

## **CULTURE AND PEACE BUILDING: LESSONS FROM SOCIAL SERVICE PRACTITIONERS IN BOTSWANA**

**Kgosietsile Maripe**

*Social Work Department*

*University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana*

*Email: maripek@mopipi.ub.bw*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Cultural frameworks for conflict resolution and peace building are based on norms and values of the people. These set acceptable standards of behaviour for everyone in the community. They are enforced by the family, the headman, and the Chief following democratic principles before a verdict is reached. This ensured justice and ownership of community values and norms. Therefore, strategies or policies that ignore values and norms in peace building risk being totally irrelevant. This paper appraised the role of culture in Peace Building in Botswana. The paper submitted that the intellectuals must examine cultural traditions and myths by deconstructing exclusionist myths and by reconstructing a more pluralist, inclusive set of cultural myths and traditions in Botswana.*

*Keywords: Culture, peace building, Botswana, conflict resolution.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Botswana people pride themselves on promoting dialogue rather than any other means of conflict resolution. This unique characteristic strengthened the nationalization of Botswana at independence from Britain in 1966. A central maxim is expressed in the vernacular “ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo” which implies that dialogue provides the best solution to conflict (Mompoti and Prinsen, 2000). It was a common statement during the leadership of Sir Seretse Khama, Sir Ketumile Masire, and their successors. During the Rhodesian and South African attacks of the 1970s and 80s the Botswana leadership resorted to dialogue rather than armed retaliation and the principle of dialogue continues to guide Botswana in managing ethnic differences, land issues, discrimination, and skewed developments that have the propensity to spark violence.

Some principles have been incorporated at the national level to guide policies and programmes. These principles are Botho (humanity), Bonatla (productivity), Botswere (diligence) and Bothakga (excellence). They have been incorporated also in the national vision 2016, so that the basis for peace and ownership of the vision is promoted. It is fundamental for social scientist to find out why the founding fathers took cognizance of and incorporated the culture of different tribal groups in nation building in Botswana. The wisdom of the founding fathers enabled the country's leadership to avoid bloodshed

over four decades (1966 - 2010) and unite Botswana different ethnic groups. The adoption of foundational values is essential in challenging Botswana to strive and be committed to national development and nation building (Vision 2016 Council, 2010). These norms and values evolved over time as guidelines for what are acceptable standards of behaviour for individuals, families, groups, and communities in the maintenance of peace. They act as indicators of national identity, pride and unity. These norms act as indicators of national identity, pride and unity.

The integration of cultural values and norms in the political, judicial, economic, and social systems of the country worked to harmonize relationships amongst the people. In this way, unity and ownership were promoted and the values and norms of Botswana were safeguarded. The realization was that strategies, policies or programmes for peace building that ignore cultural principles, values, and norms risk becoming irrelevant, contributing to dissatisfaction, disgruntled communities, and political instability. This paper posits that lack of reference to traditional institutions and methods of settling disputes have made modern methods and institutions ineffective giving rise to a spate of conflicts and disorder in the modern society.

The aim of the study is to stimulate debate and research amongst and across the social science practitioners on how culture could be a useful instrument in peace building. It is vital to identify cultural factors that motivate conflict and isolate those factors that would bring parties at conflict to dialogue (Hardcastle, Wenocur and Power, 1997). Culture is a very instrumental force in defining the identity of individuals and communities, development, understanding and interpretation of worldview. Airhihenbuwa (2010) argues that culture should be at the core of health and development projects particularly when addressing communities in Africa and Diaspora because it is a collective sense of consciousness which must be lived and experienced. He asserts that culture is central to knowledge production, distribution, and acquisition.

### **Botswana Culture and Peace**

From time immemorial the Botswana culture embodied principles that promote peace and stability in the family and the community (Presidential Task Force, 1997; Devore, 1983). It upholds several principles that guide individuals and enhance family harmony. Devore (1983) in his article on ethnic reality argues that Black families are imbedded in a network of mutually interdependent relationships with the community and the wider society (parents, children, relatives and non-relatives). Botswana culture is founded on diverse customs and traditions of various groups, dialects, and languages, as well as the common foundational value of “kagisano” (harmony). Awareness of this reality enhances the potential for success for all involved in conflict interventions (Devore, 1983). Harmony amongst Botswana derives from principles promoting cross-cultural tolerance, non violence, and neighborliness championed by the fore-

fathers of the society. These philosophies reduced disharmony in neighborhoods and promoted mutual understanding and support between and amongst different Botswana groups. The fore-fathers applied these principles to ensure an atmosphere of peace amongst Botswana and other nations. Peace is the absence of war or other hostilities, an agreement or treaty to end hostilities, freedom from quarrels and disagreement in harmonious relations, public security and order, inner contentment, and serenity (Answers.com, 2010). The definition covers the peace within individuals, in groups, and society as a whole. Peace.org (2010) asserts that every woman, man, and people of all faiths and races must find a way to embrace each other's difference and search for compromise and a method of co-existence.

