



# Diaspora engagement mapping

## BOTSWANA

### Facts & figures

Terminology: The term 'Batswana in the diaspora' is used in official documents to refer to the diaspora. *Batswana* (pl.) - (*Motswana* (sing.) - means Botswanan in Setswana, one of the official languages of Botswana (the other official language is English).

#### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



#### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.66%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **128.30**

#### Voting from abroad:

At embassies/consulates



#### Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from [UNDESA \(2024\)](#) and remittances from the [World Bank \(2024\)](#).

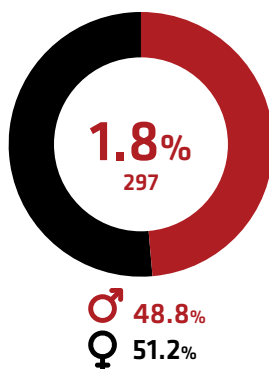
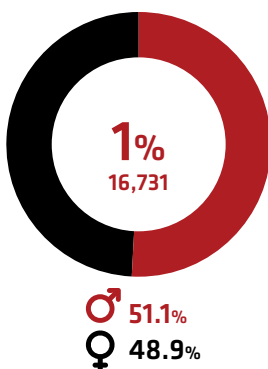
#### Emigration



% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



#### Top countries of destination



|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| South Africa | 8,004 |
| Zimbabwe     | 3,985 |
| Australia    | 1,736 |
| Zambia       | 1,498 |
| Namibia      | 731   |

1 The 1998 Citizenship Act (Cap 01:01) (Act No. 8 of 1998) describes Botswanan citizenship. While children of Botswanan citizens are automatically considered Botswanan at birth and may hold dual citizenship, at the age of 21 they have to renounce one or other of their citizenships.

2 Voting rights for those living abroad are for legislative elections only. The Botswanan constitution was amended in 1997 following a referendum on electoral reform to allow Botswanan citizens abroad to vote overseas at Botswanan embassies and consulates. See: [Voting from Abroad – the International IDEA Handbook](#)

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1997** ● **Electoral Referendum.** One significant policy shift from the government came out of the electoral referendum of 1997 which was held in response to riots in Gaborone earlier in that year. One of the questions put to voters was whether Batswana abroad should be allowed to vote.<sup>3</sup> 70% of voters agreed, and the constitution was amended that year to enable diaspora voting in Botswanan embassies and consulates.<sup>4</sup>
- 2017** ● **National Development Plan 11 (NDP)<sup>5</sup>** states that a National Migration Policy will be developed during implementation of NDP 11. IOM is supporting the development of this policy, which includes labour migration components, but its current status remains unclear.<sup>6</sup> The focus of this policy is on border management and controlling irregular migration to Botswana, but it will also cover issues such as emigration and brain-drain of skilled Botswanan professionals.

## Practices

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### Active Global Citizens (AGC) campaign 2018-ongoing

Brand Botswana (part of the Botswana Investment and Trade Centre) has seen the need to engage and work with Batswana around the world to promote the country's investment potential using a unified message. In 2020 it has been using the [#IAmMotswana Twitter campaign](#) in order to help raise awareness about investment and trade opportunities in Botswana. The aim of the campaign is to reach out to the diaspora, get to know who they are and where they are, and build awareness about investment opportunities in Botswana. The campaign has carried out activities in South Africa, Zimbabwe, the UK, and UAE.<sup>7</sup>

### Botswana Diaspora Engagement Dialogue

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with IOM Botswana, launched the first Diaspora Engagement Dialogue with Botswana diaspora. This marked a significant step forward to ensure extensive engagement of diaspora in developing the Comprehensive Diaspora Engagement Policy Framework.

## >> Observations

The "Observations" and "Obstacles" sections contain additional information on the context of diaspora engagement that does not fit directly into the other sections. They are based on a combination of literature review and comments from the authors. New information is incorporated during the annual updates. Readers are invited to verify the relevance of the information at the time of reading, as the context may have evolved.

Since its independence from Britain in 1965, Botswana has enjoyed strong economic growth based on mineral extraction (especially diamonds) and agriculture. Whilst there has been some

3 Ibid. See also Poteete A.R. (2013) The Absence of Intergroup Violence in Botswana: An Assessment of the Role of Development Strategies. In: Ascher W., Mirovitskaya N. (eds) *The Economic Roots of Conflict and Cooperation in Africa. Politics, Economics, and Inclusive Development*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York

4 [http://africanelections.tripod.com/bw\\_2.html#1997\\_Referendum](http://africanelections.tripod.com/bw_2.html#1997_Referendum)

5 At a special meeting on 6 October 2022, Parliament approved a decision to defer implementation of National Development Plan 12 (NDP 12) to April 2025 and to develop and implement a Transitional National Development Plan from 1st April 2023. <https://businessweekly.co.bw/news/ndp-12-deferred>

6 <http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/mobile/news-details.php?nid=35502&flag=?r=1>

7 See, for example, [https://www.gobotswana.com/sites/default/files/bitc\\_newsletter\\_-\\_q2.pdf](https://www.gobotswana.com/sites/default/files/bitc_newsletter_-_q2.pdf)

migration of Botswanan workers to South Africa (the top country of destination), Botswana remains a country of immigration rather than emigration, especially for neighbouring countries.

