

Poverty Eradication in Botswana: Towards the Realisation of Vision 2016

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Abstract

Economic growth is usually recognized as a vital factor in poverty eradication. Thus, with the excellent performance of Botswana's economy over the years, observers had hoped that poverty in the country would decline dramatically. However this has not been the case. Mass poverty in Botswana has led to increasing concerns with policies and associated development efforts that focus on, or have aspects aimed at, poverty eradication. The government of Botswana has implemented social policies to assist vulnerable groups such as the destitute, the elderly and remote area dwellers (RADs). Despite these efforts, many individuals and households continue to experience poverty. This paper discusses poverty eradication within the context of Vision 2016, which is aimed at prosperity for all Batswana.

Introduction

Poverty eradication has become a buzz-word since the beginning of the millennium, as the international community shifted from the paradigm of poverty alleviation to that of poverty eradication. Mafeje (2001: 22) notes that the new paradigm is not only a process to get the poor to pass a certain level of income or consumption, but also to achieve "a sustained increase in productivity and an integration of the poor into the process of growth". In order to achieve this, the poor must have access to resources within an effective policy and institutional framework. Thus, a developmentalist approach is envisioned. Poverty eradication is therefore crucial to sustainable economic and social development in developing countries, Botswana included. There are linkages between poverty and economic decline, food insecurity, environmental degradation, population expansion and gender inequality, among others. Though it is difficult to establish concrete direct causality among these factors, it is acknowledged that poverty and related problems seem intractable and continue to adversely affect a large number of people (Easter, 1993; Osei-Hwedie 2001).

The issue of poverty has attracted both local and international attention over the years, leading to a more critical appraisal of methods used to tackle the problem. For example, some approaches assumed that all development efforts embodied objectives of poverty reduction. Thus, through a process of "trickle down", progress would be achieved more or less automatically. However, the available evidence clearly shows the failure of this approach. Similarly, structural adjustment programmes (SAPS), which were designed to reorganise and revive the economies of developing countries and create the conditions for growth, have been shown to have negative impacts on poor communities. It is also evident that very little progress in poverty eradication has been achieved from the numerous industrial and infrastructural development projects pursued by many countries. Thus, it is increasingly recognised that there is need for policies and programmes that have poverty eradication as an explicit core objective and that mount a direct and conscious

attack on poverty (Easter, 1993).

Poverty in Botswana is associated with institutional and structural constraints (Kerapeletswe and Moremi, 2001), and this has led to increasing demands to develop policies and associated development efforts that address poverty eradication. At independence, Botswana was among the world's twenty poorest countries in per capita terms. The country's main sources of income were cattle, subsistence agriculture and remittances from migrant workers in South Africa. Over 30 percent of Botswana men between the ages of 20 and 40 worked in South Africa. However, Botswana's economic growth began not long after independence and has been well-sustained since then, with annual growth rates reaching as high as 13%. By 1997, GDP per capita was USD3,210. However, the benefits of this growth were very unevenly distributed. The government of Botswana responded with various policies to assist vulnerable groups such as the destitutes, the elderly and remote-area dwellers. Despite these efforts, however, many people continue to live in poverty.

Definitional Issues

There is a range of views on the conceptualisation and scope of poverty. Some definitions are closely associated with income and basic services. Others relate to a multidimensional view which includes the absence or lack of economic, social, political and environmental assets and resources (Wilson *et al*, 2001). In this paper, poverty will be broadly defined as deprivation related to insufficiency in resources required to maintain an acceptable standard or quality of life (Osei-Hwedie *et al*, 1991). Thus, poverty means the lack of physical, human and social capital to meet basic needs. Physical capital refers to productive resources such as land and cattle; human capital to such things as health, education and information and; social capital to the strength of civil society, community networks and so on (Alexander, 2002; Narayan, 2002).

