

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 848

PS 030 260

AUTHOR le Roux, Willemien  
 TITLE The Challenges of Change: A Tracer Study of San Preschool Children in Botswana. Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections. Following Footsteps.  
 INSTITUTION Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague (Netherlands).  
 REPORT NO No-15  
 ISBN ISBN-90-6195-062-7  
 ISSN ISSN-1382-4813  
 PUB DATE 2002-02-00  
 NOTE 115p.; Funding provided by UNICEF Botswana. For number 14 in this series, see ED 462 143.  
 AVAILABLE FROM Bernard van Leer Foundation, P.O. Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, Netherlands. Tel: 31-70-3512040; Fax: 31-70-3502373; e-mail: registry@bvleerf.nl; Web site: <http://www.bernardvanleer.org>.  
 PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS \*Academic Achievement; Comparative Analysis; Corporal Punishment; \*Culturally Relevant Education; Developing Nations; Dropouts; Followup Studies; Foreign Countries; Intervention; \*Minority Groups; Outcomes of Education; Parent Attitudes; \*Parents; \*Primary Education; Program Descriptions; Social Change; Student Adjustment; Teacher Attitudes; \*Young Children  
 IDENTIFIERS Botswana; \*San People

## ABSTRACT

This report details findings of a study undertaken during 1993-1995 in the Ghanzi District of Botswana to ascertain the progress of the San children in primary school, comparing children who attended preschool to those who did not. The report also describes the Bokamoso Preschool Programme, started in 1986. Data for the study were collected through interviews with San parents and questionnaires and interviews with primary school teachers. Findings focus attention on the difficulties of the San people in responding to current demands that they earn a livelihood through agriculture rather than through traditional hunting and gathering practices. San people have found it difficult to understand and adjust to the formal system of education in which children are often sent to boarding schools far from their parents. The main findings deal with the lack of mother-tongue teaching and materials in the primary schools, the lack of cultural understanding, and the system of corporal punishment in the schools. The report concludes with 13 recommendations for improving the chances of success for San children entering the formal education system. An epilogue adds further recommendations made by the San themselves and general recommendations for governments and nongovernmental organizations in the area of education. Two appendices contain the tracer study questionnaire and additional data tables. (Contains 26 references.) (KB)

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# The challenges of change

*A tracer study of San preschool children in Botswana*

*Willemien le Roux*

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The Foundation aims to enhance opportunities for children 0-8 years, growing up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage, with the objective of developing their potential to the greatest extent possible. The Foundation concentrates on children 0-8 years because research findings have demonstrated that interventions in the early years of childhood are most effective in yielding lasting benefits to children and society.

The Foundation accomplishes its objectives through two interconnected strategies:

- o a grantmaking programme in selected countries aimed at developing culturally and contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood care and development; and
- o the sharing of knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that primarily draws on the experiences generated by the projects that the Foundation supports, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Foundation currently supports approximately 150 projects in 40 selected countries world wide, both developing and industrialised. Projects are implemented by project partner organisations that may be governmental or non-governmental. The lessons learned and the knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that are generated through these projects, are shared through a publications programme.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation was established in 1949. Its income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958.

CIP-DATA KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK, DEN HAAG

le Roux, Willemien

The challenge of change: A tracer study San preschool children in Botswana

Willemien le Roux

- The Hague : Bernard van Leer Foundation

- Ill. (Early childhood development: practice and reflections)

ISSN 1382-4813

ISBN 90-6195-062-7

*Subject headings:* childcare, community development, early childhood project, preschool, primary school

cover photo: *by Coby Visser*

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Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections

Following Footsteps

## *The challenges of change*

*A tracer study of San preschool children in Botswana*

*Willemien le Roux*

**February 2002**

Following Footsteps

reports of studies tracing the 'footsteps' of former participants in early childhood programmes

Bernard van Leer  Foundation

### *About Following Footsteps*

*Following Footsteps* are reports of efforts to trace former participants of early childhood projects and programmes. They are studies that follow the progress of the children, their families, the workers, the communities or the organisations five or more years down the line to find out how they are faring. Some of the programmes were originally supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation; others were not. Some of the studies were commissioned by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, while others were not. Each of the programmes studied is unique, and the methods used for tracing, gathering data and analysing are many and varied. As a whole, the studies will contribute to our understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

### *About the series*

*Following Footsteps* is a sub-series of *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections*. The series as a whole addresses issues of importance to practitioners, policy makers and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in developing and industrial societies. Contributions to this series are welcomed. They can be drawn from theory or practice. Information about contributing to the series can be obtained from Joanna Bouma, Series Editor, Department of Programme Documentation and Communication at the address given on the back cover. Material from *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections* may be reproduced or adapted without prior permission, provided it is not distributed for profit. It must be attributed to the original author(s), *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections*, and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. A list of all the titles in this series is available from the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

### *About the author*

Willemien le Roux is presently the Regional Coordinator for WIMSA (Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa) on Education and Culture. She has worked and lived in Botswana for two periods, totalling 25 years, all this time working with the San people in Western Botswana. She and her husband, Braam, assisted the community of D'Kar (mostly Naro people) in Ghanzi to establish the Kuru Development Trust (KDT), and one of the projects she began was the Bokamoso Preschool Programme. She left D'Kar in 1998 to live in Shakawe in Northern Botswana, where she coordinates an oral history programme with San people from the Ju'hoan and Khwe peoples as part of her role in WIMSA. This work is done under the umbrella of the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (TOCADI). She has written a report for WIMSA and Kuru, called *Torn apart, San children as change agents in education*, funded by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, as well as a novel about her life in D'Kar called *Shadow Bird*, which was awarded the Herman Charles Bosman Prize for English Literature in 2000.

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## *Foreword*

The San (also called Bushman or Basarwa) population of Botswana is among the last groups of hunter-gatherers still surviving into the 21st century. Few of the San are now able to exist solely by hunting and gathering – much of the land they used to live from is now fenced and farmed, while most of the animals they hunted can now only be found in protected game reserves. The values and norms by which the San have lived for centuries are different in many respects to those of the majority of the Botswana population; thus, adaptation brings with it barriers that can seem insurmountable for both adults and children.

This report of a tracer study of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme describes very clearly, sometimes poignantly, how these differing values and norms affect the children of the San. In traditional society, San children were not kept apart nor confined to 'classes'. It was a society in which children were brought up as equals with adults. When small, they were in almost continual bodily contact with adults; they learned by listening, watching and practising; they were disciplined orally, not physically.

The Bokamoso Programme has its origins in a preschool that started in 1983 at a small farm in Ghanzi District. Over the years, it has grown to include a full-fledged preschool teacher training programme and preschools in the settlements of the Kalahari that have been established by the Government of Botswana to accommodate Remote Area Dwellers – who mainly comprise the San. 5

Despite the efforts of the people working in the programme, it was apparent to them that the San children were facing enormous difficulties in adjusting to primary school, and it was reported that many children were dropping out at an early stage. This is the background to the decision to trace as many preschool graduates as possible, to find out where they were and what they were doing, and to look for the reasons behind success or failure.

It is a sad reflection of how little has changed that we can now republish the report of the study that was carried out in 1993/1994 and first published by the Kuru Development Trust in 1995. Additional background material, and new findings from research on the situation of San children, is also included to help to bring the Bokamoso story up to date.

Against a background of a people forced to adopt a new lifestyle, the results are in some respects encouraging: children who had attended the preschools were mostly still in school, there were many instances of parents who were very supportive of the



preschools and of formal education in general, some head teachers were trying to adapt the school to the realities of the community, and many of the children believed to have dropped out were, in fact, still in school. What the report refers to as a 'statistical illusion' was mostly the result of inadequate record keeping.

Through a combination of interviews with children, parents and teachers, documentary research and observation, the report brings alive the problems of the language gap, differences of opinion on discipline, socio-cultural misunderstandings and factors in their home and family circumstances that affect the children.

Since the early 1980s, the Government of Botswana has made many efforts to reach out to the San with the provision of water, food, education, health and other services and, not least, trained workers. Yet 20 years of such efforts have still left many San families in desperate circumstances. While this report does not explain why this has happened, it gives us many hints and lessons that can be applied in other situations involving work with indigenous or other minority groups.

### **The tracer studies**

The early childhood interventions supported by the Foundation are action projects that are implemented by locally based partners in the field. Their objectives are concerned with developing and improving the lives of children and their families and communities in the here and now, based on the hypothesis that this will lay the foundations for improved opportunities in the future. These projects have not been conceived or implemented as research studies in which children/families have been randomly assigned to 'treatment' or 'control' groups, and they have not usually been subjected to tests or other research instruments.

Evidence exists on the longer term effects of early childhood interventions, much of it coming from longitudinal studies that have been implemented as research projects in industrialised countries. The outcomes are mixed, although usually fairly positive. Other evidence, mostly anecdotal, is available from early childhood projects such as those supported by the Foundation, and again, this is mostly positive.

In 1998, after more than 30 years of support for field projects, the Foundation decided to commission a number of studies that would trace former participants of projects to find out how they were faring a minimum of five years after they had left the programme. Although evaluation has been a major element in early childhood programmes supported by the Foundation, we had never gone back to find out how people are doing a number of years later.

Other similar studies are taking place, or have been completed, in countries as widely spread as Jamaica and Kenya, Israel and India, the USA, Ireland, Colombia and Trinidad. Each of the programmes studied is different in its target group, in its context and in its strategies. This means that the methods used to trace former participants and discover their current status are almost as varied as the original programmes. We are emphasising an anthropological and qualitative approach that uses small samples of former participants, matching them where possible with individuals/families that share similar characteristics for the purpose of comparison.

The present tracer study from Botswana predates the Foundation's interest in such studies, and it was, in fact, one of the factors that inspired us to delve more deeply into the medium-term effects of early childhood programmes. Although it was carried out by the same people who implement the programme, and although there is no comparison group, it gives us a rich and varied picture of the very many factors that have an influence on children as they grow older. It shows us, among other things, that there is far more to child development than preschool, and that if the school system is not congruent with home circumstances, the children will have to make immense efforts to achieve any form of success.

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Our intention is to share the results of the individual studies with as wide an audience as possible, as well as to undertake an analysis of a group of the studies to see what lessons can be learned in terms of both outcomes and methods.

We anticipate that each study report will be a source of learning and reflection in its own context and country as well as for a wider public. As a whole, we hope that these exercises in following footsteps will contribute to a better understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

*Ruth N Cohen*

Bernard van Leer Foundation

## *Acknowledgements*

This study was the product of a team effort by the Bokamoso Staff and several volunteers, people who generously shared their time and knowledge on a short term basis.

I would first like to thank the staff of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme who participated in the collection of information for this tracer study during 1994 and 1995, adding the extra work into their normal working day: Gaolathe Thupe, Maithamako Keakopa and Qgoma Qhomatcāa were the main interviewers. They were guided in the process by Nomtuse Mbere, then working with SNV Netherlands, who acted as consultant for Bokamoso. Members of the 1994-1995 Advisory Board of Bokamoso assisted in various ways, with practical assistance in the further collection and analysis of data as well as preparation of the report. Coby Visser and Beppie Wessels volunteered many hours in collecting additional data as needed.

UNICEF Botswana provided the funding for the extra field work and the printing of the initial report, and especially Philip Kgosana gave editorial assistance and general advice. Dan Chatman from Kuru Development Trust, my mother, Pollie Jerling, and Paul van Hoof (SNV Netherlands) gave editing and editorial assistance, and Jan Wessels helped to analyse the statistics. Frank van Büssel (from SNV, then District Officer Lands, Ghanzi District Council) provided much demographic information for the background to the areas in which the study was done.

The Education Officer in Ghanzi in 1995, Mr Nkete, as well as all the teachers and principals at the various primary schools in the district, are commended for their patience and kind assistance in providing information about dropouts and school statistics.

I would also like to thank Mr Kelekwang at the Ministry of Education, Dr Lucy Mafela from the University of Botswana, and Mr Norman Motsoge, Education Officer in Ghanzi, for their assistance in providing information for the appendix.

Without the enthusiastic participation of various preschool teachers in the settlements, as well as the parents and children who were interviewed, this report would not have been possible and would not have been worthwhile. May their willingness to share their lives and information bring some dividends to them and their children.

*Willemien le Roux*

## *Glossary/abbreviations*

ARADP	Accelerated Remote Area Development Plan
BDO	Bushmen Development Office
Bokamoso	'future' in Setswana – the name was chosen for the programme in the early 1990s by trainee teachers
CKGR	Central Kalahari Game Reserve
ECD	early childhood development
ELRU	Early Learning Resource Unit, Cape Town, South Africa
KDT	Kuru Development Trust
<i>Kgotla</i>	traditional Tswana judiciary system, place where things of importance are discussed and the chief addresses his people
<i>Kuru</i>	'to do it (yourself)' in the Naro language
LDTC	Lobatse Day Care Training Centre
<i>Letloa</i>	'net' in Setswana
<i>Mma Moruti</i>	wife of a minister of religion
MLGL&H	Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NPA	National Plan of Action
PTA	parent-teacher association
RADs	Remote Area Dwellers
RADO	Remote Area Dwellers Office
RADP	Remote Area Development Programme
RSEP	Regional San Education Project
S&CD	Social and Community Development Office
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Netherlands Development Organisation)
Std	standard or grade level in school
TCC	Tirisanyo Catholic Commission
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VDC	village development committee
WIMSA	Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa
WMA	wildlife management area

## **Types of landholdings in Botswana**

**Game reserves:** areas set aside as national parks for conservation of natural resources, managed by the Department of Wildlife and exploited for tourism.

**Wildlife management areas:** reserved areas set aside under the tribal grazing land policy of 1975 to ensure rural development and citizen participation in wildlife utilisation.

**Farming blocks:** a few freehold land sections set aside by government for commercial farming; areas are usually fenced and owned by individuals as opposed to communal grazing areas found over the largest part of Botswana under the Tribal Land Act.

## *Executive summary*

Based on a report published in 1995 by the Kuru Development Trust, this tracer study adds additional information gathered in 1998 as part of a three-phase educational programme on San education in Southern Africa.

The main focus of the report is on the progress of children in primary school, comparing those who attended preschool to those who did not. A brief description of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme, started in 1986, is given, along with three hypotheses fundamental to the development of the programme: (1) that San children who were gradually introduced to formal education through the preschools would do better and would be less likely to drop out than children who had not attended preschool, (2) that San parents would be more accepting of the educational process if their children were gradually introduced to it through the less formal structure of the preschool, where they could learn through play and be taught in their mother tongue, and (3) that introducing Setswana and English through games and rhymes would give the children a head start in primary school.

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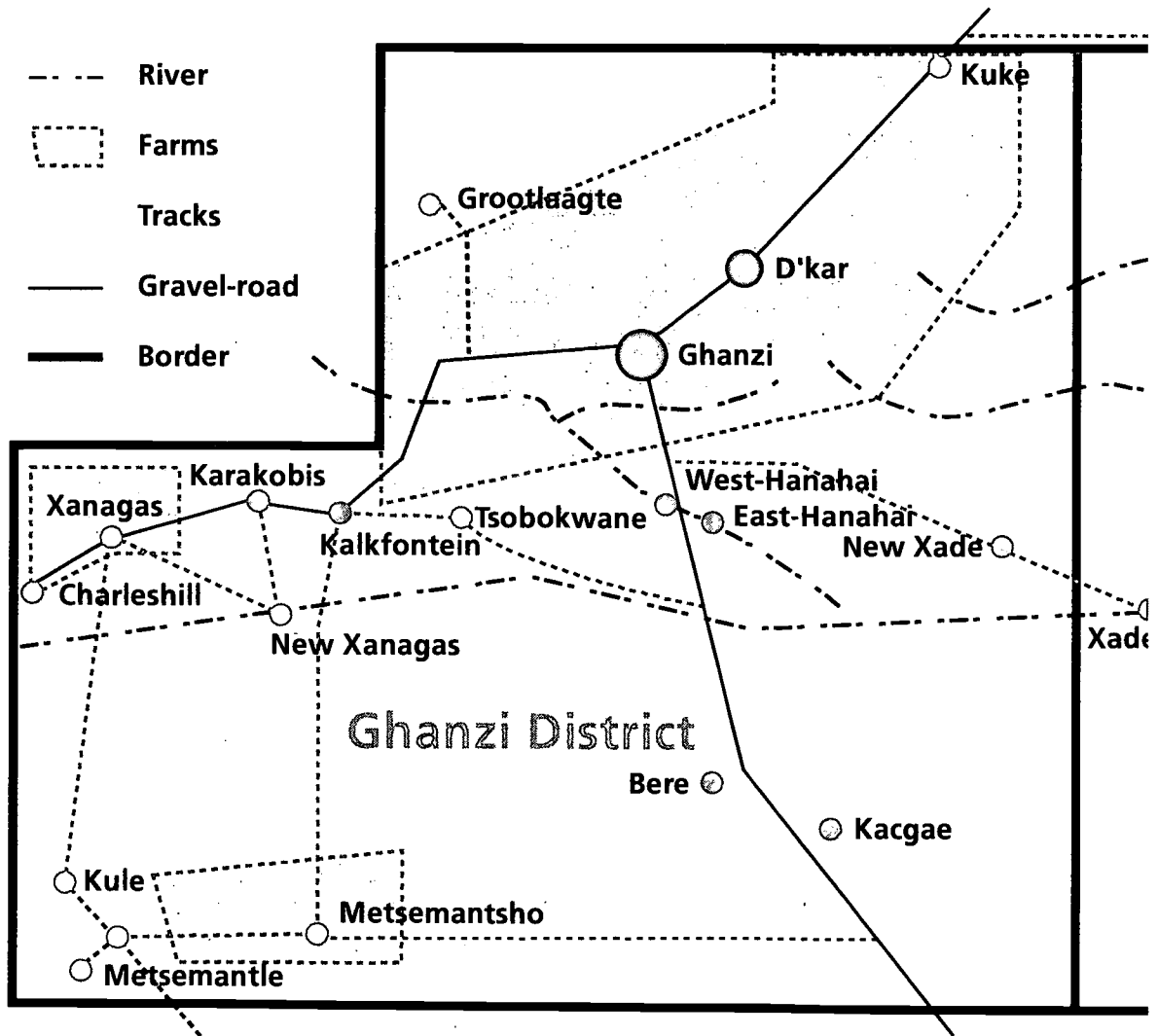
In looking at the education of San children, the situation of the San people in general comes into focus. One can not be considered without also considering the other. This report shows a people whose way of life was adapted to the harsh conditions of the Kalahari desert, who subsisted through hunting and gathering over broad areas of land. The San no longer have access to their old territories but squat on the land of others. Hunting is forbidden almost everywhere, and they are expected to earn a livelihood through agriculture – something with which they have no experience. They face this situation with a sense of hopelessness and despair; unemployment is high and alcoholism is a serious problem.

Coming from a culture where children and adults interacted freely, where education was informal and a constant part of this interaction, and where physical abuse of children or harsh corporal punishment was unheard of, the San find it hard to understand the formal system of education. Children have difficulty adjusting to rigid class schedules and being enclosed in a classroom with groups of people. Lessons are taught in Setswana and English by teachers who have no understanding or appreciation of San culture or language. Children are often sent to boarding schools, far from their parents, with the result that many of them run away from school to find their way home. Parents mistrust a system that 'steals' their children and beats them for childish misbehaviour, but feel powerless to make any changes.

This study offers an important insight into the situation of minority cultures and the problems the children of these cultures face in trying to understand and cope with conflicting expectations and norms, and unfamiliar languages. The conclusions and recommendations presented here should be taken very seriously by those who hope to change the situation of the San people – and, indeed, those who would hope to change the situation of any group in similar circumstances.

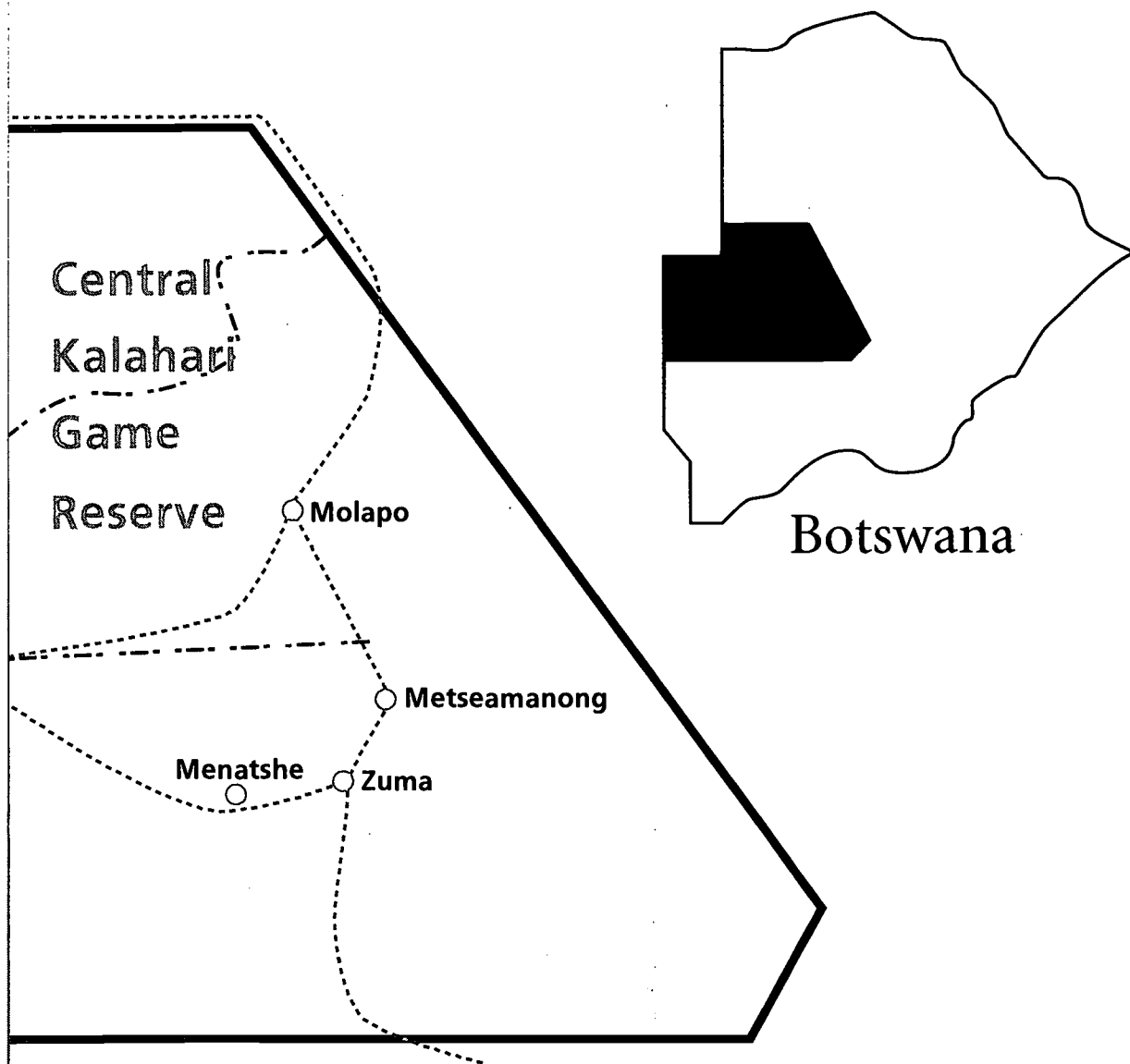
The main points, based on interviews with San parents, deal with the lack of mother-tongue teaching and materials in the primary schools, the lack of cultural

## Map of the area 1995



understanding and the system of corporal punishment in the schools. The report concludes with 13 carefully considered recommendations for improving the chances of success for San children entering the formal education system.

