

**Sustainability of Social Security in Botswana**Kgomotso Jongman<sup>[1]</sup> and Sethunya Molosiwa<sup>[2]</sup><sup>[1]</sup>Lecturer, University of Botswana, Department of Social Work, Gaborone, Botswana<sup>[2]</sup>Okavango Diamond Company, Gaborone, Botswana

**Abstract.** Botswana was ranked second poorest country at independence from Britain in 1966. The country has seen a steady movement from a state of poverty to be among the most developed in the sub-Saharan region and earned the upper middle-income countries title in the past 54 years. This has been due to so many factors but mostly due to steady democracy that has seen 12 undisturbed elections, good fiscal policy and mostly the modest approach to life by the population. The infrastructure development has been seen, education, health systems and other developments. Despite all these, Botswana still experiences the poor countries issues such as high unemployment, high poverty incidences, illnesses such as HIV and AIDS, malnutrition among the under 5s and teenage pregnancies. This has led the government of Botswana to come up with strong social security programmes in Botswana which Kalusupa and Letsile (2012) believe is the strongest in Africa. These programmes include among others, public works (Ipelegeng), old age pension, school feeding, and destitute programmes. This paper is looking at the sustainability of these programmes considering that Botswana is a mono-economy country that takes most of its revenue from diamonds.

**Keywords:** Social security, Social protection, Social welfare, Sustainability

**Introduction**

At Independence in 1966, Botswana was classified as one of the poorest countries in the world and at the time the country relied heavily on subsistence agriculture, cattle farming, and remittances from migrant labourers in South Africa (Ntseane & Solo 2007). With time the situation changed for the better, particularly with the discovery of diamonds in the late 1970s, as minerals began to contribute immensely to the country's revenue (Maundeni & Mupedziswa, 2017). Since then the level of poverty has been declining, although the country is still a long way off from total eradication of poverty. Maundeni and Mupedziswa (2017) highlight that the scourge of poverty continues to stubbornly refuse to disappear, although there have been promising signs of its decline. Between 1985/86 and 1993/94, for instance, the proportion of poor and very poor persons declined to 47%, while a further decline to 23% was recorded in 2009 and this has led Botswana to be classified as middle-income country. Despite Botswana's acclaimed economic success story, over 20% of Botswana continue to live below the poverty datum line of less than US1.25 per day. In addition, Botswana still experience challenges that are experienced by poor countries such as pervasive poverty, high unemployment, HIV and AIDS and high maternal deaths.

Prior to independence Botswana used traditional support system to address issues of poverty and destitution. The family provided for widows, orphans, and poor children and this was seen as social safety nets (Jongman, 2015). After independence in 1966, government acknowledged that solutions to social problems could still be found in the framework of customary law and traditional support system. However, Kalusupa and Letsile (2012) indicate that the devastating drought of the mid-sixties necessitated government to intervene as people could no longer rely on subsistence economy. Invariably, with assistance from the World Food Programme, the first formal social protection programme was launched to counteract the effects of the 1965 drought. Destitute Policy was enacted in 1980 (Government of Botswana, 1980) and later revised in 2002 (Government of Botswana, 2002). Short Term of Plan for Care of Orphans (STPA) (Government of Botswana, 1999) was launched in 1999 to respond to

critical needs of orphans due to high number of deaths due to AIDS. Many more social assistances programmes were initiated in the past 43 years which some will be discussed in this paper.

This paper therefore seeks to explore the sustainability of social security measures that are used to mitigate high unemployment and poverty and vulnerability in Botswana. Furthermore, the paper will look at how the programmes can be run so that they cannot be a burden to the economy that is dependent on natural resources, especially diamonds.

