

AGDI Gender Outlook Series

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BOTSWANA

The African Centre for Gender (ACG) introduces *Gender Outlook #1*. It aims to benchmark Botswana's performance on the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI), highlight challenges and offer prioritized policy recommendations to accelerate progress towards gender equality. The AGDI is based on two components. The first is the Gender Status Index (GSI), a quantitative snapshot of 44 indicators that capture gender disparities in the social, economic and political arenas. The second component is the African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS), which is a qualitative self-evaluation of government performance in the implementation of more than 30 treaties, declarations, and resolutions affecting women's rights and women's empowerment in the social, economic and political arenas. All data¹ are provided by stakeholders in Botswana, including ministries and civil society organizations. This profile draws on the results from the AGDI Country Report for Botswana, one of the 14 countries in Phase 2 of the AGDI².

Key Messages

- The prevalence and incidence rates for HIV/AIDS as well as the level of youth unemployment are alarmingly high among young women compared with young men. Two policy imperatives stand out; engaging men in HIV/AIDS programmes, and helping women participate in active labour market programmes.
- Rural populations, particularly female-headed households, must receive support in obtaining land and livestock as well as better educational opportunities.
- Occupational segregation is an obstacle to women's progress in the general labour market as well as in the

public sector. Norms that lead girls into certain areas of study or specific occupations must be addressed as early as possible in the education system, and at the latest at secondary level.

- Women's extremely low rates of participation in the political sphere requires strong and sustained political commitment at the highest level to correct the situation.

Figure 1 provides a comparative perspective on Botswana's GSI and AWPS. First, Botswana has achieved one of the highest GSI scores at the composite level and reached parity³ for the Economic Power block. Even though Botswana is not yet halfway to gender parity in Political Power, it is still far ahead of many African countries. Botswana's AWPS follows a similar trend with much better performance in the Social and Economic Power blocks than in the Political Power block. Botswana unfortunately has not engaged with some of the key regional and continental initiatives such as the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003; or the Maputo Protocol and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, 2004. This lowers the country's AWPS by default. According to this aggregate picture, Botswana simply needs to improve its policy implementation, particularly by focusing on women's rights as well as the components in the Political Power block.

Figure 2 breaks down Botswana's performance in each sub-component of the GSI relative to the gender parity line. At the aggregate level, Botswana has achieved gender parity

¹ The Country Report from Botswana was prepared in August 2012 and received by the African Centre for Gender (ACG) in September 2012. While the ACG has strived to update various indicators using international databases, e.g. Demographic and Health Survey and Inter-Parliamentary Union, the majority of the indicators are from 2012 and were provided by the government of Botswana.

² Other countries that were part of AGDI 2 are: Burundi, Cabo Verde, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Senegal, Togo and Zambia.

³ The GSI for most of the indicators are calculated by dividing the indicator for female achievement by that for male achievement for the particular indicator. A tolerance level of 3 per cent is set around the full gender parity score, leading to a parity bandwidth of 0.97-1.03 whereby scores below (above) this bandwidth indicate gender disparity against women (men). However, there are eight reverse indicators, i.e. stunting, underweight, mortality, prevalence of HIV/AIDS, share of women under poverty line, time spent on non-market activities and domestic care and volunteer activities and youth unemployment rate, that follow a slightly different formula such that overshooting in these normatively negative indicators are neutralized for the consistency of the index.

