

Primary-Resource Dependence: An Examen of Economic Diversification Policy and Poverty Eradication strategy in Botswana

Article by Feddious Mutenheri

Tutor in Development Studies at Livingstone Kolobeng College and a PhD Student in Public Administration at Texila American University

E-mail: feddious@gmail.com

Abstract

Dating back to its independence from British 'protection' in 1966, Botswana's economy has been largely based on beef production and in the 1980s, the mining and export of diamonds. Whereas the country remains one of the few brawny economies in Africa, the twin challenges of overreliance on primary economic activities and a sparse population base have become a real development bane. While the former has by now shown calamitous economic consequences as a result of foot and mouth disease and the drop-in world diamond prices, the latter is difficult to contemplate in development outlay. Faced with these reality checks the successive governments of Botswana have, with varied successes (or lack of), embarked on economic diversification overdrive and robust population policies. This paper reconnoiters the importance of economic diversification in primary-resource dependent Third World economies such as Botswana. It further explores the historical background to economic diversification in Botswana and the major challenges that Botswana faces in its diversification drive. The paper also draws attention to the challenges posed by a small and dwindling population and other fundamental issues to the vision of economic diversification. The paper concludes by pointing out opportunities available for a long-term expansion of the economy of Botswana. An intensive qualitative analysis of available literature will be used to gather information on Botswana's diversification policy. Secondary quantitative methods of data collection will largely be relied upon which involves the collection of secondary data from existing data sources like the internet, government resources, libraries and research reports. Secondary quantitative research will help to corroborate the information that is collected from primary quantitative research as well as support the strengthening or proving or disproving previously collected data. It is a major finding of this research that Botswana's diversification policy has not been pursued with the competence it deserves and therefore has so far been a failure. It is also the finding of this paper that unless robust population policies are put in place to support diversification, this policy will remain a pipe dream.

Introduction

Background to diversification in botswana

The talk about the necessity for diversification in Botswana is a progeny of a stark reality of an unsophisticated economy heavily dependent on a few primary economic activities. Botswana, from times of yore, provides itself a lot of avenues and opportunities for expansion of its economic options due to its array of endowments. Surprisingly, the economy has tended to depend primarily on diamond, copper/nickel and gold mining and beef export and to a lesser extent on the tourism sector, to its own disadvantage with little attention to diversification. While it was easy to maintain this situation at independence, it has proved unsustainable in recent years as a result of changing global economic and political realities which will be discussed later in this installment.

As a general policy objective, diversification in Botswana has been attempted since the attainment of independence in the 1960s, but as a specific and vigorous policy, diversification became a phenomenon in the 1990s. (Shillington: 2005). Diversification then was centered on mineral production. This was the time when the mineral industry was booming. Botswana tried to avoid the problems of mineral boom economies. It dealt then with its government expenditure and the result was economic growth and economic diversification (shillington: 2005).

Even then, diversification did not have an impact on gross domestic growth. At the time of its independence, Botswana was among the world's poorest countries. Tax revenues proved insufficient to cover the costs of government, forcing Botswana into heavy debt with Britain.

Seretse Khama set out on a vigorous economic program intended to transform Botswana into an export-based economy, built around beef, copper, and diamonds. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seretse_Khama). The 1967 discovery of Orapa's enormous diamond deposits particularly aided this program, and between 1966 and 1980 Botswana had the fastest growing economy in the world. Much of this money was reinvested into infrastructure, health, and education costs, resulting in further economic development. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seretse_Khama).

The source of this fortune has been the exploitation of deposits of diamonds and other minerals, a beef export industry that has preferred status with Europe, and a tourism policy that has courted the top-end of the market. But it is diamonds that have been the engine of growth. The domestic cost of production is low compared to their overseas sales value (priced in American dollars) and as a result, diamond sales for Botswana are extremely profitable (Jefferis, 1998). By the early 1980s, diamonds had replaced beef as Botswana's leading foreign exchange earner: in 1981, diamond exports accounted for 40% of total exports—in the first quarter of 2001 it was 87% (Republic of Botswana, 2002b). (Taylor: 2002).