Therefore, peace should be the responsibility of every person in the society (including all age groups). Botswana National Policy on Culture (2001) states that it is the responsibility of chiefs, church leaders, and ethnic groups to embrace different cultures and learn from one another. This behaviour was projected to broker peace, cultural tolerance, and understanding between and amongst different people. A National Cultural Council was appointed in 1992 and restructured in 1999 to oversee cultural promotion and education through its different committees.

The fundamental statement that characterized Botswana during the pre colonial, colonial, and independence era was "ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo" emphasizing dialogue with offenders or aggressors (National Development Plan 8, 1995-2001). Peace is further viewed as describing a society or a relationship that is operating harmoniously and without violent conflict (Ryan, 1995). The assertion shows that conflict is part of human existence but should not be characterized by violence to negate peace because differences must be embraced. The potential causes for the absence of peace are insecurity, social injustice, economic inequality, political and religious radicalism, acute racism and nationalism. Therefore, dialogue encourages lasting relationships within and between kinship groups, strengthens consultative governance, and promotes harmony between ethnic groups. As such, good governance addresses factors that negate peace and in the process it permeates national development plans, Vision 2016, resource distribution, and mutual support in Botswana (Presidential Taskforce, 1997; Vision Council, 2009).

Botswana Government in 1996 through a national consultation process developed a national long-term vision for the country. The longterm vision for Botswana identified seven pillars that define direction for the way ahead' to the year 2016. One of the seven pillars is to be a moral and tolerant nation by 2016, which implies greater tolerance and acceptance of differences between people that is their religion, language, and ethnic background. A council was established in 2004 after it was realised that a mechanism to drive the vision was needed. It was imperative that a high level institutional mechanism - a

Vision 2016 Council is established to monitor and evaluate the effective and timely implementation of the Vision by all stakeholders and to drive the popularization of Vision 2016. The Council is a highly respected non partisan national body appointed by H.E. the President and answerable to the nation (Vision Council, 2004; Vision Council, 2009).

Botswana, through its democratic ideals and respect for humanity "Motho ke Motho ka Batho" (no man is an island) is described as a society that operates harmoniously and without violent conflict, promotes safety in matters of social or economic welfare, and acknowledges equality and fairness in political relationships (Peace.org, 2010). In addition, the government public service policy promotes the deployment of civil servants across the country regardless of ethnic difference because Botswana is for Batswana (Botswana ke wa Batswana botlhe). The policy strengthens cross-cultural learning amongst people in the country and the ability to work with other cultures. Public officials from one culture are faced with a culture different from theirs which facilitates fine-tuning to differences and acquisition of cross-cultural tolerance.

Cross-cultural synchronization in Botswana reduced insecurity, social injustice, economic inequality, political and religious radicalism, acute racism, and nationalism (Peace.org, 2010). It has promoted cross cultural exchanges, exogamous marriages, cultural transfers, language acquisition, and sometimes integration in what was a strange culture. The Botswana Review (2010) asserts that this long lasting democratic "kgotla system" (consultative process) which has been passed from generation to generation has provided a strong base for free political debate at all levels of society. The Botswana Directorate of Public Service Management was established by government as its human resources agency.

It works with government Ministries and Departments on HR policy formulation, monitoring, and evaluation and to orientate civil servants on government policies (Botswana Government, 2008). According to the first Botswana Constitution at independence (1965) as reviewed in 2007, the following tribes Bakgatla, Bakwena, Balete, Barolong, Bangwato, Bangwaketse, Batlokwa, and Batawana were considered the major tribes while others were referred to as minor or subordinate groups (Mompoti and Prinsen, 2000). However, this was changed in 2007 when the constitution was reviewed to be more inclusive and representative (Constitution of Botswana, 2007). In terms of ethnicity, it is not known how many people represent which ethnic group in Botswana because ethnicity is not included as a variable in the population census (Mompoti and Prinsen, 2000)

