

**12TH REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR AFRICA AND ARAB COUNTRIES**

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PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL



**GENERAL INFORMATION
FOR THE CONFERENCE
AND RELATED MEETINGS**

**GABORONE SUN CONFERENCE CENTRE,
BOTSWANA
22-25 SEPTEMBER 2015**

www.world-psi.org

INTRODUCTION

BOTSWANA BASIC FACTS:



Botswana is a country located in Southern Africa. Geographically the country is flat and up to 70-80% of Botswana is covered by the Kalahari Desert. Officially the Republic of Botswana is a landlocked country. Formerly the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, Botswana adopted its new name after becoming independent within the Commonwealth on 30 September 1966. It has held uninterrupted democratic elections since independence.

Botswana is one of Africa's most exclusive safari destinations. The Okavango Delta and Chobe National Parks are filled with wildlife and not that easy to get there. Botswana is a well-off (thanks to the diamonds), politically stable little country and the people enjoy a relatively high standard of living.

Location: Botswana is in Southern Africa, just north of South Africa, it borders Namibia to the west and Zimbabwe to the North East; see Africa map

Area: Botswana covers an area of 600,370 square kilometers making it just slightly smaller than Texas and slightly larger than France.

Capital City: Gaborone (169 Square kilometers)

Population: Just over 2 million people live in Botswana.

Language: English (official), Setswana is spoken by most people in Botswana and there are also some indigenous languages.

Religion: Indigenous beliefs 85% and Christian 15%.

Climate: Botswana is almost all desert (80% of the country is covered by the semi-arid Kalahari Desert. The climate reflects the country's geography, with hot days and cool nights throughout the year. The rainy season is from November to March.

When to Go: Wildlife viewing is at its best from May to October, but the Best time to visit Botswana is during the rainy seasons, from December to March.

Botswana's Main Attractions:

<http://goafrica.about.com/od/botswana/tp/Botswana-Top-Attractions.htm>

- **OKAVANGO DELTA** -- The Okavango River cuts through the center of the Kalahari Desert, creating a unique ecosystem that gives life to a huge variety of birds and mammals. The Okavango is a unique safari destination because you can view much of the wildlife from a traditional canoe, a mokoro.
<http://www.okavangodelta.com/>
- **CHobe NATIONAL PARK** -- Chobe National park lies in Botswana's Okavango Delta and covers four distinct ecosystems. The Savuti marsh in particular offers some of the highest concentrations of wildlife in Africa year round. Chobe boasts around 120,000 elephants -- you're unlikely to miss them when you enjoy a safari here.

<http://goafrica.about.com/od/gameparks/ss/Chobe-National-Park-Botswana.htm>

- **KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK** -- Salt pans, Kalahari sand dunes, and plenty of wildlife during the rainy season makes this a wonderful park to visit, but it's not easy to get to.

http://wikitravel.org/en/Kgalagadi_Transfrontier_Park

SUMMARISED INFORMATION

Total Area:	600 370 km ²
Water (%)	2.6
Population:	2,098,018 (growth rate: 1.48%);
Birth Rate:	22.02/1000
Infant Mortality Rate:	10.49/1000
Life Expectancy:	55.74; density per sq km: 3
Capital:	Gaborone- 196,000 inhabitants
Religion:	Christianity, Islam
Official languages:	Setswana and English
Political System:	Democracy
Currency:	Pula
Health:	No particular health risks in Botswana.
Vaccination:	Several vaccines are sensible (typhoid, polio and tetanus), though none are required. Anti-malarial tablets are usually recommended.



ECONOMY

The Bank of Botswana serves as a central bank in order to develop and maintain the Botswana Pula, the country's currency. Botswana has enjoyed one of the fastest growth-rates in per capita income in the world since independence, although it slowed considerably due to the global economic downturn. In 2010, real GDP grew by approximately 7.5%. Botswana has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country. By one estimate, it has the fourth highest gross national income at purchasing power parity in Africa, giving it a standard of living around that of Mexico and Turkey. Mining, Tourism, Agriculture and Transportation contribute to the country's economic structure. The country has maintained one of the world's highest economic growth rates since independence in 1966, though growth fell below 5% in 2007-08. Through fiscal discipline and sound management, Botswana has transformed itself from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of \$13,300 in 2008. Two major investment services rank Botswana as the best credit risk in Africa. Diamond mining has fueled much of the expansion and currently accounts for more than one-third of GDP and for 70-80% of export earnings. Tourism, financial services, subsistence farming, and cattle raising are other key sectors. On the downside, the government must deal with high rates of unemployment and poverty. Unemployment officially was 23.8% in 2004, but unofficial estimates place it closer to 40%.

