

Botswana: Indigenous Institutions, Civil Society and Government in Peace Building in Southern Africa

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Abstract

The challenge of peace building in Southern Africa is how to blend traditional practices and modern liberal methods of peace building into sustainable peace. This requires the involvement and collaboration of indigenous institutions, civil society, government and the international community. The call for a prominent role for traditional institutions and civil society in peace building does not ignore the problems associated with traditional cultures, norms and institutions; and reflects the need to make indigenous institutions and civil society relevant and applicable to contemporary peace building efforts. It is the positive elements of culture and civil society as facilitators, enforcers, and instruments for conflict resolution and prevention, peace building and promotion of democracy and development that are emphasized. Botswana is discussed to illustrate how it uses three main mechanisms, namely, indigenous norms and institutions of the Tswana traditional culture, institutions of chieftaincy and Kgotla (village assembly); modern democratic institutions such as civil society and the judiciary; and socio-economic development for conflict resolution and prevention, and governance. Botswana's use of indigenous institutions, civil society and government structures as the bases for negotiations and adjudication in peace building serves as a learning experience for other countries to emulate.

1. Introduction

One of the challenges faced by Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is peace building. Currently, the Southern Africa region is the most stable in SSA. However, it faces potential conflict, which if not contained could pose enormous problems. The recurrence of conflicts makes conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building and development imperative for sustainable peace and development. This calls for the development of a culture of peace in the region. Although Botswana has never experienced violent conflicts, it may provide useful lessons for other Southern African countries to emulate in their endeavor for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace building. Even post-conflict states and those that continue to experience conflict and wars including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Angola, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Zimbabwe, can benefit from Botswana's experience.

The paper, therefore, discusses the basis of a comprehensive mechanism for peace building that allows for a link between conflict prevention and peacemaking; and partnership among traditional institutions, civil society (both local and international), and government. It advocates for participation of traditional institutions and local civil society, to work with respective governments and international organizations in promoting conflict resolution, development and democracy, essential parts of peace building. Towards this end, the paper starts with explanations of the sources of conflict; peace; peace building; and debates on methods. It then examines the cornerstone of the peace building in Botswana by focusing on three interrelated factors, namely, indigenous cultural norms and institutions, such as dialogue, chiefs and Kgotla; modern democratic institutions (civil society and judiciary); and socio-economic development.

2. Conflict, peace and peace building

2.1. Sources of conflict

In order to foster conflict resolution and prevention, and peace building, the causes of conflict have to be examined. Conflict defined as disharmony or contending interests or goals, or absence of peace (De Coning & Henderson, 2008; Galtung, 1990). There are many sources of tensions and conflicts that threaten peaceful relations within and between groups in society and between states in the region. These could be actual or potential, personal or structural. Increasingly, conflicts within states of the region involve competition for scarce resources including land, and oftentimes, conflicts are articulated in terms of ethnicity and gender. Poverty, economic inequality, and deprivation, which often mirror ethnic and gender divisions are the prime causes of conflict and war. These make distributive justice and economic equality as the most sustainable solution to conflicts in the southern African region (Galtung, 1990), hence the need for socio-economic development. Also, multiparty elections have often undermined democratization by festering electoral disputes some of which have resulted in violence and power sharing inimical to consolidation of democracy, conflict prevention and peacemaking.

2.2. Understanding peace

All states seek peace because it is a necessary condition for democracy, development and a good and happy life. It also signifies the level of development. Attainment of peace remains elusive as threats, violence, and wars recur in the region in spite of strenuous efforts by states, individually and collectively at national, regional and international levels to build peace. Peace is a contested concept with no one meaning and usage. Galtung (1990) defines peace as absence of structural violence with no underprivileged suffering from economic inequality, exploitation and poverty. Feminists conceptualize peace as a condition of justice, economic equality for all, especially between men and women and ecological balance (Reardon, 1990).

2.3. Towards comprehensive peace building

Peace building gained prominence in the post-Cold War era with the publication by the former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, of the report called 'An Agenda for Peace' in 1992. Peace building includes conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction to achieve sustainable peace (Agenda for Peace, 1992). Thus, peace building activities which are directed at managing change and undertaking development to respond to economic and social needs of the people are emphasized (De Coning, 2007). Grassroots organizations are seen as essential in this respect. Similarly, enhancing democratic governance and resolving the structural causes of violence are essential to successful peace building (Agenda for Peace, 1992; CCR & EISA, 2005). Peace building is a complex process that requires involvement of a diversity of participants, both local and international, in a collaborative and coordinated manner for effective outcomes. This is where traditional institutions

and civil society are critical in working with governments and international agencies to build peace and prevent conflicts, and to help in the reconstruction efforts of (post) conflict societies.