The Botswana Government controls land and mineral rights and determines how proceeds are used for national development on behalf of the nation. The revenues from minerals have been used for various developments across the country guided by the "Botho" or "Ubuntu" principle. All districts

have benefitted from mineral and water resources and they have been provided with educational facilities, infrastructure, health services, safety and security, water, electricity, and opportunities for citizen employment (Vision Council, 2009). The Botswana Review (2010) states that Botswana's mineral policy aims to strike a balance between maximizing economic benefits for the nation and allowing investors to earn competitive returns. Currently, mineral mining continues to offer employment to Botswana regardless of their ethnicity. During the presidency of Festus Mogae, Botswana dispelled accusations that its diamonds were "blood diamonds" like those in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Liberia. The country successfully proved beyond doubt that its diamonds are used exclusively for nationwide development in various economic and social fields.

Gordon (1999) states that African rebel groups supply up to 20 percent of the world's diamonds to the global market and in Sierra Leone, Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), was appointed the chairman of a mineral resource commission controlling the diamonds that paid for the rebels' AK47s and machetes used to kill and mutilate thousands of people. The same author shows that Angola's diamonds became a militarized and politicized commodity promoting the United Nations to intervene by investigating the illegal trade in diamonds and guns during the civil war. UNITA was accused of having mined over two-billion-dollars worth of diamonds in from 1993 to 1999 (Gordon, 1999).

### **Botswana Traditional Mediation Systems**

Botswana traditional systems of conflict mediation are built upon the culture, part of which was adopted by the Botswana Government at independence in 1966. However, it must be noted that culture as a concept is the subject of various disciplines (Giddens, 1996). The anthropologists view culture as the integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs, and rules of conduct which determine the range of accepted behavior in any given society. Diffusionist theory defines culture as a collection of traits and the spread of these traits from one society to another.

The ecological approach views it as the different ways people around the world live, not in terms of their degree of evolution but rather as a distinct adaptation to the variety of environments in which they exist. Furthermore, structural functionalists define culture as a system of normative beliefs that reinforces social institutions (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2007). According to the Human Culture website (2010) culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Kevin (1998) on the other hand views culture as a slippery concept having not only many possible meanings, but also used in ways that are related and at times quite distinct.

Tswana culture identified the family as the first level of mediation for family members. When issues are beyond the capacity of the immediate family, the extended family intervenes. The third step is when the ward (kgosana) headman takes over. The final authority in the community is the Chief (Shillington, 2002; Davis, 1996). The traditional mediation system continues to be organized around the same levels today. As such, aggrieved individuals and families are expected to activate the traditional systems to broker peace. The mediation process follows democratic principles where parties present their case before a verdict is reached. It upholds a democratic consultative approach and promotes open communication which also characterizes the governing system in the country.

The Botswana Review (2010) demonstrates that the peace prevailing in Botswana results from committed leadership; that is, the National Assembly and the President acting in consultation with the House of Chiefs which advises on custom and traditional matters. Stieglitz (2002) also confirms that the socio-political stability rests on the leadership's ability to maintain political consensus based on a broader sense of national unity. The assertion is strengthened by Schultz (2007) who posits that the country's developmental success was attained through good governance and prudent macro-economic management.

The principal duty of chiefs is to prevent and settle conflicts and maintain peace and unity within the chiefdom. Chiefs conduct their work at the "kgotla" kraal system applicable in Botswana and some other African countries. The Setswana phrase that describes the crucial duty of the chief is "lentswe la kgosi le agelwa mosako". It is an acknowledgement that a decision reached by the chief is supreme, binding, and final. The notion may be perceived as non democratic/oppressive by other scholars but it has secured community stability in Botswana. Another phrase that emphasizes the mandate and authority of the Chief to resolve conflicts and broker peace is that of "kgosi thothobolo e olela matlhakala" meaning that the sole role of a chief is conflict resolution. Davis (1996) states that the chief, before colonialism, was recognized as the leader of all civil, military, judicial, and religious matters affecting his people.