Poverty may also be conceptualised in terms of good quality versus bad quality of life, defined as well-being and ill-being respectively. Clearly these are multidimensional and interrelated conditions with a prominent psychological dimension. Well-being has many interrelated aspects including material, physical and social security, and freedom of choice and action dimensions. For example, material well-being includes having enough food, assets, money and opportunities to work and live a decent life. Physical well-being requires good health, and access to health services, as well as a healthy and pleasant physical environment. Ill-being on the other hand refers to a state of deprivation and a pervasive sense of loss, hopelessness and powerlessness. It also denotes lack of food, money and other assets, unemployment and poor housing. It means an inadequate or deteriorating physical condition due to such things as hunger, illness and stress. On a social level, ill-being also attracts humiliation, shame and stigma. Those who experience ill-being usually suffer from exclusion, rejection and isolation. All these factors lead to fear and a sense of vulnerability.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this paper combines three main concepts of poverty: income poverty, social/human poverty and social exclusion. Income poverty is defined as the ratio of

declared poor to the total national population. It is essentially a numerical approach: those whose income or consumption is below a certain poverty line or benchmark are defined as poor. The poverty line usually represents the income equivalent of a basket of goods and services identified as the minimum necessary for the survival of an individual or family. Though conceived as an absolute threshold, the level of the poverty line varies depending on the selected goods and services, the relative weight assigned to them and the estimated price associated with them (Destremau, 2001).

Social/human poverty focuses on a broader range of basic needs, including “not only food and shelter, but health, education, and sanitation” (Destremau, 2001: 131). Thus, this concept of poverty includes goods and services addressed on a group basis. The UNDP Human Poverty Index (HPI) is one example. Destremau (2001: 131) notes that in developing countries, social/human poverty rests upon three key indicators: “the chances of dying before the age of forty years, the illiteracy rate among adults, and the deficit in terms of living conditions, measured by a combination of access to health services, access to portable water and under-nutrition among children under five”. An assumption of these approaches is that the basic needs and services may not be available simply through participation in the labour market and that it is therefore necessary to socialise some services so as to cover everyone.

The social exclusion approach emphasises the notion that socio-economic well-being is a right. Social exclusion is linked to processes of “social disintegration” and “inadequate realization of social rights” (Destremau, 2001: 133). Social exclusion is a qualitative approach to understand its dynamic nature of poverty, how it emerges and is sustained, how people move in and out of deprivation and socio-economic marginalisation and how the associated institutions regulate or safeguard exclusion. Generally, social exclusion has been associated with a set of symptoms closely related to absolute poverty such as material deprivation, housing problems, vulnerability to disease and under-nourishment (Destremau, 2001).

All three approaches relate to the provision of basic needs, but they conceptualise these needs differently. Income poverty focuses mainly on the capitalist conception of the market in relation to goods, services and labour, the moral conception of work as necessary for enriching the body and soul of the poor and the need to pity and help the incapable poor. The notion of social/human poverty, however, relates to needs that are dependent on both private sources and the state, while the social exclusion approach identifies needs that must be fulfilled for an individual to be integrated in society and to the “civic, political and socio-economic rights that determine social integration and are guaranteed by a set of social conventions and institutions that place solidarity at the centre of social cohesion” (Destremau, 2001: 135-136).

Who Are The Poor?

The poor are not a homogeneous group. They are affected by issues related to gender, resource endowment, region of settlement and cultural traditions, among others. For example, the poor and disadvantaged in Botswana, according to Jacques (1995), include recipients of direct and supplementary feeding such as under-five children in rural areas, malnourished under-five children in urban areas, temporary and permanent destitute, children aged six to ten years not attending

school, as well as all tuberculosis and medically selected pregnant and lactating women. Other groups classified as poor are herdsmen, subsistence farmers, farm labourers and female-headed households (FHH) characterised by significant income fluctuations and high economic dependency ratios. The poor in Botswana also include RADs who have no assets or resources and who live in areas which are far removed from facilities and services (Jacques, 1995).

