

# An Inclusive Linguistic Framework for Botswana: Reconciling the State and Perceived Marginalized Communities

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## Abstract

A people's language and increasingly information communication technologies (ICTs) have emerged as powerful forces in enhancing political and socio-economic development. In Botswana there are several ethnic groups with diverse linguistic dialects. Each of the ethnic groups desires its dialect to be recognized by the state as official or national languages - integrated in education, media, and governance. The government recognizes only Setswana as the officialdom language and perceives agitation for multiple language use in officialdom as divisive and a threat to the long standing political and economic stability of the nation.

This paper sought to examine Botswana's perceived marginalized linguistic dialects by the state and proposes a linguistic framework for Botswana incorporating institutional and ICT aspects, which would appeal to both government and the ethnic groups concerned. The proposed linguistic framework for Botswana is applied as the methodological tool to examine the exclusion of the minority languages from the officialdom. The findings suggest that several ethnic groups in Botswana perceive their linguistic dialects as marginalised by the state. They seek the support of regional advocacy groups to help them promote their language values and culture, and they employ ICT to achieve their aims. However, the groups have not explored the existing international, regional, and national institutional frameworks to address their linguistic plight. Besides, they have not leveraged local content and indigenous knowledge systems approaches to address the language problem in Botswana. This paper proposes an inclusive linguistic framework for Botswana to address the language problem in Botswana that could have positive policy and managerial ramification for both the state and the leadership of the so-called marginalised groups in Botswana.

**Keywords:** Botswana, ICTs, ethnicity, Southern Africa, linguistic diversity, multilingualism, multiculturalism, information culture, globalizaiton

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## Introduction

Botswana is a multiethnic society with different linguistic dialects. Each ethnic group believes that their language should be mainstreamed in the officialdom of the state and used in education as the media of instruction, government, etc. However, the government of Botswana has, since independence in 1966,

advocated for a bilingual policy with Setswana being the national language while English is the official language. Setswana, which derives its name from the name of the country, also happens to be the language spoken by the largest ethnic group in the country. The official policy to recognize Setswana as the national language has created tension between government and some ethnic groups that consider this policy as discriminatory. Despite repeated petitions to government over the years, the political establishment has stood its ground. The ethnic groups that feel their languages are marginalized have responded by forming informal cultural or ethnic groupings to advance the linguistic values of their communities. They also seek the help of regional advocacy groups for support. And more recently, they are increasingly resorting to the application of ICT to promote their values and share knowledge through, for example, creating websites and maintaining databases of their members.

Matters are not made any better for the so called marginalized communities. Most of them reside in remote areas; their ethnic languages do not have a writing system (orthography), and/or there are no dedicated writers in the language. In addition, most issues affecting the cultural communities are policy related, and the cultural associations do not have learned representatives to engage government on issues of concern to them. Besides, the information culture is still essentially oral; it is therefore a daunting task for minority groups to generate written information in their language and on their situation to be easily shared. The situation is not made any better by the fact that there is lack of a supportive language policy for indigenous languages in Botswana.

After Botswana gained independence from the British in 1966, the leaders of the new Republic of Botswana envisaged one nation that was being built under one flag and speaking one language - Setswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004). Nyati-Ramahobo (2002) details this fact clearly through statements made by the different presidents of the country at different times. She notes that Sir Seretse Khama, the first president of Botswana, “informed the nation that his party stands for a gradual but sure evolution of a nation state” (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2002). The second president of the country, Sir Ketumile Masire, asked Botswana citizens “not to spoil the prevailing peace and unity in the country by fighting for ethnic language groupings to take precedence over Setswana, and tribes insisting that their languages become media of instruction within their respective areas would break up the nation” (*Botswana Daily News*, June 30, 1989, no. 123:1, as cited in Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004, p. 19).