Peace building initiatives have taken place within the context of the liberal framework of democracy and market-oriented development with a predominant role for international development agencies and international non-governmental or civil society organizations. Whereas their efforts have contributed enormously to enhancing peace in the region, there is need to strengthen the process. One way to do this is through the incorporation of indigenous processes into modern methods of peace building. The debate that arises relates to the relevance and application of traditional methods of conflict resolution and prevention to contemporary conflicts.

In the search for mechanisms for conflict resolution and prevention, peace building and development, culture has acquired importance as another tool, especially indigenous culture. Increasingly, the call has been to build a culture of peace, as espoused by UNESCO's Culture of Peace Programme as part of the drive of the United Nation's Agenda for Peace. Essentially, the goals of peace building are not only conflict prevention but to "lay the foundations for social justice and sustainable peace and development" (De Coning, 2007: 48). This is exactly what Botswana strives to achieve. Indigenous culture is conceived as traditional norms, practices and institutions around which society's expectations converge (Fry and Bjorkqvist, 1997), which have not been exported from elsewhere. It is the positive elements of culture that should be identified, and their relevance and applicability to contemporary conflict resolution determined and emphasized.

The call for a prominent role for traditional institutions and civil society in peace building does not ignore the problems associated with traditional cultures, norms and institutions; and civil society. Traditional culture and institutions have their own disadvantages. Traditional methods of conflict resolution and prevention are localized and particularistic rather than universal. This is in spite of commonalities or similarities among neighboring countries, such as ubuntu (humanity) among the Bantu of Southern Africa. There has also been political manipulation of traditional practices by almost all African leaders as they have used ethnic differences and conflicts, and traditional institutions and practices for their own economic and political benefit to the detriment of peace and development (Osei-Hwedie & Abu-Nimer, 2009; Osaghae, 2000). Similarly, patriarchy, associated with chieftaincy and the general structure of the society encourages discrimination against women and the youth, and thus, does not facilitate conflict prevention, peacemaking and democracy. It leads to tension between indigenous mechanisms of peace building with emphasis on the collective, and the liberal peace method (Hagg & Kangwanja, 2007) that stresses human rights and social justice.

However, there are a number of factors that necessitate the use of traditional methods. For example, experiences from post-conflict countries, such as Mozambique, point to "the need to recognize the significance of indigenous peace building methods ... and integrating indigenous peace building methods with mainstream peace building practices on the continent" (CCR & EISA, 2005: 10). It is further asserted that "Traditional authorities ... have played a central role in governance and conflict resolutions issues and sometimes remain the custodians of most principles and cultural values in African societies" (CCR, 2008: 9). The most important traditional factors relate to the use of reconciliation and expediency in resolving 'day to day' conflicts which guarantee the stability needed for prevention or resolution of national or serious ones (Osaghae, 2000).

Therefore, the positive elements of African cultures should be encouraged such as dialogue and the institution of chiefs and village assemblies that have made important contributions to conflict resolution and prevention, peacemaking, development and democracy. The argument for a role for cultural values and institutions, especially dialogue, chieftaincy and public meetings in peace building activities, emanates from the predominance of Western culture and institutions in African affairs that have resulted in the relegation and obliteration of indigenous knowledge and institutions in many African countries. This is despite the fact that chiefs, for example, have very important roles in peace building (CCR, 2008). Generally the use of Western ideas and institutions, especially liberal peace has not led to

desired results and at best is partially successful.

Civil society, conceptualized as “the space for cultivating processes through which citizens engage in public life by channeling their interests and aspirations through peaceful deliberative processes” (Kotter, 2007: 47), contributes equally to peace building. Unfortunately, civil society organizations’ (CSOs) independence from governments, dependence on donor, and ‘perceived hidden’ agendas, have created suspicions, tensions, and mistrust with states. Nevertheless, the role of civil society is equally significant in peace building in terms of articulating and aggregating the socio-economic needs of aggrieved and marginalized groups, delivering services to the people, enhancing democracy as mediators and checks on the government’s power to ensure accountability, augmenting the capacity of the government (Osei-Hwedie, 2008), and as mediators in conflicts between chiefs and government or between opposition parties.

