

## **Gobe Matenge's Social Engineering Through Milestone Independence Anniversary Celebrations in Botswana, 1975-2016**

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### **Abstract**

Utilising archival records this paper argues that the coordinator of the Tenth Anniversary Independence Celebrations Unit (TACU), Gobe Matenge, tried to use the process to transform what was considered deplorable social and professional attitudes of Botswana into positive and desirable behaviour to be appreciated by international visitors to Botswana in 1976. Some of the embarrassing behavioural attitudes Botswana were accused of included fighting over food in public places, disrespecting the national anthem, and being discourteous in providing service particularly telephone operators. Matenge's social engineering was also meant to be a long term change in attitudes of the citizenry. After the country celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence in 1996, a presidential task force was set up to devise a long term vision for the country. The result was a document known as 'Vision 2016' which envisaged Botswana to be a prosperous country by 2016 when the country celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence which was attained in 1966. Vision 2016 also raises similar concerns of Botswana not being patriotic and lacking pride in national symbols among other issues. Ironically, while in 1976 undesirable attitudes of the country's overwhelmingly rural populace was blamed on lack of contact with the 'outside world' or foreign cultures, by the turn of the new millennium globalisation or 'too much' international influence was now blamed for people's negative attitudes.

### **Introduction**

Independence celebrations are commemorated in numerous former colonial nation-states to mark socio-economic, cultural, political and technological advances and milestones. These celebrations are critical aspects of nation-building or construction of nationhood. Independence entails a nation-state being a sovereign entity and having self-determination. 'Independence day is a commemorative holiday that contributes towards the shaping of the collective memory of political creation', writes Rebecca Kook (2005:153). Self-determination refers to a country's ability or desire to shape its own future without being dictated to by a colonial power or an overbearing major power. A good example is the celebration of 4 July as the Independence Day by the United States of America as a result of its war of Independence against the British colonial rule in the eighteenth century. Whereas Independence days are celebrated annually, in most cases when a country reaches a decade or century as an independent state the celebrations are more elaborate and amplified. In most cases messages of goodwill are received by a country's leadership from leaders of friendly nations. For example when the United States celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of Independence on 4 July 1976, President Seretse Khama of Botswana sent a congratulatory message to President Gerald Ford of the United States (*Botswana Daily News* 7 July 1976). By coincidence 1976 was also Botswana's tenth anniversary of Independence.

Therefore, during milestone Independence celebrations a country seeks to portray a positive and impressive image of its development over the decades. In particular, the tenth anniversary celebrations in Botswana in 1976 were driven by the determination for the country to project an impressive image to the distinguished international visitors who included African heads of state, among others. The previous Independence celebrations were said to have been poorly organised and unimpressive (Personal commu-

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nication with Matenge 20 November 2015). Therefore, no effort was spared in ensuring that the landmark 1976 celebrations left an impressive and permanent mark. In mid-1975 Gobe Matenge, who was under secretary at the Ministry of Works and Communications and had joined the civil service before Independence in 1947 (Dingake 2011), was tasked with coordinating TACU. As we demonstrate below, in addition to planning the everyday activities for the celebrations, Matenge made it abundantly clear that he was not only interested in celebrating the country's tangible infrastructural developments but also sought to re-engineer, for the long-term, what was seen as appalling social and unprofessional behaviour of Botswana. To Matenge, proper and desirable attitudes on the part of the citizenry had to be an integral part of Botswana's national philosophy constituted by the four principles of *democracy, self-reliance, development and unity* collectively known as *Kagisanyo* (peaceful co-existence).

In this paper we refer to Matenge's task and later Vision 2016 as attempts at social engineering. For our context, social engineering simply refers to 'a group of approaches to applied social science oriented to modification of social problems, adaptation of social institutions to changeable conditions and maintenance of social stability' (Koptzeva 2010). In their social engineering endeavour Matenge and Vision 2016 sought to instill the ethos of patriotism and the traditional Setswana or African ethic of *Botho* (courteous and appropriate behaviour).

