

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.

Although many languages are spoken in Botswana, English is the official language. 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; medical records and medicine labels are also written in English.

Education

The discovery of diamonds and the revenue that their trade generated was beneficial for Botswana's educational funding. Botswana spends about 10% of its GDP on education.

The early years of education are taught in Setswana, then children are introduced to English and more and more subjects are taught in English. All subjects are taught in English in secondary schools. The University of Botswana, in the capital city of Gaborone, is the country's only public university. The Botswana government provides scholarships to students at the university level. Certain subjects are not offered at the university and so students must often go abroad to pursue an education.

The African Library Project

The African Library Project concentrates on establishing primary school libraries in Botswana in partnership with the Ministry of Education. In October 2008, the first ALP African Partners Summit in Kanye, Botswana, brought together our partners in Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana to share best practices and develop simple evaluation tools. As of 2015, the African Library Project and the Ministry of Education have established 344 primary school libraries in Botswana.

Quick Facts

- Botswana is a sizeable country -- comparable to France, slightly smaller than Texas -- but its population is small at about 2 million.
- The people of Botswana are known as Batswana. A single Batswana is a Motswana. English and Setswana are their main languages but more than 20 other languages are spoken in Botswana.
- Botswana has one of Africa's highest literacy rates: 85% for males and 86% for females.
- The life expectancy in Botswana is about 54 years.
- Botswana's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 23%. This is the third highest rate in the world. The government has an excellent program providing HIV/AIDS medications.
- The Kalahari Desert covers nearly 85% of the country, including the entire central and southwestern regions.