From the statements above, it is clear that the ethnic groups in Botswana whose mother tongue is not Setswana have for a long time felt marginalized and have been agitating for their languages to be given some form of official recognition (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1987, 1997 1998; Presidential Task Force, 1997). However, the official position of the state is that arguments for the inclusion of ethnic languages in the officialdom do not augur well for nation building and unity. This may explain why non-Setswana mother tongue-speaking communities seem to have taken upon themselves the responsibility of creating awareness about their ethnic culture and languages. These ethnic groups have adopted varied means to advocate for language, cultural, and ethnic identity rights. For example, the Bantu Groups have generally opted to voicing their concerns through their cultural associations, while the Khoe and San groups have largely relied on external organizations to intercede for them. However, the ‘marginalized’ groups in Botswana have not done a lot in their persistence of influencing bilingual policy through official channels at international, regional, and national levels to influence positively the government policy on bilingualism.

This paper therefore aims at addressing three objectives:

- Examine Botswana’s linguistic diversity and the tension between the state and some ethnic groups who perceive government’s bilingual policy (English and Setswana) as discriminatory

- Assess the efforts being made by the affected ethnic groups to address perceived linguistic marginalization problem
- Propose an inclusive linguistic framework for Botswana to narrow the bilingual tension between the government and the concerned marginalized ethnics in Botswana.

## Methodology

In attempting to propose a linguistic framework for Botswana to narrow the tension between government and certain ethnic communities, the authors applied existing institutional frameworks such as international, regional, and local: UNESCO Cultural Advocacy Framework; World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) ICT Framework; Millennium Development Goals; Africa Indigenous Capacity Framework; Botswana National Development Framework; and Botswana Ethnic Community Advocacy Strategies. These frameworks helped inform the linguistic framework for Botswana proposed here that would help bridge the linguistic tension between the state and the perceived marginalized communities.

The importance of the frameworks discussed here as methodological tools need not be emphasized as they have been proven as critical in a number of ways in enhancing socio-economic and political development. For example, international, regional, and national institutional frameworks such as WSIS, Organization of African Unity (now African Union), Lagos Plan of Action, UNESCO's cultural advocacy initiatives, and others have advocated for enhancing inclusive societies where linguistic diversity, multiculturalism and indigenosity take centre stage (WSIS, 2003; UNESCO, 2005b). Besides, ICT is being applied by governments the world over to advance, democracy, good governance, transparency, and accountability in the running of the state (United Nations, 2008). In addition, most governments, including the government of Botswana, have enacted ICT policies that put the people at the centre of state operations to enhance socio-economic and political development (Ministry of Communication Science and Technology, 2007).

### **Botswana Context**

The country of Botswana represents the social context in this study. When Botswana gained independence in 1966 it was regarded one of the ten poorest countries in the world. The state lacked development capability and more than half of the recurrent budget was funded through grants in aid, primarily from the United Kingdom (Mutshewa, 2009). Today, Botswana's economy is one of the strongest and best managed in the developing world and is regarded as one of Africa's wealthiest nations with a thriving economy mainly based on diamond mining and tourism (Mutshewa, 2009). The economy is dependent essentially on mineral extraction which accounts for more than a third of GDP, about 80% of export receipts and about 50% of government revenue. The majority of the population consist of youth below the age of 30 (65%), while those below 15 years of age are estimated at 36% of the population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006). Poverty level among the population is estimated at 17.35% by 2006 (CSO, 2005, 2006).

Botswana is a semi-arid and landlocked country covering a land surface area of 582 000 km<sup>2</sup> (Republic of Botswana, 2007). It is considered one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world, with about half the population (estimated at 1.8 million) living in the towns and cities and the other half in rural areas (Mutshewa, 2009). The vast part of the country falls within the Kalahari Desert which extends across the borders into neighboring South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. The Republic of Botswana also borders Zambia to the north. Botswana is a democracy with a stable political and economic environment. The country has been experiencing a slowdown

in population growth because of the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS, though the provision of antiretroviral drugs by the hospital has stabilized the decline in the population.

