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# "Our Father's Programmes": political branding around social protection in Botswana, 2008-2014

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# "Our Father's Programmes": political branding around social protection in Botswana, 2008-2014

#### **Abstract**

The Botswana Democratic Party has ruled uninterrupted in Botswana since independence, but opposition parties have made significant inroads during recent elections. In the midst of this heightened political competition, President Ian Khama (2008-) has sought to increase support for the party by remarketing the country's employment-based programmes to serve new governmental objectives around employment and poverty reduction. Khama's rebranding of public employment programmes (PEPs), especially the Ipelegeng Programme, has allowed government to target underserved beneficiary groups such as the urban poor, and provided more reliable incomes to out-of-work Batswana in rural areas. Critically, the rebranding of social protection programmes has resulted in their being publicly associated more with Khama himself than with government. Public displays of empathy for the conditions of the poor moreover, as manifested during Khama's visits to disadvantaged areas, reinforced the president's image as a poverty-sensitive leader. These programmatic and non-programmatic measures have together defined Khama's social protection 'brand'; or the public emphasis that the president has placed on his social protection agenda. For their part, opposition leaders have branded themselves around a "social-democratic" approach to poverty reduction. Since the 1990s, ruling and opposition parties have converged in their social protection ideologies as the BDP has "counterbranded" in response to electoral competition by adopting opposition policy ideas. Khama's branding around personalised PEPs, in conclusion, generated strong support for himself among the rural poor especially owing to popular preferences for low-wage work over cash transfers. Using Afrobarometer survey data, this paper shows that Khama's branding was insufficient to maintain the BDP vote, as the party's poor performance in the 2014 election confirmed.

### Khama's mandate and the state of party politics in Botswana c. 2008

By 2008, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) had managed a feat matched by few other parties in any democratic political system: eight straight electoral victories. These electoral achievements were due in no small part to the ruling party's stewardship of the country, which has featured an impressive record of development and economic growth. While the BDP had during the leadership of first president Seretse Khama (1967-1980) received the support of roughly three-quarters of the electorate, however, the popular vote percentage won by the BDP waned thereafter. Botswana's first-past-the-post electoral system continued to afford the BDP a massive majority in the National Assembly, but its share of the vote declined to 55 percent in 1994. The 1994 election also gave the opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) a significant voice in parliament, as the party won 13 out of 40 elected positions. Since 1994, elections in Botswana have continued to be characterised by this heightened political competition.

The 1994 election forced the BDP to reflect on how the BDP could continue its stay in government. One way in which these party elites responded to the BDP's decline in electoral support was to reconsider its leadership strategy. With comfortable wins through Botswana's first five elections, the party had over time shifted its priorities away from politicking and toward a more administratively efficient (if not politically expedient) style of governance. This shift manifested itself in the selection of "an educated, mostly expatriate bureaucratic and technocratic elite" who were best prepared to advance the country's development goals. Headlining this new leadership class was Festus Mogae, who became vice-president under President Quett Masire in 1992 and succeeded Masire as president in 1998. Mogae, unlike Khama and Masire, had been a career technocrat, first as a director at the International Monetary Fund and then as Governor of the Bank of Botswana, before joining the Cabinet in 1989 as Minister of Finance.

As president from 1998 to 2008, Mogae received accolades for his government's AIDS eradication programmes and generally staid leadership style. But he devoted relatively little energy to ensuring that the political needs of the party were being met. Mogae once noted, "the problem with us in Africa is that individuals ... are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Mwansa, L., Lucas, T. & K. Osei-Hwedie. 1998. The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 13(2): 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Sebudubudu, D. & M. Z. Botlhomilwe. 2012. The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development: What Lessons? *Leadership* 8(1): 29–45, doi:10.1177/1742715011426962.

more important than institutions: political parties must be more important than their leaders [and] the government ... must be more important than the president." Yet as the 1994 election had demonstrated, the BDP needed a president who could reenergise the party's traditional bases of support, especially rural, elderly, and impoverished communities, as well as reach new political constituencies in the rapidly urbanising country that was Botswana at the turn of the millennium. By 2004, the popular vote for the BDP had fallen further to 52 percent.

In searching for a leader who could renew support for the BDP, the party's elites turned to the man with the most famous name in the country's history, Khama. The son of the first president and founder of the country, Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama ("Ian Khama") had been a member of the BDP for all of one day when he was sworn in as Vice-President of Botswana in April 1998. Nevertheless, his attributes and attitude toward government in other ways made him the ideal individual, at least politically, to become next-in-line for the presidency. His status as a tribal chief, a position he inherited from his father, gave his candidacy added appeal among Botswana's rural populace. Moreover, Khama's career in the Botswana Defence Forces, where he had occupied a commanding rank since he was in his mid-20s, congealed a party that had splintered in the late 1990s owing to suspicions of corruption by the Masire government. Though he lacked political credentials prior to 1998, Khama's inextricable ties to the party positioned him to become a president who could restore the BDP to its historical pre-eminence.

## Drought relief, the economy, and the BDP's ebbing social protection conservatism

When Khama stepped into the presidency after an unremarkable ten-year stint as vice-president, he inherited a BDP development strategy that had been largely responsible for buoying the party during four decades of political leadership.<sup>6</sup> The country's lucrative mineral resources allowed the government to fund expansive

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Naidoo, J. A Leader I Would Vote for: Botswana's Former President Festus Mogae. April 4, 2014: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2014-04-04-a-leader-i-would-vote-for-botswanas-former-president-festus-mogae/#.VVvcgkaZqVB.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe. The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development, 42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Good, K. 2009. The Presidency of General Ian Khama: The Militarization of the Botswana 'Miracle'. *African Affairs*: adp086, doi:10.1093/afraf/adp086.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Government minister David Magang called Khama a "closed book" as so little was publicly known about him. *Ibid*.

infrastructural development projects as well as to provide Batswana with healthcare and education at a rate that was not matched by any other country in the region. Economic growth of about 9 percent per year ensured that few voters would wish to challenge the ruling party's stewardship of the economy for fear of "rocking the boat". At the same time, early BDP governments implemented an extensive array of social protection programmes that initially featured support for farmers and, in the case of drought, extensive food aid for all Batswana who were unable to engage in livelihood-generating activity.

In addition to its economic growth track record, the government's early welfare programmes served as powerful motivators for the country's (then) mostly rural electorate to support the BDP. Under Ian Khama's father, the Accelerated Rain-fed Agriculture Programme (ARAP) and Arable Land Development Programme (ALDEP) supported smallholder herders and cultivators with livestock and farming implements. Both programmes were implemented during election years (1974 and 1979, respectively), suggesting that the BDP wished to emphasise to voters that the party would continue to develop the country through agriculture. But the government's efforts to develop agriculture in the late 1970s and 1980s were on the whole no match for the drought that would beset the country.

When drought hit the country beginning in 1978, the government was forced to change tack. As President Masire explained in the party's 1984 election manifesto, the government had been forced to shift its policy priorities away from institutional development in favour of relief from drought. At first, this response took the form of food aid, which was distributed in part through a Destitute Persons Programme (introduced in 1980) that made food baskets available to people living in chronic poverty. Drought forced the BDP by the 1980s to begin to provide social safety

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S. H. & J. A. Robinson. An African Success Story: Botswana. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2001, doi:10.2139/ssrn.290791.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Mwansa, Lucas & Osei-Hwedie. The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana, 62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 1984.

The Government of Botswana also features several more targeted social safety net schemes. These include Community Home-based Care (CHBC), which was launched in 1995 as a response to the HIV/AIDS crisis, and provides clinical medical assistance and a food basket to beneficiaries. The Old Age Pension, which was introduced in 1996 and provides a means-untested monthly transfer of P300 to Batswana over the age of 64. The Veterans Program (introduced 1998) provides a cash stipend of about P400 to veterans of World War II or their spouses. The Orphan Care Program, established in 1999 for minors who have two parents who are deceased, provides food baskets and other items such as schools uniforms and a transportation allowance. The government also sponsors extensive feeding programmes for "Vulnerable Groups" and primary and secondary

nets that could ensure food security for rural people.<sup>11</sup> Social protection had been extremely limited under Seretse Khama, who had been reluctant to provide welfare that he believed would detract, both in funding and in focus, from development projects in infrastructure and education.

In addition to prompting an expansion of the Botswanan welfare state, which slowed development, heavy drought in the 1980s hampered the ability of rural Batswana to engage in sustainable agriculture projects. Drought hampered the BDP's agricultural development programmes such as ARAP, but also disrupted traditional livelihoods. The implications of this disruption were politically hazardous for the BDP. Indeed, it had been the ability of the Seretse Khama government to ensure social stability for the country's historically rural populace that had underpinned strong electoral support for the party. Masire was aware that the agricultural production strategy was becoming decreasingly effective:

'We in the BDP were also concerned about the drift to towns for social reasons. In the rural areas, people had a traditional way of making a living and carrying on with their lives. In the cities, they either got a job or they just become lost souls. The traditional safety nets—going to live at your uncle's place, or borrowing oxen from someone else to plough your lands if you had no oxen—had no parallel in the towns. We talked about it in cabinet; we talked about it in party meetings; and we talked about it in parliamentary caucuses. It was very much a part of our thinking as we developed our economic policies'.<sup>14</sup>

The party therefore needed a way to maintain livelihoods and keep people productive, if they hoped to ensure stability, while at the same time avoiding losses to the rate of development.<sup>15</sup> With drought in the 1980s continuing to limit agricultural output, the government decided it would employ people in development projects instead. This policy shift marked the end of the BDP's initial "assumption

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school students. World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," December 2013, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/17846.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Mwansa, Lucas & Osei-Hwedie. The Practice of Social Policy in Botswana, 62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Sebudubudu, D. 2010. The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa: Botswana-A Relatively Successful African Initiative. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(7): 254.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Interview with Happy Siphambe, PhD, Professor, University of Botswana, October 22, 2014.

