

# Bureaucrats, Peasants and Rural Development Policy in Botswana

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*Résumé: Les petits fermiers constituent environ 60% de la population rurale du Botswana. La stratégie de développement extravertie bénéficie plutôt une minorité de la population. L'objet de la présente étude est d'analyser les tentatives de l'Etat de redresser ces déséquilibres structurels au niveau des revenus à travers les projets suivants: le programme pour le développement de terres arables ainsi que le programme pour le développement accéléré de terre arable sous pluie. Cependant les objectifs de ces deux programmes n'ont pas pu être atteints à cause des obstacles créés par l'intervention des bureaucrates dans les projets de développement de l'agriculture paysanne.*

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## Introduction

In the late 1970s, various assessments of the process of development in Botswana concluded that the majority of the population had benefited very little from the country's impressive record of economic growth. In particular, this was demonstrated in respect of small peasants, who constitute about 60% of the country's rural population. Evidently, the country's outward-oriented development strategy based on mineral and beef exports, had been of disproportionate benefit to a small minority of the population comprising mostly the cattle barons and sections of the elite deriving their incomes from urban-based occupations.

Arable agriculture remained under-capitalized, risk-ridden and under-productive. Only 10 to 15% of those engaged in arable production regularly produced a surplus and 30% managed to meet their subsistence needs. Around 50% of rural households were dependent for their livelihood on remittances from household members in wage employment.

The combination of unemployment – which characterized the period preceding 1985 when employment began to rise in absolute terms – rural poverty and inequality, and increasingly pronounced cleavages in the social

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structure, signalled a potentially explosive political situation. Most profoundly, these processes led to the emergence of new social forces pressing for change, the most articulate and effective of which were located within the state bureaucracy itself. A section of the bureaucracy effectively challenged the policy focus on capital accumulation and were instrumental in influencing subsequent policy changes towards 're-distribution'.

The Botswana state attempted to redress these structural and income imbalances partly through the initiation in 1978 of the Arable Lands Development Programme (ALDEP). This programme was presented as a comprehensive, integrated rural development strategy whose main objective was to increase rural employment and improve peasant incomes and welfare through the transfer of basic agricultural inputs. The inputs were to be provided on a credit/subsidy basis later changed to a more favourable grant/downpayment scheme.

This paper examines bureaucratic intervention in peasant agriculture in the context of the relatively unfettered state-society relations characteristic of Botswana's multiparty system. The paper presents a general profile and analysis of the composition and character of the Botswana state bureaucracy and examines its role in the formulation of ALDEP. It then assesses in some detail aspects of the evolution of socio-political and economic processes leading to the change in the mode of state intervention in agriculture. The paper also examines the efficacy of bureaucrat-peasant relations in the context of the implementation of ALDEP.

Overall, in the analysis presented in the paper two main issues are tackled: a) inadequacies and inconsistencies in the definition of the objectives and implementation of ALDEP, and b) the emergence of processes operating at the 'wider' national level and impinging on ALDEP – particularly pressure from rich semi-mechanized farmers – whose effect was the 'elbowing aside', albeit temporarily, of the programme by the introduction in 1985 of a new scheme called the Accelerated Rainfed Arable Programme (ARAP). ARAP was presented as a drought recovery agricultural subsidy scheme targeted at all farmers but in effect was designed to be, and was of greater benefit to, the better-off farmers. The paper examines the effects of ARAP on ALDEP and on the autonomy and unity of the bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup>

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2 The paper elucidates these issues through the analysis of empirical material collected in 1988/89 in Kweneng District and Gaborone. The empirical material consists of survey data on a stratified sample of 120 heads of household and data based on in-depth interviews with 46 farmers, 62 government bureaucrats (34 central and 28 district level), and 23 extension workers.

### **The Botswana State Bureaucracy and the Ideology of 'Modernization'**

The dominant view in the literature on the Botswana state bureaucracy and its relationship to development policy is that it is an 'administrative elite', which is one of the country's dominant 'socio-economic elites' (Picard 1987). Since it is part of the ruling class, this administrative elite enjoys 'considerable autonomy' in decision-making on policy issues, which is left largely to it (Gunderson 1971). Isaksen (1981) takes the view that the exercise of this policy-making autonomy by the bureaucracy functions within the limits of 'two main borderlines [which] are to avoid critically endangering the relationship with South Africa and to refrain from promoting interests which are seen as directly in competition with those of the cattle industry'.

If it implies that the entire state bureaucracy in Botswana is committed to pursuing a programme for capital accumulation by the economically dominant class, this analysis is an over-simplification of its nature and character. The analysis also reflects a failure to appreciate the evolution of this bureaucracy over the years since independence in 1966. The suggestion that the Botswana state bureaucracy is a homogeneous entity pursuing the programme of the ruling and dominant class is not borne out by empirical scrutiny.

The views of Isaksen (1981) and Picard (1987) emerged out of a focus on senior civil servants, identified by the former as 'macro-managers'. These bureaucrats are recruited from within the ranks of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and they do indeed exhibit socio-economic characteristics similar to those of the national politicians. Some of them, together with some of the present-day members of the Cabinet, were part of the colonial bureaucratic establishment. This group includes Permanent Secretaries (PSs), directors of parastatal enterprises, the army and police top brass, and those holding other top administrative positions. Some of the senior bureaucrats are eventually inducted into ministerial posts.

