconomic development. It aims to eradicate poverty, inequality, and social exclusion particularly focusing on the empowerment of marginalised social groups such as the youth, people living with disabilities, women, and historically disadvantaged ethnic groups such as Basarwa. Inclusive growth seeks to create opportunities and empower people through education, health, and skills to enhance their wellbeing. Economically, the principle of social justice seeks to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusive growth, participatory development, and competitiveness in the productive sectors, focusing specifically on small and medium enterprises that have potential to generate employment opportunities and sustainable income for the rural poor. This principle is in sync with the Economic Inclusion Act, which seeks to ensure the participation of citizens in the economy of Botswana. The Act is discussed at length at Section 6.9 of this Policy.

Affirmative Action: Affirmative action is intended to correct historical injustices against individuals with certain identities and characteristics that put them at a disadvantage relative to mainstream society. While there are no laws in Botswana discriminating against specific groups, for example, ethnic minorities, populations living in rural areas, often experience significant social disadvantage, marginalization and exclusion from socioeconomic services generally enjoyed by mainstream population groups. Access to, and utilization of, services is significantly limited, and where available is of poor quality. Affirmative action takes into account the above realities and seeks to discriminate in favour of the historically disadvantaged groups with a view to compensate affected persons and communities and to close the inequality gap.

Gender equality: refers to the state in which access to rights or opportunities is not affected by gender. It is not only a fundamental human rights principle, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable Botswana. Efforts to accomplish gender equality must often be accompanied by empowerment programmes that address identified areas of inequality and building capacity for all to engage and participate equitably and profitably.

Participation: this principle emphasises the active involvement of all groups of individuals in collective processes in which the public influences the decision-makers as well as take part in decision making processes. Public participation in decision making processes in Botswana is a

right that guarantees the public an opportunity to participate in, or influence, the making of decisions that affect them. Public participation is an integral part of democratic decision making, and it increases public trust in administrative authorities, improves the quality of policy decisions, as well as bridges the gap between the Government and the people.

Ethics: ethics is widely understood to relate to issues of morality and often what is right and wrong as it tries to establish the general principles of conduct. In the context of the Rural Development Policy, ethics relates to the broad decision making in the development process in its concerns with rights and responsibilities of individuals. Ethical decision making will be imbued with virtues such as honesty, compassion (*kutlwelo botlhoko*), transparency, fairness, integrity, accountability, and respect. Our public administration will be honest and transparent in communicating with our communities, fair in decision-making, respect diversity and individual differences, take accountability for decisions and/or actions whether good or bad, be compassionate towards disadvantaged groups, and protect the confidentiality and privacy of our citizens and clients.

5 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 GOAL

The goal of the Rural Development Policy is to enhance the quality of life of all people who live in Botswana's rural areas.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Policy are:

1. To promote diversified rural economy that supports sustainable rural livelihoods.
2. To ensure inclusive growth in the rural economy that promotes gender equality, and the inclusion of all vulnerable groups.
3. To bring rural settlements design and service standards to the equivalence of the urban areas.

6 POLICY STATEMENTS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The policy statements and strategic initiatives in this section are aligned to each of the objectives of the Policy. The objectives themselves are aligned to the broad framework provided by the Policy Goal. The alignment should make it easier to monitor and evaluate the policy. However, some factors that affect, or are affected by, rural development are cross-cutting such as gender, disability, and youth. This demonstrates the complexity of human life and the intricacies inherent in analysing impact-causal relationships on policy interventions. The objectives and the associated policy statements and strategic actions are presented in Part A, B, and C as follows:

PART A: TO PROMOTE DIVERSIFIED RURAL ECONOMY THAT SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIVELIHOODS.

6.1 ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND PROMOTION OF JOB CREATION AND LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE RURAL AREAS

The economies of many rural settlements are becoming diversified. However, the structure of rural employment differs across rural settlements with some, especially small remote ones, still

relying on low wage farm work while others have increased their off-farm employment. The main challenge facing rural economies is the reliance on the low paying agriculture-based jobs, and the inability to generate high paying off-farm employment. In Botswana the cultivation of high-value crops that generate high paying jobs is nascent, and exists largely in peri-urban areas where there are better paying markets. Skills development will be a key focus area for job creation, in particular off-farm employment. Lack of skills is one of the leading causes of unemployment in rural Botswana. Unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, is a major policy concern that deserves urgent attention. It is becoming a threat to the socio-economic development of the country, and it manifests in a variety of social ills, including; poverty, drugs and alcohol abuse, crime, gender-based violence, and social exclusion, to name a few. Available research evidence suggests that unemployment has remained stable between 1991 and 2023. However, data from Statistics Botswana (2022) revealed that Botswana's unemployment rate was 21% in 2019 and increased to 25.4% in 2022, with youth unemployment rate even higher at 33.5%. A disaggregation of the above statistics revealed that rural districts have higher rates of unemployment compared to urban districts.

With the frequently recurring drought in the country, and the worsening effects of climate change and slow economic growth, the conditions of livelihoods for the rural populations can be expected to become more challenging. To address the employment issue, the Government in concert with all stakeholders will focus on the creation of economic opportunities and the assessment of labour market needs, linking these to the training needs of specific rural contexts, as well as the adoption of technology. The strategic actions to address unemployment in the rural economies are as follows:

Strategic Actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

- 1 Adopt an integrated approach to the development of skills and employment opportunities in rural areas by leveraging on the wide range of policies, institutions, and actors in the training sphere.
- 2 Provide infrastructure in the rural areas such as roads, transportation, markets, utilities, internet connectivity to stimulate investment and create jobs.
- 3 Leverage tourism in the rural settlements to create employment.
- 4 Support entrepreneurship through the implementation of the LED programme to promote

local businesses and start-ups.

- 5 Improve entrepreneurial opportunities and access to sustainable livelihoods.
- 6 Support agricultural innovation to promote the adoption of new farming techniques and technologies, and enhance value chains.
- 7 Promote research such as on market needs and economic opportunities and linking these to the skills requirements in the specific rural contexts.

6.2 RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION

Policy Statement

The rural economy in Botswana is mainly agrarian and is prone to drought and other environmental and climate change challenges. Post-harvest technologies are poor and farmers lose a lot of their produce and therefore potential income remains too low. The lack of markets in the rural areas, poor roads linking rural areas to markets, and the cost of transportation significantly increase costs to get goods to the market. Lack of services such as electricity, potable water, and lack of municipal sewage disposal systems discourage investors to locate industries in the rural areas. Therefore, the markets remain far and inaccessible to rural communities, limiting employment creation opportunities. Mining is another economic activity that mostly takes place in rural areas and presently constitutes a significant economic activity in the rural areas. However, due to it being capital intensive, requiring highly specialised skills, mining's direct contribution to sustainable rural livelihoods remains limited. To address the challenges of rural economic development, there is a need to strengthen local economic development through efficient production and enhanced social and physical infrastructure.