Masire, Q. K. J. 2008. Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat. Ed. Lewis, S. R. Gaborone, Botswana: Palgrave Macmillan. 217.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Sebudubudu. The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa, 254.

that the rural communities had adequate systems of support for the welfare of all their members". 16

Starting in 1982, the Masire government dispensed drought relief to able-bodied Batswana in the form of cash-for-work programmes in order to replace the income that was lost to crop failure.<sup>17</sup> Drought relief (namola leuba) in Botswana during these years was not monotypic: food aid for vulnerable groups including children and nursing women, remote-dwellers, and other "destitutes"; cash in exchange for short-term work on local development projects for able-bodied adults. <sup>18</sup> During the drought of 1992-1993, for instance, roughly 400,000 Batswana received food aid and 100,000 labourers were provided short-term employment for several months of the year. Jobs were varied but often involved infrastructure projects including the construction of "dams, roads, classrooms, community halls and houses for extension workers in the rural areas". 19 Labourers received a very modest cash stipend of approximately P130 per week, but the amounts were nonetheless sufficient to have "saved the lives of countless people". 20 Indeed, without these relief schemes, which ensured that rural household incomes declined only modestly during the extended drought of the early 1980s, the resultant disruption to rural communities would likely have upset traditional livelihoods on a massive scale.<sup>21</sup>

Politically, the drought relief programmes that government implemented (on an annualised basis) throughout much of the 1980s proved a major impetus for voters in rural areas to support the BDP. According to the 1989 BDP election manifesto, the party "takes pride in the fact that despite periods of prolonged drought which have adversely affected production, Batswana have been able to maintain their close ties with the land.<sup>22</sup> This is so because we [the BDP] have always been quick to introduce sound assistance programmes during periods of drought." The BDP government's implementation of drought-related welfare was extremely influential

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Selolwane, O. 2012. From National to People's Poverty in Changing Policy Regimes. *Poverty Reduction and Changing Policy Regimes in Botswana*. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>c</sup>Munemo, N. 2012. *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices* (Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2012), 153.

<sup>18</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Mokganedi Zara Botlhomilwe and David Sebudubudu, "Elections in Botswana: A Ritual Enterprise?," *Open Area Studies Journal* 4 (2011): 98.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Gooch and McDonald, cited in Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Charles Harvey and Stephen R. Lewis, *Policy Choice and Development Performance in Botswana* (Macmillan, 1990), 282.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 1989

in these years, with PEPs apparently driving significant political support for the ruling party:

The single most important reason given by respondents ... for being a member of the BDP was the Drought Relief Programme. Through this project, where many people are fed, subsidized, employed and assisted in so many ways, the ruling party has successfully resisted political inroads into its popularity, especially in the rural areas.<sup>23</sup>



With BDP landslide victories in 1984 and 1989, including victories in over 90 percent of constituencies and a nearly two-thirds majority of the national popular vote, discretionary drought relief undoubtedly served both the party's political and policy agendas in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

The BDP's political dominance seemingly assured thanks to discretionary drought relief, political concerns around social protection strategy began to make way for more technocratic considerations. As was announced in the BDP's 1989 manifesto. drought relief planning would thenceforth "be tied to the overall [development] strategy because drought is a lurking danger in Botswana that the country must continuously be prepared to combat."<sup>25</sup> Assuming that the party's electoral dominance would last, BDP leaders in 1991 decided to institutionalise spending on drought relief, which as a discretionary measure was proving to be too expensive. This institutionalisation allowed for "greater policy and institutional preparedness," resulting in more comprehensive support for vulnerable populations during the drought periods that followed in 1992-1993, 1995-1997, and 2001-2005.<sup>26</sup> Politically speaking however, incorporating drought relief—and accompanying public works programmes—into the standing budget limited somewhat the discretion that incumbents had to determine when and how drought relief would be implemented. Whereas drought relief served as an important political tool until the 1990s, its bureaucratisation decreased the potency of drought relief to drive electoral support for the party by the time Ian Khama became president in 2008.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> John D. Holm and Patrick Molutsi, *Democracy in Botswana: The Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Gaborone, 1-5 August 1988* (Ohio Univ Pr, 1989), 128.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*, 158.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 1989

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Ibid., 159.

This decision of the BDP leadership to depoliticise drought relief, however, was not made with a complete understanding of how drought had fundamentally changed the country's demographic makeup. Despite the early success of drought relief to strengthen political support for the party in the 1980s, the "incalculable harm" that drought had beset upon the rural populace, as Masire put it, had not assuaged the migration of many thousands of Batswana to cities and towns in search of new sources of livelihood. The government had "poured a great deal of money [US\$13 million per year] into drought relief to keep body and soul together for people," as well as promoting the industrialisation that more than doubled per-capita GDP between 1980 and 1990.

Yet the magnitude of drought combined with the loss of many breadwinners to the AIDS pandemic toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century sparked a demographic transition from rural areas to the country's burgeoning urban centres.<sup>29</sup> The population of Gaborone, once a small village, for instance, was growing at a rate of almost 15 percent per year between 1971 and 1975.<sup>30</sup> A country that was more than 80 percent rural-dwelling in 1981 became for the first time a majority urban nation by the time Ian Khama inherited the presidency in 2008. (In 2011, more than 60 percent of Batswana lived in urban areas.<sup>31</sup>) The BDP, unable or unwilling to invest nearly as much capital on job creation in cities as compared to rural areas, was as a consequence of this demographic shift losing its traditional base of electoral support. By 1994, the BNF had galvanised significant support in cities which featured many disgruntled migrants, leading to a significant dip in BDP support in the election that year.

Another major catalyst of discontent for many Batswana was the government's relative inability to convert public revenues into fully inclusive growth for all citizens. The BDP through the first three decades of its rule had relied on a tremendous economic growth rate—the fastest in the world from 1966 to 1989—to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Masire, Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat:, 218.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibid.; From Reuters, "Botswana Appeals for Drought Aid," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-04-09/news/mn-490\_1\_drought-aid.

Amy R. Poteete, "The Absence of Intergroup Violence in Botswana: An Assessment of the Role of Development Strategies," *The Economic Roots of Conflict and Cooperation in Africa*, 2013, 183.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Coralie Bryant, Betsy Stephens, and Sherry MacLiver, "Rural to Urban Migration: Some Data from Botswana," *African Studies Review* 21, no. 02 (September 1978): 85–99, doi:10.2307/523664.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> CIA World Factbook, "Botswana Demographics Profile 2014," August 23, 2014, http://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/demographics profile.html.

be the "rising tide that lifted all ships." Ample public revenues allowed the government to make investments in education, infrastructure, and health. Beyond these strategic investments, however, the early BDP leaders followed a frugal public policy. This "parsimonious," market-oriented development brand, as Seekings characterised the early BDP governments, fostered only minimal inclusion in economic participation for Botswana's poor. 33 Therefore, while GDP per capita rose from US\$50 in 1967 to US\$2,583 in 1991, the benefits of growth did not trickle down fully to the masses, especially to the rural poor. Persistent poverty, which was in large part the outcome of the government's heavy reliance of mineral extraction to drive economic growth, characterised much of the populace even at the end of the millennium.<sup>34</sup> Nearly one-third of the country was still living on less than US\$1.25 per day in 2002-2003 with a majority of this population inhabiting the rural parts of the country. 35 The BDP's historical strategy of fiscal conservatism, though it ensured the government had resources to spare on expanding drought relief, did little to mediate the country's uneven wealth distribution through inclusive job creation..<sup>36</sup> By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Botswana had become one of the most unequal societies in Africa.

The task of Ian Khama by the late 2000s was therefore to generate support for a party whose historical support base had been significantly reduced, owing to the effects of drought and insufficiently inclusive growth. To help overcome this handicap, the president relied on a new social protection strategy. Specifically, he strengthened the government's old public employment programmes (PEPs), which had been associated with drought relief, and then re-purposed them to reflect a new public focus on poverty reduction through employment creation. By changing the way the government's employment-based social protection programmes were being marketed and by strengthening them further, Khama could better address national unemployment concerns and broaden the scope of programmes to include the urban as well as rural poor. These programmatic efforts to recast the government's

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Charles Harvey, "Botswana: Is the Economic Miracle Over?," *Journal of African Economies* no. 3 (November 1, 1992): 335–68.
Seekings, Jeremy, "Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under

<sup>33</sup> Seekings, Jeremy, "Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under Botswana Democratic Party Governments, 1994-2010," forthcoming 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Lesego Sekwati, Nettimi Narayana, and Mpho Raboloko, "Understanding the Nature of Household Poverty in Botswana," *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 26, no. 1 (2013): 71–82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> BIDPA and International Poverty Centre, "Poverty Status Report for Botswana: Incidence, Trends, and Dynamics," Research Project Report, (September 2005), 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Kempe Ronald Hope Sr and Wayne A Edge, "Growth with Uneven Development: Urban-Rural Socio-Economic Disparities in Botswana," *Geoforum* 27, no. 1 (February 1996): 53–62, doi:10.1016/0016-7185(95)00031-3.

decades-old public employment strategy were characteristic of the Khama social protection "brand," as the following section will elucidate.

#### Introduction: Khama PEPs

Under Ian Khama, the government's discourse around public works schemes changed. The BDP Minister of Finance Baledzi Gaolathe, whose service spanned the Mogae and Khama governments, articulated the new emphasis around PEPs in his 2009 Budget Speech to the National Assembly. "In the past, Government addressed poverty through a number of strategies including provision of infrastructure and basic services," Gaolathe noted. As we refine our anti-poverty initiatives, we will now place emphasis on improving the livelihoods of Batswana, and engaging in productive activities." The emphasis on productivity as a remedy for the country's poverty challenges epitomised the programmatic aspect of Khama's social protection brand.

The most prominent programme to be the result of Khama's re-marketing effort has been the Ipelegeng Programme. Botswana's drought relief programmes essentially ended in 2008 with the introduction of Ipelegeng, which was known in its first year as the Labour Intensive Public Works Programme. Despite the name change, this programme resembled the old programmes in virtually every way, save for the fact that Ipelegeng operates throughout the year and regardless of drought conditions. Like its predecessor programme, Ipelegeng has employed vulnerable Batswana, though the programme restricts participation to working-age adults of a minimum eighteen years old. Ipelegeng participants are employed in jobs such as "maintenance of drift fences, [schools], health facilities, staff houses and government facilities; desilting of dams and storm water drains; [and] vegetation control."38 The Ministry of Local Government manages the programme and, as of 2014, disbursed salaries of P480 per month plus a daily meal (P100 per-month value) to labourers, who are employed six hours per day and twenty-two days per month.<sup>39</sup> With the national unemployment rate consistently exceeding 15 percent during the Khama presidency, the demand for participation among unemployed persons has been so high that local recruitment offices have had to institute a lottery system for

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Budget Address 2009

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> "Ipelegeng Programme," *Ministry of Local Government (MLG)*, n.d., http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/Ministry-of-Local-Government-MLG1/Tools-and-Services/Services1/Ipelegeng-Project1/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 29.

people wishing to work.<sup>40</sup> The programme is self-targeting in that the meagre benefits mean that in practice only the poor participate.<sup>41</sup>

Ipelegeng may have been in its structure rooted in drought relief, but the programme was also the culmination of a BDP policy evolution that, motivated by declining mineral revenues, stressed the need to engage welfare recipients in economically productive projects. An important policy document in this regard was the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (NSPR), which was launched in 2003 during the Mogae presidency. Through the NSPR, the government sought to spark the establishment of economic empowerment schemes and job creating programmes that could also alleviate poverty. The NSPR's central tenet was that the "self-empowerment of citizens" should be the primary focus of any effort to achieve sustainable reductions in poverty. To this end, the authors of the NSPR proposed sixteen specific poverty reduction initiatives that would spur creation of employment, especially in rural parts of the country. While few of these programmes were ever implemented, the NSPR presaged the Khama government's focus on reducing poverty by increasing productivity on state-sponsored projects.

