

# AN EVALUATION OF THE INTEGRATED POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND HOUSING SCHEME IN BOTSWANA, CASE OF RAMOTSWA VILLAGE

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*This article evaluates the effectiveness of the Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme (IPAHS) in Ramotswa; an urban village located 32 km south-east of the capital city of Botswana, Gaborone. This study emanates from the fact that low income urban and rural residents with no formal employment were left out of the Self Help Housing Scheme (SHHA). The SHHA was mandated to facilitate the acquisition of subsidised land and loan to purchase building materials. One of the major conditions to qualify for SHHA is that applicants should have formal employment.; the IPAHS was specifically introduced to facilitate economic empowerment to poor households who do not qualify under the SHHA scheme. The IPAHS scheme is a two-thronged approach mandated to equip the residents with skills to build/improve houses for themselves and create employment for themselves through molding of bricks for sale in an effort to alleviate poverty. This paper is based on documentary and field research. The field research has a participatory component involving discussion and open ended interviews with relevant government departments. It also involves the administration of structured questionnaire survey to 30 beneficiaries of the scheme. Results show that despite high uptake of the scheme within the country, there are several challenges such as insufficient income to build or improve their houses, signs of poverty in living environments of beneficiaries, uncoordinated roles of various institutions which are major stakeholders in the implementation of the scheme. The scheme requires pragmatic policies geared to meet the needs and aspirations of the poor. There is a need for policy interventions through Government commitment to principles such as the right to housing by every citizen, coordination of roles played by different stakeholders to support the sustainability of the scheme.*

**Key words:** self-help housing scheme, integrated poverty alleviation, Botswana.

## INTRODUCTION

The international development policy agenda is currently dominated by the theme of "poverty reduction". The World Bank has been very supportive in poverty reduction initiatives ensuring that its lending policies are informed by pro-poor policy framework. Around the 1980's there was a shift in policy which focused on social safety nets, sound macroeconomic management and austere fiscal policies.

In the wake of these initiatives there was still

evidence of deteriorating living conditions in urban areas of most developing countries. Thus emerged a profound policy consensus about the importance of meeting the basic needs of the poor. Adequate housing was identified as one of the effective means to alleviate poverty. Housing was viewed as a source of income, pre-requisite for better health and the place for income generating activities.

The literature by most housing advocates spell out that urbanisation is the root cause of housing problems in urban areas of the developing countries (Ikgopoleng & Cavrić, 2009). The current speed of urbanisation is probably not excessive, but the numbers

involved are enormous. The United Nations projects that by 2025 over 4 billion people (86%) of the global population will be living in urban areas of the developing countries and there will be 486 mega-cities in the developing world with at least one million inhabitants (Choguill, 1994). Poverty and housing are interconnected and multidimensional. They relate to economic issues such as income, labor market; social issues like public infrastructure, urbanisation etc (Vander-schueren et al., 1996).

## Definition of Poverty

The definition of poverty has evolved over the past decade since the World Development Report 1990 (World Bank, 1990) expanded the

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traditional, income-based definition of poverty to include lack of access to adequate health services, education, and nutrition. Numerous scholars have added to this framework, and the 2000/2001 World Development Report (World Bank, 2001) further extends its framework to include the dimensions of vulnerability, voicelessness and powerlessness.

The World Development Report 2000/2001 observes that poor people consistently emphasise the centrality of opportunities for jobs, credits, roads, electricity and markets for their products as well as for schools, clean water, sanitation services, and health services (World Bank, 2001). The four dominant approaches to poverty analysis that have featured in the development literature are:

1. The **poverty line approach**, which measures the economic 'means' that households and individuals have to meet their basic needs (determined generally by their income – also nutrition poverty);
2. The **capabilities approach**, which explores a broader range of means (endowments and entitlements) as well as ends (functioning achievements);
3. The **participatory poverty assessments** (PPA), which explore the causes and outcomes of poverty in more context-specific ways and aim to include the ideas and values of the poor;
4. The **vulnerability approach** (VA) which looks at fluctuations in the well-being of the poor and at movements of household into – and out of – poverty over time. Vulnerability has now become an integral aspect of poverty analysis, and is both objective, that is, the exposure to risks, shocks and stress and the inability to deal with them without sustaining damaging loss (e.g. becoming less healthy, selling off productive assets or withdrawing children from school), and subjective, that is, the sense of powerlessness in the face of threats (Carman, 2003).