With specific reference to post-conflict societies, CSOs have been vital in dealing with community-based trauma; demobilization of ex-combatants; demining; and proliferation of small arms and light weapons (CCR & EISA, 2005). In Southern Africa, the role of civil society in peace and human security is emphasized. For example, community based organizations have been identified as important to conflict prevention and peace building due to linkages with local communities; women’s NGOs in advocating for human rights and participation of women in peace building discourse; and regional CSOs such as SADC-CNGO in promoting regional human security and ‘people-people’ linkages across member states of Southern African region. It is rightly observed that “peace building role of civil society in Southern Africa is dominated by the promotion of peaceful participatory processes that allow citizens to pursue common interests and aspirations in the public arena” (CCR & EISA, 2005: 13).

Chieftaincy and CSOs are two institutions that are very close to the grassroots. This makes them important tools for mobilizing the people for peace building projects and activities. Traditional institutions and civil society are significant in strengthening local participation, and in promoting “local ownership of the peace building process” (CCR, 2008:16) for sustainable peace. Local ownership promotes the idea of people working for their own peace, and creates a situation whereby they would value the peace more than when someone obtains it on their behalf. It also helps move the processes away from over reliance on Western experts, and instead paves the way for collaborative partnership between Western experts and local institutions. It also promotes the appreciation of the cultural contexts within which peace and development take place. In the same vein, it facilitates a clear understanding of what development means within a cultural context; the nature of culturally defined roles; and culturally accepted peace building institutions. What comes out clearly, however, is that the government has to provide a conducive environment within which all peace actors can work. It is important for the government to be politically committed to peace building to ensure success.

3. Botswana and peace building

As a long-standing and stable democracy and a middle-income country, Botswana seemingly has the right conditions to nurture peace. However, the country is not free from challenges, which threaten peace and national unity. These include, among others, appropriateness of the electoral system, particularly the indirect election of the President and calls for proportional representation by opposition political parties and civil society; unemployment rate that stood at 17 percent in 2006; poverty which was estimated at 30 percent in 2004 (Central Statistics Office, 2007, 2004); and sub national ethnic claims. Nevertheless, Botswana continues to nurture a culture of peace that has prevented conflict from escalating into violence and allows for peacemaking. Peace building in Botswana is attained through three intertwined mechanisms: traditional culture and institution, especially dialogue, chieftaincy and the Kgotla; democratic culture and institutions, with a prominent role of the Court as an independent source of the rule of law and civil society as champions of human rights, largely unconstrained by the government; and welfare provision through sustained socio-economic development. These three mechanisms, either singly or combined, have been used to address some

of the above mentioned challenges thereby transforming potentially conflict situation and preventing escalation into violent confrontation. They have also contributed to the consolidation of democracy and promotion of development.

3.1. Indigenous institutions and peace building in Botswana

A brief on Botswana social structure is essential to provide the context of indigenous institutions of cultural groups. In this paper, the terms tribe and ethnic group are used loosely and interchangeably, mainly because of the fact that within each tribe there are many ethnic groups. Lack of census data on tribe or ethnicity has given rise to controversy surrounding the numbers of each tribe. Usually, tribes in Botswana are classified into two groups, Tswana and non-Tswana because the non-Tswana are numerous and cannot be neatly categorized. However, the Kalanga constitutes a large proportion of the non-Tswana. The non-Tswana are mainly the different ethnic groups in the North West; the Basarwa; and the Bakgalagadi in the Western areas. Another classification identifies four ethnic groups, the Tswana, Kalanga, Basarwa and Kgalagadi in Botswana. The Tswana, “distributed among eight tribes”, are seen as the “most famous and important” and previously referred to as “Principal Tribes” in the national constitution. The constitution has since been amended to accord equal status to all ethnic groups. The Tswana are also viewed as the ‘majority’ in terms of being the traditional ruling class and not because of the size or number. Thus, the term majority has connotations of power and privilege. It has the largest ethnic group consisting of 79 percent of the total population. The second is the Kalanga with 11 percent of the total population. The Basarwa ethnic group makes up 3 percent of the population, while Kgalagadi (Yei, Ovaherero and Subiya) account for the remainder. These non-Tswana are considered ‘minority’ tribes because they did not hold traditional power. The 2001 Population and Housing Census based on language of citizens showed that 72.2 percent spoke Setswana, 7.9 percent Ikalanga, and the remainder are Sekgalagadi and San (The Institute for Security Studies, 2009: 1). The eight Tswana tribes share a common language, Setswana, and cultures and history different from non-Tswana ethnic groups including Kalanga and Basarwa (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008). Traditionally, the Tswana ruled over the non-Tswana, through which they learned the Tswana culture, language and adopted the Kgotla system.