Despite decades of rapid GDP growth and export (i.e. minerals and beef) success, the economy has failed to diversify and remains under-developed. (Taylor: 2002). Coupled with the world economic recession of 2008-2009, the economic outlook faced a gleamer future. All this has partly been a result of unclear government policies.

A key element in the government's model of economic development consists of private sector development policies grouped under the broad goal of economic diversification, and aimed at reducing the country's dependence on diamond mining. Botswana's successful management of its macro-economy and the persistent stagnation of private sector development present a perplexing paradox. (Conteh: 2008)

Diversification has thus become a policy objective for successive governments to that led by Lft Gen. Seretse Khama Ian Khama but with limited to no success. As Kapunda (2003) points out:

...One should not quickly conclude that significant diversification has been achieved. Firstly, the manufacturing sector, which is expected to play the central role in the diversification process, is still contributing only about 4 percent to GDP compared to 10percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, its contribution to total employment is only II percent. Even the industrial sector, defined broadly to include manufacturing, public utilities and construction, contributes only 12percent, 23 percent and 13percent to GDP, total employment and exports respectively.

From the above submissions, there is need to exhume the problems and the opportunities available for diversification of the Botswana economy in order to achieve porverty alleviation.

Natural resource endowment: The diversity

In order to comprehend the case for diversification in Botswana one needs an understanding of the geography and resource structure of the country. Botswana is a landlocked nation-state located in Southern Africa and shares its borders with Zimbabwe to the north-east, South Africa to the south and eastern side, Zambia to the north and Namibia to the west. This has meant that Botswana is heavily dependent on South Africa and Mozambique for her exports and imports. This profound reliance on other sovereign entities has palpable political, economic and even social costs.

582 000km² in area, the country is flat and up to 70% of it is covered by the Kalahari Desert. The tropic of Capricorn passes through this country and as such produce's differences in seasons especially between winter and summer. The other area though is suitable for arable agriculture. Because of the semi-arid climate, it is livestock farming, particularly ranching, which dominates agriculture in Botswana. According to Silitshena (1993: 115) ranching contributes 80% of the agricultural gross domestic product and is a major contributor of exports.

Apart from agriculture, Botswana is endowed with a rich mineral wealth that has contributed immensely to its GDP. A variety of minerals are found in Botswana and these include diamond,

silver, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten, chromium, iron, manganese, copper, nickel and coal (Silitshena: 1993: 125). Of these however, the most important ones are diamonds, copper, nickel and coal as some of the minerals exist only in smaller quantities.

Botswana boasts of a landscape and natural endowments which make the country suitable for tourism. The wildlife in Botswana is one of the best in Africa in the league of Kenya, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Whereas wildlife in those other countries has been affected by human activities due to their high densities, Botswana enjoys a smaller population and its wildlife has remained relatively flourishing.

The endowments which also include fish, resourceful forest and tourist features are a pointer of the potential that Botswana possesses in its endeavor to diversify its economy.

Research problem

According to Sekwati (2011) international experience has shown that diversification is a challenging task, and structural changes are usually slow to implement. Sekwati further notes that, for countries which are resource dependent, such as Botswana, the challenges are compounded by the fact that the dominant resource sector is poorly linked with the rest of the economy. The Ministry of Trade and Industry (2011) noted: in spite of four decades of rapid economic growth, the Botswana economy continues to be less diversified and driven by primary products of diamonds, copper/nickel and beef. In addition, the country's import bill averages P20 billion per annum over the last five years, further illustrating the symptoms of a less diversified economy. (Ministry of Trade and Industry: July 2011). Notwithstanding the flurry of policies, stratagems and incentive arrangements implemented by government to promote economic diversification over the years, the economy of Botswana remains heavily dependent on diamond mining, with a narrow and shallow private sector. (Lesego Sekwati: 2011). From the foregoing, it is clear that it is difficult for a country to depend on one commodity primarily because of the risk that if sector falls, the whole economy crumbles. According to Ramsay (2018), mining in Botswana is capital intensive and therefore there are not many jobs there and therefore that sector cannot be depended on to alleviate poverty in Botswana. It is therefore the objective of this research to examine the effectiveness, and the success of the diversification policies and attended strategies that the government has put in place to achieve economic diversification and eradicate poverty in Botswana.

