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**Expanding Non-Governmental Organization Participation
in African Environmental Policy Reform:
Botswana**

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This discussion paper is prepared by Center staff and collaborators. WRI takes responsibility for choosing the topic and guaranteeing authors and researchers freedom of inquiry. Unless otherwise stated, all the interpretations and findings are those of the authors.

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I. Introduction

This report marks another contribution to Phase I of the World Resources Institute (WRI) project entitled *Expanding Nongovernmental Organization Participation in African Environmental Policy Reform*. The project hopes to, in brief, enhance the ability of African NGOs to contribute to natural resources policy dialogue by increasing NGO understanding of the policy process, documenting examples of successful NGO influence and advocacy, and building NGO analytical, research and communication capacities. At the same time the project seeks to encourage policymakers' interest in NGO contributions to policy dialogue and reform efforts.

Phase I of the project is intended to identify countries where the enabling environment is conducive to popular participation in public policy formation and to gauge the level of interest among local NGOs and host country officials. In each project country WRI aims to be highly responsive to the needs of the local NGO community. Therefore Phase I is also intended to identify a local NGO collaborator for future activities in consultation with the host country NGO community. To date, WRI has identified a collaborator in Burkina Faso who has produced a document entitled "The Role of NGOs in Natural Resource Policy Reforms." This paper served as the discussion piece of a workshop held in late January, out of which ideas for future NGO activities were generated. Potential activities include forming an informal NGO consortium to participate in dialogue on the land reform policy, the forestry code and the International Convention on Desertification via written summaries, critiques, articles and formal meetings. In Tanzania an in-depth study of the policy and legislative process is being undertaken by a senior government official. A study of the experience of private sector associations and other groups in influencing policy dialogue and formation is being done in Kenya. Finally, an assessment similar to this one is being carried out in Senegal. Given the unique interests, circumstances and abilities of NGOs in the different countries it is expected that Phase II project activities will vary from country to country.

Botswana has been selected as a potential project country for several reasons. It provides representation for the Southern African region. In contrast to many African countries, it has been economically well-off, politically open, and stable in the post-independence period. In short, it offers a seemingly favorable NGO "enabling environment." Finally, it combines in microcosm many of the natural resource use issues faced by countries across the continent: conservation versus sustainable use of wildlife, heavy dependence on an extractive mineral industry, land degradation due to overgrazing, deforestation and water scarcity.

During January and February meetings were held with 12 Batswana¹NGO representatives involved with the natural resource issues and/or the NGO community, 2 international NGO representatives, 2 government representatives, 5 multilateral/bilateral agency staff, and 2 academics to obtain information on the following:

- The level of government and national NGO interest in participatory policy reform and the Center's project on NGO involvement in environmental policy reform.
- The legitimacy of Batswana NGO (BNGO) participation in the policy making arena and the existence of any legal constraints to NGO participation.
- The experience to date of Batswana NGOs and the private sector in policy reform.

and to:

- Identify a host country NGO collaborator to prepare a state-of knowledge report examining policy formation process, institutions, NGO experiences and the opportunities for future policy advocacy within Botswana.
- Identify a government official to prepare an overview of the policy and legislative initiation and reform processes.

II. The Natural Environment

A. Geography

The Republic of Botswana, bordered by South Africa to the south, Zimbabwe to the east, Namibia to the east and north, and brushed by Zambia in the far north-east, occupies 225,000 square miles in the center of the southern African plateau. It is comparable in size to Texas or France. Elevation averages 950 meters above sea level.

Much of the country can be characterized as flat high semi-desert, with gentle undulations and occasional rocky outcroppings. Botswana's most notable feature is the Kalahari desert which covers the central and southern two-thirds of the country and extends into South Africa, Namibia, Angola and Zambia. The term "desert" is somewhat of a misnomer when applied to the Kalahari -- only in the extreme southwest does one find prototypical sand dunes. The Kalahari retains no permanent surface water, but it does receive rainfall (although highly variable) and is able to support a variety of vegetation that includes scrub, grassland, and dry forest.

The Okavango Delta, in the northwest part of the country, stands in sharp contrast to the Kalahari. The Okavango River rises in Angola and enters Botswana as the third largest river in Africa. There its fast flow is dispersed by the thick Kalahari sands, and it fans out to become one of the largest inland deltas in the world. Over 15,000 square kilometers of floodplains, lagoons,

¹ "Batswana" is the common term for all citizens. "Motswana" is used to refer to a citizen on Botswana in the singular.

and islands are linked by a maze of fast flowing channels. Trapped by imperceptibly rising land to the east, the waters eventually evaporate and trickle into the desert. The waters of the Delta support a plethora of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and insects -- the greatest concentration of species in Southern Africa.