Causes of Poverty

Lack of work is identified as a major cause of poverty across the world. Unemployment leads to hunger, illness, crime, substance abuse, family breakdown and suicide. However sometimes the problem is not lack of a job, but poor wages that trap workers in poverty. Many other factors cause poverty in Botswana. These include inadequate levels of social safety nets, inequitable distribution of power and assets in households, over-reliance on government to provide economic resources and social services, high population growth rates, the large physical size and low population density of the country and the remoteness of many communities. Harsh climatic conditions leading to low agricultural production, as well as cultural beliefs and practices which relegate women to a subordinate position can also be blamed. There are also fatalistic cultural practices such as witchcraft and sorcery and discriminatory attitudes towards segments of the society, such as the Basarwa. Finally, years of state-led development have arguably created a dependency syndrome and a lack of initiative (BIDPA, 1997; Duncan et al, 1994).

Within the agricultural sector, lack of ownership of livestock is a significant cause of poverty in Botswana. The distribution of cattle ownership is highly skewed. Forty-seven percent of farmers do not own cattle, and most people who own cattle own small herds. Thus, the poorest 71 percent of traditional farmers own only about 8 percent of total traditional herds, while the richest 2.5 percent own about 40 percent (Kerapeletswe and Moremi, 2001). Ten percent of farming households own 60 percent of the 2.3 million cattle in the country. In terms of productive assets, FHH own only 12 percent of cattle on traditional farms while an overwhelming 62 percent of FHH own no cattle at all (BIDPA, 1997). Kerapeletswe and Moremi (2001) indicate that 66 percent of female farmers have no cattle, compared to 33 percent of male farmers.

There has been a great decline in traditional agriculture. Employment in traditional agriculture declined from 121,000 (33 percent of the labour force) in 1984 to about 75,000 (15 percent of the labour force) in 1991 (Hope, 1996; Duncan et al, 1994). This sector therefore has limited potential to generate income, a fact compounded by periodic droughts which force many people to abandon traditional agriculture. Moreover, institutional and socio-cultural difficulties hamper poor people from accessing land, water and credit facilities, especially for acquiring cattle. Thus, rural families are only able to raise between 25 and 40 percent of their basic income from their own production. As much as 40 percent of total rural income is from transfers by relatives and government. Other factors which contribute to persistent rural poverty in Botswana include alienation of communal land, curtailment of hunting and gathering opportunities, gender inequality (with wide implications for FHH) and the continuing transition from a society based on traditional agriculture to one based on a cash economy. This last factor has changed family structures from extended to nuclear ones and negatively affected families' abilities to care for their members. There have also been

changes in people's attitudes towards self-reliance. This has led to a dependency syndrome and reliance on government handouts (Kerapeletswe and Moremi, 2001; Hope, 1996; UNDP, 1995; Peke, 1994; Republic of Botswana, 1993).

Hope (1996: 53) notes that Botswana is internationally acclaimed for good governance through sound development management and maintenance of administrative capacity for economic development. However, in addition to the rapid growth and admirable economic success, there are also "rising unemployment, persistent poverty and widening income inequality". Unemployment is a serious problem. It tends to be high among the 15-24 age group, which accounts for about 51 percent of the total unemployed, and the 25-39 age group, accounting for 34 percent. Female unemployment rates are higher than those for men. Hope (1996) argues that since Botswana men are generally better educated than women, their employment rates are higher. Women also encounter socio-economic barriers to labour force entry. Thus, women comprise 36 percent of formal sector employees but 75 percent of informal sector employees.

Poverty Eradication Policies and Programmes

Good (2001) argues that liberal democracy accepts and tolerates poverty and inequality and that the ascendance of American liberal capitalist ideology and processes threatens egalitarian models across the world. He notes, for example, that where "deregulation and downsizing are . . . embraced, poverty alleviation is abandoned" (Good, 2001: 33). With specific reference to Botswana Good (2001: 47) emphasizes that:

Botswana has both the wealth and the state capacity to reduce poverty substantially, should the elite have chosen this as an original developmental goal. Consistent with the values of liberal democracy, the ruling elite have not addressed poverty eradication directly (1966-98), and the people have yet to insist that they do so.

