

How has women's political representation affected inequalities and poverty alleviation for women in Sub-Saharan Africa?

In reviewing the literature on achieving greater gender equality in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa there appears to be a consistent international message focused on providing access to basic needs such as - education, health, water, sanitation and providing women with a voice through political representation. The UN Millennium Goals (MDG), Beijing and Nairobi Conferences, and the 50/50 Campaign by Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) all have promoted and placed emphasis on a practical needs approach towards gaining equality in developing countries. For African women it has been argued that practical needs are in fact strategic needs for many policies and agendas are focused on land rights, poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, violence and childcare issues (Gretchen et al 2006). I would argue that the needs may be strategic in nature however; the policies and agendas implemented thus far have not had a substantive impact on improving gender inequalities or alleviating poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Today we have witnessed many developing countries governments incorporating the MDG's into their vision or strategic plans, additionally there has been more than 80 countries worldwide who have taken actions to guarantee women's political participation (UNMDG Report, 2005). The contribution and impact that many of these goals and strategies have had on improving living conditions in developing countries can not be under estimated, recent Human Developed Index (HDI) statistics and interim MDG 2005 Status Reports both reflect the significant achievements that have been made in furthering education, health, water, and sanitation to the poor (HDI, 2006). Most recently The World Bank highlighted that medium income countries, those with a GPI per capita income greater than \$ 3466 US and less \$10,725 US are home to 70% of the world's poor (World Bank Development, 2006). Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank stated that "income levels do not measure accurately levels of development or reflect social or geographical inequalities" (Wolfowitz, 2006:1) The 2006 HDI Report outlines that even with significant

increases in growth and investments in gender programs, a corresponding reduction in poverty and equality has not been achieved in most of the medium and low income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, significant inequalities in income distribution and employment opportunities remain high.

To improve these inequalities, the most common strategy put forth by international organizations and feminist theorists is to provide women with a voice through political representation, with an emphasis on reconstructing the western political framework that focuses policy making on the 'public' spheres – authority and contestation, to one that embraces both the public and 'private' spheres – associated with the family and home (Waylen, 1996; UNDP & Basu, 2003). This essay will cover the international humanitarian and feminist arguments for gaining greater equality through political representation with an emphasis on the affects it has had on improving gender issues for those women living in poverty. In conclusion, I will highlight the debates being put forth relating to why feminists and political analysts believe changing Botswana's first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system to either the highly endorsed proportional representation (PR) system or to the Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP) system would improve gender equality (SADC 2004; EISA 2004; Waylen 1996; Molomo, 2004). I shall argue that a change in electoral systems would allow for having a greater representation of women in parliament; however in my opinion the corresponding effect this action would have on improving gender equality would be minimal based on the dominating patriarchal social and cultural structures that exist today in Botswana's society (BMDGR, 2004).

Before outlining the arguments for using political representation to promote gender equality, we should review the factors which characterise women living in poverty. In the last 25 years living conditions for many residing in Sub-Sahara Africa have improved dramatically based on investments put forth to improve practical needs; however during the same time period, poverty for the region – defined as living on less than a US \$1 a day, increased from 227 million in 1990 to over 313 million people in 2001 (MDG Report, 2005). The majority of the 313 million living in

poverty are women that live in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. It is typical that these women of poverty work full time in either jobs that are considered unpaid labour such as; household duties, carrying water, tending to the children, growing crops, obtaining wood for fire or they are actively employed with low pay rates and high hours of weekly labour (Pearson, 2004). At the same time it is also common to find high unemployment for both men and women living in poverty, due to the limited opportunities for work in a rural area. In many families the male members will seek employment by relocating to urban areas, leaving the women and children behind to manage the household.

The communities of poverty are traditionally ruled by strong tribal customs and cultures that have been developed through strong patriarchal structures which regard women as property and / or subservient to men (Waylen, 1996). Tribal customary laws and actions have in many cases perpetuated inequalities towards women even when adequate civil - state laws and policies have been provided to protect women's rights, the issues relating to land rights is a commonly used example for this debate (Matemba, 2005). Women's role in tribal structures are further defined or exasperated by lack of education, it has only been in recent years that investments in knowledge have impacted the children of those living in poverty, however the majority of adult women have had limited or no education compared to their male counterparts.