Integral to the above, there is need to catalyse the rural economic development through the promotion and development of sustainable industries especially primary industries. This thinking is fully supported by the current Industrial Development Policy which promotes an export-led growth economy. Further, the Industrial Development Policy recognises the need for rural industrialisation as evidenced by one of its principles on the geographical distribution of industries. This principle of the Industrial Development Policy emphasises that the distribution of industries across the country should be based on each region's comparative and competitive advantage (regional economic anchors), including the promotion of the development of regional strategic industries and finding a niche in regional value chains.

Strategic Actions

Government in collaboration with key stakeholders will:

1. Develop a rural industrialisation strategy.
2. Develop and implement strategies that promote the participation of rural communities in economic opportunities that arise out of the implementation of economic programmes of the special economic zones within their areas.
3. Establish a framework that promotes the formation of sustainable small local business groups/clusters/trusts and/or cooperatives within rural communities.
4. Develop and implement a framework for the provision of supportive infrastructure for investment in agriculture and exploitation of agricultural value chains in rural and remote areas.
5. Promote and facilitate the development of Open Data for the districts with the view to providing potential investors with data on the economic potential of rural districts.

6.3 POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Policy Statement

Poverty is one of the most complex development challenges Botswana has faced since independence. Even though available data shows that the incidence of poverty has declined significantly over the years across the country, it has remained relatively higher in rural areas in the same period. Vulnerable population groups, such as children, women (female headed households), older people, and people living with disabilities are overrepresented in poverty statistics and are found mainly in the rural areas.

Data reveals that the incidence of poverty is higher among female-headed households and female individuals. In 2015/16, female headed households accounted for 55 per cent of poor households compared to 45 per cent for male headed households. That poverty is higher among females could suggest that there are limited opportunities for females compared to males. Other vulnerable groups such as children, Remote Area Dwellers (RADs), are also more vulnerable to malnutrition, hunger, and food insecurity, which severely undermine their cognitive development and entrenches the poverty trap. The rights of the socially disadvantaged Batswana have to be protected in such a way as to enable and empower them to graduate from

poverty and be able to attain sustainable livelihoods.

Strategic Actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

- 1 Review existing poverty eradication programmes to make them responsive to the needs and aspirations of the poor and most vulnerable population groups (women, PWDs, youth, etc.).
- 2 Align living allowances to the cost of living and international poverty thresholds in order to ensure that the allowances are sustainable and adequately support the livelihoods of the poor.
- 3 Establish a governance framework to regulate and guide civil society organisations and other community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide services to rural communities.
- 4 Review the National Policy for Mainstreaming Gender into Vocational Training and Work-based Learning of 2000 with the view to ensure gender mainstreaming of national vocational training is updated and stays relevant.
- 5 Improve on programme targeting to improve the allocation of limited resources to those who cannot support themselves.
- 6 Harmonise the Poverty Eradication Policy with other policies that target the same population groups.

6.4 SMART VILLAGES AND DIGITALISATION

Policy Statement

The concept of smart villages is being embraced increasingly around the world as a strategy to improve the resilience of rural communities using innovative solutions. Smart villages promote the participation of rural communities in the improvement of their social, economic, and environmental conditions, empowers them to undertake social innovation, cooperate with other communities and take pride and ownership in their communities. Technology will be adopted and used in a sustainable and synergetic way to improve the quality of life of rural populations. Digitalisation offers an opportunity for Botswana to smartly develop rural, remote, and sparsely populated areas. Presently the digital divide in Botswana between urban and rural settlements is wide. The information and communications technologies (ICT) infrastructure in the rural

areas is limited and there is an urgent need to provide it. Physical access to rural communities remains a major challenge due to costs associated with the provision of road and air traffic infrastructure. The provision of smart services has potential to alleviate these challenges. This is also the case especially in instances where extension officers, who constitute the machinery that drives implementation of policies and programmes are required to travel long distances to participate in capacity building training often conducted in urban or district centres. The adoption of smart village strategies in Botswana will help diversify rural economies, promote agricultural innovation, and thereby reduce poverty, and make rural areas a better place for entrepreneurship, employment, education, health care, technology, and climate action.

Strategic Actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

1. Develop and implement smart village strategies that will serve as catalysts for development, innovation, address specific community priorities, ensure long term sustainability and meaningful socio-economic impact.
2. Prioritise digitalisation in rural areas, through infrastructure development and extension of network coverage to help build resilient communities and sustainable rural livelihoods.
3. Leverage on the burgeoning technological development in the country as one way of increasing the diversity of rural livelihoods (i.e., smart agriculture), especially among the youth who are technologically savvy.
4. Leverage information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enable telecommuting opportunities.
5. Improve access to education and training in rural areas through distance and online learning.
6. Improve access to financial services through the support and strengthening of the local financial institutions including micro-credit organisations to improve information provision on services and facilities available such as loans and savings schemes.

6.5 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Policy Statement

Government recognises the potential of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, (IKS), this encompasses all forms of knowledge; technologies, skills, practices, and beliefs that enable communities to achieve sustainable livelihoods in their environment hence the need to harness and protect it in pursuit of a knowledge-based economy. Indigenous Knowledge has potential to help achieve economic diversification in the rural areas through commercialisation of local knowledge, skills, and technologies. Transitioning from resource-based economy to knowledge-based economy will also reduce pressure on the natural resource base, thereby contributing to achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, value chains can be developed from harnessing indigenous knowledge to ensure economic diversification through innovation and facilitating linkages and interdependence among indigenous knowledge-based enterprises.

In July 2022, Parliament passed the Access and Benefit Sharing Act, which provides for sharing of indigenous knowledge and for local communities to make a living from their indigenous knowledge. Access to Benefit Sharing Act aims at creating a conducive environment for conservation of biodiversity by localising the Nagoya Protocol. The Protocol addresses the importance of biodiversity conservation and fulfilment of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a legal framework authorizing the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge and the sharing of the benefits from the utilization of those resources, which instils environmental stewardship and sustainable utilisation of natural resources to improve livelihoods and well-being. Guidelines that facilitate the implementation of the Access and Benefit Sharing Act are still under draft. Once approved, and implemented, it will improve communities' conservation efforts as communities will then derive benefits from their indigenous knowledge and reduce pressure on natural resources and the environment.