Another seminal policy document to which Khama often referred in his discourse focusing on poverty eradication was the *Vision 2016*. The *Vision* aligned the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Botswana with the government's own stated aspirations to eradicate absolute poverty by the time Botswana turned 50 in 2017. The document, which was introduced in 1997, just prior to Khama's entering politics, established that "Batswana will be active participants ... not passive beneficiaries [in poverty eradication] ... [and that] while Government has an undeniable and critical role to play *seabe sa Motswana mongwe le mongwe* ("the role of every Motswana") is [to] marshal his or her best energies and resources towards the realisation of the *Vision*." Khama's stated dedication to following the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Ibid., 4. The cited unemployment rates come from the Government of Botswana statistics bureau. These data consistently underreport the true rate of unemployment, according to several key informants consulted as part of this report.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Poverty was measured in one representative survey by the number of cattle owned that labourers owned, a common proxy for wealth in Botswana. Among survey respondents, fewer than one-quarter owned any cattle.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Interview with Happy Siphambe, PhD, Professor, University of Botswana.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," June 2012, http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Botswana\_2012-004\_Final\_Ipelegeng.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Jeremy Seekings, "Welfare Reform and the Conservative Social Contract: Botswana under Botswana Democratic Party Governments, 1994-2010," 2015, forthcoming.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> "Realising the Dream / Seabe Sa Motswana Mongwe Le Mongwe," *Towards Prosperity for All*, n.d., http://www.vision2016.co.bw/vision-content.php?vid=31.

*Vision 2016* document both in its means and its ends further shaped the president's social protection approach.<sup>46</sup>

### Ipelegeng, the heart of the Khama brand

Entering the presidency at the height of the global financial crisis, President Khama prioritised the creation of employment and the reduction of poverty in his early government. "Today, the country faces challenges that require further responses and initiatives," he declared in his April 2008 inaugural address. 47 "Areas that I feel need special emphasis are employment creation and poverty alleviation, programmes for the youth, health, housing and the fight against crime." The worldwide recession had provided an initial impetus for Khama's policy emphases during the early years of his government. The recession had entered Botswana through the diamond industry, of which Botswana is a leading international supplier. 48 In 2008, the country's real GDP contracted by 6 percent and jobs in the mining sector fell by almost 10 percent. Nearly one out of five Batswana lived below the poverty datum line and the unemployment rate was 18 percent, though this rate was no doubt much higher among the youth and in rural areas. 49 Within four months of taking office, Khama introduced the Ipelegeng Programme as the principal agent by which to combat the effects of the recession, according to the party's 2014 manifesto.<sup>50</sup> But even after the worst effects of the recession had ebbed, Khama's employment programmes continued to comprise a major focus of his policy agenda. Whereas discrete periods of drought were the spark that motivated former presidents to implement relief through temporary employment schemes, the fact that Khama's programmes were not predicated on weather conditions but rather on the existence of poverty and unemployment ensured a continuing rationale for their existence.

While Ipelegeng, Khama's chief public employment scheme during his presidency, may have resembled structurally the former drought relief programmes and resonated with pre-existing BDP policy aspirations, the president's efforts to realise these programmes and market them as central to his *social* policy agenda made them fundamentally his own. Without "reinventing the wheel," Khama essentially

http://www.thevoicebw.com/2014/07/18/one-one-president-ian-khama/.

<sup>46 &</sup>quot;One on One with President Ian Khama," *The Voice*, July 18, 2014,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Inauguration Address, 2008

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> United Nations Global Pulse, http://www.unglobalpulse.org/resources/brief-effects-global-economic-crisis-botswana.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> "Data: Botswana," http://data.worldbank.org/country/botswana?display=default.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 2014

rebranded drought relief with a new public emphasis around combatting poverty and developing the country by striving for the employment of all able-bodied persons. Though Ipelegeng offered to beneficiaries only short-term employment of up to several months, the president declared it to be a "permanent programme and a poverty eradication strategy," according to Presidential Directive 19(a) (2008), and "as part of our national development agenda."51

Khama's decision to transform the government's employment programmes from being predicated on drought to serving a broader goal of poverty eradication was the ultimate result of a realisation that in the drought-battered Botswana of the 21st century, government income relief needed to become less reactive and more proactive. 52 With extensive drought making agricultural activity as a primary means of income perennially tenuous for smallholder farmers, Khama's policy emphasis shift around employment programmes transformed them from being about mitigating loss to instead "providing needed employment." <sup>53</sup> That employment was in fact needed to ensure national Dignity, one of the four themes that characterised Khama's policy agenda along with Discipline, Development, and Democracy (the "4 D's"). 54 As the president articulated in his 2010 State of the Nation Address:

'Our development goal is to ultimately ensure the dignity of all citizens through mutual respect and empowerment through productive excellence. This administration thus has as its ultimate vision a nation that is secure in its individual and collective accomplishments, while showing respect for others at home and abroad. If we pull together we can eradicate absolute poverty by achieving greater prosperity through self-empowering enterprise'.55

"Dignity" and "enterprise" from the beginning characterised the Khama presidency, and although previous presidents had offered similar rhetoric linking the

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> "Support to Smallholder Arable Farmers in Botswana: Agricultural Development or Social Protection?" (UNDP-UNEP-Environment Initiative, 2013),

http://www.unpei.org/sites/default/files/e library documents/Botswana POlicy Brief Support t o smallholder arable farmers in Botswana.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa," 254.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Khama later added a fifth 'D,' Delivery, to his stated policy vision. According to an official October 2009 posting located on the government's website, Khama was "humbled by the expression of faith and trust bestowed upon Him and his Government, [and so] introduced a fifth component – Delivery. ... He emphasized Delivery as a crucial element of the nation's strategy in going forward.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Emphasis is mine.

government's job creation and poverty eradication objectives, Khama reified that rhetoric with a considerable programmatic effort. Ipelegeng, specifically, has "taken centre stage and [is the chief mechanism through which Khama] seeks to achieve some of the aspirations [of the] 5 Ds development strategy." <sup>56</sup>

The early marketing around the Ipelegeng Programme was very much in line with the president's articulated vision for national development. Most immediately, the decision to rename the programme "Ipelegeng," which is often translated as "self-reliance" or "people must carry themselves on their own backs," marked an important discursive shift away from the "relief" programmes that had been associated with the welfare state under Botswana's three former presidents. This concept of self-reliance has been an important rhetorical preoccupation of the Khama presidency and the Ipelegeng Programme has undoubtedly served to reify that new discursive emphasis. "Where we once practised self-reliance (ipelegeng), at both the individual and community levels, we now too often tend to rely on others and the State to provide for us," commented Khama on what he believed to be the nation's prevailing mindset toward work. <sup>57</sup>

PEPs under Khama were therefore no longer about compensating for income lost to drought, but rather mechanisms for achieving self-development. According to the government's website, Ipelegeng "shifted its focus from drought relief to poverty alleviation in 2008," a statement that simultaneously demonstrates the structural consistency between the old and new programmes, and notes the Khama-era change in programmatic focus. <sup>58</sup> Explaining the purpose for this shift in focus, Khama noted in 2012 that:

Poverty eradication is no simple task, for one, a particular action of charity could motivate them to step out of poverty, but for another, the same act could make them government [sic] dependent individuals, as such, programs implemented are always done in the best interest of the poor to help them realise that hardwork will lead to something good. Our vision

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> "Botswana: Khama: State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Botswana, to the Opening of the Fifth Session of Parliament (03/11/2008)," *Polity.org.za*, accessed April 27, 2015, http://www.polity.org.za/article/botswana-khama-state-of-the-nation-address-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-botswana-to-the-opening-of-the-fifth-session-of-parliament-03112008-2008-11-03.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> See the Ministry of Local Government website as of May 2015: http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/Ministry-of-Local-Government-MLG1/Tools-and-Services/Services1/Ipelegeng-Project1/

for ipelegeng isnt [sic] necessarily about giving people money and good food, but rather instil the idea and habit of waking up early to go and do something (work) with oneself. Remember, 'laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.'59

This mandate to have the individual participate in his or her own development had been the clarion call of the NSPR and *Vision 2016*, but Khama was the first president to realise, through Ipelegeng, its prescription in a programmatic way.

The president has furthermore positioned Ipelegeng at the centre of his effort to project a policy focus around discipline. In his 2008 inauguration address, Khama declared that "No democracy can exist without discipline"—another pillar of his "4 D's"—which confirmed the sentiment that many Batswana had already ascribed to the former military commander. Efforts to eliminate poverty and develop the country, Khama suggested from early on his presidency, would necessitate a heightened work ethic, something that the president has frequently argued must change in Botswana. Only with this "mindset change," as the president emphasised in his 2009 State of the Nation Address, could Batswana achieve the country's other policy aspirations: Dignity, Development, and Democracy. Ipelegeng has thus been an important manifestation of the president's drive to cultivate an image of strong leadership, necessary for the development of the country.

Part of this presidential discourse on discipline was centred on the importance of citizen participation in the economy. Commenting on the role of Ipelegeng to reengage unemployed and impoverished able-bodied Batswana, Khama declared that "Instead of just sitting around [and] doing nothing, at least they [Ipelegeng labourers] can be contributing to the local communities whilst earning something and growing their local economies." Khama challenged further in his 2011 State of the Nation Address "all able-bodied citizens to take pride in fending for themselves and contributing towards the development of their country." The

Botswana 2009 National Assembly 0830 Hours," *Selected Press Releases*, October 29, 2009, http://prgovbw.blogspot.com/2009/10/inauguration-address-by-president-of.html.

<sup>62</sup> Botswana Government, President Khama Extended BTV Interview, January 21, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32USZ-0GYWo.

