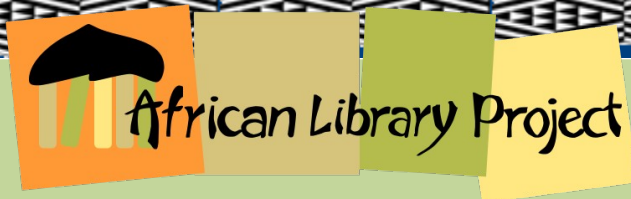


Botswana



About the Country

Botswana, a former British protectorate, gained independence in 1966. The country's economy depended primarily on livestock until the 1970s when Botswana became a major exporter of diamonds. Currently, Botswana has one of the most successful economies and stable democracies in Africa. The Botswana economy now includes a service sector along with tourism, manufacturing and of course mining of diamonds along with other precious resources.

Over 20 different languages are spoken by Botswana but English and Setswana are the official languages. Employers in Botswana require a high level of English proficiency and newspapers in Botswana are written primarily in English. But being literate in English is the key not only to getting a good job; it's also key to survival as medical records and medicine labels are also written in English.

Botswana has been hit very hard by the HIV/AIDS epidemic but in recent years both the government and numerous international organizations have turned their attention to education and prevention programs.

Education

The discovery of diamonds and the revenue that their trade generated was beneficial for Botswana's educational funding. However, in 2006, after 20 years of free state education, the government reintroduced school fees. School fees make it very difficult for many students to obtain the supplies they need or to even continue schooling, in some cases. Overall, Botswana's primary schools are quite underfunded although recently, the government has started providing some aid to help cover the costs of school supplies. All subjects are taught in English at both primary and secondary schools.

The capital city of Gaborone has been home to Botswana's only University. However, a second University is scheduled to open in 2010 while the University of Botswana has recently opened a medical school.

The African Library Project

The African Library Project has partnered with the Ministry of Education in an effort to establish primary school libraries across the country. We're focusing on younger students partly because the Botswana government provides university scholarships- it's our goal to prepare the younger students for a higher level of education.

In October 2008 the ALP hosted its first annual African Partners Summit in Botswana. Partners from Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana gathered in Kanye to discuss their experiences, share best practices and develop simple evaluation tools.

Quick Facts

Botswana is a sizeable country- comparable to France, slightly smaller than Texas but its population is small at about 1.6 million.

Botswana has one of Africa's highest literacy rates: 78.6% for males and 84.1% for females.

The UN estimates that 23.9% of adults in Botswana are living with HIV.

The life expectancy in Botswana is quite low at under 50 years.

The Kalahari Desert covers nearly 85% of the country, including the entire central and southwestern regions.