To further compound many of the challenges of poverty; it is the women who have been most vulnerable to contracting the diseases such as AIDS, malaria, TB and cholera, additionally when illnesses occur within their extended families it is their responsibility to care for those members. Women of poverty are often victims of severe violence and subordination, this condition is in part do to the historical culture and patriarchal influences of colonialism (Waylen, 1996), however in many occasions it has not always been based on the lack of power or voice of the women, however the males feelings of lack of empowerment, inadequacy and a fatalist view that manifests in conditions where life expectancy is low, unemployment is high and poverty is chronic (Nettleton, 1995). Nussbaum (UNDP, 2003: 9) argued "family policy and the

nature of the family are an important part of what renders women able, or unable, to function productively in the public realm” which could also result in bad behavior being insulated or perpetuated in cultures. This argument is an important position to consider when understanding how culture and poverty influences the African framework towards equality.

When we review the social factors that characterise those living in poverty it provides us with a greater understanding of why feminists believe that policies relating to equality will become more effective when they are constructed by utilising both the private and public realms of people’s lives (Waylen, 1996; UNDP & Nussbaum, 2003). Poverty in Africa is a family condition it can not be seen as an isolated condition of women, poverty impacts children, spouses, elders, brothers, sisters and the society as whole. Thus, it would seem relevant to expect policies to incorporate cultural, family, and societal considerations when developing, implementing and enforcing laws and rights which influence women’s lives. Nussbaum (UNDP, 2003:2) argued “it is very clear that there are dramatic cultural and societal differences and that the life of a female individual is from birth shaped by social expectations and norms regarding femaleness”.

With the increasing concern of HIV/AIDS and the rising number of people faced with poverty it can be argued that these casualties will continue to impact society as a whole if socio-economic environments and polices are not implemented to improve the well-being of those most vulnerable. It is becoming evident as rates of HIV/AIDS infections and poverty are increasing that a change is necessary if society as a whole is to remain productive. The financial and social cost of poverty and HIV/AIDS have reached a critical mass, there is a growing consensus that welfare programs and economic globalization will not cure the epidemics, while never designed for such achievements much hope was placed on their ability to impact the crisis.

In looking for solutions to improve equality within developing countries it is the position that greater diversity of representation in government and civil society will

promote and transform the male patriarchal class of politics into one which is more representative of society's needs and interests (Pateman, 1989). Feminists argue that greater representations of woman would influence the policies and rights for women based on common interests. Women's representation was underlined by the assumption that once women entered office they would participate by marketing and supporting issues and views for women by women, such as workplace, home, and equality programs. Anne Phillips (1998:228) outline the following four positions as the primary arguments put forth for justifying increasing the levels of women in elected office: "there are those that dwell on the role model successful women politicians offer; those that appeal to principles of justice between the sexes; those that identify particular interests of women that would otherwise be overlooked; and those that point towards a revitalised democracy that bridges the gap between representation and participation".

Historically the justification for greater representation was influenced by the success of women in Scandinavian countries, where one third of the members in parliament are women and the society as a whole has high levels of equality (Siim, 1998). Diane Sainsbury (2004) argued "that the Scandinavian countries ability to increase women's representation and focus on substantive issues enabled the political system to grow to greater democracy over time, which has converted woman from a minority to a majority voice allowing for a more descriptive approach of representation". In hopes to replicate the Scandinavian success story, international organizations started to promote equality through political representation.

During the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action Conference an international marketing campaign began, which recommended governments should grow their representation of women in government to 30% with an ultimate goal of 50%, utilizing the principles that having more women in government would result in a greater amount of gender friendly policies and rights for women. To further endorse the principles of representation in the African context the South African Development Corporation (SADC) joined the promotion and received agreement from its members to aim for a

30% political representation of women in parliament by 2005 (SADC, 2004). It was believed that without pressure on political parties to nominate more women seats, women's organizations stood little chance of increasing women's representation in parliaments (Gretchen et al 2006).