The domination of the Tswana tribes over other ethnic groups is as a result of fact that the chiefs of the eight Tswana tribes were accorded the paramount chiefs status in the Constitution and the House of Chief while the status of chiefs, a lower rank, was accorded to other tribes. Most important, their dominance also arises from the fact that Setswana, the language of the Tswana tribes, is the national language, which is firmly entrenched and accepted by the other tribes. Setswana as the national language has promoted national unity by enabling a large number of people to speak one language. However since the late 1990s, there has been increased agitation by ‘minority’ tribes through cultural or ethnic associations for recognition as equals to the Tswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008), while the Tswana have also formed an association of their own. The Court of law has served as another arena for championing tribal equality. With the amendment of the Constitution, every ethnic group chooses its chiefs, including the Basarwa, for example, in New Xade settlement. Basarwa have their own Kgotla, which works well among the settled population, not for those who continue to lead their traditional nomadic life.

Traditional culture and institutions of the predominant group, the Tswana speaking group, form the backbone for building and sustaining peace in Botswana. This shows how traditions play positive roles, and give important lessons to other African states. In many African countries, culture has been a source of conflict rather than the foundation of conflict prevention and resolution. In Botswana, however, the Tswana culture and traditions have been instrumental in prevention and resolution of conflict, hence the peace enjoyed by Batswana. Culture has also contributed to the promotion of democracy and development as well as consolidating national identity and unity in Botswana.

The Tswana cultural values, and institution of chiefs (Kgosi) and the Kgotla (village assembly) have been instrumental in conflict resolution and prevention in Botswana thereby contributing to national identity, unity, stability

and peace. Temane (1995: 10) argues that “Batswana are traditionally a very peaceful people” as their social behavior is conditioned by their culture. Indeed, Setswana is rich with sayings or proverbs that show that peace is inherent in Setswana culture – proverbs that signify the causal link between culture and peace building. Examples of proverbs that embody the peaceful nature of Setswana culture include ‘Ntwakgolo ke ya molomo’ meaning that the biggest war is that of words’ or ‘Goo-boi ga go lelwe’ meaning that whoever is afraid to provoke others does not get hurt (Temane, 1995: 10). Moreover, peace is sustained by the fact that Setswana culture emphasizes dialogue and negotiation to reach compromise as opposed to winner take all, confrontation or violence, as a means of conflict resolution and prevention. Holm (1988: 196) adds that “The culture of the Tswana seems to be antithetical to physical violence than many others in Africa” (Holm, 1988: 196). Alverson (quoted in Holm, 1988:196) notes that

... Botswana place [s] a particularly high value on peaceful social relations. They commemorate the virtues of propriety, tranquility, and a peaceful approach to societal relations. The peacemaker, the wise man of words, and the conciliator are as likely candidates for herodom ...”.

Moreover, the traditional Tswana culture stresses Botho (humanity) that demands respect and compassion for fellow human beings, which shapes individual’s attitudes towards others thereby facilitating mutual social relations.

The chief is the custodian of the Tswana culture, rules over his tribe, and convenes and presides over the Kgotla as an arena for spearheading peace. The Chief (Kgosi) is the leader of tribal administration whose appointment, ratification, suspension and dismissal is done by the Kgotla. This provision necessitates, by tradition, that Chiefs be accountable to their ethnic groups. Chiefs, as traditional authorities, are expected to be responsible, accountable and transparent to ensure that people’s wishes are taken into account and their interests promoted. Hence, the saying that “khosi ke khosi ka batho” (a chief is a chief by the grace of the people). Therefore, a chief exercises traditional authority after consultation with his tribe (Sharma, 2008: 14). The Kgotla, literally translated as ‘a place for community discussion’, in short, village assembly, serves as a public assembly and a court system. As a public assembly, the Kgotla is a central decision making organ at the village level through which chiefs engages in consultation with their adult subjects, on any matter affecting the village, and undertake planning for community development. This illustrates that public debate is the norm of public policy making, a hallmark of the democratic nature of the traditional Tswana institution, which continues into contemporary political system, albeit in a modified form as explained below.

