



Migration Profile

BOTSWANA

A. Executive Summary

The Republic of Botswana is at the centre of Southern Africa. Most of its territory is in the Kalahari Desert, the most meridional in Africa.ⁱ

Historically, Botswana's emigration has never been large.ⁱⁱ In 2013, its top destination countries were South Africa, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Netherlands.ⁱⁱⁱ However, since 2013 there has been an increase of people moving to Europe.^{iv} Its economic growth, working opportunities and healthcare system have attracted many immigrants to Botswana.^v In 2020, their main countries of origin were Zimbabwe, South Africa, India, China, and Zambia.^{vi} Regarding refugees, in 2022 they mainly came from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda.^{vii}

When Botswana gained its independence in 1966, it was one of the world's poorest countries, but significant mineral extraction, a small population and prudent economic management have yielded considerable development and economic growth in the nation.^{viii} The United Nations has commended it for its advancement in human rights, as well as its democratic and constitutional enhancement.^{ix} However, Botswana heavily relies on diamonds, being exposed to external shocks. Inequality and unemployment remain a concern, and despite its progress the Government still faces structural challenges.^x

In 2021 Botswana's GDP amounted to US\$ 17,614,791,270,^{xi} experiencing an annual growth rate of 11.4% from the previous year's decrease of -8.7, mainly caused by the pandemic.^{xii} Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) net inflows represented 0.3% of the country's GDP.^{xiii} The inflation rate instead was 7.2% of its GDP, experiencing a significant increase from the previous year (1.9%).^{xiv}

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Botswana is a landlocked country located at the centre of Southern Africa, bordering Zambia to the north, Namibia to the west, Zimbabwe to the east, and South Africa to the south.^{xv} It is mostly flat land, and the Kalahari Desert covers more than 70% of its territory.^{xvi} The country is divided into 15 districts (6 urban and 9 rural).^{xvii}

It has a total surface area of 581,730 km² and a population of about 2,260,000.^{xviii} Gaborone, with 208,411 inhabitants is both the capital and the largest city in the country.^{xix} Although

English is the official language, roughly 90% speak Setswana as their mother tongue.^{xx} There are also over 20 minority languages (Kalanga, Kgalagadi, Shona, Ndebele, etc), and Sekalanga is the most spoken one.^{xxi}

Concerning religion, Christians account for 79.1% of the whole population, Badimo (African Traditional Religion) 4.1%, other 1.4% (Baha'i, Hindu, Muslim, Rastafarian), none 15.2%, and unspecified 0.3%.^{xxii} Regarding ethnic distribution, Setswana represents 79% of the population, Kalanga 11%, Basarwa 3%, and others 7% (including Kgalagadi and people with European ancestry).^{xxiii}

II. International and Internal Migration

In 2020, the migrant population in Botswana accounted for 110,268 inhabitants. 43% of them were female, whereas 57% were male.^{xxiv} The most represented nationalities among them were Zimbabwean (58.31%), followed by South African (5.20%), Indian (5.12%), Chinese (4.33%), and Zambian (4%).^{xxv}

Botswana's rapid economic growth since its independence from the UK in 1966 has attracted skilled and unskilled migrants.^{xxvi} In the 1990s, Botswana was considered a country that offered greater working opportunities and better living standards, such as free health cards for children of foreign nationals residing in Botswana.^{xxvii}

A high influx of immigrants entered Botswana between the 1970s and the mid-1990s. Among them, Zimbabweans in particular face discrimination in the country and are usually considered irregular immigrants.^{xxviii} As a matter of fact, many people enter Botswana using irregular channels. There is no formal migration policy, although systematic involuntary repatriations of undocumented Zimbabweans have been taking place.^{xxix}

Moreover, there are many irregular employees who work with no contracts, especially in the domestic and construction sectors. As a result, the Government has been increasing control measures against any organisation employing irregular immigrants, and unannounced company inspections have become frequent.^{xxx}

Skilled migrants are recruited in several sectors in Botswana, including education, management, engineering, law, and healthcare.^{xxxi} This has produced a large influx of migrants from mixed backgrounds replacing the local workforce as a strategy to attract foreign investment and fill in skill shortages.^{xxxii} Until the last decade, many children of skilled workers were offered free education in private international institutions, and their families were covered by private health insurance. Nevertheless, the Government has been committed to improving educational standards for local workers in the skilled labour market, in order to decrease the influx of skilled migrants.^{xxxiii}

Regarding Ghanaian and Malawian migrants living in Botswana, a study found that in Gaborone teachers and managers were recruited in their home countries until the end of the 1990s.^{xxxiv} Some of them even occupied lecturer positions at the University of Botswana. However, most Ghanaians own hair salons and fashion retail companies, among other private businesses in the capital.^{xxxv} Malawians instead moved into the country in large numbers during colonial times, especially in the northern regions. However, the number of newcomers

has drastically decreased in the last decades. Discrimination targeting Malawian teachers, academics, and other professionals working in South Botswana has forced them to return to the north or other countries in the region.^{xxxvi}