Strategic actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

1. Develop a governance framework for Indigenous Knowledge.
2. Develop and implement a framework for research and innovation on indigenous knowledge with the view to promote the participation of local tertiary institutions and research institutes in the packaging and codification of indigenous knowledge and ensure that it is preserved and continually developed for posterity.
3. Promote training and capacity building on indigenous knowledge skills and technologies especially in the rural areas.
4. Use cultural mapping to enable communities to manage resources in their areas including patenting their indigenous knowledge.
5. Recognise and promote indigenous knowledge and give it higher status to ensure wide uptake and adoption in the same way Western scientific knowledge has been treated.
6. Consider the development of a comprehensive national security strategy for Botswana.

6.6 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND NATURAL DISASTERS

Policy Statement

Environmental issues of concern are prevalent and increasing across the country. Excessive pressure is exerted on the environment due to limited employment and livelihoods opportunities, which leads people to over-exploit natural resources to survive. Rural poverty has a major impact on the sustainable utilisation of natural resources. While poverty contributes to environmental degradation, environmental degradation inversely contributes to the intensification and perpetuation of poverty. Human-wildlife conflict is another issue adversely affecting rural areas in Botswana, and it is increasing. Wildlife damages crops, property, and preys on livestock, and sometimes kills and injures people. The mitigation of environmental issues, therefore, serves a dual role of environmental conservation and poverty reduction in rural areas.

Botswana experiences natural hazards which have increased in frequency and intensity, leading to loss of biodiversity, and soil degradation. Climate change related impacts affect rural communities, who are highly dependent on agriculture, natural resources for their livelihoods and social structures. The effects include shifting of ploughing seasons due to delayed or

changing rainfall patterns, with negative implications on agricultural productivity. Veld fires and drought, likely to be exacerbated by climate change, and carry implications for household and national food security. Among these concerns, drought is the most common and recurrent, and linked to climate change. The effect of drought is more likely to be pronounced in the rural economy, whose current major economic activity is agriculture because it results in high animal mortality rates and low crop yields. Natural resources such as veld products, a source of revenue for the rural communities, are also susceptible to drought, veld fires and other calamities, natural or human induced. Overall, Botswana is considered highly vulnerable to climate variability and change due to its high dependence on rain-fed agriculture and natural resources, elevated levels of poverty, particularly in rural areas, and low adaptive capacity to these expected changes.

Strategic Actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders shall:

1. Review the laws and regulations that govern environmental management with a view to encourage maximum beneficiation by communities in the management and utilisation of natural resources.
2. Develop a circular economy policy and action plan to improve waste management and create jobs through the commercialisation of waste including in rural and remote areas.
3. Encourage incorporation of the ecosystem-based approach to planning at both the national and local levels.
4. Promote and strengthen Disaster Risk Reduction programmes and plans to enhance societal adaptive capacity to environmental shocks.
5. Develop and adopt building standards that promote rain water harvesting and utilisation.
6. Improve sanitation and refuse collection in both the rural villages and the rural environment to manage environmental pollution and control of diseases from all types of waste.

6.7 ENERGY

Policy Statement

Energy is essential to the economic development of any country and is a key driver for economic growth in the most important sectors of the economy. Botswana has considerable energy resources most of which have not been fully exploited. The country has an estimated 212 billion metric tons of coal reserves found in several locations, and abundant sunshine (3,200 hrs. at 21MJ/m²), biogas (2.2 million cattle, 3 kg dung/LSU/day), and fuel wood (200 tons/annum). Wind energy constitutes a significant but unexplored potential energy source. Hydro power, however, is not feasible considering the country's arid climate. Furthermore, a feasibility study carried out in 2023 for the production and use of biofuels in Botswana has revealed the potential for liquid bio-fuels production, mainly biodiesel from *Jatropha* carcass, and ethanol from sweet reed. The generation of power remains limited mainly to coal generated electricity but there is potential for its exponential increase, which could inversely have a positive impact on access to energy.

In 2019, 70 percent of the country had access to power. However, access to electricity is skewed in favour of urban dwellers compared to rural people, with 88 percent urban in contrast to only 28 percent rural people with access. The other factor that is a significant limitation to the country is that the Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) as the sole power supplier is overwhelmed by multiple roles of generation, transmission, and distribution. These multiple roles limit its focus and end up providing sub-optimal service. To enhance the efficiency of the sector, there is a need to unbundle the corporation into several companies and open up the sector for more players to participate.

Botswana relies heavily on fossil fuels to cover its energy needs. Sustainable Development Goal 7.2 requires that by 2030 the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix be increased substantially. The country has determined that by the year 2030 the share of renewable energy to the energy mix will be increased to 15 percent. Renewables will be more appropriate and more affordable in the rural areas where the national grid reach is limited.

Strategic Actions

To improve the living standards of the people residing in rural areas, the following strategic actions will be pursued.

1. An electrification subsidy scheme specifically for the rural settlements will be introduced, so as to improve the quality of life of households, and attract businesses to locate there, thereby creating jobs.
2. There will be a gradual transition to clean and renewable energy sources, the transition will be just, fair, and consider the needs of various stakeholders.
3. Address the challenges of vertical integration by unbundling or unpacking BPC into three entities for power generation, power transmission and distribution.
4. Promote and support adoption and use of renewable energy especially in places where the national grid reach is limited. These include remote rural villages, and agricultural production areas.

6.8 AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY, AND NUTRITION

Policy Statement

Climate change and market access present challenges to the development of the agriculture sector, pose risks for food security, and worsen malnutrition. The impact of climate change has already started to affect agriculture sector productivity and heighten food insecurity for rural communities as they are already experiencing environmental degradation and have limited options of coping with adverse weather conditions. Although both arable, and livestock agriculture are evolving rapidly, due to technology and climate effects, it is still dominated by the rural elderly. The younger generations tend to migrate to urban areas for non-agricultural employment and prefer to lead urban oriented lifestyles. However, recent developments in the horticulture sector indicate potential for improving food security and self-sufficiency, through import substitution. While livestock rearing has been one of the leading sources of rural livelihoods, there has been a decline in the national cattle herd as well as market access. Causes will be addressed to ensure that revitalisation efforts will be effective at both subsistence and commercial levels. Additionally, new and improved production systems for both arable and pastoral farming, resource management, and product development to increase market penetration will be pursued. Smallstock is recognised as having potential, for both household

and at business scale of operation to reach international markets where demand is strong and growing.

Government recognises smart farming as one of the strategies that can catapult the productivity of the agriculture sector to ensure food security and improved nutrition. The development of agriculture will be aimed at ensuring the economic access to adequate, nutritious, and safe food. One of the strategies would be to adopt the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), in particular the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture to improve innovation and productivity. As a cost cutting strategy, the Government scaled back agricultural extension over the past several years. The use of generative artificial intelligence for agricultural advisory extension (GAIA) will be promoted to fill this gap. This sector will receive strong government support to fully realise this potential, and it is envisaged that all these initiatives will increase financial benefits to the rural communities and their value to the national economy.