Existing solutions to the problem

The government of Botswana has long realised the importance and the need to diversify its economy. These efforts can be traced through the various National Development Plans (NDPs) 14 that have been implemented since independence (Sekwati, 2010). However, in recent years, direct policy has been designed to focus on economic diversification including the Botswana Excellence Strategy rolled out in 2008. In view of the problems mentioned above, recently in 2010, The Government of Botswana engaged Ministries and their Stakeholders to step up efforts to expand the economy via the Economic Diversification Drive (EDD) Short-Term Strategy and the EDD Medium to Long-Term Strategy.

The EDD Short-Term Strategy is grounded on Government interventionist strategies such as administrative interventions to promote domestic production and consumption; The use of citizen economic empowerment strategies; The use of Government local procurement, The use of Government reservations, The use of Government preference schemes, The use of Government large import bill to promote the development of local companies and the use of preference margins. According to the Ministry of Trade and Industry strategy paper, it is aimed at achieving quick wins and early harvest of low hanging fruits in targeted sectors of the economy where private sector efficiency and competitiveness may be achieved quickly. (Ministry of Trade and Industry: 2011). The major aim of the Strategy is to diversify the economy and reduce the large import bill cited above.

On the other hand, it is realized that the EDD short term strategy is not viable in a free-market economy. Therefore, the EDD Medium to Long-Term Strategy envisages diversification of the economy through the development of globally competitive enterprises that need little or no Government protection and support. (Ministry of Trade and Industry: 2011). Its major aim is to

diversify the economy into sectors that will continue to grow long after minerals have run out. Its specific objectives are to develop globally competitive sectors; diversify exports and export markets through a vibrant and globally competitive private sector; develop goods and services that comply with local and international standards; and develop an entrepreneurship culture for business growth and enhanced citizen participation in the economy. (Ministry of Trade and Industry:2011)

But these are not the only solutions that the Government of Botswana have implemented to diversify the economy. According to Ramsay (2018) the first two Botswana Presidents, Sir Seretse Khama and Quet Masire did what was necessary to keep the economy oiled-up and the well-being of the people well looked after. Under Quet Masire, educating Botswana became a basis for skills development. Diamond money was used to improve the infrastructure. Under President Mogae, the country had an opportunity for FDI. President Mogae had the right ideas to attract FDI. However, during his time HIV/AIDS didn't help matters as resources had to be channeled to this epidemic, which also brought a bad reputation on the country. The country's leaders then had to focus attention on the combating of the pandemic and little attention to diversification.

The best solution

The EDD Medium to Long Term Strategy is the best approach do diversification in Botswana. It is an ambitious programme that envisages a vibrant and globally competitive private sector, which has been weaned-off from government support and protection. According to the Ministry of Trade and Industry it is to be achieved through: The development of a modern technology and skills driven knowledge economy in which Botswana firms will compete on the basis of quality of the labour force and productivity; quality of goods and services; technological innovation and adaptation; quality of business environment and infrastructure; and the extent and diversity of business linkages. (Ministry of Trade and Industry: 2011).

Limitations

The failure of diversification in Botswana thus far points to a variety of challenges that the country faces in its bid to diversify its economy. While there are myriad of factors that are responsible for failure of diversification, the momentous challenge to this process is to a larger extent posed by the twin phenomena of: its infernally small and dwindling population plus heavy dependence on a very few primary resources. The two challenges are dissected hereunder. Since independence, the population of Botswana was expected to grow at very fast rate because of a number of factors such as improvements in the economy, food aid and imports and better distribution, which have eliminated deaths caused by drought and also the provision of health facilities. However, in recent times, this trend was drastically altered by a number of factors.

Firstly, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has had very serious repercussions on Botswana's population structure. Ranked second in HIV prevalence in Africa after Swaziland, Botswana has experienced a drastic decline in its life expectancy. This has resulted in population projections being reduced from an estimated 2, 6 million by 2011 to a very humble number of only 2, 0 million by 2030. Such projections are a revelation of how the Botswana population is expected to grow at a very decreasing rate.