In the east the land rises and then gradually descends in a series of small hills to form part of the Limpopo River watershed. Eighty percent of Botswana's citizens live in this eastern corridor, where the climate is less harsh. There is enough rain to grow resilient crops for subsistence and enough easily tapped groundwater and grass to raise cattle. The historical concentration of people in the Eastern Corridor has led to serious overgrazing of the natural grasslands and attendant soil degradation.

B. Climate

Botswana is arid and subject to large contrasts in temperature and weather patterns. Mean average annual rainfall ranges from 14 inches in the extreme northeast to less than 10 inches in the extreme southwest. Drought is an ever present threat and Botswana historically has been subject to cycles of drought, most recently from 1981 to 1988 and from 1992 to present. The majority of Botswana are dependent on water from aquifers accessed by boreholes.

C. Wildlife

As alluded to above, Botswana is rich in wildlife, boasting 164 species of mammals, including the "big five:" lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, and the occasional rhino. Over 550 species of birds exist in Botswana, reflecting the wide variation of habitat in the country. Over the years the government has shown its commitment to protecting the country's wildlife and has established game parks (17%) and wildlife management areas (21%) comprising 38 percent of the country.

D. National Environmental Problems and Goals

The Botswana National Conservation Strategy (1990) identifies five environmental issues requiring solutions. They are:

- Growing pressure on water resources;
- Degradation of rangeland pasture resources;
- Depletion of wood resources;
- Overuse of some veld products; and
- Pollution of air, water, soil and vegetation resources.

The strategy also lays out conservation goals that include the protection of endangered species, conservation of main ecosystems, maintenance of renewable resource stocks, restoration of degraded renewable resources, and depletion of non-renewable resources at optimal rates.

III. Botswana in Brief

A. History

Botswana has been settled by a succession of hunter-gatherers, agriculturists and pastoralists for nearly two millennia. The presently dominant Tswana people arrived during the last 300 years from present day South Africa, pushed north by tribes fleeing the Zulus, and later the Boers. The British desire to avert German expansion from South West Africa (now Namibia) and the Afrikaner expansion from the Transvaal to the south, led to the proclamation in 1885 of a British "Protectorate" over the territory then known as Bechuanaland. This move was actively encouraged by many Tswana chiefs, who saw British domination as the decidedly lesser evil.

The marriage in 1948 of Seretse Khama, the Bangwato tribal heir, to an Englishwoman created a political crisis which solidified Botswana nationalism and shaped the country's future racially neutral character. Traditionalist elders were angered by Khama's marriage to a "commoner," and Tshekedi Khama (Seretse's uncle and acting tribal regent) led a breakaway faction. The racist South African regime urged Britain to nullify the marriage and prevent Khama from assuming the chieftaincy. Britain, for political reasons, acquiesced. Two years later Khama was lured to England in the belief that British recognition of his position was imminent. However, once there he was forbidden to return to Bechuanaland Protectorate for five years. Nonetheless his support among the Bangwato remained strong and for six years they resisted British pressure to elect a new king. Fearing that the Protectorate would ultimately be ceded to South Africa, Tshekedi reconciled with Seretse, who returned to Botswana in 1956 having renounced his royal claim. In the ensuing ten years Seretse Khama built the Botswana Democratic Party and was instrumental in negotiating decolonization from Britain. He was elected newly independent Botswana's first President in 1966.

B. Government

In contrast to most of Africa, Botswana has enjoyed a remarkable degree of political and economic stability since Independence. Its government is a multi-party parliamentary democracy which places no restrictions on free speech or assembly. Although there are a host of political parties, the Botswana Democratic Party, founded by the late President Sir Seretse Khama, has won every presidential election. The most recent elections were held in October 1994 and President Quett Ketumile Masire was reelected to a third term. In addition to the 40-seat National Assembly, a 15-member House of Chiefs serves an advisory role similar to the British House of Lords.

Governance in Botswana remains highly centralized and "top-down." The country is divided into nine administrative districts, each represented by a District Commissioner responsible for administration and implementation of district-level development programmes. The District Commissioners are appointed by the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing. The central government provides almost all social services, and retains all hiring, funding and police responsibilities. The elitist civil service bureaucracy wields considerable authority, often overshadowing more poorly educated elected officials.