There are also concerns about increasing competition for land use between agriculture and other land uses. For instance, the rapid expansion of residential land allocations in peri-urban areas, mining, and infrastructure developments that serve urban areas, has intensified this competition. The unplanned expansion of human settlements in agricultural areas is also creating challenges for the agriculture sector.

Strategic Actions

Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

1. Implement Adaptation Measures for Agriculture and Food Security and Forest Management articulated in the Botswana Climate Change Policy of April 2021 (8.1.1. and 8.1.5.).
2. Critical to protect all forms of fertile subsistence land and resource uses while providing openings for their progression into income generation.
3. Promote and integrate climate-smart agriculture and climate change risk management into the entire agricultural sector.
4. Promote the adoption of digital technology in agriculture (livestock and crop production, fisheries, and forestry) to improve productivity and food security.

5. Promote research in product development, supply chain development and the cultivation of locally grown produce to satisfy existing and new demand.
6. Provide infrastructure such as roads, ICTs, electricity, etc., in production areas to enhance market access, improve efficiency, and make farming attractive especially to the youth.
7. Promote nutrition security among the rural population.
8. Promote cluster farming of one crop per region/cluster which may also promote agro-industries.
9. Promote agricultural product traceability to improve standards compliance to international food safety standards and enhance local product competitiveness in international markets.
10. Focus on the production of organic produce to target elite markets that are health conscious and pay well.
11. Consider the management of, and compensation for, losses incurred due to presently non-compensated predators such as hyenas, baboons and other excluded predators to reduce human-wildlife conflict and enhance crop protection.

6.9 VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Policy Statement

Rural economies in developing countries are dominated by the agricultural sector. Agriculture remains the main source of rural livelihoods, contributes significantly to GDP, and is an important foreign exchange earner. While in Botswana its contribution to GDP has declined, it remains the third most important source of export earnings after diamonds and tourism respectively. Botswana's participation in many economic sectors has remained limited, especially in the rural areas where mining, agriculture, and the exploitation of natural resources take place. The Economic Inclusion Act of 2021 seeks to facilitate the implementation of citizen economic empowerment initiatives and laws. It seeks to empower targeted citizens. The law aims at the development of an integrated, coordinated and uniform approach to economic transformation and empowerment. It is aligned to, and guided by, the Government's National Transformation Strategy.

Some of the notable provisions of the Act for targeted citizens are; ownership of land and property, investment opportunities, empowerment opportunities, representation of citizens in professional and employment bodies, foreign investors to empower citizens to participate in value chains, to name a few. The latter is of particular importance as barriers to entry have been limiting citizen participation in the economy. Interventions in enabling citizens to participate in value chains enhance their participation in all segments of the value chain and ensures that rural economies can transform through increased productivity, incomes, and nutrition. To improve the implementation of the Act, the following strategic initiatives will be undertaken:

Strategic Actions

1. Identify targeted value chains and develop competitiveness strategies for them.
2. Improve local agriculture extension and farm advisory services especially for the low income households and individuals.
3. Promote and strengthen cooperatives and other community-based producer organisations.
4. Develop reward systems to support innovative programmes for value chain strengthening.
5. Facilitate poor households to meet the minimum thresholds for successful participation in the value chain initiatives.

PART B: TO BRING RURAL SETTLEMENTS DESIGN AND SERVICE STANDARDS TO THE EQUIVALENCE OF THE URBAN AREAS.

6.10 LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Policy Statement

Most rural economies are primarily based on use and exploitation of available land and natural resources. Natural resources sustain livelihoods and may also provide valuable contribution to the national economic output through commercial enterprises. Security of title and tenure, for individuals, and communities increases their ability to obtain better financial benefits and motivate individuals and communities to adopt safer and better environmental conservation measures. Of relevance to Botswana rural areas is the need to effectively manage the already scarce and stressed water resources.

The tourism sector is also moving into a state of change for similar reasons, but also due to demographic changes. The potential for developing naturally occurring veld products as a rural industry is finding recognition alongside an imperative to protect the resource.

Government has put in place mechanisms intended to increase value of the rural economy to the nation and intends to continue this process. These mechanisms will be done through improved effectiveness of traditional land uses, and expanding beyond these to take advantage of new and emerging technologies. The objective is to increase productive output, while preserving the resource base and mitigating the effects of climate change, as rural outputs also contribute to objectives such as food security and import substitution.

Continuing investment in rural infrastructure will be directed to enhancements of commercial activities, while providing for improvements in livelihood strategies, especially for locations more distant from urban centres. Such investments will be guided by their ability to demonstrate high value returns, but also to employment creation that will both bring financial and quality of life benefits to the communities and enhance their ability to contribute to the national economy. Care will be taken to recognise the characteristics, and especially strengths, deriving from regional comparative advantages, and investments directed accordingly.

Strategic Actions

Tenure and Market.

The Government, in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

1. Ensure that future allocations of land will reflect the intrinsic value of the land and utilise it for the public benefit.
2. Entry-level access to land will be preserved and protected, with special regard to disadvantaged persons.
3. Extend the property rating system to rural land to capture and utilise value realised in high value locations. This will enable local authorities to provide services of an appropriate standard to urban villages.
4. Facilitate access to finance for low-cost housing construction in low value locations, guided by the various options, including; direct subsidy, extension of the Bonno Housing programme to a reduced entry threshold, and a loan guarantee or subsidy for

the purpose of involving the commercial mortgage sector in a public private partnership arrangement.

Planning and Management

Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

1. Align the physical development of rural settlements with the New Urban Agenda and the Draft Spatial Development Code in consultation with local communities and having regard to incorporating appropriate traditional or cultural village style applicable to the locality.
2. Declare villages whose settlement patterns have transformed significantly as urban to leverage their economic development and ensure planned urbanisation. However, this will be done subject to extensive and thorough consultations with leadership and residents of these villages. This will also serve as recognition of the significant transformation these settlements have undergone since independence in 1966.
3. The responsibility to categorise settlement types will be transferred to Statistics Botswana. The Local Government Act will be reviewed and amended accordingly to recognise the reallocation of this responsibility to avoid duplication of efforts. Again, this will be done subject to extensive and thorough consultations with leadership and residents of these villages.
4. Encourage investment activities identified as having development potential in the rural areas through a human and natural resource based cluster approach appropriate to the location, and to Growth Centre/Growth Point model. The focus should be on creating employment opportunities, creating low environmental impact digital services and the promotion of the manufacturing sector to motivate the development of urban and/or modern style villages.
5. Discourage the mushrooming of unplanned settlements and ensure that all new settlements are planned. The uncoordinated mushrooming of settlements overstretch public resources and services resulting in underserved rural communities.