The Botswana pyramid has a much narrower base, since many sexually active HIV-infected young people die prematurely, while women may become infertile well before the end of their child-bearing years, leading to fewer babies being born. (Potter et al: 2008). Furthermore, as Barnett suggests, 'Up to a third of the infants born to HIV-positive women become infected themselves before or during birth, or through breast milk. Hence fewer babies survive to childhood and adolescence'. (Barnett, 2002b: 393). The smaller number of females under under 50 years old in the 2025 Botswana pyramid indicates the higher infection rate among young women than men.

According to the 2001 Botswana population census, Botswana's de facto population is 1.8 million people and This number masks the real population and slightly above 1million people are Botswana and the rest are foreigners.

There are a number of other factors that inhibit the achievement of the government's ambitious diversification strategies such as climate which limits diversification in agriculture, lack of other viable manufacturing options, financial resources and requisite skills base.

Exports have not risen as expected since diversification has largely been experienced in the services sector which does not produce goods which can be traded across the borders.

Unemployment has remained largely high because mining is largely a capital-intensive sector and does not create jobs. It is the government which is largely the employer and it does so by using revenues from mining in the public sector. This therefore means, there is still high unemployment and by extension means inequality still exists in the Botswana economy.

Achievements

There are a number of indicators of achievement in the area of diversification in Botswana. Firstly, GDP has become more diversified over the past 25 years. Since the 1980s the share of mining has progressively fallen, to 22.4% in 2013. (Jefferis: 2014) (See Figure 1- Figures and Tables).

Although the economy has become more diversified since the late 1980s, and the share of mining has fallen, the non-mining sector is quite different now to what it was 40 years ago. In 1974/5, the agriculture and manufacturing sectors accounted for 45% of non-mining value added, but by 2013 this had fallen to 10%. The counterpart to this was that the share of services has risen sharply. (Jefferis, 2014) (See Fig. 2 – Figures and Tables).

Secondly, Botswana has experienced growth in the services sector. So instead of mining alone contributing to growth, there has been an increase in the sources of growth of the economy thereby showing a decrease in the dependence on mining. However, it has to be noted that though services experienced growth, overall the growth rates have gone down since there has been lack of export diversification as most services are non-tradables. (See Fig. 3 – Figures and Tables).

Thirdly, there has been an expansion on government revenues from other non-mining sectors. Back in mid-1980s, fiscal mineral revenues accounted for 60% of total revenues and 30% of GDP. These figures have now at least halved, and non-mineral revenues make the majority (around 70%) of government revenues. (Jefferis: 2014) (See also Figure 4 – Figures and Tables).

Research methods

An intensive qualitative analysis of available literature was used to gather information on Botswana's diversification policy. Secondary quantitative methods of data collection were largely relied upon which involved the collection of secondary data from existing data sources like the internet, government resources, libraries and research reports. Secondary quantitative research helped to corroborate the information that is collected from primary quantitative research as well as support the strengthening or proving or disproving previously collected data.

The qualitative analysis reviews topics to do with the diversification policies in Botswana, the implementation of the policies, the extent to which the policies have been successful and the gaps in the policy-making strategy by the government of Botswana. An evaluation of the literature was extensively done to determine whether as a strategy, economic diversification in Botswana has managed to eradicate poverty in the country where poverty is said to be at 46% in rural areas and unemployment levels at 20% (Borjen Project 2017). Key respondents in government and the private sector were also consulted in order to get the view of the real participants in the policy making and implementation domains.

Results/Findings

It is the major finding of this Paper that there has been a large spate of policies, strategies and interventions that were aimed at diversifying the economy and averting the dangers associated with diamond led economies or basically economies dependent on one major economic activity.

According to Dr. Ramsay, the successive governments of Botswana since independence have made considerable progress in making policies that would set Botswana on a path to diversification and with-it poverty eradication. Especially under President Ian Khama, Tourism has been developed since he had passion for tourism. He contends that tourism is labour extensive and more jobs have been

created in that field since Botswana has unique tourist resources such as wildlife and one of the only world inland deltas, the Okavango Delta. However, the continued lack of a strong private sector means that government alone has to push for the diversification of the economy. According to Ramsay, bureaucrats by their very nature are the wrong people to push for diversification.

Thirdly, Botswana's education policy has not necessarily complemented the diversification drive pursued by the government. There is need to develop a skill based that is based on the country needs for diversification, creating graduates who know what exactly the economy needs. This has been a failure.