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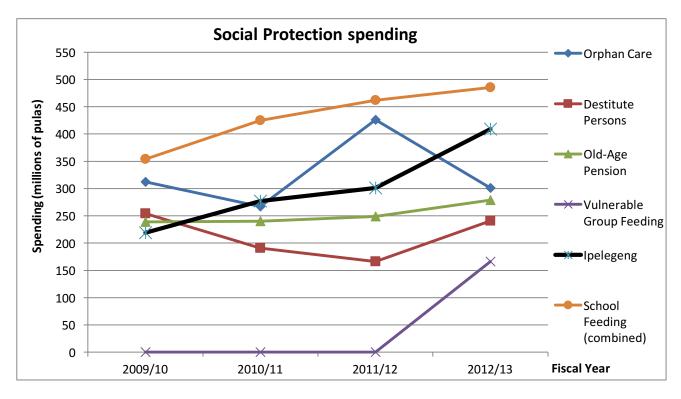
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Quote from Ian Khama, found on official BDP Facebook page. 30 May 2012, https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=115468075145715&story\_fbid=46695302999721 6.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Inauguration Address, 2008.Khama is almost always referred to in official government documents by his full title and name, President Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama.
<sup>61</sup> Pula, "Selected Press Releases: Inauguration Address the by President of the Republic of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Khama, State of the Nation Address, 2011.

president's broader moves to transition the Botswanan welfare state away from beneficiaries' passive receipt of welfare (drought relief) to active participation in development ("self-reliance") accompanied parallel reforms. For instance, shortly after taking office Khama ordered a review of the Destitute Persons Programme after completion of which he announced that 8,765 beneficiaries were able-bodied and would thus be moved to the Ipelegeng Programme. <sup>64</sup> The president's actions around participation in this regard were fundamental to building up his broader social protection brand around work.

Ipelegeng, as judged by consistent spending rises, has occupied an increasingly sizable role in defining the Khama presidency. Beginning in the 2009-2010 fiscal year, Ipelegeng received P219 million and had increased its share of funding to P409 million in 2012-2013.<sup>65</sup> This nearly 87-percent increase in spending on the programme occurred, moreover, when the government's total expenditure on "Social Safety Nets" increased by only 7 percent (P3,471 million to P3,698 million). Though the programme received relatively little funding at its inception, by the 2012-2013 fiscal year Ipelegeng had become one of the largest social protection



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World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 49. By 2010, about two-thirds of these workers had been moved to the Ipelegeng program.
Ibid., 42.

schemes in Botswana, second only to the combined school feeding programmes.<sup>66</sup> In 2014-2015, during which time Botswana held an election, spending on Ipelegeng climbed another 42 percent to P580.6 million. As Ipelegeng accrued greater relative expenditure with each passing year, the programme came increasingly to characterise the president's public policy agenda.

### Khama's rebranded PEPs: engaging old constituencies and reaching new ones

Ian Khama's transformation of the government's PEPs from being predicated on drought to serving a broader goal of poverty eradication resulted in a programme that could, to a greater degree than before, uplift both rural and urban Batswana. Early on, as the Minister of Finance noted in the 2009 Budget Address, the Labour Intensive Public Works Programme had begun to "provide relief in the form of supplementary income support to the poor and unemployed whilst at the same time carrying out essential development projects covering both urban and rural areas." <sup>67</sup> By comparison, drought relief under previous governments had been apportioned on a district-by-district basis depending on the duration and severity of the drought. <sup>68</sup> Consequently, districts with urban areas often received less drought relief funding or even none at all. Ipelegeng, because it was implemented across the country and year-round, served a more geographically diverse beneficiary population. This extended reach of Ipelegeng thus conferred benefits to the urban poor as well, expanding the reach of a programme that has become very much associated with the president.

Along these lines, one unusual aspect of the Ipelegeng Programme, especially given how the BDP has historically offered only targeted social protection schemes, has been the broad scope of its target constituency. In this regard, as one Ipelegeng project supervisor noted:

'While other government safety net or poverty programmes have clear criteria for qualification and hence targeting, this is not the case with Ipelegeng. For example, there is a specific criteria developed for one to be

<sup>68</sup> Ngonidzashe Munemo, *Domestic Politics and Drought Relief in Africa: Explaining Choices*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> According to Seleka (2007), some 580,000 individuals are on feeding programmes which is about a third of the country's population. Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa," 260.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Budget Address, 2009. Emphasis is mine.

defined as a destitute person or an orphan. Interestingly for Ipelegeng, poverty and vulnerability is by self definition. This means that anyone can work for Ipelegeng should they wish to define themselves as poor and are willing to work for the paltry P400.00'. <sup>69</sup>

Maximising participation in the national economy, a theme of the Khama social policy agenda, has likely been the reason for why Khama has broadened the target constituency of the former drought relief PEPs. As one Village Development Committee representative responsible for implementation commented, "we want and recruit everyone because we want everyone to get a chance [to work in Ipelegeng] whether you are old, young or a person living with disability ... If you can work it is fine." From these statements it is clear that Khama's rebranding of PEPs has been the grandest manifestation of his stated intention to engage all ablebodied Batswana, urban or rural, in self-development.

Despite Khama's efforts to extend his social protection programme to a broader constituency however, Ipelegeng seems to have had only a somewhat limited penetration into cities and towns. Of the 56,274 people working in the programme in May 2013, for instance, 18,034 (32%) were based in urban or semi-urban areas.<sup>71</sup> This ratio of rural to urban still meant that Ipelegeng had a more geographically diverse profile than the previous PEPs centred on drought relief, though like its antecedents still primarily targeted rural dwellers. With 11 percent of urban dwellers living below the poverty line, the programme was annually recruiting only a moderate fraction (about one-sixth) of the urban poor, though the number of participants was perhaps fewer than the Khama government had intended. <sup>72</sup> Indeed, the Gaborone City Council reported in 2012 that the city was repeatedly failing to meet its quota for the Ipelegeng Programme. 73 Khama himself complained, during one of his many visits to Gaborone (and to communities around the country), that "people residing in Gaborone do not come forward to work for the Ipelegeng programme."<sup>74</sup> Though Khama's extension of PEPs to urban dwellers—a marked shift from the greater emphasis of rural targeting—has benefitted thousands of urban

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 102–103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Thandy Tebogo, "Khama Walks about Gaborone West North," *The Daily News*, July 22, 2013, http://en.africatime.com/botswana/articles/khama-walks-about-gaborone-west-north.

Batswana, the programme has fallen short of what seems to have been its expected outcome. 75

In rural areas, by contrast, the programme has enjoyed strong approbation. According to one review, Ipelegeng "appears to be very popular among the poor people, especially those living in the rural and remote areas." <sup>76</sup> In these areas where poverty levels exist often between 40 and 60 percent, according to the Central Statistics Office's 2008 report, the programme has elicited a great deal of support. As one community leader characterised the reaction to the programme:

'This Kgotla [tribal council] is usually filled up during recruitment for Ipelegeng because people have no jobs. ... In almost all the cases, the programme is fully subscribed, and in some cases oversubscribed, especially in ... settlements where no or very limited employment opportunities exists except for Ipelegeng. In almost all the districts surveyed, Ipelegeng is able to meet its quota and people are engaged on a rotational basis', 77

Not only did Ipelegeng provide livelihood support to many rural communities, but the programme ensured that fewer rural people felt the need to venture into urban centres in search of work. According to a sampling of rural Ipelegeng participants, 73 percent stated a belief that employment opportunities in the Ipelegeng Programme had stopped migration to cities; this observation was corroborated by 70 percent of urban respondents.<sup>78</sup>

Khama's calls for greater inclusion of women in economic activity also matched a rise in PEP participation by women, exceeding the already high levels of participation in formers governments' drought-contingent programmes. Women, whom Khama in the BDP's 2014 election manifesto declared must be prepared to "participate in and contribute towards socio-economic, cultural and political

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> This observation correlates strongly with trends in population data that show Botswana urbanising at a decreasing rate. Between 2005 and 2010, Botswana was urbanising at an average yearly rate of 2.50 percent, whereas from 2010-2015 the rate has proven to be 1.29 percent. Central Intelligence Agency, *The CIA World Factbook 2010* (Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2009), 90; CIA World Factbook, "Botswana Demographics Profile 2014."

development," comprised 77 percent of Ipelegeng participants in 2012.<sup>79</sup> PEPs in Botswana have generally engaged a greater proportion of women than men, primarily due to the fact that fewer women than men have education and skills training that would allow them to more readily find stable employment.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, over the five years between 1992 and 1996, some 50,000 people were employed annually in drought relief PEPs of whom between 60 and 70 percent each year were women.<sup>81</sup> The slightly higher enrolment of women in Ipelegeng compared to these former PEPs, plus Khama's rhetorical insistence on female participation in the economy, indicates that the president's social protection brand might be understood as being even more dedicated to creating income-generating opportunities for women.

### **Other Programmes**

Toward the end of his first elected term, Khama's rhetoric on empowerment of vulnerable persons increasingly included mention of the youth. In his 2013 State of the Nation Address, for instance, Khama declared that "Poverty eradication and youth development are ... leading priorities" for his government. The president's efforts to engage young Batswana in gainful employment through PEPs has distinguished his commitment to youth empowerment from that of prior presidents. The Khama government's response "to the needs of the masses through service delivery and schemes targeted at the youth and unemployed graduates" has, with Ipelegeng, comprised an important part of his dual poverty-unemployment focus and, by extension, his social protection brand. 82

Most prominent among Khama's youth social protection initiatives has been the Botswana National Service Programme (BNSP). Following a 2013 State of the Nation Address in which he dedicated "at least 11 paragraphs of his speech to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 48; BDP Election manifesto, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Natural Resources and Environment Department, "Learning to Live with Drought and Climate Variability," *FAO Corporate Document Repository*, n.d.,

http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/y5744e/y5744e0c.htm.

Teklu, Tesfaye. "Labor-intensive public works: The experience of Botswana and Tanzania." Employment for poverty reduction and food security (1995), 151.; http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/project/target/bt\_work.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Botlhomilwe and Sebudubudu, "Elections in Botswana," 100.

https://www.quandl.com/WORLDBANK/BWA\_SL\_UEM\_1524\_ZS-Botswana-Unemployment-youth-total-of-total-labor-force-ages-15-24

youth, the second longest time he spent on a subtopic," the president announced the launch of the "new" programme. In fact, BNSP was the reincarnation of a former national service scheme called *Tirelo Sechaba*, which the government had terminated in 2000 because it was deemed, at an annual cost of P40 million, to be too expensive. In April 2014, the Khama government implemented BNSP, known colloquially as Tirelo Sechaba, "to engage youth in meaningful community development programmes, while giving them the needed experience for the world of work." Participants, who range in age from 20 to 30, commit themselves to at least twelve months of service in their home communities, performing any number of low-skills jobs from distributing identity cards to maintaining parks to staffing crèches; all similar roles to the ones characterising Ipelegeng. BNSP remunerates participants, who numbered about 9,800 in June 2014, with an allowance of P500 per month plus a bonus of P200 for each month worked that can be recouped at the end of the programme.