Access to primary education in Botswana is nearly universal and educational attainment, as measured in primary school completion rates and transition to higher education, is markedly high. It is estimated that 95.3% (about 350,000) of primary school age children (7-13 year age group) are enrolled in formal education (Mutula and Mutula, 2008). The transition rate from Standard 7 to Form 1 is approximated at 96.0%. With regard to tertiary education, there has been a consistent increase in the numbers of learners at the tertiary level. For example, the University of Botswana, the only public University in the country has 15,725 students (Mutula & Mutula, 2008).

Botswana is a multiethnic and multicultural society. Table 1 shows the ethnic groups in Botswana who claim their own mother tongues apart from Setswana along with their corresponding cultural organizations that try to advance their causes.

**Table 1: Botswana Ethnic Groups' Cultural Organizations**

Major Tribal Groups	Ethnic Group	Language	Cultural organization
<b>Bantu</b>	Bakalanga	Ikalanga	Society for the promotion of Ikalanga language And Mukani Action group
	Ovaherero	Otjiherero	Herero Youth Group
			Banderu Youth Council
			Ngatoane Committee
			Tjingirine and Omohiba
	Rugciruku	Rugciruku	Kuru (TOCaDi)
	Bakgalagari	Shekgalagari	Chelwa ya Shekgalagari
	Wayeyi	Shiyeyi	Kamanakao Association
	Ovambukushu	Thimbukushu	Mbungu wa ka Thimana
	Valozi	Silozi	Helped by the New Apostolic Church
	Babirwa,	Sebirwa	-
	Vazezuru,	Sezezuru	-
	BaNambya	Nambya	-
Ndebele	Ndebele	-	
Vekuhane	Cikuhane	Cisiya Nkulu	
<b>Khoe</b>	Tshoa and Kua	Tshoa and Kua	Tsoa/Kua Cultural Group
	Naro	Naro	Naro Language Project (NLP)
	Nama	Nama	Nama Youth group
	Gwi	Gwi	(Benefits from NLP)

	Khwedam	Khwedam	Kuru Family of Organizations (KFO) - Letloa, Kuru D’Kar Trust, ToCaDI, Bokamoso, SASI, Komku, Gantsi Craft, San Arts and Craft;  The Southern Africa San Initiative (SASI), based in Kimberly South Africa does regional extension work and links cultural and language development activities of the Khoesan communities;  The Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) based in Windhoek, Namibia. undertakes regional coordination of developmental and social activities for San communities;
	Gana	Gana	(Benefits from NLP)-
	Shua (Cire-Cire)	Shua	-
<b>San</b>	Ju’haon,	Ju’haon	Qonyane Cnsha; KFO; WIMSA; RETENG; First people of Kalahari; Lutheran Bible translators; Survival International
	!Xoo	!Xoo	
	#Hua,	#Hua,	

## Findings

The so called marginalised communities in Botswana have failed to effectively engage government to accede to multilingual policy. They have also not used a formal institutional framework to pursue their causes; instead they rely on advocacy groups which the Botswana government views as intrusive. The challenges facing Botswana “marginalized” communities in promoting their linguistic values, therefore, need multi-pronged approaches including institutional (international, regional, and national), indigenous frameworks, and use of ICT. Some of the avenues available for the ethnic communities to use to promote their cultural and linguistic values are described below.

### **UNESCO Cultural Advocacy Framework**

UNESCO (2005a) has long recognised the value of local languages in promoting local content development. It has been involved through “Local Content in the Media Programme” in boosting the production and dissemination of local content in both the traditional and new media in the most disadvantaged communities of the developing world by training content creators, supporting local content production, and enhancing content distribution channels. In particular, UNESCO has helped in training creators of local content, producing local content, distributing local content, developing an audiovisual e-platform, and creating a content photo bank. The UNESCO support is directed toward regional, interregional, or international training initiatives, where the transfer of know-how between sub-regions or within a region is needed. Training areas focus on the content production chain, such as pre-production work, scriptwriting for television and radio, digital camera and sound techniques, digital editing, post-production, and self-training through screenings of best examples. The training modalities include development of guidelines, training modules and reference materials, publication of training materials, production of video tutorials, or-

ganisation of short-term training courses, hands-on workshops, provision of experts for production screenings, and research on latest trends and flows in audiovisual production.

