

NGOs PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN BOTSWANA’S DEVELOPMENT



NGO Co-Chairperson, Mr Montshiwa Montshiwa presenting his speech about NGO policy

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) of northern Botswana are scheduled to assemble in Maun and Selebi Phikwe this winter to review the role of NGOs in Botswana’s development and consider issues to be discussed at the 2nd Annual Stakeholder Forum organized by the NGO Council. At a meeting in Francistown on 25th April, a planning group met to plan the agenda for the District Dialogue. Comprising of both NGOs and Community-Based Organisation (CBOs), the meeting enjoyed the support of both government and the Botswana Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations (BOCONGO). The participants were welcomed by the Deputy Mayor of Francistown City, Honorable Mr. Godisang Radisigo who described himself as a strong believer in the potential of NGOs to meaningfully contribute to a better Botswana. From his welcome remarks the Assistant Mayor said NGOs should network to promote experience sharing with other organizations’ as well as providing assistance to members on issues relating to bonding, capacity building, and information dissemination. He said effective and

informed consultation is the best way of linking citizens with government in addition that he would like to see youth working in

NGOs and CBOs and excelling. He said they should be challenged, especially those in major positions, in running organisations.

“Youth are dragging their feet because they are not given a chance to prove themselves and I am encouraging you to work together to achieve a common goal”, said Mr. Radisigo. He requested to include the local government in the next ASF II which will be held on the 20th to 23rd June 2017. He also said limited access to information is a major challenge in Botswana therefore involving Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development will be a step ahead since their presence will give them a true perspective of what is happening.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs and Co-chair of the NGO Council, Mr Montshiwa Monty Montshiwa officially opened the meeting. In his official opening, Mr Montshiwa said “In an effort to address sustainability of NGOs, a new era of collaboration and partnership building between the Government and the NGOs was established by way of appointment of the NGO Council; a structure derived from the NGO Policy”. The purpose of the National Non – Governmental Organisations Policy is to provide a framework to guide relations, including the institutional and administrative structure and processes for overseeing these relations. The NGO Policy represents government’s commitment to work with NGOs as the relationship has been rather informal in the past. He defined an NGO as an apolitically formed autonomous organization that is only involved in the socio-economic development of its constituents, that

possess nonprofit status and whose primary motivation is to pursue an identifiable set of interests of public, community and or group significance as defined in its constitution or deed of trust. He also stated that the NGO policy seeks to provide a framework to achieve and promote overall efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery; to promote mobilization and utilization of resources between key stakeholders in national development and to promote partnership and collaboration between NGOs, the government and other stakeholders.

NGO Council Coordinator Ms. Diana Meswele said another purpose of the meeting was to prepare for the upcoming District Dialogue fora in Maun, Kang, Molepolole and Selibe Phikwe, which will be attended by civil society, government, local authorities, private sector and other relevant partners. She said the district level meetings will seek to nurture trust and shared understanding of critical development issues in each district as well as progressively building a common platform for action across different actors.



Board Member of NGO Council Ms. Gaontebale Mokgosi during presentation

From the feedback on the 2015 Inaugural Annual Stakeholder Forum Dr. Gaontebale Mokgosi, a Board Member of the NGO Council, stressed the aim of the forum as being to open dialogue around the need to forge a rejuvenated partnership for sustainable development between CBOs, government and the private sector. Such a partnership will be a critical enabler to address issues of concern such as poverty and widening a gap between the rich and the poor and even unequal opportunities for children and

youth. She invited the

participants to review the recommendations made during the inaugural Annual Stakeholder Forum (ASF) of 2015 and reflect on the achievements made to-date in the implementation of the recommendations of ASF 1. Participants included representatives from the performing arts NGOs, Child Rights, Community-Based Natural Resources Management, District-

level civil society coalitions, Nature Conservation, Botswana Council of Disabled and other indigenous groups



Presentation by one of the groups that attended the Forum

When giving vote of thanks, the District Commissioner of Francistown Mrs. Chabongwa Matseka said CBOs and NGOs are the key to the development of the country as they play a significant role and shouldn't be left behind. She said most of the people who work hard in making these organisations are striving towards winning. "From the meeting, there was harmony and that is a clear guideline of knowing what we are here for, we shall see change" said Ms Matseka.



Francistown District Commissioner Ms. Chabongwa Matseka giving vote of thanks.

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