There is, however, a second category of government bureaucrat in Botswana, which is largely the product of the evolution of the country's economy and society since independence in 1966. This category of bureaucrats has also benefited immensely from the country's multiparty system and comprises younger entrants into the civil service, most of whom are graduates of the local university or of centres of learning situated abroad.

Their recruitment into the civil service is not subject to membership of the BDP. These civil servants are therefore not necessarily bound by loyalties to the ruling party. They are salaried officials recruited mainly on the basis of their qualifications or experience. This contrasts sharply with the view of the state bureaucracy in most of Africa as made up of political appointees recruited through a system of patronage and clientelism (Bates 1983; Hyden 1983; Bayart 1986). These civil servants constitute an

independent-minded group within the bureaucracy whose activity is not obviously subject to the sets of limits outlined by Isaksen.

Many of these bureaucrats occupy middle-level administrative or technical positions at ministerial headquarters or at district level. In recent years a significant number have risen to the top of the administrative hierarchy at the district level. These bureaucrats tend to perceive their role as that of 'modernization', as against ensuring the continuation in power of the ruling party and politicians. It may therefore be said that they exhibit an *esprit de corps* deriving from their common understanding of their role in society.

While there is an element in this 'split', in the bureaucracy which is generational (many of the 'lower level' bureaucrats entered the civil service after independence in 1966 and as mentioned earlier were socialized within the multiparty system), another, more important factor is that of social origin. Most of them originate from the relatively better-off strata of the peasantry, mostly middle peasant households. These strata of the rural population have access to adequate income in the form of cattle and cash which can be invested in the higher education of their children (Kerven 1982). As will be shown, while they have benefited immensely from government rural development policies in the 1980s, from time to time all strata of the peasantry exist under precarious economic conditions.

Since most of them originate from rural backgrounds, these bureaucrats claim a strong affinity with the rural population. They often express a deep resentment of some of the policies of the present government, pointing to the increasing control of the business sector by foreign, particularly South African capital. They routinely deride the government for what one respondent referred to as the government's 'tendency to ignore the widening gulf between rich and poor'.<sup>3</sup> Most of all, they are highly critical of what they perceive to be a deliberate policy of slowing down the localization of the civil service. The 'expatriate question' has always been a sensitive political issue in Botswana.

The ideology of 'modernization' prevails across the entire bureaucratic structure. This concept is, however, subject to different interpretations. The group at the top of the hierarchy advocates the promotion of unhindered capital accumulation from which the poor would benefit from the 'trickle down' effect. The other section believes that capital accumulation and redistribution should go hand in hand, and if necessary, the former must be curtailed in the interests of the latter.

It is within this ideological framework that many of these bureaucrats also define their role as representing the interests of the poor. This role has

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3 Interview, Gaborone, September, 1988.

been of much significance in influencing the shift in the late 1970s towards some kind of re-distribution of resources to the peasantry. These bureaucrats have apparently taken up this role in view of the relative absence of effective grassroots organization designed to bring pressure to bear on the government for better policies. Their background is also an important factor which influences their support for a pro-poor policy orientation for rural development which is informed generally by a desire to eliminate structural constraints and any policy inconsistencies which may accentuate them.

As will be seen, however, this situation has had the negative effect of reinforcing an essentially top-down approach to policy administration and a paternalistic attitude towards the rural population. Furthermore, the notion of 'progressive farming' developed by some of these bureaucrats and which form the basis of their approach to agricultural development have, because they are more applicable to the better-off strata of the peasantry, had the effect of marginalizing the poor. It will also be shown that conflicts often arise within this bureaucracy, whose effects are to undermine this very concern with improving the situation of the rural poor.

### **The Origins and Nature of ALDEP**

After the onset of the diamond boom in the early 1970s the Botswana economy went through a process of growth that may be described as phenomenal. Gross National Product (GNP) per capita grew by some 8.5% annually between 1965 and 1985, which according to Harvey and Lewis (1990), was 'the most rapid rate of any country in the world'. Rates of economic growth in the 1970s were in excess of 15% per year (Colclough and McCarthy 1980). From US\$80 in 1966, GNP per capita had reached US\$910 in 1984. By 1988, GDP stood at P2,749 – a remarkable leap from the P36,9 recorded in 1966. In 1985, minerals, which dominate exports, accounted for 77.8% of the country's total exports of US\$353.1 million. By the last quarter of 1989, the country's foreign exchange reserves stood at US\$2.8 billion (Financial Times 1989).

As the result of an increase in construction activities and the growth of the public sector, formal sector employment grew considerably, by about 36%, during 1972-76 (Dahl 1981). In later years, particularly from the late 1970s, the rapid growth of the private sector contributed to a growth rate of formal sector employment of 11%, leading to a significant reduction of the level of employment in about 1985 (Harvey and Lewis 1990).

Trends in the early to mid-1970s indicated that the number of formal sector jobs within Botswana was set to grow by only 11,500 per year in the 1980s, which was certainly not enough to provide employment for the 21,000 school leavers entering the labour market every year (Whiteside 1986). Adding to this figure was the estimated 2,000 migrants returning from South Africa in the wake of the decrease in demand for these workers

in that country since the mid-1970s. In 1977 alone, the decline in recruitment of mine labour was of the order of 50%. On the other hand, throughout the postcolonial period the rate of rural-urban migration has been high. The rate of urbanization, at 11.3% per year in 1973-84, was the third highest in the world after Oman (17.6%) and Lesotho (20.1%) (World Bank 1986, 240-41).