Figure 1. African Gender and Development Index Snapshot - Botswana

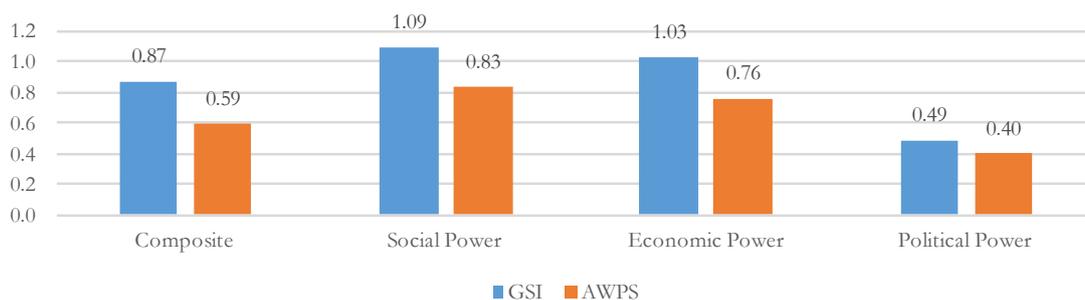
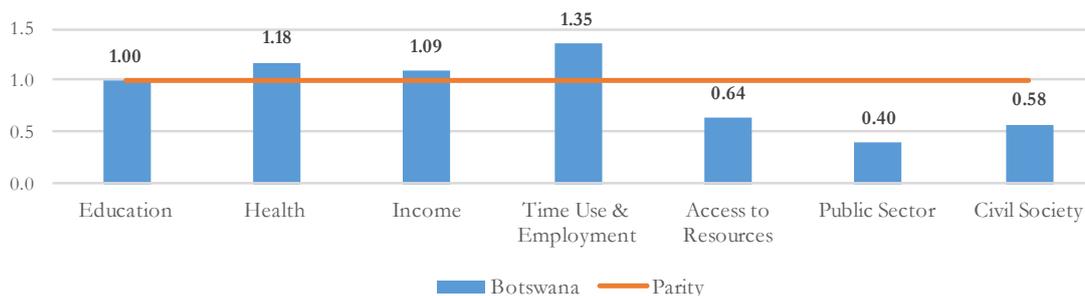


Figure 2. Disaggregating Botswana’s Gender Status Index



in *Education* and exceeded parity in the *Health, Wages and Income* and *Time Use and Employment* sub-components. However, it must be noted that for the latter sub-component, there are no data at all on *Time Use* and the only data used are on *Employment*. Figure 2 also draws attention to the large gender disparity in *Access to Resources* in the Economic Power block and even greater disparities in women’s presence and role in *Civil Society* and the *Public Sector*.

- The **Social Power** block is made up of the *Education* and *Health* sub-components. At the aggregate level, Botswana has achieved gender parity in *Education* and women and girls exceed parity in *Health*.

In *Education*, gender parity has been achieved across all indicators except for enrolment in tertiary education where females are below parity (Figure 3a), and in secondary education where females exceed parity. Botswana is one of few countries with available data where the female enrolment rate in secondary school is higher than that of males. However, there are concerns about pregnancy forcing girls to drop out at and beyond secondary school, particularly in rural areas, contributing to a lower enrolment rate in tertiary education for females than for males. There is strong policy commitment clearly at work to prevent females dropping out, as observed in the AWPS, through support for young mothers to get back in school. The ideal situation of parity partly attained in Botswana unfortunately masks the educational challenges faced in rural areas, especially in early childhood education. This is because only private sector and civil society organizations provide preschool facilities and they are not only expensive but also predominantly located

in urban areas. In higher education, there is a disturbing concentration of females in teacher training colleges while males are concentrated in technical colleges, a phenomenon that can sustain occupational segregation in the labour market, as observed below in relation to Economic Power.

In *Health*, there is gender parity in indicators of malnutrition – underweight and stunting (Figure 3b). However, disparities exist in the remaining three indicators: while there is some disparity affecting boys in child mortality rates and access to antiretroviral therapy, large disparities against young women are observed in HIV/AIDS prevalence rates which are also some of the highest in the world. Specifically, in 2013 there were well over twice as many young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years as young men of the same age infected with HIV/AIDS – 10.55 per cent versus 3.95 per cent⁴. Furthermore, the incidence rates are also higher for girls, suggesting that the gap may not close anytime soon. The AGDI Country Report suggests that young women are more likely to be tested than young men. It is therefore crucial to increase testing of young men in order to lower disparities in access to ART as well as lowering new incidence rates.

Focusing on the AWPS, Botswana has done relatively well, scoring mostly above 90 per cent. The only exception is safe abortion, a critical policy concern since that is the third leading cause of maternal mortality (13 per cent) behind hemorrhage (26 per cent) and hypertension (16 per cent).

⁴ Statistics Botswana (2014). *Botswana AIDS Impact Survey IV, 2013*. Note that the female and male prevalence rates for the 15-24 age group have been aggregated by taking unweighted averages of the 15-19 and 20-24-year-old groups.