While BNSP provided relief to vulnerable Batswana, for Khama ostensibly it was yet another tool by which to engage people in the nation's collective poverty eradication efforts. In explaining his motivations for pursuing implementation of the programme, he noted in a 2014 interview:

'What we [government officials] need to pick up on are those that are not doing anything productive.... By introducing Tirelo Sechaba [BNSP] we are saying that ... Wherever you are we are engaging the youth in the activities ... of their communities to be able to make an impact and a contribution within their communities. And we will be able to give them some allowance—yes, it is not a lot of money, but it is better than nothing—and so instead of sitting around and doing nothing, and whilst waiting for formal opportunities to come along, they can be useful'. 87

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Justice Kavahematui, "President Khama's Speech Decoded," *Botswana Guardian*, November 8, 2013, http://botswanaguardian.co.bw/latest-news/690-president-khama-s-speech-decoded.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Ian Khama, "State-of-the-Nation Address 2014," November 14, 2014, http://allafrica.com/stories/201411141763.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Chedza Mmolawa, "Tirelo Sechaba to Alleviate Youth Unemployment," November 22, 2013, http://www.echoonline.co.bw/index/index.php/local-news/item/809-tirelo-sechaba-to-alleviate-youth-unemployment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Ibid.; Thamani Shabani, "Half Quit Tirelo Sechaba," *Daily News*, June 19, 2014, http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=12237.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Botswana Government, President Khama Extended BTV Interview.

Despite the current programme's P178 million price tag—a much greater sum than the P40 million that caused the termination of the old Tirelo Sechaba, even after adjustment for inflation—the president's emphasis on engaging vulnerable youth and increasing national discipline through economic productivity no doubt justified the programme's restoration.<sup>88</sup>

Khama's other contributions to Botswana's social protection network, though small in scope relative to Ipelegeng, further characterised his public image as a leader dedicated to uplifting impoverished Batswana through work. Chief among these initiatives has been the Poverty Eradication Programmes, an umbrella scheme featuring 22 small-scale farming and small business stimulus programmes that furnish grants to poor Batswana who wish to start their own enterprises. The mere fact that the president has equated "Poverty Eradication" with work reinforces the idea that Khama has marketed his government's social protection programmes as necessitating citizen initiative. Despite the limited scope of around 3,600 beneficiaries (at a cost of P104 million in 2012-2013), the president has nonetheless declared the programme as being one of the programmes that is foremost among his successful endeavours.

All-in-all, Khama has held up his social protection programmes not just as hallmarks of his social policy agenda, but as being among his most important contributions as president. In a 2014 interview recorded four months before the election, Khama was asked—outside of any discursive context on social programme—"What milestones have you achieved so far?" and responded by listing "Ipelegeng, Youth Economic Schemes [including the Youth Development Fund], EDD [Economic Diversity Drive], Poverty Eradication..." The fact that Khama has dedicated his presidency to implementing PEPs that encompass a numerically expanded and more diverse beneficiary pool as compared to antecedents has reinforced a political brand that is very much intertwined with his social protection agenda.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> This comparison assumes a constant annual rate of inflation of 8 percent. "Botswana Inflation Rate | 1997-2015," accessed January 23, 2015,

http://www.tradingeconomics.com/botswana/inflation-cpi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> World Bank, "Botswana Social Protection Assessment," 30.

<sup>90 &</sup>quot;One on One with President Ian Khama."

## "Our Father's programmes": personalising social protection

One significant effect of Khama's pursuing a work-oriented social protection agenda, including the rebranding of pre-existent PEPs to align with his poverty reduction discourse, has been a popular association of programmes, not with government *per se*, but with Khama personally. According to one observer:

'Under Mogae [social protection programmes] were not taken as the president's initiatives. They were just public programmes. But the tone has changed [under Khama]. People speak of these programmes: they call them "mananeo a ga Rara." In our language it means "our Father's programmes"—"our Father" being the president. ... These are Ian Khama's programmes. They were here before, but the way they've been marketed since he came into office is that these are his programmes [and] ... they are attributed directly to his benevolence. ... They are public programmes but they are there because of the current president. That's how it's marketed'. 91

This personalisation of what would otherwise have been government PEPs has resulted in Khama becoming "a messiah amongst the ordinary people who are beneficiaries of his 'pet projects'." To impoverished rural citizens with otherwise no access to stable employment, moreover, Khama has "become synonymous with government". 93

Popular approbation for Khama's social protection approach, which has centred on what many citizens perceive as being the president's own PEPs, have been reinforced by the president's own actions. UNICEF's 2012 review of Ipelegeng, for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Interview with Gape Kaboyakgosi, Senior Research Fellow, Public Sector Reforms Unit, BIDPA, October 30, 2014. "Rara," which corresponds to "father" in Dr. Kaboyakgosi's translation, does not generally mean a literal father but something more akin to a heavenly father or nonhuman beneficent male being. "*Mananeo a ga Tautona*" ["President"] and "*Mananeo a ga Khama*" also were "in reference to the government's empowerment or poverty eradication programmes common phrases."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Edward Bule, "Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?," *The Midweek Sun*, September 23, 2014, http://www.themidweeksun.co.bw/news/5059-will-khama-retire-at-the-end-of-his-term.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Kenneth Dipholo, "Botswana Has Become the Property of President Khama," *Sunday Standard*, February 23, 2014,

http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=19209&GroupID=5.

instance, included an observation that "the programme is given preference over others [i.e., other social protection programmes] because it was initiated by the state President". Hama's frequent tours to meet with rural communities throughout the country have also allowed him to reinforce the rhetoric around creating jobs and poverty reduction that has comprised substantial parts of his public addresses. "At the kgotla meetings that he addressed, Khama often played the star at the expense of his ministers as he made the important pronouncements instead of leaving that to the concerned ministers," commented one observer. Whereas former presidents had generally opted to prescribe policies from the State House, Khama's populism has resulted in his becoming the literal face of his programmes.

These efforts, though they have served to reinforce Khama's political brand among the rural poor, nonetheless have not avoided criticism from urban intellectuals. Dumelang Saleshando, leader of the opposition Botswana Congress Party (BCP), lambasted the president who, he scorned as being "still on the learning curve of how the people he leads live by sitting around kgotla fires with them, while there are critical issues of development, high unemployment, delayed infrastructure that the president and his cabinet must be firmly addressing". Though not all critics have fingered Khama for striving to enhance his political image directly through the personalisation of social protection programmes, for some observers it was problematic enough for the president to be "allowing his supporters to personalise government programmes and projects by [their] appendaging [sic] them to his name." Regardless of who was responsible for marketing the government's PEPs as being fundamentally Khama initiatives, the fact that these programmes had become personalised and ascribed to "Our Father" indicates the popularity that their ostensible sponsor Khama enjoyed.

### Opposition branding, BDP counterbranding

Since 1994, opposition political parties in Botswana have become a significant force. In elections that year, the BNF won a then-unprecedented 37 percent of the vote (13 of 40 seats) in large part due to the support of recent rural migrants to cities and other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Edward Bule, "Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Kenneth Dipholo, "Botswana Has Become the Property of President Khama," *Sunday Standard*, February 23, 2014,

http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php?NewsID=19209&GroupID=5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Edward Bule, "Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?"

urban dwellers upset with the government's to stimulate job growth. The ideological "father" of the BNF was its presidential candidate in 1994, the socialist firebrand Kenneth Koma. The founder, a Soviet-schooled intellectual who, despite his family's considerable wealth, fashioned himself with crumpled clothes and adopted Setswana colloquialisms in a way that substantiated the "man of the people" image that he intended to portray. According to a contemporary observer:

A substantial section of the electorate supports [the BNF] because its political message seems to be relevant to the socio-economic conditions of contemporary Botswana. The issues which it has stressed in its campaigns such as affordable housing, employment creation, better working conditions and the revamping of the education system resonate with more conviction amongst urban and peri-urban dwellers than amongst the peasantry. <sup>100</sup>

Koma's campaign tactics in 1994, moreover, signified his commitment to reforming government in a way that would benefit the urban poor, for instance, by arranging for a motorcade of 600 vehicles carrying every BNF parliamentary candidate to parade through the Gaborone slum of Old Naledi, Koma's self-appointed "political bunker." The BNF president, whose towering stature in the party inspired the codename "*Party ke Koma*" ("Koma is the party"), came to be known as an urban "messiah" among the poor and working-class communities of urban Botswana. His advocacy on behalf of youth activists seeking to have the age of suffrage changed from 21 to 18 years old—a policy that the BDP initially opposed—furthered his being seen as the youth's foremost advocate in politics. 102

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Mpho G. Molomo, "Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 85, doi:10.1080/14662040008447810.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Danielle Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 191.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> Balefi Tsie, "The Political Context of Botswana's Development Performance," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (1996): 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Kenneth Good, "Authoritarian Liberalism: A Defining Characteristic of Botswana," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 14, no. 1 (January 1996): 29–51, doi:10.1080/02589009608729580.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*, 193. "Botswana" in *Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa* (2002), edited by Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima and David Pottie, EISA, 39-40. http://www.content.eisa.org.za/old-page/botswana-constitutional-and-electoral-reform

Inspired by the political brand of their ideologue Koma, party leaders issued a manifesto in 1994 that was designed to appeal to a growing urban working-class base. According to the manifesto, the BNF government would pursue "a strong civil society, and social welfare for the underprivileged members of our society," and listed among its objectives the creation of an old age pension, dependent and orphans benefit, a contributory pension programmes, and unemployment benefits. <sup>103</sup> These proposals largely shaped the party's social protection agenda, which were integral parts of its larger "social democratic programme." <sup>104</sup>

The BCP emerged ahead of the 1999 election after disagreements with the commandeering Koma resulted in the defection of eleven MP's led by former anti-



apartheid activist Michael Dingake. A "social democratic" programme also characterised the BCP brand. 105 The party's 1999 manifesto, for instance, included the promise that the BCP would "introduce an orphan policy that guarantees social welfare support to all orphans (AIDS and non-AIDS orphans) and their primary carers" and criticised the BDP for lacking a "comprehensive social security and welfare system... in spite of high levels of unemployment." <sup>106</sup> Similarly to the BNF, the BCP declared that it would

"develop a social security and welfare system which will provide to all people regardless of income, category of work, gender and disability."