Land and Natural Resource Use.

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders shall:

1. Ensure beneficial use, development, strategic management, and protection of land and natural resources, with special regard to the implications of climate change, ensuring the security of subsistence livelihoods, and to enhance the contribution for all aspects of economic and social advancement of the rural areas.
2. Create strong public awareness of the essential requirement to preserve and conserve water resources. Efforts, with strong participation of civil society, will be made to ensure public awareness of the impacts of increased water demand anticipated to result from population growth, the development and expansion of new land use activities, and the effects of climate change.
3. To grow and strengthen collaboration between communities, private sector and other stakeholders in the exploitation of land and natural resource use to ensure sustainable economic and equitable wealth distribution.
4. Revise property development guidelines to include rain water harvesting strategies for all property development permit applications.

6.11 HEALTH

Policy Statement

People living in rural areas have comparatively limited access to healthcare compared to their urban counterparts. The main thrust of our healthcare provision is to orientate our healthcare system towards the promotion of healthcare equity. Access to healthcare offers improved quality of life and increases life expectancy by enhancing early detection and treatment of diseases. The prevention of diseases is of paramount importance as it is always cost effective to prevent the diseases than to provide treatment afterwards. Treatment of diseases is delayed where people lack access to healthcare resulting in diseases progressing to uncontrollable levels. The rural healthcare system will be resilient to withstand disease epidemics and pandemics whenever they may arise. Challenges from communicable and non-communicable diseases also worsen Botswana's rising morbidity and mortality rates. Epidemics and pandemics create unprecedented health challenges that resource constrained countries like Botswana find difficult to cope with unaided. Notwithstanding the challenges, Botswana has a

successful record fighting HIV/AIDS and other health challenges. Lessons learnt in the fight against HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics will be accentuated to build a resilient rural healthcare system.

Strategic Actions

1. Improve healthcare coverage and access in the rural areas, in particular, by reducing distance to the nearest primary health facilities from five (5) kilometres to at most half the distance (2.5km).
2. Improve screening for non-communicable diseases in rural areas.
3. Improve means of transportation to enhance access to healthcare in rural areas.
4. Strengthen the preparedness of public agencies and private sector health providers for epidemics and pandemics through the establishment of standards and funding for building health capacity.
5. Improve core public health infrastructure, including for water and sanitation, in rural areas.
6. Embrace regional policy integration in the health sector to facilitate surge capacity during epidemics.
7. Adopt risk transfer mechanism such as risk pooling and sovereign-level catastrophe insurance.

PART C: TO ENSURE INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE RURAL ECONOMY THAT PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY AND THE INCLUSION OF ALL VULNERABLE GROUPS.

6.12 SOCIAL INCLUSION: GENDER AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Policy Statement

Vulnerable groups are prone to social exclusion much more than mainstream population groups. Social exclusion is involuntary and systemic, often a result of structural forces in society which include socioeconomic variables such as poverty and unemployment, harmful gender norms, ageism, and barriers to access available goods and services. Across the world, socially excluded population groups include women, youth, children, people with disabilities, the poor, ethnic minorities, and rural populations. In Botswana, gender disparities are among

the most entrenched forms of inequality which constitutes one of the greatest barriers to human development. Studies have confirmed that female headed households are disproportionately poorer and experience different challenges associated with poverty such as poor education, poor nutrition, poor housing, and inadequate childcare. Rural women are more often victims of gender-based violence (GBV), due to undesirable socio-cultural practices, which negatively affect their economic and mental wellbeing.

Strategic Actions

To address gender inequality and inequity, and effective inclusion of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and the youth, government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will take the following strategic actions.

1. Strengthen existing inclusion initiatives promoting gender equality and gender justice, meaningful involvement and participation of the youth and people with disability; and adopt a systemic mainstreaming approach as a foundational strategy for all rural development programmes, and activities.
2. Strengthen national structures for gender justice, including, but not exclusive to the Parliamentary Committee on Gender Based Violence, the Gender, and Child Protection Branch of Botswana Police Service, and the National Gender Commission.
3. Review current national policies on gender equality, disability, youth and ethnic minorities to ensure alignment with current requirements of affirmative action.
4. Develop innovative and transformative programmes to sensitize and engage community leadership (Bogosi) regarding the link between gender, development, and vulnerability.

6.13 YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Policy Statement

Rural youth are among the most disadvantaged of groups, often with limited economic opportunities to improve their quality of lives. Rural youth have limited access to education, and tend to drop out of school at an early age. Young rural women have even greater challenges than young men as they are not given similar opportunities in education, training, and involvement in rural development activities, based on community gender norms and practices⁶. As a result of these many challenges, rural youth experience high levels of unemployment,

⁶ Rural Youth Situation, Needs and Prospects - An overview with special emphasis on Africa - Part I: Current situation and needs of rural youth (fao.org)

marginalization, lack of appropriate resources, and poor-quality education relative to urban youth. Available research evidence suggests that Botswana has not adequately taken advantage of the demographic dividend presented by the youth in the rural areas. This Policy seeks to address this gap by creating economic opportunities for young people in the rural areas.

Strategic Actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders will:

1. Provide targeted training and skills development initiatives for the youth to enhance their ability to access the world of work, improve productivity, competitiveness, and their ability to own businesses.
2. Provide a range of courses that cater to various artisanal skills levels and interests to address the skills shortages in the national economy and rural areas in particular.
3. Ensure the issue of artisan development is a prominent aspect of the national skills development framework that is supported by all stakeholders especially employers and business partners.
4. Enhance capacity building efforts targeting sustainable livelihoods for young people in rural areas, including through:
 - a) Promoting rural youth involvement, visibility, participation, and contribution in all aspects of rural development. As well as promoting active involvement of rural youth in sports, arts and culture; and
 - b) Providing continuous public education on youth relevant issues such as sexual and reproductive health, alcohol, and substance abuse.
5. Expand affirmative action programmes, specially designed for rural youth in selected areas in which their regions have competitive advantage (such as tourism, agriculture, arts and culture products and services, as well as indigenous knowledge).