Underlying these trends was the implementation of government policies which were directed mainly at promoting the cattle industry, which is firmly in the hands of the indigenous elite. The distribution of cattle is highly skewed, with 45% estimated as owning no cattle, 40% owning up to 50 heads each, and the 15% who are large cattle owners (or 'cattle barons') owning three-quarters of the national herd (Government of Botswana 1976, 109) of some 3.4 million. The cattle barons are also significantly represented within the state apparatus by senior national politicians and senior civil servants (Colclough and McCarthy; Parson 1980). The cattle barons and other rich agrarian strata have among them access to 42% of total rural incomes (Watanabe and Mueller 1984, 115).

In promoting the cattle industry, the Botswana state took advantage of new market opportunities in EEC countries which came in the wake of the Lome Conventions. This was followed by massive investment in the cattle industry and the promotion of the interests of large cattle owners in many ways. Major efforts focused on veterinary support, the development of water supplies and the maintenance of a low taxation regime on the industry (Hudson 1981; Hubbard 1986). This led to a reversal of the fiscal incidence in the cattle industry, turning the industry into a 'net recipient of public funds, whereas in the colonial period it had been a net contributor' (Hubbard 1986, 194).

The most penetrating criticisms of the favourable policy regime for the cattle industry and the bias in favour of the large cattle owners have come in the form of the now numerous analyses of the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP). The TGLP was introduced in 1975 in the form of a government White Paper purporting to be designed as a rural development strategy whose main thrust was land reform and range management. The policy proposed the formation of private ranches under a leasehold system. It soon became clear that the main purpose of the policy was to expedite modalities of commercializing the cattle industry whose main beneficiaries were a small number of people, mainly the cattle barons (Cliffe and Moorsom 1979; Parson 1980, 1984; Hitchcock 1982; Molutsi 1986).

On the other hand, arable agriculture, from which the majority of the population derive their livelihood, was supported half-heartedly. The small-scale peasant sector was largely ignored and the majority of peasant households exhibited high levels of poverty. Only half of rural households had access to remittances and reliable sources of cash income in 1974-75

(Lucas 1985). Because this cash income is usually small, remittances are usually sufficient to ensure bare survival.

Agricultural production in Botswana is so-called 'deficit agriculture', marked largely by sub-subsistence cultivation (Hesselberg 1985) about half of the cultivating households produce too little basic food to sustain themselves throughout the year, while only a little more than one-third produce more than the family can consume (Hesselberg 1985). A good indicator of this is that presently, Botswana imports over half of its staple food requirements and the bulk of processed food. Arable agriculture presently accounts for a mere 3% of GDP.

It is important to note that arable agriculture is not Botswana's comparative advantage, nor the comparative advantage of the individual peasant household. The major contributors to Botswana's national wealth are the mining and beef sectors. On the other hand, because of the country's erratic rainfall, many small arable producers seek to minimize inputs in arable farming and maximize them (subject to the limits of household income, etc.) in cattle production, since the latter has a greater potential in terms of financial return.

Notwithstanding these observations, however, there has been a discernible bias against smallholder production throughout the post-independence period up to the initiation of ALDEP in the late 1970s. This bias does not, however, manifest itself in the form of a rising real exchange rate as has been the case elsewhere in Africa, but in the sense of a real and perceived failure to provide ways of increasing the productivity of the smallholder sector. Moreover, the country's marketing parastatal, the Botswana Agricultural Marketing Board (BAMB), tends to pay producers above border prices for gain (Jones 1981).

A crucial explanation of the bias against the small-scale peasant sector in rural development policy before 1980 lies in the manner of the peasantry's mobilization into national politics. The Botswana peasantry was inducted into participation in the country's multiparty electoral system not as an occupational group, i.e. as agricultural producers or peasants, but in the form of the more amorphous category of 'the people' - 'Botswana'. They were mobilized to vote in the first election under the BDP slogan: 'a vote for the BDP is a vote for your chiefs' (Moamongwe 1982), thus giving credence to a loyalty justified by tradition. The majority of the rural population were also not included in the party structure in the rural areas. They were instead expected to be politically acquiescent.

The effect of this approach to mass political mobilization was the exclusion of the agrarian question from the political agenda from the very outset. Moore (1983) discusses a similar trend in a slightly different context in Sri Lanka. He highlights the failure of peasants in that country, who have a record of voting different governments into power, to get the system to

provide better prices for agricultural products. However, Moore also points out that the government in Sri Lanka tends to re-invest the money taxed out through low prices in rural social infrastructure. In Botswana the problem is the more fundamental one of getting the agricultural sector off the ground.

Politically, the situation does not lend itself to a straightforward explanation. The BDP continued to enjoy large electoral majorities ranging from 68% (1969) to as high as 77.8% (1974). However, voter turnout has been varied but generally low, as demonstrated by the fact that 56% of the eligible population voted in 1965, 30% in 1969, 21% in 1974, 37% in 1979 and 56% in 1984. A possible source of concern for the BDP is that its share of the vote has tended to fluctuate, reflecting losses to the opposition. It was 68% in 1969, and reached its all-time high of 77.8% in 1974, seemed steady at 75.2% in 1979, and then declined to 68% again in 1984. These may be 'wild' swings which do not illustrate an underlying pattern, and they may also reflect a degree of voter apathy. It has been argued, however, that 'many instances of non-registration and non-voting are expression of discontent rather than satisfaction, with the *status quo*' (Polhemus 1983).