Despite the fact that disagreements over leadership since 1999 have prevented the parties from unifying, members from both sides have noted that the two camps are ideologically alike. As BCP co-founder Paul Rantao observed, "the [BCP] party's ideology will not be that different from [that] of the BNF. Its focus will be to try to articulate the interests of workers and the youth." Resisting pressure to integrate with the dominant BNF, the BCP has contested every election since its founding, achieving its largest delegation to parliament (four seats) in the 2009 election.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> BNF Election manifesto, 1994

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> The 1999 BNF manifesto described its base as being "the urban poor and the working class in both rural and urban areas."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Both opposition parties in 2014 described themselves as social democratic. The parties are ostensibly modelled on post-war Scandinavian political economy. With regard to social protection, according to one BCP MP, this means that "as a social-democratic party, the party supports redistribution through wealth creation." Interview with Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament (BCP), October 30, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> The BDP in its 1999 manifesto declared that it would create an orphan care programme for (only) AIDS orphans. BDP Election manifesto, 1999.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> Molomo, "Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana," 72.

Though opposition parties have never ruled the country, the parties' most lasting influence to date has perhaps been to force their ruling party adversary to incorporate their ideas into policy as a response to heightened electoral competition. Indeed, the opposition's political inroads have been sufficiently worrisome to the BDP elites to induce "counter-branding" efforts with regard to social protection. In 1994, for instance, the BNF won unusually high support from elderly voters, which was in part what caused the BDP to receive less than 55 percent of the popular vote, an unprecedented low. (The opposition also won each of Gaborone's four parliamentary districts for the first time). This vote capture from a constituency that had historically supported the BDP was apparently enough to motivate counterbranding by the party: in 1996, the government sponsored legislation to enact an Old-Age Pension in line with what the BNF had been promoting, though this had not before been part of the BDP's platform.

In addition to inducing the implementation of the Old-Age Pension, opposition advocacy for an orphan care programme ahead of the 1999 campaign likely influenced the ruling party's implementation of such a scheme that year. These policy shifts by the BDP toward opposition policy positions were starting to make apparent, as Molomo (2000) noted, that "the BNF has drawn the BDP closer to its position." Supporting this notion is the fact that the rhetorical similarities of the ruling and opposition party manifestos have increased. The party's manifesto in 2004, for instance, noted that a BNF-led government would "introduce a comprehensive social security and welfare system (as opposed to BDP's Old Age Pension) that will give every deserving Motswana a minimum level of dignity as a human being." However, it was not clear with any degree of specificity in what ways the BNF social security and welfare system would differ from what the BDP had already implemented. The BNF manifesto from 2004 also included a promise that a new government would "spearhead job creation programmes that will be matched with timely action to distribute wealth equitably through a collectively financed policy of social security." This rhetoric, though it too lacked policy specificity, signified what was becoming a convergence of opposition party ideas around PEPs and Ian Khama's own ideas for public employment, which were introduced five to ten years later. The BCP, for their part, offered in 2004 to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Sebudubudu, "The Impact of Good Governance on Development and Poverty in Africa."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> "Botswana" in *Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa* (2002), edited by Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima and David Pottie, EISA, 39-40. http://www.content.eisa.org.za/old-page/botswana-constitutional-and-electoral-reform

Molomo, "Understanding Government and Opposition Parties in Botswana," 72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Emphasis is mine.

implement a "comprehensive safety net for the disadvantaged, and work towards full employment, in recognition of the fact that employment is a human right." These statements too resonated with the employment-centred poverty reduction strategy that Khama subsequently gave special emphasis.

By the time Khama took office in 2008 and then pursued affirmation of his presidency in the 2009 election, the BDP had shifted its social protection approach dramatically since the party first came to power in the 1960s. Under Seretse Khama, the party brand vis-à-vis social protection was associated with food aid that government would disburse during drought as a relief measure. This later morphed into cash-for-work schemes, with the need for development project funding to be redirected to drought relief. Opposition inroads provided further impetus for social protection reforms, with the effect being that the ruling party began to counterbrand around features of the opposition's social-democratic agenda. With Ian Khama at the helm, the introduction of Ipelegeng and other PEPs suggested that the party was evermore invested in managing a social protection agenda with the kind of broad scope that opposition parties had long-before advocated. To the extent that the parties' brands around social protection were distinguishable by 2009, the principal differences hinged not on ideology but rather on leadership, programmatic implementation, and transfer levels to beneficiaries.

This convergence of BDP and opposition party social protection approaches was further reflected in opposition party manifestos themselves. In the 1990s, opposition party manifestos offered several policy suggestions that the government under the BDP, which not yet shifted fully from its conservative 1970s-era approach to social protection, had yet to implement (e.g. the old-age pension). 112 With BDP counterbranding accounting for a greater inclusion of vulnerable populations in the government's welfare programmes by the 2000s, these opposition parties shifted tack in their manifestos to instead criticising the BDP's inability to effectively implement existing programmes. In fact, coverage of social protection in the 2009 BNF manifesto was essentially the same as it had been since 1994. Among the few differences between the two editions was a statement in the 2009 version describing the BNF as "the true Party of the masses, especially the poor, the working class, the peasants and sections of the middle class." What exactly motivated this insertion remains uncertain, but it was no doubt a possible reflection of a concern with the BDP having significantly expanded the welfare state to include vulnerable

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> BNF Election manifesto, 1994; "" 1999

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> BNF Election manifesto, 2009

groups—that the BNF needed to double down to voters on the party's commitment to best representing the interests of Botswana's poor.

Neither did the BCP offer new social protection policy ideas in their 2009 manifesto. The party did contend that the Old-Age Pension transfer amount should be trebled to P750 from P250 and the age of qualification lowered from 65 to 60 to match the legal age of retirement. The opposition parties' criticisms of Khama and the ruling party were extensive, but on the government's role in pursuing social protection and poverty eradication, all three major parties in their manifestos did not significantly differ in terms of substantive policy ideas. According to BNF activist Bashi Mothusi, the parties "don't so much disagree with BDP's ideas around social protection; they just have qualms with the implementation and the amount of the transfers." With Khama advancing a social protection brand that did not differ significantly in ideology from what opposition leaders have proposed to implement, elections in 2009 and 2014 seemed to be more referendums on Khama and/or the BDP leadership than on any substantive policy distinctions between parties.

In addition to shifting its social protection policy approach in response to increasing popular support for opposition parties, BDP with Khama at the helm has also adjusted its political strategy. Khama's status as a paramount chief and stature as the son of the first president were likely salient features of his public identity, but they have also facilitated a campaign-style leadership tactic to which many observers have ascribed his



political popularity in rural areas of Botswana.<sup>116</sup> The president has been eager to traverse the country and in doing so has cultivated the perception that he has taken a strong interest in the welfare of the poor. Khama's visits to rural areas also routinely involve participation in the work of poverty alleviation by his own hands. In addition to convening kgotla meetings in which he invites local community leaders to offer ideas and air grievances, the president has been extensively

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Bashi Mothusi, PhD, Lecturer, University of Botswana, October 21, 2014. UDC and BCP Election manifestos, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> BCP Election manifesto, 2009

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Khama "remains popular particularly in the rural areas where he is largely perceived more as a chief than a sitting president." Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe, "The Critical Role of Leadership in Botswana's Development," 42.

documented and photographed serving meals from breadlines, distributing care baskets, and delivering radios and blankets to elderly Batswana.<sup>117</sup>

Khama's populist behaviour has clearly endeared him to rural Batswana, many of whom regard the president positively for these demonstrations of empathy. Edgar Tsimane, a Motswana journalist, remarked on the president's appeal among vulnerable persons:

'Khama wears so many hats: son of the first president of the country, king of Bamangwato tribe in central district, former soldier, commander-inchief. Young boys would think of him as the guy who cannot be shot. ... He's popular also because part of his administration is creating a social safety net that borders on handouts. He likes to go around the country travelling, handing out blankets to the poor, and they all clamour after him to shake his hand'. 118

Others, such as one parliamentarian, were not as charitable as Tsimane: "The president seems comfortable sitting around the bonfire with old men in rural areas, distributing food hampers and blankets, and behaving like King, or Father Christmas." Responding to such critics, who have contended that his extension of blankets, radios, food, and other handouts to all the vulnerable communities he visits have essentially bought votes for the BDP, Khama stated that "I cannot understand why somebody will want to criticise anybody for helping people in need." Regardless of the controversy his tactics have solicited in the press, Khama's personal interactions with the rural poor have strengthened the poverty emphasis of his political brand and have, moreover, reinforced his commitment to ensuring the welfare of the BDP's historical base.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Interview with Mogopodi Lekorwe, Professor of Political Science, University of Botswana, October 20, 2014.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Simon Allison, "Botswana in Crisis: Perspective from a Journalist in Exile," *Mmegi Online*, November 27, 2014, http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=46432.

Bame Piet and Ntibinyane Ntibinyane, "When Khama Doesn't Care, Even about the US," *Mmegi Online*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=45059.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> "Botswana: Opposition Gets a Whiff of Power," *The M&G Online*, accessed March 9, 2015, http://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-24-opposition-gets-a-whiff-of-power/.

Khama's leadership style was further characterised by overtures to the urban poor in a way that was at least in effect a response to the urban populism of Kenneth Koma and the mid-1990s BNF. The president in 2009, seemingly in an attempt to "outpopulist" Koma's stunt from fifteen years earlier, rode a bicycle around the Old



Naledi neighbourhood of Gaborone during the week leading up to the election. 121 While the event drew scorn from those pundits who deemed the president's actions a "populist stunt," it was clear that Khama was seeking to manufacture an image of himself and of the BDP as being sympathetic to the plight of the urban poor. 122 To redouble his claim, Khama repeated the ride one week before the 2014

elections. 123 Campaign tactics such as these rallies revealed Khama's intent to brand himself as a leader in touch with Botswana's most vulnerable citizens, be they rural or urban.

This populist leadership style of the new president has been moreover in stark contrast to the "educated, mostly expatriate bureaucratic and technocratic elite" of Mogae and the previous government. The former president, in contrast to Khama, had generally manifested his commitment to fighting poverty by participating in multilateral conferences, such as at the African Union and the United Nations, and "wouldn't be seen mingling with the poor." 124 Khama has generally avoided participation in such forums, preferring to send envoys in his stead. 125 Like his antipoverty PEPs, including Ipelegeng, which have broadened the scope of the BDP's programmatic efforts to encompass more urban constituents in social protection, Khama's campaign-style tactics have been targeted at a wider range of Batswana,

<sup>121</sup> Resnick, Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> John Regonamanye, "Opposition Politicians Rubbish Blankets Donation in Old Naledi," Sunday Standard, May 24, 2013,

http://www.sundaystandard.info/article.php/email.php?NewsID=16949http://www.sundaystanda rd.info/article.php/email.php?NewsID=16949.