In summarising the report of the most recent study in 1998, the Epilogue includes further recommendations made by the San themselves, and a set of general recommendations aimed at governments and NGOs working in the area of education.





Chapter one



## Introduction

### Why this study?

The Remote Area Dwellers (RADs) of Botswana have been the focus of study from different angles for many years. This is the collective name chosen by the Botswana Government for hunter-gatherers and other tribes that live together in the Kalahari Desert. Most of these people are from the San or Bushmen peoples, and are called *San* in Botswana. As yet no inclusive name for all the groups has been chosen by themselves (different groups prefer to be called by their own names, for example, *Ncoakhoe* for the Naro), but according to a decision made in 1996 at an annual general meeting of the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA), the term *San* was accepted as an interim word to describe all groups.

The San have been at the receiving end of several schemes and projects aimed to develop or integrate them into mainstream society. However, those who are actively involved in the process often question the success and desirability of these development programmes. Much has been done, much has still to be done, and yet progress is often not evident. In many instances, the goal of such programmes is ill-defined and one-sided, and it could be asked whether the effects are, in fact, the reverse of what was envisaged.

One of the major problems experienced by the San, since they started living with other people and were forced to adapt to a new lifestyle, has been the difficult transition from the informal style of traditional education to modern, formal education for their children. Since the late 1960s, schools have been established to bring education to them, but the great majority of San children still drop out at one stage or another and the authorities experience lack of participation from parents and communities in addressing these problems.

This study reports the results of a survey undertaken during 1993-1995 in the Ghanzi District of Botswana to ascertain the progress of the so-called Remote Area Dweller children in the primary schools. Although five different language groups are represented in the survey, the children all share the common lifestyle of hunter-gatherer people in transition – mobile people under pressure to settle.

The main aim of the survey was to study the progress in primary school of those children who had completed preschool. These preschools form part of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme, which, at the time, was operating as part of the Kuru Development Trust based in D'Kar, about 32 kilometres northwest of the town of Ghanzi. It was also hoped that the survey would supplement previous research done on the San people's transition in the Ghanzi District, and thus provide more information

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regarding the progress of the San in general. Simultaneously, it continues to serve as a measuring instrument for the Bokamoso Programme itself.

Since 1995, the Kuru Development Trust has been restructured in order to make the growing organisation more understandable to its owners and to make the goals of the different activities more transparent. By the end of 2000, Kuru had once more become a community-based organisation for the San people in D'Kar only, as it was at the time of its formation in 1986. The Bokamoso Programme has developed into an independent preschool teachers' training programme, one of a family of nine organisations that has branched off from the former Kuru Development Trust (for further details see Epilogue).

Although some of the restructuring processes have changed the setting in which the survey was carried out, the realities in the communities around D'Kar remain largely the same: the basic findings of the survey have not been affected and are presented largely as they were originally published.

The staff of the Bokamoso Programme undertook this study themselves, hoping that the outcome would help them evaluate their progress as well as convince donors and authorities of the continuing need for such initiatives. The findings were also to be used as background material for the development of a

curriculum for this programme, which is at present the only in-service training programme for preschool teachers in Botswana.

The survey supplied enlightening information on the cross-cultural difficulties that teachers, parents and children are presently experiencing. Although, in the end, the statistics were not as strongly supportive of the hypotheses (see box) as was hoped, the report still highlights important issues that have to be dealt with in regard to the education of San children and other minorities in southern Africa. It also supports the recommendations of the 1994 Commission on Education in Botswana, which stressed the need for the Ministry of Education to develop a policy on a national early childcare programme for Botswana, which would provide the scope to develop alternatives for rural children of minority groups as needed.

The main finding of the survey was that the dropout figures in the early years of primary school were lower than had been assumed when just class allocations for each year were considered. However, dropouts continued all through primary and secondary school, and the reasons for dropping out were varied and complex. The survey also did not take into account the numbers of children who were not reached.

To form a fully scientific picture, a follow-up study tracing each individual

child should have been undertaken within the following few years. However, enough interesting broad lines were highlighted in this study to make this publication worthwhile as a snapshot of the situation at a specific period of time.

The most important conclusions indicate a wide gap in cultural understanding between parents and teachers. If the parents and the community are not considered when new processes are introduced, the result may be counterproductive and too costly to be worthwhile. It also points out the necessity for flexibility in transitional

teaching and the importance of linking traditions with modern values.

The report also points out the need for further research in certain areas – and for close monitoring – if a responsible approach towards the education of children in transition and children from non-sedentary families is to be implemented in a country like Botswana. At the same time, it is hoped that the people and organisations involved in the lives of the San people on a wider front in southern Africa will be alerted and will gain a better understanding of the confrontations they are facing, so that

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#### HYPOTHESES

Certain hypotheses, which were presumed by the Bokamoso Programme and incorporated in its development, needed to be tested:

1. San children who have gone through preschool would be less likely to drop out of formal schools and would show better general progress in primary school, because of the gradual introduction to the foreign environment of the formal school system by means of the preschools.
2. San parents displayed mistrust in the education and other systems introduced for their sake. Therefore the parents would participate more positively in the formal education process if their children were somehow 'lured' into learning through play. It was hoped that San people would be 'softened' towards the idea of formal education if their children were allowed more freedom in the institutional setting while learning some basic ideas in their mother tongue before they entered primary school.
3. Introducing Setswana and English in an informal way, by means of games and rhymes through the mother tongue, would not only break through children's resistance towards the foreign languages, but would give them a head start in primary school, making communication with the teacher easier.

eventually all the information may influence correct choices and decisions regarding the progress and assimilation of the people involved.

This report covers the following areas:

- o more information on the Bokamoso Programme;
- o general background of the peoples' own educational practices;
- o information about the survey: methodology, statistical findings and conclusions;
- o additional material regarding the study.

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## Chapter two



## *Early childhood in Botswana*

### **Introduction to the Bokamoso programme**

Unlike other more urbanised African countries, the concept of institutionalised daycare in Botswana is a new one. Most existing daycare centres are in towns and have been started to help urban mothers who have joined the paid work force and who no longer have the support of the extended family, especially the support of the maternal grandmothers, most of whom remain in the rural areas.

Being sparsely populated (Botswana has just over one million inhabitants), the rural areas are vast and distances great. Most daycare centres exist in the eastern part of the country, in places like Lobatse, Gaborone, Serowe and Francistown. Some are privately run businesses and range from groups in backyards or garages to fairly sophisticated buildings operated by entrepreneurs; others are subsidized centres run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and churches. The main purpose of these centres is to provide daycare, but they also provide social and cognitive stimulation for children under the age of six.

The situation in Ghanzi District, in the northwestern part of Botswana, is quite different. There are at present about 17 daycare centres, preschools and play groups in the district. Thirteen of these

are community preschools run by the village development committees (VDCs) and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) of the various settlements in the district. They are assisted by the local district council in collaboration with the Bokamoso Programme.

Most of these settlements have been developed since the late 1970s as a solution to the impoverishment of the original inhabitants – the San people – after they lost most of their land and opportunities for hunting and gathering (their original livelihood) to incoming groups who were mostly cattle farmers. The resettlement programme fell under the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP), and government and overseas donors tried to introduce projects and agricultural opportunities with the assistance of the remote area development office (RADO) and the social and community development office (S&CD) in each district council.

In spite of these efforts, and for many complex reasons, most of the people in these settlements, called 'Remote Area Dwellers' or RADs, are still unemployed. These people are the parents of the children in these settlements, and daycare is not one of their top priorities. Daycare, therefore, is also not the main purpose of the preschools and playgroups in the settlements. Instead, they function

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as a bridging programme and have been set up by outsiders with the objective of assisting the children in their process of acculturation. Although the aim of these centres is not always fully understood by the participating communities, they are welcomed because of their relaxed time schedules and informal setting, and also because they offer part of a solution to the problem of unemployment in the villages.

### **Historical overview of the Bokamoso programme**

The first preschool for San children in the Ghanzi District started on the farm at D'Kar in 1983. This was not the result of a preconceived plan, nor was it a developmental experiment; rather, it was started as an emergency solution to specific needs in a specific place. The aims and objectives of this first school, and of those that were started later, were formulated according to the practical needs of its own situation.

The first school started under the management of the local D'Kar Church Council, as a diaconal project, and had almost no funding. Initially, parents were not involved and for two or three years the little centre was run as part of a practical solution to the problem of too many idle children in a village of unemployed, drifting parents whose last concern was the formal education of their children. The D'Kar playgroup soon expanded to include a feeding programme to address the problem of

malnutrition. Three women from the village (Mpotsang Gosiame, Xguka Krisjan and the late Catherine Ngakayaeya) helped at different times, first as translators for the author, but later they were able to work independently.

After its first year, the D'Kar preschool came to the attention of UNICEF. This contact eventually resulted in a nominal grant for basic outdoor equipment and some furniture from the Bernard van Leer Foundation in the Netherlands. Through the years, the Bernard van Leer Foundation has continued to assist with funds for programme development, later providing a larger grant for the development of the Bokamoso Training Programme.

Initially the D'Kar preschool was open from 9 a.m. to midday, and children were allowed to experiment with art materials, blocks and educational toys on a loosely organised basis. Outdoor games, songs and rhymes in English and Setswana were introduced. The language for teaching was Naro, the mother tongue of the majority of the children.

From 1985 onwards, two more playgroups were established in settlements where the church of D'Kar had activities. These were East Hanahai and Grootlaagte, where parents built a shelter to use on the days when the playgroups were active.

The establishment of settlements in Ghanzi District was ridden with problems: the locations were remote and too far from



markets to aid the development of small-scale businesses; the settlement areas were too small to sustain hunting and gathering for large groups of people; and the San had no experience with agriculture or animal husbandry. The drought in the early 1980s forced the government to introduce 'food-for-work' projects to help these resettled groups survive.

Many communities in the so-called government settlements for Remote Area Dwellers, especially those who knew about the preschools in D'Kar, East Hanahai and Grootlaagte, suggested that they could erect preschools as drought relief projects.

The settlements were still very young (some less than three years) when the Drought Relief Programme was introduced, and the communities were still learning how to cope with the effects of resettlement and living in larger groups of 200 to 300 individuals, when small family bands of about 30 people had been the custom. The situation was not conducive to a level of participation and understanding about the consequences of establishing these preschools that might have been desirable for future feelings of community ownership.

It is unclear whether the preschools were suggested by expatriates working for the government, or whether the parents chose to have them, but the fact is that the buildings were erected before the communities had a real idea of how to

run or even start a daycare centre. Officials in the responsible departments of local government and the Ghanzi District Council were equally at a loss as to how these centres should be run, as there were very few examples of community daycare centres in Botswana at the time.

Eventually, the preschool in D'Kar was approached by the Ghanzi S&CD, with a request for assistance. The preschool staff in D'Kar were asked not only to manage these settlement schools, but also to monitor the training of the teachers. They accepted, and this cooperative effort resulted in the often strained but commendable cooperation between an NGO and the local district council. The Ghanzi District Council sent the first teachers to the Lobatse Day Care Training Centre for training and also agreed to provide a percentage of teacher salaries from VDC grants, as well as to supply food for the schools.

The programme grew quickly, and as Botswana was favoured by donors during the 1980s as being both stable and democratic, the country had funding from several overseas development agencies. The RADP programme was a natural choice for donors looking for projects to fund, and it was soon apparent that the preschool project provided an excellent opportunity for addressing common problems. Therefore, it was not difficult for Bokamoso to find funding support for the preschools.

The Unitarian Service Committee (USC) of Canada funded the programme for three years, after which time the Dutch organisation HIVOS, in collaboration with SNV, took over. In 1995, when this study was done, the training programme was funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, while the management of the schools, transport costs and salaries were jointly funded by Kinderpostzegels (a Dutch charitable organization), the Mission Deputies of the Christian Reformed Churches and SNV, all from the Netherlands.

The assumption was made that the dropout rate of San children from school could be minimized if the preschools addressed certain key problems in the three years before primary school. These key problems were seen as such things as children not understanding the language of instruction, children having difficulty with adaptation to school routines and cultural differences, and more general issues such as children's poor health and malnutrition. It was also concluded from the positive feelings towards the centre in D'Kar, and later in the other

#### TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

In those early days, discussions with primary school teachers about the problems they experienced with the San children more or less directed the contents of the preschool curriculum. A programme was designed to address the following complaints of primary school teachers:

1. San children did not understand Setswana. The teachers of Standards 1 and 2 were at a loss as to how to communicate the required material to these children so that they could pass up to the next standard.
2. Teachers had disciplinary problems. They saw San children as unruly and undisciplined, and complained that the children did not know the basic requirements for learning in a primary school, such as holding a pen, sitting on a chair or keeping quiet when an adult speaks. The children had no toilet routine or basic knowledge of hygiene.
3. There were many socio-cultural problems. Teachers complained that San children could not sing like other people; they did not believe that it was necessary to come to school every day, or stay in school for a fixed period. The teachers had no means of making the children happy, as they did not understand their needs or their languages.

settlements, that parents would participate more positively in the education process if their children were successful in one learning environment. It was hoped that the problem of the parents' lack of participation in the formal education system could be counteracted if their children were instructed in the mother tongue, and if their own culture was given a positive emphasis.

### **The Bokamoso training programme**

The Bokamoso training programme, begun in 1991, is built up around a two-year in-service training course for village teachers, people who have been selected as suitable candidates by their communities. Fieldworkers visit the schools on an ongoing basis, following up the two-week workshops that are held three times per year. At the time of the study, the preschools were also used to provide a basic feeding programme in cooperation with the RADO, and Bokamoso was administering a grant to the VDCs from the Social and Community Development Office in Ghanzi, to be used towards salaries for the teachers. The village development committees are the managing bodies and actual owners of the schools at each settlement. Since the grants were also supposed to cover building maintenance and other needs the VDCs may have, Bokamoso assisted with topping up these funds with donor money. However, the salaries remained scant, since the parents were unable to

contribute. This role of Bokamoso had a negative effect on the control and ownership of the centres and created confusion as to the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Lately, considerable progress has been made. The services for distributing food and salaries have been taken over by the local district council, and some of the VDCs have even started to pay the salaries of their own teachers from their VDC grants. However, Bokamoso still assists in finding extra funding when needed, as well as facilitating training.

The Bokamoso Programme functions as an in-service teaching programme for rural community schools that have a problem with financial support, focusing on people in transition like the San and other minorities.

In 1995, nine settlement schools were added to Bokamoso's training programme: East and West Hanahai, Bere, New Xanagas, Tshobokwane, Xade (at that time still inside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve), Grootlaagte, D'Kar and a private school in Ghanzi. In addition, playgroups for children were formed by the Bokamoso team in Ghanzi township, two in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and one on a farm near Kuke.

Non-San communities starting up preschools, such as at Karakubis and Charleshill, were visited for community

training, since the realities of most rural people in the area, such as the Bakgalagadi, were very similar to those of the San communities. The same support from the local council was extended to such communities. Bokamoso also assisted the Tirisanyo Catholic Commission (TCC) with training of preschool teachers (three) in the Kgalagadi District. Other districts in Botswana, such as the San communities of Mababe and Boteti in Ngamiland and the Hambukushu communities of Etsha, also sent teachers for training and were assisted by Bokamoso. There were also a few teachers from Serowe and Sefare in the east of the country.

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In D'Kar, the local community preschool runs under the supervision of the Bokamoso trainers in order to serve as a practical training venue for the teachers when they come to D'Kar for workshops. The D'Kar preschool teachers are then incorporated as temporary trainers.

### **Training applied to community realities**

The original aim of the training programme for preschool teachers was to build a cultural bridge to the primary schools. The strategies were to use mother-tongue speakers who would act as teachers/role models/facilitators; assist the communities with change in such a way that there would be informed involvement; and sensitise other players to the children's needs and the uniqueness of their culture.

Because of the emphasis on mother-tongue education, emotional security, and the concept that learning should be fun, the Bokamoso Preschool Programme has been seen by San communities all over Botswana as a very positive contribution to their process of development. At the same time, the preschools have provided some solution for the unemployment of the villagers. For these reasons, Bokamoso is often requested to provide services over a very wide area, beyond its own capacity and resources.

The realisation that Kuru, as well as the other community development programmes, would not always be able to rely on outside funding or support, a campaign towards community awareness and parent interaction in the settlement preschools was started, aiming at the long-term sustainability of these projects. This was an additional task on the shoulders of the trainers, which resulted in the formation of a parallel Parent Workshop Programme alongside the teacher training. The need for community ownership and participation in early childhood development (ECD) was stressed at all events and remains a constant reality in the absence of ongoing government support for such community efforts and the lack of income in these settlements.

In spite of the lack of an official government-supported ECD programme, a fair amount of support came through

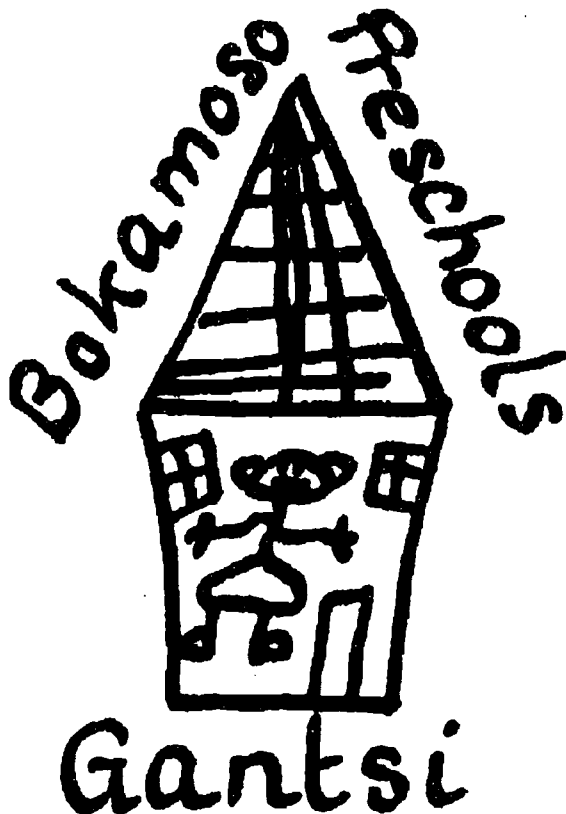
government aid programmes intended to eliminate poverty in the remote areas. The existing preschools had been built during the late 1980s under the government's LG 17 Drought Relief Scheme. In 1995, five of the then 29 preschool teachers supported by Bokamoso had been trained at the Lobatse Day Care Training Centre, under the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing. Their training was continued with Bokamoso for the sake of cultural adaptation of learning materials. Apart from the fact that only one person per district could go to Lobatse for training each year, Bokamoso training was favoured by communities because teachers from these areas had difficulty leaving their

communities for long periods. They also found it difficult to work completely on their own after training, which was the model within the Lobatse training programme.

### Teacher training programme

The first eight teachers who completed their training with the Bokamoso Programme received certificates at the end of 1994. These certificates were not recognised by the government because there was no policy on daycare or criteria for training; nevertheless, some of these teachers left the preschools after their training and acquired better-paid jobs in the district on the basis of these certificates.

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In 1995, the Bokamoso in-service training was structured as follows:

- o January: Introductory workshop – one week;
- o April: Training workshop – two weeks;
- o August: Training workshop – two weeks;
- o November: Evaluation – one week.

In between these training sessions, the trainers and fieldworkers visited the schools regularly for practical assistance and observation. In 1995, a system of community motivators, paid by Bokamoso, was introduced in Ghanzi District. A local

person with more knowledge and contact with the communities was appointed to live and move between three or more adjacent communities, to visit the preschools more regularly and to mediate between parents, government workers and the preschool trainers. During training workshops, these community motivators acted as assistant trainers.

### Training parents

As the VDCs are the owners of the preschools, the Bokamoso Programme runs a parallel training programme for parents and community members during short workshops and village meetings. These training sessions are held about twice a year per settlement, on average, and have the following objectives:

- to enable parents to take over the responsibility of ownership, and to train the VDC in its duties. VDC responsibilities include appointing and dismissing teachers and supervising work attitudes. All conflicts, practical issues and policies are referred to the VDC in collaboration with the S&CD in Ghanzi, but evaluation of teaching performance is still monitored by the Bokamoso field team;
- to enrich the learning content of the Bokamoso Programme by including traditional material such as songs, stories and dances, as well as promoting discussions on traditional concepts of education;
- to enable parents to understand the importance of their role in supporting their children in formal education and to help them develop pride in their own traditions and values.