6.14 SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

Policy Statement

The Government has put in place several social protection programmes (SPPs) to safeguard the poor and most vulnerable groups from unpleasant life events, natural disasters, and associated aftershocks, and promote good quality life. However, significant challenges that negate these interventions and heighten risks in the implementation process have been

identified. These include systemic institutional challenges and undesirable work ethic, fragmentation, coordination issues, poor targeting, incomplete social registry, and inadequate coverage of programmes. In particular, poor targeting of SPPs has resulted in undesirable inclusion and exclusion errors which compromise service delivery to deserving beneficiaries, results in wasteful expenditure, and poor social protection outcomes. To guide and inform SPP interventions, Government developed the National Social Protection Framework (NSPF, 2020), which adopts a life course/cycle approach. This approach recognises the heterogeneity of the poor and most vulnerable as a group, recognising differences in their realities, risks and challenges. The NSPF is also alive to major social problems across population groups defined in the NSPF such as persistent poverty, unemployment, and income inequality, which give rise to social ills. If properly designed, SPPs can be useful in responding to societal ills in contemporary Botswana, which include escalating cases of; gender-based violence, rape, violent and intrusive crime, alcohol and drug abuse, child abuse and deprivations, as well as general moral decadence and unbecoming behaviour among the youth.

A combination of risks and challenges referred above undermines the primary role of social protection programmes to respond to expressed needs and aspirations of the poor and most vulnerable groups. To close the gap, the Draft National Policy on Poverty Eradication of 2019 identified multi-dimensional poverty approach as critical to poverty eradication. This approach resonates with the National Social Protection Framework (2020), and together they will provide context-specific interventions to protect the poor and most vulnerable against socioeconomic shocks, risks and vulnerabilities that may be experienced by the poor during implementation of this Policy. The guiding principle shall be social inclusion, social justice, equity, **botho**, anchored on the principles of "leave no one behind and shared prosperity" envisaged in the aspirations of both Vision 2036 and the National Transformation Strategy (NTS 2023 – 2030) as well as the SDGs 2030 Agenda SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10. A commitment and strict adherence to these principles has potential to shape existing SPPs and make them more effective with a view to prevent the emergence of new social ills and address the existing ones. In the context of the current social, fiscal, economic and political challenges facing contemporary Botswana, it is important to develop social protection interventions that are transformative, innovative, and cost-effective.

Strategic Actions

The Government in collaboration with other key stakeholders shall:

1. Adopt and facilitate implementation of the National Social Protection Framework (2021) that promotes a life course approach, to ensure that social protection interventions yield tangible results that improve quality of life of the poor and most vulnerable in society.
2. Fast track harmonisation of fragmented, and not-so-well targeted social protection programmes.
3. Put in place measures that promote participation of the poor and vulnerable people in decisions that directly affect their lives. The emphasis should be on promoting self-reliance, independence, and graduation from dependence on social protection programmes provided by the government to become self-reliant on own efforts.
4. Promote joint planning and decision making among Government entities for effective coordination and collaboration in the delivery of SPPs by employing the strategy of “Deliver as One.”
5. Improve targeting of beneficiaries as a strategy to enhance the effectiveness of Government interventions among affected population groups such as the poor, vulnerable, youth, women, and people with disabilities.
6. In view of declining financial resources, design social protection programmes with inbuilt strategies for graduation from such programmes as a way of ensuring those who cannot graduate are adequately covered by the programmes.

7 CAPACITY BUILDING

Policy Statement

Capacity building in rural development is essential, especially in today’s rapidly changing environment in the context of technological innovation, societal change, climate change, and changes in several other spheres of life that impact on the sustainable development of the rural economy. Capacity building involves the process of enhancing the performance of local governments, service organisations, and communities by ensuring they acquire necessary skills, have adequate personnel, and resources to stay relevant in a changing world. The capacity of public institutions to provide efficient and effective service delivery to rural

communities will be dependent on them being appropriately staffed, resourced, and skilled. Rural communities will also need to have the capacity to achieve their goals. The Government in collaboration with development partners and communities will take the following measures to ensure capacity building for rural development:

Strategic Actions

1. Ensure that frontline staff are adequately trained and provided with resources to effectively perform their tasks. Capacity building will include leadership succession planning in which the organisations' future needs will be explored and mapping a strategy to prepare existing staff or recruit new staff to fill leadership positions.
2. Strengthen community engagement to ensure maximisation of social and human capital. From this multifaceted approach leadership training will be provided to community leaders, and identify and groom future leaders to ensure there is a workforce pipeline for the communities.
3. Ensure rural communities have access to information and communication technologies that can be harnessed to serve them. The use of these technologies will be measured to assess their impact on the livelihoods of communities.
4. Disaster resilience is one of the areas for which capacity building will be necessary. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that during a disaster vulnerable populations such as the poor, elderly, people with disabilities, etc., suffer the most. Strategies will be developed to deal with natural and man-made disasters, pandemics, and cyberattacks to ensure that rural communities are resilient and can go through these with minimal adverse impact.

8 IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION STRUCTURES FOR THE POLICY

8.1 *ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION*

Rural development policy cuts across all sectors of government and the economy, and its success hinges on the capacity to effectively coordinate actors and harmonise the different and often overlapping and/or conflicting interests. Implementation of such a cross-sectoral policy involves multiple stakeholders. Role clarity is, therefore, crucial to ensuring cost-effective, coherent, and well-coordinated implementation process. However, coordination is often beset with challenges as the coordinating institution often has no powers to enforce their decisions. This Policy proffers a Commission, instead, to ensure compliance and accountability. Appropriate institutional structures must be established to steer rural development implementation process at both strategic and operational levels. The multi-sectoral structures will reflect multi-stakeholder interests, and concerns. They will ensure that all stakeholders participate and play their respective roles in the policy implementation process.

The main difference between a commission and a council is in how they execute their functions and exercise power. A council uses persuasion to coordinate other stakeholders while a commission is a special purpose body with legal authority to enforce decisions. These differences explain why the Rural Development Council found it challenging to mobilise stakeholders to perform their roles. Commissions undertake regulatory function, control and disburse funds, has its own staff, and execute projects as well. As a statutory body, for instance the Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana (IEC), a commission applies the law in the performance of its functions and its decisions are legally binding.

This section presents proposals for the institutional framework necessary for the implementation of the Rural Development Policy. The section presents three options of institutional arrangements, with Option 1 (see Appendix A) being the preferred model. The three options are presented in 8.1.1 as Options 1, 2, and 3:

8.1.1 AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Option 1: Rural Development Commission

The Rural Development Council will be transformed into the Rural Development Commission and will continue to be the authority responsible for advocacy and coordination of rural development in Botswana. To strengthen its performance, the agency will be a semi-autonomous entity reporting to the Vice President (see Appendix A). Among others, it will be responsible for the following functions:

- Identification of priorities for rural development.
- Integrate rural development into national development planning.
- Strategic leadership and guidance on rural development.
- Advising Cabinet on matters of rural development.
- Identify, mobilize, and engage key players.
- Mobilise resources in support of the implementation of the policy.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy.