### **Coordination and Challenges of the Tenth Anniversary Independence Celebrations**

In July 1975, the Permanent Secretary to the President (PSP) Phil Steenkamp declared the formation of TACU headed by Matenge. TACU's mandate was to coordinate all programmes for Botswana's ninth and tenth Independence celebrations (Steenkamp to Matenge 24 July 1975, Botswana National Archives and Record Services (BNARS, OP/1/5)). By this time the preparations for the ninth anniversary on 30 September 1975 were almost complete and the major focus of TACU was the tenth anniversary of celebrations in 1976. TACU was tasked with deciding on the general policies to be adopted, define the content of and design a programme for the 1976 celebrations. The main committee included a senior officer from each of the ministries responsible for or had a direct interest in any Independence celebration activity. Various sub-committees were formed to deal with many different activities. District celebration committees were formed throughout the country and this was widely announced through the government-owned Radio Botswana and *Botswana Daily News*. Chairpersons of these committees included officials coopted from the local authorities and non-governmental organisations that existed in the country. In some instances, people who had been involved with the organisation of Botswana's first anniversary of Independence celebrations in 1966 were coopted.

The first professional member of the TACU was a fulltime finance officer who acted as financial controller. The appointee's brief was to draw up a network analysis of the proposed activities and their draft financial requirements (Steenkamp to Matenge 24 July 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). Other important office holders at TACU were the transport officer, catering officer, accommodation officer, and protocol officer, among others.

In order to make the tenth anniversary celebrations quite attractive, TACU decided that the 1976 Gaborone Trade Fair, which was usually held in July, be postponed to the end of September 1976 in order to coincide with the Independence celebrations (Matenge to Steenkamp 6 August 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). This meant that the combined trade fair and Independence celebrations would last for the whole week from 27 September to 3 October 1976. TACU's original plan was to invite six heads of state from various African countries, ministerial and ambassadorial delegations from many countries some of which did not have diplomatic representatives in Botswana (Matenge to Steenkamp 15 September 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5).

The significance of making the tenth anniversary celebrations a special occasion was regularly emphasised by Matenge to senior government officials in the capital –Gaborone –and the districts. For in-

stance, in September 1975 he wrote to Vice President Quett Masire and other members of parliament that:

The Botswana government has decided to observe the Tenth Anniversary of Independence as an occasion of considerable historical and national significance which will be celebrated throughout Botswana....

It is generally felt that the efforts made during the past ten years to create and uphold stable and responsible government, democratic institutions and respect for human rights in this country have contributed to the well-being of all elements of Botswana society. The material advancement of the nation has also been impressive. It is hoped and expected that you, as a Member of Parliament for your constituency, in cooperation with its District/Town Council, and in particular the local councilors, will take an active interest in preparations for the celebrations and where necessary, initiate activity and mobilise local effort and talent to make the occasion both a truly historic and a most enjoyable event for all the people of Botswana regardless of colour, creed or political persuasion. It is hoped too that Members of Parliament will take this opportunity to use their experience and awareness of building a responsible united nation (Matenge to Masire 15 September 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5).

Matenge also sent communication with similar sentiment to 41 business entities in Botswana and solicited their assistance. These included multinational corporations such as Anglo American and small local construction companies and butcheries among others (Matenge to resident business concerns 15 September 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5).

The first meeting of TACU was planned for 1 October 1975 but only 25 people out of 52, who had been invited, showed up. The poor attendance greatly annoyed Matenge who complained that a large number of invitees had not attended the meeting despite invitations sent to district and town councils as well as various organisations in advance. To add insult to injury, it was reported that those who had not attended did not even send apologies (Minutes of TACU 1 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). As a result of poor attendance, the inaugural meeting had to be postponed which was also an embarrassment to Matenge.

Furthermore, despite repeated reminders it was also taking rather too long for government to release officials for secondment to TACU which was housed at the Office of the President. So bad was the situation that Matenge complained to Steenkamp that 'I am now placed in a very unsatisfactory position in that I had promised all District Committees and voluntary organisations that the Unit will support them in their activities and that I would introduce the members of the Unit to all members of the Committee at the general meeting on the 1st October 1975; this I was unable to do. I have had to call a meeting to be held on 10th October and I can only hope that the staff will be in post by then' (Matenge to Steenkamp 7 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). He also informed Steenkamp that 'There is another problem area in that no Personal Secretary has been appointed and I have been using, on a temporary basis, a secretary from the Ministry of Works and Communications which is wholly unsatisfactory as I have no direct authority over her'. Matenge also lamented that inexplicable delays in appointments to TACU were causing embarrassment.