Specific to the Sub-Saharan Africa region where governments have been blamed for corruption, war and non-gender sensitive structures it was understood that any move towards greater women representation in government was seen as a positive beginning. Waylen (1996) argued that many of the structures that are now seen as obstacles for gaining gender equality in Africa were influenced by the lengthy tenure of colonialism and patriarchal views in government and tribal leadership. There was an underlining belief that based on these historically male dominated governmental structures which existed in developing countries that women's participation would only occur if there was a formal implementation of quota goals. The principle of using a gender-based electoral quota system was to get women into politics; it was seen as a temporary measure to enable women into politics while many of the barriers which limit women's participation were removed over time (Gretchen *et al* 2006).

Historically those countries with the highest representation of woman in their national legislatures used a proportional representation (PR) electoral system and some form of voluntary party based quotas. Over the past 20 years this electoral strategy has dominated literature in developing countries as Waylen (1996:11) stated "it appears woman fare better in systems with proportional representation". In over 127 African elections held between 1989 and 2003, "the more proportional the electoral system, the larger the share of legislature will be occupied by women" (Staffan Lindberg 2004:35).

Sub-Saharan Africa has seen a significant increase in women's political representation through implementation of electoral quota systems; today women represent 17.5% of the seats in government with 18.5% in the Upper House / Senate (IPU, 2007). This increase in representation has allowed women to be seen as leaders and contributors

to society as a whole, which can only serve to dismiss the stereotypes that politics is a place for men; this position is especially true and influential for young women and girls in Africa. Further more the representation of women in African politics has forced men to adapt and adhere to woman as a component of political life, which can only serve as a start towards changing the patriarchal structures which are imbedded in politics.

This rapid movement towards representation in African countries has been in contrast to the Scandinavian and Northern European countries who achieved significant participation over an 80 year period of slow and continuous social and civil movements. These numbers drives one to question how the rapid and significant rise in women in African parliament has correlated to effective gender policies and have their voices been representative of woman as a collective whole (Hassim, 2006). Gretchen (2006:21) wrote “bringing women into national office does not necessarily translate into a consistent voice for women’s rights”. In most cases where electoral quotas have influenced minority representation the participation has been limited in voice, due to the majority rule environment which is common to the political structures of democracy (Gretchen *et al* 2006).

In Rwanda where women’s representation is leading the world with 48.8 % of government, feminists are questioning if women are able to effectively exert power independently of their male majority leadership. When Rwanda’s women MP’s drafted a policy to expand women’s ownership and inheritance rights for land they were faced with significant political pressures from the male ruling party to modify and limit the scope of the policy, which resulted in a land policy reform act that was male engendered. This example demonstrates the challenges that women of affluence have in gaining agency, for it is most common in Sub-Saharan Africa politics that women in government are associated with the male political leaders and in many cases serve more as a “first lady” rather than an independent representative, this further underscores the difficulty that women of poverty have in being heard or represented by women in politics (Molomo, 2004; Selolwane, 2004). Women may

represent women in politics however, their ability to advance the status and position of gender issues in society as a whole has been limited due to their inability to act independent of political pressures of the majority party (Gretchen et al 2006).

Many women in parliament have had difficulty in influencing change whether it's due to education, experience, discrimination, or their own interests and agendas have not been reflective of the needs of the majority population, in any case the results have been considered less than transformative. In South Africa there is a growing dissension between the women in government and those in civil society, based on a perception of elitism and the beliefs that MP's do not understand or care about the needs of the common women (Hassim *et al*, 2003). It is clear that women are represented in many Sub-Saharan African governments, however their ability to act appears to be limited based on the historical power structures that persist in African cultures. Pateman (1989) argued that if change is to occur in participation and democracy then "it is clear that if women are to be citizens as women, as autonomous, equal, yet sexually different beings from men, democratic theory and practice has to undergo a radical transformation (Pateman, 1989:14). This argument by Pateman can be seen within the disappointing and consistent occurrences of governments absorbing powerful women and women's organizations into their own formal governmental parties, where the majority rule can steadily diminish their voices and powers to influence society (UNDP & Basu, 2003; Alvarez, 1990).