Due to Botswana's position as a country of immigration, the emigration of Botswanans has not had a negative economic impact, even if it has faced labour shortages in certain sectors such as medicine. Until 2009, there was no medical school in the country, and this meant Botswana wanting to train as doctors migrated to South Africa, the UK or Zimbabwe to complete their medical training.<sup>8</sup> Botswana thus lost health professionals to high-income countries in the face of significant shortages and a dissipating HIV and AIDS epidemic in the region.<sup>9</sup> The US and the UK continue to recruit Botswanan medical professionals, even during the recent Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>10</sup>

These factors, with the small contribution of remittances to national GDP, has meant that diaspora engagement has not been a policy priority for successive Botswanan governments. Although diaspora voting was enacted in 1997, there is no formal diaspora policy for the country. Moreover, Botswana retains a rather unitary approach to citizenship, and does not recognise dual citizenship. Arguably, this was partly driven by concerns about political opposition from Botswana exiles.

Botswana has started to develop some services for its diaspora through embassies and consulates but these are currently limited to voter registrations and ID cards. However, recent evidence such as the Active Global Citizens campaign, shows a willingness to diversify diaspora-engagement initiatives.

Botswana continues to show interest in formally increasing their diaspora engagement. In October 2023 a study visit facilitated by the IOM took place with a delegation of Botswana government representatives to Ghana to learn about Ghana's diaspora engagement experience and policy development.<sup>11</sup>

## Obstacles



- **Lack of government interest:** It is a common perception that Botswana in the diaspora are largely ignored by the government of Botswana, and there are few diaspora engagement initiatives.<sup>12</sup> Dual citizenship is not recognised, and there are no formal schemes to connect second and third generation Botswana diaspora with their country of origin/heritage.
- **Lack of political engagement:** Diaspora voter registrations has generally been low, with only 1,044 registered Botswana voters in the diaspora voting in the 2019 elections representing around 1% of the diaspora.<sup>13</sup> This has led to concerns that diaspora voter turnout is insufficient to justify the costs incurred to the government in enabling diaspora voting.<sup>14</sup>
- **Lack of information:** Currently, government services provided to the diaspora are limited to voter registrations and ID cards. There is little specific information available targeting the diaspora.
- **Lack of employment and enterprise opportunities for diaspora professionals and entrepreneurs:** There remains a lack of attractive employment opportunities for diaspora professionals, as well as a lack of targeted investment opportunities or incentives for diaspora entrepreneurs.

8 Ibid.

9 Motlathledi K, Nkomazana O (2018) Home is home—Botswana's return migrant health workers. PLoS ONE 13(11): e0206969.

10 <https://www.thegazette.news/news/botswana-doctors-on-high-demand-as-covid-19-intensifies/30875/#.XtvzK-d7m00>

11 <https://rodakar.iom.int/news/knowledge-sharing-mission-botswana-explores-ghanas-diaspora-engagement-practice>

12 Campbell, Eugene (2015), *op. cit.*

13 <https://allafrica.com/stories/201910230002.html>

14 Patrick Molutsi (2007), 'Botswana: disappointing results of external voting' in *Voting From Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook*

## Annex:

# List of Actors

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### **African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) 2001**

AU-CIDO is responsible for implementing the AU's engagement with non-state actors through the involvement of the diaspora and civil society. Botswana nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country at AU-CIDO Continental Meetings.

#### **Southern African Development Community (SADC) 1992**

Botswana is a founding member of SADC, an inter-governmental organisation whose goal is to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient productive systems, deeper co-operation and integration, good governance and durable peace and security among fifteen Southern African Member States.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

#### **Ministry of International Affairs and Cooperation 2014**

The primary responsibility of the Ministry is to manage and coordinate Botswana's foreign policy and advance the country's national interests abroad. It is also responsible for promoting and protecting Botswana's interests and its citizens abroad, including its diaspora.

- At sub-ministerial level

#### **Department of Protocol and Consular Services**

The Department of Protocol and Consular Services in the Ministry of International Affairs and Cooperation provides assistance to Botswana in the diaspora. It processes applications for passports and emergency travel documents, national identity cards (Oman), replacement birth certificates, police clearance certificates, documents for repatriation of deceased Botswana and provides authentication of documents issued by the Government of Botswana.

#### **Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC) 1997**

BITC is an organisation established by an act of Parliament to become an integrated Investment and Trade Promotion Authority (ITPA) with an encompassing mandate of investment promotion and attraction, export promotion, and development, including management of the "Nation Brand". BITC works to encourage investment and expansion, and contribute towards the improvement of the investment climate through policy advocacy to create sustainable job opportunities. It is also responsible for encouraging diaspora investment to the country.

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 520+ institutions](#)



## Diaspora organisations in Europe

Read more about diaspora organisations  
in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora  
organisation](#)"



### Botswana Community UK 2018 UK

- ✓ Development activities
- ✓ Integration activities

Botswana Community UK serves the Batswana community in the UK and works to promote and celebrate their culture and heritage – for example the yearly Botswana Independence Day Celebrations in London. They also raise funds for development projects in Botswana.

### Botswana and Friends in the Diaspora e.V 2017 Germany

- ✓ Development activities
- ✓ Integration activities

BAFID e.V., is an organisation working on communication and cooperation through intercultural exchange and solidarity support of people across the SADC region. It supports local education and development projects in Botswana.

### Botswana Student Union UK 2015 UK

- ✓ Integration activities

Botswana Student Union UK is a society for all Batswana Students in the UK. Its main aim is to promote the general welfare of these students. It also aims to pursue matters of interest to its members including charity fundraising, internships, mentoring and employment.

### Transvaal Zimbabwe And Botswana Association (TZABA) 1967 UK

- ✓ Development activities
- ✓ Integration activities

TZABA works to provide education and training, promote health and livelihoods, mobilise famine relief, conduct religious activities, and undertake economic, community development, and employment programmes in Botswana.

### YourBotswana 2016 UK

- ✓ Integration activities

YourBotswana is a diaspora news and information website providing links to community events activities in Botswana and the UK.

Original research:  
**AFFORD (2020)**  
Editing & update:  
**EUDiF (2026)**



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