The transition from a Department to an autonomous Commission is intended to bolster the agency's effectiveness. The Commission will have a maximum of 15 members (preferably seven members only). Membership will be voluntary and based on merit as compared to Ministerial or departmental representation. Key among the professions that should be central to its membership will include: i) rural development or public administration, ii) economics, iii) entrepreneurship, iv) gender, v) social protection, vi) public health, vii) physical planning, viii) community development, ix) agriculture, x) vocational education, xi) human resources development, xii) environment and climate change, xiii) information and communication technologies, xiv) housing, and xv) sports. The membership of the Commission shall earn a sitting allowance, and be limited to a maximum of two terms of five years each.

The Commission will be led by a chairperson appointed by the Vice President. The Secretary to the Commission will be its Chief Executive Officer and will be responsible for its day-to-day operations. The Commission will be facilitated by the Office of the Vice President. The Commission will delegate policy implementation functions to other public agencies, in particular local authorities, established local structures, as well as the key stakeholders. The delegated functions will be carried out within the framework of the Draft National Decentralisation Policy. The Ministry responsible for local government will facilitate and

coordinate the local authorities in carrying out their delegated functions under this Policy, while the determination of standards and other requirements will remain under the purview of the Commission.

While the attainment of the strategic actions outlined in this Policy are a priority to government, they will neither be realised near term, nor all at once. Many other processes, including legislation will need to be put in place first. Supporting this Policy is an Implementation Plan. In some instances, it will be necessary for laws, strategies, and processes to be put in place by Government and other stakeholders to develop appropriate reforms to facilitate the implementation of this Policy. Such measures will include mobilizing and availing adequate (financial, human, legal, technological, and political) resources, putting in place strong implementation structures, and a robust system for monitoring implementation. It is important to appreciate that the roadmap should be aligned to the national roadmaps for the realisation of Vision 2036 and the SDGs, so harmonisation of the specific rural development initiatives with relevant targets under Vision 2036 and the SDGs will be critical aspect of the rural development process.

The advantage of this model is that membership will be based on merit and is voluntary. That should attract motivated and suitably qualified individuals who have the urge to contribute to the development of their country. Open competition for membership will ensure the best fit for the task, and promote a cross-section of society to be represented in the membership. The structure will also allow for the Commission to operate with some level of autonomy in decision making. Operational autonomy will obviate the challenge of bureaucratic challenges associated with the civil service and promote efficiency in decision making. This model strengthens oversight and accountability, and separates strategic leadership and oversight from operations. Oversight lies with the Office of the Vice President, while strategic leadership lies with the Commission, and operational responsibility lies with the agencies charged with the implementation of the policy. The Commission holds the policy implementers accountable for their responsibilities, and it reports to the Office of the Vice President. The latter and Cabinet provide strategic leadership while the rest of the public service is responsible for policy implementation. This structure boasts clarity of roles and is the preferred option.

Option 2: Rural Development Commission (Central Government Controlled)

In this option the RDC will comprise of institutional memberships from key ministries and sectors, including renowned individuals with expertise in rural development and disciplines relevant to the mandate of the Commission. RDC membership will be aligned to NDPs in a relevant plan period so that the Policy is aligned to the priorities of government for the same plan period. The membership of the RDC will be composed of a maximum of 15 members. The Commission will be chaired by the Vice President (see Appendix B) and will consist of the ministries responsible for:

1. Social protection and community development;
2. Education, (Department of research, science and technology);
3. Health;
4. Entrepreneurship;
5. Infrastructure and communications;
6. Land and Agriculture;
7. Environment and Tourism;
8. Youth, gender, culture, and sport;
9. Labour and employment, and;
10. National Planning Commission.

Other members, one each, will be drawn from:

1. Private sector
2. Non-governmental organisations
3. Community based organisations
4. Research institutes.
5. A renowned or experienced individual, scholar, or researcher on matters of rural development.

Other government ministries and departments shall support the RDC through ministerial/departmental reports. The status of the office of the Secretary of the RDC shall be elevated to the level of Deputy Permanent Secretary to the President. Alternatively, the position should be merged with the Permanent Secretary to the Vice President, to afford the office the authority and the respect it deserves particularly as it serves the second highest office in the land.

The advantage of this mode is that the membership is aligned with specific areas that directly impact the lives of rural populations. The non-state actors and the private sector are also involved. The disadvantage with this model is that membership is largely constituted of public sector representatives. This leaves the burden of rural development in the hands of Government alone, with limited roles from the private sector and non-state actors. The other challenge is with the overlaps in roles and functions as shown in Appendix B.

Option 3: Maintain the Status Quo

The third option is to maintain the status quo, and not change the institutional representation based membership. The main advantage with this model is that it is well-known and understood by most stakeholders, and it has served the test of time. However, one of its undoing is the sheer size of membership that is cumbersome and unwieldy. The Council has lost its strategic leadership role and fails to hold policy implementers accountable and instead has resorted to undertaking significant operational functions. In its current form the RDC cannot efficiently and effectively address today's rural development challenges. This option is the least preferred as nothing will change from doing the same thing the same way.

8.2 PUBLIC SECTOR INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

8.2.1 MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry responsible for rural development shall take the lead role in providing strategic leadership and political support to the implementation of this Policy. It will be responsible for formulating Cabinet Memoranda on issues emanating from the policy implementation and advising relevant stakeholders on strategies, structures, processes, and resources for rural development policy implementation. The key tasks are:

- i) Collaborate with the Ministry of Finance, the Rural Development Commission, and the National Planning Commission to ensure that rural development projects are adequately planned for and funded.
- ii) Facilitate the buy-in of other government ministries, the private sector, development partners, and nongovernmental organisations in generating awareness and support for rural development.
- iii) Collaborate with the NPC, Statistics Botswana, RDC, and research and academic institutions in generating evidence to support evidence-based decision-making for rural development.

8.2.2 LOCAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND STRUCTURES

Local level institutions will be empowered to support and strengthen rural development initiatives and enhance the participation of local communities in planning, and implementation of rural development initiatives. These include:

- Local Authorities (cities, Towns and District Councils);
- Land Boards.
- Office of the District Commissioner.
- Tribal Administration and Bogosi;
- District Development Committees (DDCs, DETs, VETs,), and.
- Village Development Committees (VDCs).

The Office of the District Commissioner, Council Secretary, Bogosi, Land Board Secretary, VDCs, DDCs, and local political leadership will work together to identify appropriate modalities, to enhance service delivery measures for strengthened rural development.