Local chiefs, known as "kgosi's," still play an important role in Botswana's civic life. With the exception of three "towns" that have elected to remove themselves from the jurisdiction of tribal leaders (Gaborone, Francistown and Lobatse), the remaining settlements are governed by District Commissioners and the local chiefs. The kgosi presides over tribal judicial matters and over the allocation of communal land.

C. Politics

The Botswana Democratic Party has won every presidential election since 1966. Under President Khama the party enjoyed strong support in rural areas and from tribal leaders. His successor, President Masire, has a narrower base of support and is not a member of a traditional royal family. Unlike President Khama, who was concerned about growing inequality in the country, President Masire has been forthrightly pro-capitalist. As a result, the Botswana National Front has steadily been gaining seats in the urban areas over the last few years, and it is conceivable that it will capture the presidency in the next election.

Historically Botswana's leaders have shown a remarkable ability to successfully navigate between hostile external forces. This leadership ability will be tested in the future as the country faces new internal challenges -- rapid population growth, slowing economic growth, and resulting unemployment. Just recently, on February 16 and 17, rioting broke out in Gaborone, the first such incident in the country's history. What started ostensibly as a protest by high school students against government handling of a ritual murder case, quickly was joined by disgruntled university students and the unemployed. They stormed into the parliament building and then rampaged through the city center, later issuing a call for the President to step down. Government troops cracked down on the protesters and temporarily closed the university, leaving the country in an uneasy calm. The incidents of February have receded from the headlines but it should serve as a warning of the profound social changes that threaten the stability of Botswana in the future.

D. Population

"Botswana" literally means "land of the Tswana," the country's largest ethnic group. Some cultural variations exist among the eight recognized Tswana tribes, but they share a common language, Setswana, and trace themselves to a common ancestor. There are other ethnic groups for whom Setswana is not a first language, including the San (also commonly referred to as the Basarwa, Bushmen or Remote Area Dwellers (RADs)), the Kalanga, the Bakgalagadi, Indians and Whites. At Independence the Botswana government instituted enlightened non-racial policies which discourage the drawing of ethnic distinctions. Thus, unlike most of Africa Botswana has been largely free of tribal and ethnic tension -- a Mtswana will identify him or herself as a Mtswana first and by tribal affiliation second.

As of the 1991 census Botswana's population stood at a little over 1.3 million people with a growth rate of 3.4 percent, one of the highest in Africa. Thirty-three percent of the population lived in urban centers, 67 percent in rural areas. Between 1981 and 1991 the average annual

urban growth rate was 6.6 percent; the rural growth rate was 2.7. The literacy rate stands at 73.6 percent.

E. Economy

At Independence Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world, with a handful of college graduates, less than 10 kilometers of paved road, no telephone system and no electricity or water infrastructure. Fortuitously, diamonds were discovered at Orapa a year later. The government entered into a joint venture with the DeBeers Corporation on very favorable terms and by the early 1970s that mine and two others were major contributors to the country's economy. Today diamond mining accounts for roughly 77 percent of export earnings and 45 percent of GDP. Copper, nickel and other minerals also are mined.

After mineral earnings, customs duties earned from Botswana's membership in the South Africa Customs Union and interest earned on invested foreign exchange earnings comprise the next largest portion of GDP. Livestock production has been an integral part of Tswana culture for centuries (In 1986 half of all households -- urban and rural -- owned cattle, and it is estimated that cattle outnumber people two-to one.) and is Botswana's other major industry. Most of the beef is exported to European markets. Tourism is a growing sector and of particular importance to the rural areas. It is estimated that tourism generates more than \$50 million in revenue per year. Botswana produces a wide variety of industrial and commercial goods, however, it is still highly dependent on South Africa for imports of most manufactured goods and foodstuffs.

The revenue produced by diamonds, coupled with market-oriented economics and sound management resulted in two decades of outstanding growth and impressive levels of infrastructure development. However diamond revenues currently are down and real growth has slowed. Unemployment, particularly in the rural areas, is a growing problem as job creation has been unable to keep pace with the rate of population growth. (The mining sector operates as an enclave and has never contributed substantially to employment.) Over half of Botswana's people are outside the formal economy and many in the rural areas earn a livelihood through subsistence agriculture, small scale enterprise and government subsidies. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate in Gaborone is estimated to be as high as 45 percent. Labor productivity is low. Income distribution is disturbingly skewed, with the bottom 40 percent earning as little as 10 percent of the total and the top 20 percent more than 60 percent. Also looming is the economic potential of the "new" South Africa. Whereas Botswana was once the only stable oasis for investors wishing to have a presence in the region, South Africa, with its large consumer market and lower production costs, threatens to swamp its neighbors economically and lure away needed investment.