Tipple (1994) argues that there is a growing recognition that housing development has the potential to provide employment for large numbers of people both directly and indirectly. He suggests that the activity required to provide millions of dwellings has the potential to produce large numbers of jobs directly in the construction work, and at least many would gain through backwards linkages. Therefore the effort to fulfill housing needs could be seen as the generator of considerable employment, which contributes to dealing with poverty. In addition, through working from home the housing produces are likely to form the physical infrastructure for more productive employment.

According to Chen et al. (1991), the proportion of

home based enterprises ranges from 54–77% in 5 sub-Saharan African countries, namely Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland. In Lesotho, 88% of women's manufacturing enterprises are home-based (compared with 37% of men's and 57% of women's services enterprises are home based (compared with 30% of men's) (Chen et. al.1999).

Tipple (2005) notes that HBEs are important in times when formal wages diminish or cease, and enterprises are started at the only place available, such as the home. This has been regarded as undesirable in planning orthodoxy because it introduces commercial and industrial uses into areas zoned as residential. But the reality is that otherwise many low-income households would be unable to meet the survival needs; food could not be purchased conveniently and carrying out simple tasks, such as having a haircut, would require a major expedition.

In Botswana, economic empowerment through housing can be achieved by enabling plot holders to engage in a home based enterprise. This kind of activity would be ideal for the female headed plot holders who happen to be in majority in Botswana urban centers (e.g. capital city, towns, urban villages). Not only would this reduce travel cost, but it would also introduce commercial and industrial uses into areas zoned as residential hence providing a work space without paying any rent for working space.

In comparison with other countries, the levels of poverty in Botswana are high in relation to the overall per capita GDP, and to the sustained rate of economic growth. The Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2011) states that despite the macroeconomic success, Botswana has a serious problem of poverty compared to countries of similar economic stature. In Botswana poverty is fundamentally a structural problem. It is a consequence of a narrow economic base, which limits opportunities for gainful employment; a poor endowment of agro resources; a small and sparsely distributed population of 2.1 million in 2011, and as a result of population size and distribution, a small and fragmented internal market.

Collectively, these attributes translate into limited capacity for the creation of sustainable employment and poverty reduction. The more immediate causes of vulnerability to poverty in Botswana are: Unemployment and under-employment, which are primarily determined by lack of education and skills, ill health, in particular HIV/AIDS, which takes people out of work, destroys accumulated wealth and creates new groups of vulnerable people, lack of

access to productive assets such as land, water and finance and also lack of access to markets (UNDP, 2011).

Poverty remains an issue of concern to the government of Botswana, as it is a multifaceted problem. The eradication of poverty and hunger, greater equity in income distribution, and human resources development remain major challenges for the government. This is evident in that since the inception of the first National Development Plan, measures have been taken and policies formulated in order to curb poverty, yet it still remains an issue of concern (Kepaletswe, Moremi, 2001).

## CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### The sustainable livelihood framework

The sustainable livelihood framework identifies the key elements, factors and relationships that affect the lives of poor communities, urban, and the various feedback loops between them. The basic concept is that the quality and sustainability of livelihoods depend on the strategies communities develop to manage their 'capital assets', which are by and large under their control, within an environmental and institutional context, over which they may have little control. Development projects operate within, and can contribute to these assets and to the institutional context. A deeper understanding of the factors and the relationships and feedback loops between them should improve project design, implementation and impact.

The frame work is one way of organizing the complex issues surrounding poverty and it needs to be modified, adapted, and made appropriate to local communities and local priorities. In order to address the problems of poverty the relationship between poverty and its immediate courses should be established so that poverty can be fully addressed from different angles. The basic framework is shown in Fig. 1.

The sustainable livelihood approach is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for the development in order to enhance progress in poverty elimination. It is a holistic approach that tries to capture and provide a means of understanding the vital causes and dimensions of poverty without focusing onto just a few factors. It also tries to sketch out the relationship between different aspects (causes, manifestations) of poverty, allowing for more effective prioritization of action at an operational level.