### Bokamoso training of trainers

Bokamoso has always tried to extend the training of its staff members and trainers as widely as possible, promoting linking and networking with related programmes all over Southern Africa as well as among other indigenous people in the world who might be in similar situations. The training supervisor<sup>1</sup>, Goalatthe Eirene Thupe, attended a six-month training course at the Kenya Institute of Education, in addition to her training as a primary school teacher and her prior experience as headmistress of a primary school. She was originally seconded to the programme by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). Her assistant trainers were trained at the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU) in Cape Town, South Africa, while the fieldworkers/community motivators visited the Ntataise Training Programme in South Africa, and their knowledge was supplemented by courses at ELRU. In 1997 Ms Thupe went on an extended tour of indigenous ECD programmes in Canada and the USA.

Parents and trainers, as well as teachers, have been taken to visit preschool programmes in Namibia, Lesotho and Zimbabwe and have visited other

1: Ms Thupe is now (2001) Coordinator of the Bokamoso programme

daycare centres in Botswana to give them wider exposure, enhance their understanding and inspire their participation in forming an appropriate learning programme for children in the remote areas of Botswana.

# Chapter three





## *The people – a closer look*

By 1995, the first handful of San children who had completed either primary or secondary school had started to work here and there as teachers and government extension workers. In the Ghanzi District, a fairly large group of San people worked as farm labourers. Some families had been living on the farms for generations, forming a kind of symbiotic existence with the mostly white, mostly ex-South African farmers.

Over a period of 20 years, varied efforts had been made to bring San children into contact with formal education, and as part of the government of Botswana's Remote Area Development Policy, primary schools had been built in even the remotest of places. However, by going to school, the younger generation lost contact with the activities of their parents; they lacked knowledge of the veld and their elders' hunting and survival skills. The older generation had enormous concerns about the future of the youth, and it was becoming clear that, in spite of improving educational opportunities, employment in the district had not kept up with the numbers of children finishing school, to say nothing of those who dropped out.

In the age group 7 to 13 years, the dropout rate from primary schools, as well as the non-attendance rate, amounted to almost one-third of the RADs children

in the Ghanzi District (UNICEF, 1991: p. 54). Due to teenage pregnancies, health reasons or poverty, a large percentage of children also dropped out from the second half of primary, and even secondary, school. Consequently, members of the older generation began to lose their trust in the education system and in development efforts in general. For this reason, and to understand the dynamics of the situation, it is necessary to look into the past living circumstances and educational practices of the San people.

### **A fast changing life – effects of acculturation**

For many centuries, the San had the Kalahari Desert largely to themselves, although they had contact with hunters, pastoralist trekkers and other passers-by. They were the only ones, however, who knew how to survive in this arid region during the long dry season, when the land turns into the merciless, windswept sand face from which even most of the larger animals migrate. Out of necessity, they knew everything about their surroundings and each individual, including the smallest child, was constantly being schooled in the subject of survival.

This situation has changed dramatically. The San of today find themselves living with about seven other language groups,

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most of whom are socially and economically more powerful than they are. The division of land in the Ghanzi District into private ranches, communal farms (cattle posts) and wildlife management areas means that the San can no longer migrate freely, following the patterns of rain and abundance of food in the veld. Even if they were still allowed to roam over the whole area, the resources of the veld are shared by so many other users that there is no longer enough for everyone.

For many years, their migrations, and their lack of permanent settlements, led anthropologists to believe that they were true nomads, and studies stating this enhanced the idea that the San did not 'own' any land. This could be one of the reasons that the people were dispossessed and left out when land allocations were made during and shortly after Botswana's independence in the early 1960s. Today, it has become more evident that the San always moved within specific territories and that the different groups or bands knew their boundaries very well. When farm fences cut across their traditional territories, starting from 1951 in the Ghanzi District, there was confusion as to where these people belonged, and thousands found themselves considered to be squatters on other people's land. Older people can still point out the borders of their territories today and mourn the loss of free access to the land of their ancestors (interview with Qhomatcāa Qace, 1989).

Most people have gradually been relocated onto government settlements. Now, not only have they lost their source of food to a great extent, but their culture is under pressure. Many people suffer from despair and apathy, and social problems like alcoholism and poverty leave the majority of the San destitute. They are extremely vulnerable to modern diseases, such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Many are uninformed about the destructive nature of modern substances like tobacco, caffeine and alcohol, and much abuse therefore takes place.

In a mobile lifestyle, their material possessions were defined by what they could carry. In modern society, wealth is measured in tangible possessions, and wealth means power. The San have ended up at the bottom of the social ladder, which has had a disastrous effect on their self-esteem and on their attitude towards working for change. They have found that their knowledge of the veld is no longer useful or in demand. If they want to survive, they have to join the mainstream, where formal education is one of the most important social institutions.

In the Ghanzi and Kgalagadi districts of Botswana, many San have one of two typical points of view about their socio-economic situation. They have either chosen to take a passive, spectator's role, expecting others to alleviate their poverty and social distress, or they have become

angry and have developed a desire to regain what they have lost. The latter viewpoint is sometimes irrational and highly emotional but has the advantage of being a source of energy – a challenge that can be used by those in power and those who try to support them in this transition period. This factor, however, has caused many misunderstandings and conflicts.

### **Education – the school of life versus the school of today**

Despite the numerous efforts that have been made towards integrating San children in the schools, the present picture is not very positive. Although many children start school, they seldom finish, in spite of several support systems available. Some of the factors involved are the languages of tuition, lack of self-esteem, lack of parental support and cultural insecurity. Because of extreme poverty, the parents are busy with life-and-death struggles of their own. A major concern for development workers and government extension workers is the seeming lack of cooperation and real concern from the parents about their children's formal education.

### **Childrearing practices of the San**

Much has been written about the traditional educational methods of the San. A lot has changed with the influence of other cultures and the subsequent social disruption for the San, but the resistance of parents to school discipline, and the strict order of formal education

can still be seen against the backdrop of San traditional practices, whether still intact or just living in the minds of the people.

The book *Namkwa, Life among the Bushmen*, written by the late Dr H.J. Heinz (1978) about his experiences living at Kacgae and Bere in the 1960s, has many descriptions of interactions between children and adults. He observed that children learned by listening: at night by the fires, where the San had their most pronounced social interactions, and during the day while doing different duties. No subject was censored, and the child could listen to all kinds of vulgar talk, gossip and quarrels. Other anthropologists have reported that education in the traditional context taught children the tools and workings of their society at a very early age (Tanaka, 1980: p. 101).

According to Heinz, children of the !Xõo were perceived to go through three stages before they were considered adults. From birth to about six years, they were seen as almost not fully human and were not held responsible for their behaviour. From the age of six to puberty, they were described as being in 'their first sense', and from puberty onwards, in their 'second sense' (Heinz, 1978: p. 106).

The way children were taught to socialise and have respect for others was to let them go through the first two 'senses'

without restrictions, while exposing them to all the aspects of adulthood. Peer pressure and group ridicule controlled any behaviour that was considered out of line. Taboos existed to control behaviour and teach discipline, especially regarding certain foods. These taboos changed with the age of a person (Heinz, 1978: p. 115).

One way of making sure a person knew when s/he had done wrong, was to discuss the bad behaviour in public, within hearing distance of the culprit. Sometimes a parent would scold a child severely, but the child was allowed to scowl back, and the parents saw this as a way in which the child could vent emotions, while simultaneously grasping the nature of the offence.

There is some controversy as to the existence of male and female initiation, especially as today only female initiation is still practised here and there. Puberty rites around the first menstruation are still intact in some settlements and farms. During these rites, the girl is kept in a hut in the company of older women for a period that could range from a weekend to a month. (The length of time has been adapted under pressure of change, so that children can return to school after the weekend.) During this time, the women do a special dance for the initiate and apply veld medicines and ointment to her body, while information about food taboos and the reasons for them, sex and childbirth is given to her

by the older women. According to the women in D'Kar, the most important aspects of this information focus on the need for respect between people and the requirements for harmonious living with others.

Before and during their puberty years the boys are put through tests that teach them to endure and to control their aggression (Heinz, 1978: p. 115). Only after the children have gone through these stages are they considered to be adults and held totally responsible for their behaviour. The boys, for instance, were not allowed to play with real hunting weapons before this time and from then on were supposed to become good hunters and to help provide food for the group.

### **Emotional security and the process of learning**

San children enjoy a lot of emotional security, even today. Like many other African babies, they are constantly on their mothers' backs, suckling whenever they ask for it. For the first few months, they are seldom taken off the mother's back, becoming almost a part of her body. As babies grow older, they are continually in bodily contact with adults, being passed from hand to hand, kissed and cuddled constantly (Heinz, 1978: p. 89).

During hunting-gathering, the child knew that s/he would be carried when unable to keep up with the adults, and in addition to the parents, the mother's

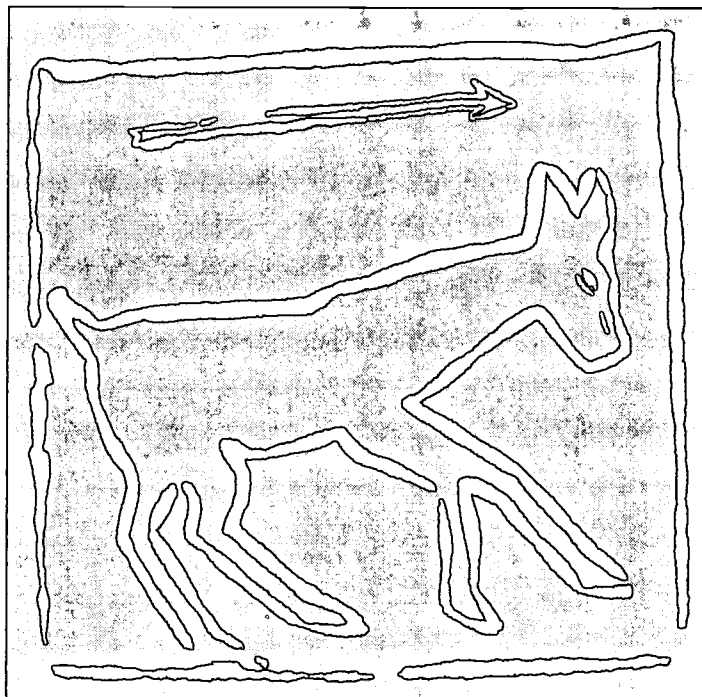
older brother was responsible for carrying her children long distances. This might be the reason the maternal uncle always played a very important role in the child's life, and even today is seen as the final authority in disciplining the child.

In the past, transmission of knowledge was principally done by exposing the children to tales and narratives, leaving them free to make their own interpretation. This was the most important way of learning. The theory of life would be played out each night around the fire, and each tale retold would be a revision of what they had already heard. From the narratives, and from being allowed to watch adult behaviour at all times, practice and theory came together, playing off right in front of their eyes, leaving no doubt about what would be acceptable behaviour in their society.

Learning – gaining knowledge about their surroundings and their way of life – was transferred until the time when children were expected to help with any task, such as gathering food and making things.

The gathering process took many hours on foot in the hot sun, and mothers found it easier to leave the children at home under the care of elderly people or older children (Shostak, 1981: p. 105). No specific duties were expected of the children, except the occasional fetching of water in small containers if they lived near a water source. Real involvement in daily tasks only started in their mid-teens. Although small bows and arrows, and playful hunting, for example of birds and mice, were allowed, real hunting, and working with poisonous arrows were restricted to the period after

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puberty, and seen as a privilege for those who had 'passed' the school of life (Tanaka, 1980: p. 101). According to Shostak (1981: p. 106), the total lack of responsibility expected from the San child, compared to European children and even other African children, was striking. Some researchers have concluded that San children did not help their parents unless the children themselves wanted to.

Boys seemed to have even less responsibility than girls. A girl picked up enough about domestic chores, food gathering and childcare by being with her mother, that by the time she was seen as a 'big girl', she would be ready for marriage. The boys, on the other hand, would be allowed to roam around all day, setting snares, shooting with bows and arrows and, in modern days, riding donkeys (Guenther, 1986: p. 211). Children played all day long, mostly games that imitated what they were allowed to witness and watch.

*This freedom results in inventive and energetic play, which characterizes most of their day. . . . Because little formal teaching is done – observation and practice are the basis of all learning – in these groups children acquire many of the skills that will make them productive adults.*

(Shostak, 1981: p. 107)

In the settlements in Ghanzi today, it is still observed that although children are not obliged to do work, they are left free to experiment with grown-up activities. Children are often seen working with dangerously sharp knives and, as in the past, are allowed to play near the fire, although bad burns occasionally do occur.

It is therefore understandable that with all the sudden changes of acculturation they are undergoing, one of the most

seriously affected areas of modern San society will be children and their education. This survey was intended to measure the effect of the preschool intervention as a bridge, keeping in mind that against the culture described above, even the friendliest, most lenient educational structure will be alien to these children, and will require a certain amount of adjustment from both teachers and children.

### **Present circumstances of the San: Life in the settlements**

Most people in the Ghanzi District are living in government-owned (state-land) settlements, although a large percentage still live on private farms as labourers, or as 'squatters'.

The survey took place at all settlements having a preschool supported by the Kuru Development Trust. The following schools were included during 1993/1994: Xade, East Hanahai, West Hanahai, New Xanagas, Bere, Grootlaagte and D'Kar. Most of these settlements were established as part of the Botswana Government's Land and Water Development Scheme for Ghanzi San, a sub-project of LG 32 – San Development (Ghanzi District Land Use Planning Unit, 1992: p. 119). The information presented here was obtained from respondents, as well as from other studies and reports.

To underline the gap the people have had to bridge during the past 30 years, and to help give an idea of the situation

of the San people in the Ghanzi District in 1995, three of the settlements are described here: Xade, a traditional settlement; Grootlaagte, a more recent government settlement; and D'Kar, a private farm settlement. Today, the settlement of Xade no longer exists because of the removal of people from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) to a settlement outside the reserve, called New Xade. Because of this move, some of the demographic data below is no longer relevant, but the information is important as Xade was, in 1995, one of the last traditional areas in the district where people still continued seasonal hunting and gathering.

**XADE**

**Established:** Traditional settlement established 1958

**Population in 1991:** 528 San, of whom 49 percent were under 15 years of age (the total population in the game reserve was 990 in 1991)

**Infrastructure:** Health post and vehicle, cooperative shop, primary school and teachers' quarters, water reticulation (standpipes)

**Social institutions:** VDC, chief, tribal office and traditional judiciary (kgotla)

**Location:** Inside the CKGR, approximately 180 kilometres from Ghanzi

The settlement was established by the government as a central point to which the inhabitants of about 15 small villages in the CKGR were encouraged to move, since basic services could only be provided in one place. Xade was different from other settlements in the survey in that the people had been living in the surrounding areas, whereas in the other communities, people had been moved to areas not traditionally their own.

There were six other occupied RAD settlements in the CKGR, with an estimated total population of 462. This included places like Menatshe, Molapo and Kikao, but since permanent water and government services were available only at Xade, several tribes settled there in the dry season, going out on trips for hunting or food collection as they had done for centuries.

The situation of the preschool differed from others because Xade settlement was considered temporary by the government, and all development activities had been frozen. In fact, by 1995, the government had announced that the inhabitants would be given a new settlement outside the game reserve, where water and other services would be provided and the inhabitants would be eligible for development projects and state funding schemes as in other resettlement areas.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons, prior to 1996 the preschool had to be housed in a

2: This resettlement had taken place by 1999 and was very controversial. The inhabitants contested the compensation they received, and the fairness of the consultation process was questioned in the international press, especially after it became clear that the government intended to develop the Gopi

temporary structure inside the primary school yard. The school children came not only from Xade, but were also brought by their parents from the five other villages in the game reserve. Those children boarded with other families, who were not necessarily related to them and who often felt burdened with extra mouths to feed and with the problems the children had in adapting.

Families considered destitute were given food. Parents and relatives who had been identified by the RADO as non-destitute and non-recipients of livestock were given special licences for hunting. These allowed limited killing of steenbok and duiker (30 each) but only two gemsbok and one kudu per year. However, they were allowed varying numbers of more than 11 kinds of non-edible species and almost all birds (Department of Wildlife and National Parks, 1992: Part V11, 30). No livestock were allowed inside the game reserve except goats, horses and donkeys. The hunter-gatherer lifestyle remained strong in this area but diminished radically in the late 1990s, with drastic social, health and cultural consequences.

People from Metsi-a-Manong and Kikao, who had moved to Xade prior to 1995 at the request of the government, felt insecure and unsettled at the time of the survey because there was already much talk about moving the settlement out of the CKGR. This restlessness in the community contributed to a lack of

participation in educational facilities and a mistrust of the extension workers posted there. Another reason for the unstable climate was that the Naro-speaking segment of the community had drawn up a letter to the government supporting the idea of moving the settlement, claiming that they wanted to start cattle farming (interview, Xade 1993). The Naro people have had more exposure to cattle farming, since they were originally grouped more to the north and the west, where they interacted with cattle farmers for more than a century. The original villagers from Xade felt that the 'newcomers' were influencing their destiny by forming pressure groups, even though they had moved to Xade much later than the other people there. (interview, Xade 1993).

To illustrate their point and their right to permanent residence in the CKGR, one old man from the Dzanakhoe (majority) tribe told the survey team that they were the first people who were granted permission to live in that area; the father of the present headman in Xade had asked the late President, Sir Seretse Kgama, to supply permanent water in order to settle in one village.

In the dry season, the people from Xade used to move north, towards the Rakops area, and in the wet season, they roamed through the CKGR area, but they saw the area around Xade as their main base. The Dcuikhoe tribe originally came from



around the Kacgae area, but also regarded part of the game reserve as their traditional home area.

#### GROOTLAAGTE

**Established:** 1976-1982

**Population:** 345, of whom 50 percent are below 15 years of age

**Infrastructure:** Primary school, Stds 1-4; teachers' quarters; clinic and vehicle; cooperative shop; water reticulation – four village fenced standpipes, 2 equipped boreholes

**Social institutions:** VDC and chief, tribal police and *kgotla*

**Size and location:** an enclosed area of 3,900 square km, it lies in an ancient river bed in the southwestern corner of the Grootlaagte Wildlife Management Area and is fenced in by the veterinary cordon fence on the northern side, the Namibian border on the west, and the farming block on the south.

The situation in this settlement is quite similar today to what it was during the survey in 1995. It was primarily the hunting ground of the Makaukau (Qung) people, who seasonally occupied the area before they started working on farms or squatting in Ghanzi behind the Kalahari Arms Hotel.

Water was found at the settlement in 1982, but there was still some resistance

from the people who were supposed to move there because the water was brackish and had a high mineral content, which was blamed for many diseases. In 1988, however, relatively sweet water was found, and people could use the saline water for their animals.

One of the characteristics of Grootlaagte is that it does not have many large trees, with the result that firewood has always been a problem. This has become increasingly difficult lately. Many households still find most of their food in the veld, and some households are even reported to earn an income selling resources of veld products, such as *morama* (a tuber with vines bearing pods with a very nutritious nut) and *sengaparile* (devil's claw), as food and medicine, as well as thatching grass. There has, however, been a significant decline in the abundance of wild plants, the scarcity being attributed to overgrazing, drought and intensity of use (Kalahari Conservation Society, 1991).

Originally people were discouraged from having cattle inside the wildlife management area (WMA), but in 1987, more than 500 cattle were reported in the settlement. Under the cattle scheme of the Accelerated Remote Area Development Plan (ARADP), many people obtained livestock, with subsequent rapid depletion of the grazing and veld food reserves in the vicinity of the settlement. Possibilities of providing an alternative farm for the

residents of Grootlaagte have been proposed.

The fact that many people from Grootlaagte claim this area as their traditional hunting grounds contributes to the present scarcity of game. Before the survey, larger species like eland and kudu could frequently be seen on trips to the settlement, but not any more. In 1995, many people still held special hunting licences and hunted with dogs and spears, using snares and traps. This privilege has since been removed. This enclave was also used for casual hunting by many residents from the Ghanzi farming block, which caused a further decline in the number of wildlife reported in the area since the inception of the settlement. The Huiku Community Trust has recently been established with the help of the Kuru Development Trust, and one of its proposed projects is to re-establish game in the area for tourism and controlled hunting.

#### D'KAR

**Population:** 380 in 1981, 700 in 1993; in 1997, a survey brought the figure up to 1,500; an estimated 50 percent are under 15 years of age

**Infrastructure:** Health post, boarding school and teachers' quarters are provided on 6 hectares of government land; water for the villagers is pumped from the church's borehole

**Social institutions:** The church council, comprised of village members, owns the land and therefore replaces the VDCs of other communities; however, in spite of the farm being private land, a Tswana chief has been appointed by the district administration

**Size and location:** 2,700 hectares situated about 32 kilometres from Ghanzi.

The informal village of D'Kar is not officially acknowledged as a settlement because it is situated on private land owned by the D'Kar congregation of the Reformed Churches in Botswana.

The farm is very small compared to the 8,000 hectares (80 km<sup>2</sup>) of an average freehold farm in the district. This makes D'Kar one of the largest settlements in the district on the smallest piece of land. Resources on this farm, such as firewood, grazing and veld food, have been almost totally depleted. In spite of several people having an income, some people are extremely marginalized because a hunter-gatherer economy is hardly possible. In addition, because of overpopulation, the health situation in D'Kar has been a cause for concern for many years.

In 1980 the D'Kar congregation became independent and, in 1986, formed the Kuru Development Trust (KDT). This is an organisation for self-development, run by a board of San people. The Trust

tries to assist in the process of economic survival, as well as to provide adult education, alternative agricultural activities and cultural development programmes (see Epilogue). The presence of the KDT has made a pronounced economic difference between the situation in D'Kar and that of other settlements in Ghanzi.