IV. The NGO Environment in Botswana

A. Factors in Botswana NGO Development

The development of the Botswana NGO² sector has been quite different from the experience of other countries. Elsewhere in Africa NGOs emerged as grassroots project implementers in times of disaster or to fulfill social welfare needs not being met by the government. NGOs also evolved out of the organizational experience of grassroots political struggles for liberation or against repressive regimes. Overall, the impetus for NGO formation was from the bottom up. NGOs, with their limited resources, and working within regimes that considered themselves the sole arbiters of national development, tended to shy away from influencing policy and instead devoted themselves to being effective implementors of community based activities. It is only recently, in the face of perceived government failure and greater political space, that African environmental NGOs have been able to begin to channel some of their experience and knowledge into the policy making process.

Botswana's experience has been nearly the opposite. NGOs were initiated at the national level and aspired to influence policy from the start -- efforts to mobilize a social base followed with lackluster results. As a result there is general agreement that most Botswana NGOs (BNGOs) are weakly rooted and less experienced in carrying out community-level activities. Meanwhile, numerous small community efforts struggle in relative isolation from one another and from the national NGOs. Why? Some point to the fact that Botswana did not struggle to gain independence, nor has it endured political strife, both experiences which in other countries have served as training grounds for grassroots organizing skills. This paper will briefly look at three factors that others have mentioned frequently: the basic effectiveness of the government in providing resources to communities, the basic responsiveness of the government to citizen concerns, and the high degree of political and bureaucratic centralization.

Community self-help is not an alien concept in Botswana. Because the colonial government invested virtually nothing in the Protectorate, the people historically provided most of their own services and infrastructure. However much of this self-help was directed from above by the chiefs. Immediately after Independence there flourished for a brief time what can be called a "true" self-help spirit. Communities banded together to build schools and to carry out various community projects. But with the influx of diamond revenue, the government gained the resources which enabled it to embark on an ambitious rural development program that effectively usurped the self-help role, retarding the development of NGOs.

In Botswana, the central government not only has effectively delivered services to most areas of the country and maintained a generous social safety net (even settlements in remote areas have telephones, post offices, schools and clinics -- i.e. 85 percent of citizens live within 15 kilometers of a staffed and equipped health clinic), but it employs a host of extension agents, district development officers and the like to do the work normally done by NGOs elsewhere.³

²Methods for categorizing and defining "non-governmental organizations" abound. The term Botswana NGO (BNGO), as used in this paper, is meant to include community-based, grassroots membership groups as well as national, service-providing organizations and to exclude international NGOs.

³Holm writes, "Community Development officers from the Ministry of Local Government and Lands organize and supervise at the village level a whole series of groups concerned with development, health, schools, and public

There are many examples of this phenomenon. Virtually every settlement and village in Botswana has a locally elected Village Development Committee (VDC). Unlike truly community-based entities elsewhere in Africa, the VDCs were created by Presidential directive shortly after Independence. Because local powerbrokers tend to get elected to the VDC, they are considered quasi-governmental entities with direct linkages to the government through which resources are channeled. Another uniquely Botswana quasi-governmental/quasi-local institution are the "brigades." These are community trusts designed to train Standard 7 school leavers in the areas of vocational skills, production or community development in an effort to stem rural-to-urban migration. Each brigade is run by a locally elected board but all are coordinated nationally by the National Brigades Coordinating Committee, under the Ministry of Education. The pervasiveness and effectiveness of the government can also be seen in the context of drought relief. Botswana has suffered from cycles of severe drought for most of its history, yet it has never experienced marked drought-related mortality, nor have drought victims had to sell off assets such as cattle. Instead the government has had the ability to institute costly targeted cash-for-work programs, and distribute generous subsidies and outright grants in affected areas. As a result of social policies such as these and generally competent management of the national patrimony, the government (until very recently) has enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy.

This is not to say that some sectors of society have not been overlooked: women, the Basarwa and the disabled are often mentioned as groups which suffer from government neglect. Rural poverty is also acute, often on par with that of the poorest countries in Africa. The rural-urban distribution of income is highly skewed and the interests of the rural poor are often not adequately represented.⁴ Although the reach of the government is extensive, many rural officials are given inadequate resources to service the vast areas under their jurisdiction. Implementation often falls short and it is these gaps that some of the stronger NGOs have sought to fill. On the whole, however, one can say that in contrast to most Africans, the average Botswana can, when in need, turn to an impressive array of government programs and social services.