The population threshold in Botswana

According to Ramsay the Botswana economy still falls far behind in technology. The Asian Tigers have managed their growth through implementation of the 4th Industrial Revolution and Botswana still lags behind. The Fourth Industrial Revolution builds on the Digital Revolution, representing new ways in which technology becomes embedded within societies and even the human body. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is marked by emerging technology breakthroughs in a number of fields, including robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing, biotechnology, the Internet of Things (IoT), 3D printing and autonomous vehicles. (Klaus Schwab: 2016). Ramsay contends that the starting point is the digitization of government itself then manufacturing and services for the country to set the right tone for diversification.

Botswana's vision maintains that by 2016 Botswana will have diversified its economy, with mining, industry, manufacturing, services and tourism all making a sustainable contribution (RB: 6). However, the diversification is still not satisfactory as illustrated hereunder: Although the contribution of the mining sector to GDP has been declining from over 50 percent when the diversification industrial development strategy was adopted in 1984/85 to only 37 percent in 2000/01, one should not quickly conclude that significant diversification has been achieved. Firstly, the manufacturing sector, which is expected to play the central role in the diversification process, is still contributing only about 4 percent to GDP compared to 10percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, its contribution to total employment is only 11 percent. Even the industrial sector, defined broadly to include manufacturing, public utilities and construction, contributes only 12percent, 23 percent and 13percent to GDP, total employment and exports respectively. (Kapunda: 2003) (Botswana Journal of African Studies: Vol. 17 (2003) no.2).

Discussion

The EDD Short term strategy is basically not sustainable in a supposedly free market economy as it is based on government interventions and other policies that are command in nature such as preference margins, local empowerment strategies, local procurement and government reservations to mention a few. Botswana in reality falls far short from being described a free market economy because government is too involved what Ramsay described as a neo-soviet economy. Examples are the ways in which government was heavily involved with such big investments such as Corning and Heinz, Hyundai, Palapye Glass. The apt Adam Smith's concept of the "invisible hand" applies because generally government is ineffective and wasteful. Botswana needs to open its market rather than being protective if it is to achieve a diversified economy that caters to the development needs of the country.

The government needs to take on board the Fourth Industrial revolution starting the digitization of government, manufacturing sector and services sector. The advanced economies have progressed on this basis. Being a landlocked country however, manufacturing is a difficult task for Botswana but the services sector. However much of these services are not tradable and would not be expected to push the export revenues up for Botswana.

Government needs to create an enabling environment and there should be political commitment to the objectives of diversification. For 25 years the government has talked about The One-Stop-Shop for investors but till to date it has not materialized. On the other hand, while it is important to open borders and ease immigration laws, care should also be taken as there is need to protect the social and economic interests of the local people. So, doors need to be opened for investors but with rules.

Education in Botswana also needs radical change. It needs to be automated and let education centers infuse a curriculum that suits the needs of the economy.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, diversification in Botswana has been a buzzword in government circles however with little progress made on the ground. Government has been preoccupied with making a flurry of policies on paper well-meaning for diversification but with little implementation on the ground. The EDD short term strategy cannot be the panacea to the development needs and poverty alleviation strategy. It is a command economy strategy in what is basically a free market economy and therefore does not address the long-term needs of the economy. On the other hand, the EDD Medium to Long Term Strategy is a very ambitious programmed, which envisages a globally competitive private sector which is able to compete at the international stage, producing goods that have international standards. This is a hard sell as the private sector in Botswana has relatively remained small shallow and generally ineffective. The population dynamics, immigration policies and commitment by government bureaucracy in the country inhibit FDI since it is difficult to support viable business and therefore unlikely to lure much needed foreign investment. In as much as there has been diversification in the services sector, and an increase in the revenue base of non-mining activities, this has not translated to real growth in GDP, and rather there has been a decline as the export side of the economy has not experienced any growth.