These challenges did not deter the determined Matenge to forge ahead with other preparations. For instance, a meeting was held on 6 October 1975 to discuss the poster and symbols for the tenth anniversary celebrations. Attendants at the meeting included among others: A Timms who was a graphic artist from the Ministry of Agriculture, and Phillip Lesiga Segola in his capacity as a graphic artist from the Department of Information Services. Matenge 'expressed the view that in the past, civil servants used to plan for national occasions without involving members of the public. He said in his view of this fact and also in compliance with the principles of democracy, it is important to sound the views of the people on the matter' (Minutes of Meeting on Poster and Symbol 6 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). According to Matenge, it

was unwise to call for suggestions through the press release as he considered that experts would give the matter priority. He emphasised that if possible, the proposed posters and symbols must clearly depict the four principles of *democracy, self-reliance, development and unity* and ought to show something which could be appreciated by most Batswana, and which could easily be explained to the people. It was agreed that once the designs for the posters and symbols were completed and approved, the Department of Posts and Telecommunications be approached to include them in special stamps commemorating the tenth anniversary celebrations (Minutes of TACU 10 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). TACU officials appreciated the fact that postal stamps are important for depicting a country's history and culture.

During TACU meeting of the 10 October 1975, committee members were shown a film documentary on Zambian tenth anniversary celebrations which had been held in 1974. It was also agreed that the film be shown to the members of the district sub-committees throughout the country in order to enable them to gain ideas on what they were required to think of.

Power outages, which would become a serious concern in Botswana as the country prepared to celebrate 50 years of Independence, were also common during the preparation for the tenth anniversary celebrations in Gaborone owing to unstable electricity supply. Matenge complained to the general manager of Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) that 'This has resulted in extra expense, not only to the private householders but also at places where functions had been arranged' (Matenge to BPC General Manager 21 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). 'It must, therefore, be stressed that the Corporation is required to meet its obligation and responsibility to ensure that during the period from 27th September to 3rd October 1976, a constant and reliable service of electric power is available', ordered Matenge.

The scale of activities for the tenth anniversary celebrations was quite huge for Botswana which had very limited infrastructural facilities in the mid-1970s. It should also be noted that this was before the diamond revenue that radically transformed the economy of the country since the 1980s. According to Matenge, this meant that necessary infrastructure such as improvements to the national stadium, show-ground, Gaborone Airport, and roads within Gaborone had to be effected immediately. He estimated the whole project to cost R4,483,375.00 (Matenge to PSP 30 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). However, later government approved a significantly reduced amount of just R1.1 million.

Pressure was also applied by the projection that even though festivities were to be held in the outlying villages about 10,000 people from these centres were expected to throng Gaborone which had a population of 32,000 (Matenge to PS Ministry of Commerce and Industry 29 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/6). With this scenario likely Matenge advised the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to ensure that traders in Gaborone were prepared by stocking essential commodities for the whole period beginning from 27 September to 3 October 1976 to cater for visitors in Gaborone. He also advised that adequate toilet facilities be provided at suitable points.

The task of coordinating the celebrations was a challenging one for Matenge and others involved. As the coordinator, he proposed to travel on a benchmarking tour of Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania which had celebrated their 10 years of Independence a few years before (Matenge to PSP 11 December 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). In early 1976, he went on a benchmarking tour with Christopher Dambe—a senior commercial officer in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. However, Matenge says that during the tour of these countries they realized that what they were already doing in Botswana was not too different from what they observed outside the country (Personal communication with Matenge 20 November 2015).

Issues of security challenges were also discussed because it was noted that an occasion such as the tenth anniversary celebrations where several heads of state, senior ministers, liberation movement leaders, and other high profile international guests were present was ideal for terrorist attacks (Minutes of Meeting of 13 January 1976, OP/1/6). The security matter was taken over by the police and the Office of the President. This indicates great importance of security issues during the time when Botswana was surrounded by

hostile and racist white minority regimes in South Africa, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South West Africa (Namibia).