D'Kar's problems are similar to other squatter areas in Botswana but different from those of the other settlements. The almost complete lack of natural resources, and the reluctance of the church council to use force to drive excess animals and 'illegal settlers' away, has resulted in overcrowding. The government does not support efforts to evict people, since this encourages the destitute to move to other settlements. There is also no support provided in the form of municipal or other services, which leads to extreme cases of malnutrition, disease and poverty – in stark contrast to a fairly large group of people within the settlement whose average incomes are among the highest in the district.

The majority of people in D'Kar are San, although large numbers of Bahehero, Bakgalagadi, Batswana and even Humbukushu people from the northern, southern and western parts of the country, including Ghanzi, are illegally settling there for economic reasons and the prospect of fringe benefits from income-generating projects. These are

the people the church council would like to move, but have no power to do so. Many non-RADs are also settling here for the sake of boarding their school-age children, since most of the government schemes are for RAD children only.

Before the farm was given to the San congregation in 1964, plots on its borders were sold to individuals who have since set up businesses such as general dealers, a garage and butcher shop, as well as two liquor stores. It is therefore one of the best-supplied centres in the district and resembles a small town rather than a farm community.

Because of the shortage of land, the district council has offered the residents of D'Kar alternative space at a new settlement called Qabo. However, Qabo is far away and people were reluctant to lose their foothold in D'Kar. D'Kar is also comfortably close to Ghanzi township, with its services, transport and social activities, and therefore preferable to the remote settlement.

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## Chapter four



## *The survey – how it was done*

The realities of the people's present life, highlighted by knowledge about their traditions, could not leave the development of the Bokamoso Programme untouched. As the programme grew, the advisors decided to maintain the link with the Kuru Development Trust for the sake of better infrastructure and the interaction of developmental issues, since these are the daily concern of the Kuru Board. Recent changes have resulted in complete autonomy of Bokamoso again, with its own Board. (See Epilogue)

The Bokamoso Programme has, since its inception, constantly had to justify its existence, not only to donors, but also to the primary schools. The latter expected faster results, such as that children should be taught to read and write. However, contact with other programmes in Southern Africa gave the Bokamoso programme confidence to persist with its specific focus and to continue to clarify the difference between these schools and other daycare centres that were beginning to start up all over Botswana.

### **Reasons for the survey**

Partly to justify its strategies, a comprehensive study of the programme was needed not only as a tool for the Bokamoso staff to evaluate their work over the past years, but also as a means of redirecting the contents of the

programme. It was important to prove to other concerned parties, including the primary schools and local government, that the Bokamoso programme had become an irreplaceable link in the education of the children of this area, bridging the gap between the home and the formal school system.

The donors and resource organisations involved were approached and agreed to support the study. SNV Gaborone approached UNICEF on behalf of Bokamoso, and the latter agreed to fund the survey.

Given the complexity of issues surrounding the preschools and primary schools in the Ghanzi District, the Bokamoso team wanted to be instrumental in the study. Researchers were chosen who already knew much about the situation through their daily experience, so that the survey would not be based only on theoretical concepts. The Bokamoso Board first wanted to clarify for itself whether the work had had any effect, and second, it wanted to assess the success or failure of the preschools based on statistical information. It also wanted to document the situation as a reference for teachers, officials and NGOs working in the same field.

Bokamoso also wanted to use the study to verify the contents of its own curriculum and to monitor changes that

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should be made in the programme policy.

In order to balance the research team and to avoid the possibility of biased findings, the Bokamoso Board included the services of an outsider, members of different ethnic groups and members of the advisory board, as well as one parent who also acted as the driver.

## Methodology

### The team

Over a period of three months during 1993, the research team travelled to eight settlements in the Ghanzi District.

Nomtuse Mbere, a social scientist, guided the collection of data. She drew up the questionnaire and directed the data collection, as well as analysed the findings. Although she was well informed about the work of Bokamoso through her position as deputy director of SNV at the time, she was not involved in the day-to-day relationships and physical circumstances.

There were three data collectors: Gaolatlhe Thupe had been the headmistress of the primary school in Xade before she joined the Bokamoso Programme. She had therefore personally dealt with the problems of dropouts and cultural conflicts, and knew most of the parents of preschoolers well. Born in the district, Qgoma Qhomatcāa had worked with Bokamoso for four years. Being a native speaker of

Naro, the most commonly spoken of the San languages in the district, Mr Qhomatcāa could also represent the insider's perspective where parent issues were concerned. Maithamako Keakopa was also born in the district and had worked with Bokamoso for two years.

Willemien le Roux was responsible for interpretation of field notes, anecdotal data and research of relevant studies, as well as the final writing of the study.

### Constraints and difficulties to overcome

From the very beginning, the Bokamoso staff believed that the use of questionnaires and formal interviews alone would not be sufficient as a research approach in the settlements. Certain elements of cultural importance had to be borne in mind.

In non-literate societies, the inaccessibility of the written word can contribute towards feelings of exclusion from (and mistrust of) people who represent literate societies. The Bokamoso staff therefore recognized that people might be reluctant to contribute information to a format to which, by virtue of their non-literacy, they did not have access.

Another cultural element is a truism in the San culture: people tend to be polite towards strangers, and are likely to give questioners the kind of answer that is perceived as expected or desired. Additionally, in the Ghanzi District,

interviewers from KDT who had tried to do village surveys in the past had had the experience that respondents often gave answers that portrayed their living circumstances in a far more negative light than reality would suggest, in case the interviewer could be of material or other assistance. This is particularly likely to occur when a questioner is perceived as being from 'outside' Botswana, since foreign status often evokes expectations of material aid due to the history of aid programmes in the district.

In order to avoid these kinds of misunderstandings and other undesirable reactions typically elicited by interviewers unfamiliar with local culture, the survey was conducted by team members of the Bokamoso Programme who could interpret such responses and who knew how to be creative in avoiding such misinformation. They found that respondents were fairly relaxed in their presence and seemed to understand the purpose of the questions. Not only were they able to interpret discussions in the light of their cultural knowledge, but throughout the study period, they continued to visit the areas selected for the survey in the course of their regular fieldwork, which enabled them to fill in missing bits of information as time went by.

#### **Permission and right of entry**

Before starting the research, permission was obtained from the Office of the President as well as from the education

officer of the Ghanzi District. To keep communication channels open, the team announced the purpose of their research to the Village Development Committees (VDCs) in advance. During their regular visits, team members held meetings with the preschool staff, the parents of current and former preschoolers and the headmaster of each primary school. During the meetings, they discussed the reasons for the survey and possible ways of conducting it.

#### **Methods used**

The team initially relied only on the questionnaire and interviews. However, for better interaction and to address deficits in information arising from the ineffectiveness of the questionnaire and interviews, the team also used other more culturally acceptable forms of information gathering.

After completing the initial series of introductions at all the settlements studied, the team members divided themselves into groups, each taking a pile of questionnaires, and camped at the preschool for between two and three days. They first interviewed the teachers and thereafter the parents of children who had dropped out of school. During these interviews, the Naro-speaking team member frequently acted as a translator.

Meeting with primary school teachers, the team members asked to view attendance registers and other records to compare them with old preschool

attendance registers. In this way, they could ascertain which current and former pupils of an individual teacher had been in preschool.

After this information was determined, the team members interviewed the primary school teachers individually, in order to get their personal opinion about the preschools and the performance of children who had attended them.

In the case of dropouts, the team members tried to find the parents and contacted their relatives to locate them. The parents were questioned about the reasons for their children dropping out of school and about their own perceptions of formal education.

On returning to D'Kar with information, the team held group discussions. Field notes were interpreted, and areas where more study was needed were pointed out. The surveyors kept notes of their findings and Willemien le Roux collected all their impressions, from either the team's recollections or from their notes. The questionnaires were sent to Ms Mbere in Gaborone.

Throughout the study period, research was also done on the childrearing practices of the San, which led to further questions that had to be verified.

The team meetings held in D'Kar brought to light a number of information gaps that resulted in a second round of visits

to the settlements. At each settlement, the team attempted to gather the missing information during informal discussions with parents over a period of days, while ostensibly focusing on other activities relating to the preschool.

As anticipated, the gaps indicated weaknesses in the use of a questionnaire to gather information. In order to avoid creating mistrust and to elicit informative answers, the team had to fall back on creative approaches. For example, while assisting parents in activities such as clothes-making for their children, the team were able to unobtrusively ask questions from the questionnaire. Similar opportunities presented themselves during informal field trips and on the long journeys to and from the settlements, during which the team often picked up hitchhiking parents.

### **Second round of information gathering: 1994/1995**

Due to many weaknesses in the statistics of both the Education Department in Ghanzi and the primary schools, more information was needed to clarify the statistical data, and two more rounds were made to the settlements.

### **Preschool registers**

At the end of 1994, all the attendance registers from the preschools in the Bokamoso Programme were brought to D'Kar and were studied to find the names of children who had passed on to



primary school during the previous four years. However, many registers were missing and the teachers had not divided children into age groups. This necessitated another round to the settlements to obtain the information from the primary schools instead.

### **Names of dropouts and ex-preschoolers in primary schools**

Coby Visser and her husband visited all primary schools to discuss the writing of the click symbols and tonal differences in the San languages (mainly Naro) and simultaneously checked all the school registers to find the names of children who had dropped out of school. All the names of children in the first four standards were noted down in order to check if they had been in preschool or not. These names were then checked with the preschool teachers during a normal round to the preschools.

### **Summary of survey techniques used**

(See questionnaire in Appendix 2.)

- A questionnaire was administered to primary school teachers, comparing the performance of preschool finishers with other students.
- The same questionnaire, with an additional section intended for preschool finishers who later dropped out of primary school, was administered to parents or relatives.
- Group discussions were held with parents from the communities on their perceptions of the preschools, as well as childrearing practices and any other relevant information, with some questions based on previous research. This information was recorded in notes.
- In-depth discussions with primary school teachers, individually or in groups, supplemented the questionnaire. Notes were taken and analysed by the team and compared with other data.
- Impromptu discussions were held with parents, individually and in groups, as the opportunity arose. The impressions from these discussions were later noted down and analysed.
- Excerpts from literature relevant to the research were read to stimulate specific questions regarding childrearing practices and the educational philosophy of other San groups. This helped to guide discussions and clarify cultural references.

## Chapter five



## *The survey results*

In this chapter, we present the results of the survey in three sections. The first contains the statistics that summarise the findings from the questionnaires and interviews with teachers regarding the performance of ex-preschool children in primary schools. The second section is drawn from interviews with parents and teachers regarding the reasons for children dropping out, as well as the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the education process. In the third section, a summary of an interview with a group of parents is presented.

### **The figures**

In general, the number of preschool leavers traced in each primary school was very small. One reason for this was that the vast majority of children in the district do not yet attend preschool. This meant that no statistically significant findings can be inferred. However, the aim was to follow the progress of individual children, rather than to make comparisons.

There are a host of factors that could have an influence on the experience of preschool leavers, which make it difficult to draw specific conclusions. During the course of the study, these factors became clearer – they need to be followed up before any real conclusions can be drawn about the effect of preschools on the educational progress of the San children.

Examples of these factors include the effect of health problems on performance, the effects of poverty and alcoholism, the significance of parent support, and the mobility of the parents.

Information about the general dropout rate for each school was available from only a limited number of schools. These figures were checked with and compared to the class allocation figures at the Ghanzi Education Office, but as schools were not consistent in supplying them, it was difficult to form a clear picture.

The records of both preschools and primary schools were not well kept, so it was difficult to derive the numbers of preschool leavers from each community in each year. The assumption was that a small number of ex-preschoolers ‘disappeared’ between preschool and primary, but the reasons given in the cases known were mostly related to the mobility of the parents and the lack of facilities on farms and remote areas where parents relocated. Other reasons included insufficient care due to social problems such as alcohol abuse, but the percentage of children affected was too small to make a difference in the study. In most cases, it was clear that children coming from preschools in the district were keen to make the transition to primary school. The fact that they made it as an already bonded little group made it easier for the parents to know what was expected and to follow the right

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procedures, as well as to provide emotional security for the children.

The information about the performance of children was obtained from the questionnaires and from interviews with the teachers. Only those schools from which sufficient information could be obtained through the questionnaires are represented, and in most cases, schools were combined to give substance to the figures.

The information collected during the survey is tabulated according to the primary school level of the ex-preschool children in 1993 and 1994, showing the situation at each individual settlement. For the sake of consistency in all schools, only standards 1 to 4 were researched. Grootlaagte, D'Kar and East Hanahai had ex-preschool children in the higher standards as well, but the numbers were too small to be included.

Table 5.1 gives a summary of the total number of children traced in the seven

schools. Of these schools, only D'Kar has boarding facilities. It should be noted that more children were traced in the lower standards (1 and 2) than in the higher ones (3 and 4).

#### Standard 4

In Std 4, former preschool children were found in two primary schools: D'Kar and Grootlaagte. The children in D'Kar started primary school in 1990 when they were seven or eight years old. The children in Grootlaagte started primary school when they were six, seven, or eight years old. All the children had entered preschool during the year they turned five; thus, some children had spent a longer time in the preschool than others.

It should be noted that children in Botswana start primary school between the ages of six and eight, depending on parental decision, distance from school and other reasons. The Bokamoso preschools are advised to take children

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TABLE 5.1: SUMMARY OF EX-PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TRACED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

School	Std 1		Std 2		Std 3		Std 4		Total	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
D'Kar	10	16	6	12	4	2	3	3	23	33
E. Hanahai	10	8	5	10	3	3			18	21
W. Hanahai	3	5	4	6					7	11
New Xanagas	6	5	5	10	4	3			15	18
Xade			6	6					6	6
Grootlaagte					2	6	4	2	6	8
Totals	29	34	26	44	13	14	7	5	75	97

only from age three up and to divide the classes into groups containing three to four year olds, and five to six year olds.

In D'Kar all the children had the same preschool teacher throughout. This teacher was trained both at the Lobatse Day Care Training Centre and by Bokamoso. In Grootlaagte, all the children except for one boy and one girl, had the same preschool teacher, trained by Bokamoso.

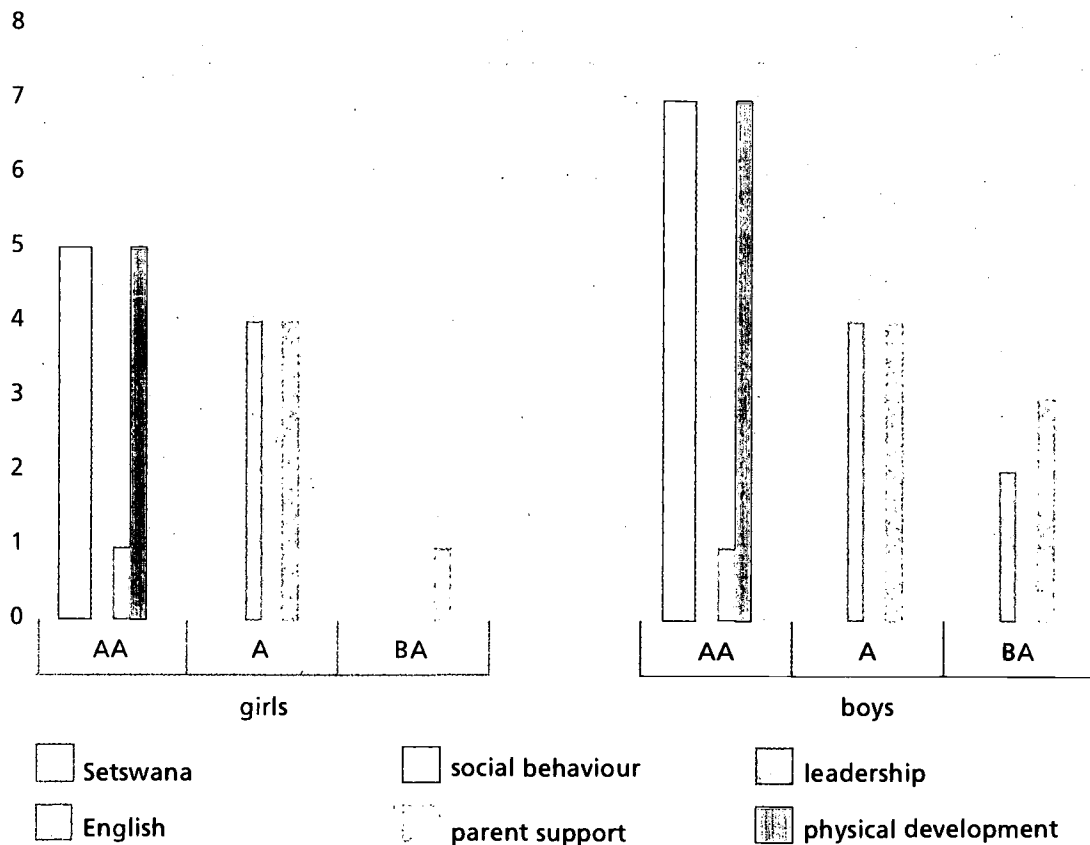
Parents were reported as helping to make preschool materials and cleaning school premises, and parents attended parent teacher association (PTA)

meetings at both preschool and primary school. The teachers indicated that the parents of one boy and one girl were poorer than average, while three other parents were alcoholics. It was therefore significant that these children were still at school in spite of below average support at home.

Figure 5.1 summarises the teachers' assessments of the children's performance and parental support in Std 4 in both schools.

Performance indicators were monitored in the preschool as well as the primary school, using selected developmental and

FIGURE 5.1: STANDARD 4, PERFORMANCE OF FORMER PRESCHOOL CHILDREN



Note to figure 5.1: AA = above average; A = average; BA = below average.

educational criteria (for example, ability in scribbling, drawing, classifying, sorting, and speech, hearing and sight development, according to age). The class teacher was the main informant regarding performance in the primary schools, and in some instances, teachers could produce observation records.

In D'Kar, teachers noted that the girls seemed to out-perform the boys in English (reading, writing, speech and communication). According to the questionnaire, all the girls were rated as consistently doing well. Although, in general, the boys understood Setswana slightly better than the girls, both girls and boys seemed to do well in both languages. It should be noted that by this stage the children had spent more than three years in a Setswana learning environment and could have been expected to understand Setswana. However, the boys had more difficulties in writing and communication in English. Those boys who had reading disabilities in English also had them in Setswana, which could indicate the influence of other factors, such as genetic ability, rather than environmental influence.

In Grootlaagte, 1994 was the first year a Std 4 class was included at the settlement. All the children there were reported to be fairly good in communication and participation in class. They seemed to have mastered the required writing skills for this level.

These children interacted well with others and were showing some leadership qualities.

### **Standard 3**

In Std 3 a total of 27 former preschool children (14 girls and 13 boys) were found in primary schools in four settlements: D'Kar, New Xanagas, Grootlaagte and East Hanahai. These children started preschool in the year that they turned five and transferred to primary school in 1991 when they were between the ages of six and eight. One girl had dropped out of preschool in D'Kar and one boy in New Xanagas. These children followed their parents to the farms; according to their parents, there was no problem with the preschool or in attending PTA meetings.

The preschool teachers had all been trained by Bokamoso while one in D'Kar and one in East Hanahai had also received training at LDTC.

The teachers attributed support by the parents in a few cases to religious reasons, naming the parents of two boys and one girl. They found that people who have accepted some form of organised religion were less likely to be alcoholic and more likely to take responsibility for their children. The parents of one boy in D'Kar were not known to the teachers.

In Grootlaagte, parents in general were supportive. The teachers assessed the situation with the non-supportive

parents as follows: parents of three girls were alcoholic and for one child they were poorer than average. In East Hanahai, all parents, except for those of one boy and one girl, were supportive. The parents of one girl were reported to be alcoholic. In both these settlements, parental support was demonstrated by parents making materials and cleaning school premises. All parents, except those of one boy in Grootlaagte, attended PTA meetings. One parent in Grootlaagte was not known to the teacher.

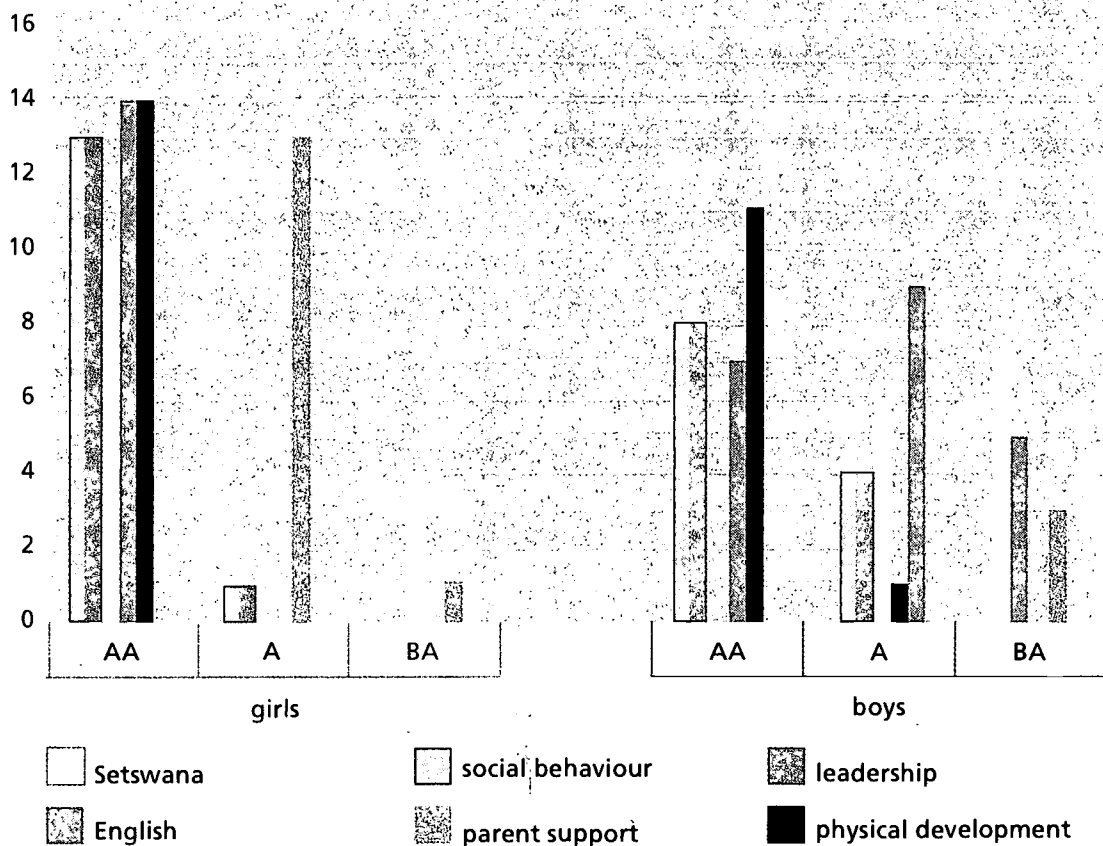
In D'Kar two boys and two girls performed fairly well on the indicators used. One boy, however, had difficulty in English writing and communication. Three boys performed badly in writing, reading and communication in Setswana (a notable difference compared to the Standard 4 boys in the same settlement).