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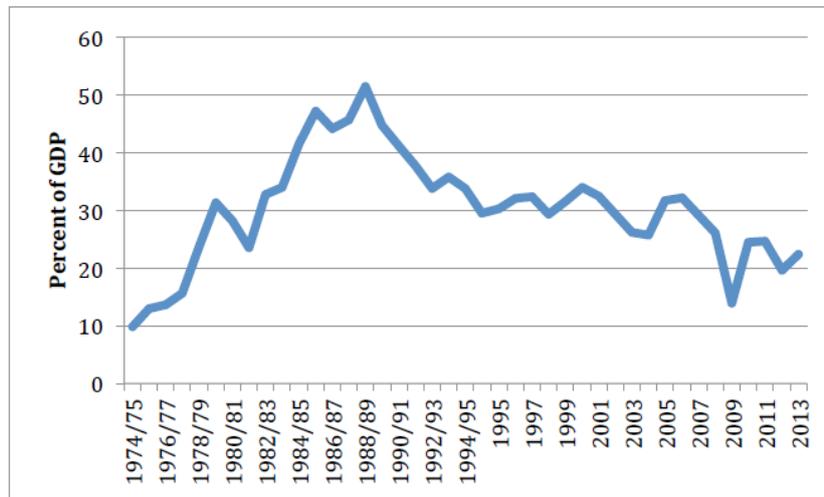


Figure 1. Mining as share of GDP

Source: Statistics Botswana.

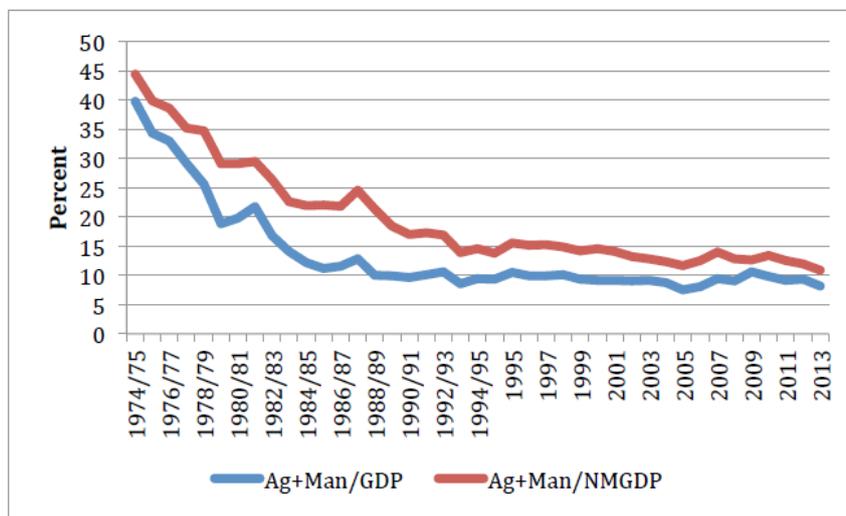


Figure. 2. Share of Agriculture and Manufacturing in GDP and Non-Mining VA

Source: Statistics Botswana.