Nevertheless, the government of Botswana has undertaken several policies and programmes which have implications for poverty alleviation. These include the policy of national food self-sufficiency and food security, drought relief programmes, supplementary and direct feeding programmes, labour intensive public works, the Arable Lands Development Programme (ALDEP), the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP), the Accelerated Rainfed Arable Programme (ARAP), the Financial Assistance Policy (FAP), the National Policy on Destitute(s), the Old Age Pension Scheme and the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency. However these programmes offer no long-term solution to underdevelopment and entrenched poverty and lack sustainability since they rely on surplus revenue without fully addressing the issue of productivity (Mafeje, 2001).

This is amply demonstrated by the National Policy on Destitute (1980). Bar-On (2001: 257) notes that the people who may receive benefits under the policy are those without assets (land, livestock and cash), and incapable of working due to old age or disability. Unsupported minors and people rendered helpless by natural disasters or temporary hardships are also eligible. The benefits provided are all in kind and include food, soap and "other essential household goods". Bar-On identifies four issues in relation to gaps and other weaknesses associated with the policy. First, he notes that the guidelines are very general and allow officers wide discretion in deciding eligibility and the nature of help to be offered. Second, this help is at the basic minimum of the

already low standards of the PDL. For example, the food component provides 30 percent less than the minimum local caloric intake requirement (estimated at 2,300 calories a day) and 66 percent less than the standard average requirement of 2,900 calories. Third, benefits are entirely personalised, as the policy recognises only individuals and not households. A 1995 exception to this rule indicates that when a household had 8 members, it could receive two sets of rations. Fourth there is no allowance for unique necessities such as special diets and disabilities and no built-in incentives to work.

Employment directly influences poverty reduction. Poverty in Botswana has to do, in part, with limited employment opportunities. In 1997, unemployment was 21 percent, indicating that about one-fifth of the population had no meaningful participation in the economy. The incidence of unemployment is particularly high among women, rural dwellers and the youth. In 1994 36 percent of those between 20-24 were unemployed; 27 percent were unemployed in the 25-29 age group, and 14 percent of all urban males were unemployed compared to 20 percent of females. In 1993, labour force participation was approximately 50 percent; with 60 percent participation for males and 40 percent for females (Kerapeletswe and Moremi, 2001).

Vision 2016: Towards Prosperity for All

Vision 2016 is about change in Botswana and how to manage the process. Change is conceptualised as “a fundamental transformation across the broad spectrum of the social, economic, entrepreneurial, political, spiritual and cultural lives of Batswana” (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 1). The long-term vision is a national manifesto that contains a set of goals for transforming the Botswana society. The goals suggest that by the year 2016, Botswana will be an educated, informed nation; prosperous, productive and innovative; safe and secure; open, democratic and accountable; moral and tolerant; and united and proud (Presidential Task Group, 1997). This vision clearly poses many challenges in all areas of national life. It requires the ability to create and utilise opportunities in all spheres of life and must begin, among other things, with self-re-examination at all levels and sectors of society: “individual, community, business enterprise, political, social and professional organization, and indeed as a nation” (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 1). The goal is to enable everyone to contribute effectively and meaningfully to building the nation, while creating “prosperity for all”. The guiding principles are democracy, development, self-reliance, unity and “*botho*”, which encourages cooperation, respect and social justice for all.

The plan envisages the nationwide *eradication* of absolute poverty. By 2016, “no part of the country will have people living with incomes below the appropriate poverty datum line” (Presidential Task Group, 1997: 8). By then it is hoped that everyone will have access to productive resources irrespective of ethnic origin, gender and other socio-economic factors. A safety net will be established for the helpless and disadvantaged, which will go hand in hand with the provision of good quality social security in partnership with the private sector and non-governmental organisations aimed at vulnerable groups such as the elderly, disabled, orphans and the terminally ill. It is also hoped that by 2016 per capita income will have trebled to about USD8,500 in real terms – and within a context of more equitable income distribution. Botswana will also have diversified its economy, with mining, agriculture, manufacturing, services and tourism all making substantial

contributions. Through this diversified economy, Botswana will be able to reach full employment, which will further reduce the levels of poverty.