Botswana also is unique among African countries in that it has maintained key elements of its traditional political culture. A "kgotla" is a public meeting called by the village headmen to discuss developmental issues, tribal matters, or settle grievances in an open, consensus-based manner. The kgotla system provides fora for debate beginning at the ward level and wending upward to ever larger jurisdictions. Although some would debate how "truly" democratic the kgotla is (some argue that the kgotla has been used to hand down or legitimize decisions already arrived at), it does enable any individual in the community to question government officials and policies, criticize shortcomings and demand services for the community face-to-face. This systematized public airing of issues at ever higher levels allows one to be fairly certain that concerns at the grassroots will eventually be expressed at the highest policy levels. Again, there

safety. The degree of government involvement in such groups even goes to the extent of imposing a standard constitution on each type of group, regardless of whether the group itself might like to generate its own." (*Democracy in Botswana*, p. 144-145)

⁴ Although "cattle democracy" is a cherished national notion, it is estimated that 5 percent of the population owns 60 percent of the cattle and 45 percent of rural households own no cattle.

are gaps in this system of grassroots-to-policymaker communication, but for the most part the process is deemed transparent and legitimate by most citizens.⁵

To the casual observer it would seem that the fortuitous combination of ample government resources and an relatively open political climate would lead to a flourishing NGO sector, but this not the case. Instead, these factors, when combined with a culture that favors economic individualism and shuns group activism, has led to a certain complacency and entitlement mentality that does not prove to be fertile ground for NGOs seeking to work at the grassroots.⁶ Working at the grassroots is always challenging, but in Botswana many feel that the essential community-oriented, self-help spirit is particularly difficult to arouse. *In sum: What should be an enabling environment is, rather, something of a disabling environment in Botswana.* Whereas NGOs in many parts of Africa have suffered from a lack of political space, one could argue that NGOs in Botswana have suffered from a lack of service delivery space. If the government does not directly provide services, it frequently coopts those entities which do. The result, in terms of the development of the BNGO community, has been a situation where community based NGOs struggle to get off the ground and national level NGOs are weakly rooted in communities. NGOs are not an important feature of the political, social or economic landscape.

There is also a spatial dimension. The size of the country and the sparseness of population make it difficult for community efforts to grow by linking with other community groups, thereby discouraging the growth of NGOs from the grassroots. Likewise the distances involved make it expensive and logistically challenging for national NGOs to carry out community-based activities or gain an intimate knowledge of grassroots concerns. Concurrently, the NGO community is shaped by the the high degree of centralization in public life. Although efforts have been undertaken to decentralize government functions away from Gaborone, in actuality Gaborone remains the seat of all powerful government and private institutions. As one person quipped, "You can't build an outhouse in this country without going through Gaborone first." Given the difficulty of working at the grassroots and the centrality of Gaborone in terms of decisionmaking, it is not surprising that most high profile BNGOs, particularly those with environmental orientation, have developed in the way that they have: as Gaborone-based NGOs that engage in education activities and seek to influence policy.

B. The Current Landscape

⁵ It is important to note that adversarial group politics, i.e. interest groups which challenge the status quo, are not a feature of the Batswana political culture and, indeed, are viewed with deep suspicion.

⁶ An anecdote, as shared by a government official to illustrate this point. Early this year Botswana was hit by floods and several hundred people were left homeless. Although the government and Red Cross provided tents for shelter and food and cooking equipment to establish an emergency feeding program, the refugees demanded that the government pay them to cook for themselves.

Numerous community based groups and service providing organizations (all falling under the term "NGO") are currently active in Botswana. When contacted, the Registrar of Societies was unable to provide the exact number of NGOs registered in Botswana because they register such diverse groups as sports clubs, burial societies and choirs in addition to professional societies, village development committees, and service providing organizations. NORAD is currently updating a directory of NGOs in Botswana. The new directory will contain entries for 69 groups and for the first time will include environmental groups. By contrast, its 1989-1993 directory contained 47 listings broken into the categories of assisting organizations, farmers groups, rural producers, disabled, children and youth, and women. The Botswana Council of Non-governmental Organisations does not have a firm register of members to date, but approximately 35 NGOs from various sectors were present at the last major organizational meeting. The Environmental Liaison Group (ELG), "an affiliation of NGOs concerned with the environment of Botswana" currently lists 16 members. Thomas, in a useful typology, divides groups relevant to environment policymaking in Botswana into the following categories: western style conservation organizations, indigenous national NGOs, community based membership organizations, and NGO consortia.