As more officials were seconded to TACU, it needed more office space and it could no longer be accommodated at the Office of the President. It was then relocated to a ministerial house in Gaborone's Extension 5 suburb. In early 1976, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Archie Mogwe attended one of TACU meetings and encouraged the members on their work. He further 'stated that we have reason to rejoice for in a world characterized by turmoil, dissensions and bloodshed we remain a united nation. After all we had not had to fight for our freedom' (Minutes of Celebrations Committee 16 January 1976, BNARS, OP/1/6). However, Mogwe also warned that in the past Independence celebration displays at the national stadium tended to be haphazard, and demanded that no effort be spared in making the tenth anniversary celebrations a different and successful exercise.

At a meeting held at the State House in the presence of President Seretse Khama, it was stated that the national philosophy be explicitly displayed in all performances whether cultural or not. Traditional dancers were to be drawn from all over the country, and representing the best groups among the Baka-langa, Bamalete, Bakwena, San (Basarwa/Bushmen), Bakgalagadi and other ethnic groups. The dancers were also to be provided with suitable uniforms (Minutes of meeting held at State House 19 January 1976, OP/1/6).

About two days before 30 September 1976, torrential rains were experienced in Gaborone and other parts of the country which to Batswana symbolised blessings. According to the *Daily News* reporter, Samuel Moribame, the torrential rains added to the public excitement and sentiment attached to the tenth anniversary celebrations (Moribame 29 September 1976). However, Moribame also wrote that the people were disappointed by reports that Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Samora Machel of Mozambique would not come as had been planned owing to unforeseen circumstances back in their countries. Other international guests who were present included Zimbabwean liberation struggle leaders Joshua Nkomo and Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Moribame reported that the first three days of the celebrations were characterised by pomp and fanfare, and almost all activities attracted large crowds. Heads of state who did attend were Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Dauda Jawara of the Gambia and Mobutu sese Seko of Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo). For his part Jawara stated that Botswana under the dynamic leadership of Seretse Khama had achieved steady progress on the political and socio-economic fronts, and this had won it deep admiration from other Africans (Tangana 30 September 1976). An embarrassing development had taken place when Mobutu's aircraft, which was too big for the small Gaborone Airport, sunk in the airstrip and had to be hauled out by means of South African help –the last thing Botswana wanted to see happening (Personal communication with Sandy Grant and Bojosi Otlhogile 2 November 2015). Later some roads or streets in Gaborone were named Kaunda, Mobutu and Jawara in honour of their participation in the celebrations (Manatsha 2014).

### **Concerns over Embarrassing Attitudes of Batswana and the Need for Change**

It was stated that the majority of Batswana's predominantly rural background and lack of contact with the 'outside world' or foreign cultures contributed to the rather worrying attitudes spelt out in this section. Matenge was conscious of the need for proper behaviour that would reflect positively on the country in the eyes of the observant international visitors. He was particularly concerned about appropriate response of Batswana to the singing of the national anthem. In a communiqué to various stakeholders he noted that:

Whilst VIPs will be coming to join the Government and the people of Botswana in rejoicing over the attainment of the Tenth Year of Independence characterized by people and industrial development, they will, individually, with their private tape measures and through their private peep holes,

be measuring up Botswana to carry with them to their respective countries their impressions of Botswana.

The creation of good or bad impression of Botswana rests squarely on our shoulders as citizens and residents of our beloved country.

Your organization is therefore called upon to do its utmost to prepare and work towards a high standard of whatsoever and no matter how small a part you will be playing during this week of celebrations.

Very high in the list of important activities is the National Anthem. Everybody, young and old, should feel emotionally involved in the singing of the Anthem. It is both a prayer and an expression of our national hopes and aspirations. I have no doubt that it will be accorded the respect and the reverence it deserves. It is expected that the Anthem will be sung well by people standing to attention whilst it is being sung. May our guests read from our singing of it our inflexible determination to forge ahead in peace, harmony and unity (Matenge to Stakeholders 30 December 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5).

In numerous other communications Matenge stressed that the presence of international visitors in Botswana meant that the image of the country was at stake. Writing to the permanent secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Education he requested him to issue a directive to all schools and educational institutions in Botswana. The import of the directive was that professors, lecturers, teachers, students and pupils were requested to practice and perfect the singing of the national anthem (Matenge to PS in Ministry of Education 30 December 1975, BNARS, OP/1/6). He further noted that 'It has been observed in the past that the singing of the Anthem was in the main slipshod. Added to this school children and many adults appeared not to have a clue of the meaning of the Anthem. It was [not] accorded the respect and reverence it demands of us. During the singing of the Anthem some people engage in conversations or walk away. Our children, future leaders of Botswana, be taught now to respect and revere the Botswana National Anthem'. Copies of the anthem were given to schools, churches and non-governmental organisations.