<sup>123 &</sup>quot;Incumbent Botswana President Seretse Ian Khama Rides a Bicycle While... News Photo Getty Images," accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/newsphoto/incumbent-botswana-president-seretse-ian-khama-rides-a-news-photo/457378226. Interview with Matthew Wright, Bank of Botswana, October 27, 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Bashi Mothusi, PhD, Lecturer, University of Botswana; Bame Piet and Ntibinyane Ntibinyane, "Mmegi Online."

including both urban and rural citizens, with the intention being to counterbalance opposition support among the urban poor.

### Social protection and the 2014 election

The 2014 election featured extensive discussion of social protection approaches and programmes. The Ipelegeng Programme was the target of much scorn from opposition leaders, who decried the president for touting his job creation record when many of the jobs were short-term stints of employment offered through Ipelegeng. Dumelang Saleshando of Gaborone, the BCP's candidate for president, scolded the president for this kind of rhetoric, saying that "Khama through his various States of the Nation addresses refers to Ipelegeng statistics to give an indication of the extent to which his government has created jobs. 126 He went on to say that "while labour intensive public works to alleviate the economic desperation faced by the poor is accepted globally, Ipelegeng is never regarded as a job creation scheme."127 Critiques of Khama's conflation of Ipelegeng expansion and job creation also emanated from members of the Umbrella for Democratic Change, the BNF-led coalition of opposition parties (save the BCP) that contested the 2014 election. Mohammed Khan, a UDC MP from Molepolole, for one, remarked on the floor of parliament that the government ought rather "to look at how we can get people out of Ipelegeng," adding that the country "should have a President that says to us 'we reduced the number of Ipelegeng beneficiaries from 61,000 to 48,000 because we created [private-sector] jobs.""128

Criticism from opposition politicians also targeted the president for increasing dependency on the state among poor Batswana, many of whom seek out several terms of employment through Ipelegeng, instead of equipping them with skills to earn employment in the private sector. Many in the opposition camp, among whom Ipelegeng has been referred to as *atlhama ke go jese* ("open your mouth and let me

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Kenosi Daniel, "BCP Brands Khama a Failure," *The Voice*, July 18, 2014, http://www.thevoicebw.com/2013/04/05/bcp-brands-khama-a-failure/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Kabo Matsapa, "'5 Years of Broken Promises' - Saleshando," *The Tswana Times*, April 3, 2013, http://www.thetswanatimes.co.bw/news/politics/527-5-years-of-broken-promises-saleshando.html?fb\_action\_ids=238103012996908&fb\_action\_types=og.likes&fb\_source=aggre gation&fb\_aggregation\_id=288381481237582.

Emphasis is mine. Hansards, National Assembly of Botswana, Hansards, December 2014, http://www.parliament.gov.bw/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/314/DAILY%20HANSARD %2001%20DECEMBER%202014%20%28MIXED%20VERSION%29%20%282%29.pdf?sequ ence=1.

feed you"), have dismissed the programme as being more about handouts than empowerment. Statements such as these are in line with the conclusion of a UNICEF programme review that says "Ipelegeng gives people fish without teaching them how to fish." Other politicians decried the president for channelling the poor into Ipelegeng without a strategy to lift them into true self-reliance. These critics included Duma Boko, Gaborone lawyer and UDC presidential hopeful, who declared at a rally that "when Khama looks at you, he sees herders, Ipelegeng workers. We at the UDC we see among you doctors, engineers, lawyers." While Khama's rhetoric suggests an effort to cultivate a brand heavy on job creation for low-income Batswana, the opposition elites sought to degrade Khama's image by portraying him as being uninterested in real development ends.

For his part ahead of the October election, President Khama worked to strengthen the case he had been making all along that his efforts to increase the productivity of the country were the only sustainable way that the nation's poor could lift themselves out of poverty. In May 2014, for instance, he announced the National Work Ethic Programme and dedicated "facilitators" to reinforce his public emphasis on increasing the nation's individual enterprise. 132 In April, the president also (re-)launched the BNSP, which he reported had recruited more than 11,200 participants. 133 He also defended his record around poverty reduction and employment growth. At the party's 7 April campaign launch, for instance, Khama was reported to have said that he would "not apologise for introducing programmes such as Ipelegeng and Tirelo Sechaba." 134 Rather, in August 2014, the president announced increases to the remuneration package for Ipelegeng, other PEPs, and the Old-Age Pension. 135 The party's manifesto, moreover, showcased Ipelegeng as a leading policy achievement of Khama's presidency and included a promise to "strengthen flagship programmes aimed at poverty eradication" should the party be returned to the government. 136

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<sup>129 &</sup>quot;Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 90.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme, xx.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Tsaone Basimanebotlhe, "Mmegi Online :: Boko, the Push Rannatshe Needed," *Mmegi Online*, October 17, 2014, http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=46777.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Ian Khama, "State-of-the-Nation Address 2014."

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>134</sup> "BDP Launches Its General Election Campaign," *GabzFM*, accessed May 18, 2015, http://www.gabzfm.com/bdp-launches-its-general-election-campaign.

Goitsemodimo Williams, "BDP Has Good Record - Khama," *Botswana Daily News*, August 17, 2014, http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=13724.

<sup>136</sup> BDP Election manifesto, 2014

Despite spoken criticism of how the BDP was implementing social protection programmes, what the opposition parties offered the country in their manifestos was not much different from the programmes of the Khama-BDP government. The UDC in its manifesto offered an extensive programme with short-term (*A re tsogeng* – "Let's get to work") and long-term components (*Iphetlheleng khumo* – "Create your own wealth") for empowering the poor. <sup>137</sup> The short-term plan, which was designed to "relieve the immediate desperation of our people," proposed "Employment of vast amounts of labour for our envisaged infrastructure expansion programme," an



increase to the Old-Age Pension, and a tree-planting scheme. The long-term programme featured, among other objectives, a "comprehensive scholarship programme for people living with disabilities." A final pillar of the UDC's social protection offerings in 2014 (*Tshegetsang bana* – "Embrace the youth") included "a solution to the youth unemployment ... [through] new and vast infrastructure project that we intend to implement." Without deviating significantly from the BDP's structural approach to social protection, the UDC's proposals

for the country included higher transfer levels and replacements for Khama programmes, which the party claims "rarely concern themselves with lifting our people from poverty permanently or empowering them to find meaningful opportunity in the longer term."

The BCP in its manifesto offered a similar social protection brand to the UDC. In the manifesto's section on "Protecting the Vulnerable," the party promised that it would "create economic opportunities for all people who are poor and vulnerable as we believe that the best form of social welfare is work," suggesting that BDP-style PEPs would be continued. Keorapetse confirmed in 2014 that the BCP would implement a cash-for-work scheme similar to Ipelegeng, but would factor into its programme a greater emphasis on skills development in order to more quickly graduate labourers into private-sector work. Though the party called for government to "reorientate social welfare policies and programmes towards a developmental approach," there was no strong indication that social protection under the BCP would deviate significantly from the programmes that Khama had already implemented. In short, both opposition camps have consistently over the years striven to craft brands around social protection that are more social-democratic than the BDP's in order to appeal to the urban working class and rural poor. Yet by 2014,

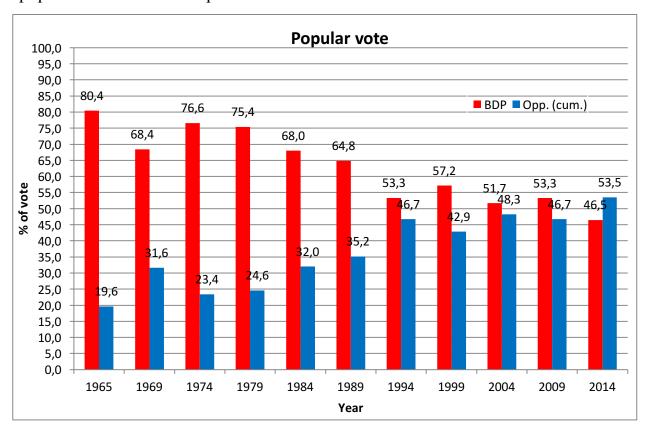
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> UDC Election manifesto, 2014

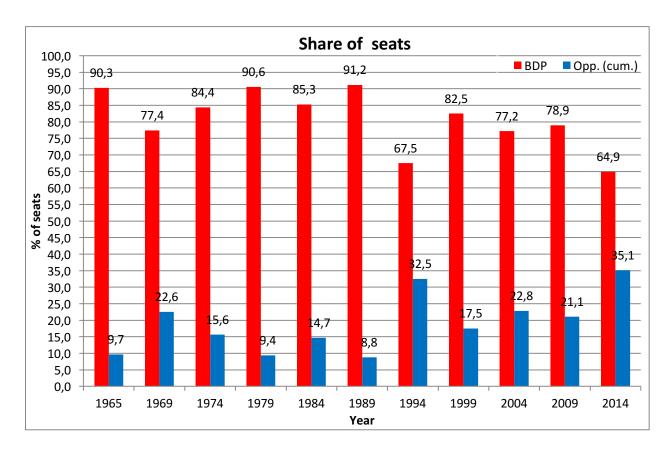
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> BCP Election manifesto, 2014

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>139</sup> Interview with Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament (BCP).

the ruling party had furnished an already comprehensive programme around social protection featuring many of the opposition parties' ideas.

When the results of the October 2014 election were announced, the BDP had returned a majority of legislators to parliament and Khama to another term as president. However, while the BDP in 2009 had stemmed their party's trend of electoral decline by winning a 45<sup>th</sup> parliamentary seat (of 57) and increasing their share of the popular vote by two percentage points (53.3%), the party in 2014 fell to its lowest level of electoral popularity yet, coming away with eight fewer seats (37) and a 7-percent decline to less than half of the popular vote (46.5%). Despite their having been denied leadership of the government yet again, opposition parties led by the UDC coalition nearly trebled their seat count to 17 and earned the votes of 30 percent of the electorate. The BCP fell to three seats, though the party increased its popular vote count to 20 percent of the national count.