### ***World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Framework***

The focus of World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 and 2005 in Geneva and Tunis respectively was to propel nations to an information society status. The WSIS Principles of Declarations expect nations to take specific actions toward this goal including but not limited to:

- Connecting villages with ICTs and establishing access points
- Connecting universities, colleges, secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs
- Connecting public libraries, cultural centres, museums, post offices and archives with ICTs
- Connecting health centres and hospitals with ICTs
- Connecting all local and central government departments
- Adapting all primary and secondary school curricula to meet challenges of the information society.

The WSIS declaration of principles provide a framework for an international debate aimed at creating an all inclusive information society (Souter, 2007) with emphasis placed on ensuring pervasiveness of ICTs that would, in part, facilitate creation of local content. The WSIS declaration of principles state that public institutions such as libraries and archives, museums, cultural collections, and other community-based access points should be strengthened so as to promote the preservation of documentary records, free and equitable access to information (WSIS, 2005). The WSIS declaration of principles also emphasizes advocates for the establishment of community telecentres, adopting open access policies, enhancing linguistic diversity and multiculturalism, etc. The International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) in its submission to WSIS recognised the extent to which indigenous knowledge needed to be harnessed in the information society and underscored the importance of connecting villages and establishing community access points with ICT (International Federation of Library Associations, 2003).

### ***Millennium Development Goals***

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) outline eight development goals that must be achieved by each state on the globe by 2015. These development goals are predicated on harnessing and leveraging peoples' collective abilities and wisdom, including language and culture, to bring about development. Botswana national development plans (NDPs) as well Vision 2016 and the national ICT policy have infused MDGs into their documents (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2009).

### ***Africa's Indigenous Capacity Framework***

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1980, through the Lagos Plan of Action, placed great emphasis on locally generated solutions to solve Africa's development problems. The Plan recognised that the strength of the indigenous information systems rested with content of valuable social, scientific, and technological information as well as traditional channels of information exchange. The Plan recommended that African countries should enact policies that reflect adequately the socio-cultural values in order to reinforce cultural identity (Onyango, 1996). Similarly, the African Union (AU), the successor of OAU, declared 2001-2010 a decade for African traditional medicine. The AU in this regard recognised the importance of indigenous knowledge in the continent's health sector. With this declaration there followed the formation of a number of traditional healer's associations across Africa in Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, etc. ("Enact policy to

protect indigenous knowledge,” 2004) and legislation related to indigenous knowledge. For instance, the South African government put in place the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy in 2008. This policy is aimed at stimulating and strengthening the contribution of indigenous knowledge to social and economic development in the country (Department of Agriculture, 2008). Similarly, the revised South African National Forest Act No 84 of 1998 recognises the links between community conservation and commercial forestry. It recognises the role played in people’s livelihood by trees, woodlands, and the resources. The Act places greater emphasis on the value of indigenous forests and prohibits destruction of indigenous trees without license (National Forests Advisory Council, 2001). Botswana is currently discussing a draft indigenous knowledge systems policy.

Before colonisation, Africa relied on endogenous development characterised by reliance by people on their own resources, values, knowledge, and organisations that were locally designed for their survival. These local resources were developed and shared to strengthen the resource base of local population, enhance their ability to integrate selected external elements into local practices, and broaden the options available to the people, without diluting the local views and practices (Menchu, 2007). The concept of local content is now widely adopted and is inextricably related to the “endogenous “or “indigenous knowledge” in literature. UNESCO (2005b) defines local content as the expression and communication of a community’s locally owned and adapted knowledge and experience that is relevant to the community’s situation. A community in this definition is signified by location, culture, language, or area of interest. Such a community can comprise a whole region, a sub-region, a nation, a village or clan, or a group of people with strong cultural, linguistic, religious, or common interest links. UNESCO intimates a close link between indigenous knowledge and local content. Indigenous knowledge is perceived as an intricate knowledge acquired over generations by communities as they interact with the environment (Seepe, 2001). Indigenous knowledge is oral and experience-based, often tested over centuries of use. It is adapted to local culture and environment. Indigenous knowledge is also dynamic and changing, acquired and passed to generations, in the public domain, and shared among community members.