The plan also suggests that by the year 2016, Botswana will have quality education and health systems that are adaptable to the changing needs of the country and that empower citizens to become better producers of goods and services. It will produce entrepreneurs who will create employment through the establishment of new enterprises. Health facilities will be efficient and accessible, and population growth well controlled so that everyone can benefit from socio-economic provision. HIV/AIDS is also addressed. Vision 2016 anticipates that by the year 2016 there will be a zero rate of new infections, as well as mechanisms in place to cater for all those infected and affected.

Furthermore, Botswana in 2016 will be a society oriented to democracy, with strong decentralised institutions. This requires an effective, democratic government as a foundation for sustainable development. There will also be a culture of transparency and accountability, and local government in particular will increase the participation of poor communities and improve financial management and accountability. Public service reforms in both national and local government will also provide more effective and responsive services, particularly for the poor.

Vision 2016 and Improving Poverty Eradication in Botswana

Movement out of poverty is often the result of many factors. However, self-employment or entrepreneurship appears to be the most frequent way out. In addition, income from wages and salaries, remittances and other help from family, extra income from agriculture, better access to land, acquisition of skills, education, migration, relief aid and donations have all helped to move some people out of poverty. Poverty eradication requires identifying poor people's priorities and empowering them to transform the conditions they experience. Poor people require fairness, safety and peace of mind, socio-political empowerment, access to services and assets and security. It is also necessary to recognise that there is great diversity among the poor, who include men and women, children, youth, the elderly and the disabled. Poverty eradication programmes have to take this diversity into account. Gender relations, for example, deeply affect poverty reduction strategies, but improvements in gender relations require changes in social norms, an "engendered" approach to development, and psychological support for both men and women. It is also necessary to design programmes to help boys and men redefine masculinity and to redress the neglect by government and the private sector in this area.

Thus, Alexander (2002) argues that poverty eradication in Botswana is a policy issue and requires a multidimensional strategy driven by community-based structures that facilitate the active and real participation of the poor. She emphasises that for poverty eradication to be effective, it must utilise people-centred approaches based on their livelihoods and community structures to facilitate planning and implementation of projects. New structures controlled by communities have to be set up to facilitate development of enterprises for employment creation. Such endeavours require practical skills training to manage local institutions, facilitate communication and safeguard transparency and good governance.

Poverty eradication is more successful when there are initial favourable conditions in the

prevailing socio-economic structure, the level of physical infrastructure and the level of human development. This is because productivity gains tend to be higher, and shared more widely, under such conditions. The role of the state in creating and building up the social and physical infrastructure is decisive, especially in remote and resource-poor areas. Specific policies are needed for vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of society. In rural poverty alleviation, for example, the government's role has to extend beyond provision of infrastructure to include issues such as the identification of demand for particular goods, ensuring access to capital and other resources, imparting skills and providing market services. The government must help establish appropriate linkages to ensure sustainability of goods and services (UN, 1996).

Good and Molutsi (1997: 15) maintain that, although the government of Botswana has used its resources judiciously to provide social services and related infrastructure, poverty eradication programmes require more than financial resources. They suggest that the core of poverty eradication has to involve changes in attitudes on the part of government policy makers, the poor and people in general, centred on the principle of "mutual respect and support". They contend that poverty alleviation programmes must also be founded on strong political will, strict targeting and effective involvement of the poor, as well as good long-term planning (reflecting the skills and the needs of the poor) and a supportive macro-economic policy regime.