This fear of absorption has caused many women's organisation to view the state as an opponent versus an agent to help promote their agendas; however with governments increased dependence on Non-Government Organisation (NGO) for facilitating, promoting and funding programs such as; human rights and HIV/AIDS a progressive change towards viewing the state as a partner has taken place (UNDP & Basu, 2003). Women activists are recognizing their ability to exercise power to defend and promote women's interest through working with the state, while still operating outside its formal structure. The United States of America a country that has historically had a significant under representation of women in its government "best exemplifies the

trend towards the institutionalization of feminism, through the powerful establishment of women groups, committees and research institutions” which function outside the doors of formal politics (UNDP & Basu, 2003:34). These powerful groups in America have been able to shape, influence and defend women’s rights and issues through powerful associational politics (UNDP & Basu, 2003). This perspective of operating powerful women’s organizations and movements outside the government has become a growing subject for African countries, with the increase concern over the effectiveness and representation of women’s in politics feminists appear to be targeting change through empowering women in civil, economic and cultural organizations (Hassim et al 2003; Matemba, 2005; Pearson, 2004).

In addition to many of the concerns over how to enable voice and agency, it appears that a significant amount of policies relating to women and equality have focused only on the subjects on health, welfare and education. There is an emerging perspective that equality agenda’s need to broaden their scope too include strategies that address gender inequalities that relate to equity distribution, economics of reproduction and the role of women in development planning and implementation (WDR, 2006; Pearson, 2004). Pearson (2004) believed that there needed to be a refocus on the material inequalities and on social policies of redistribution, she wanted to see more effective feminist political action that would drive policies for reducing the marginalization and subordination of women .

In conclusion women’s participation in Sub-Saharan Africa can be seen as a positive step towards gender equality in parliament; however the correlating impact it has had on improving inequalities and reducing poverty for women seems distant. The existing patriarchal cultures and structures that exist today in politics and society appear to limit a woman’s ability to influence change. Recently, Hassim (2006:16) argued “that a strong notion of equality would rest on the extent to which overall poverty is reduced, the degree to which women have autonomy and are able to make choices free of the constraints of care work within families and communities, as well as free of the pressure to remain in oppressive and violent relationships (Orloff 1993)

and the extent to which women feel safe in society”. This argument supports many of the positions put forth in this essay and the need to clarify the definition or goals of equality in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa seems relevant, however the ability to gain this form of equality appears to be highly contingent on the transformation of culture, customs, and social norms that exist and challenge equality. Established laws and rights can only be seen as achievements for equality when they are practiced and enforced by society as a whole, this gap between laws / rights and agency / practice can be witnessed in the case study of Botswana.

As previously outlined in the beginning of this essay the case study of Botswana will highlight the debates being put forth relating to why feminists and political analysts believe changing Botswana’s first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system to either the highly endorsed proportional representation (PR) system or to the Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP) system would improve women’s status (SADC 2004; EISA 2004; Waylen 1996; Molomo, 2004). I shall argue that a change in electoral systems would allow for having a greater representation of women in parliament; however in my opinion the corresponding effect this action would have on improving gender equality would be minimal based on the dominating patriarchal social and cultural structures that exist today in Botswana’s society (BMDGR, 2004).

Case Study of Botswana

Botswana is a small landlocked country located in Southern Africa, since their independence in 1966 they have had the fastest growing economy in the world (World Bank, 2006). Botswana's success has been seen by many as a condition of "luck", due to the discovery of diamonds in the 1970s; however others strongly contribute their success to "good governance". Governance defined by the Human Development Resource Center (UNDP) refers to:

"the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate the interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences".

In highlighting this definition of governance we are able to define the Government of Botswana as the organization that has led the countries transformation from an economy that had a per capita ppp income of US \$ 60 in 1966 to one with a per capita ppp income of \$ 9,945 in 2005 (World Bank Data 2007).

Botswana's Government took the dominate role in managing and implementing development and investments for providing its citizens with access to basic needs such as; health, education, water, sanitation, and infrastructures (roads, phones, etc.). The government's expenditures account for over half of the countries gross domestic product (GDP) and approximately 70% of the countries national revenues come from state owned property and 70% of exports are attributed to diamonds (Andrew, 2005). The government led by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has utilized the profits of diamonds to improve its citizens well being, President Fetus Mogae stated in an 2006 interview "they are supporting education, health care, clean water and orphans, people know that when they are buying diamonds, they are helping Africa fight poverty and disease" (Carter, 2006:1-2).