From the mid-1970s the government came under pressure from an increasingly articulate and confident opposition and, more often than not, from BDP back-benchers, to be seen to be doing more for the rural population. Criticisms of the TGLP increased the possibility of anti-BDP voter vengeance at the polls. The largely negative reactions to the TGLP among small peasants revealed the fragility of the state's control over the peasantry.

Also important was the issue of the government's maintenance of 'excess liquidity' in foreign reserves. This is a favourite talking point among opposition politicians in the country who routinely criticize the government of pursuing a conservative fiscal policy and of 'keeping money lying idle while no development takes place'. The rapid increase in national income, mainly from mining, was therefore another factor influencing the subsequent shift to re-distribution.

External factors also played a significant part in influencing changes in government thinking on rural development policy in the late 1970s. In the 1980s particularly, the most serious threat, although no record exists of it ever being made explicitly, was the possibility of punitive economic sanctions by South Africa, such as the withdrawal of South African exports to Botswana, of which over 50% would constitute food products. This would not only be economically damaging but would undermine the BDP politically.

Also important were the changes during the 1970s in the thinking of the World Bank and other donor agencies about rural development. The World Bank had until then been more prepared to provide funding for the cattle sector and large-scale arable farming. In the late 1970s these agencies began to advocate the 'smallholder focus' in agricultural programmes as against



large-scale farming. This was soon translated into a condition for certain kinds of aid.

The most decisive factor influencing the shift towards some form of re-distribution, however, emanated from within the state machinery itself. A number of government bureaucrats, located mainly in the Ministry of Local Government and Lands (MLGL) as well as in the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), began to highlight the problems facing the majority of the rural population. The findings of the Rural Income Distribution Survey (RIDS) published in 1976, which revealed serious income inequalities, were cited regularly. Since many of these bureaucrats were involved in rural development activities, they spoke authoritatively of a 'crisis' in these areas. The failure of the TGLP to be of any significant benefit to the poor was singled out for special criticism.

In response to all the factors mentioned above, the first step taken by the Botswana state was to assess the employment problem by commissioning an EEC-supported study by Professor Lipton in 1977/78. His report was instrumental in laying the general framework for ALDEP, particularly through his detailed articulation of a 'smallholder-focused', agriculture-based employment creation policy (Lipton 1978).

When ALDEP was eventually initiated in 1979, it was presented as the single most comprehensive and important policy in the Botswana government's strategy for promoting rural development and employment creation. It was stressed that the programme lay at the core of an 'integrated' rural development strategy, backed up by other new efforts in settlement planning, communal (village area) development, and the encouragement of small rural industries. ALDEP thus emerged as an effort apparently aimed at redressing the country's major structural and economic problems, particularly the continued bias against arable farming.

As outlined in government documents, the major aim of ALDEP was to raise the productivity and standard of living of small-scale peasant farmers. In the words of the Fifth National Development Plan (NDP V, 1979-85), ALDEP aimed:

*to increase production to achieve self-sufficiency in basic grains and legumes at rural household and national levels plus export surplus for these and cash crops in all but the poorest rainfall years; in so doing, to raise arable incomes (both self-employed and waged) through improved agricultural productivity, and to optimize income distribution effects by concentrating on smallholder development; and to create employment in the lands areas to absorb underemployment and reduce rural-urban drift (Government of Botswana 1979).*

Three broad groups of targets for the programme were outlined in 1978. The first of these, designated 'production targets', revolved around the objective

of increasing arable production by 4 to 6% per annum (ALDEP 1981). Under this plan average yields would rise from the present 200 kg/ha (and the mean of 10 bags?) to over 400 kg/ha. The second set of aims, designated 'income targets', involved raising average rural income from its estimated level of P460 per annum to P1,060 by the year 2000 (ALDEP 1981; Government of Botswana, 1978). Under the third category of targets, covering 'employment creation', it was hoped that agriculture would provide around 2,500 jobs per year, in the form of self-employment generated by the envisaged commercialization of smallholder production (Government of Botswana 1978, 166).

Perhaps rather too optimistically, it was also claimed that these efforts would help earn and save foreign exchange 'through import-substitution and rising exports' (Government of Botswana 1979, 148). The programme targeted the group defined as 'resource poor farmers', i.e. those cultivating less than 10 hectares of land and owning less than 40 cattle. These producers constitute an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 'traditional' farmers practising rainfed crop production. 11,000 producers were selected to participate in Phase I of the programme, which would cover the five-year period from 1981/82 to 1986/87.

The farmers belonging to the target group were divided into three categories, which were designated Models 1, 2 and 3. Those designated as Model 1 are the non-cattle owning group who constitute 45% of the total; 54% of these are believed to be female-headed households. Model 2 farmers are those with 'inadequate' draught power, as their cattle holdings fall within the 'unreliable' range of 1-25. The Model 3 group consists of producers considered to have 'adequate' draught power since they own between 21 and 40 cattle.