This illustrates that the kgosi is a cultural figure, the personification of community, and the central point of unity and peace. He is the source of identity, protection for the people, and the provider of community welfare (Davis, 1996). Brager, Specht and Torczyner (1987) also confirm that shared identity develops around some symbol of unity such as a particular well-known leader. The assertion is further reinforced by the social identity theory that explains how people strive for a positive self concept and derive a sense of self-esteem from their social identity as members of the ingroup (Sears, Peplau and Taylor, 1991). Tlou and Campbell (1997) state that the Barolong people were established under their founder Kgosi Morolong, from whom they derived

their name. This applied universally to other groups like the Bahurutshe, Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bangwato, Batlharo, Bakgatla, and Bapedi (Parsons, 1982; Davis, 1996). The kgosi is not only a political persona but also a spiritual leader considered to have close contact with ancestral spirits for rainmaking rituals and good harvests. In addition, the religious and political power of a kgosi was often judged in terms of his ability to make rain and lead his people during hard times. The spiritual qualities of a king brought the community together to pray and consult on various community based matters.

As such, reducing the possibility of disagreements and violent conflict in the community and cultivating peace. Peace.org (2010) explains that peace refers to a mental attitude of tranquility based on a relationship with God and correct response to God's grace. The spiritual role of the kgosi encouraged the members to appease the gods in the bid to maintain peace in the community. For example, in Ghana, the failure to appoint a chief for the tribe led to problems of lawlessness in most rural communities without alternative structures for the administration of justice to enforce laws and ensure order in daily life (Tonah, 2004).

After independence from Britain, the Government of Botswana established Ntlo ya Dikgosi (House of Chiefs) and the Customary Court of Appeal in recognition of the role of chiefs in nation and peace building. Section 77(1) of the Botswana Constitution (2007, 48) states that "there shall be Ntlo ya Dikgosi for Botswana which consist of not less than 33 or more than 35 members..." This was meant to establish a traditional system that would guide the political government to address culturally oriented matters at the highest level. Ntlo ya Dikgosi is headed by traditional leaders from the ethnic groups in the country who can discuss any matter within the executive or legislative authority of Botswana considered desirable to take cognizance of the interest of the tribes and tribal organizations it represents and to make representation thereon to the President or to send messages thereon to the National Assembly (Botswana Constitution, 2007).

Therefore, the existence of the Ntlo ya Dikgosi harmonized differences between the traditional and modern political systems. Although, the modern political leadership diminished the image of Dikgosi, it recognized their role in the society and created a forum for dialogue with the legislature. Section 88 (2) of the Botswana Constitution (2006) states that the National Assembly shall not proceed upon any Bill that in the opinion of the person presiding, would, if enacted, alter any of the provisions of this Constitution or affect

- (a) the designation, recognition, removal of powers of Dikgosi or Dikgosana;
- (b) the organization, powers or administration of customary courts;
- (c) customary law, or the ascertainment of recording of customary law; or

- (d) tribal organization or tribal property unless a copy of the Bill has been referred to the Ntlo ya Dikgosi after it has been introduced in the National Assembly.

According to the Customary Court Act (1984) customary law refers to law in relation to any particular tribe or tribal community (the customary law of that tribe or community) not incompatible with the provision of any written law or contrary to morality, humanity or natural justice. It is further stated that customary courts are required to follow clearly written procedures contained in the customary courts procedures (rules for both civil and criminal cases) (Lute, 2010). Thus, Botswana took the common values of different ethnic groups as fundamental characteristics of amalgamation, peace, and tolerance under traditional law. Booi (2006) asserts that the Botswana court system is independent from the influence of legislature and the executive and that the trait is enshrined in the constitution. Accordingly, the courts are guided by the Setswana principle that disregards the status of an offender in the society during case trial "*ga re lebe motho re leba molato*" meaning that the issue in question is the offence not status of the person.

The principle safeguards people against prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance based on ethnic hatred. The author further states that a variety of indigenous legal systems that existed in tribal areas before the Bechuanaland Protectorate was established were collectively classified as constituting customary law. Though customary law was recognized, it was not incorporated into the general law of the country before or after independence (Keoreng, 2008). The Native Courts Proclamation number 33 of 1943, repealed by African Court Proclamation 19 of 1961, provided for the recognition of customary courts with limited jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases but the 1961 Proclamation gave the customary courts unlimited jurisdiction in civil matters provided parties were African. These courts applied native laws and customs in African legal disputes within the areas or districts of jurisdiction of Dikgosi (chiefs). The approach provided and facilitated cultural interpretation of civil matters which the British did not fully comprehend (Booi, 2006). The Customary Court of Appeal is the highest court in terms of the current arrangement but subordinate to the Magistrates Court. Though that is the case, the approach granted Botswana the opportunity to practice their culture in dispute resolution thus minimizing ethnic tensions that could emerge. The House of Chiefs is not only a cultural symbol but evidence of the role chiefs played (and continue to play) in the preservation of peace in the country.