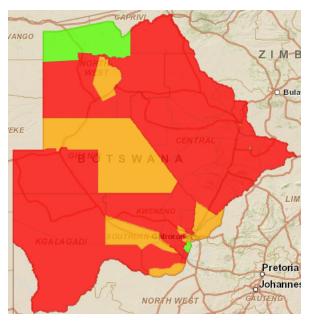


Both the ruling and opposition parties thus had reasons to celebrate the results of the election. The BDP earned the right to continue in government for a tenth consecutive term. Following the election, Khama selected as his new vice-president Mokgweetsi Masisi, a former MP who had spearheaded the president's Poverty Eradication Programmes as Minister of Presidential Affairs. 140 Perhaps another Khama action to reinforce his social protection-focused brand, the choice of Masisi, who is slated to become president automatically on 1 April 2018, reflected a desire by many in the BDP to find a successor who could continue to substantiate the party's commitments to poverty reduction. The UDC in 2014 also achieved a victory of sorts by earning the most seats an opposition party has ever earned in an election, and together with the BCP demonstrated the growing appeal of opposition parties. Failure to topple the BDP, according to one pre-election editorial, would be "not because the opposition has not made inroads or that their manifestoes are not sound, but because the rural electorate ... support the BDP because they rely on social grants."<sup>141</sup> Indeed, Khama and the BDP may have failed to increase their overall support in cities, but by preserving their base of support in a large majority of rural

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> "Masisi New Vice-President," *The Ngami TImes*, November 2014, http://www.ngamitimes.com/2014/11/masisi-new-vice-president/?lang=hmn. <sup>141</sup> "Botswana"

constituencies through the disbursement of social protection, the party demonstrated how it may be able to continue in government for many years to come.

After Khama and the party won a tenth term, the BDP officials announced that the



government would be continuing its investment in the poor. The Minister of Finance announced in the February 2015 Budget Address that spending on the Ipelegeng Programme by nearly 10 percent in the coming year to P635.6 million, nearly treble the government's initial expenditure on the programme. This was to be accompanied by spending increases on the Old-Age Pension, Orphan Programme, and the Khama-initiated Poverty Eradication Programme, funding for which was proposed to increase 54 percent in 2015-2016. 142 It remains to be president's what the seen engagement strategy will be in 2015.

though it is expected that BNSP and other youth-targeted programmes will continue. Having earned a tenuous victory in 2014, the BDP leadership appears content for the time-being to continue with its employment-based poverty reduction strategy. 143

# Discussion: the potency of PEPs in Botswana

There are several reasons to believe that Khama's social protection 'brand,' which was fostered by PEPs rebranded to meet stated poverty reduction objectives, has likely helped the BDP to meet some of the political challenges, including drought and migration, that had effected a decline in the party's electoral support since the 1990s. For one, the president's expansion of state welfare offered new lifelines to both urban and rural poor, which in a neopatrimonial fashion likely bolstered support for the BDP. The fact that transfer levels for Ipelegeng (P480 per month) have

<sup>142</sup> Finance Ministry, "Botswana: 2015 Budget Speech," *Botswana Daily News (Gaborone)*, By Finance Ministry, http://allafrica.com/stories/201502031834.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> There were a total of fifty-seven constituencies contested in 2014. Constituencies that are shaded red (37) were won by the BDP; orange (20) were won by the UDC; and green (3) were won by the BCP.

consistently been higher than for minimum wage jobs in agriculture (P445 per month)—representing an effective raise for the rural working poor—may have further ensured ruling party popularity in rural areas."<sup>144</sup> Perhaps of even greater value to participants though were not so much the transfer levels but the amplified availability of employment itself. In comparing public views on workfare versus cash transfers, Seekings argued that "in general, low-wage job creation is the preferred option of both elites and citizens".<sup>145</sup> Khama's decision to pursue low-wage employment in lieu of a cash transfer scheme (e.g. basic income grant) has likely resonated with this sentiment in Botswana. Indeed, the ability of the 1980s drought relief programme to stimulate support for the BDP evidences how PEPs have a history of being strongly influential politically in Botswana.

The societal value of paid employment in Botswana, as popular attitudes toward work in neighbouring South Africa suggest, has made low-wage job creation a potentially more politically expedient tactic than cash transfers to mitigate vulnerability. Vulnerable populations in South Africa, for instance, believed that paid work offered recipients dignity in a way that unconditional social grants could not. According to the results of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (2006), which featured 2,939 respondents, 75 percent of respondents disagreed when asked whether they consider themselves better off claiming grants than working. The idea, moreover, that people need to work in order to find dignity permeated the views of most South Africans in the study: 68 percent agreed with the statement that "A person has to have a job to have dignity." Surender *et al.* (2010), who published based on the study, found that paid employment was highly valued by respondents both in and out of work. Nattrass (2003) noted further how pursuing the "dignity of work" for poor South Africans was, as a result of this prevailing social value, an important consideration for political elites.

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http://www.inderscienceonline.com/doi/abs/10.1504/IJEWE.2006.009357.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Cornelia Tesliuc et al., "Botswana Social Protection," 2013, 102, https://wdronline.worldbank.com/handle/10986/18968. Agricultural minimum wage figure appears on page 82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Jeremy Seekings, "Employment Guarantee or Minimum Income? Workfare and Welfare in Developing Countries," January 1, 2006,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Rebecca Surender et al., "Social Assistance and Dependency in South Africa: An Analysis of Attitudes to Paid Work and Social Grants," *Journal of Social Policy* 39, no. 02 (April 2010): 203–21, doi:10.1017/S0047279409990638.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>148</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Nicoli Nattrass, "The state of the economy: A crisis of employment" in John Daniel, Adam Habib, and Roger Southall, *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2003-2004* (HSRC Press, 2003), 151.

The cultivation of a sense of personal dignity was also a part of Khama's stated intentions with regard to his PEPs. To the extent Khama's programmes achieved dignity for their beneficiaries—according to one survey of Ipelegeng labourers, 85 percent of respondents agreed that the programme had given them some dignity—the president therefore stood to gain politically from this group. As one Ipelegeng labourer noted, the programme "has brought dignity, a sense of self-worth and independence to us because like everyone else we can go to the shops and buy ourselves food." Cash transfer programmes, by comparison, may not foster dignity to the same degree as PEPs, especially for able-bodied adults. According to the FAO's review of cash-for-work programmes in Somalia, "there is an intrinsic value and sense of dignity that is derived from households earning income from their own hard work and sweat that cannot be provided through unconditional cash transfers. Sequence of the provided through unconditional cash transfers.

Khama's decision to make low-wage work the hallmark of his social protection agenda therefore fostered the greatest degree of dignity possible for beneficiaries, as compared to other welfare strategies he could have pursued. For a president who made Dignity one of the five themes of his presidency, moreover, and claimed that his "development goal is to ultimately ensure the dignity of all citizens ... through productive excellence," implementing PEPs was likely the most politically expedient strategy to boosting the dignity of poor Batswana.

Evidence suggesting that Khama's programmes have become personalised to the point of being associated more with him than with government has likely also motivated political support for the president among Botswana's poor. "Observers argue," noted one journalist, "that the personalisation of the government schemes is a deliberate effort by the President and his supporters to make him bigger than the institutions he works under and hence portray him as indispensable." Whether or not Khama intended this personalisation as an outcome of his programmatic agenda is a matter for debate, but in any case the effect has been the same: with the existence of popular programmes such as Ipelegeng perceived to be contingent on Khama's leadership, it stands to reason that supporters of the *mananeo a ga Rara*—most notably the beneficiaries—would offer their support to the president in order to keep

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> The rate was 90 percent among rural respondents. "Final Report for the Review of the Ipelegeng Programme," 93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Maham Farhat, Andrew Kardan, and Mohamed Gure, "Review of FAO Cash For Work Programme in Somalia," 2014, 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> Edward Bule, "Will Khama Retire at the End of His Term?"

him, and by extension his programmes, in office. This contingency, and strong approbation for Khama's programme generally among recipients, has given pause to opposition politicians who might have otherwise criticised Khama's PEPs. The BCP's Keorapetse, for instance, complained that "as soon as you mention the idea of taking away Ipelegeng that they [beneficiaries] depend on, people get upset, even if you only want to replace it with something better." Had the same PEPs been institutionalised as programmes of the government (à la drought relief in 1991) and not of the president himself, political support for Khama among beneficiaries may have been less certain.

Clearly, the Khama brand, as manifested through his social protection schemes, has boosted support for the party among programme beneficiaries and most especially the rural poor. What is less clear, however, is the effect that the president's brand management has had in appealing to Batswana who were not recipients of recent state social protection programmes. On the one hand, Khama's took sweeping action on his self-assigned mandate to create jobs and reduce poverty. On the other hand, the high degree of dependency that low-wage workers in BDP employment programmes experience suggests how the president fostered a clientelistic strategy aimed at increasing electoral support among specific groups. These ends, of course, may not be mutually exclusive. More information about how Batswana perceive Khama's development strategy would first be needed in order to determine what effect they may have had in bolstering support for the president and the party. Absent survey data focused specifically on the president's PEPs, data from the Afrobarometer survey in Botswana could offer some insights into the effectiveness of the Khama political brand to generate support among the broader electorate. 155

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> Interview with Dithapelo Keorapetse, Member of Parliament (BCP).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>155</sup> Photograph from Leungo Rakgati, "Explore Other Projects," *Botswana Daily News*, June 23, 2013, http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=3641.

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Botswana National Front:

[No title], 1994.

Umbrella for Democratic Change:

## **Hansards**

Debate of the National Assembly of Botswana, December 2014.

# **Key informant interviews**

Name	Position
NGO	
Motshwari Kitso	National Director, SOS Children's Villages
Rudy Jansen	Advisor, Ditshwanelo: Botswana Centre for Human Rights
Government	
Kelapile Ndobano	Deputy Secretary for Macroeconomic Policy, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
John Mothibi	Permanent Secretary, Poverty & Vulnerability, Office of the President
Matthew Wright	Deputy Director, Research at Bank of Botswana.
Ruth Radibe	Director of Social Protection, Ministry of Local Government
Steven Ludick	Director of Community Development, Ministry of Local Government
Political	

<sup>&</sup>quot;Working Together for Success," 1999.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Together We Shall Deliver," 2004.

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Key to a Quality Life for All," 2009.

<sup>&</sup>quot;The Five Pillars," 2014.

Dithapelo Keorapetse	Member of Parliament, Botswana
	Congress Party
Moabi Mogorosi	Umbrella for Democratic Change
	(Botswana National Front)
Academia	
Mogopodi Lekorwe	Afrobarometer National Investigator for
	Botswana, University of Botswana
Bashi Mothusi	Senior Lecturer, Public Administration
	Coordinator, Democracy Research
	Project (DRP)
	University of Botswana
Gape Kaboyakgosi	Senior Research Fellow, Public Sector
	Reforms Unit, BIDPA
Happy Siphambe	Faculty of social sciences, University of
	Botswana
Tebogo Seleka	Executive Director, Botswana Institute
	for Development Policy Analysis

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