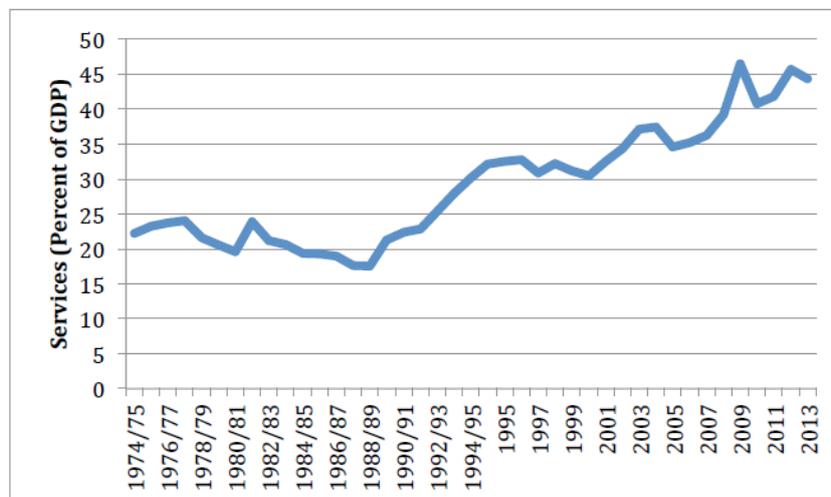
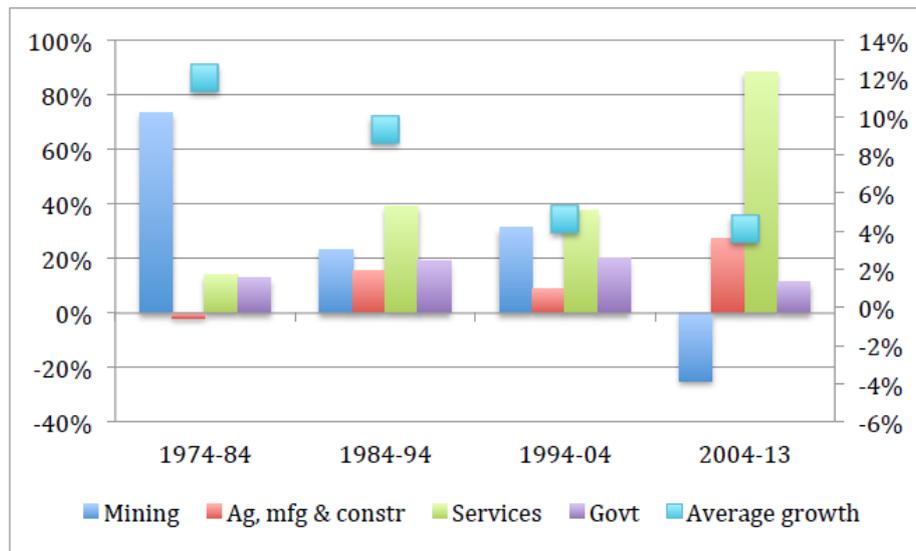


Figure 3. Share of Services in GDP

Source: Statistics Botswana



Source: calculations based on data from Statistics Botswana

Figure 4. Drivers of Growth

World Population Ageing 1950-2050

Botswana		Age	1950	1975	2000	2025	2050
Population (thousands)							
Total	Total		389.4	759.0	1 541.3	1 826.4	2 109.3
	0 - 14		179.6	379.9	648.9	594.9	518.9
	15 - 59		185.9	354.0	822.5	1 119.0	1 338.7
	60 - 64		8.4	8.8	26.2	32.4	90.1
	65 - 69		6.7	6.2	17.7	26.6	65.9
	70 - 74		4.6	5.0	12.2	20.3	40.5
	75 - 79		2.7	2.8	8.3	15.6	23.9
	80 - 84				3.9	10.1	16.2
	85 - 89	}			1.2	5.4	9.9
	90 - 94		1.5	2.3	0.3	1.6	4.0
	95 - 99				0.0	0.3	1.0
	100+				0.0	0.0	0.2
Female	Total		207.4	400.7	786.5	901.5	1 027.5
0 - 14		94.5	189.4	322.2	294.6	256.2	
15 - 59		97.6	196.2	420.7	537.1	646.9	
60 - 64		5.3	5.4	15.7	17.5	42.8	
65 - 69		4.2	3.3	11.1	15.6	31.4	
70 - 74		2.9	3.0	7.7	12.9	19.2	
75 - 79		1.8	1.8	5.6	11.2	11.8	
80 - 84				2.5	7.3	9.0	
85 - 89	}			0.8	3.8	6.3	
90 - 94		1.0	1.6	0.2	1.2	2.9	
95 - 99				0.0	0.2	0.8	
100+				0.0	0.0	0.2	
Male		Total	182.0	358.3	754.7	924.9	1 081.9
0 - 14		85.1	190.5	326.7	300.3	262.6	
15 - 59		88.3	157.8	401.8	581.9	691.8	
60 - 64		3.1	3.4	10.4	14.9	47.3	
65 - 69		2.4	2.9	6.6	11.0	34.6	
70 - 74		1.6	2.0	4.6	7.4	21.3	
75 - 79		0.9	1.0	2.7	4.4	12.1	
80 - 84				1.4	2.9	7.2	
85 - 89	}			0.4	1.6	3.6	
90 - 94		0.5	0.7	0.1	0.4	1.1	
95 - 99				0.0	0.1	0.2	
100+				0.0	0.0	0.0	

Figure 5. Botswana's Population Statistics

Extracted from: Population Division, DESA, United Nations