In the past cross-cultural marriages were used by African kings as tools for brokering peace between ethnic groups, particularly between kings or chiefs. The marital relationship enabled two kingdoms to support each other in many ways. Sometimes, the relationship was used as an additional strength to fight invading forces, share grazing lands and water, and organise joint celebrations

for achievements. Tlou and Campbell (1999) state that Bakhalagari, Batswana, and Basotho practised similar adult initiation practices (bogwera and bojale), the marriage of cousins (ntsala wa motho ke mogatse), and inheritance by the first son of the most important house. Therefore, drawing from prevailing commonalities, it was easier for these groups to marry and to relate based on similar principles. Retrospectively, the Constitution of Botswana (2007) section 15 protects any person from discrimination on the grounds of race, tribe, place of origin, political opinions, colour, and creed or sex. The protection is further pronounced in the Botswana National Policy on Culture (2001) which defines culture as the whole complex of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterize a society or small group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions, and beliefs of Batswana. The assertion is refuted by Ditshwanelo (Human Rights Organization, 2007) that argues that customary law prohibits children and women from speaking in kgotla meetings, community gatherings, and consultations which are discriminatory. It further advocates that culture should ensure that children learn their responsibilities and the rights of others, as well as their own, so that the rights of all citizens are protected.

Sociologists argue that every culture, like every religion, has something important to contribute to the world and no culture has all the answers. Therefore, cultural diversity in the global system, like ecological diversity within the ecosystem, is ultimately an asset if it is valued and contributes to an openness to learn from other groups and cultures (Human Culture, 2010). It is crucial that cultures exercise tolerance for other cultures for the richness that may be derived from such openness. A Setswana maxim states that "*chaba di bapileng di a tshegana*" which means that a foreign culture always appears barbaric to strangers unless it is well understood. It is important, therefore, to study other cultures and understand why they are as they are.

Giddens (1996) argues that norms vary between cultures and between sub cultures and what is normal in one cultural setting is deviant in another. That is the reason why the Botswana National Policy on Culture (2001) promotes cultural tolerance and exchanges for purposes of progressive learning and growth. Cultural contexts provide a platform to identify factors responsible for violent conflict. In that regard, a study by Ditshwanelo (2007) found that the majority of Batswana have greater confidence in the traditional structures than in centralized legal system. Therefore, the effort to change attitudes and reduce violations of childrens' and women's rights need to build upon positive attributes of Botswana culture. This should characterize all other organizations that seek to build or restore peace between and amongst Batswana or African people. Amongst the hunters and gatherers of Botswana, when food was plentiful, they gathered together once a year into larger groups of a hundred or

more to exchange news, pass on new technology or find marriage partners (Shillington, 2002). If there was a dispute between individuals then the aggrieved would use these large gatherings to leave their own group and join another. In this manner conflict was culturally resolved and peace prevailed. In addition, the success of hunting and gathering depended very closely on mutual cooperation between men and women who were equally dependent upon each other. Redfield (1988) argues that the members of a folk society have a strong sense of belonging together. This symbolizes an attitude of tranquility that led to successes in hunting expeditions by the entire group (Bodley, 1988; Peace.Org, 2010). They celebrate group success in hunting and gathering and no one boasts about personal achievements (communalism rather than individualism). The culture of success is concerned with community survival rather than individualistic selfishness that characterize the modern capitalist system. The approach to work, activities, and success in various expeditions is culturally oriented and endorsed oneness, reliance on others, and group achievement (*matlo go sha mabapi*).

Bodley (1988) asserts that tribal societies lack social classes but are communally organized, kin-based systems in which people are differentiated by age, sex, and personal characteristics, not primarily by ownership of property or productive resources. This encourages a spirit of communal mutual support and understanding amongst people and discourages division and segmentation (Redfield, 1988). According to Giddens (1996) hunters and gatherers are more preoccupied with religious values and ceremonial and ritual activities than material wealth. They participate regularly in preparing the dress, masks, paintings or other sacred objects used in rituals to appease the gods. He further alleges that the hunters and gatherers are not primitive people whose ways of life no longer hold any interest for others. Studying their culture allows others to see more clearly that some of the modern institutions are far from being natural features of human life. The absence of war, the lack of major inequalities of wealth and power, and the emphasis on cooperation rather than competition are all instructive reminders that the world created by modern industrial civilization is not necessarily equated with progress (Giddens, 1996). This calls for cultural introspection to identify the values that might have been lost due to modernization and to reincorporate them in peace building.