Local content provides opportunities for members of the community to interact and communicate with each other, expressing their own ideas, knowledge, and culture in their own language. Moreover, locally generated content is more relevant to the consumer, easily accessible, cheaper, promotes community identity and culture, enhances social inclusion, facilitates universal access, etc. ComDev (2008), discussing the importance of local content, observes that local content programs enhance economic development through local procurement of goods and services, employment, and related initiatives. Through local content, local communities receive immediate benefits, such as employment skills development, and longer term benefits, such as skills transfer through training and direct experience. In addition, successful local content programs create a multiplier effect that can help to broaden and diversify the local economy.

Moreover, local content draws on resources in the immediate neighbourhood and makes people less dependent on outside supplies, which may be costly, scarce, and irregularly available. Additionally, local content provides the means of satisfying internal needs, enhances self reliance, helps bridge intra and extra divides, promotes community access to content, and in general gives a community identity as it mirrors real life situations and operations (Mutula, 2008). Local languages are central in developing local content capability. Ofcom (Office of Communications, 2006), the UK Office of Communications (the local telecom regulator), notes that local issues continue to matter to people and digital local content could, in this respect, deliver a range of benefits, including: more relevant local news; improved access to local services; stronger involvement in community affairs; enhanced democratic participation; greater capacity for individuals and local organisations to make and distribute their own content.

## **Botswana’s National Development Framework**

Botswana has several frameworks for guiding its development agenda in the social, economic and political spheres. Vision 2016 is the country’s long term development blue print that anticipates by the year 2016 for the people of Botswana to be able to use and apply the potential of computer equipment in many aspects of their everyday life. Besides, the country will then have become a regional leader in the production and dissemination of information; schools in Botswana would have access to computer and computer-based communications such as the Internet (Presidential Task Force, 1997). Similarly, Botswana’s national ICT Policy aims to develop local ICT skills, connect all schools and learning centres, provide public libraries with the necessary ICT resources to go online, and achieve universal access and content development (Ministry of Communication Science and Technology, 2007).

## **Botswana Ethnic Communities’ Advocacy Strategies**

Botswana communities that perceive themselves as marginalised are already engaged in advocacy activities which may be complemented and strengthened by the frameworks addressed above to further their cultural and linguistic values. Table 2 summarizes the strategies that are being employed to promote cultural interests of the “marginalized” communities.

Besides the cultural organizations depicted in Table 2, other cultural groups such as Mbungu wa ka Thimana (for the Ovambukushu people) predominantly use cultural festivals to promote their culture and language. Other umbrella organizations also use other strategies (largely ICTs) to promote the community interests.

**Table 2: Strategies Used by Cultural Organizations to Advance their Interests in Botswana**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>ICT/ Media</b>	<b>Work done</b>
Kamanakao	Internet	The Kamanakao Association Website Shows contact details: Tel. and Fax Nos. No links to sister organizations Lists various publications on/in Shiyeyi Lists various association documents Lists various cultural/educational materials
	Print	Shiyeyi Grammar, posters and calendars Shiyeyi Dictionary (and picture dictionary)
RETENG	Internet	Lists various cultural/educational materials  The RETENG website (appears defunct now) Tel. and fax Email: Has/had links for at least one organization (LBT)
Naro Language Project	Internet	Information on Wikipedia
Kuru (KFO)	Internet	Website, email, Tel. and Fax Has links with other organizations, various online resources (WIMSA)
First people of the Kalahara	Internet	Information on Wikipedia, Survival International