At its inception Phase I of the programme which would cover the five year period from 1981 to 1986 was to be financed with P23 million (equivalent to US\$29 million when the programme was initiated), most of which was obtained through loans from the African Development Bank (ADB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The Botswana government itself covered 20% of the initial financial outlay for the programme. ALDEP was launched on a nationwide scale in 1981/82 after going through a pilot phase between 1979 and early 1981.

Under ALDEP the target group farmers were to be given access to agricultural implements and other inputs (officially called 'investment packages') under a credit scheme which was changed three years later to a more favourable grant/downpayment scheme. Under this scheme the farmer meets 15% of the cost of a particular package while the remaining 85% is covered by the government. The packages provided are the following: animal draught power (donkeys, oxen, or mules), animal drawn implements (ploughs, row planters, cultivators, and harrows), fencing materials, and

water tanks. In addition to these, the producers would benefit from extension and input delivery efforts which would be directly linked to the programme.

Recent studies of state intervention in the economy have suggested that the re-distribution of resources to under-privileged classes signifies autonomous state action. This is the case particularly if this action is undertaken against the interests of the dominant economic class (Skocpol 1979; Evans et al 1985). When considering the case of ALDEP in Botswana, this issue must be treated with extreme caution. This is primarily because the main economic interests in Botswana are based and well entrenched in cattle production and not in arable farming. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that the cattle barons at any stage felt significantly threatened by the prospect of ALDEP.

However, ALDEP was cause for concern among the group whose economic interests are based on arable farming, namely the rich peasants and medium scale farmers who constitute roughly 10% of the rural population and cultivate an average of 50 hectares of land. They also own cattle ranging from 50 to 100 heads — a level which is significantly below that of the large cattle owners whose cattle holdings average 250. The medium scale farmers, and to some extent the rich peasants, are semi-mechanised surplus grain and cash crop producers (officially called 'progressive farmers') who also employ labour under a clientelist system characterized by the payment of the labourers in kind, mostly in bags of grain (Parson 1979, 201). They also play an important 'intermediate' political role acting as the 'eyes and ears' of the national politicians, particularly those of the ruling party, within the rural areas, a role which they perform in their capacity as District Councillors, village headmen, and district and village-level party representatives.

Since the programme sought to spread the services provided by government agencies among a larger group of farmers, to this group ALDEP seemed to pose the threat of diminished income. Until then government-provided credit and other facilities were focused on this group. As will be seen the decision in 1983 by the government to change ALDEP from a credit/subsidy to a grant/downpayment scheme led to concerted demands by the rich peasants and medium scale farmers to have such benefits extended to them as well.

In initiating ALDEP the Botswana state embarked on a path which significantly altered its approach to rural development. This tends to confirm the suggestion above that the state itself went through significant changes between 1966 and the late 1970s, and casts doubt on the impression of the Botswana state as an ossified structure, given by the many analyses which were based on the study of the cattle industry before 1980. However, the extent to which these changes were irrevocable is a different matter.

### **Implementation and Bias: ALDEP in Kweneng District**

A total of 1,213 farmers nationwide obtained ALDEP packages under the grant/downpayment scheme in 1982/83 (Opschoor 1983, 171-2).<sup>4</sup> By 1987/88 this figure had reached 21,034, 35% of the target group. On the surface, this appears impressive. However, this figure is merely an un-analyzed aggregate. The offtake of the packages has been concentrated on the group designated as 'Model 2', i.e. those owning between 1 and 25 cattle, who represent 67.3% of the beneficiaries. Another 20.2% of beneficiaries belonged to the 'Model 3' group, i.e. those owning 25 to 40 cattle, while the non-cattle owning 'Model 1' category account for a mere 12.3% of the beneficiaries.

About half of the 'Model 2' group (45%) are relatively better-off. They own between 12 and 20 cattle and plough an average of 10.1 hectares. Their cattle holdings are therefore safely above the 'critical threshold' for a reliable span of eight oxen which has been placed at 12 cattle (Vierich and Sheppard 1980, 20). The remaining 55% on the other hand own 1 to 9 cattle and plough 3.5 hectares of land.

The most important factor responsible for this bias in favour of better-off farmers are notions of 'progressive farming' developed by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) agronomists and technical scientists. The dominant view is that 'progressive farming' is to be found at two levels. The first level is that of large-scale mechanized farming. The second is 'small-scale' farming utilizing 'improved' technologies, production and farm management techniques (Government of Botswana 1973, 1985).

The most effective way of analyzing the implementation of the recommended package of cultivating techniques is to begin by carrying out a brief comparison of the bureaucratic (so-called 'modern, scientific'), and the peasant (so-called 'traditional') approaches to arable production. MoA recommends ploughing in spring, around October. The majority of the small-scale producers, around 79% (Government of Botswana 1987, 120), normally begin ploughing in mid-summer, i.e. around December/January.

Row planting is considered to be the most important of the package of techniques recommended to small-scale farmers in the country. It is generally regarded as the greatest contributor to increased yield (ALDEP 1979). The majority of the peasants, however, practice the broadcast planting

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4 This discussion focuses on the ALDEP grant/downpayment scheme which was introduced in 1984 after the abandonment of the credit/subsidy scheme. The latter was abandoned mainly because of a low rate of package offtake due to the fact that the majority of the target group farmers did not have the financial means to take part. The scheme had also had a regressive effect, marked by a situation where the majority of the beneficiaries (some 60%) were richer farmers and a minority (13.4%) were not part of the target group.

method. According to a MoA report (1987), 87.1% of the 'traditional' farmers who ploughed in 1985 used this method (Government of Botswana 1987:130).