### **Definition of Social Security Key Concepts**

There are three main concepts that need to be defined in this paper because they are sometimes used interchangeably:

1. Social security will be defined using Otto and Osei-Boateng's definition. The authors indicate that, Social security maybe refereed as social protection, security, or social assistance (Otto & Osei-Boateng, 2012). It is a set of benefits provided by the state, the market, or a combination of both to individuals and households to mitigate hardship. Social security come in the form of state sponsored social benefit. Its main aim is to mitigate possible hardships resulting from reduction or loss in income.
2. Although social protection has recently become mainstreamed in development discourse, it remains a term that is unfamiliar to many and carries a range of definitions, both in the development studies literature and among policymakers responsible for implementing social protection programmes. One inevitable result of this proliferation of concepts and understandings is confusion: the core components and boundaries of social protection are far from agreed, and different stakeholders perceive social protection in very different ways. For example:
  - (i) Some see social protection narrowly, essentially as a new label for old-style social welfare provided to the "deserving poor" (e.g. widows and orphans, or people with disabilities).
  - (ii) Many policymakers continue to equate social protection with social safety nets, or interventions that cushion the poor against production and consumption shocks, such as food aid for drought-affected farmers in subsistence-oriented communities.
  - (iii) Others adopt a very broad approach, including education and health subsidies, job creation and microcredit programmes, as well as safety nets for groups that may be vulnerable to shocks, but are not usually regarded as among the poorest strata of society (e.g. coffee farmers facing falling export prices).
  - (iv) A more "political" or "transformative" view extends social protection to arenas such as equity, empowerment, and economic, social, and cultural rights, rather than confining the scope of social protection to targeted income and consumption transfers.
3. Social Safety Nets- The term Social Safety Net is also used in a broader context to mean any program that provides benefits to individuals or families. This broad definition includes Social Security, Medicare, and Unemployment. In this context the Social Safety Net is made up of both contributory and non-contributory Programs.

In this paper the term social security will be used to explain the social protection (assistance) in Botswana.

### **Social Security Models**

It is important to first look at the models of social security (welfare) from the broad perspective so as to give this paper a context. This paper will look at three methods of social welfare (social security), these are: residual, institutional and social development.

### **Residual Welfare Model**

Residual welfare provision is often seen as being for the poor. Spicker (2020) indicated that, this model was the dominant model in English-speaking countries; the English Poor Law (1601-1948) was exported to many other countries. The above-mentioned author continues to indicate that, this model has been taken as the model of a residual system of welfare, in which welfare is a safety net, confined to those who are unable to manage otherwise. In buttressing the above point Zastrow (2002) goes further in the definition and say, residual welfare model as, a model that is reactive or gap-filling. The author continues to indicate that this kind of approach deals with needs as they come; it attends to visible needs that cannot be addressed by other societal means. Furthermore, residual welfare model, as a prerequisite, it has to ensure that all other methods of social sustaining have been exhausted for it kicks in. this support will include among other things, support from family, market economy and religious institutions before assistance measures are given. It is short-term in that it is withdrawn when the person in need of aid becomes capable of independence from the system (Zastrow, 2002)

Since residual social welfare is reactive, it only acts when the problem is obvious and already needs immediate attention. Residual social welfare often caters to poor and underprivileged members of society. One social programme in Botswana that fits the description of the residual model is the ipelegeng programme. According to Nthomang (2018), the ipelegeng programme was launched as Public Works Programme (PWP) in 2008 as one, among a myriad of initiatives meant to reduce poverty for sustainable development in marginalized contexts. The programme will be discussed in depth later on when programmes are dissected to see their impact and their sustainability.

### **Institutional Model**

Institutional social welfare takes the approach that everyone deserves to be supported by the community and the government, even without an obvious and direct request for help, so each person can become self-sufficient. It is also preventive in nature, because it anticipates problems that may arise and resolves them as early as possible (Zastrow, 2002).

Institutional social welfare focuses on giving each person equal opportunity to be supported, whatever their circumstance. Government-funded social services are some of the best examples of this type, as it is offered to everyone without the need for application or justification. Moreover, Spicker (2020) indicates that, Institutional welfare model is system in which need is accepted as a normal part of social life. The author continues to indicate that, welfare is provided for the population as a whole, in the same way as public services like roads or schools might be. In an institutional system, welfare is not just for the poor: it is for everyone. Examples of institutional social services include free daycare programs, free education, and social security programs. These services do not distinguish the need of one individual from another and it can be availed by anyone who wants it. Some other examples of institutional social welfare include free medical services, government-funded scholarship programs and housing subsidies.