Organization	ICT/ Media	Work done
Lutheran Bible Translations (LBT)	Internet	Website that details missionaries and the languages they are working on in Botswana (Shekgalagari, Ikalanga, Khwe, Shiyeyi).
e-knowledge with women in Southern Africa (EKOWISA)	Internet	A regional NGO which uses technology to generate, analyse, translate, repackage, and disseminate locally relevant information and knowledge for better livelihoods (E-knowledge For Women in Southern Africa, 2008)
Mukani Action Group	Print	Preschool literacy materials Publication of various writing on/in Ikalanga
Chelwa ya Shekgalagari	Print	Trilingual picture dictionary, various religious publications, pillars of Vision 2016, posters and calendars
Lentswe la Batswapong	Print	Posters and calendars
Cisiya Nkulu	Print	Posters and calendars
Naro Language Project	Print	Naro English, English Naro Dictionary, 70% of the bible, posters and calendars, children/adult literacy materials, various publications in English and Naro
RETENG	Print	Various posters e.g. Vision 2016 pillars and calendars
Kuru (KFO)	Print	Various publications (WIMSA)

### ***Botswana Communities use of ICT for Advocacy***

Certain Botswana communities are turning to ICT to help address their perceived linguistic marginalisation. The use of ICT in development, including cultural advancement, is well documented in literature. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) opines that if you have 1% access of broadband today, you have 99% of opportunity (ITU, 2005). Many development agencies including the World Bank, WEF, UNDP, and UNCTAD have integrated ICT in their development activities (UNCTAD, 2006; WEF, 2003; World Bank, 2007; WSIS, 2003).

Africa Online a well known African ISP provides bandwidth and content services. It has played an important role in organising Africa's local content on the Web. Africa Online offers single portal of access to information on various countries in Africa on diversity of subjects. It maintains a directory that offers access to different local content (Africa Online Holdings Ltd, 2002). Botswana cultural organisations could explore using Africa Online to link them to related organisations and also to attract international attention. The cultural groups in Botswana could also try to explore the power of mobile communications to advance their interests. The cell phone service providers are increasingly using mobile handsets for local content publishing. Mobile phone content has become more pervasive, just like radio broadcasts, to many people in the rural areas in Botswana. Southwood (2007) observes that for most rural and remote parts of Africa, cellular networks provide the only way for people to make calls or send data because of the dearth of fixed-line phones. The local content accessible through mobile phones includes news broadcasts, music, video, short message service, voice, videoconferencing, etc. Similarly, Internet radio connectivity can provide opportunity for enhanced community access to information (Southwood, 2002), though most of them remain commercially driven.

As can be discerned from Table 2, the ICTs and mass information media used in promoting the activities of cultural groups in Botswana are varied. On the other hand, most cultural organizations use telephones and radio announcements to diffuse information about their communities cultural and other activities such as orthography workshops, cultural activities, meetings, and more. The most common ICTs used are the telephone and radios. Radio is particularly suitable because it can penetrate very remote areas. On the other hand, mobile phones are now increasingly used because they are ubiquitous in Botswana and are affordable. They help to overcome rural isolation of communities and are less costly compared to fixed telephones. Other commonly used ICTs/media include: videos/films (mostly for recordings during orthography workshops and cultural festivals); television; and slides (used for short snaps of events). Moreover, pictures/photos are used to capture various cultural events, cultural artifacts, etc., posters are used for displaying messages during cultural festivals, and audiocassettes for recording oral history, cultural folklore tales, various stories, and other aspects of indigenous knowledge

The importance of ICT in promoting culture in Botswana in the current dispensation need not be over emphasized. ICTs are important for several activities, such as web-hosting and for creating interactive websites, creating links to counterpart, creating links to funding organizations such as Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) and UNESCO, packaging and storing information digitally, or creating computer databases for storing information, developing web-based translation into the various languages, and developing chat sites and blog-spots. Through ICT, the cultural organizations in Botswana would benefit by making their languages visible not only to the international but also the local communities.