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

In 2019 there were 86,504 emigrants abroad.^{xxxvii} Their main destination countries were South Africa (73,310), Zimbabwe (3,825), the United Kingdom (3,748), Australia (1,512), and the Netherlands (1,041).^{xxxviii} Migration patterns have experienced some changes since 2013, especially the increase of people moving to European destinations.^{xxxix}

Historically, Botswana's emigration has always been very low.^{xl} The net migration rate in 2021 was 0.7 migrants/1,000 population.^{xli} Regarding the emigration of skilled professional citizens from the country, some indicators already show the likelihood of experiencing brain drain due to meagre opportunities for professional advancement in the country, better access to information technology, and family reunification reasons.^{xlii} The brain drain happening in the nursing sector is worsening the difficult conditions of the healthcare system, challenging the services offered for HIV/AIDS and other illnesses that require a strong workforce.^{xliii}

Regarding remittances, in 2021 they represented 0.3% of Botswana's GDP.^{xliv} Migrants maintain economic and social links with their home-based households through remittances and visits.^{xlv} Nevertheless, remittances do not significantly affect households' access to essential services in Botswana.^{xlvi}

Since the late 19th century, thousands of Botswana men have become contract labourers in South African gold and diamond mines,^{xlvii} thus establishing a regional migration corridor.^{xlviii} In light of this situation, the country has had bilateral labour supply agreements to clearly define the rights and obligations of migrants in the country.^{xlix} Ethnic and linguistic similarities between both countries are considered another pull factor.¹ Most people trying to move to South Africa to work, study, for health reasons, trade or shop usually do it by using legal channels.^{li} Nevertheless, Botswana's borders with South Africa and Zimbabwe have always been highly porous and unpatrolled, fostering irregular migration, smuggling, and human trafficking.^{lii} ^{liii} Moreover, due to the fact that many emigrants overstay their permit deadline, there are many undocumented migrants living and working in South Africa.^{liv}

IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced Persons)

In 2022, 723 persons with refugee status and 89 asylum seekers were registered in Botswana.^{lv} They came mainly from Somalia (44.95%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (36.09%), Burundi (8.16%), Uganda (2.62%), and Rwanda (2.48%).^{lvi}

Because of Botswana's isolated geographical location, its refugee population has never been large.^{lvii} Nevertheless, over the past 30 years, hundreds of thousands of Somalians have fled their country due to its political instability and the civil war that erupted in the 1990s, compounded by climatic emergencies. These issues led to severe droughts and depletion of water sources, causing the destruction of livelihoods and rising prices for food and essential goods.^{lviii}

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conflicts over the last two decades have perpetuated increasing poverty and instability, driving thousands of people to seek refuge in other countries, including Botswana.^{lix} Regarding Burundi, its Government has also been experiencing a humanitarian crisis marked by economic deterioration, extreme food insecurity, and a malaria epidemic.^{lx} As far as the Rwandan refugee population, it includes people who were forced to leave their country between 1994 and 1995 because of the genocide, civil war, and the devastation caused by it.^{lxi}

Botswana is considered one of the most politically and economically stable countries in southern Africa, which makes it attractive to people seeking refuge.^{lxii} It is also a signatory to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The national law recognises asylum and refugee status and other aspects related to refugee protection.^{lxiii}

Refugees and asylum seekers residing in Botswana live in the Dukwi refugee camp in Gaborone, which is administered by the Ministry of Defence, Justice, and Social Security and is supported by UNHCR.^{lxiv} Asylum seekers need permission to leave the camp to work or study outside. They can seek employment if they receive a work permit, making them totally dependent on financial assistance provided by the Government and other agencies.^{lxv} In terms of health care, the Ministry of Health runs a clinic within the camp providing primary care services, including reproductive health, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV prevention, voluntary counselling and testing, and family planning.^{lxvi} ^{lxvii} Regarding refugees who obtain permission to leave the Dukwi refugee camp to work in Gaborone, many have vocational qualifications or are artisans, which increase their chances of finding employment.^{lxviii}

Finally, concerning climate-forced migrants, in 2020, 780 forced displacements were recorded within the country due to a storm.^{lxix}