### **Social Development**

Midgley (1995) has had a decisive impact on the international discussion on social development. He conceives it as a "process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development" (Midgley 1995). The goal of social development in the context of modern welfare is to produce a social well-being that makes people capable of acting and making their own decisions in the broadest sense. Midgley's definition of social development "as a process of promoting people's welfare" can be elucidated as an enabling perspective, because it focuses attention on the potentials for action without forgetting the structural constraints to which actors

are subject. The strengths of social development lie in the fact that its intervention strategies address the macro-, meso-, and microlevels. This means that it draws local communities into its strategy packages just as much as governments and international organizations.

The social development approach seeks to integrate economic and social policies within a dynamic development process in order to achieve social welfare objectives.

### **Social Security Implementation Structure in Botswana**

According to the International Labour Organisation (2020), Africa is the continent where the greatest proportion of the population does not have access to adequate health care and where the incidence of infant mortality is highest. The labour organisation continue to indicate that, these are only some of the social risks and adversities being faced in day to day life, but Africa is also the continent where the coverage of social security is at its lowest. In contrast to what ILO (2020) is saying, Botswana is said to be among the few countries in Africa with a functional and organized social security system. Even though Botswana is said to be the shining star in Africa as it was indicated at the introduction, Botswana was among the poorest countries of the world in 1966 when she gained independence. In 1974, there was the discovery of diamonds that led to the new found wealth that has seen the country moving from poverty to an upper middle class income country. This new wealth however, it is very unevenly distributed among its population and has left a lot of the citizens marginalised economically, socially and/or geographically (Regional Hunger and vulnerability Programme, 2011). The RHVP (2011) in their Frontiers of social protection brief, titled, social protection in Botswana, a model for Africa, indicated that, poverty headcount, of Botswana was at 30.6% (2003), but this has been falling but remains high for this income level. Statistics Botswana shows that poverty has gone down to 20% (2020) in the past 17 years. Structural poverty and vulnerability are aggravated by periodic drought and an HIV prevalence rate second only to Swaziland's. moreover, the RHVP (2011), has also indicated that, in Botswana, women, children and the Basarwa (Bushmen or San) are especially marginalised, and there are particular concerns about social pathologies affecting the youth. In Botswana according to the youth policy (2010), there are 38.8% of the youth in Botswana and out of the 38.8%, 40% of them are unemployed and mostly females. Botswana was hard hit by the 2008 global economic recession because of its dependence on diamonds. The question is, in, a longer-term reliance on diamond exports, which are set to decline as resources are depleted, can be reduced given the structural disadvantages of a small domestic market, competition from neighbouring South Africa and low agricultural productivity how will Botswana support its social security programmes?

Unconsciously Botswana has adopted the residual welfare model from the British as it was a protectorate. Despite this, due to continued drought and HIV and AIDS, Botswana has mixed residual model and institutional model. There are instances where residual is prominent and there are instances where institutional are prominent. This has led the country to have a strong and long-standing commitment to state-led social protection. When looking at the Programming for the poor, vulnerable such as orphans, the elderly and excluded groups is comprehensive by African standards. The country has made a concerted efforts in trying to tackle HIV and AIDS and its impacts on its population. RHVP (2011), submit that, despite all this impressive track record, which provides a model for other African countries, has until now remained under-researched and rarely cited.

### **The Policy Environment for Social Development and Social Protection in Botswana**

Botswana is a signatory to several international Botswana is signatory to several international policy goals, frameworks and conventions aimed at poverty reduction and social development. The country has embraced the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Alongside other global conventions such as those on child rights and discrimination against

women, Botswana has been an active participant in two important regional initiatives: the 2007 SADC Code on Social Security, which declares that ‘Everyone in SADC has the right to social security’ and sets out responsibilities of Member States in providing it, and the 2008 African Union Social Policy Framework (AU-SPF) which elaborates the rationale and provides guidelines for establishing coherent national social policy in African countries (RHVP, 2011).