In New Xanagas, the girls seemed to be doing well on these indicators compared to the boys, who did badly in writing, reading and communication in both English and Setswana.

Figure 5.2 summarises the teachers' assessments of children's performance and parental support in Std 3 in all four schools.

The children in D'Kar showed leadership initiative and took an active part in

FIGURE 5.2: STANDARD 3, PERFORMANCE OF FORMER PRESCHOOL CHILDREN



Note to figure 5.1: AA = above average; A = average; BA = below average. Not all children were assessed in all areas.

singing rhymes, communication, socialising and sharing. In New Xanagas, girls seemed to show more leadership potential than boys. However, both boys and girls were reported to have reached the expected development levels; indicators of motor skills showed equal progress among boys and girls.

Most of the primary school teachers in both D'Kar and New Xanagas believed that the children had benefited from the preschool, pointing to better interaction skills and the ability to write and draw, as indicators. They reported that they used these children to encourage those who had not been to preschool, using the ex-preschoolers as translators and assistants in class.

In both Grootlaagte and East Hanahai, the children performed well on physical indicators. All the children did well in English, but two girls from Grootlaagte were indicated to have problems with Setswana. In both settlements, the teachers stated that children were doing fine in general. They all shared, socialised

and participated in class. The teachers believed that (except for the two girls in Grootlaagte who had problems with Setswana) all the children had benefited from the preschool, and this was manifested in their interaction, leadership and communication skills. The two girls who were an exception seemed to perform poorly in general and could hardly interact, write properly, or communicate.

#### Standard 2

In Standard 2 a total of 70 ex-preschool children (44 girls and 26 boys) were found in five settlements: West Hanahai, East Hanahai, D'Kar, Xade and New Xanagas. Table 5.2 shows the year of birth of these children. Note that the age range is quite wide. All the children transferred to primary school in 1992 except in Xade, where they transferred in 1991.

Except in Grootlaagte, all the children had the same preschool teachers. At Grootlaagte and East Hanahai, the teachers had been trained at both LDTC

TABLE 5.2: YEAR OF BIRTH OF CHILDREN IN STANDARD 2

	West Hanahai		East Hanahai		D'Kar		Xade		N. Xanagas	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
1982		1	1							
1983		1		1	1	2	1			
1984	2	4	4	5	4	2	1	3	2	3
1985	2			4	1	8	4	3	3	3
1986										4



and Bokamoso, while teachers from the other settlements were trained at Bokamoso only.

Children in West Hanahai and Xade all had supportive parents. In the other settlements, the picture was more mixed in that there were non-supportive parents in D'Kar (two boys, six girls), New Xanagas (three girls), Grootlaagte (two girls) and in East Hanahai (four boys and three girls). It seemed that, compared to the higher grade levels, in Std 2 there were more girls with non-supportive parents.

Parental support was measured by attendance at PTA meetings, cleaning school premises and making materials. Non-supportive parents were indicated as not undertaking these activities and not being known to the teachers. Surprisingly high numbers of parents were unknown to teachers, namely, the parents of three boys and eight girls in D'Kar, of three boys and four girls in West Hanahai, and of five boys and five girls in New Xanagas.

All the children had completed preschool except for three boys and two girls in D'Kar, one boy and three girls in New Xanagas, and one girl in East Hanahai. According to the teachers, the nomadic lifestyle of the parents was the cause for children dropping out of preschool. These same children were taken to primary school later when the parents returned to the settlements.

At primary school, the children in all the settlements seemed to do well on physical indicators, and the girls performed exceptionally well.

The children also performed well on development criteria but appeared to struggle with the two languages: Setswana and English. This may have been because this was only their second year at school and they might not have mustered enough confidence to try the languages. However, in most cases, the children participated well in class and felt free and confident. They were defined as *bold*, in spite of the language problem.

### Standard 1

In Standard 1, although information was collected from six settlements – West Hanahai, East Hanahai, D'Kar, Xade, Bere and Grootlaagte – the information from Xade and Bere was insufficient, so they are not included here in detail. Table 5.3 gives the years of birth of children from the four settlements for which there was complete information.

All children from all six settlements entered primary school in 1993, and all had had the same preschool teachers during their years of attendance. The preschool teachers in D'Kar, Grootlaagte and East Hanahai had LDTC and KDT training, while the others were trained by KDT only.

All children were reported to have done well at preschool and, with the exception

TABLE 5.3: YEAR OF BIRTH OF CHILDREN IN STANDARD 1

	D'Kar		East Hanahai		West Hanahai		N. Xanagas	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
1983	1	1						
1984	1	1	2					
1985	1			1		2	1	1
1986	7	14	7	2	3	3	5	4
1987			1	5				

of one girl in D'Kar and three boys and two girls in New Xanagas, they all completed preschool. The reason for dropping out of preschool was that their parents had moved from the settlement.

There was positive support from parents except for one boy each in D'Kar and New Xanagas, five girls in D'Kar, three girls in West Hanahai, and two girls in Grootlaagte. Support was measured by the parents' participation in material making, attendance at PTA meetings and assistance in cleaning the premises.

The parents of three girls and one boy in Grootlaagte, as well as the parents of two boys in East Hanahai were defined as alcoholic and therefore irresponsible.

Only one boy and two girls from D'Kar had dropped out of primary school. Reasons given were that one boy and one of the girls had school-related problems and the other girl had family problems.

More girls in Grootlaagte performed well on the indicators, compared to the boys; in Bere, both boys and girls did well. In Xade, there were only boys in Std 1 and they were all reported to be doing well. In Bere, teachers were satisfied with children's progress in reading and writing in both English and Setswana. All children seemed keen to learn, and in Grootlaagte, the girls were said to work especially hard.

The children also performed well by leading in singing, rhyming, and on indicators of physical development such as being able to handle pens and crayons, as well as doing well in sharing and socialising.

The boys in Xade seemed to be able to communicate well in Setswana. The children were perceived by the teachers as having benefited from preschool – they interacted well, could hold pencils well and were leading others. The teacher reported that she used their skills as encouragement to others and also used these children to assist her in class.

**The dropout factor**

Taking the above findings into account, a second round of information gathering was carried out. This was done to try to establish whether there was a pattern among the children who dropped out from primary school, and to try to measure how many of them had been to preschools. The aim of this round was to draw some conclusions regarding the influence of preschools and to substantiate the personal opinions of the teachers interviewed in round one.

As explained above, there were too many administrative obstacles to allow final conclusions to be drawn, but from the figures that were available, it became apparent that children who had attended preschool were less likely to drop out of primary school than were their counterparts who had not attended

preschool. Table 5.4 compares the number of dropouts from seven primary schools during 1993 and 1994.

The following points should be noted when looking at the figures in Table 5.4:

- o Because the enrolment numbers do not distinguish between those children who had attended a preschool and those who did not, no firm conclusions should be drawn from these figures. In any case, the ex-preschool children would always be in the minority. The size of the younger classes varied between 15 and 30 children, depending on the size of the schools, and it was assumed that the average number of preschool children every year would be between 6 and 12, depending on the situation in each area.

TABLE 5.4: DROPOUTS FROM SEVEN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN 1993, 1994

Settlement	Total enrolment		Dropouts				Total numbers		% of enrolment	
	1993	1994	Non-preschool	Preschool	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994
Bere	50	47	7	7	0	0	7	7	14	14.9
East Hanahai	89	80	1	2	0	0	1	2	1.1	2.5
West Hanahai	77	66	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	7.6
Xade	115	136	4	14	1	1	5	15	4.3	11
D'Kar	263	365	60	92	12	8	72	100	27.4	27.4
New Xanagas	68	72	0	3	12	3	12	6	17.6	8.3
Grootlaagte	133	88	37	23	2	4	39	27	29.3	30.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>percent of total enrolment</b>			<b>13.7</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>19</b>		

- o The enrolment numbers are the totals for all classes, not only Stds 1-4. It was not possible to obtain the numbers broken down according to class; these are the figures in the records of the district education administration.
- o The dropouts represent the total number of dropouts from the school. The numbers could not be broken down by grade level; however, it should be noted that there are fewer dropouts from the higher levels, and most of the schools had only four to six levels in 1995. The exception was D'Kar, which is a boarding school and goes up to Std 7.

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The fact that the percentage of dropouts was higher in schools with higher numbers of children, indicated to us that the San children find it difficult to make the transition from living in small family groups to functioning in large, organised groups of people.

The most important aspect to be followed up in a future study would be to find the children who quietly drop out, without being recorded by the teachers. Class allocations are only done about two weeks after the start of the first term, and it seems that many children run away from school at this early stage and are therefore not registered as dropouts. This phenomenon takes place mostly at the boarding schools, where children from farms are

sent, and who, in many cases, find their own way home almost immediately.

This higher dropout rate in boarding schools should indicate that boarding children at school is not a feasible approach for the RADs children. Unfortunately, no figures could be obtained from other schools that have hostels. D'Kar is an example of a boarding situation where children come from farms and villages inside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, they would not have been to preschool and would see their parents only once every three months.

In addition, many school registers start afresh each term, making a list of children without referring to the names from the previous term. Dropouts during the term would be recorded under the code 'A6', many times with a short description of reasons, but the registers did not explain what had happened to the children from the previous terms who had not come back after school holidays, and who were no longer recorded. This seems to be the reason the dropout numbers derived from the class figures at the beginning and end of the year were different than the numbers drawn from the attendance registers.

Preschool teachers do not register which children have moved on to primary school each year, so the primary children who had been to preschool could only be

traced from what the preschool teacher remembered, which could not be considered completely reliable. Additional problems include the fact that preschool children are not registered according to age group, and in most cases no birth date was given, which made tracing the children according to the preschool registers too time consuming. Following children from preschool to primary was further complicated by the inconsistent spelling of San names. As there has been no consistent use of the symbols for clicks and other characteristics, each teacher gives his/her own interpretation of what the child says, which sometimes leads to incomprehensible variations.

The only way to ascertain if a specific child had been in preschool was to record the names of dropouts from primary schools and check those names with the preschool teachers of that specific settlement, to see if they remembered them having been to preschool. There were several disadvantages to this system, one being that it was not possible to tell if a child had been transferred to another school or to be sure that all the ex-preschool children of a specific year had been followed. The other disappointing factor in trying to accumulate this information was that many schools had lost some of their registers, and gaps in information at crucial points made it impossible to draw a full picture. This was especially a problem in the preschools, but files at

the Education Office in Ghanzi were also not representative. The education officer complained that he had no way of enforcing the schools to supply class allocation figures. He had designed a new standard form requesting more information at the end of 1994, which would hopefully alleviate the problem for 1995.

### **Perceptions**

In addition to the tracking exercise to see whether preschool had made any difference to the general performance of these children in primary school, the fieldworkers made notes during and after discussions, which supported the questionnaire with anecdotal information. This resulted in information regarding the perceptions of parents and teachers that add meaning to the statistics. At some settlements, people were more cooperative than at others, therefore the amount of data is not consistent, but represents reactions over the whole area.

### **Gender and the question of parental support at preschool**

If parental support can be measured by parental involvement in PTA meetings, the making of educational materials, cleaning school premises and so on, it appeared from the questionnaires that there seems to be more parental support for girls in school than for boys. Only one boy had this kind of parental support. In most cases, the parent who gives this support is the mother. As both mothers

and fathers are largely unemployed in the settlements, the question is open as to whether this might reflect the changing gender roles of parents, influenced by the society they are moving into.

It was difficult to measure the impact of lack of parental support on the boys. In general, according to some teachers' personal observations, it seemed as if girls did better than boys in all the schools.

Some teachers pointed out that boys often had a better command of Setswana than the girls. In present day San society, men speak better Setswana than women, as observed in *kgotla* meetings. Men are exposed to work environments where Setswana is spoken, such as farms, cattle posts, tracking for safari companies, cattle treks and similar activities. Some individuals have even been to the South African mines. The phenomenon of boys being more fluent in Setswana than girls therefore suggests that in 1995 fathers still played an important role, especially in the upbringing of boys, in spite of their changing lifestyles. It would appear that because boys often accompany their fathers, they are more able to pick up some rudimentary Setswana than the girls.

The question of the father's role in modern San society brought forth some noteworthy data. Economic changes often favour the men, with the authoritative position of the men in the cultures

surrounding them increasingly being copied, while San women tend to become more marginalized. However, it was interesting to find several cases of equal responsibility between genders in the raising of children. The observation of the research team was that many San fathers were not copying other tribes' traditions so far as fathers' roles are concerned. Although it did seem as if the mother's role was becoming stronger – in matters regarding school attendance, for example – the father still played an important role.

- o Several fathers were reported to walk their children to school every morning in order to encourage them to go or to make sure that they did get there. (D'Kar, New Xanagas, East Hanahai)
- o In one instance the fieldworker offended a child in the way she addressed him, and he ran home, coming back with his father, who then gave the teacher a lecture on how to talk to children. (D'Kar)
- o One father who was interviewed about a dropout child, put all the blame on the mother, saying that she had decided that the child should no longer attend school and that he had no authority over that decision. (East Hanahai)
- o It has been observed that fathers walk their truant children all the way to

school, beating them with a stick about the legs. When asked about this, a father said that he was instructed by his wife to do it. He was seen as the disciplinary figure, but the initiative came from his wife. (D'Kar)

- Parents from both sexes took an active part in discussions during group interviews, and it came as a surprise to the fieldworkers that some fathers came along when they had a parent meeting to assist the parents in making clothes for their children. These fathers unselfconsciously participated in the sewing! It appeared there as if the tendency to adopt role divisions between the sexes (a phenomenon in other settlements closer to town centres and farms) had not yet reached this community, and the fathers saw themselves as being equally involved in the upbringing of their children. (Bere)

### **Reactions from the primary school teachers**

#### **About the survey**

Teachers in some schools provided very helpful progress reports showing the performance of the ex-preschool child in all subjects, as well as the general behaviour of each child.

Xade, in the CKGR, had the most positive response to the survey. The settlement has a history of good cooperation between the school, parents, and

extension workers. It was noticeable that the teachers knew the village people by their names and that they encouraged the participation of parents in the survey. A healthy interaction existed between all the government departments and NGOs. For example, the primary school teachers offered to supervise a feeding scheme introduced by Bokamoso, a relief project for old people and children during the drought of 1993.

Both the former and present headteachers of Xade supported the idea of a survey like this to help teachers understand the underlying reasons for the high dropout rate in primary schools in the RAD settlements, and to make changes in education practices accordingly.

Outstanding examples of cooperation included the Std 1 teacher in New Xanagas, who immediately presented and discussed progress reports on each of the ex-preschool pupils with the team. One teacher in Grootlaagte spent his free hours in the afternoon going through the records with a team member, and the headmistress of Bere was exceptionally helpful in explaining the dropout pattern of individual children, going through the records term after term.

At the schools that reacted negatively towards the survey, the team observed that some teachers felt threatened by the questionnaire. The teachers initially thought that they would have to do the

questionnaires by themselves, which would mean extra work, and they also felt 'inspected' or criticised by the questions.

It took more time convincing the D'Kar teachers to support the survey than it did at the other settlements. This surprised the survey team, since the D'Kar primary school has always been close to the heart of the Bokamoso Programme, from which information has always been easily available.

In spite of their initial suspicion, after the teachers at all the schools understood the purpose of the survey, most of them agreed that it would contribute to progress in early childhood education in general, and that it would assist teachers in their understanding of cultural influences on the children's behaviour and performance.

It should be noted that the teachers in these settlements are usually from other districts, mostly the more developed east and south, and are posted by government, without choice, for a minimum of two to five years. This is in accordance with the policy that all Batswana should mix as much as possible to break down tribal prejudices and to enhance nationhood. Family relationships are not taken into account in this policy, so husbands and wives may be transferred to different posts. The result is that many teachers are miserable and feel punished. In the remotest areas, where most of the San people live, there are few opportunities

for transport and few services such as shopping centres or health facilities.

The majority of teachers are Batswana, although during the past few years a small number of San-speaking teachers have qualified. Their knowledge of their language and culture is not taken into account when they are posted, so their training is often wasted on an area where they do not know the language and culture.

#### About the preschools

With the exception of three settlements, namely D'Kar, West Hanahai and East Hanahai, in general all the teachers interviewed felt that the existence of preschools has enhanced their communication with the children in the first years of primary school. Teachers from New Xanagas approved of the preschool's existence, although the headmaster was outspokenly negative, saying that mother-tongue education was the main reason the preschool was ineffective.

The following are extracts and summaries from comments by primary school teachers at different settlements regarding the success or failure of the preschools from their perspective:

- o The fact that preschools bring children of different cultures together at an early age builds strong relationships in an increasingly multicultural society. (West Hanahai)



- o Preschools, by trying to introduce Setswana, make it easier for the San children to communicate with children from other tribes in primary school. This assists them in competing more fairly. (East Hanahai)
  - o Although San as a people are capable of achieving, they are handicapped by their lack of Setswana, and preschools provide an important empowerment tool for the future. (Xade)
  - o Xade School also had no recent dropouts from the younger classes, which emphasised the success of the preschool, since the Xade Preschool was only two years old in 1995. Dropouts from the older groups were either due to pregnancies or to the mobile lifestyle of the parents. (the former headmistress of Xade)
  - o Preschools eliminate some of the initial fear that San children have for the foreign environment of formal education because it eases them playfully into a learning situation. There is a clear difference in accepting routine, personal management, etc., in children who have gone through preschool, compared to those who come straight from home. (New Xanagas Primary School)
  - o The low number of children in the school does not convey a negative attitude from the parents towards this service, but can be attributed to their lifestyle. The parents find it inconvenient to stay in one place for long periods for the sake of their children's schooling. Lodging them with others also creates problems, so they prefer to take them along when they travel. (Bere Primary School)
  - o These children (ex-preschool) are just as useless as the others. It would be better if you could take them all back to preschool again, and teach them to read and write. (D'Kar Primary School)
  - o The children should be taught to speak Setswana and English. The mother-tongue education given in the preschool causes them to lag behind, compared to other preschools like Kalkfontein where there are predominantly Bakgaladadi people. I see no difference between the children of this village who have gone to preschool and those who have not. (Headmaster, New Xanagas)
  - o The preschools enhance two-way communication between teacher and child, which is a problem with children who are not used to any formal system. Preschools help them to be less shy to talk in the beginning of their school years. (East Hanahai)
- Reasons for children dropping out of school**
- Most teachers ascribed dropout to be the fault of the parents, implying that

preschools would not have much of an effect as long as the problems of the parents were not addressed. Some seemed to imply that there is not much hope for San education in general:

- Parents drink too much. Alcohol abuse has the effect that the parents do not take up their responsibilities towards the school. (Grootlaagte)
- The parents are not cooperative, do not attend parent teacher association meetings and are not dependable. (D'Kar)
- The effects of poverty and cultural transition result in poor communication. Children drop out because the parents and teachers cannot communicate. (West Hanahai)
- Jealousy and tribal conflict make all efforts at educating children worthless. (Grootlaagte)
- The dropout problem is the fault of the parents. They should take total responsibility for this. You should inform them. (D'Kar.)
- They do not drop out because they are unhappy at school. They just do not want to be left behind when their parents move. (Bere)

The parents

In all settlements, interviewing the parents required special efforts. In

general, parents seemed to feel pressured and did not understand why they should be involved in the survey. Informal information-gathering sessions with groups of parents had the best response, and the team fell back on these when there were information gaps from the questionnaires.

Some parents were visited at their homes, due to their children having dropped out of school. Interviews about the reasons for dropping out were not easy. Parents showed apathy towards the situation and did not want to verbalise their concerns. Two typical answers were that the children were beaten at school or that they (the parents) were helpless because their children did not want to listen to them. Another reason given was that they did not have proper clothes for the children.

The question about hunting in the questionnaire (see Appendix Two) was sensitive, and parents were reluctant to answer for fear of getting into trouble. During the two years preceding the survey the relationship with the Wildlife Department had deteriorated, through accusations of torture made in the press. People regarded these questions as political and did not want to discuss their hunting habits. The same reaction applied to questions about ownership of livestock, which people did not want to disclose for fear of losing out on potential aid schemes to the needy.

The following are typical questions asked in the group information-gathering sessions:

- If you feel that your children are beaten excessively, why do you not talk to the teachers?
- What do you see as the difference between preschool and primary school?
- How would you like your child to be disciplined when s/he is naughty?
- Why do you think that your child is suffering at primary school?  
Do San people ever use corporal punishment themselves?
- Why do your children not have clothes?  
Can't you be helped by the school/  
social welfare department/ RADO?
- When your child dropped out of school, why did you not take him/her back to school?



### **Group discussion with parents from East Hanahai, D'Kar, West Hanahi and Xade**

A discussion was held with parents who attended a dancing workshop at D'Kar concerning their views on education for their children. Although people from D'Kar were generally bolder and more outspoken, their comments were later checked in smaller groups with other parents, and they all agreed on what was said during this interview. The following are extracts from the discussions.

**Question:** *A lot of people complain that their children suffer at school. Why is this?*

**Group answer:** San children, in general, fear school. Even if bad things have not been done to them, they hear stories about what is being done to other children. Parents really have to put a lot of pressure on their children to attend school. The parents then cannot stand the disappointment when the child comes home beaten over the head with a thick stick, or a blackboard ruler, or hit over the back and chest, mostly for reasons the child does not understand, without an explanation as to what he/she has done wrong.