Botswana has aggressively pursued gender issues in their political strategies and ideals, starting in 1998 two years prior to the MDG, they targeted gender equality in their comprehensive government strategy called Vision 2016 “Towards Prosperity for All” (BMDGR, 2004). The Women’s Affairs Department in the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs was established in 1992, which has the responsibility for promoting and protecting women’s rights and welfare, in 2006 they provided over \$ 216,000 US dollars to NGO’s for promoting and defending gender related issues in Botswana (USBRHR, 2006). During the 2004 elections women produced over 57% of the vote and took the following seats: 7 of 61 in Parliament; 5 of 20 in the Cabinet; 3 of 13 Justices in High Court; and 3 of 15 in the House of Chiefs, the overall representation of women decreased from the 1999 elections, however the level of senior executive positions increased (EISA, 2004). In 2003 Botswana was recognized as the world leader in gender equality by the UNDP, in 2006 they dropped to a 34th place ranking behind South Africa and Tanzania (Mmegi, 2006).

When examining the links between state action, gender relations, and policies we can divide their impact into three major categories: (Charlton et al. 1989) policies which are aimed at women, those focused on protective legislation and reproduction, abortion, childbirth, maternity leave; second those which deal with relations between men and women such as property rights, family relations, power, sets of gender relations often institutionalize; and general policies that are gender neutral but have a different impact on men and women, those policy areas linked to the public sphere and seen as masculine, politics, war, foreign policy international trade, communications, welfare and reproduction. When using the categories set forth by Charlton (1989) Botswana would be regarded as politically progressive in establishing and implementing gender policies for its citizens.

In Botswana women are considered equal citizens to men and the constitution and law prohibits government from discriminating on the basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, creed, sex, or social status and these are predominately endorsed by government; however it should be noted that the laws do not prohibit discrimination by private

persons or entities which has resulted in cultural and societal discrimination against women, minority groups, and people with disabilities, which weakens the governments position (USBRHR, 2006; BMDGR, 2004, EISA, 2005). In 2004, Botswana's government took one its most aggressive stances towards promoting gender equality when it endorsed and passed the law which abolished the marital powers of husbands ensuring that spouses have equal rights in the marriage, the Marriage Act had previously allowed husbands the rights to sell cattle and houses without their wives consent (Botswana Daily News, 2005). Furthermore, the Marital Act abolished the common law rule that defined how the husband acquires power over the person and property of his wife (Matemba, 2005:11)

To further understand of how Botswana has utilized its revenues to create and fund policies and programs for improving its citizens well-being the following list has been compiled to outline some the significant accomplishments made since their democracy; free universal healthcare with rural facilities; education up to 13 is at no cost with a minimal charge thereafter; literacy rate of 82 %, created a world recognized AIDS program including free anti-retroviral medicine; executive leadership positions for women in government and religious groups; three women chiefs including majority tribe; 95 % of the population has accessible clean water; however with all these gains poverty – living on less than \$ 2 US a day - still embraces 50% of its population (HDI, 2006). Botswana's government stated in their 2004 MDG Status Report that the country was on target to meet all of its goals by 2015, except for one, the eradication of poverty. To further the concern, the recent HDI 2006 report ranked Botswana at 131 with a .570 rating, which was equivalent to their countries rating in the late 1970s. Additionally the HDI report reflected that Botswana's life expectancy has reached a critical crisis rate of 35 years due to the massive HIV/AIDS epidemic that has plagued the country.

How has this exemplary case of a country growing its GDP through strong governance and reinvesting its profits into its citizen's well-being been limited by its ability to effectively reduce poverty? This paradox of understanding why these

investments in social transformation have not had a corresponding impact on poverty reduction or improving women's status in society, has led many to question the framework of Botswana's majority rule political electoral system. The argument has been that "women enjoy the same civil rights as men in Botswana on a legal level, however in practice, political and societal prejudice persist" (EISA, 2005:15; USBRHR, 2006). Thus, it has been positioned by political analysts and feminists that a lack of political will is one factor which contributes towards a lack of women's representation, and secondly the electoral FPTP system does not account for equitable representation (EISA, 2005; EISA, 2004; Molomo, 2004; Selolwane, 2004; Sokhulu, 2004). Before and proceeding the 2004 elections SADC, EISA, opposition parties and women's feminist groups such as Emang Basadi campaigned for a change in Botswana's FPTP system, which resulted in heated discussions, however no action or serious consideration was warranted by the ruling BDP. This argument that changing the electoral system to a more proportional electoral system is understandable in looking at the position for gaining a greater representation of women and disadvantage groups in politics, however I would argue their influence would be minimal based on the cultural components of Botswana's Society.