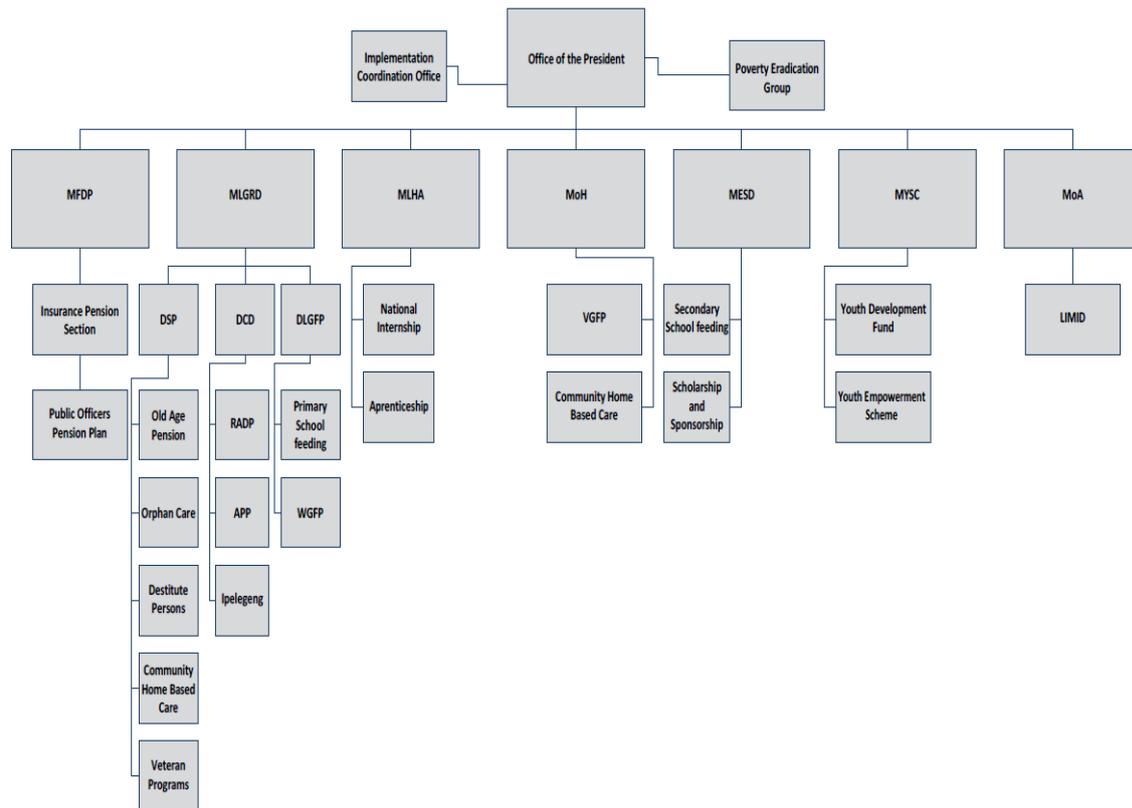
### **The National Policy Context for Social Development and Social Protection**

Holzmann and Jorgensen (2002) have indicated that, provision of social assistance to support coping strategies, tackle deep poverty, and promote development is consistent with the key objectives of a developmental state. In buttressing the above point by Holzmann and Jorgensen (2002), Castells (1992) indicates that, the developmental state provides social support in the sectors of education, health, housing and social services, and acknowledge the role of economic growth as a means to social development and not as an ultimate goal. Botswana despite its economic success and prudent fiscal policies is categorised under developmental state its concentration will be on education, health, and housing. Moreover, despite the fact that Botswana currently does not have a single national policy for social development or social protection, there are a lot of policies and strategies that are more related to areas of social distress that needs to be address in social development. The table below indicates the importance accorded to social development in the national polity.