**Qhomatcãa:** The D'Kar people accept that beating is a fair way of inducing discipline because they grew up with the farmers and heard that it also happened to white children in their schools.

However, those children are being hit over the palms of the hand, or even given the cane on their behind, after talking to them about the particular misbehaviour. San are willing to accept this form of corporal punishment. But nowadays in the schools it is getting increasingly worse. They hit my child on his chest with the fist, and this kind of behaviour is humiliating and intolerable.

[At this point, other examples from several settlements were given in support of this statement.]

**Question:** *Do you as parents follow up these reports from the children, and have you addressed this behaviour of the teachers at PTA meetings?*

**Group answer:** We are just powerless, because if you complain, they laugh at you or mark you as a trouble maker, and the teachers group themselves in a block against that parent. They do not admit the wrongs that others have done. They refuse to hear that parents do not want to be scolded like children by the teachers. They do not want to hear what we say; they just want to tell us what to do.

**Meriam:** Children who have gone to school sometimes come back very naughty, and we do not know how to deal with them any more. If our children stay at home with us, we feel more in control and we know how to handle them. The big children at school, and

especially in the hostel, teach them very bad things. Putting children in a hostel is not a good plan. If I talk to my children well, I am used to them answering me well.

**Habe:** We were five children in the house. Two went to school, and the others stayed at home. Today we are working and assisting our parents, while the two who went to school are drinking and living a useless life.

**Question:** *Are there any other reasons to make you believe that your children suffer at school?*

**Group answer:** Food. The children are not fed properly. The parents are expected to come and cook at school for free, and if they do not find a cook, the parents are expected to rotate. The result is that the food is undercooked, for example beans, which gives the children stomach problems.

**Dada:** RADO tells us they will look after children and provide them with uniforms, but many times the children, especially those sent to boarding schools, have no soap, no hand cream [very important for modern day San] and often no tunics. We try to buy these things, but the children are far from us. Many times they write letters to us parents who cannot read, and we only see them when the school closes again. If someone takes my child away, that person is responsible for the child.

**Question:** *Do San ever use corporal punishment?*

**Dada:** I beat my children when they were small because I knew others were later going to beat them, and it helped them to get used to that. But I hit them in the right way, never with the fist. When a child is small, and he/she touches something dangerous, we would pinch the child on the back of his hand or slap him lightly on the hands, to teach him.

**X'aega:** We talk to our children. We talk to them a lot, and everybody talks. If a little one does something wrong, we hit him on the hand softly. When I was little, and I used to be naughty, I was disciplined by my older uncle. My father would not discipline me, but the elders would get together to discuss about me, and then my uncle would do the talking.

[Comment: This system of consultation would only be for things like stealing, breaking other peoples' possessions, or antisocial behaviour. This was checked with the people from Xade and West Hanahai, and they agreed to the same system.]

**X'aega:** I have sent my two children to preschool, and I have had to beat them on their behind to force them to go. I walk with them all the way to school, beating them if they want to turn back. But then, once they have accepted that they should go, I talk to them every day

about what they have done at school. That way they know that I am interested. But they also like the preschool. They are not scared.

**Habe:** If you beat a child too much, they become stubborn, and you cannot win that child over again.

**Question:** *Is there a way in which you can change the behaviour of a very naughty child to become disciplined? What if the child does not listen any more?*

**Dada:** It is better to give the child a reward if she/he has done something right, than to beat him/her when doing something wrong. You can always bribe a child to do something, if he knows he will get something afterwards.

**X'aega:** My oldest child left school, and refused to go to the hostel. She has no more clothes left to wear and I will not force her to go. I do not have the money to pay for the food they eat at school anyway. If a child refuses something, let him go. Never force a child.

**Dada:** If the child has done something wrong to you, and you complain to me, I will go with the child to your house, and explain the wrong doing. I will then give the child a beating there, or I can ask you to beat her for me. My sisters, or my mother, are also responsible to take care of these things.

**Question:** *I have seen small children hitting their parents in the face, even with a stick, and people just laugh. Why?*

**Qhomatcāa:** People know that children still do not know everything, and if you are too forceful with children, you can make that child very weak. It is important to let the child feel strong.

**Xguka:** Sometimes I have tried to beat my child, then she tells me not to do it. She also says to me when I tell her to do something: 'I will only cooperate if you do not beat me.'

**Dada:** We teach children to have respect, but it takes time. Respect is something very important. If you have respect, you do not laugh at people with disabilities, or at weak people. People should not laugh at others.

### **Response from other parents**

There was a remarkable similarity in group responses between the different settlements. Typical answers, additional to those from the group discussion above, were as follows.

- If the government wants my child to go to school, they should look after him/her.
- My child was taken to boarding school three months ago. They did not give my child shoes/food/clothes/blankets.

- Those people are being paid to look after my child. They should do the work. Why do they ask me to help with cooking/cleaning the yard?
- Why is it necessary to beat my child at primary school? He had finished preschool successfully, and he was not beaten there.
- I want my child to be taught by someone with a good heart towards me and my child. If a person hates somebody, s/he will carry that same feeling towards the child of that person.
- The children who go to school are not better off. They no longer respect their parents, they cannot work for us, and they also do not find work elsewhere.

## Chapter six





## *Discussion and conclusions*

From the statistical information, and from interpretations drawn from the interviews, it was clear that the preschools had fulfilled their purpose as much as could be expected at this stage of their development.

Information from the questionnaires confirmed that parental support of children who had been in preschool corresponded consistently with information given by primary school teachers regarding average parental support for primary students. Furthermore, the factors related to the food situation, the deterioration of social structures, and the other results of cultural transition applied to all the children. Yet it seemed as if the children who had attended preschool were not as harshly affected.

However, it is clear that more study is needed to take into account the variables that might be affecting the dropout rate. In spite of the consistent factors that could influence the attendance rate of primary school children, those who had been in preschool were mostly still in school, compared to the large numbers of children who are still dropping out of primary school. However, the different background circumstances of each school have to be taken into account before reaching conclusions.

### **Factors that could have an influence**

#### **Preschool attendance indicates parental support**

Certain schools, like D'Kar, seemed to have very positive statistics regarding the effect of the preschools. But it must be borne in mind that because of more than 30 years of development work, the settlement has quite a few progressive parents who were already committed to the idea of formal education for their children. The hypothesis can be made that children who attend preschool are already a step ahead of their peers and are less likely to drop out later because their presence in preschool suggests their parents' convictions about the need for modern education. This is even more apparent if it is noted that in each settlement there are still many children who do not yet attend preschool, even though the services are free. A follow-up study should also look into why some parents do not take advantage of any services, not even of preschool.

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#### **Separation from parents**

The D'Kar primary school has boarding facilities, where a large number of children are boarded and are separated from their parents at a very young age. Many of them return to the farms after the first few weeks or even days, or do not return to school after the first term.

One way the government has tried to counteract the dropout rate among these children has been to send them to boarding schools so far from home that they will not be able to find their own way back. This means that boarding schools like D'Kar have many children from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (from Xade in 1995 – about 200 km by road – and now even from New Xade and three or four settlements inside the Reserve). These children are then transported in trucks to and from home each term. This system operates with the consent of the parents, who are often at a loss as to how to prevent the children from running away from school and coming home. The emotional effect of this kind of separation on the general progress of the child deserves further research.

The system of separating children from parents described above is in stark contrast to the attitudes of teachers in schools such as Bere, where in 1995 a very sympathetic headmistress seemed to have accepted the lifestyle of the parents and had tried to adapt the school to the realities of the community. Although quite a few children still dropped out in the course of a year in Bere, the registers showed most of these children returning to school the next year, or even two years later. In 1995, many of the parents in Bere, mostly !Xõo people, were still seasonal hunters and gatherers, and it can be deduced from this that the children's reason for leaving school did not have as much to do with the

circumstances of teaching as it did with not wanting to be separated from their parents.

The Bere school accepted such children, returning from a 'migration', back in school and into the same group they started with, for the sake of social acceptance. The school then considered them as 'special children', and encouraged the teachers to try and let the children catch up on lost time without having to be humiliated by joining a younger group.

Although such children cannot be seen as true dropouts, further research is needed on the effect of this practice on their further progress, as many might find themselves left too far behind to catch up. They would then probably never go further than primary school because of the age gap or other pressures of early adulthood, such as teenage pregnancy.

### **Statistical illusion**

It became evident during the study that many children who were registered as dropouts actually returned to school the following year. The class allocation figures, the school registers and the other records used in this survey were therefore not always reliable. However, the information allowed us to draw a preliminary set of conclusions.

### **Conclusions concerning the dropout situation**

Although not the main aim of the survey, it was impossible to ignore the

prominent factors that still contribute to problems of San children in the preschool as well as the primary school. The basic problem areas, which are shown clearly by the statistical information and the interviews, correspond to the three original problems pointed out by primary school teachers in 1983. Conclusions about the study results are therefore given in relation to the teachers' complaints from that time.

### **Problems regarding discipline and language**

San children do not understand Setswana. The teachers of Stds 1 and 2 are at a loss as to how to communicate the required learning material to these children in time for their being passed on to the next level.

Teachers have problems disciplining the children. San children are unruly, undisciplined, and do not know the basic requirements for learning in a primary school, e.g., holding a pen, sitting on a chair, keeping quiet when an adult speaks. They have no toilet routine or basic knowledge of hygiene.

Considering the culture of the San, in which children are brought up as equals with adults, and where corporal punishment is very rare, the team concluded that although spanking was still an acceptable form of discipline in Botswana primary schools in 1995, it was understandable that the practice is still regarded very negatively by most San parents and children.

Although not many of the traditional childrearing practices are still in operation, the belief in them is still very prevalent (see interview, Chapter Five). Therefore, it is understandable that the Setswana-speaking teachers, who are mostly from the east of the country and who are placed at the settlement schools without any choice, would be frustrated. Communication is very difficult because of language differences and other cultural factors, and teachers are not formally prepared or informed about the cultural reasons for what they perceive as bad behaviour or lack of parental control. Teachers often resort to excessive beating as the only way to control the large groups of children they are supposed to handle, especially when they have no way of interpreting the child's behaviour from their own background or training. (One teacher reported that it took two years before the children fully understood her anyway, so she could not use any alternative disciplinary methods.)

Interest in the phenomenon of second language learning, and how learning in a foreign language influences progress, has grown during the past years, and recent studies have pointed out the effect of such education on children who have no other choice:

*Specifically, the persistent educational under-achievement of students from certain minority groups in western societies, and the consequent lower literacy levels and economic status*

*among the adult members of these groups, raise questions in regard to appropriate educational programs and policies needed to reverse the historical pattern of underachievement. (Cummins, 1993: p. 52)*

Several studies prove that the development of minority students' first language can positively influence the learning of additional languages. If literacy in the home language can be achieved first, the development of academic skills in other languages and even other subjects are significantly better (Cummins, 1993: p. 56).

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The language issue in the settlements in Ghanzi does not only concern the children's lack of Setswana, but it also reflects the teachers' lack of interest in the local languages of the area, and the importance of nurturing knowledge about the different languages as well as wider cultural understanding. The random spelling of click languages without proper knowledge of how to apply symbols correctly highlights two things:

- People working with the San do not regard it as important to gain enough knowledge about the people and their culture/language.
- This gives the children the perception that their own cultural goods are inferior, and it affects their self-esteem.

The Kuru Development Trust works closely with the Naro Language Team, working alongside the D'Kar Reformed Church – a team led by missionaries from the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Literacy classes for San, as well as non-San, and a dictionary, names manual and Naro primer are now available to everyone, as are a regular newsletter and several booklets on educational and health issues.

For the sake of counteracting the resistance against the click languages as 'impossible to write', the Naro orthography was developed according to the symbols for clicks accepted by the Nguni languages. These symbols were already used by Setswana speakers to write the San languages, which has made the new Naro dictionary and name lists easier for Setswana speakers to accept and implement. Although many schools do not have Naro speakers, there are enough similarities between the San languages in the Ghanzi District regarding clicks, tones and nasalisation to enable people working with other language groups to use this orthography, at least where the names of children are concerned.

Each year the Naro team does a round trip to the schools in the district to teach primary school staff how to interpret and write clicks, nasalisation, tonal differences, the correct spelling of Naro names and so on. This has had quite a

positive effect, and some individuals in various schools try to follow the manuals provided.

The following conclusions were drawn in 1995 and, when compared to the findings of the report *Torn Apart – San children as change agents in a process of acculturation* (Le Roux, 1999), they are still mostly valid today.

**Conclusion 1:**

The problems with regard to the language gap in the schools are still some of the main reasons San children leave school too early. As language and culture are intertwined, recognising the significance of a common language in the early school years, or an alternative method of answering this need, remains one of the most important recommendations towards a more successful approach in education.

**Conclusion 2:**

Corporal punishment in schools in the Ghanzi District, often administered by desperate teachers, is counterproductive to the progress of the children and was shown by the survey as the single most direct reason for children leaving school. The practice is perceived as derogatory and oppressive by both parents and children. Therefore, parents and teachers should cooperate to find a more culturally accepted form of discipline for San children.

### **Problems regarding emotional security and the learning process**

3. Socio-cultural misunderstandings are a serious problem: 'San children cannot sing like other children; they do not believe that it is necessary to come to school every day or to stay in school for a fixed period. The teachers do not know how to make the children happy, as they cannot understand their needs.'

Because of the culture and language gap, the primary school teachers have no way of forming a relationship with the child, and the two drift further and further apart, which has a negative effect on the learning process. The preschool, on the other hand, corresponds more with the San's educational traditions of free group activity and experimenting. The fact that the mother tongue is spoken in each preschool alongside Setswana, and that the teachers are mostly chosen from their own community, adds emotional security.

It is important to note, however, that there might be a downside to the perceived success of preschools in San settlements. The fact that the preschool system seems more to the liking of the San children and to their parents may even aggravate negative feelings towards the primary school. The preschool has now become the 'model' against which the primary school is judged. If parents learn from

these preschools that there are other ways of practising 'modern' education, without spanking the children, for example, they might more readily accept the reasons children give for dropping out of primary school and, by their consent and withdrawal of participation, weaken the chances of change in the primary schools. This would benefit neither the two institutions nor the children.

However, in most cases, San parents feel that once they have 'given' their children to the school, they have lost control over them (see also Le Roux, 1999). When the children go to school, they enter a different world, and the parents sometimes even feel inferior to their own children. Their lack of understanding creates mistrust that many times turns into excessively aggressive behaviour towards the teachers when parents suspect them of mistreatment or favouritism.

Most schools reported very poorly attended and sometimes chaotic PTA meetings and unreasonable demands from parents. Teachers generally felt that PTA meetings were worthless. Parents felt that the meetings were used by teachers only to vent their frustrations towards the parents, so they stopped going.

#### **Conclusion 3:**

It might be that one of the original aims of the preschools, namely to prepare children for primary school, has had the effect that some of the problems in primary schools are

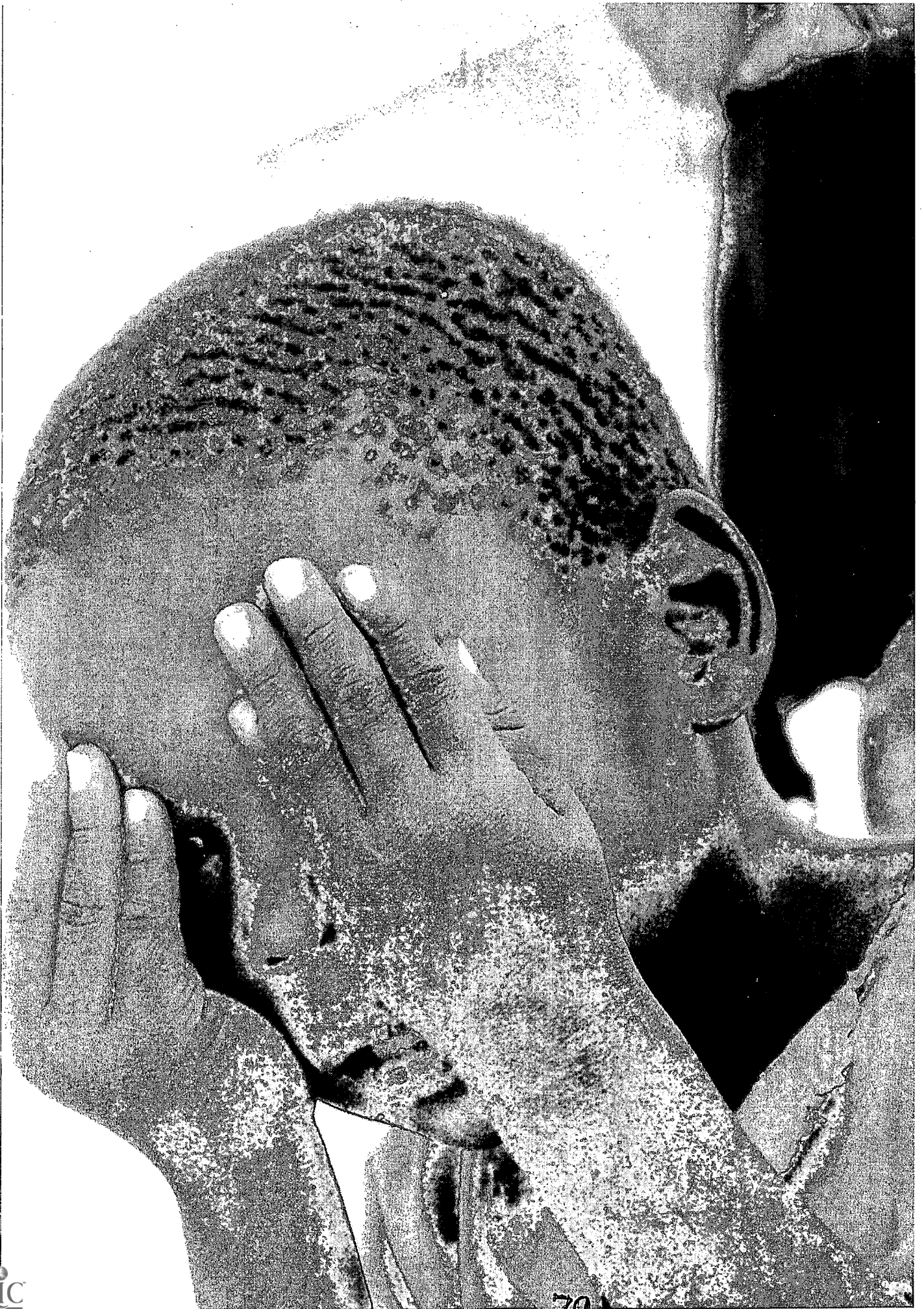
highlighted by comparison and create animosity and tension. Whereas this should have put pressure on the primary schools to work towards change and to enhance understanding between the different systems, the rivalry between them is sometimes detrimental, and parents and children are confused by it. To strengthen the bridge-building task of the preschools, much more attention should be given to communicate the San parents' traditional perceptions with regard to education, as well as to explain the aims and advantages of early learning programmes to both parents and primary schools.

#### **Conclusion 4:**

There is a serious lack of cultural understanding. The survey showed that parents have given up trying to communicate their viewpoints on education because they are aware of the wide gap of understanding and the negative attitudes of most teachers towards the San culture. True educational progress for the San children will only be possible if parents and communities are respected by the schools as valuable resources and as partners in the development and education of the child in his/her own environment.

#### **Problems of the children at home that affect their education**

Several factors of change in the communities are related to the issues



discussed above, but are not necessarily connected directly to the school situation. These factors may have an influence on other difficulties, however.

### **Materialism versus the tradition of sharing**

Jealousy has corroded most efforts towards teamwork in the communities. As San were previously virtually egalitarian, although it has been debated whether this has not been overly romanticized (Loermans, 1993: p. 12), it is clear that nowadays people are confused about how to handle the progress of some individuals in a changing society, especially since it is no longer obligatory to share all possessions. This is especially evident in a settlement like D'Kar, where a cash economy has been introduced and vast inequalities have developed. The jealousy factor often tests, and even destroys, the development of local leadership in the community.

An example of this from the survey was at a meeting when mothers were making clothes for their preschool children in West Hanahai. The fieldworkers knew that at least two of the women had been on sewing courses organized by the Integrated Field Services, but these women refused to show any skills, or to lead the other mothers in cutting patterns. The conclusion was that knowledge and modern skills are also considered as wealth that separates some people from others. Harmony is achieved when all are equal, and preferably when all share equal hardships.

### **Forced sedentary living**

The various San clans used to have enough land to sustain their family bands, while being able to respect territorial borders and to avoid conflict with neighbours. Resettlement of families into larger and mostly unrelated groups who now have to share a far smaller area has brought new challenges. Because of a lack of unity in the settlements, the San, who are now living together, do not see themselves as a community but, rather, have formed new factions or grouped themselves into smaller family clusters. The result is that very few constructive *kgotla* and PTA meetings can be held, since people do not see it as important to take part in the village political system. This has hindered most of the development efforts in the settlements and has made it almost impossible for the school authorities to obtain unanimous decisions from parents, or for the parents to form pressure groups unified against injustices or bad practices.

### **Health and social deterioration**

A high degree of alcohol and other substance abuse exists among the San people everywhere, female as well as male. Some settlements in Ghanzi are more notorious for this than others, for example: D'Kar, Grootlaagte and Bere. Such abuse can be ascribed to poverty, the stress of cultural transition and loss of hope, as has been reported among all groups in transition in the world. But it seems even more prevalent among indigenous peoples, for whom the gap



between their own circumstances and the surrounding society is even wider. Consequences can be family structures that no longer support the child, and which can actually become a threat to his or her emotional development. If the school does not provide sympathetic avenues of communication and assistance, the child may perceive dropping out of school as the only means of survival in order to go in search of emotional support from the wider community or his or her peers.