The existing poverty alleviation and reduction policy and measures, taken together, are fairly useful and have been successful, in the main, in achieving their core objectives – enhancing the survival of target groups by improving their access to basic needs and resources. However, they have not been successful in getting people out of poverty, either on an individual or group basis. More effort must therefore be undertaken to improve individuals' and communities' access to resources. Vision 2016 thus requires that emphasis on citizen economic empowerment must be strengthened to provide opportunities for all Batswana to utilise national resources to improve their standards of living by their own efforts. This requires changes in institutional structures and processes, and a new way of doing business, a major task which is yet to be tackled on any meaningful scale.

Unemployment and citizen empowerment are among the major challenges that must be resolved to enable citizens to be in the mainstream of economic activities. These challenges call for the creation of conducive conditions for economic expansion, employment creation and progressive reduction of poverty (Republic of Botswana, 2001). This means that the way should be opened for wider citizen participation in the economy and other walks of life. Thus, existing schemes such as the credit guarantee scheme, which helps Batswana to access loans ranging from P10,000 to P250,000 from commercial institutions by guaranteeing 60 percent of the loans, the reservation policy, which reserves certain businesses for Batswana, the Economic Promotion Fund (EPF), aimed at creating employment opportunities, exploiting resources and promoting participation and self reliance of RADs and the Community Projects Programme, which provides grants for productive and employment generating activities in rural communities, must not only be consolidated but opened up to accommodate all those who need assistance at different levels of the economy. At the same time, it is necessary to reinforce education and training components. The content of training must include programmes that promote inter-sectoral and mutually sup-

portive services and income-generating projects at the local community level. For example, local community members, leaders and extension officers must be trained in integrated programme development, implementation and evaluation, and must be able to develop plans that are both poverty-sensitive and gender-sensitive.

National development programmes must become more responsive to the needs of the poor, and must focus on integrated strategies. This is in relation to the contention by Narayan (2002) and the World Bank (2001/2002) that poverty is multidimensional, has important non-economic dimensions and has specific locational factors. Development programmes must therefore be formulated with the participation of the poor. This means that poverty eradication must be based on in-depth and comprehensive analysis and understanding of the country's poverty situation, its underlying causes and the selection of strategies that have the potential for highest positive impact.

Kahn (2002) contends that to eradicate poverty there must be economic growth, and this economic growth must reduce income inequality in order to have a positive impact on absolute poverty. For example, material opportunities related to jobs, credit, roads, electricity and markets for products are crucial to peoples' welfare. However, overall economic growth is critical for generating these opportunities. Investments, technological improvements and innovation are necessary for expansion of jobs and incomes. In addition, private investment requires a positive climate resulting from stable fiscal and monetary policies, clear and reliable investment regimes and effective and efficient financial system (Kahn 2002; Lustige and Stern, 2000). The private sector is critical in poverty eradication because it generates jobs and makes goods and services available. Job creation is a major path to poverty reduction. Government, in addition to improving macroeconomic conditions, education and health care, must also undertake deliberate institutional reforms to reduce the cost of doing business over time and create a more favourable business environment. These will encourage more local entrepreneurs as well as foreign investors to engage in different sectors of the economy. It is evident that poverty eradication depends on, and requires, a range of, actors working in concert, including the private sector, civil society and government, and the effective functioning of societal and institutional structures within which they operate. They are all important in developing and implementing effective strategies and creating external partnerships to reduce poverty (The World Bank, 2001/2002).

Since the poor are varied, it is necessary to understand how economic changes and policies affect them, for example, through markets, infrastructure and transfers. Infrastructure that affects productivity and quality of life includes economic infrastructure (transport, communications, extension services) and social infrastructure (education, health care, water, sanitation). Transfers are both public and private and provide some insurance against emergencies. Private transfers take place among households and kinship networks, while public transfers include such things as employment on public work projects. It is important to build and strengthen human capital. The necessary conditions for these include provision of basic health care and education, especially for women and children (The World Bank, 2001/2002).