*Vision 2036*  
*National Strategy for Poverty Reduction*  
*Eleventh National Development Plan*  
*Revised National Policy on Rural Development*  
*Strategic Framework for Community Development*  
*National Population Policy*  
*National Policy on Gender and Development*  
*National Youth Policy*  
*National Health Policy*  
*National Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS*  
*National Policy on HIV/AIDS and Employment*  
*Revised National Policy on Education*  
*National Strategy for Promoting Good Social Values*  
*National Policy on Sport and Recreation*  
*National Policy on Culture*  
*Labour legislation*  
*National Policy on Non-Governmental Organisations*  
*Children’s Act 2009*  
*Revised Remote Area Development Programme*  
*National Policy on Disaster Management*  
*National Policy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

Source: (GoB, 2010:9)

These policies and programmes have to be implemented more especially at the local level. Majority of the programmes are implemented at the ministry of local government and rural development. The following is a local structure which shows how this policies and programmes are implemented in Botswana.



Note: MFDP- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; MLGRD- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; MoH- Ministry of Health; MESD- Ministry of Education and Skills Development; MYSC- Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture; MoA- Ministry of Agriculture; DSP- Department of Social Protection; DCD- Department of Community Development; DLGFP- Department of Local Government Finance and Procurement; RADP- Remote Area Development Program; APP- Alternative Package Program; VGFP- Vulnerable Group Feeding Program; LIMID- Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development

### Social Security Programmes in Botswana

The government of Botswana has, over the last couple of decades, forged ahead with its developmental agenda and continued to expand its social protection regime in the process (Mupedziswa & Ntseane, 2018). The above point is buttressed by Botlhale et al. (2015) who quoted the government of Botswana (2003) by saying, the Government of Botswana has always been visionary on poverty reduction. Botlhale et al. (2015) indicated that in 2003, the country adopted the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction whose functions are to: a) Set poverty reduction as its overarching goal consistent with the country's commitment to 'build a compassionate, caring and just nation'; b) Chart the strategic pathways for poverty reduction primarily through broad-based labour-absorbing economic growth, the provision of basic quality social services to the poor, the promotion of cost-effective pro-poor social safety nets, an enhanced effective response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic and strengthening of institutions for the poor, and; c) Provide a multi-sectoral approach for overseeing the design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction interventions (Government of Botswana, 2003:53) The above authors continue to indicate that this has led to reduction of poverty among Botswana as it was indicated by Statistics Botswana (2011). Ntseane (2018), has highlighted that, the government of Botswana has come up with a number of policy measures that are trying to reduce poverty and promote social protection. The revised policy for rural development promises mechanisms to increase economic empowerment and self-reliance in provision of social protection schemes (MFDF, 2002 in Ntseane, 2018). The following are some of the social security programmes in Botswana. They are categorised into food subsidies, Public Works Programmes, and human capital subsidies.

### **Food Subsidies**

Despite the fact that all the food subsidies are put together, there are those that are population specific like children. The government of Botswana in 1999 decided to concentrate its efforts on coming up with food or income support to children. In Botswana, a child is someone below the age of 18 years in accordance with the Children's Act of 2009 (Government of Botswana, 2009). The government, has collaborated with the UNICEF in trying to develop an orphan care programme in the height of HIV and AIDS pandemic to try and mitigate the impact on children who were left as orphans commonly known as the Short Term Plan of Action on the care of orphans (STPA), which was supposed to run from 1999 to 2003 but was extended until 2010, when the government came up with a permanent plan in the form of National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Botlhale, 2012b). It should be noted that the children's social programme does not make direct cash transfers to them<sup>10</sup> but supports them in terms of goods and services (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development MLG&RD, 2010b). The programme is not only for children, there is the destitute programme that is guided by the Revised national policy on destitute persons 2002 (Government of Botswana, 2002). The following are just a summary of all the food subsidies in Botswana and they are inclusive of children and the elderly:

- Old Age Pension
- Orphan Care Program
- Primary and secondary school feeding programs
- Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme
- Pregnant and lactating mothers' program
- Children aged 5 years or less
- Destitute Persons Program
- Needy Students Program

### **Public Works Programmes**

- Ipelegeng
- Special Constables
- Wildlife
- Green Scorpions
- Crime Prevention
- National Internship Program

### **Human Capital Subsidies**

- Scholarship programme

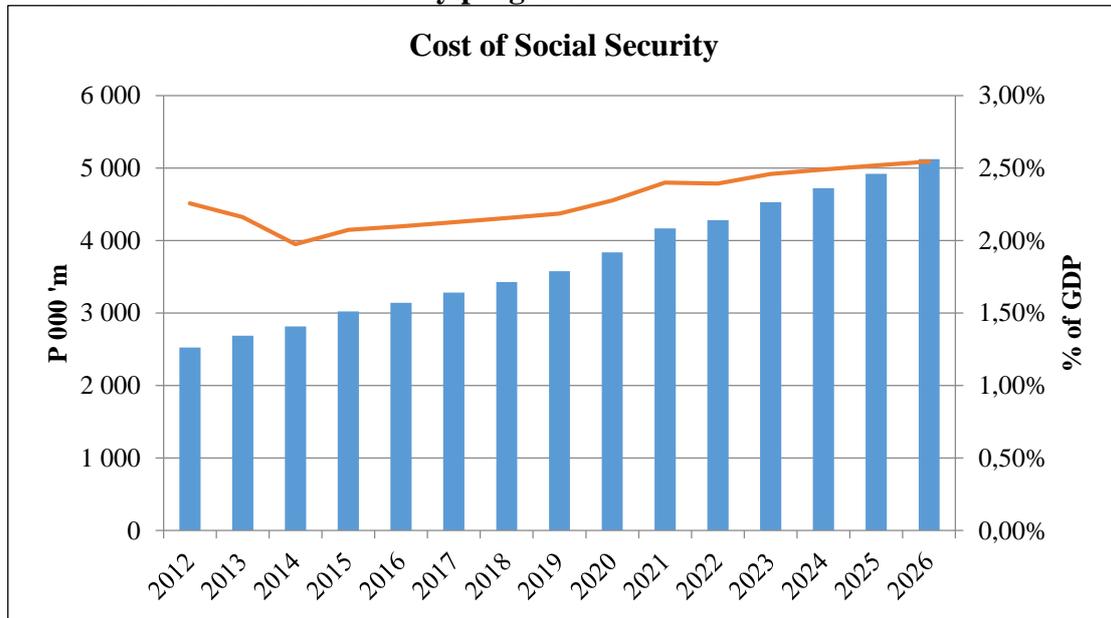
### **Limitations/Challenges of Social Security Programs**

The social security system has a potential to reduce pervasive poverty in Botswana if it can only be targeted and means tested effectively and efficiently. In Botswana, the failure for social security schemes can be attributed to a number of factors according to Ntseane (2018). The following are some of the factors that led to challenges or limitations of social security schemes in Botswana.

- Data shows that they reach a very small number of beneficiaries
- Capacity is limited for effective implementation of social welfare services. On average, one social worker is given responsibility to cover 5 villages or more.
- No unemployment insurance/benefit despite high unemployment rates
- High leakages due to universal coverage of most of the programs
- Individuals claiming across multiple programs
- Uncoordinated work by different ministries and departments.

- Lack of common and standard definition of social security.
- High load of cases for welfare officers (average of 629 orphans for an officer in a year (Kalusopa & Letsie, 2012).
- Lack of personnel especially on issues of psychosocial support and therapy. More officers are concerned with the material support.