V. Victims of Human Trafficking (3500 characters including spaces).

Botswana is Tier 2 in the US Trafficking in Persons Report, meaning that the Government does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but it is making significant efforts to do so. Human traffickers usually exploit Central African economic migrants intercepted by traffickers while transiting to South Africa. They also take child sex trafficking victims through the country to be then exploited in South Africa. Within Botswana, traffickers mainly target unemployed women, rural poor people, agricultural workers, and children. Extended family members may force young Botswana to become domestic workers, preventing them from accessing education and subjecting them to abuse or confinement. Botswana girls and women are exploited in commercial sex at bars and along major highways. Adults and children in the San ethnic minority group are employed in private cattle farms in the country's rural west. Refugees are also vulnerable to traffickers, especially refugee children who are exploited in sex trafficking around the camp. Traffickers also bring Botswana victims to Zimbabwe for forced labour. Organised trafficking rings subject women to sex trafficking internally and in neighbouring areas (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and East Africa). There are even Cuban medical workers

being forced by their Government, and Bangladeshi women brought in for sex trafficking by their own country.^{lxx}

In 2021 the Government investigated one sex trafficking offence and pursued five cases carried on from previous years. It prosecuted two suspects for sex trafficking and continued the prosecution process against 17 alleged suspects. It further convicted four traffickers (two for sex trafficking, one for labour trafficking, and one unspecified). Furthermore, the state identified 31 trafficking victims, although it lacked formal procedures for their identification and referral. NGO-operated facilities provided shelter and medical care to victims, while local institutions offered shelter, counselling, and provided for their needs. In 2021 it also repatriated six victims willing to return to their homeland, and cooperated with other countries on one trafficking prosecution and five investigations. The state economically supported district councils' anti-trafficking efforts and national coordination and capacity building in the 2018-2022 National Action Plan (NAP) framework. Likewise, it began developing a new NAP for the upcoming years.^{lxxi}

The Botswana Government held several awareness-raising events on human trafficking this year. The police operated a hotline equipped for human trafficking inquiries and made referrals, while the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs set up another hotline for labour-related problems, including forced labour. Neither one, however, received any calls related to trafficking in 2021. Moreover, the state trained diplomatic personnel on human trafficking.^{lxxii}

VI. National Legal Framework

Citizenship in Botswana is regulated by the 1982 Citizenship Act, amended in 1984, 1985 and 1995, and finally replaced in 1998.^{lxxiii} The Act was last amended in 2004 and deals with citizenship attribution based on descent, but it does not include provisions to protect persons born in Botswana from foreigners who would otherwise be stateless.^{lxxiv} Botswana's immigration policy was updated with the 2011 Immigration Act, providing norms for immigration procedures, the employment of non-citizens, and other related matters.^{lxxv} The Constitution of Botswana from 1966 regulates citizenship in its articles 20-29.^{lxxvi}

The 1968 Refugee (Recognition and Control) Act (the Refugee Act) is the primary domestic legislation regulating asylum in Botswana.^{lxxvii} The Act handles procedures for the admission and assistance of refugees in the country.^{lxxviii}

The Constitution of Botswana criminalises forced labour.^{lxxix} Thus, the 2014 Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 32 created a Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee to oversee the Act's implementation.^{lxxx} The law prohibits human trafficking and establishes protective measures for its victims, including setting up specific centres and creating a special human trafficking victim fund.^{lxxxi}

Botswana acceded to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (from now on, the 1951 Convention) in 1969.^{lxxxii} It ratified the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (the 1969 OAU Convention) in 1995.^{lxxxiii} It succeeded in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (the 1954 Convention) in 1969, subject to certain reservations.^{lxxxiv}

Botswana ratified the 1969 International Convention on Eliminating all Forms of Racial Discrimination.^{lxxxv} In 2002 Botswana ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The country is also a party to the Palermo Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons.^{lxxxvi} Botswana is not a party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.^{lxxxvii}

In 2021, the Government also developed the draft of the National Action Plan to end statelessness in Botswana.^{lxxxviii}

VII. Main Actors

The State

The Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs is responsible for essential services of civil registration and vital statistics, movement of persons across borders and gender equality, which are important for the social and economic development of the country.^{lxxxix} Its Department of Immigration and Citizenship's responsibilities include facilitating the movement of people, issuance of passports, visas and residence permits, and border control and management.^{xc} The Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security handles all refugee and asylum matters.^{xc1}

The Ministry of International Affairs and Cooperation manages and coordinates Botswana's foreign policy and national interests abroad.^{xcii} It works closely with other Ministries and through its diplomatic representatives abroad (High Commissions and Embassies) engages the international community to have an interest in the country and its people.^{xciii}

The Botswana's Government has made significant efforts to eliminate forced labour and trafficking within the country, including establishing and maintaining the Anti-Human Trafficking Committee.^{xciv} The Human Trafficking (Prohibition) Committee, established under the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), coordinated the Government's anti-trafficking efforts and met regularly during the reporting period.^{xcv} The Botswana Police Service operated a hotline for gender-based violence, which was equipped to accept human trafficking inquiries and make referrals.^{xcvi} The Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs also operated a hotline for labour-related problems, including forced labour.^{xcvii}