### ***Challenges of Utilizing ICT in Promoting Culture in Botswana***

Despite the increasing use of ICT, including the Internet, to promote cultural values of communities in Botswana, there are tremendous challenges. Computer mediated communication remains the least utilized in the majority of cases. One challenge affecting the use of ICT to promote cultural values of marginalized communities is the lack of access to electricity as only 30% of Botswana population has electricity, most of which is concentrated in urban areas (Botswana Power Corporation, 2008). Even people who have access to electricity frequently suffer from power cuts because demand exceeds supply. Moreover, a large population of Botswana has access to neither computers nor TVs. The other challenges include lack of adequate technical support for ICT applications, digital illiteracy, the growing digital divide between the urban and the rural areas where infrastructure is poor compared to urban areas, and the high cost of ICT infrastructure.

Botswana has no policy that allows for the establishment of community radios that would help advance the cultural interests of the ethnic Botswana communities because it is believed that such radios would promote ethnicity and divide the country. In fact, the only community radio in the country that was established for Khoesan group of communities was discontinued recently when the Botswana Telecommunication Authority refused to renew its license. With regard to access to ICTs, most of the people do not yet have access. For example, access to the Internet and computers stands at 4% in the entire population. Botswana therefore faces obstacles to leverage ICT for socio-economic development let alone for effectively promoting culture. Preparedness for effective ICT use among the populace should be measured by the level of universal access, relevant local content, universal service, human resources, affordable connectivity, and access to adequate electricity supply. Mutula and Van Brakel (2006) observed that in Botswana, the telecommunication operator does not respond to faults expeditiously and numerous network problems occur due to poor maintenance and support services. Besides, the costs of hardware and software remain largely unaffordable because government has been levying 10% Value Added Tax (VAT) on all imported ICTs. The VAT has been revised to 12% from 1 April 2010 (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2010).

## ***Prospects of ICT in Promoting Culture and Multilingualism in Botswana***

Botswana has generally an expansive ICT infrastructure covering the whole country. The ICT infrastructure in Botswana consists of a government data network. It provides access to centrally hosted information systems (e.g., national identity registration and vehicle registration), mobile telephony infrastructure with nationwide footprint, Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT), pay-phones, Internet services, commercial radio services, and value added services including VOIP and public access venues countrywide. Besides, the government has continued to increase investment from 0.2% of GDP in 1999 to 3.7% of GDP in 2009 in ICT infrastructure development and also in creating a conducive environment for private sector investment in ICT infrastructure. As a result mobile telephony penetration level now surpasses fixed telephony significantly (the fixed telephony was 142,282 in March 2008 while mobile telephone reached 1,151,761 and was in 2008 estimated to have surpassed 100% taking into account subscribers with more than one access line (Botswana Telecommunication Authority, 2008))

The government is also implementing various programmes to enhance universal access. For example, through a telecommunication programme known as Nteletsa (Setswana word for “call me”), the Botswana government has invested significant resources. Nteletsa II is a US\$ 54 million investment in telecommunication services provision to 94 un-serviced villages in five rural districts covering the Central, North West, Chobe, Ghanzi, and Kgalagadi Districts of the country. The Nteletsa I cost US\$42 million and covered 197 villages in Southern, Kweneng and North East districts, providing basic telephony. Botswana has about 515 villages each containing 400-500 people (Botswana Telecommunication Authority, 2008; “Information technology goes rural,” 2009) giving an overall population of about 2 million in the country. Besides government of Botswana in partnership with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is through a project known as Sesigno (Setswana word for “granary”) equipping all public libraries with Internet access and computers throughout the country. The other government telecommunication project is Thuto Net – an expansive project for schools connectivity. By 2007, 235 secondary schools (out of 260 in the country) had access to the Internet.