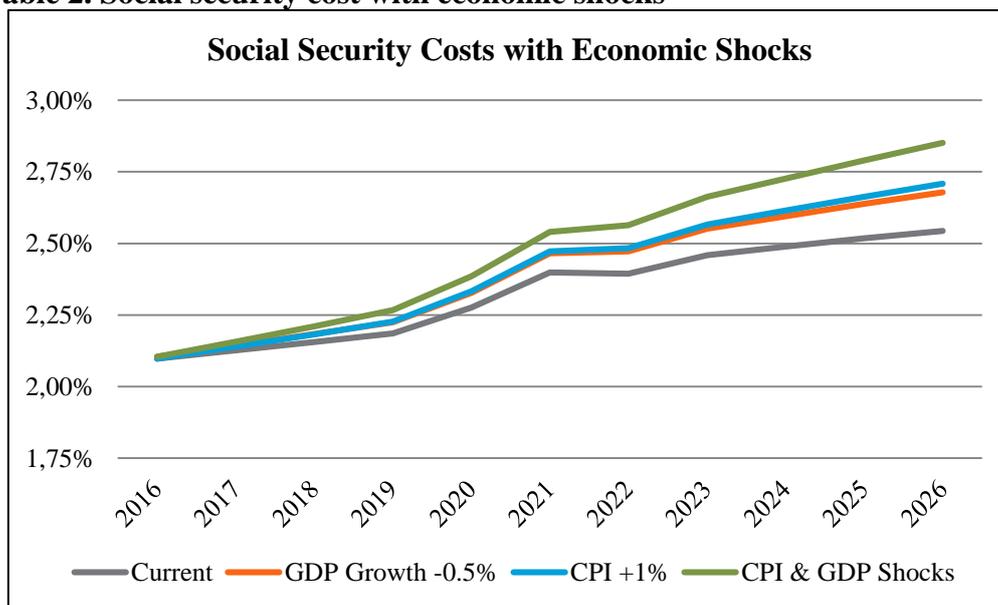
**Table 1. Cost of social security programs**



**Acid test for sustainability**

- Increase in long term CPI from 4% to 5%
- Drop in GDP growth from 3% to 2.5%
- No accounting for secondary effect of either scenario on unemployment rates or hence eligibility numbers
- Assumed same level of cover ratio

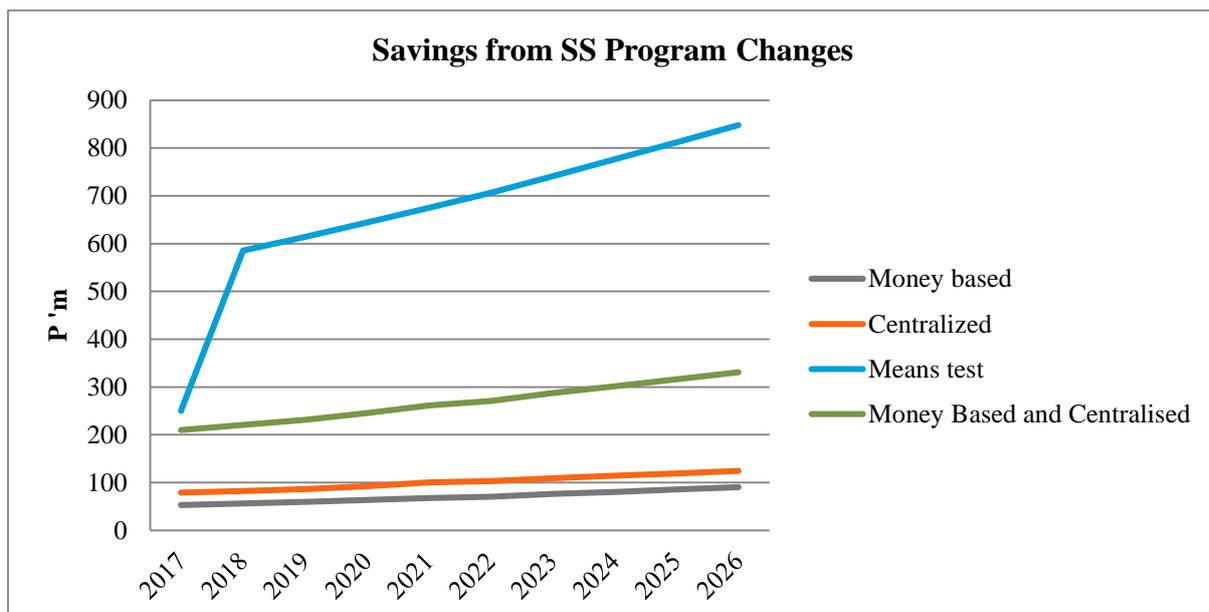
**Table 2. Social security cost with economic shocks**