Sustainable livelihood approaches are being

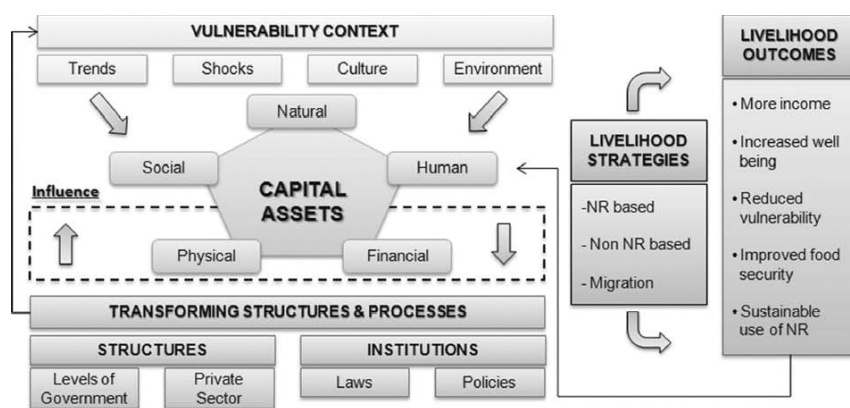


Fig. 1. Sustainable Livelihood Framework,  
Source: compiled by Authors based on Moser et al (1996)

used as an 'optic lense' through which poverty can be better understood, and development options prioritized. A livelihood is defined as 'the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.

## Poverty and housing issues in Botswana

### Poverty

There have been several attempts to understand and reduce poverty in Botswana. Concerns have often centered on poverty alleviation policies, the appropriate strategies that should be adopted for poverty alleviation, and the targeting mechanisms in this regard. However, little attention has been paid towards the service delivery process for poverty alleviation. Poverty is multi-faceted and can be manifested in hunger, lack of habitable housing, unemployment, lack of access to clean water, sanitation, health-care and education amongst other things.

The Government of Botswana has put in place many policies and programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, which are implemented by the different sectors at the national and district levels. Specific programmes aimed at enabling the poor to achieve sustainable livelihoods by improving access to productive resources include targeted schemes, such as: Financial Assistance Policy for income generating projects which create employment; the Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agricultural Development (ISPAAD) and Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID), which assists resource-poor farmers to produce at subsistence levels and raise income; the Labour Intensive Public

Works programmes (*Ipelegeng*) to reduce unemployment, social protection and emergency related schemes, such as the Drought Relief Programme, the Old Age Pension Scheme, destitute programmes are implemented to complement efforts ensuring sustainable livelihoods, (*Ipelegeng* and the new back garden initiative.)

The Government has a number of policy interventions which are used to expand employment creation and stimulate growth in the private sector. These include reduction in tax rates, liberalisation of exchange controls, provision of serviced plots and industrial units.

Despite all these initiatives, the unemployment rate in Botswana has recorded a slight increase; it was estimated at 17.8% in 2011 compared to 17.6% in 2002/2003 (UNDP). The number of people living below the poverty datum line has decreased from 30.6% in 2002/2003 to 20.7% in 2011. The household income and expenditure survey of 2002/03 recorded 499,467 people living below the poverty datum line.

### Housing

Building on its urban development policy, the government has had a commitment to provide adequate shelter for all, the objective being to provide or enable access to shelter for the rapidly growing populations of the urban areas and for the currently deprived urban and rural poor, through shelter development and improvement that is environmentally sound. The National Housing Policy of 1982, which was revised in 1990, concretises Botswana's overall political strategy, the 'Vision 2016': the aim of the 'provision of adequate shelter for all' calls for good quality basic houses within a safe and sanitary environment in both urban and rural areas from here to 2016.

The Government has come up with different interventions to realise the aspirations of the National Housing Policy and the ideals of the

Vision 2016. There have been several programmes targeted to low income albeit with little impact on improving the housing conditions of the poorer sections of the community. There have been several programmes such as Self help Housing Scheme, accelerated land servicing programme and squatter upgrading. The State President has appealed to the private sector to assist in providing habitable houses for the poor through "The Presidential housing appeal". The private sector is currently playing an active role in building houses for the poor through their social responsibility policies.

### Self-help Housing Scheme (SHHA)

The empirical studies of Turner and Mangin have highly influenced Botswana's housing policy. The government has adopted the policy of upgrading and provision of site and service schemes under the SHHA scheme and it also calls for cost recovery mechanisms. The site and service schemes involve the servicing of land and its subsequent allocation to low-income families to develop over time using materials provided by the government. The scheme was first introduced in 1978. The scheme was established to provide effective means of allowing access to affordable housing for low-income households. With the assistance of international bodies such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Appropriate strategies were examined and the scheme was accepted as a viable strategy for urban development.

Given that the Batswana (people of Botswana) have always built adequate housing for themselves in rural areas, self-help was seen as the most cost-effective way of providing housing for urban dwellers, particularly the poor. The SHHA scheme sought to emphasise self-reliance (one of Botswana's four national principles) and the spirit of self-help.