The Batswana culture promoted the *mafisa* system which permitted the loaning of cattle to poorer dependants for milk and meat of the offspring (Shillington, 2002). This sustained the well being of the community by providing support systems that did not desire to enslave the needy but rather to build self-reliance (*kgomo ya lefisa re e gama relibile tsela*) meaning that the one receiving the loan must work hard to become self-sufficient before the owner takes back his or her cattle. The system was also used to neutralize those who would seek to be more powerful than others and the king through

accumulation of wealth. The kgosi redistributed the wealth amongst community members to reduce rebellion and maintain stability in the community. Kgosi (Chief) Kgari of the Bakwena neutralized the power of royal relatives and built unity in the morafe (community) by giving kgamelo (milk container) cattle which worked like mafisa to his basimane ba mafatshe (commoners) (Tlou and Campbell, 1997). The approach is a display of wisdom that permeates the indigenous cultural system in diffusing conflict and maintaining political and economic stability in the community. It successfully prevents division and tribal break-aways, thus building solidarity and serenity.

### **Synergy between Modern Mediation Systems (MMS) and Traditional Systems (TS)**

The modern systems of conflict resolution rely on courts, weapons, and other legal instruments, guided by Roman-Dutch law, for brokering peace. In the African context, violent conflicts have been fuelled more by ethnic cultural differences than other factors. For example, the political conflict in Madagascar in 2002 was fuelled by racism as coastal Ratsiraka supporters threatened the Marina (high land) people with hell-fire (Akpata-Ohohe, 2002). Some examples are the Rwanda genocides, the Democratic Republic of Congo conflict, Sudan's extermination of black Sudanese, the Liberian civil war, the Nigeria Niger Delta oil conflict, and the situation in Zimbabwe (French, 1998).

Phillips (1999) reported that in the town of Sagamu, some fifty kilometers outside Lagos in July 18, 1999 sixty people died in street battles between the majority Yoruba people and the minority Hausa community and later similar occurrences were repeated in the northern city of Kano in Nigeria. In Sudan, the long running war with the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) fighting for self-determination against the Islamic ideologue in the south drained state coffers (Plett, 1999). The United Nations acknowledges that the cohesion of States is threatened by brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural or linguistic strife. Social peace is challenged on the one hand by new assertions of discrimination and exclusion and, on the other, by acts of terrorism seeking to undermine evolution and change through democratic means.

In 1992, the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, asserts that as racism becomes recognized for the destructive force it is, and apartheid is dismantled, new racial tensions are rising and finding expression in violence (United Nations, 1992). There should be synergy between the traditional and cosmopolitan mediation systems in conflict. They should bring the values of African societies into context when investigating factors that lead to violent conflict. The United Nations (1992) stated that its efforts to build peace, stability and security must encompass matters beyond military threats in order to break the fetters of strife and warfare that have characterized the past. The drive should be to identify common values applicable to all parties and their cultures

that promote peace and unity. It is argued that self- determination for indigenous people should involve full ownership of their traditional territory as well as political control within it (Bodley, 1988). In Botswana, though there are traditional courts, they rely heavily on Roman-Dutch rather than customary law to resolve all kinds of conflict. Cultural systems, though hardly consulted and involved, lack written references and evidence of success (Booi, 2006). The reference point is only advisors who sit together with the chief to preside over conflict situations and ask questions to guide proceedings. This is a democratic process that is not common in the modern or western systems of conflict resolution. It is slowly losing prominence because it is not recorded or given due attention that would make it serve the changing society.