Figure 3a. GSI for Education indicators

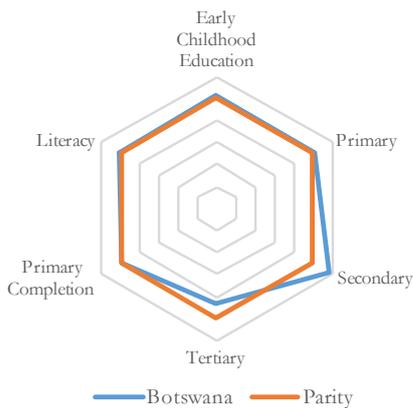
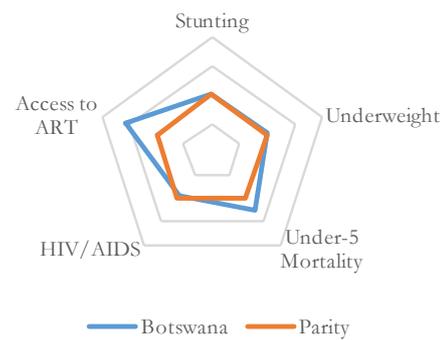


Figure 3b. GSI for Health indicators



Notes: ART= Antiretroviral therapy; HIV/AIDS relates to the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate for those aged between 15 and 24 years.

- The **Economic Power** block is made up of the *Income*, *Time Use and Employment* and *Access to Resources* sub-components. Out of 44 indicators that constitute the GSI, Botswana has missing data only in 9. Unfortunately, seven of these relate to *Economic Power*, particularly in the latter two sub-components. Available data suggest that priority must be given to addressing female youth unemployment and access to resources, particularly access to livestock in rural areas.

Gender parity has been almost achieved across most indicators that constitute *Wages* and *Income* aggregates and there is no disparity in wages in the agriculture sector (Figure 4a). Unlike any other country with available data, Botswana reports women earning more from informal enterprises than men by a significant margin. Consequently, Botswana has recorded one of the highest scores in this sub-component.

In the *Time Use and Employment* sub-component, Botswana has provided data on only two indicators that belong to *Employment*. The share of women in non-agricultural employment increased from 42.6 per cent to 62.4 per cent between 2011 and 2016⁵. The extent to which this non-agricultural employment coincides with formal and decent

jobs requires further investigation. The AGDI Country Report suggests that from 2004 to 2009, women's share in formal wage employment in Botswana increased from 38.7 per cent to 47.9 per cent. Recent evidence suggests that since Botswana's submission of its Country Report, the female youth unemployment rate dropped from approximately 74 per cent to 53 per cent⁶ and the gender parity score has improved from 0.54 to 0.80. Yet the levels are still high and remain puzzling since gender parity is largely observed in *Education* and there are no formal occupational restrictions in Botswana. One potential explanation is that Botswana lags behind other African countries in offering workplace protection rights to women.

Furthermore, gender disparity in favour of boys in tertiary enrolment rates as well as subject choice may contribute to inequality in unemployment rates. According to the *Global Gender Gap Report* (World Economic Forum, 2016), while 18 per cent of female university graduates are from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies, 39 per cent of male university graduates have a STEM background. Given the large share of women in non-agricultural employment and the relatively small informal sector,

Figure 4a. Economic Power

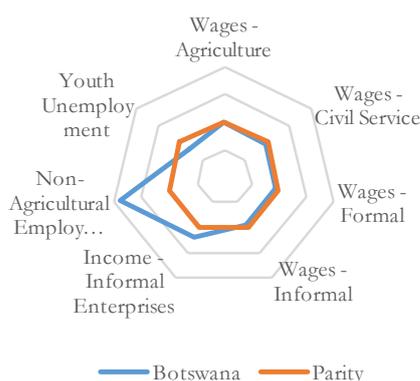
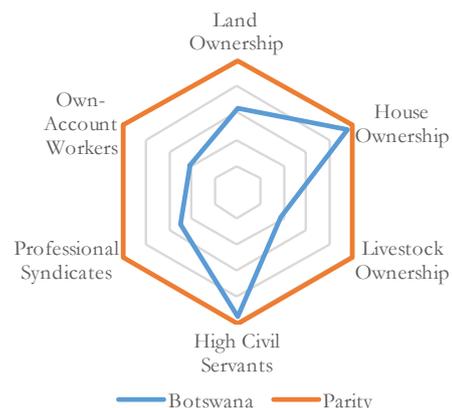


Figure 4b. Economic Power (contd.)