POLITICS

Politics and Brief History: Formerly the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, Botswana adopted its new name upon independence in 1966. Four decades of uninterrupted civilian leadership, progressive social policies, and significant capital investment have created one of the most dynamic economies in Africa. Mineral extraction, principally diamond mining, dominates economic activity, though tourism is a growing sector due to the country's conservation practices and extensive nature preserves. Botswana has one of the world's highest known rates of HIV/AIDS infection, but also one of Africa's most progressive and comprehensive programs for dealing with the disease.

CLIMATE

Botswana's climate is semi-arid. Though it is hot and dry for most of the year, there is a rainy season, which runs through the summer months. Rainfall tends to be erratic, unpredictable and highly regional. Often a heavy downpour may occur in one area while 10 or 15 kilometers away there is no rain at all. Showers are often followed by strong sunshine so that a good deal of the rainfall does not penetrate the ground but is lost to evaporation and transpiration. The summer season begins in November and ends in March. It usually brings very high temperatures. However, summer is also the rainy season, and cloud coverage and rain can cool things down considerably, although only usually for a short period of time. The winter season begins in May and ends in August. This is also the dry season when virtually no rainfall occurs. Winter days are invariably sunny and cool to warm; however, evening and night temperatures can drop below freezing point in some areas, especially in the southwest. The in-between periods - April/early May and September/October - still tend to be dry, but the days are cooler than in summer and the nights are warmer than in winter. Summer days are hot, especially in the weeks that precede the coming of the cooling rains, and shade temperatures rise to the 38°C mark and higher, reaching a blistering 42°C on rare occasions. Winters are clear-skied and bone-dry, the air seductively warm during the daylight hours but, because there is no cloud cover, cold at night and in the early mornings. Sometimes bitterly so - frost is common and small quantities of water can freeze.

LANGUAGE

The official language of Botswana is English and Setswana (mother tongue) is widely spoken across the country. Other languages spoken in Botswana include Kalanga (sekalanga), Sarwa (sesarwa), Ndebele and in some parts Afrikaans.

FOOD

The cuisine of Botswana is unique but also shares some characteristics with other cuisines of Southern Africa. Examples of Botswana food are Pap, Boerewors, Somp, Mabele (Sorghum), Food unique to Botswana includes Seswaa, (mashed-up red meat).

HEALTH

The Ministry of Health in Botswana is responsible for overseeing the quality and distribution of health care throughout the country.

Botswana is generally a healthy country to visit. Several vaccines are sensible (typhoid, polio and tetanus), though none are required. Anti-malarial tablets are usually recommended. Always check the latest recommendations with your doctor or clinic before travelling, and perhaps see the Scottish NHS site for useful travel info on Botswana.

In Botswana, HIV infection rates are high, and AIDS is prevalent. Generally, this isn't an issue for travelers, but you should be aware of the situation – take the same sensible precautions to avoid infection which are wise in most countries. We understand that blood supplies used by the private hospitals in Botswana have been carefully screened for a long time.

TIPPING

Tipping is optional for all services rendered.

SHOPPING

Most shops are open from 9am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. However, Saturdays and Sundays are usually open half day. Restaurants open up to 10pm but some open for 24 hours though they are very few in the Gaborone city.

TELECOMMUNICATION

Botswana Telecoms provides a modern telecommunications network, including internet access and WIFI internet access; the cellular phone network is managed by BE-mobile, Orange and Mascom networks. The International Dialling Code for Botswana is +267, followed by the city area code (e.g. (0)62 for Kasane, or (0)68 for Maun) and local number. Calling from Botswana, you need to dial 00 and the relevant country code (e.g. +44 for the UK, or +1 for the USA). International prepaid calls from Botswana to UK landlines with Botswana Telecommunication Corporation currently cost P2.70 per minute, or P3.40 per minute to UK mobiles.