Bodley (1988) asserts that "tribal peoples have been politically oppressed and economically exploited as virtual internal colonies within the countries that claim control over them. Ideally, self determination should put tribal peoples in charge of their internal affairs and territorial resources again". Cultural ways of dealing with conflict are not written down but rely on values that are known only to some senior citizens and Dikgosi (Keoreng, 2008). Unless and until the cultural processes are written down their importance and function will not be realized. It is time to raise the level of customary courts to that of statutory law courts rather than being judged as subordinate to magistrate courts. The 1961 Proclamation gave the customary systems a subordinate status to the western system. According to (Booi, 2006) the hierarchy is as follows:

- i Court of Appeal
- ii High Court
- iii Magistrates Court
- iv Customary Court Commissioner
- v Customary Court of Appeal
- vi Customary Courts

The Ntlo ya Dikgosi (House of Chiefs) should be raised in status and power to investigate culturally related matters and to develop customary rules and methodologies for brokering peace in the nation. It should not remain without political or veto power but must play a significant role in the promotion of inter-cultural relations and exchange and advocate for the preservation of culture. The Department of Youth and Culture in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs should define the role of the chief in the promotion and maintenance of culture in the National Policy on Culture (Botswana NDP 9, 2002- 2009: National Policy on Culture, 2001).

### **The Role of Culture in Peace Building in Botswana**

Historically, culture in Botswana set the standard for functioning, behaviour, and relationships and even encouraged marriage between cousins to keep cattle within the extended family (Shillington, 2002). According to Articlebase site

(2010) culture is defined as accepted ways of behaving for members of a particular society. Redfield (1988) defines it "as organization or integration of conventional understanding, that is, the acts and objects that represent the type characteristic of that society, which express and maintain this understanding". Giddens (1996) states that culture consists of the values that members of a given group hold, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create. African societies developed institutions that would ensure that members are socialized intensely in their culture through them. For example, tribes established initiation schools, for both men and women, and related cultural ceremonies (Giddens, 1996).

Initiation schools and ceremonies in Botswana are cultural activities established to mark and assist members' transition from childhood to adulthood. The initiated are formed into regiments (mephato) which ensure that the various villages of the morafe are bound under the central authority of the kgosi. Amongst the Bangwato, initiation was administered by the kgosi for all members of the morafe and subjugated tribes. Young men of subject groups were initiated into Bangwato regiments and became much closer to becoming Bangwato than their original group or culture (Tlou and Campbell, 1997).

Culture was an instrument of building a common identity, unification, and peace for the group and community. The Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN, 2010) states that cultural activities are meant to instill a sense of pride and unity in the entire nation. For the purpose of self preservation, a community's culture must be shared, practised, and transmitted from generation to generation. The process is meant to provide continuity, to build solidarity and commonality amongst community members and subjects. Thus the understanding of culture is crucial because the sources of conflict are pervasive and deep and might be rooted in the culture of the people (UN, 1992). Sears, Peplau and Taylor (1991) explain that conflict can help or harm the development of relationships, depending on how it is resolved.

It can provide an opportunity for clarifying disagreements and changing expectations about the relationship. Therefore, reducing the predisposing factors to violent conflict will require the utmost effort of all community members to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, promote sustainable economic and social development for wider prosperity, and alleviate distress (Sears, Peplau and Taylor, 1991). It is possible when there is cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of differences that characterise cultures. The commitment to cross-cultural tolerance is captured by the Botswana National Population Policy (1997) which asserts that sustainable development requires that the interrelationship between population, resources, the environment and development should be fully recognized, properly managed, and brought into harmonious and dynamic balance.

Cultural values should be translated into a language that motivates

common understanding and development. Botswana and other African societies (South Africans, Zimbabweans, Basotho, and Namibians) speak the same language, which should make it easier to relate and associate without much ado. SARP (2010) shows that Botswana's national development plans describe it as a non-racial country that maintains the freedom of speech, of the press, and of association, and affords all citizens equal rights. Africans besides geographic boundaries, share common experiences that may bring them together, such as, diseases, values, type of housing, leadership systems, political and economic challenges. Articlebase site (2010) states that values are a belief that something is desirable and provides general guidelines for the upholders (Giddens, 1996). Values define what is important, worthwhile, and worth striving for by communities (Brager, Specht and Torczyner, 1987).

Therefore, Setswana values are fundamental for national unity and peace in Botswana as in other African nations. They set the standard of behavior which makes the country different from the rest of the world. Losing cultural values is suicidal and may contribute to confusion in the nation or family, a state that breeds violent conflict. Brager, Specht and Torczyner, (1987) view values as representing beliefs concerning goals towards which people should strive and a code of conduct for realizing them. They further attest that beliefs that find collective expression are community values and norms which emerge from past experience and serve to shape societal expectations.