The majority of small-scale producers also fail to comply with the recommendation that they must weed their fields at least on two occasions during the crop year. MoA estimates that 87.7% (41,850) of the 47,650 crop farms which were weeded in 1985 did only one weeding (Government of Botswana 1987, 134). Inter-cropping (the planting of different crops in rows) is also rejected in favour of mixed cropping, which is done through the broadcasting method. The producers do however tend to comply with the recommendation to use of certified seed and fencing, the latter being an effective means of protecting crops from damage by animals.

Available data suggest that the 'traditional' approach to arable practices represents a mixture of good sense and risk avoidance, derived from experience. For example, most farmers broadcast seed when planting because they lack sufficient labour, draught power and implements necessary in carrying out the row planting operation. Planting in rows requires the use of an animal drawn planter over a field which has already been ploughed.

On the other hand, the practices recommended by the bureaucrats are not obviously efficient or feasible. It has also been shown that the agronomic and technical research schemes on which these recommendations are based are not particularly reliable. For example, Lightfoot (1981) asserts that these 'improved technologies have not resulted in significant increases in yields'. In particular, he shows in the case of broadcast planting that 'there is no large difference between the yields of row and broadcast crops'.

On the other hand, extension outreach among the peasants is generally low. For example, out of my survey sample of 120 producers in Kweneng District, only 45 (i.e. 35%) reported that they had been visited by their extension officers, called Agricultural Demonstrators (ADs), for the purpose of advice on methods of cultivation. Moreover, 47.6% of these farmers are rich peasants or middle peasants. However, almost the whole sample (92%) were aware of the extension package. Notwithstanding this fact, extension visits remain important as they enhance the flow of information between extension officers and farmers, as well as facilitate the provision of inputs to the latter.

To what extent does ALDEP provide a useful framework for reconciling the opposing approaches to agricultural production between peasants and bureaucrats in Botswana? The purpose of the programme is to assist farmers to increase their production by giving them access not just to inputs but to the means of introducing high-yielding cultivation methods. However, even official data show that the uptake of these methods has been low even among those who have taken some of the ALDEP packages (ALDEP 1987b).

This is partly explained by the fact that most of these producers have concentrated on obtaining ploughs and fencing. According to the ALDEP (1987) report for, ploughs account for 86% of the total number of implements of different kinds taken so far under the programme. The ploughs do not seem to entail a commitment to the recommended methods of cultivation. On the other hand, the low uptake of the planters and cultivators, which together account for a mere 14% of all the packages taken, serves as a limiting factor on the adoption of the recommended techniques. Row planting, for example, depends on the acquisition of a row planter. Therefore over the years since the programme began a small minority of the ALDEP target group have been able to acquire a full package of ALDEP inputs necessary to enable them to follow the extension programme.

The set of 'eligibility criteria' prescribed for participation in the programme have also played a major role in limiting the level of small peasant participation in the programme. These include the condition that the farmers must have 'shown that their crop husbandry management is adequate as shown for example by their past willingness to carry out timely ploughing and weeding operations' (ALDEP 1984). These conditions are rather stringent and they have had the effect of marginalizing poor peasants, most of whom are not in a position to meet any of them.

Another seriously limiting factor is lack of sufficient arable land among small peasant households. Most assessments have stressed that the main problem is not the lack of land as such, but that the available land is 'insufficient'. A study by the Botswana Government and the FAO (1974) found that 40% of the sample households had 'insufficient land' to meet their food requirements (Cooper 1982, 270). Insufficient land was estimated by Odell (1980) to be in the region of 1 to 4 hectares. Many of these households are therefore not in a position to increase their production to the required levels which under ALDEP are seen to be possible on a field of 5-6 ha. Studies carried out in Kgatleng District by Opschoor (1981) and Arntzen (1985) confirm this pattern (Opschoor 1981; Arntzen 1985).

Above all, as was subsequently shown in official reports, the majority of small and poor peasant households did not have the financial capacity to enrol in the scheme (ALDEP 1987a, 19). Although about a third (68% according to my survey) of peasant households have access to cash from various sources, for the majority in the form of remittances from members in formal employment, a small minority (some 12%) are in a position to spend this money on items associated with arable production. The majority use it to cover basic household needs. They cannot afford the 15% required as downpayment for most inputs under ALDEP. It may be said, therefore, that in this and other respects the position of the majority of small peasants is untenable.