TIME ZONE

Botswana is always two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+2); it doesn't operate daylight saving time, so there's no time difference between winter and summer months in Botswana.

GABORONE

Gaborone is the capital of Botswana. It is also the largest city of Botswana with a population of about 191,776. The city is the government capital as well as the economic capital. Gaborone is headquarters to numerous companies and the Botswana Stock Exchange.

ENTRY AND EXIT PROCEDURES

The main requirement for entering and exiting Botswana is a passport, no validity requirements needed.

BANKS

Banks are open from 0830am to 1530pm, Monday to Friday and from 0830am to 1230pm on Saturdays. Currency can be exchanged at some hotels, supermarkets (such as Choppies), Botswana Post Office and other commercial banks.

CURRENCY, CREDITS CARDS AND TRAVELLERS CHEQUES

The pula (BWP) is Botswana's currency. Travellers' cheques and foreign currency can be exchanged at banks, although most camps here will take VISA and Mastercard credit cards, as well as US Dollars, Pounds, Euros and SA Rands. At most camps/lodges, there are no extras to pay.

TRADE UNIONS IN BOTSWANA

Trade unions in Botswana operate within a longstanding democratic system in which the government of Botswana has ratified the International Labour Organization's core conventions, including Conventions 87 (Freedom of Association) and 98 (Right to Organize).

With the exception of members of the Botswana Defence Force, Botswana Police Service, Local Police, and Prison Service, all workers have the right to join unions. However, in practice trade unions complain of difficulties in operating unfettered. The 2004 Trade Disputes Act is seen by unions as "employer-favoured" and requires submitting grievances to a complex procedure which, it is claimed, invariably results in strike action being declared illegal.

Formed in 1948, the Francistown African Employees' Union (FAEU), led by G. M. K. Mmusi was the first trade union in Botswana. It existed until 1970, although only being recognised by the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1964. The Bechuanaland Protectorate Union, led by Lenyeletse Seretse, was formed in 1959, and in 1962 the Bechuanaland Trade Union Congress (BTUC) was established, with Klaas K. Motshidisi as General Secretary. The BTUC, which was allied with the Bechuanaland People's Party, foundered three years later, in 1965; and after independence in 1966, with the help of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (now ITUC), trade unions in Botswana formed the Bechuanaland Federation of Labour.

In the 1970s the Botswana Trade Union and Education Centre was created, and it was replaced in 1977 by the current national trade union centre, the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU) Present day. The BFTU is still the sole national trade union centre in Botswana. Most unions are organized at the enterprise level, with few resources available for cross-enterprise structures such as industrial or craft unionism.

The government of Botswana appears to take a pragmatic approach to trade unions, arguing that they should be formed in order to encourage fair labour practices, facilitate education of workers, and reduce conflicts between individual employees and employers.

Another Federation by the name of Botswana Federation of Public Sector Union (BOFEPUSU) was formed in 2008 and is formed by 5 public sector union being Botswana Public Employees Union (BOPEU) Botswana Land boards Local Authorities and Health Workers Union (BLLAHWU) National Amalgamated Local and Central Government, And Parastatal Workers Union (NALCGPWU) Botswana Teachers Union (BTU) and Botswana Sector for Educators Trade Union (BOSETU).

BOFEPUSU have membership of over 93000 public employees including those in private and Parastatal sector.

PSI AFFILIATES IN BOTSWANA

- Botswana Public Employees Union (BOPEU)
- Botswana Land boards Local Authorities and Health Workers Union (BLLAHWU)
- National Amalgamated Local and Central Government, And Parastatal Workers Union (NALCGPWU)



In case of emergencies contact the following Personnel:

Kagiso Watema	kagisowatema@gmail.com +267 73362858 +267 74306279 +267 71565150
Elisinah M. Botsalano	embotsalano@amalgamated.co.bw +267 71300485 +267 3952790
Mothibi Mampane	mmampane@gmail.com +267 71653741 +267 72244089
Alice Motshegwa	amotshegwa@gmail.com +267 71282910
Neo D. Joel	neodudujoel@gmail.com +267 7154908 +267 73501803
Sikalame C. Seitiso	sseitiso@gov.bw +267 71391794