Under this scheme, administered by the urban and rural councils, the plots are allocated at a subsidised rate. The eligibility criteria for these plots are that the applicant should be a citizen of Botswana, formally employed and having stayed in town for a minimum period of six month. The question of an applicant's formal employment is of particular importance to the income criteria. In principle it means that the income criteria discriminate against the low-income households with irregular or informal income, especially against the poorest of the poor like single mothers. The income criteria for building materials loan has been increased from BWP30,000 to BWP45,000.00.

An evaluation of the programme by Ikgopoleng, Cavrić (2007), revealed that the programme is still confronted with numerous challenges such as the shortage of serviced land, the default in building materials loan and stringent urban development standards.

## INTEGRATED POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND HOUSING SCHEME (IPAHS) IN BOTSWANA

### Background

The programme was conceived by the Government in the 1990s to facilitate economic empowerment of poor households that do not qualify for SHHA loans through employment creation, poverty alleviation and home ownership. This idea was crystallised during NDP 8. Chapter 17, (section 17.21) of the plan indicates that "low income housing development should be pursued within the context of employment creation and income generation". Section 17.49 continues that "housing provision for the very poor rural households will be meaningless unless opportunities to earn some income are equally addressed."

The White Paper on the National Housing Policy of 2000, recommended that the scheme has to be implemented in both rural and urban areas. Implementation of this scheme in both settings is meant to address the poverty problems experienced in the country and to give poverty policies and programmes a national focus. The scheme's main thrust is on the integration of skills acquisition, employment creation and income generation with shelter provision.

The first stage of the project involves the identification of beneficiaries through the help of the Social and Community Development Division of the local Council where the project is being implemented. Once they have been identified they are trained in the production and marketing of standard building materials such as stock bricks, blocks, pavement slabs and kerbstones for sale at competitive prices on the local market. An allowance is offered to the beneficiaries dependent on the profit made from the sale of the project's products. Production of building materials runs concurrently with the training of beneficiaries in basic construction skills. Skills acquired are meant to encourage the beneficiaries to build their own houses without having to employ someone to do it for them.

The projects have to repay the Government the initial capital invested so that a revolving fund can be created for replication purposes. Once the project has reached full production, with the needed resources in place, the Government is

expected to pull out and hand the project's management to the beneficiaries. This scheme has since been piloted in three urban areas of Francistown, Mahalapye and Ghanzi. The 'success' of these projects has led the Government into replicating the project in Tsabong, Kanye, Mahalapye, Ramotswa, Mochudi and it has been spread to almost all the villages in Botswana.

### Institutional set-up

The main institutions responsible for implementation of Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme (IPAHS) Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, which is responsible for the capital financing and the Department of Housing under the Ministry of Lands and Housing which provide the advisory role. The Council implements the project on behalf of the Department of Housing. The Council is responsible for the selection of beneficiaries, training and day to day operations of the project for a period of two years. After two years the project is handed over to beneficiaries to run it profitably.

## BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY AREA

Ramotswa urban village is located in the South-East District within the south-east part of Botswana (Fig. 2). The Population and the Housing Census of 2001 indicate that the settlement recorded a total population of 23 232 people (the 2011 Census figures will be provided). Ramotswa lies about 32 km south-east of Gaborone City and it is a headquarter of the South-East District Council administration responsible for primary education, primary health care, tertiary roads, village water and wastewater, solid waste management, social welfare and community development, and remote area development. Due to its close

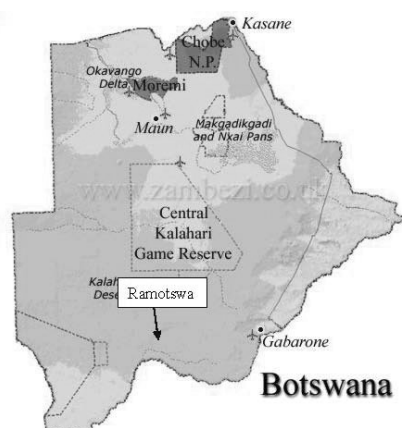


Fig. 2. Geographical setting of Ramotswa in Botswana

proximity to Gaborone City, Ramotswa has experienced rapid population growth and market itself as an alternative destination for those seeking rental housing in Botswana capital. The settlement accounts for 99% of the population in the South-East District and experience demographic growth due to the population spillover from Gaborone City. The rapid population growth has put a tremendous pressure on demand for residential plots and rental housing. Therefore, it is necessary to develop innovative ways to encourage more people to increase residential capacities for their own needs and commercial renting. The latest development plan (GoB, 2011) promotes traditional areas redevelopment and high density residential development in new areas to curb urban sprawl and secure application of social and commercial housing schemes.