### **The Limits to Bureaucratic Autonomy: The Case of ARAP**

The introduction of the ALDEP grant/downpayment scheme in 1984 set the stage for a major confrontation between the government and the medium and large scale farmers. Murmurings of discontent and talk of an equally 'free' programme, especially for the rich medium-scale arable farmers and rich peasants could be heard as early as 1984. This was fuelled by the fact that the economic fortunes of the rich peasants had been seriously undermined by increasing indebtedness and bad harvests in the drought years of the early to mid-1980s. In particular, complaints began to mount over loans owed the government major credit institution, the National Development Bank (NDB), which many rich peasants, medium and large scale farmers had obtained for the purposes of stock breeding, purchases of tractors and other machinery, diesel fuel and seasonal inputs. By 1986 many of these farmers owed the NDB large sums, perhaps P5,700 on average, and continued to accumulate more debts at a rate averaging about P3,000 annually.<sup>5</sup>

Realizing that the stirrings of discontent among the rich peasants could lead to political uncertainty, in 1985/86 the government decided on two strategies to defuse the issue. First, it announced an across-the-board writing off of NDB loans for seasonal agricultural items. The main reason given was that these farmers had suffered badly during the drought. About 1,400 farmers and up to P8 million were involved.<sup>6</sup>

A bolder move to placate these farmers came with the announcement in 1985 of the initiation of the Accelerated Rainfed Arable Programme (ARAP). ARAP was presented on 16 September 1985 in a speech to Parliament by the Minister of Agriculture as essentially a drought recovery measure and as a government initiative designed to benefit 'that large group of farmers engaged in arable production [but] not covered by either ALDEP or FAP'.<sup>7</sup> As stated in a MoA Savingram sent to all local agricultural offices on 9 October 1985, ARAP had been necessitated by the fact that the other programmes, such as ALDEP and the subsidy scheme for [business activities] called the Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) which was initiated in 1982 'did not fully cater for middle-level farmers'. Subsequent government notices on the programme, which was introduced during the 1985/86 agricultural season, pointed out that this was to be a 'project which would not be discriminatory to any group of farmers' (Government of Botswana 1988). This implied that ARAP was some kind of 'bonanza' scheme aiming at subsidizing and providing cash income for virtually every arable farmer.

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5 Interviews, Gaborone, November 1988.

6 Interviews, Gaborone, October 1988.

7 Hansard, *Botswana Parliament*, 1985.

An analysis of the implementation of ARAP reveals that the programme was formulated hastily. This suggests that the pressure to introduce it was immense. Unlike ALDEP for example, whose formulation took four years to complete, ARAP was announced suddenly. From the Cabinet decision to operationalize it, ARAP was taken through the pre-launch formalities in less than six months. Again unlike ALDEP, ARAP was financed entirely from government coffers.

Another peculiar feature of ARAP was that it provided cash payments to farmers for carrying out certain operations on their own land or on that of others lacking the technical means to do so for themselves. These operations included ploughing, for which the farmers were paid P50 per hectare ploughed up to a maximum of 10 hectares; row planting, P20 per hectare up to a maximum of 10 hectares; and destumping, P30 for 1 to 30 stumps removed, P40 for 21 to 30 stumps, and P50 for 30 stumps or more. P10 per hectare was offered for weeding, which was dropped from the scheme when it entered its second year in 1987/88. Each farmer could claim free seed amounting to 8 kg per farming household, estimated to cover a 10 hectare plot.

Even a cursory examination of the progress of ARAP between 1985 and 1988 reveals that it has been of disproportionate benefit to the tractor-owning medium and large scale farmers. Within three years government expenditure on ARAP, whose budget was initially placed at P29,890,000 but by March 1988 had grown to P55,858,008, was twice that provided under ALDEP. Except for P1,600,134 spent on fencing (2.9% of the total), which since 1986 has been provided free of charge to a selected group, and P3,817,245 spent on destumping (6.9%) the remaining P50,440,629 (90.4% of the total) was spent on non-permanent agricultural activities such as ploughing, row planting and weeding. Ploughing was the most popular of all these activities, accounting for 81.8% of the total and covering a larger number of beneficiaries. In 1987/88 ploughing alone covered 452,015 hectares, while row planting was done on 103,425 hectares, weeding on 121,760, and destumping on 42,305 hectares.

Clearly, ARAP has been able to reach a considerable number of farmers. The beneficiaries numbered 92,226 and 160,560 in 1986/87 and 1987/88 respectively. However, official ARAP data do not specify the categories of farmers assisted under the scheme. One has to rely on some simple but useful estimates based on known national data concerning the distribution of draught power among cultivating households. Considering that under ARAP those who own draught power were paid for ploughing for those without it, we may conclude that on a nationwide basis no more than 20% of the farming population received cash payments for ploughing. This figure is based on the estimate that 50% of agricultural producers in the country are definitely known to be lacking draught power and 35% have inadequate



draught power. The 20% who have access to adequate draught power consist overwhelmingly of either large-scale capitalist farmers or medium scale farmers and rich peasants who own tractors. It is also worth mentioning that ARAP statistics showing the total number of beneficiaries include all farmers ploughed for by others under the scheme as well as those who obtained cash for doing so. Thus, while a large number of farmers benefited from the scheme, those who derived an income from it were mainly the rich.

The effect of the implementation of ARAP on ALDEP was to restrict its modest but selective progress. As shown earlier, the latter had its many faults; but this programme, which was evidently designed to achieve a lasting solution to the problem of the low productivity of the smallholder sector, came under pressure as the direct result of the introduction of a scheme designed as a one-off exercise which in the end benefited only a few.

ARAP was literally superimposed over all the other MoA institutions and activities involving arable agriculture. The key institution drafted to implement the scheme was MoA's Department of Agricultural Field Services (DAFS) and its extension network. Although the post of ARAP coordinator was created, the structures and personnel functioning below him consisted of the whole gamut of institutions placed at the disposal of ALDEP.