The government of Botswana is also undertaking major service delivery reform programmes including e-government that will enable the government to provide services electronically to the citizens as well as enabling the people to engage with government. Access to the internet by the citizens will be enabled through purposely equipped Kitsong Centres (Kitsong is a Setswana term for knowledge centres), which are being rolled around all corners of the country. Already, the ministry of agriculture has implemented Livestock Identification and Trace-back System, which maintains a record of all the cattle in the country and tracks the exposure level of each animal to contagious diseases.

Despite ban on community radios, there is steady growth of the electronic media especially radio stations (estimated at five and two TV – one public broadcaster and Digital Services Television (DSTV)). The previously largely print media is increasingly providing their content online, making it possible for people around the country to access news and other information through Kitsong Centres, cyber cafes, and public libraries. Other development that will enhance Botswana ethnic community advocacy initiatives include the implementation of broadband services (e.g. ADSL and WiMAX ) in most parts of the Botswana (Botswana Telecommunication Corporation, 2008), the upgrading Morupule Power Station to address shortfalls in electricity supply, and expansion of rural electrification, which by mid-November 2008 covered a total of 270 villages (out of 515 villages in the country), had been electrified connecting 52.4% of households to the national grid (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2009).

## Conclusion

This paper has tried to demonstrate the point of departure between the political establishment and the minority community groups with regard to integrating their languages in the officialdom of the state. The paper has argued that the world over, including Botswana, the so-called marginalized groups have tended to politicize the language issue, thus rubbing governments the wrong way. The linguistic framework for Botswana proposed in this article, involving institutional framework (international, regional and national), indigenous approaches, cultural organizations, and use of ICT by ethnic communities in Botswana, could provide a platform for government and the so called marginalized communities to engage positively on the bilingual issue in Botswana. The linguistic framework for Botswana proposed in this article opens up opportunity for planning, action, and dialogue between the communities and government.

Researchers should work together with cultural organisations to determine how best to utilise existing infrastructures (e.g., media, ISPs, cell phone providers, etc.) with regard to documenting their culture rich information and knowledge resources. Besides, applied research in local languages in Botswana should be undertaken in the context of indigenous practices that appeal to both government and other non-Setswana speaking groups. Indigenous knowledge emphasises the needs of a people as reflected in songs, folklore, proverbs, dances myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, traditional conflict resolutions, etc. Moreover, most of the indigenous knowledge practices are well expressed through language in forms of songs and dances, lullabies, folk tales, stories, plays, and drama. Therefore any marginalisation of any language would impact negatively on development of cultural values of a community.

Research focusing on linguistic problems can re-validate indigenous ways of thinking and the importance of languages that have been negated by officialdom. From the perspectives of indigenous knowledge, it can be argued that implanted languages do not always adapt well to the problems, cultural realities, and sensibilities of a given community. Through a language that is not mother tongue to a community's own, formal content and communication "channels" help to push "external" content into local communities. Besides, traditional ways of life, knowledge, and know-how, including language, would disappear with the onslaught of foreign cultural models (Mutula, 2008).

Information professionals, on their part, should take the lead in documenting and repackaging information and knowledge and making it available as content in modern information systems, while the media could help to disseminate such content. The digitisation of documents, as well as creation of electronic databases that are of use to local communities, should be encouraged. It is important to invest in training of information professionals and developing skills in Web design and digitisation of documents. Other actions that should be taken to address the bilingual problem in Botswana is to have an education policy that affords all school going children from all communities equal chances in life and an opportunity to contribute to their own cultural values. Moreover, infrastructure development should equally be accompanied by developing relevant local content.

Ethnic communities in Botswana should, on their part, ensure that civil society is involved in helping address their perceived linguistic marginalisation because NGOs have immense influence on the people and government. Government needs to promote social inclusivity by enhancing universal access through digital literacy, connectivity, and providing broadband access. Government must also consider seriously a policy framework that allows community media, especially community radios, including freedom of access to information and multilingual content as one way of giving legitimacy functionality to the linguistic framework proposed for Botswana.

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