Once the Kgotla has deliberated on problems and issues and formulated a plan, the proposed plan is forwarded to the Village Development Committee (VDC) (Osei-Hwedie & Osei-Hwedie, 2001). As a (traditional) court system, the Kgotla allows the community to participate in adjudicating civil disputes and criminal cases and arrive at appropriate decisions or judgments through consensus (Ngcongco, 1989; Osaghae, 2000). Thus, the Kgotla supplements and eases the burden of the modern court system by handling 80 percent of criminal cases and 90 percent of civil cases in Botswana. The fact that the customary courts are popular in rural areas, and are fast, accessible and comprehensible to ordinary citizens (Sharma, 2008) confers legitimacy on, and acceptance of, settlement of disputes. Punishment, compensation and reconciliation are used for conflict resolution and prevention. These demonstrate that the Chiefs foster a sense of belonging among the tribal community, promote tribe’s welfare, and metes out discipline thereby contributing to peace and stability.

3.2. Contemporary means: democratic culture and institutions

Democracy is vital to promotion and enhancing prospects for peace, especially in terms of creating a conducive environment for participation of CSOs, respect for human rights and rule of law, all elements of good governance. More so if it is home grown and not exported from outside. In Botswana, the traditional Tswana culture is the cornerstone of

peace building and democracy because “traditional Tswana values of public discussion, community consensus, non-violence and moderation are critical elements of a democratic political culture” (Holm, 1988: 196). Holm (1988:196) adds that “Tswana political culture does not support extremist organizations”. Therefore, the traditional Tswana political culture discussed above blends well with the modern democratic culture.

Botswana’s national principles seem to mirror local traditional, and many other African cultures. Botswana’s development plans are guided by four national principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity to promote social harmony (*kagisano*). However, there is a fifth principle, *Botho* (humane behaviour), which seeks to mould every citizen into ‘well rounded, well mannered, courteous and disciplined ... a compassionate, just and caring’ person by 2016 (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 8, 20). *Botho*, is not only germane to Botswana but also to other African cultures, primarily of the Bantu speaking groups of Eastern and Central Africa, with the philosophy of Bantu, and Southern Africa with *Ubuntu* (Molomo, 2009). Common principles of *Botho*, Bantu and *Ubuntu* are trust, sharing, harmony, collectivity, and popular participation, among others. Therefore, these provide a common practice for conflict resolution and democratic governance in traditional African society, which is being resuscitated by politicians, academics and activists to apply to contemporary Africa (Osaghae, 2000). Since 2008, the four Ds, democracy, development, dignity and discipline, have modified and expanded the principles guiding Botswana. Therefore, although Botswana’s democracy respects individual rights as stipulated in the Constitution, it also emphasizes individual obligations and regard for the dignity of others, the collective (Republic of Botswana, 2008).

The main features of Botswana’s parliamentary democracy, which are an extension of traditional Tswana political culture, include representation, participation, consultation and accountability. This helps to explain how Botswana’s system of democracy promotes unity and is sensitive to people’s needs leading to stability and peace. Botswana’s democracy is a complex mixture of traditional and modern liberal elements manifested in the form of leadership succession, especially the Presidency; consultation, especially through the *Kgotla* and constituencies by members of parliament MPs; and retention of traditional institutions of chieftaincy. The chieftaincy, which is closely linked to the institution of the *Kgotla*, is an indispensable resource in social development through which the masses could be engaged in decision making at the village level. In this way, the government of Botswana allows popular participation by its citizens in development decision-making that contributes to successful implementation (Osei-Hwedie & Osei-Hwedie, 2001).

The importance of the *Kgotla* is underscored further through its use by the modern leadership in Botswana. This makes the *Kgotla* a very significant communication link between the government and the people. Political leaders, such as MPs, cabinet ministers, and President; and civil servants utilize the *Kgotla* to consult the populace on national issues, gauge their wants and needs. The *Kgotla* is also used to discuss all new policies before adoption and implementation to secure consensus, as well as explain government policies and programmes to the people. Holm (1988: 195) confirms that politicians and civil servants discuss all new policies with people in the *Kgotla* before adoption and implementation to secure “consensus behind their proposals”, and if no consensus is reached then “the program is likely to be reformulated or terminated”. Therefore, consultation, a central feature of Botswana’s democracy, promotes transparency. It is an attempt to reflect the will of the electorate to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, and is an extension of public decision making of the *Kgotla*. Consultation is not only in *Kgotla* meetings, but also through referendums, commissions of inquiry and MPs’ visits to their constituencies.