Lustige and Stern (2000: 3) argue that "poverty is also the outcome of economic, social, and political processes that interact with and reinforce each other in ways that can ease or exacerbate

the state of deprivation in which poor people live.” In this regard a poverty eradication agenda must address ingrained inequalities, social barriers and institutional weakness and failures. Wide differences in economic growth, political power and general well-being reflect the outcome of the interaction of several forces within the country, including history and geography, institutional and policy choices and external factors (Lustige and Stern 2000). The fight against poverty, therefore, requires political will and effective cooperation between government, civil society and the private sector in an effort to focus public action on social priorities and to support local decisions with adequate political, financial and technical resources and effective participatory mechanisms.

In Botswana, the success of the formal sector in expanding employment has led to increased reliance on it to create further jobs. Formal sector jobs are seen as providing more security and higher incomes. Thus, 97 percent of the unemployed aspire to employment in the formal sector. Due to growth of employment in government, manufacturing and service sectors, the percentage of the work force employed in agriculture has also declined. This suggests that economic diversification has not been successful. The employment potential and efforts of other sectors, especially construction, are significantly dependent on government expenditure. The issue, therefore, is how to diversify the economic base so as to create more employment in sectors other than government (Bank of Botswana, 1998).

The size of the domestic market is also a constraint to job creation. The small population restricts the scale of domestic industry. Associated costs of production are high and easily undercut by foreign competition. Besides the sparse population, the country is land-locked and far from the sea. Whereas it is economical to transport diamonds by air, other exports such as copper, nickel, soda and beef involve costly overland transportation. In addition many inputs for manufacturing have to be imported. Thus, the associated costs become magnified and disadvantageous to the sector (Bank of Botswana, 1998). In addition, because the government and the formal sector are the major employers, there is maldistribution of jobs. The majority of jobs are found in urban areas, leading to high levels of rural-urban migration. The rural areas are also the worst-affected in terms of the overall shortage of skills in the country, especially in entrepreneurship (Bungu, 2002).

Available data show that labour productivity stagnated in the 1990s. Botswana is still struggling to develop and maintain the competitive spirit necessary for survival in the market economy. Lack of relevant skills and work orientation at higher levels of labour influence productivity levels. Low levels of productivity hamper the ability to expand the labour market. In addition, much of the labour force does not have access to other factors of production such as machinery, skills in business organisation, finance and entrepreneurial leadership. Poor people also have limited productive assets, limited education and limited access to financial resources (Bank of Botswana, 1998). There is need for public capital including infrastructure and institutions as well as private capital and expertise, which is not in abundant supply currently. Inability to have direct access to inputs also constrains the development of the small-scale sector.

The structure of the national economy underscores some of the weaknesses in Vision 2016. The vision does not give guidelines as to how to address the fundamental causes of poverty in Botswana. Even with a superior performance of the economy, there is no indication that the distribution of wealth and access to resources will change dramatically, since fundamental causes

of inequalities are not addressed. Vision 2016 states that all stakeholders will charter their role in realising its objectives. However there is still no comprehensive document that outlines the specifics expected from all stakeholders besides their normal activities. There are no targets for poverty eradication and what the different sectors of society are expected to contribute, or how the sectors must restructure themselves to effectively undertake poverty eradication. Part of the problem also relates to finding answers to questions such as how Botswana can reduce poverty given the high levels of HIV/AIDS and how Botswana can deliver on Vision 2016 when over one-third of the population is HIV-positive? These are questions which need urgent attention.

Conclusion

Economic growth and sustainable development are necessary for poverty eradication. Sustainable development requires paying attention to several inter-related issues simultaneously in order to have an effective impact. The issues include socio-economic programmes to create jobs, access to financial and other resources, investment in human capital, stabilisation of population growth, protection and efficient use of natural resources and support for improved technologies and practices. In the context of Vision 2016 poverty eradication requires a wide variety of policy interventions targeted at the market, infrastructure, specific groups and actors and the mobilisation of the poor for popular participation. Participation by the poor, together with political will and sufficient resource allocation by government, would help meet the challenges of Vision 2016 to promote economic growth and sustainable development necessary for the expansion of employment and poverty eradication. However, under the current socio-economic circumstances, the trends indicate that by 2016 many Botswana will still live below the poverty datum line.

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