### **Dependency**

In the 1995 study, the lack of ownership of the preschools, which were supposed to be community projects, stood out more clearly in some settlements than others. The first preschool in D'Kar was started as a church diaconal project, which could be the reason this particular preschool has not been able to get a really active PTA off the ground. Even though the school is no longer run by the church, most people's historical perception of the church as provider causes a strong dependency, which makes them see the school as a church welfare project. However, in 1995 the Bokamoso team was at the height of its struggle to ensure parental ownership of the preschools. Some progress can be reported in 2001, since certain schools are now responsible for administering the salaries of their own teachers with the money provided to the VDCs by the district council. In most settlements, however, this breakthrough has still not

been made, and either the Bokamoso team or the local council authorities are responsible for payments.

### **Traditional role changes**

The previously egalitarian gender roles in San culture have undergone rapid change, especially during the past 20 years. An excellent example of the traditional situation could once again be seen in Bere during the survey, where the questionnaires were well responded to by both parents. This was in stark contrast to other settlements closer to Ghanzi, where the mother was reported to carry more responsibility and low father support was reported.

### **Conclusion 5:**

Education touches the heart of a culture. The people who are being served in this district are undergoing enormous and overpowering processes of cultural transition, and it is natural that the effects spill over into the schools. Therefore, the educational system has to adapt to the specific situation at each place, and take into consideration the fact that the educational methods and practical arrangements that work for one area will not necessarily be appreciated elsewhere. The school curriculum should address the realities of the children's lives, and support systems should be developed at schools to assist children in distress.

### **Problems regarding practical life circumstances**

Lack of food was given by both teachers and parents as a major reason for children dropping out of school. The fact that in the early 1990s, the Bokamoso Programme organised meals at each school in collaboration with the RADO in Ghanzi was considered by many as one of the reasons children stayed in the preschools.

While all primary schools provide for cooking meals at school for children, in 1995, in order to involve parents, the schools shifted the responsibility to the parents who were expected to take turns cooking the food. This resulted in bitter conflict in some areas, such as D'Kar. If the parents' feelings towards the school system are taken into account, their reluctance to take part in preparing the food can be explained: many still believe that they are doing the government a favour by allowing their children to go to school in the first place. When they are also expected to cook for the children, they feel exploited.

For children staying with their parents, the traditional lack of a daily routine for meals, bed time and other activities creates problems when they have to attend school. San, as a rule, never had organized meal times, but would often walk and eat while gathering food, or eat in the veld where they found food. This pattern is still quite prevalent as far as gathering is concerned. Instead of

coming home to find that they have missed out on the day's harvest, children prefer to follow their mother to the veld.

The lack of regular meal times at home creates a dilemma for children who have to keep to school hours; the home situation does not change to accommodate their new needs. Therefore, many San children go to school without having had breakfast.

In 1995 in the CKGR, most of the children who had absconded from school were those who had been placed with other families in Xade, while their parents continued living in areas such as Molapo and Metsiamanong. Some parents tried to stay with their children in Xade, but since most of the families were registered in their home villages, they were not entitled to receive food through the social and community welfare departments in any other area. Trying to bring enough food along to sustain the child for a lengthy period is also difficult, because of the tradition of sharing and the long distances that need to be travelled on foot.

It was also obvious from the reactions to the questionnaire that hunting can no longer be done extensively enough to supply all families. In 1995 there were only a few places, like Bere, Xade and maybe Grootlaagte, where any possibility of hunting still existed, while in 2001 restrictions have been imposed on hunting in all areas.

Although all NGOs and government workers agree that, in general, development efforts should try to avoid creating dependency or introducing practices that cannot be maintained in the long run, drought-relief projects have taken priority over many other development efforts as a short-term solution to providing food – without creating permanent job opportunities. People by now are used to interventions of one kind or another that have short-term outcomes. In the meantime, people have to eat. In comparison with other poor communities, the San are even worse off, since there is very little possibility of producing food consistently in a very dry and harsh desert environment without any surface water and minimal average annual rainfall. Sedentary life has also caused a decrease of veld food in many areas.

There is little hope of an economic solution within the next 10 to 20 years. NGOs like Permaculture and the Kuru Development Trust, as well as Thusano Lefatsheng, have tried several projects to enhance food production, and there have been some hopeful beginnings for vegetable gardens in places like New Xanagas and East and West Hanahai. Kuru Development Trust has started a large-scale production project for cochineal dye in several settlements, but because of several natural disasters and lack of commitment and knowledge of agriculture, only a few people in the district are still involved, and they are dependent on KDT for marketing.

The reasons for these difficulties are that in a semi-desert environment, agriculture and horticulture remain a task for the very committed and skilful. It is a practice that is alien to a culture that has always been able to harvest without planting, and the San need more time to make this transition. Organisations like Gantsicraft and KDT have continued to provide excellent services for marketing traditional crafts, but without international trade and back-up services, craft making remains an isolated economic activity and cannot be seen as a permanent solution.

**Conclusion 6:**

Since the survey was done, some feeding schemes have been introduced to the primary schools in the Ghanzi District. The research team believes that this can be the only good interim solution in the area. Botswana can follow the example of countries like South Africa and Namibia, where all children of poorer communities are fed through the schools, often without any contribution from the parents. Despite the danger of increasing dependency, if such relief aid could remove a stumbling block towards education for all in the short term, the dividends of a better education would re-establish the balance in the long term. It would be fatal for any country's future to lose their youth by assuming that withholding relief services would force parents to step in with full understanding and responsibility.

# Chapter seven



## Recommendations

Through the Accelerated Remote Area Development Programme (ARADP) of the 1980s and early 1990s, a tremendous effort has been made by the government to reach out to even the remotest of communities regarding services, including education. Nonetheless, during the survey, the research team and other Bokamoso staff again became aware of the enormity of the problems facing San education and the mammoth task that lies ahead for anyone trying to offer solutions. Although it is clear among government and extension workers that there are people with favourable attitudes and skills who could help alleviate the problems, joint action by all available sources, including NGOs and government, is necessary to reach all.

The research team deemed it necessary to mention outstanding areas of concern and to recommend changes that could have very positive effects on the education of a large group of Botswana citizens in the long run. Even though some of the suggestions require a change of policy and outlook and have fallen into the court of the politicians, the team felt it worthwhile to mention these suggestions in order to raise awareness and simultaneously to offer assistance from the NGO side.

The following recommendations were made by the research team in 1995 and

have been adapted to circumstances as they are in 2001.

1. More serious attempts to improve the relationship between parents, extension workers and the schools on the settlements are crucial. Anti-bias training methods should be introduced to the primary school teachers' training curriculum, and should also be included in parent training programmes, to enhance cultural understanding between groups. Development theories should be added to the curriculum of teachers and extension workers to enhance understanding and strengthen participatory decision-making practices in communities.
2. Most primary school teachers still have an erroneous perception of preschools. Their expectations of preschool children's achievements by graduation age are often unreasonable, and their lack of knowledge contributed to their hesitant response to the questionnaires. An effort should be made to include information about early learning in the primary school teacher training curriculum. Since the responsibility for early learning was passed on to the Ministry of Education in 1994 (Government of Botswana, 1994: p. 7) the development of a new approach to daycare has been in the pipeline, opening avenues for introducing such concepts in the training of primary school teachers.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, the new early childcare development policies of the Ministry had not yet been finalised.

3. The Bokamoso Programme should also actively seek opportunities to increase understanding and to remove mistrust among the different stakeholders involved in daycare and early childhood development. Cultural workshops at the Kuru Training Centre should be offered for Std 1 and 2 teachers, especially, but also for extension workers.
4. More effort should be made by the Bokamoso field staff to befriend and involve primary school teachers in order to counteract the division and to nurture an understanding of the parents' point of view. The Bokamoso Programme should try to let its curriculum feed into the primary schools' bridging programme, called 'Break Through'. In this way, the child's transition could be eased even more, and the primary schools could be convinced of the benefit and goodwill of the preschools. (See the Epilogue for an update on these activities.)
5. The lack of food should be seen as a serious impediment to the learning process of the Remote Area Dwellers (RADs). Until people have fully given up their mobile lifestyle, or until employment opportunities have improved, provision should be made for feeding children at all schools and preschools, and possibly even supplying food for boarders at private homes.
6. Although this recommendation has been made in almost every report written about the RADs, there continues to be an urgent need for establishing sustainable income-generating activities. The government should not only establish such industries, but should also commit itself to subsidizing or purchasing from them for a fixed period. This would assist people in getting used to a capitalist economy, as well as stimulating the economy in this part of the country. The new trans-Kalahari road to Namibia did open new job opportunities, but it requires specific planning and affirmative action in order for these communities to take part in the developments in the region.
7. Much more should be done to support parents in the process of understanding their role, not only in early childhood development, but also in formal education in general. Bokamoso has annually taken some parents to similar projects in neighbouring countries, but these efforts could be extended to also enhance the understanding of primary school teachers about respectful interchange on the matter

of cultural differences and the value of pride in one's identity. The report by Kann, Mberere and Hitchcock (1990: p.23) commented on the assumption of some people that children will more easily adopt a 'normal sedentary lifestyle' if they are put in boarding schools away from their parents. It seems that this idea is still prevalent in the minds of many teachers, who want the children 'to become like us' instead of having the opportunity to get to know who they want to be.

8. More research is needed on the educational and childrearing traditions of the San, and the possibility of using traditional knowledge as a part of the primary school curriculum. This would not only enhance the attitudes of parents towards the primary schools, but would also improve the self-esteem of the people as a whole and enrich those who are working with them. Several projects that are working with indigenous peoples in different parts of the world work along these lines and have reported success with participation, as well as positive progress in education. Examples are the Village Schools Programme in East Bushmanland (Tsumkwe constituency in Namibia) under the Nyae Nyae Conservancy and the Intelyape-lyape Akaltye Project for Aboriginal children in Ltyentye Apurte, Australia. But more than

research is needed, as the following quote indicates:

*The current situation also demands action beyond research. Present education policies and practices in this country [the USA] are creating a serious problem for language minority children, one that goes far beyond how well they learn English. The consequences of losing a primary language not only affect children's education development; they also affect their social and emotional adjustment, as well as the integrity of the families and the society they live in.*

(Fillmore, 1992: pp. 6-7)

9. In 1995, government policies were still very much against the concept of mother-tongue education, and all instruction was in Setswana. Recently, the concept of different groups being allowed to learn in their own mother tongue has been approved, but much debate still takes place about the practical implications of implementing such a policy given the difficulties of not having enough first-language teachers available in all minority languages. Presently the lack of sufficient language materials and human resources still surpasses all arguments in favour of the policy, especially in regard to the San languages.

The 1995 tracer study recommended that the government should consider hiring permanent translators as teaching aides, especially in the four lower grades of primary school. These people need not have had much schooling, but they would need to know Setswana well, as well as the local language of each settlement, and would need to have basic reading and writing skills. Consideration could also be given to employing interested parents to act as aides in the preschool. They could be used as intermediaries or monitors, and their presence in the classroom could provide emotional security for the children. These people could also be given the task of imparting some traditional knowledge in an informal way. Such a system would not only be a valuable help to the teacher, but might bring better understanding from the parents' side, as they would be able to get to know the system from the inside.

Examples of such programmes elsewhere are the Head Start Program in the United States, which has become famous for its effects on education among marginalized communities. It also has a component of involving parents in the process, which means education for the parents as well as enrichment for the system. In South Africa a programme working with the !Xun and Khwe San children, the

Schmidtsdrift School near Kimberley, has reported success with translators/aides in the lower grades of primary school.

10. The survey made it clear once again that the preschool has a useful place in the transition process of the San people. Therefore we recommended that the government look into the possibility of either providing these services to especially underprivileged communities or taking over the salaries of teachers where non-profit institutions are run by NGOs or private owners. At present, the preschools in the Ghanzi District are funded by several overseas donors, topping up the VDC grants to some of the preschools, but it is hoped that at a certain stage either the communities or the government will take over this role.
11. The tracer study indicated the need for better record keeping and for better monitoring in order to provide a basis for better understanding. We recommended that the Bokamoso Programme keep records of the children who have gone through their preschools, indicating the movement of their families and the primary schools to which they transferred. The best solution would be to computerise all the registered data to be able to really trace these children.



12. More attention should be given to the teachers' understanding of click languages, to enable them to be consistent in spelling. Teachers in both primary and preschools should be obliged to use the available information on these languages, while linguistic help to develop the other San languages should be encouraged by easing the restrictions on research permits for Botswana, and by making more funding available for the development of minority languages.
  
13. The system of allowing children to pass their primary school years in spite of very weak results is still a complicated issue that builds one weakness upon another. Although it is an obvious disadvantage to keep children in one grade for too long, it is, for example sometimes necessary to counteract the specific problems children have developed in the first two years because of insufficient language skills. These problems influence their performance in later years and might be one of the strongest reasons for failure and dropping out.

# Epilogue



In this Epilogue, I have described the background to the Bokamoso Preschool Programme and brought the story up to date with recent developments. This update includes a summary of the research carried out during 1998-99 to look at the present situation of San children in education throughout southern Africa and the plans for the future as they stood in April 2001.

### **History and background to the Bokamoso Preschool Programme**

I started the first of the present preschools in the Ghanzi District in my then capacity as *Mma Moruti* (wife of a minister) of the Reformed Church in D'Kar, where I started working with my husband, Rev. Braam le Roux, in 1982. The very first donor to the preschools was the Bernard van Leer Foundation which, in 1983, funded the purchase of basic toys and equipment.

The initial three preschools (one in D'Kar plus two playgroups in Grootlaagte and East Hanahai) expanded when drought relief projects erected more preschool buildings in RAD settlements and help was needed to train teachers and to assist with managing these preschools. In 1986, Gaolatlhe E. Thupe joined the programme. She was formerly the headmistress of Xađe Primary School, inside the CKGR. She was seconded to the Kuru Development Trust by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and is presently the Coordinator of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme.

Ria Seithleko, wife of the minister of the Reformed Church in Ghanzi, started her own preschool in Ghanzi, not only for the children of government workers, but also for San children from the informal settlements growing up around Ghanzi. She became involved as advisor and co-trainer in the broader Bokamoso Preschool Programme during 1991.

From 1991 to 2000, a team of eight people in the district formed an advisory board, meeting monthly to assist and direct the programme. This board included the three persons mentioned above plus Coby Visser and Beppie Wessels (both missionaries in Ghanzi sent by the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) and Maithamako Keakopa, who joined in 1992 as a fieldworker/trainer, assisted by a succession of Mennonite Central Committee volunteer couples on three-year contracts. Since the end of 1994, Xwaa Qubi has been promoted from preschool teacher to fieldworker/trainer. In 1996, two community mobilisers, Mary Simon from New Xanagas and Mutla Maipelo from the CKGR, were appointed to serve different communities as well as to assist in training sessions and workshops. Keipele Tibi, preschool teacher from D'Kar, was appointed as assistant trainer. Sophie Tsatsi joined the programme as materials developer for two years but retired in 2000.

### **The Kuru Development Trust**

The first preschools and teacher training programme were loosely affiliated with

Kuru Projects, which became the Kuru Development Trust in 1986. From 1991 to 2000, the Bokamoso Programme was formally linked to KDT's training centre. In the years since the study was done, the structural environment around the Bokamoso Programme has changed dramatically. It is useful, therefore, to consider the history of the Kuru Development Trust, as well as the history of the area in which these preschools were set, to fully understand the background of the programme.

D'Kar is a private farm legally owned by the San Church Council of the Reformed Church in D'Kar. Some income-generating projects and a primary school (which for a few years also had an attached preschool) were started there during the early 1960s and 1970s through the work of the then owners of the farm, the Mission of the Reformed Church in Aranos, Namibia. These projects and activities were given new life in the early 1980s when the local church became independent and the farm was officially handed over to the community. Through this act, the farm became the only piece of freehold land in Botswana officially owned by San people. In 1986, the diaconal projects – called *Kuru Projects* and affiliated to the church council – organised themselves as the Kuru Development Trust, an independent organisation. The word *kuru* means 'to do it (yourself)' in the Naro language.

At the time of the tracer study, the board of trustees of the Kuru Development Trust was chosen from project participants and villagers of D'Kar who, as owners and decision makers, met on a weekly basis. The tracer study was done when there were changes made that enlarged the Kuru board to include members from all those communities where the KDT was working, a step that diminished the influence of the D'Kar community over projects such as Bokamoso, but which empowered wider leadership development in the whole region.

### **Changes in the Kuru Development Trust 1995-2001**

Starting in 1995, this process of widening KDT's target group and representation led to the many changes that also affected the Bokamoso Programme. In 2001, the Kuru Development Trust decided to restructure itself into a community-based organisation for D'Kar only (Kuru Development Trust) and a district development programme supporting community-based initiatives in the district (Komku Development Trust). As part of this reorganisation, the Bokamoso Programme has now become an independent development agency for the training of preschool teachers in the Ghanzi District as well as in the rest of the remote areas of Botswana. Bokamoso has elected its own board from people involved in the preschools at the community as well as government level. Bokamoso will also assist all the community preschools to form a daycare

association with an annual general meeting that will then be responsible for managing the affairs of the different preschools with the assistance of the above-mentioned agencies. (Other organisational changes are described below.)

### **Background to the change process**

In 1994 and 1995, when the study was done, KDT employed a number of expatriate and non-San people with the necessary technical skills to ensure financial accountability and communication with donors. Although, from the beginning, the KDT's vision had been the economic and developmental empowerment of its own people, it had to deal with the difficult realities of transition. One of the main struggles of the board was to ensure professional output from the organisation as well as transparency for the larger group of Kuru participants and villagers in D'Kar, some of whom were not directly involved and mistrusted the ethnic-specific ownership of the Trust. Capitalism has brought many inequities to the area, and as a result, the harmony in the communities, traditionally kept intact through equal sharing, has been disturbed. It is an acknowledged fact that in contemporary San culture, extreme jealousy often cripples development efforts. Individuals who prosper in one way or another have to endure much abuse from their fellows, and the San leadership of today finds itself in crisis.

### **Kuru Development Trust in 1995**

The KDT board had tried to address these issues through regular visits to the communities and by holding workshops on related topics at the training centre in D'Kar. At the same time, the KDT did its best to ensure employment opportunities for as many people as possible, through various income-generating activities like cochineal dye production on cactus plants, leather work and tanning, sewing, contemporary San art, and silk screened products. It also bought and marketed crafts from local producers, as well as locally dug and processed *mosetsane* root for tanning purposes. Although these activities provided income for many people, the number of beneficiaries was still disturbingly low compared to those not reached.

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In 1995, the KDT had 38 paid local employees, and about 120 people benefited directly from the income-generating projects. The Trust employed 11 technical support staff members, including expatriates and Batswana. Projects such as the cochineal dye production needed a lot of back-up support and motivation because of the San's lack of experience in agriculture and the time it took to establish the prickly pear orchards, so a food-for-work programme was attached to it to ensure participation. In addition to the hope that the cochineal production units could bring an income to about 500 people in the district, it was expected that more D'Kar people would make a

living from the new game farm, Dqāe Qare, which the Trust bought in 1995 with the help of the Dutch government.

The Kuru Training Centre ran an adult education programme that included a cultural centre and museum. This encouraged people to address the difficulties they were facing then and now, from the perspectives gained from their history. It also tried to empower people by encouraging their self-esteem and reminding them of the beauty of the culture they were rapidly losing.

Training courses were offered on an ongoing basis and included the Bokamoso Preschool Programme, an English literacy programme, and Naro language development, with reading and writing classes for adults and children. Other short-term courses included driving lessons, administrative skills, bookkeeping and technical upgrading courses for small businesses, as well as cultural workshops focusing on community issues, such as nutrition (including veld food knowledge), traditional housing methods, HIV/AIDS, the changing role of women, alcoholism.

### **The situation today**

At present, most of these activities have been temporarily stopped or scaled down, except for limited extension activities to maintain contacts and projects in the settlements and activities attached to the cultural centre and the Bokamoso Programme. The restructuring

of the KDT was delayed for months in 2000 by a protest movement organised by factions within the community of D'Kar against the inclusion of other communities, the enlargement of the board of trustees and San ownership of the organisation. Through mediation by government officials and other facilitators, the board regained the right to pursue the changes as proposed by an evaluation in 1999 in order to make the development work easier to understand and manage for local people.

Therefore, in 2001, the Bokamoso Programme is now embarking on its own independent course as a training programme. It will stand alongside the organisations mentioned above, such as the Komku Trust, the D'Kar-based Kuru Development Trust, the Kalahari Crafts Business Support Programme, and the Trust for Okavango Cultural and Development Initiatives (TOCADI) in northwest Botswana. These organisations will all have their own boards but will be linked as the Kuru Family of Organisations and will be supported by a networking organisation called Letloa ('net' in Setswana). This organisation will house a savings and loan programme and support the other programmes with training, fundraising and financial management on a contractual basis.

### **San Education in the future**

#### **The Bokamoso Programme**

In future, the Bokamoso Programme will concentrate on preschool teacher

training for RADs in the rural areas of Botswana and will also try to develop alternative early learning opportunities in areas where there are no schools or possibilities to start them. They will liaise closely with the Ghanzi Farm Workers Project (under the Department of Social and Community Development in the local council) to empower San workers on the cattle ranches around Ghanzi to take charge of their children's transition into formal education. Bokamoso also plans to continue to build on the initiatives started since 1996 to train primary school teachers about the need for early childhood development, as well as to enhance their general understanding of the cultural differences of the people they work with and what the preschools in the district are trying to achieve. Successful workshops have been held every year with the Breakthrough Programme for Infant Teachers in Ghanzi, and more collaboration and training is needed with school principals and other teachers.

Another achievement since 1995 has been that Bokamoso managed to hand the food support programme over to the RADP programme office in Ghanzi; even the payment of teachers from the VDC grants is now administered by the S&CD office. One or two of the local VDCs are attempting to handle the payment of their own teachers and the administration of their own funds, which will be encouraged further to ensure complete independence of these community schools.

Bokamoso will further cooperate with other programmes such as the Tirisanyo Catholic Commission (TCC), which has started preschools in predominantly San settlements in the Kgalagadi District, as well as with the Preschool Development Unit under the Ministry of Education, to build an awareness of the need for adaptation of policies in accordance with the realities of rural groups and language minorities.