The first salvo of criticism of ARAP's effect on ALDEP came from the ALDEP Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (ALDEP 1987a). This document highlighted the issue of pressure exerted by ARAP on the time of MoA's extension workers, the ADs, who under this programme were expected to measure farmers' fields to establish the extent to which particular ARAP operations had been carried out. Having done this, the ADs would then calculate the amount of money due to the farmers and complete forms in triplicate each for destumping, ploughing, row planting, and weeding, which the farmers would then take with them to the District Agricultural Office to claim payment. Considering the large amount of 'office type' work already faced by the ADs who also had to complete ALDEP forms, this more than doubled the amount of paperwork done by these extension workers.

One ALDEP document noted that the ADs 'who are primarily responsible for screening and recommending applications for ALDEP packages, remained wholly occupied with the measuring of fields for issuing certificates to ARAP farmers to receive payments' (ALDEP 1987b, 4). Emphasis in the original. This conflict over the use of the extension services was presented in another report which stated that ARAP was having a 'negative effect on ALDEP', with the 'result [that there] has been a loss of momentum for ... ALDEP which [relies] heavily on extension' (ALDEP 1987a:32). Some of the senior bureaucrats responded to these criticisms by pointing out that ARAP was a short-term and 'emergency' programme.

Another serious point of conflict was the fact that ARAP was providing free of charge some of the inputs for which ALDEP was insisting on a 15%

downpayment. Even though ALDEP had introduced a free fencing package for the poorest farmers around the same time as ARAP did in 1987, a major complaint was that in some districts the 'eligibility criteria prescribed under ALDEP regarding the provision of poles have tended to be bypassed by ARAP' (ALDEP 1987a, 32).

The most important cause of consternation among MoA bureaucrats over ARAP was their resentment of being made to participate in a programme perceived as a populist BDP political mobilization strategy. This view was expressed with more frequency after the government decided to extend ARAP into the 1988/89 season on the grounds that many farmers had 'still not recovered sufficiently from the effects of the ... drought to enable them to continue production on their own' (Botswana Daily News 1988). Ironically, the government media were at the same time referring to a 'bumper harvest' in the wake of good rains which broke the drought during the previous season.

District-level bureaucrats also voiced their displeasure with the scheme. A typical statement to this effect is contained in the 1986/87 Annual Report on ARAP of the Central Region which reads: 'We feel that ARAP should not be re-introduced afresh. It must be reviewed to become a subsidy (sic) for seasonal and on-farm inputs like herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer, etc. (Government of Botswana 1987, 3). Around this time it had become evident that ARAP was lowering morale among extension workers. Another complaint that has been made is that ARAP is creating 'a dependent society' by providing cash payments instead of market incentives and subsidies.

The large number of ARAP beneficiaries suggests a less virulent bias despite the fact that the scheme deprived ALDEP of some of its resources but also delivered something to ALDEP farmers. This, however, was undermined by the fact that ARAP created income for the better-off largely because it was corrupt. Among the unintended consequences of ARAP the most serious was an unprecedented increase in corruption and fraud involving both farmers and local-level agricultural officials. This took the form of claims for payments for fictitious ARAP operations, particularly ploughing, by some farmers in collaboration with some local officials and ADs.

This issue was taken up by the local private press with some enthusiasm. The 'Botswana Guardian' reported on 7 October that the government had been 'swindled' of a total of P178,000. Four cases of alleged fraud were cited in the report, which was alleged to have taken place in locations as geographically diverse as Lobatse in the South, Mahalapye and Machaneng in the Central District, and Molepolole in Kweneng in the South-East. The fact that the majority of the offenders were tractor-owning large-scale farmers rather than small peasants served to underscore the point that the availability of so much funds was corrupting particularly those with the capacity to make the best out of the scheme.

Most profoundly, the initiation of ARAP demonstrated the strength of socio-political forces operating at the 'wider' national level and its adverse effects on the coherence of action and unity of the bureaucracy. It demonstrated the limits of the autonomy of the progressive sections of the Botswana state bureaucracy vis-à-vis the national politicians. ARAP had the effect of undermining the unity and coherence of action of the bureaucracy and of strengthening the position of elite farmers more closely linked to the political interests of the ruling party. The effect of these developments was to severely restrict existing efforts designed to re-distribute resources to the rest of the peasantry.

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing analysis has demonstrated the limitations of the particular mode of re-distribution to the peasant sector currently being implemented in Botswana. In particular, the analysis has illustrated the argument that bureaucratic intervention in peasant agriculture is based on largely stereotypical notions of 'progressive farming' developed by MoA bureaucrats. This translates into a peasant-bureaucrat relationship which provides little scope for the reconciliation of the opposing bureaucratic ('modern, scientific') and peasant ('traditional') approaches to production.

This situation is accentuated by socio-economic factors which have had the effect of marginalizing the majority of, small and poor peasants to the extent that they are incapable of deriving any significant benefit from a policy such as ALDEP. This has to do primarily with dwindling sources of income among the majority of small peasant households, undermining their capacity to take part in the acquisition of inputs despite the programme's favourable grant/downpayment scheme.

Various forms of bias against small peasants, which mirror a tendency to support better-off (middle) peasants and, as shown by the case of ARAP, medium and large scale farmers as well as rich peasants, limit the effectiveness of the process of re-distribution. These biases serve to undermine the progressive thrust of the actions of the bureaucracy and often result in serious inter-bureaucratic conflict.

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