NGOs can register or seek official recognition in several ways. Under the Societies Act Chapter 18:01 groups are required to contact the Registrar of Societies, housed in the Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs, which is responsible for registering organizations of all types. Upon application groups are required to submit constitutions, rules, regulations or by-laws and include the names of the office holders. Yearly reporting is required but is not considered onerous. Groups can also register through the Registrar of Deeds to obtain a Notarial Deed of Trust. NGOs choosing this mechanism submit the names of the trustees and their formal resolution to form a trust. Some groups fall under the purview of the relevant ministry, for example Village Development Committees are covered under the Department of Social and Community Development of the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, which has certain organizational guidelines. Agricultural groups fall under the Agricultural Management Associations Act through the Ministry of Agriculture.

On the whole, the NGO community in Botswana is small, fairly young and has been somewhat isolated from general NGO trends. Because Botswana has been relatively prosperous, it has been able to accept aid on its own terms, thereby limiting the influence of international NGOs and the ideas that they transmit. Several, what one could call "traditional," NGOs have a long-standing presence in Botswana and enjoy high recognition, namely the Botswana Christian Council, YWCA, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, etc. In contrast, most of the NGOs working on environmental/natural resource issues have been started in the last ten years or less and probably would not be known to the average Botswana. These are either NGOs that work at the national level or else are very localized community mobilization efforts. Unlike the phenomenon in other African countries, NGOs do not seem to be a growth "cottage industry." This is probably indicative of the adequate job opportunities, primarily in the civil service, enjoyed by educated Botswana.

Because the BNGO community is so small, one quickly can ascertain which groups and individuals have the highest profile, are considered the most dynamic, and are the most effective.

In general, groups like Emang Basadi, Women and the Law in Southern Africa, Ditshwanelo (The Botswana Centre for Human Rights) and First People of the Kalahari are receiving a lot of attention for their work with marginalized groups. Environment and natural resource groups mentioned most often are: Kalahari Conservation Society; Forestry Association of Botswana; Cooperation for Research, Development and Education (CORDE); Thusano Lefatsheng; Somaraleng Tikologo--Environment Watch Botswana and Forum on Sustainable Agriculture (FONSAG). The main consortia in the environment and natural resource field are the Environmental Liaison Group (ELG), FONSAG, the Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations. Groups at the subnational level, with the exception perhaps of the Kuru Development Trust and the Chobe Enclave Trust are less well known. According to one interviewee, local farmers groups are often somewhat "artificial" in that groups are forced to come together to qualify for certain government benefits and inputs, such as boreholes, irrigation, etc. He maintained that without these "incentives" it was unlikely that they would exist. Holm (Democracy in Botswana, p.144) underscores this, noting that, "In the agricultural sector, it is the officers of the Ministry of Agriculture who promote the formation of marketing cooperatives, dip groups, and farmers associations." The brigades can be considered local organizations, but again are subject to a degree of national government oversight.

The ELG coalesced in the late 1980s to share information and use that information to lobby government. Most ELG members have wildlife conservation as their primary concern, a few are more developmentally or agriculturally focused. No urban or "brown" issue group is a member. The relative effectiveness ebbed and flowed depending on which individual and organization was leading it. Some felt that when membership was expanded to include more developmentally concerned NGOs as opposed to purely conservation NGOs that the group lost focus. Others perceived the group as "elitist" and dominated by "white" organizations. For whatever reason, by 1993 the organization was suffering from what one donor termed "an identity crisis." Recently though, fledgling efforts have been made to breath new life into the organization. At a meeting attended by this consultant, the group voted to institute dues in order to support a modest secretariat (two of the organizations who had been acting as the ELG secretariat had been criticized by their donors for spending time and money on phone calls, copying, faxing, etc. on behalf of the ELG). It was also agreed that the ELG's mandate did include lobbying, and the group voted to send letters on the group's behalf vis-à-vis two emerging environmental issues. However this move later prompted some criticism from one of the member NGOs who felt that if the ELG wanted to lobby, it was going about it in the wrong way. Clearly, the ELG will need to work out a procedure for, or at least a common understanding on, lobbying. The group's ability to maintain some forward momentum also remains to be seen, but in the meantime it remains a peripheral entity.