### Research justification of the study area

Ramotswa was chosen as the case study, mainly because of the following reasons:

- One of the first Botswana villages where the scheme was introduced.
- It has the worst problems of housing due to its close proximity to Gaborone City and increased housing demands as dormitory settlement.
- It is experiencing rapid population growth.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### Broad Aim

The main broad aim of this research is to determine whether the primary objective of integrated poverty alleviation and housing programme has been met in providing the affordable low-cost housing and equipping the beneficiaries with requisite building skills which they can use to seek employment. The objective stated above arises from the concern about the plight of low-income people who do not qualify under the Self-Help Housing Scheme SHHA and mushrooming of squatter settlements, signs of poverty in the low-income areas and overcrowding in living units.

Based on those broad aims, the study met the following objectives as set out below.

### Objectives

1. To examine the structure of houses that were built/improved through the programme

The beneficiaries are trained and equipped with skills to mould bricks, paving slabs, kerbstone etc. They are given allowance from the profits made from the sale of the project's products.

They are encouraged to use the allowance to mobilize building material for the construction or improvement of their houses.

2.To examine poverty levels amongst the beneficiaries. The programme is intended to reduce poverty levels amongst the beneficiaries. The poverty levels should be reduced through gainful employment in construction sector.

3.To investigate the level of construction skills acquired by beneficiaries

The beneficiaries are trained in the production and marketing of standard building materials such as stock bricks, blocks, pavement slabs and kerbstones for sale at competitive prices on the local market. An allowance is offered to the beneficiaries dependent on the profit made from the sale of the project's products.

4.To assess the roles and challenges of different institutions in the implementation of the implementation of the Integrated Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme (IPAHS).

**Research Methodology**

Most informal interviews were conducted at the Department of Housing under the Ministry of Lands and Housing because it is a government based agency for administering the integrated poverty alleviation scheme. This department is central to all housing issues because it has assumed the responsibility for all housing functions (including policy formulation, planning, research, development and management of Government estates) in the country.

Other knowledgeable informants were selected from the South-East District Council. These included Planners and the Coordinator of Integrated Poverty Alleviation Officer at District level. Some other ministries and several other departments responsible for different aspects of human settlement were also contacted, in particular the Department of Town Planning, Department of Lands, Department of Surveys and Mapping and Department of Local Government and Development.

The study also utilises published and unpublished materials as well as sundry informal investigations (i.e. observations) of beneficiaries' houses. A total of 30 questionnaires were administered to the beneficiaries of the scheme. The questionnaires were prepared to seek information on levels of poverty, construction skills, income status and challenges confronted by the beneficiaries. The gender issue has not affected the results of the research because the questionnaire was designed for both sexes. Therefore, our research method and presented results focus on the information retrieved from affected citizens

where their participation and individual capacities in implementing IPHAS have been identified as key factor for improving the scheme (Cavrić et al., 2008).

**Findings**

Prior to joining the scheme, almost all the respondents were registered under the Government Destitute programme. According to the respondents they were removed from the destitute programme four years before to join the Poverty Alleviation and Housing Scheme. The majority of respondents were females aged between 40 and 50. Almost 90% of the respondents were single female-headed households with at least 5 children per household. The majority of the respondents have lower levels of education, while 90% of the respondents did not finish primary education. The beneficiaries are paid a standard daily rate of BWP25 (EUR 2,5) per day which translates to BWP550 (EUR 55) per month. According to the beneficiaries the allowance is standard regardless of level of education and performance.

**Housing Structures**

Information on housing characteristics was obtained from the beneficiaries. Only 3% of the beneficiaries have improved/built their houses from savings of their allowances. About 80% of the beneficiaries have not improved their houses during the time of survey. They complained that the allowance is too little and

does not even cover basic commodities such as monthly groceries. They indicated that they were expecting to be assisted by profits from project not to use their allowances to improve their houses. They complained that there is no transparency between them and the Council regarding operations of the project.

**Poverty alleviation**

The main aim of the programme is to alleviate poverty amongst people who do not qualify for the SHHA scheme, and it anticipates that there will be poverty reduction and eventually elimination. The results of the study, however, show that even though most of the beneficiaries have acquired knowledge of moulding bricks, there are still signs of poverty amongst their households. Close to 85% of the beneficiaries said they were better off under the destitute programme because they were given a basket of food for free by the Government. They said their removal from the destitute programme has exacerbated their living conditions because they are paid a small allowance which can not even buy monthly worth of supplies. The majority of the beneficiaries are still trapped in a cycle of poverty because they still live in uninhabitable houses where basic services are remarkably missing.

