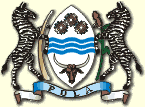
** REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN BOTSWANA**

**17TH JANUARY, 2018**

**Mr President,**

1. The National Policy on Gender and Development which is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prioritises the following areas towards achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment;
2. **Economic Development, Prosperity and Poverty Eradication;**
3. **Social Protection and Social Services**;
4. **Political Power, Democratic Governance and Decision-making;**
5. **Access to Justice, Protection of Human Rights and Freedom from Violence**; and
6. **Special Measures Targeting Vulnerable Groups**
7. The Policy also recognises the critical role played by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Development Partners and the Media in advancing the gender agenda particularly in community-based initiatives and sustaining national level advocacy. The Government in this regard has identified the need to strengthen the capacity of CSOs and the Media to maximise their potential and contribution towards gender equity and equality.

**Mr President,**

1. Botswana operates a dual legal system in which customary law coexists with statutory and common law, and recognizes that some customary laws may be discriminatory thereby negatively affecting women. It is important to highlight that where customary law disadvantages women, they may seek redress from the common law courts. Government funded legal aid is available to assist poor women to access justice.
2. In addition, Government in collaboration with Civil Society continues to engage with community and religious leaders as well as the general public on different social, cultural and religious issues that perpetuate gender inequality. Key strategies include targeting men and boys in addressing gender stereotypes and promoting behavioural and attitudinal change that is; involvement of men in ante-natal, delivery, post-natal care and child rearing.
3. The Government also recognises school related Gender Based Violence (GBV)mostly bullyingand to address this, each school has a Guidance and Counselling unit with qualified and skilled teachers. Additionally, each local council has a dedicated Social Worker to reinforce programming efforts that ensure safety in schools. There is also a National Life Skills Framework which is used to capacitate girls and boys on life skills.

1. In addition to the information provided in our report, the Police have established Gender Focal Persons across districts and assigned specific officers to handle GBV cases at Police service points. The Police have also developed tools to facilitate capturing of gender disaggregated data at service points.
2. With respect to other disciplined forces such as the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), and in addition to their existing pre-service and in-service trainings on GBV; the BDF has designated focal points to further enhance gender mainstreaming initiatives.
3. The Government currently supports the Places of Safety for GBV Survivors and Victims run by Civil Society at an annual total of seventy five thousand US Dollars (USD75 000). To compliment this effort, Government will during the National Development Plan 11 establish and strengthen Safe Havens based on the findings of the 2017 GBV Study.
4. Regarding the management of maternal health and unsafe abortions, Botswana has improved access to family planning services, contraceptive methods mix and access to emergency contraception and medical termination of pregnancy where eligible as per the Penal Code. In this regard, the country continues to intensify capacity building for doctors and nurses through the ComprehensiveEmergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care Training to improve quality in the provision of comprehensive abortion care to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality.
5. Botswana continues to make deliberate efforts to promote women’s representation in leadership. To this end, initiatives are on-going at national level to promote the participation of women in decision making. The Government in collaboration with Civil Society continues to capacitate women standing for elections. In 2014, capacity building workshops were held with the Executives of all political parties in the Country as well as women standing for Council positions.
6. Botswana in July, 2017 was alongside other countries awarded a prize by the African Union for attaining Gender parity in basic education.
7. With regard to migration, Botswana with the support of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), developed the draft National Migration Policy which provides strategic direction on migration management. The Strategy objectives include; facilitation of movement, upholding social justice, protecting fundamental rights and freedoms, promoting development, building cooperation, mainstreaming gender and maintaining security.

**Mr President,**

1. Notwithstanding the above, the Government of Botswana is conscious that much work still needs to be done to accord equal opportunity for Batswana women and men. Intense efforts to strengthen mechanisms that facilitate gender equity and equality in Botswana for the coming years thus remain, despite resource constraints. Botswana therefore continues to make efforts to mobilise resources to support the National Gender Programme. We appeal to the international community for support to strengthen the National Gender Machinery, particularly to undertake effective monitoring and evaluation.

**I thank you Mr President!**