A new development in the NGO community is the incipient formation of the Botswana Council of Non Governmental Organisations (hereafter referred to as the Council). Accounts of how the idea got started vary, but evidently in the late 1980s there was some thought of forming a kind of "United Way" to facilitate joint fundraising. NGOs quickly had second thoughts when they realized that this arrangement might jeopardize long-standing and exclusive relationships they had established with donors: in essence it meant cutting the pie more ways. In the meantime, NGOs identified several mutual needs: to strengthen their staffs through further training; to share

information on who is doing what, where, when and how; and to increase NGO clout when dealing with donors and government. Conversely the government could approach the Council for NGO input into such matters as international conventions and national legislation. The possible development of an NGO code of conduct was also considered. A series of meetings were held in which these issues were discussed and organizational specifics were hammered out. NORAD and USAID are providing funding for the establishment of the Council in the belief that there is a serious need for more information sharing among NGOs and to allow the NGOs to approach donors, as well as government, in a more coordinated manner. Of the NGO leaders who have been instrumental in moving the idea of the Council forward, several are familiar names from the environment and natural resource community.

But there is serious skepticism about the Council among several NGOs. Some feel that the NGO Council membership will simply be too broad to do anything meaningful and point to the difficulties the ELG (where all the members ostensibly share interest in the same issue) has faced. (It certainly was unclear to this consultant what specific issues the Council would seek to lobby on.) Others believe that resistance to becoming a funding umbrella will erode and therefore the Council is just a convenient tool for donors to channel funds to NGOs or deal with the NGOs *en masse*. Another fear is that somehow the government will be able to scrutinize NGO funding and activities more closely, squeezing out groups that might not meet with their favor. "Committee proliferation" is yet another criticism. Council supporters counter that the main purpose of the group will be capacity building, that it is clearly stated in the Council constitution that NGO autonomy will be protected at all times, and that the Council will seek to be "sleek, small and efficient." USAID did in fact approach the interim Council with the idea of acting as a funding umbrella but was rebuffed. It remains to be seen which side proves to be right. Like the ELG, it is simply too early to say what direction the Council will take.

V. Constraints

As is the case for NGOs everywhere, BNGOs face numerous constraints. The difficulty in carrying out community level activities has already been noted. NGOs, not surprisingly, are quick to cite "lack of resources" as the main problem. However there is strong donor interest in developing the capacity of BNGOs and money does not always seem to be the problem. Following are some of the constraints which are relevant to WRI's proposed project.

NGOs are spread too thin. As has already been noted, Botswana is a small country and the NGO community is correspondingly small. On the macro level, there are many more issues than there are NGOs to deal with them: one NGO has demonstrated expertise in issue "A," another knows all there is to know about "F," but no one else really covers "B" through "E." And chances are good in Botswana that the "A" and "F" are wildlife and conservation. For example, this consultant was surprised that there is no single organization that monitors water issues, in a country where water is such a life or death issue. Explanations for this ranged from: "water is such an obvious overarching issue that no organization is needed; everyone is concerned with it" to "you can't lobby government to provide more rain." As it stands, water is treated in an ad hoc manner, with Kalahari

Conservation Society looking over the government's shoulder on major water initiatives, smaller groups promoting water catchment schemes, and Conservation International and other northern groups looking out for the interests of the Delta. As far as this consultant could determine, no NGO consistently was keeping a watchful eye on the mining industry either. In terms of involvement in policymaking, BNGOs are equipped to participate in a meaningful way in some areas, but woefully lacking expertise in others. As a first step environmental BNGOs need to: assess which issues are currently of strategic importance to Botswana; assess which issues will be critical in the future; and map the areas of competency of the various organizations to determine gaps and areas of issue overlap. If NGOs can "take stock" and know where they are, they will be better able to envision where they want to be.

NGOs lack human resource capacity: On the micro level, many NGOs are led by one or two dynamic individuals who are the driving forces behind their organizations. Their successes lead to increased recognition and increased demands on their time. One finds that the same handful of people are "must includes" for NGO committees, government meetings, international conferences, and as donor collaborators, which potentially undermines the ability of these leaders to pay close attention to the day-to-day needs of their organizations. The ELG and the NCS "brainstorming" meetings have suffered from the fact that attendance at meetings is inconsistent. Both the lack of staff as well as the distances some groups have to travel hamper NGO efforts to mobilize, coordinate and follow through with collective lobbying efforts.