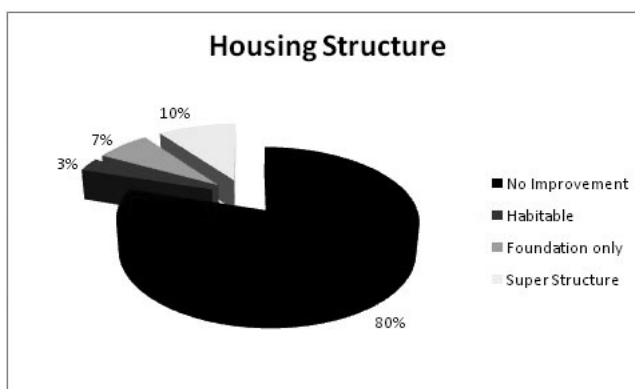
**Construction skills**

The majority of the residents (94%) have acquired building skills. They were trained in a range of construction related activities, such as

*Table 1. Age-Sex cross - tabulation of respondents*

Respondents Gender	Respondents Age (years)						Total
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	+70	
Male	0	0	2	2	1	0	5
Female	1	0	19	5	0	0	25
Total	1	0	21	7	1	0	30

Source: Field Survey April 2011



*Fig. 3. The structure of houses improved under IPAHS scheme, Source: Field Survey April 2011*

brick molding, paving, plastering, and installation of kerbstones. They have also acquired skills on the right quantities of the required material for moulding. Despite the fact that the majority of them have acquired these skills, they still lack basic managerial skills to manage a project on their own. They complained that there is no transparency in operations of the scheme. They said the Council runs the scheme under a cloak of secrecy. They said it will be difficult for them to run the scheme on their own because they lack basic skills such as book-keeping.

#### **Roles and challenges of institutions**

The institutional set-up presents constraints in that, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning is supposed to offer policy direction and synergy in the scheme, besides providing funds for physical development of the infrastructure. But more intriguingly, the policy direction is provided by yet another Ministry of Lands and Housing through the Department of Housing. The Council implements the scheme on behalf of the Department of Housing. The operations of Councils in the country are different and autonomous. This could present a contradiction with the development initiatives of the scheme not fulfilling any specific policy objective. According to the stakeholders, the scheme is confronted with numerous challenges such as bureaucratic procedures within councils during procurement of building materials for the scheme, given that the scheme is competing with other independent brick moulders in the village. The payment structure of beneficiaries is different amongst councils, e.g. in Mahalapye the beneficiaries are paid a higher monthly salary.

There are no clear criteria for beneficiaries to exit the scheme; the beneficiaries exit the scheme at their own time without any intervention by the Council. The beneficiaries are also not able to run the projects on their own after the two years elapses.

Almost all the ministries have poverty alleviation programmes, e.g. the Labour Intensive Public Works programmes (*ipelegeng*) which are geared to reduce unemployment. There is a lot of overlap in most of these poverty alleviation initiatives, and while the unemployed are expected to reap the benefits from all these schemes, they are yet implemented at the same time during the year which creates a lot of confusion amongst the unemployed who are not able to choose the right scheme that will improve their livelihoods.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The scheme has made several positive strides since its inception. The uptake of the scheme is relatively high in most districts of the country. The poverty alleviation and housing scheme model has all the necessary elements for success, as it addresses precisely the relevant social stratum of the poor sections of the community. However, the scheme in its present form is beset with problems, and outside intervention is needed to revitalise the programme. The scheme needs urgent attention in order to coordinate roles of different actors in the scheme. Management issues pertaining to all aspects of the programme: selection criteria, material supply, loan disbursement, building inspections, services, and record keeping need urgent intervention. There should be standard guidelines for management issues, the different districts have different guidelines which are sometimes contradictory.

The scheme requires pragmatic policies geared to meet the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries. There is a need for policy interventions through government commitment to principles such as the right to housing for every citizen. The poverty alleviation and housing scheme is not geared towards self-dependence. Most beneficiaries still want to rely on the Government hand-outs for their living.

There is also a need to synchronise different poverty eradication programmes in Botswana, and there seems to be a lot of overlapping and contradictions that impact negatively the sustainability of the scheme. The poverty alleviation and housing scheme is not geared towards self-dependence. There is a need to bring them under one roof so as to manage them effectively.

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