Another embarrassing attitude that worried the TACU officials was a demand by traditional dance troupes from the rural areas that they be paid. For instance, at a meeting of the Cultural sub-committee a representative from the Botswana Cultural Society reported 'that in her recent tour of the country, the troupes she talked to told her that they were no longer prepared to come and perform free of charge. They would only come to Gaborone, provided they were going to be paid for their services' (Minutes of Cultural sub-committee meeting 15 January 1976, BNARS, OP/1/6). However, 'the meeting was opposed to this attitude, and suggested that the troupes should be made to feel proud that they were being asked to take part in an active endeavour to preserve their own cultural heritage, and should be persuaded to come and participate in the competitive events to be held in Gaborone on Independence, as they had done the previous year'.

During one TACU meeting in which Minister Mogwe was present, he stated that the Botswana culture and not foreign culture should be on display during the celebrations. As far as he was concerned it was inappropriate that on such occasions the country's bands should be playing foreign music of the likes of Hallelujah Chorus or Beethoven at a state party. He advised that quintessential traditional Botswana music should be made available to the police band to practice and play (Minutes of Celebrations Committee 16 January 1976, BNARS, OP/1/6).

Matenge took the task of instilling pride in Botswana further by declaring that 'Community Development Officers are expected to ensure that cultural activities presented by various clubs, committees, [and] voluntary organisations are given the prominence second to none, during the coming celebrations.

The 18th century concept whereby Botswana culture was relegated to the background as being primitive, pagan, unchristian, should be thrown overboard' (Minutes of Meeting in Coordinator's Office 9 February 1976, BNARS, OP/1/6). Matenge also stressed that the dancers and other performers must be well-groomed and avoid being overzealous in an embarrassing way:

Troupes selected e.g. traditional dancers, poets, dramatists must conform to the required standards of cleanliness and must be provided with uniforms, whose appearance be commensurate with the spirit of and dignity that is attached to the Tenth Anniversary Celebrations. It must be stressed that traditional dresses must be clean, well cut and troupes are advised that they should not become overzealous to the extent, that in trying to present traditional dress or culture, this degenerates to the level of the vulgar and absurd, thus presenting instead a pseudo cultural appearance. Officers should be ruthlessly critical of their own poor performances and of those that are to represent the community in such activities, in order to preserve the image of the country.

In a communication between Matenge and Ephraim Setshwaelo, chief information officer, on accreditation of foreign journalists who intended applying to cover the tenth anniversary celebrations, Setshwaelo expressed rather worrying developments about the attitude of Botswana telephone operators:

During normal working hours visiting journalists MUST have easy access to telephones –presumably in a Government office where a switchboard girl can place calls for them and arrange cash charges. (Normal newspaper practice is that they pay for their telephone expenses). Whilst on the subject of telephones –visiting journalists have always alleged/complained that our Gaborone telephone operators are extremely lax and rude. They allege that they are slow to respond to a call and never get a fixed time call in time. I should not, of course be associated with these criticisms, but [the Department of] Posts (sic) & Telegraphs might be sounded on the matter.

What I know is that newsmen loose (sic) their heads if there is a delay in the telephone service while they are trying to file a story. (We had a nasty coverage by a Kenyan newsman during Arap Moi's visit here in 1970)....

Finally, journalists can be very useful if well-handled. They need to feel welcome and do not want to think that there is press hostility on the part of their hosts. They also need first class communication (telephone/telex) system where they can file stories in time to meet their deadlines. I believe Posts & Telegraphs has such equipment and the right people to handle it. They need only to be aware that they will be handling foreigners and some of them are not patient (Setshwaelo to Matenge 25 September 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5).