The foundation of my argument begins with the understanding that in 2004 the opposition took 48% of the popular vote, these totals were dispersed over a number of parties whose platforms were considered similar to those values and objectives put forth by BDP (EISA, 2004). With the opposition's diversity and inability to form a competitive alternative to the BDP it forces one to look at the historical colonisation classification system for tribes which recognises only eight principle ethnic groups as part of the Tswana nation, while all remaining groups are classified as minor groups (Matemba, 2005; Sokhulu, 2004; Moloma, 2004). This classification system is part of the Botswana Constitution and is further emphasised in the House of Chiefs which is made up of 8 merafe chiefs (major ethnic groups) and 4 elected sub chiefs (minor group) (Matemba, 2005). These cultural factors appear to create an environment that would hinder the ability of minorities groups to act on representation alone, a strong opposing party would appear to have more influence on creating change then putting

minority groups into a political structure where they would be absorbed and coerced into the majority view. Lastly, I would argue that Botswana Government has provided strong policies and rights for women, the obstacle is changing social and cultural norms so that in practice the rights are followed and supported by tribal customary courts and society collectively (BMDGR, 2004).

The argument that women's representation does not always result in engendered policies or issues can be witnessed in some of the recent agendas put forth by Botswana's women chiefs. In April 2005, the Customary Court Amendment Bill was approved by parliament overturning the previous Act which ruled women's corporal punishment as illegal, however with the support of women chief's the government passed the Act allowing chiefs to now sentence both men and women up to the age of 50 years to corporal punishment ranging from 4 to 6 strokes (Mmegi, 2005). Furthermore under customary law it is common in rural practice for men to have the right to "chastise" their wives, which continues to be allowed and accepted (USBRHR, 2006). Seboko the majority women chief has further endorsed the use of corporal punishment on Botswana's youths in hopes to modify their negative behaviors this position has not settled well with Human Rights Organizations (Matemba, 2005). President Mogae in his 2006 State of the Nation strongly addressed the concern of male deviant behaviour, he related the increased violence against women as a direct result of alcohol abuse, which has caused unnecessary rapes, passion killings and infections of HIV/AIDS, he argued strongly that this behaviour was harmful to society and needed to be stopped (BGSNA 2006). Lastly, one of the most controversial issues put forth by Chief Seboko is the wish to resurrect the traditional initiations ceremonies for boys and girls, which had been discontinued for over 20 years (Matemba, 2005). It does appear that female chiefs are using old cultural practices and customs based on patriarchal traditions to address modern problems, which questions the effectiveness of women representation.

In conclusion the Botswana MDG 2004 Status Report argued "that over the past two decades substantive areas of life, including control of productive resources have

improved in Botswana, however even when legislation may be gender neutral, traditional and institutional culture perpetuate practices that disadvantage women in relation to men” (BMDGR 2004:37). Botswana’s government publicly recognises that the “substantive challenge lies in bridging the gap between progressive policy and legislative reforms on the one hand and traditional and deep-seated institutional cultures that stand in the way of equal rights of citizenship for men and women on the other” (BMDGR 2004:40). The key challenge is therefore transformational; the ability to change culture, individuals, institutions, socio-economic disparities and society for the in betterment of all. I would argue that these changes will take time and countries such as Botswana deserve the respect and time to transform their culture, when in all accounts they are promoting equality and moving towards an engendered society.

At this time I will return to my original argument regarding how does poverty alleviation and gender equality relate to women’s representation, in the case of Botswana I would conclude that changing the electoral system to allow for more women is not the answer, however a greater emphasis on activism by civil, NGO and feminist organizations would promote change. In December 2006, after a two year court battle, the High Court of Botswana ruled that the Government of Botswana had illegally removed the minority San population from the Kalahari Desert, the case was fought by the Human Rights NGO Survival International and supported by local activist groups (Carter, 2006). The San case exemplifies the power of movements and it confirms that Botswana is a democracy by allowing its Justice System to rule by law and not based on societal, financial and political pressures. In closing if poverty is to be eradicated or reduced in Botswana there will need to be a stronger emphasis on equity distribution and cultural accountability.

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