A factor worth highlighting is the way Botswana “has successfully worked towards harmonizing relationships between traditional and modern structures” (CCR, 2008: 24) as part of sustaining peace. The government of Botswana retained the traditional institution of chieftainship because of the recognition of the fact that “people in rural areas continue to have respect for, and faith in, traditional structures” (Sharma, 2008: 5). In contrast, FRELIMO in Mozambique pushed chiefs into oblivion at its own peril by abolishing them after independence, which contributed

to the long, drawn out war between FRELIMO and RENAMO. Botswana's constitution recognizes the institution of chieftaincy. As in South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, chiefs retain a lot of respect from the people and government, in spite of losing much of their traditional power.

Chiefs became civil servants with conditions of service, and integrated into the modern administrative system through numerous Parliamentary Acts (CCR, 2008; Sharma, 2008). This has enabled the government to work with traditional leaders in fostering community development, as chiefs are responsible for promoting the welfare of their tribes; participate in, and cooperate with, local government organs such as VDCs and District Development Committees; and is subordinated to the Minister of Local Government. The House of Chiefs is the second chamber of parliament with an authoritative advisory role on customary law, tribal matters and other national matters (Sharma, 2008). The government has also modernized and expanded the institution of chiefs by promoting gender balance in the appointment of chiefs, and in the composition as well as ethnic representation of the House of Chiefs. Such efforts at gender representation are expected to lead to increased participation of women. There are currently three females in the House of Chiefs, which has expanded from 15 to 37 after the Constitutional changes (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2008: 2).

The accommodating, tolerant and inclusive nature of Botswana's democratic political culture further enhances promotion of peace in numerous ways. In addition to the House of Chiefs as the second chamber of parliament, there is a high degree of tolerance of the political opposition. Botswana avoided the adoption of one party system and has no history of political prisoners, which is very different from what obtains in other African countries. Freedom of association has been demonstrated by the ease with which opposition political parties are created and mushroom, about 13 for a population of 1.8 million. Molomo (2000:6) observes candidly that "Botswana [has] developed into a true multi-party democracy with a comparatively tolerant political culture that allowed for the existence of political parties of all shades". Furthermore, the high degree of tolerance is shown through consultations between the ruling and opposition parties through the All Party Conference, and the willingness of the ruling party to adopt suggestions by the opposition. These include reduction of the voting age from 21 to 18 years, creation of the Independent Electoral Commission, and provision for external voting for Botswana resident outside, all proposed by the opposition Botswana National Front. Such a stance has enabled the government to be pro-active and acquire legitimacy.

Furthermore, the mushrooming of CSOs signifies the existence of a tolerant and accommodating government. CSOs are another mechanism for conflict resolution as they are the conveyors of the people's interests to the authorities and watchdogs over the government, thereby contributing to good governance. Although CSOs are generally relatively weak, they have managed to get concessions from the government. A free press, especially the private one, has contributed to peace as active watchdog of the government's performance and by prompting the government to take corrective measures when necessary. Increasingly, the private press has been instrumental in publicizing corrupt practices, human rights violations of ethnic minorities and women in general, and financial mismanagement.

The accommodating nature of the system that has contributed to peace building is also manifested through the inclusion of former military personnel in parliament. Most significant, on 1st April 2008, Lieutenant General Khama, former Chief of the Botswana army, Paramount Chief of the biggest ethnic group in the country, the Bangwato, Chair of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and the first born son of Botswana's first President, the late Sir Seretse Khama, became the fourth President of Botswana. His ascendancy to highest office of the land is a result of the rules of succession, which are similar to those obtaining under the traditional Tswana political system - indirect election of the top leadership by elected members of parliament rather than direct election, and automatic succession of the Vice President to the Presidency (Maundeni, 2005). All these are stipulated in the Constitution. The smooth transition of the Presidency since independence, from Sir Seretse Khama to Sir Ketumile Masire to Festus Mogae and now to Lieutenant General Khama, is a major source of peace and stability, not common in Africa. The government has also used specially elected members of parliament (by the President as stipulated in the Constitution), and nominated councilors, by the

Minister of Local Government (per Local Government Act), to broaden representation to include sections of society which might have been sidelined, marginalized or performed poorly in general elections, such as women.