One area where the present training programme will have to be adapted will be to include training on the effects of HIV/AIDS, home based care and the role of the preschools in orphan care. Due to their social vulnerability, the San people are among the groups worst affected by the pandemic in the region, and Bokamoso is looking into expanding the role of community motivators and preschool teachers as resource people on HIV/AIDS as well as ECD.

### **San education in general**

In 1998 Bokamoso participated in a regional research project under the umbrella of the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA). It was the first phase of a three-part regional San education project (RSEP). The research phase included trips to most of the areas where San people live in southern Africa. The result was the report *Torn Apart – San children as change agents in a process of acculturation*, published at the end of 1999 (Le Roux, 1999). The second phase

took place in 2000/2001 and included feedback sessions and networking among stakeholders and policymakers about the situation and the recommendations of the report. A researcher from the USA, Jennifer Hays, coordinated this phase. The third phase started in May 2001 when, after a regional conference in Windhoek, Namibia, terms of reference for a Regional Task Force on San Education were drawn up and national task forces are in the process of being put in place as well. Hopefully, by May 2002 such a Task Force and a Regional San Education Coordinator will take the cause of San education further across the region.

At the WIMSA annual general meeting in November 2000, a representative committee on San language and education was elected from San people involved in education programmes for their own people all over the region. This San committee, of which Xhwaa Qubi from Bokamoso is a member, will act as a reference group to the actors of phase three of the RSEP. It is hoped that not only early learning programmes for the San, but educational activities involving them in general will take note of their specific needs and that people will link to and learn from the experience of others in order to build a better future for San children.

### **Torn apart – San children as change agents in a process of acculturation**

The three-phased RSEP on San education in Southern Africa started with a year of

field research over the whole region, looking into the present situation of San children in education. The subsequent report, *Torn Apart – San children as change agents in a process of acculturation* (Le Roux, 1999), is summarised below.

The fieldwork lasted eight months, which included travelling to the remotest corners of Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. A number of San people accompanied me on these trips as translators and facilitators, and several NGOs and government officials assisted in the information gathering process. In Botswana, the information gathered represents the Bugakxoe, //Anikxoe, the Ju’/hoansi, Naro, !Xõo, Kua and Tua people.

Although the report was commissioned to focus on the situation of the San, the reality in Botswana suggested taking into account the situation of other RADs, whose circumstances were often quite similar to those of the San. Such groups included the Hambukushu, WaYei, Bakgalagadi and Baherero. As the research was jointly commissioned by the Kuru Development Trust (Bokamoso Programme) and the regional WIMSA, I could make use of the previous research materials and assistants provided by these two organisations. Because it was difficult to obtain entry into Angola, and because other countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe had so few San people that it did not justify separate trips there, anthropologists, government workers



and NGOs in those countries provided the necessary information.

The report reflects broadly on San children in education all over the southern African region, and the overriding impression of the researchers was the similarity in the situation everywhere, regardless of the efforts to improve their situation and counter the appalling school dropout rate, on which several well-known previous reports have commented. The title of the report, *Torn Apart*, was chosen because it became apparent that the San children are the victims of two opposing forces involved in their education process. Teachers, as well as extension and health workers, on the one side, and parents and communities on the other, all expect the children to bring about socio-economic change for the San people and to provide a basis for political power. Each side endeavours to reach their goal by means of the children.

However, the findings showed that several crucial factors still hinder the successful transition of the San child to formal education – factors that need to be addressed before the San child would be able to meet any of these expectations. The report stressed the need for a two-way approach to education, where the traditional education methods of the San could benefit modern education and enrich both sides. In spite of the well-meant efforts to ‘educate’ San children, and the San parents’ agreement that their children needed modern education

to become equal citizens, it appeared that formal education in itself often eroded community life and the San’s self-esteem in general.

### **Three main crisis periods**

When looking at the problems of San education from the institutional side, it was clear that there are three main crisis periods in the life of a San learner.

#### **Crisis period 1: ages 4-8**

Children have to step outside of their own culture and language and enter a new environment that is not always friendly. Many have to leave their homes and family at a very young age for months on end, and care is not always up to standard. This is the time when most San children run away from school.

#### **Crisis period 2: ages 10-14**

While puberty was traditionally celebrated in San culture as the advent of young adulthood, the school culture treats children of this age as obstinate teenagers and not as individuals entering adulthood. Schools are reluctant to allow time and space for traditional puberty rites, and children feel confused about their roles. Many run away at this stage. This is also the age when most San children start feeling the pain of stigmatisation and those who do not drop out are often under pressure to change their identity.

#### **Crisis period 3: ages 16-24**

Those who have managed to remain in school this long usually start feeling the

effects of their parents' poverty. Apart from not being able to provide the right kind of clothing and cash to let the child fit in with his/her peers, the parents are no longer in tune with the needs of the child at this age, now mostly at school in towns. Only those San children who have support from other beneficiaries finish their secondary school career. Decisions about subject choices and future careers have to be made without parent support or adequate counselling. A large number of San children quit school shortly before they are due to finish. This problem extends also into institutions of higher education for those few who make it that far.

### **What the San people said**

The report tried to emphasise the perceptions of the San people themselves, to give a voice to the many San people consulted by making use of quotations and anecdotes. The main findings of the report, according to the San people and those who work with them, can be summarized according to the following five main themes.

#### **1. Power and dependency**

Parents do not always cooperate with the education of their children because they don't trust the system. The schools are often seen as the domain of the oppressor who wants to 'steal' their children so they can take their land, and parents feel at a loss to control this force. The many aid programmes that are connected to education have created

dependency on the very people who the San intrinsically mistrust, resulting in confusion, apathy and low self-esteem in the parents and communities.

#### **2. Poverty**

In spite of many poverty alleviation programmes, San people generally cannot afford to send their children to school and do not have enough information about how to access government support systems. Those who do get support or are exempted from school fees often suffer because they are blamed and ostracized by other groups for the privileges they receive.

#### **3. Abuse and discrimination**

In spite of integration taking place everywhere, high levels of abuse of San children were still reported, such as beatings, sexual abuse, theft of their clothes and name calling. Many San children suffer emotional abuse in hostels because of their separation from their parents, lack of proper care, boredom and oppression. San children react in two ways to this – they either drop out, or their self-esteem becomes so low that they do not fulfil their academic potential.

#### **4. Language**

Most San children are taught in a second, often completely foreign language. In spite of the existence of mother-tongue education policies in some countries, the availability of suitable materials and teachers in

mother-tongue languages is problematic. Very few orthographies have been developed in San languages, and often those that exist are not suitable for practical use in schools. The lack of mother-tongue education has a direct influence on the performance of the child, which, in turn, determines the choice of curriculum subjects, which once again limits the San child's career opportunities.

#### 5. Cultural differences

Traditional San educational practices differ greatly from the formal education system, and the schools do not take this into consideration. This results in the parents' lack of participation in a system they neither condone nor understand. The schools also lack patience to deal with the cultural needs of San children, such as more flexible time schedules so they can follow their parents to the veld during seasonal food collection, or allowing children sufficient time off to practise puberty rites. The school curriculum also only teaches about other children's cultures, making San believe their culture is not acceptable.

#### Recommendations

The report ends with an overview of recommendations given by the San themselves, as well as general recommendations for governments and NGOs.

The San people's recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- San children must have dual education – modern as well as traditional. Parents should be encouraged to develop traditional educational opportunities and should be assisted in doing so.
- The rapidly disappearing natural environment, history and culture of the San must be documented and preserved to influence and enrich modern education as well as to make knowledge available for traditional educational programmes.
- To lessen stigmatisation, other people should be informed about San culture by making use of tourism, radio/TV, exhibitions and updated educational materials.
- The knowledge accumulated by outsiders through research on San culture should be returned to them – linguists and anthropologists should make this knowledge available in a medium accessible to the San themselves.
- Structural changes are needed to encourage the education of San children, such as more facilities closer to where they live, official protection from abuse when they are away from home, legal protection of villagers against the abuse of power by teachers or extension workers who come to live with them.

- o Affirmative action is needed in order to employ San-speaking people in hostels, schools, etc., waiving the official levels of qualification. Examples given were to employ San people as cleaners, guards, hostel aides, teaching aides, or translators.

The general recommendations include the following:

- o Emphasis needs to be put on the ownership of educational programmes by the communities they serve so as to increase participation.
- o Special training programmes are needed to make communities understand the need for participation in and support of educational programmes and to address mistrust.
- o Educational programmes need to be more holistic and need to approach the total development of children and their community, instead of removing them from their community.
- o Village-based training and literacy programmes for communities, including multi-grade classrooms in the early years, should be promoted.
- o Ethnic-specific approaches can be counter-productive and can increase the marginalisation of the San further. The realities of the

community must be taken into account in each area.

- o Programmes geared to special needs, such as mother-tongue education and remedial teaching, are needed to effect success in the long run.
- o Education systems should allow flexibility as to time schedules, entry age, etc., in order to meet the needs of traditional education systems where they are still in place.
- o Strategic policy changes and master plans are needed for financial and structural support to break down the dependency that has developed.
- o Financial and structural support is needed for informal or NGO-based educational programmes to broaden the scope of choice for San learners and to encourage innovative approaches.
- o More flexible standards are needed for the educational level of NGO teacher-training programmes in early childhood development and literacy to enable them to employ community members and develop community-based initiatives.
- o Accreditation of traditional knowledge and special or cultural skills is needed to enable San people to be employed in the education system.

- Community extension workers/literacy teachers should be trained to support village-based educational initiatives such as home-based care groups or preschools.
- Special support should be organised in schools with regard to subject and career choices for San and other children, as early as possible.
- Government support is needed to develop and promote mother-tongue education and second-language acquisition teaching programmes for all minority languages.

There was also special emphasis on the need for improved teacher training in order to make teachers better able to cope with cultural differences and the need for effective second-language teaching practices to be introduced where Setswana is not the mother tongue.

During the discussions, the practice of dividing learners in secondary schools between pure science courses and the combined or core curriculum, based on the child's performance, was questioned because children are often hampered by language deficiencies, especially those who have had to master two foreign languages by the time they are in secondary school. The plenary also suggested language-specific schools for the first four years, before a second language is introduced. Plans have to be developed in Botswana to achieve this.

Caution was also advised not to ignore the importance of globalisation and the San child's need for equal development, although a strong point was made that globalisation presupposes a strong cultural identity if people are to benefit and participate equally.

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## Appendix one

### *Enrolments, repetition rates and dropouts in Ghanzi District, 1997-2000*

TABLE A.1: NUMBERS OF STUDENTS DROPPING OUT AND REPEATING CLASSES IN  
GHANZI DISTRICT, 1997 AND 1998

	Students dropping out		Students repeating classes	
	1997	1998	1997	1998
Std 1	87	112	49	55
Std 2	25	28	9	46
Std 3	29	31	10	9
Std 4	22	29	113	195
Std 5	14	17	14	8
Std 6	13	16	4	28
Std 7	12	15	0	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>346</b>

Source: Ministry of Education, Gaborone, 2001

It can be seen from Table A1 that in 1997 and 1998 the highest numbers of children in the District dropped out of school from Standard 1. Numbers of dropouts then tend to decrease as children move up through the different classes. (It was not possible to obtain enrolment data, thus rates of dropout and repetition could not be calculated.)

The high number of children repeating in Standard 4 is caused by the fact that this is the first time that children are held back on the basis of their academic performance. Those who repeat in Standards 1 to 3 are generally children who dropped out the previous year and have to start the year again. Between Standards 4 and 7, children are allowed to continue without repeating.

Table A2 gives details of enrolments and dropouts from the seven primary schools in Ghanzi to which most children from the Bokamoso preschool programme go – on the assumption that they enter the primary school system. It should be noted that, although there are preschools in all these settlements, only a minority of the children attending these primary schools will have attended a preschool.

The rates of dropping out, in absolute numbers and in percentages, varies quite widely from school to school and from year to year, from which it is surmised that factors such as an individual teacher or the atmosphere in a school influences the children.

The dropout figures for D'Kar, the only one of these schools with a boarding hostel, appear to have improved since figures were collected for the original tracer study 1993-1995. There are two possible explanations for this.

TABLE A.2: NUMBERS OF STUDENTS DROPPING OUT FROM SEVEN SCHOOLS WHERE THE BOKAMOSO PRESCHOOL PROGRAMME IS ACTIVE, BY GENDER, 1997-2000

	Bere		New Xanagas		East Manahai		West Manahai		Groot-laagte		D'Kar		New Xade	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>1997</b>														
enrolment	33	40	81	91	63	74	29	53	68	63	279	290	68	79
dropouts	1	3	1	0	9	8	2	1	35	36	25	13	5	18
percent dropouts	3.0	7.5	1.2	0	14.3	10.8	6.9	1.9	51.5	57.1	9.0	4.5	7.4	22.8
<b>1998</b>														
enrolment	32	39	95	97	48	74	42	47	84	70	216	236	106	134
dropouts	10	4	4	1	0	0	7	6	11	14	2	7	0	0
percent dropouts	31.2	10.3	4.2	1.0	0	0	16.7	12.8	13.0	20.0	0.9	3.0	0	0
<b>1999</b>														
enrolment	32	44	100	82	60	68	45	43	78	54	255	258	101	113
dropouts	5	4	11	2	3	9	12	9	30	19	42	26	19	8
percent dropouts	15.6	9.0	11.0	2.4	5.0	13.2	26.7	20.9	38.5	35.2	16.5	10.0	18.8	7.0
<b>2000</b>														
enrolment	31	43	108	95	48	57	43	46	96	84	285	273	97	106
dropouts	16	3	6	0	15	10	5	2	12	5	14	13	20	11
percent dropouts	51.6	7.0	5.6	0	31.0	17.5	11.6	4.3	12.5	5.9	4.9	4.8	20.6	10.4
<b>Totals 1997-2000</b>														
Total enrolment 1997-2000	128	156	384	365	219	273	159	189	326	271	1035	1057	372	432
enrolment M + F	284		749		492		348		597		2092		804	
total dropouts 1997-2000	32	14	22	3	27	27	26	18	88	74	83	59	44	37
dropouts M + F	46		25		54		44		162		142		81	
percent dropouts 1997-2000	25.0	9.0	5.7	0.8	12.3	9.9	16.4	9.5	27.0	27.3	8.0	5.6	11.8	8.6
percent dropouts M + F	16.2		3.7		11.0		12.6		27.0		6.8		10.0	

Source: Ministry of Education, Gaborone, 2001

One is that most of the other primary schools now go up to at least Std 4, thus children are able to stay with their families for their first school years. If they then transfer to D’Kar for the later primary classes, they will already be familiar with the atmosphere and culture of a primary school, and would usually be with other children from their own village. This is in contrast to the earlier study when many children were sent to board at D’Kar from Std 1 when they were just six or seven years old.

A second possible explanation is a new Farm Workers’ Project in the District, carried out by Ghanzi District Council in collaboration with SNV, that works with the small groups of workers (mostly San) on private farms. These groups are normally very isolated and out of reach of Government support services. Children from these farms would normally all be sent to board at D’Kar and previously dropped out in large numbers; there were no preschools nor any other preparation for school on the farms, and it was relatively easy for them to return to their parents. It is therefore possible that attention given to conditions and training of farm parents has had an effect on the dropout rate of their children.

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The school in Grootlaagte has a particularly high dropout rate which is currently (2001) being investigated by the authorities. One possible explanation is the lack of water in the school. The water in the settlement is not considered fit for human consumption and drinking water is trucked in by the Council from a nearby settlement. When there is no water, due to breakdowns or other delays, there is no food at the school and children do not attend. According to the Education Officer in Ghanzi, this irregular attendance causes the children to eventually drop out.

TABLE A.3: PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS FROM ALL SEVEN SCHOOLS BY YEAR

	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>total enrolment</b>	<b>1311</b>	<b>1320</b>	<b>1333</b>	<b>1412</b>
<b>total dropouts</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>percentage dropouts</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>9.3</b>

Source: derived from Table A2

Table A3 summarises the enrolment and dropout figures for all seven schools and it can be seen that the percentages of dropouts varies quite considerably from year to year. There is no specific explanation for this, except for the factors suggested above – variations in school atmosphere or individual teachers.

TABLE A.4: PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS FROM ALL SEVEN SCHOOLS, 1997-2000, BY GENDER

	Male	Female
total enrolment	2623	2743
total dropouts	322	232
percentage dropouts	12.3	8.5

Source: derived from Table A2

Table A4 shows that slightly more girls are being enrolled in primary school than boys and that the girls tend to stay in school more than the boys. As can be seen from Table A2, the dropout rate for boys is higher than for girls in all the schools except Grootlaagte, where the rates are nearly identical and relatively high. Overall, the girls have a dropout rate of 8.5 percent, whereas the boys have a dropout rate of 12.3 percent. This could have serious implications for the future of the San communities in this area in terms of differences between the genders in preparedness for adult life.

## Appendix two

### *Tracer study questionnaire (abbreviated)*

#### **A. Identification:**

1. Name of settlement .....
2. Name of Primary School .....
3. Name of pupil .....
4. Name of teacher interviewed .....
5. Date of interview .....
6. Length of interview .....
7. Name of interviewer .....

#### **B. Background information on pupil:**

1. Date of birth/age .....
2. male/female .....
3. Age started preschool:  
 3     4     5     5+
4. Year in which transferred to  
Primary School:  
 1984     1985     1986     1987     1989     1990     1991
5. Age when commenced Std 1:  
 5     6     7     8+
6. In which standard was s/he in 1993?  
 1     2     3     4     5     6     7

#### **C. Background information on the preschool:**

1. Did the child have the same preschool teacher throughout?  
 Yes     No
2. If no, state number of teachers:  
 2     3     4     4+
3. For how long did each teacher help the child?  
 Less than a year     Full year     Two years +

4. Please probe for information on the training the teacher obtained:

- No training at all  Lobatse Day Care Training Centre  Kuru Workshops  Others – specify

5. Please probe for child's performance at preschool using indicators attached.

.....

6. Were the parents supportive?

- Yes  No

Specify .....

7. Did the child complete preschool?

- Yes  No

If no, state reasons .....

#### D. Primary School information:

1. Ask for school attendance register for the years the child has been at school, and record for each year the total number of days/weeks/months s/he did not attend school.

.....

2. Check annual academic performance, if records are kept, otherwise interview teachers that have taught the child on all aspects of academic performance (includes writing, listening, Setswana, English, sums, etc.).

.....

3. Probe for other child development indicators.

.....

4. Ask teacher/s what support s/he obtained from the parents/ relatives during the years the pupil was registered at the school.

.....

Can the teacher give a subjective evaluation of what type of parents are these, e.g., poor, religious, quarrelling, alcoholic, etc.

.....

5. Ask teacher to give an assessment of the performance of the child compared to those who did not attend.

.....

What indicators is the teacher using, e.g., mastery of Setswana, behaviour in class, etc.

.....

6. Does the teacher believe the pupil benefited from preschool attendance?

- Yes  No

Specify and indicate .....

7. If the teacher feels the pupil benefited, in what way is s/he using such benefits to further improve the integration of the pupil in formal education?

.....

8. Any other information the teacher has on the pupil should be requested and reported here.

9. If pupil dropped out of school, specify:

Year/Standard/when

10. Reasons for dropping out, probe: e.g. distance from school, poverty, family problems (specify), school problems, specify.

### E. Information on those who have dropped out from Primary School:

#### Family:

1. Does the child have both parents?

Yes  No

2. Specify who stays with the child:

Single parent M/F  Both parents M/F  Relatives M/F  Others (specify)

3. Do pupil's guardians live in this settlement?

Yes  No

4. Is s/he/they employed?

Yes  No

5. If yes, by whom, specify.

6. Please probe on how they make a living.

Livestock – goats – specify number.....  Cattle – specify number.....  Chickens – specify number .....

7. Drought relief, specify remuneration.

8. Council registered destitute:

Dependent on  church  children

9. Hunts – how often a month.

10. Gathers – how often a month.

11. Handicrafts – type and where sold.

12. Others/ specify.

13. Why did pupil leave school, probe for reasons.

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**Further information**

Information about the Foundation, its grantmaking policy, and its work, as well as a list of publications, are available from the Foundation through the contact details given on the back cover.

**Titles in the following Portfolios series:**

*A new door opened: a tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project, Jamaica,*  
Roli Degazon-Johnson, 2001, Practice & Reflections No. 13

*In the web of cultural transition: a tracer study of children in Embu District, Kenya,*  
Ann Njenga & Margaret Kabiru, 2001, Practice & Reflections No 14

*The challenges of change: a tracer study of San Preschool children in Botswana,*  
Willemien le Roux, 2002, Practice & Reflections No 15

*To handle life's challenges: a tracer study of Servol's Adolescent Development Programme in Trinidad,* Jean Griffith, 2002, Practice & Reflections No 16

*Still going strong: a tracer study of the Community Mothers Programme, Ireland,*  
Brenda Molloy, forthcoming

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The San population of Botswana is among the last groups of hunter-gatherers still surviving into the 21st century. Coming from a culture where children and adults interacted freely, where education was informal and a constant part of this interaction, and where physical abuse of children or harsh corporal punishment was unheard of, the San find it hard to understand the formal system of education.

This report of a tracer study of the Bokamoso Preschool Programme describes very clearly, sometimes poignantly, how these differing values and norms affect the children of the San. Children have difficulty adjusting to rigid class schedules; to being enclosed in classrooms; to lessons taught in Setswana and English by teachers who have no understanding or appreciation of San culture

or language; to being sent to boarding schools, far from their parents. And parents mistrust a system that 'steals' their children and beats them for childish misbehaviour, but feel powerless to make any changes.

The main body of this publication is based on research carried out during 1993-1995 which has been updated to 2001 with additional background material and new findings. The report gives us a rich and varied picture of the very many factors that have an influence on children as they grow older. It shows us, among other things, that there is far more to child development than preschool, and that if the school system is not congruent with home circumstances, the children will have to make immense efforts to achieve any form of success.



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EFF-089 (3/2000)

PSD 30260