International Organizations

In Botswana, 760 refugees and asylum-seekers live in the Dukwi Refugee camp located about 580 km from the capital Gaborone, managed by Botswana's Ministry of Defence, Justice and Security and supported by three UNHCR protection staff.^{xcviii} In Namibia and Botswana, UNHCR worked with government counterparts on verification processes for the 5,669 and 1,055 refugees and asylum-seekers in the respective countries, to streamline population figures and ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers are correctly documented.^{xcix} UNHCR has also helped 394 people to return safely to their countries of origin from Botswana and South Africa since the beginning of 2023.^c

UNICEF Botswana focuses on strengthening institutions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.^{ci} Combating violence against children, especially sexual exploitation and abuse, is a crucial programming component.^{cii}

IOM in Botswana supports the Government in establishing and operating a national migration coordinating mechanism to strengthen migration governance and management.^{ciii} IOM tries to improve the assistance to vulnerable migrants and VoTs and ensures the protection of migrants' rights, including the adoption of ethical recruitment standards and practices and extensive capacity building of national stakeholders.^{civ}

In addition, IOM researches the diaspora and explores ways to harness their potential contribution to national development.^{cv} It also conducts regular migration briefings to stakeholders, including Government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector, and development partners.^{cvi}

NGOs and Other Organisations

Ditshwanelo, the Botswana Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) has campaigned against xenophobia since 1993 and advocates for human rights with the support of the International Federation for Human Rights. BCHR has prevented the forced repatriation of Zimbabwean refugees on several occasions.^{cvii}

The Botswana Labour Migrant Association (BoLAMA) is a local non-profit organisation assisting persons affected by mining. This organisation advocates for economic empowerment, equal access to social security benefits, and compensation for migrant mineworkers.^{cviii}

The Kagisano Society Women's Shelter Project (KWSO) has been involved in the humanitarian area since the 1970s. Initially, the project offered temporary shelter to asylum seekers and refugees. Recently, the organisation's activities have changed to address gender-based violence issues. Their shelters provide a safe environment for women and children victims of violence. Additional services include counselling and legal aid, and there is a specific focus on human trafficking victims' assistance.^{cix}

International NGOs such as the Lost2 Foundation, a UK-registered organisation, operate in Botswana to provide prevention, protection, and prosecution measures to reduce harm and fight against human trafficking, terrorism and violent crime.^{cx} Botswana's Red Cross division has emergency programmes targeting basic needs for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in difficulty. Additionally, several developmental programmes focus on these populations' long-term well-being, getting directly involved in cases of abuse or exploitation.^{cxii}

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Botswana is divided into the Diocese of Gaborone,^{cxiii} which works in the country's southern area,^{cxiii} and the Diocese of Francistown,^{cxiv} which serves parishioners in the northern communities.^{cxv}

The dioceses of Botswana belongs to the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBBC),^{cxvi} which in turn is a member of the Inter-Regional of Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA).^{cxvii}

One of the areas of work of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) focuses on the care of migrants and refugees through their Migrant and Refugee Pastoral Care.^{cxviii} To this end, it has developed a training manual for migrant ministry for Southern African dioceses, providing guidelines aimed at welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating migrants and refugees into the local Church.^{cxix}

In 2022, IMBISA held a meeting to reflect and share ideas for the pastoral care of migrants and refugees in the IMBISA region. These elements were highlighted: identifying and analysing the root causes of migratory movements to find the most appropriate solutions, fighting against social injustice and inadequate living conditions, and promoting resilience in communities affected by the climate crisis.^{cxx}

Likewise, in the Diocese of Francistown, clergy and nuns provide spiritual assistance, counselling, and food to the migrant and refugee population.^{cxxi} Also, all the sisters and priests are responsible for visiting the Dukwi detention centre, where undocumented migrants and refugees are held, providing them with spiritual and psychological support. The diocese also tries to convey the message that immigration is an opportunity for growth because it attracts a lot of talent, knowledge, skills, and hope. Finally, the clergy and women religious of this diocese seek legal advice on how to assist migrants and refugees without breaking the laws of the country.^{cxxii}

Catholic Relief Services in Botswana is an extension of the Zimbabwe country programme, supporting the Diocese of Gaborone in the south and the Diocese of Francistown in the north. The organisation focuses on those populations who are neglected and have little access to humanitarian assistance. It supports the Government's efforts to curb the AIDS and HIV epidemic, with a special attention on preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.^{cxxiii}

Caritas Botswana, known as the Tirisano Catholic Commission, aims to assist poverty stricken people. They provide the most vulnerable population with access to education, health services, and more effective use of resources and community participation at all stages of development. It also works with people living with HIV and AIDS to combat the spread of the disease.^{cxxiv} It further provides vulnerable children and orphans with education, nutrition, welfare, and health care services.^{cxxv}

February 2023

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