Whereas Setshwaelo seemed to distance himself from the attitude of the telephone operators, Lebang Mpotokwane at the Office of the President was quite scathing about it and seemed to speak from experience. 'The question of an efficient telephone system is a very important one –but, unfortunately, also a worrying one. Anyone who has ever had occasion to make a call through any exchange in Botswana knows exactly how exasperating this can be. Our telephone operators are not known for courtesy, and this is most unfortunate, especially when they become discourteous to visitors to this country' (Mpotokwane to Setshwaelo 9 October 1975, BNARS, OP/1/5). He further stated that 'The Department of Posts and Telecommunications cannot, of course, be expected to change the attitude of their telephone operators within one year. But it is to be hoped that they will at least try to achieve some improvement by September next year. We shall probably have amongst us next year more foreign dignitaries and journalists than we ever had in our entire history. And it is precisely because of this that we cannot afford, at that time, the sort of behaviour

that we have come to associate with our telephone operators. I hope that the importance of maintaining a good image during next year's celebrations will be impressed upon them'.

Another embarrassing attitude that was beginning to take root in Botswana involved some football players who did not regard playing for the national football team, then called Botswana or National XI, as national duty or service by refusing to play. 'It was felt that those who are selected should be gazetted as National players and, if they refused to play, action should be taken. The Chairman [Matenge] stated that, in fact, players in the National XI would benefit more than anybody. They would be paid during their training and, of course, they would improve their standard of performance' (Minutes of Meeting in Coordinator's Office 9 February 1976, BNARS, OP/1/6). Indiscipline was also said to be rife among national team players. For instance, Setshwaelo lamented 'that whereas we do not want to have a Spartan type of attitude to footballers, yet in the case of defaulters, system measures should be taken. It was explained that a law was passed with regulations and rules built into it for the purpose of disciplining players who could cause embarrassment on the occasion such as this'. He also cited an example of a case in Swaziland where a Botswana player declared that he could not play because he had not been well-fed or had not eaten his favourite diet.

Regarding diet, there was concern that Botswana had developed a deplorable habit of fighting and pushing each other about on the occasion of ox roasting. It was advised that they should be encouraged to take their time in getting their share and enjoy it without engaging in rather unsavoury conduct (Minutes of Meeting in Coordinator's Office 9 February 1976, BNARS, OP/1/6). Perhaps, it should be noted that eating meat was a rare treat because meat was hardly ever enough among Botswana despite being renowned cattle keepers. This may explain the rather embarrassing attitude mentioned above. Again this development may have influenced the member of parliament for Shoshong, Goareng Mosinyi, who during Matenge's address to the All-Party Caucus in December 1975 suggested that hunting licences be issued to the celebrations committees throughout the country during the period of the celebrations to kill wild animals in order to obtain enough meat for the people (Minutes of an All-party Caucus Meeting 3 December 1975, BNARS, OP/1/6).

Despite the challenges outlined above the communities across the country, President Seretse Khama and his cabinet were highly impressed by TACU's performance under the leadership of Matenge. The president bestowed on him the Presidential Order of Meritorious Service for the sterling work (Personal communication with Matenge 20 November 2015). In 1977, Seretse Khama promoted Matenge to the position of permanent secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs. Matenge retired from the civil service in 1981 and the groundwork he laid was used as a template by the Twentieth Anniversary of Independence Coordinating Committee (TAICU) for the 1986, and subsequent committees for 1996, 2006 and 2016 celebrations.

### **Social Engineering Through Vision 2016 and the Challenges**

Connections can be made between the tenth anniversary social engineering and the same process through Vision 2016. Following the country's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence in 1996 President Masire set up a presidential task force led by Baledzi Gaolathe, to consult widely throughout the country and produce a long term vision for the country's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence in 2016. In 1997 the task force published a document entitled *Long Term Vision for Botswana: Towards Prosperity for All* which came to be popularly known as Vision 2016. The justification for the need for a national vision seems to dovetail with what Gobe Matenge sought to achieve through TACU in 1976. The justification reads: 'Botswana finds itself in a period of history when social attitudes and values around the world are changing at an unprecedented rate. Within the country itself, this has been accelerated by the pace of urbanization, and increasing contact with diverse foreign cultures. In the future, the people of Botswana will need to adapt to the challenges of global

society while retaining the positive aspects of their cultural values that distinguish them from other nations' (Republic of Botswana 1997:1).