The Botswana National Population Policy (1997) acknowledges that the human person must be the subject of development and that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The essence is regardless of their ethnicity as they deserve to be given the opportunity to enjoy and develop their humanity without discrimination. Bodley (1988) argues that development planners must understand specific features of tribal life that might be affected by development changes before the change occurs and an understanding of the actual quality of life prior to intervention by outsiders. The basis is that when community structures fall apart, it is indicative that what held them together is lost. Therefore, it is critical to identify and promote common cultural values that uphold unity and apply to various ethnic groups within a sovereign state. The UN Security Council (2000) argues that long term strategies for conflict prevention must work to promote human rights and protect minority rights to a point where every group is convinced that the state belongs to all people.

Culture guides production and distribution of goods and determines even the kind of food people eat within the community. The clothes people wear on a daily basis and during ceremonies and rituals and the kind of crops they grow are all cultural. These set the standard for food, ceremonies, and rituals that bring the community together, thus building a common understanding. Cultural identity has been a major factor of unity that African

societies have worked to build for years. Their pride was founded and sustained by the ability to safeguard their identity and culture within traditional boundaries. When chiefs lost their key role of unifying their communities, the members scattered like sheep without a caretaker, each taking its own course. Productivity, community development, participation in important community matters, and decision making at the kgotla diminished. The UN Security Council (2000) states that internal conflict is characterized by poverty coupled with sharp ethnic or religious cleavages in which minorities are insufficiently respected. Culture has in the past played a major role in the unification of tribal groups and has been a vital strategy for peace building. The appreciation of diverse cultures creates the basis for cross-cultural communication, understanding, and pursuit of peace. Peace building, according to the United Nations Security Council (2000), requires active engagement with local parties, and that engagement should be multidimensional in nature. It must take into account the cultural context of the people to be served.

### **Adopting Culture as a tool for Peace Building**

According to Boyce, Koros and Hodgson (2002) peace building refers to action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. It is an associative approach that attempts to create a structure of peace both within and among nations that removes the causes of war and provides alternatives. This structure must ensure that all people enjoy human security within their environment and with external neighbours. Human security recognizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development, and social equity are important elements in sustaining global peace. This can only be possible if these ideals are culturally contextualised to become the way of life for societies. It will translate into values and norms that are shared within the cultural initiation schools, ceremonies and festivals, and rituals that make more sense to communities.

In addition, Ryan (1995) argues that peace building strategies focus on the attitudes and socio-economic status of ordinary persons. The purpose of the approach is to promote greater inter-group contact and focus on relationships rather than on critical issues. He is of the opinion that contact alone is not sufficient to build peace. It must be coupled with forgiveness, all encompassing goals, economic development, confidence building, and education for mutual and multi-cultural education across age groups. This should address prejudice by adopting peace building programs like formal education, community conferences or festivals, mass media campaigns, encouragement from respected leaders, and individual therapy. The intellectuals must examine cultural traditions and myths by deconstructing exclusionist myths and by reconstructing a more pluralist, inclusive set of cultural myths and traditions.

## CONCLUSION

Culture, though dynamic and changing due to several factors, is an important ingredient of peace building in Africa. Following the history of the Bantu-speaking groups it has been shown that they are related and share important cultural attributes that cannot be ignored. It is also true that culture is the basis of relationships, economic systems, political systems, and community survival. Therefore, it is an important aspect in attaining lasting peaceful resolution to violent conflict amongst Africans. Culture is instrumental in shaping the mindsets of people, their perception of reality, acquisition of wealth, and self organization. Besides, in Africa, a greater part of violent conflict has been fuelled by racism, ethnic tensions and differences, and cultural intolerance.

This demonstrates that the position taken by the Botswana Government to promote cultural exchanges with other nations and internally is a positive move towards building peace and stability between cultures. It may appear unrelated but it resembles a similar process that was promoted by initiation schools in the past. The initiates recognized one another as equals regardless of age and ethnicity which diffused unnecessary tensions and violent conflicts because the orientation was communal peace rather than individualistic goals.

Although many African values have been relegated to the scrapheap by the introduction of western systems, the latter have proved unworkable without being contextualized within African cultures. Therefore, mediation systems that continue to ignore African culture in their interventions are doing more harm than good to the people. The process will continue to perpetuate intolerance, animosity, and hatred within populations. Examples have been given of African countries that have continued to experience violent conflict defined along ethnic lines. Some of these countries are Rwanda, Liberia, Madagascar, Sudan, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. To resolve the conflict and establish a lasting solution, there is need to investigate cultural factors that might have contributed to the disharmony and how they could be remedied.

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