Critical to peace building is the way the government has handled and resolved emerging conflicts in society, which demonstrates ability to deal with changing circumstances. Tensions relating to ethnicity, land and gender, which are also human rights issues and highly sensitive, are given to illustrate how Botswana approaches peace building through the engagement of the Court and CSOs, both local and international. Primarily, gender based CSOs are very active in championing human rights in Botswana. The distinction between majority and minority tribes has been a source of simmering tension. One source of tension was the stipulation in the Constitution, especially Section 78, which mentioned only chiefs of the eight tribes, all Tswana speaking, as paramount chiefs entitled to sit in the House of Chiefs as ex-officio members. Sub-Chiefs of other tribes were elected members of the House of Chiefs (Republic of Botswana, 2002; Sharma, 2008). Second is the status of Setswana as the national or official language, and its use in schools at the exclusion of other languages.

When confronted by minority ethnic groups' agitation against the dominance of Tswana speaking tribes, and lack of representation and discrimination in the House of Chiefs, and for recognition of their own chiefs, the Botswana government appeased them and accommodated their demands by repealing and/or amending Sections 77, 78 and 79 of the Constitution. The amendment paved the way for minority tribes to sit their own chiefs in the House of Chiefs, thereby curtailed ethnic sub nationalism by the aggrieved tribes. Demands by minority tribes and the resultant friction between ethnic rights and nationalism and modern citizenship prompted the creation of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry which carried out country-wide consultation on the constitutional provisions in 60 Kgotla meetings, and through oral and written submission. The Commission recommended the repeal and/or amendment of the Constitution to avoid discriminate against any tribe and ensure representation of every citizen based on territory, not tribe (Republic of Botswana, 2002). The Commission, like others before it, served as a means to reconcile different viewpoints on Constitutional provisions to arrive at an acceptable position that maintains national unity and peace. This serves to illustrate the importance of preferring to resolve differences within the democratic set up through dialogue, negotiation and compromise. The demand for equal recognition and representation, and the right to have their mother tongue taught in schools in place of Setswana by minor tribes remain to be resolved.

The Botswana judicial system, which is reputedly, regarded as independent, remains a credible mechanism of conflict prevention and peacemaking. It demonstrates the government's commitment to the use of arbitration and peaceful means of resolving conflict, even when the court decisions are against it, a situation not common in most African countries. Three classic examples illustrate this. In the 1980s, Unity Dow, a Motswana woman married to an American citizen, successfully challenged, through the courts, the provision in the Citizenship Act that did not allow Botswana women married to foreigners the right to transfer their citizenship to their children but extended it only to Tswana men married to foreign women. Her victory contributed enormously to championing women's rights with the repeal of discriminatory sections of the Constitution. It also elevated the status of a network of women's and human rights associations, especially the Botswana Women's NGO Coalition (WNGOC), as important organizations responding to people's needs and gender issues, and highlighted the importance of networking among CSOs for successful lobbying.

Similarly, in 2003, Basarwa (also called the San), a minority group, took the government to court to overturn their relocation from their ancestral land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) to new settlements in other parts of the country, and the discontinuation of service provision inside the CKGR. The Basarwa were supported by the First People of the Kalahari, Survival International (SI) and Ditshwanelo, the Botswana Centre for Human Rights. The Basarwa-government confrontation took on international dimensions and threatened the survival of Botswana because SI labeled the country's diamonds as 'blood' diamonds, which would have negatively affected sales on the world

market. The government depends on diamond revenues for national development. The involvement of SI, a British international organization, which supposedly advances indigenous people's rights world-wide, made dialogue and negotiation difficult, in spite of the United Nations recommendation for negotiations between the government and the Basarwa.