- **Acid test for sustainability**
  - Cost as % of GDP increased from 2.54% to 2.85%
  - Cost in P224m (2016 value)

### Possible Change to Social Security Management

- The government of Botswana should consider developing a sound welfare framework to guide the social welfare programmes in Botswana with centralised and coordinated management.
- Currently there is no framework that guides the welfare programme in the country and may consider adopting the social development welfare model and contextualizing it to the environment in Botswana (The model is multi sectorial) rather than the residual model.
- There is a need to have social security policies that are integrated, inclusive and participatory through creation of a national social protection commission.
- The social security should be preventative and holistic in nature, targeted at eliminating risk and vulnerability.
- The government should also consider moving to money-based programs. Research has shown that, this will reduce admin costs from 25% to 10% as indicated in Table 2 below.
- The Move to a centralised model will also reduce admin costs from 25% to 20% and from 10% to 7.5% as it is indicated in Table 2 below.
- They should be the introduction of the means testing programmes especially with the orphan care programme and the old age pension schemes so that the money can be given to those who are most vulnerable.
- Orphan care program – reduce proportion of recipients from 5% to 2.5% by 2020 as it is indicated below in Table 2.
- VGFP – reduce proportion of recipients from 20% to 15% by 2020
- School feeding program
- Primary school – reduce proportion of recipients from 80% to 60% by 2020
- Secondary school – reduce proportion of recipients from 98% to 70% by 2020



	PV of Savings (P 'm)
Money based	582
Centralized	838
Means test	5 476
Money Based and Centralized	2 220

### Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

- The welfare system in Botswana should adopt the social development model. Social development concept is the dynamic change through creating awareness and implementation by conducting action or program activities among the mass people. It is very complex process that in social science some time to present or discover the social phenomena exactly for the reason of different views from the thinking and expressing mind set-up. With the passage of time everything is changing as the culture. All developmental work or program should be prioritized according to the view of community peoples.
- They should be a central welfare system instead of the current fragmented system where programmes are all over the departments and ministries.
- The government of Botswana should consider having one centralized ministry where welfare will be administered.
- The government should reduce on high administrative fees of the programmes and put more money into programmes.
- Government should incorporate non-traditional professions in the development and assessment of programs such as actuaries.

### Conclusion

Variety of social security schemes within on country is the product of different decision-making process of the past (Ross, 2018). Ross (2018) continue to indicate that, what was presumed to be necessary in one period and helpful might be a contradiction to other schemes in another period. This is evident with what is currently happening in Botswana. The social security programmes that were meant to address poverty in the early 1970s and now are just a contradiction. Despite all that, as it is indicated in the introduction, we cannot dispute that social security programmes are playing a pivotal role in the lives of Batswana in terms of poverty alleviation. The government of Botswana should be commended on a job well done as it is also indicated by Kalusopa and Letsia (2012) that Botswana has a better social security than a lot of countries in the region. Despite all these, there is a need to revise social welfare strategies in Botswana. Furthermore, there should be More frequent assessments and revisions of programs. Moreover, the Scope to improve benefits without affecting beneficiaries. Despite the good standing of social security in Botswana, it shows that in the long run due to uncoordinated welfare programmes and double dipping where one client can benefit in many programmes will make social security services unsustainable. The argument of this paper at the end of it all, is that social security systems in Botswana in its current form, its not sustainable. The numbers have shown in Tables 1 to 3, that there is a need to change the regime, approach, design, and implementation of social security for a maximum benefit to the beneficiaries in Botswana.

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