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THE ROLE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN BOTSWANA

The Botswana Coalitions of Non-Governmental Organizations (BOCONGO), on the 23 November 2016 gathered at Botswana National Productivity Centre to address the roles played by the Non-Governmental Organizations in service delivery and social policy formulation. BOCONGO have made it vital for them to identify areas to partner with the government and participation of citizens and civil society in policy formulation.



Ms Alice Mogwe founder of Ditshwanelo

One of the panellists speaking during conference discussions, the founder of Ditshwanelo, Ms. Alice Mogwe said, the relationship between the government and NGOs are seen to be the most effective way of solving the socio-economic problems. She said to build true relationship with the government, BOCONGO needs to be strong and the collaboration of organizations is a way to healthy relationship between the two parties. She noted that limited conceptual framework is weak among the organizations, funding and limited innovation-donor influenced direction. Domination of

narrow issues turns to be individualistic. Furthermore she said to promote experience sharing with other Organizations' as well as provides assistance to members on issues relating to networking, capacity building, and information dissemination and policy advocacy.



On the importance of advocacy and lobbying, Ms Mogwe said rural people may not be heard by the government when they want the government to make some reforms or review a process of its implementation. Through NGOs these silent voices can be made more audible.

In conclusion to her presentation, Ms Mogwe said limited access to information is a major challenge in Botswana. Freedom of information act needs transparency on how decisions are made within the state. It is important therefore to understand the changing policy context in which NGOs in the

country operate. Effective and informed consultation is the best way of linking citizens with government.

Representatives of religious organisations also attended the conference. They shared with the conference their experiences in contributing to humanitarian assistance. Churches provided services such as education and health care since Botswana's independence.

Botswana Democratic Party's representative Reverent Rupert Isaac Hambira said Botswana need to learn something from the past, they need to take an action not to wait for something to happen then act later, every citizen said to be participating in the development of the country and advocacy can be done through public speaking, launching campaigns and labour rights by unions. He said his government recognizes youth issues and regional issues, they are working on issues of unemployment, and they are fighting poverty to improve the quality of life of the people in other regions.



One of the schools that built through the church

For his part, Reverent Mosweu Simane of United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) talked about the erosion of national pride saying that there is a declining sense of collective identity of people as Batswana. This is a result of children not being properly educated and guided in the importance of unity to embrace our culture. “The relationship between NGOs and government is neglected and there is no how we can be silent when the government intrudes on their mandate”, he said. According to Rev. Mosweu, the political culture of Botswana is based on three areas, which are; (a) the subject, wherein a village oriented towards politics doesn’t care and don’t want to participate; (b) parochial, wherein people who know that politics affects their lives but do not do nothing about it and they just wait for something to happen; (c) active participant, wherein people are aware of the issues and are actively involved.

He added that he is not happy with the relationship between the government and the NGOs because government does not see the benefit of it. The government turned a blind eye on them, he noted. NGOs were meant to bring cohesion to the improvement of livelihoods in rural Botswana. The voice is brought to the government and the villages’ hardship may not be visible to the government and with the assistance of NGOs bridging off all the vocal effort of stakeholders to the government for intervention.

NGOs contribute in facilitation and make progress in all sectors of development program alongside the government's national action plan strategy including health, agriculture, education, democracy, small business and so on.

Community’s need may be not enough even they have mobilized the existing natural resources, sometimes they need the expert come to explain or provide them the skill training or approach to address any issue happens in their region. That is the point which NGOs are also making the connection to make fundraising or donation to the target areas. Furthermore, they act as the mediator to resolve any rural conflict. And other communications for services availability for local people like legal consulting. Through the NGOs, the government could receive any recommendations or suggestions from workshop in order to review its national policy or strategy and fulfil the gaps more effectively.

In conclusion, the NGOs are playing a key role to bridge the rural areas and government as development partners toward community development and achieve the government’s goal. The need for the government in developing the country for NGO's role is inevitable for working as collaboration.

Since the philosophy of community development is independent from any outside agents, thus the community must rely on their own resources. NGOs assist the community to discover their potential and also mobilize communities to be self-reliant. According to the definition, empowerment is where people have greater control over livelihood resources. Therefore, the final outcome of community development is the independence of the community from external agents in formulating its agenda and managing its affairs.

Amongst a myriad of national policies aimed at community development, Kalahari Conservation Society (KCS) as the secretariat of the national community based natural resources management (CBNRM) forum has been instrumental in supporting the formulation and implementation of the national CBNRM policy. The policy has transformed many rural villages through sustainable use natural resources such as water, veld products, wildlife and minerals (rocks, sands and clays)

In bringing together its members at this conference, BOCONGO contributed immensely in raising awareness about the role of NGOs and opportunities for NGO participation in national development. This initiative should result in more NGO participation in such processes as national development planning and national vision formulation, ultimately making Botswana a better place for all.

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