5 African Union Commission (2016). *African Gender Scorecard 2016*

6 Botswana Labour Statistics Report 2011

Figure 5a. Political Power

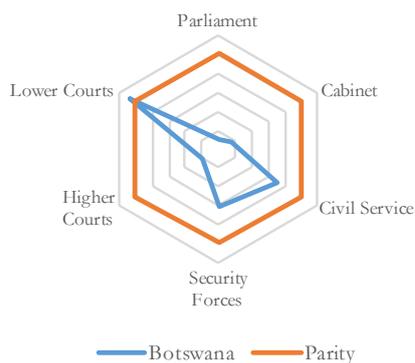
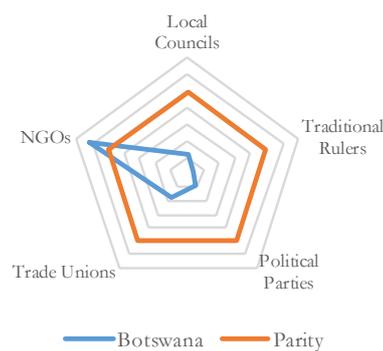


Figure 5b Political Power (contd.)



improving the legal and institutional environment for women’s economic participation as employees and job creators must be on the priority agenda. While the Youth Development Fund and Young Farmer’s Fund offer some promise for addressing youth unemployment, further effort is needed to mainstream gender within these initiatives. Occupational segregation is highly visible in the membership of professional syndicates. Women are overrepresented among accountants and while women constitute the majority in civil service, they are overrepresented in the lower ranks. Consequently, it is crucial that factors underlying female youth unemployment rates are well understood and addressed with targeted labour market policies such as entrepreneurship promotion (particularly for small, medium and micro enterprises), skills training programmes and job search assistance. Finally, the gender distinctions in subject choice of tertiary students must be addressed from early ages onward.

In *Access to Resources*, gender parity is to a large extent observed as an urban phenomenon. There are large disparities in land and livestock ownership even though women constitute a significant majority in subsistence farming. Given that cattle farming has become one of the leading sectors helping Botswana diversify its mineral-based economy, it is crucial to support women’s access to productive resources, particularly in rural areas. This would contribute to poverty reduction as well as risk mitigation in the face of external shocks as female-headed households, especially in rural areas, constitute the backbone of the poor. The AWPS for Botswana similarly suggests that great gains can be made in the Economic Power block from stronger policy commitment to facilitating access to land, especially in rural areas. According to *Women, Business and the Law* (2016), Botswana is among the few countries in Africa where customary law remains valid even if it is in violation of the non-discrimination or equality provisions of the Constitution. Since customary laws on inheritance rights favour the eldest son, provisions in Botswana’s Constitution such as the Abolition of Marital Power Act, (Act 34 of 2004) are unlikely to benefit women. In addition, the AGDI Country

Report indicates that access to land has become increasingly intertwined with financial capacity, which threatens rural women’s access to land.

- The **Political Power** block is a function of the quantity and quality of female participation in the public sector and in civil society. In Botswana, there is a large gap between these two areas, with women’s presence in some parts of civil society raising Botswana’s average GSI to one of highest among countries with available data. However, as Figures 5a and 5b show, Botswana is far from reaching gender parity in a majority of the indicators.

In the *Public Sector*, the biggest surprise is that in 2012, only 4 out of 57 members of parliament were women and this figure had barely changed by 2016⁷. It should be noted that Botswana is not a signatory to the SADC Gender and Development Protocol, which stipulates full gender equality – a 50 per cent share – in parliament. In the same period, a significant regression occurred in women’s participation in the Cabinet, with a fall from 17 per cent to 13 per cent. There is gender parity only among magistrates, namely the lower judiciary, and some promising trends in the civil service as well as the security forces. Gender parity is far in the distance for the remaining indicators in the public sector, leading to a low AWPS score for Botswana in the Political Power block. There is a strong need to boost Botswana’s engagement with international agreements and enforce the ones already internalized.

In *Civil Society*, women seemed to have carved a niche in the NGO sector where executive management is dominated by women (Figure 5b). Women’s presence in political parties and trade unions is highly limited, with the disparity level in political parties being even worse than the level in trade unions. Strengthening women’s representation in parliament will first and foremost require boosting women’s presence in the upper echelons of political parties. Similarly, occupational segregation and female youth unemployment rates require a strong response from trade unions where women’s participation in turn needs to be strengthened.

7 Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016.