The SI campaigned internationally against the government and Botswana's diamonds. It argued that the relocation of the Basarwa was due to the discovery of diamonds in the CKGR. In contrast, a local human rights NGO, Ditshwanelo, opted to engage in dialogue with the government and supported the use of courts to resolve the dispute. The government successfully countered SI's campaign with its own 'diamond for development' campaign. In 2006, the High Court of Botswana ruled in favour of the Basarwa when it held the relocation as unlawful and unconstitutional. The government accepted the ruling, which paved the way for Basarwa's return to the CKGR (Sebudubudu and Lotshwao, 2009). However, the court also ruled that the government had no obligation to restore infrastructure, including water supply in the CKGR. Since both the government and Basarwa were winners, both parties were encouraged to continue negotiations for a sustainable solution.

The slow adherence to the ruling by the government has prompted continued involvement of the Public International Law and Policy Group (PILPG) which has been providing legal assistance to the Basarwa since 2003 (PILPG, 2009). Another is the case of a University of Botswana Professor, of Australian origin, who challenged his deportation in the Botswana High Court in 2006. His efforts were unsuccessful as the Court upheld his prohibited immigrant status. What is striking is the fact that the government allowed the court to adjudicate the case to ensure due process of the law in the resolution of the disagreement. This is the essence of democracy, a model of good governance on a continent characterized by 'struggling' and 'failed' states. Relevant to peace building is the humility on the part of the government in accepting decisions and positions of the courts of law as in the case of the Basarwa or commissions of inquiry, contrary to its preferences.

3.3. Socio-economic development

The government has also been able to build national unity and peace through growth and development that have benefited the whole of the society through rational resource allocation and redistributive policies to achieve some social justice. Botswana stands out as a country that has escaped the 'resource curse', conflict over resources, and growth of corruption as a result of minerals, in contrast to other Southern African countries such as the DRC. The mineral-led development that benefits everyone in society regardless of political affiliation, region, colour, status or class, has endeared the ruling BDP to both supporters and non-supporters (Osei-Hwedie, 2001). Development programmes have advanced the legitimacy of the ruling BDP government and prevented or minimized the emergence of conflicts. As one of the richest countries in the SADC region, Botswana owes much of its prosperity to the diamond industry; good economic management; stable economic policies; democratic governance with a political leadership committed to development; and distributive policies that have improved the livelihood of its citizens, promoted social justice and transformed the country from one of the poorest to a middle income country. This shows that diamonds, development, and democracy can contribute to peace building and prevent emergence of conflicts.

Most outstanding to peace building is the government's investment of mineral revenues in social and physical infrastructure, primarily education and health offered free or at nominal fee, piped water within reach of the majority including villages, and roads; creation of jobs, making the government the largest employer; the fight against HIV and AIDS through the provision of free anti-retroviral (ARVs) therapy to its citizens; safety nets for the poor, elderly and orphans; and drought relief programmes, especially for rural areas. Programmes like the remote area dwellers (RADs), drought relief and destitute programmes are designed to alleviate hunger and assist remote and rural areas, and the poor. The Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMME), the Citizen Entrepreneur Development Agency (CEDA),

the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction, Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agriculture Development (ISPAAD), and the CEDA Young farmers Fund (Republic of Botswana, 2008) demonstrate the government's concerted effort at improving the quality of life. The successful fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic spearheaded by the President won both domestic and international commendation. A modest life style of top political and bureaucratic elite, with relatively low levels of corruption, has resulted in minimum wastage of national resources. This has also resulted in little or no public resentment against the top elite, and nurtured their commitment to development, the backbone of sustainable peace. The achievements have won Botswana the label of Africa's miracle, developmental state and good governance (Leftwich, 1996, 2000; Edge, 1997) and have made a valuable contribution to peace. The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) Report for 2008 global rankings places Botswana at number 3 out of 125 countries in the world regarding the quality of democracy, the market and political leadership. The Standard and Poor's and Moody's ratings give Botswana the highest credit ratings due to its prudent macroeconomic planning and fiscal stability (Bryan and Hofmann, 2007), a situation which might change with the current financial crisis.

4. Conclusion

The need to strengthen peace building initiatives for sustainable peace is the most important peace building challenge facing contemporary Africa. This has led to the search for modalities that appreciate and accommodate both traditional and foreign elements. Though debatable, traditional practices of conflict resolution and prevention and civil society are important to modern conflicts to enable people's participation in solving their own problems and shaping their own destiny. Botswana has successfully nurtured the norms and institutions, traditional and modern, conducive to peace creation and sustenance that provide valuable lessons to other countries. A common culture of Ubuntu that transcends across African cultures holds an even better promise of learning from other countries' experiences and building a regional approach to peace building.

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