As noted above the country's philosophy comprised of the principles of *democracy, development, self-reliance and unity* which Vision 2016 acknowledges. In addition to these principles a fifth one, *Botho*, was added by Vision 2016. An elaborate definition of *Botho* (also called *Ubuntu* in some South African communities) was given as:

This refers to one of the tenets of African culture –the concept of a person who has a well-rounded character, who is well-mannered, courteous and disciplined, and realizes his or her full potential both as an individual and as a part of the community to which he or she belongs.

'*Botho*' defines a process for earning respect by first giving it, and to gain empowerment by empowering others. It encourages people to applaud rather than resent those who succeed. It disapproves of antisocial, disgraceful, inhuman and criminal behaviour, and encourages social justice for all (Republic of Botswana 1997:2).

In 1976 Matenge had sought to foster the spirit of patriotism among Batswana through respect for the national anthem and pride in national symbols such as the flag among others. However, by 1997 Batswana had not developed a strong sense of pride in their national symbols as Vision 2016 lamented:

Despite the economic progress of the past thirty years, and some reduction of the very high poverty levels seen in the past, Botswana has not developed a strong sense of pride in itself and its position in the world....

The coat of arms, national flag and national anthem are symbols and expressions of nationhood and patriotic sentiment, and are thus strong references and rallying points for nation building and a sense of common purpose. It is therefore vital that Batswana understand and identify with these symbols and their meanings (Republic of Botswana 1991:3, 61).

Bojosi Otlhogile, professor of Law at the University of Botswana, observes that until the turn of the new millennium the legislation prohibited people to celebrate with national symbols, and stipulated that for one to use these they had to get permission from the state president (Personal communication with Otlhogile 15 January 2016). This may explain the reluctance on the part of Batswana to openly and joyously associate with the national symbols. However, during Festus Mogae's presidency (1998-2008) national symbols were 'liberalised' and Batswana started celebrating openly with national colours and symbols at national events including national football team's (Zebras) matches, among others.

Later a Vision 2016 Council was formed to drum up support for the initiative throughout the country, and in recent years a 'Vision 2016 Month' was commemorated every year in different parts of the country. Awards were also introduced to recognise institutions said to have excelled in upholding the pillars of Vision 2016.

However, like in most secular states in the twenty-first century, moral degeneration has worsened in Botswana to the extent that in 2008 President Ian Khama appointed a Joint Advisory Council Committee with members from *Ntlo Ya Dikgosi* (House of Chiefs) and Botswana Christian Council (BCC) on social values and to produce a report with recommendations on how to stem the tide. Surprisingly, as late as 2015 the government had not released the report to the public. The chairperson of the committee, Kgosi Puso Gaborone, urged the government to release the report because it was meant for public consumption (*The Patriot* 25 January 2015).

As late as 2015, attempts at social engineering through Vision 2016 have also registered very lim-

ited success. Some anti-social and unprofessional attitudes such as being discourteous to clients in some government offices are reported with worrying regularity. In this respect the campaign for *Botho* does not seem to have had deep impact. For instance, David Magang, former cabinet minister and a successful Motswana entrepreneur, cites a lengthy and damaging Facebook posting by one disgusted foreigner who was made to wait for intolerably long time by immigration officials at one of the country's border posts (Magang 2015). Magang also reports that xenophobia and insisting on speaking Setswana to foreigners who do not understand the language are some of the attitudes which turn some foreigners and potential investors off. The attitude that 'There is No Hurry in Botswana' and a prevalent poor work ethic also do not help the situation (Makgala 2013; Magang 2015; Makgala and Thebe 2015).

### **Conclusion**

This paper has tried to provide a picture of how the first decade of Independence was celebrated in Botswana, and the challenges faced, both human and material. The coordinator of the whole process, Gobe Matenge, took it upon himself to try and transform the society's undesirable attitudes into something that would give the country a positive image internationally. He proved to be an indefatigable pioneer whose approach provided lessons to other Batswana tasked with coordinating the country's 20<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Independence anniversary celebrations.

While in 1976 lack of contact with foreign cultures by the country's overwhelmingly rural populace was blamed for undesirable attitudes, by the turn of the new millennium globalisation or 'too much' international influence was now blamed for negative attitudes. Whereas Batswana have in recent times demonstrated pride in their national symbols such as wearing national colours at the Zebras events, and generally respecting the national anthem, certain attitudes are still a cause for serious worry as shown above. These are the issues to be addressed by the newly launched 'Vision 2036' –successor to Vision 2016.

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