8.2.3 MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

Government ministries, departments, and public agencies will play the key role of implementing rural development programmes and projects in line with their mandates. However, the private sector, international development partners and other NSAs will naturally play various roles in the implementation of the Policy. Their respective roles are discussed below:

8.3 *THE PRIVATE SECTOR*

The role of the private sector in rural development encompasses job creation, economic growth, capacity building, technology transfer, and attracting investment to rural areas. Through public-private partnerships, the private sector will be an important instrument for gap-filling local government capacity and improving efficiency in service delivery and infrastructure development. PPPs are also involved in community management of wildlife reserves, hospitality, and tourism projects in various parts of Botswana.

Business Botswana and other professional associations will play a pivotal role in mobilizing its members for the effective implementation of the rural development policy, and LED, both of which are critical to facilitate economic diversification which has eluded the government for many years.

8.4 DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Bilateral and multilateral development institutions are critical in mobilizing resources, funding, technical, and diplomatic resources necessary for rural development. These institutions will be key in rural development through investment and economic development, cultural exchange and social development, education, technology, and human resources development, protection of environment and climate change resilience building, and good governance and accountability.

8.5 NON-STATE ACTORS

Government recognises the key role non-state actors (NSA) play in rural development. Through this policy, the role of NSAs in rural development will be enhanced through developing appropriate mechanisms for mobilising NSAs for implementation and appropriate structures and incentives. Whereas the role of NSAs in policy implementation and governance has been minimal, government proposes to take advantage of the capacities of NSAs in the following ways:

- Restructuring existing platforms to create space for NSAs.
- Establishing financing modalities for CSOs.
- Widening the scope of PPPs, and other appropriate platforms for NSAs.
- Engaging with NSA coordinating umbrellas or platforms to mobilise, proactively engage, and work with NSAs in policy implementation.

These include umbrella coordination platforms for churches and other religious organisations, associations of local government authorities, tribal land authorities, women and youth platforms, cooperatives, and other civil society and community-based networks.

8.6 THE MEDIA

The media play an important role of social change in rural development. Mass media, which includes newspapers, radio, television, and internet can play a pivotal role in rural development by disseminating information, promoting education, and creating awareness among rural communities. Social media is growing in popularity among both the young and old alike in

urban and rural areas. It is known to promote social innovation as it enables remote communication. Government will engage the media proactively to ensure that it plays its role in educating the population and popularising rural development.

9 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Given Botswana's longstanding challenges with effective implementation, this Policy will be anchored on a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to promote the use of evidence in planning and decision making. The M&E framework attached to this policy also has a Risk Matrix that diagnoses the likely key implementation risks, and their mitigation measures. The Implementation Plan on the other hand will identify the performance indicators, measures and assure accountability.

The National Monitoring and Evaluation System (NMES) provides an M&E framework that measures performance during the implementation of this Policy. Key agencies such as the NPC and Statistics Botswana will play critical roles in the application of the NMES and ensuring that the development indicators in rural areas are effectively measured and the performance and contribution of the rural economy, and individual settlements or regions, to total gross domestic product (GDP) is known and appropriately acknowledged. However, NMES has not been effectively implemented leading to a lack of an operational comprehensive M&E framework. This means that government and other role players lack capacity to enforce accountability for financial, and other performance indicators. This will ensure a comprehensive approach to rural development and assure the optimal achievement of rural development targets. Government will ensure that the policy is regularly monitored and evaluated, and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and focused.

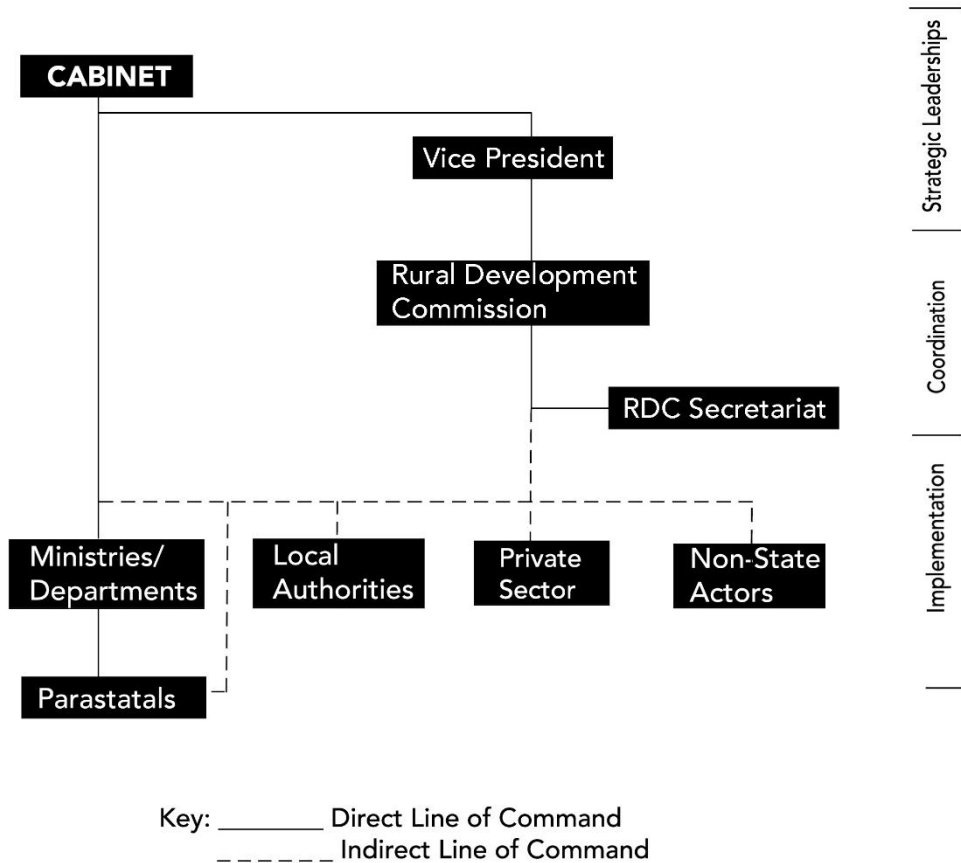
Strategic Actions

1. Design a standardised monitoring and evaluation framework for rural development.
2. Consolidate and promote a culture of results-based policy in rural development.
3. Align rural development monitoring and evaluation system with NMES.
4. Define institutional arrangements and role clarity in rural development.

5. Build institutional capacity for the collection of administrative data critical for rural development.
6. Build and capacitate an M&E Unit within the RDC for results-based M&E system.
7. This Policy will be in force for 10 years during which it will be reviewed mid-term in the fifth year of its implementation. A final evaluation will be carried out at the end of its lifespan to assess its impact on rural development.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PROPOSED RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION 1



APPENDIX B: PROPOSED RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION 2