In addition, the experience and skill of the leadership often does not extend further down into the organizations. For example, many organizations have only one or two people who are able to do policy analysis. Because the effectiveness of NGOs often rests on the skills of one individual, organizations can be left rudderless when the person leaves. Such has been the case recently, when three dynamic individuals were hired away from BNGOs by the UNDP, which could offer more attractive salaries and prestige. The weakness of BNGO human resource capacity is partially due to competition with the civil service, and to a lesser extent by the private sector, for skilled and educated employees. Jobs with the government are still plentiful enough and salaries in NGOs uncompetitive enough that a well-educated person has other options than working for an NGO. Those working in the NGO sector are often the hard core "true believers." As noted above, "suitcase NGOs" and consultancies are not yet a real phenomenon in Botswana. However the positive employment situation may soon become a thing of the past, to the potential benefit of NGOs. The use of short term development workers/volunteers is often considered a solution but this should be evaluated carefully to determine whether indigenous capacity is truly being developed. Often it is not. To strengthen NGO human resource capacity in the long term, efforts should be made to create linkages with Tirelo Sechaba (a national service scheme for school leavers) and with the university. These linkages could take the form of internships, cooperative education and experiential learning opportunities for university students to cultivate interest in environmental issues and the NGO sector.

Rootedness and credibility. In this regard BNGOs Botswana face particular difficulty on several fronts. To begin with, "environment" is not perceived as a "bread and butter issue" by the average Motswana, rather it is viewed as a concern of those who have comfortably met their basic needs. In equating "environment" with "wildlife," some would even negatively view "environmentalists" as those who favor animals over people. Thus environmentalism as such is not representative of mainstream values like child welfare or housing, although it certainly pervades the reality of rural Batswana. This perception of environment as a "frill" is not a uniquely Batswana phenomenon, but it poses a hurdle nonetheless.

At least some of this attitude can be ascribed to a related factor, one which this project may not encounter in other parts of Africa: namely the issue of "whites." Several leading organizations, particularly in the environment field, are led by white Batswana or expatriates or are perceived to be "white" organizations by virtue of who founded them, has staffed them, or comprises their membership. These include the Botswana Society, Kalahari Conservation Society, Chobe Wildlife Trust, Khama Rhino Sanctuary, and until recently the Forestry Association of Botswana (also IUCN and Conservation International if one wants to include local affiliates of international NGOs). Botswana prides itself on its non-racial character and the presence of whites in these organizations is not overtly an issue. Indeed, whites often bring a level of expertise, effectiveness and commitment to organizations that might otherwise be difficult to find given competition for skilled professionals from the government and private sector. However, the perception that concern for environmental issues is the domain of whites and elite Motswana does nothing to strengthen the connection of these groups to the rural resource users for whom they would presume to speak and potentially hinders the efforts of other groups. (As an aside, it should be noted that out of the 17 people who attended a recent ELG meeting 7 represented member organizations, 5 were Peace Corps volunteers or staff, and 4 were black Motswana. Only one black Motswana represented a member organization.). There are no easy prescriptions for this "problem," and many ultimately believe that it is better to have a "white" organization working on environmental issues than no organization.

In order to be an effective, credible voice in any policy dialogue, an NGO must ultimately be able to say that it speaks on behalf of the affected group. Credibility can come from direct representation through membership or from expertise gained through service to a constituency. BNGOS are weak on both counts. With the exception perhaps of the Red Cross, YWCA and church groups, actual membership numbers are small. There are no secular mass movements. And as already discussed, service to constituencies by national NGOs has been problematic. Many BNGOs, both "white" organizations and "Batswana" organizations have evolved in such a way that they are perceived to be more comfortable with the urban elite and national level policymakers than with rural communities and poor rural resource users. Whether this perception is entirely fair is open to debate, but the fact remains that the perception exists and therefore groups are vulnerable to questions about their credibility. If there is a conflict between an NGO and the government, it is often the government that understands the local people and the local situation better than the national NGO given the pervasive presence of the government in Botswana. There is

particular suspicion when NGOs have linkages outside of the country. In the case of women's rights, San rights and certain past environmental cases, NGO opponents tried to discredit groups (and found some success) by attributing their activism to interference by "extremist" foreign elements thereby undermining the NGOs' legitimacy. Any government official wishing to oppose an NGO could simply raise questions about the NGO's actual membership or constituency served. Faced with such a challenge, many groups would be vulnerable.

The question has been raised whether having membership or a defined constituency is necessary for an NGO to be effective in the policy arena. Organizations such as World Resources Institute in the United States, or ACTS in Kenya are neither membership organizations nor do they represent a given geographic area or group of resource users, yet they are influential, respected voices in policy dialogues. Why is this not the case in Botswana? What has prevented a purely policy-oriented environmental NGO from emerging? I would posit that one must take into account the overall evolution of Botswana's NGO sector. To begin with, WRI rests on the foundation of thirty years of environmentalism in the United States--an environmental movement that has gone from conservation and preservation, to grassroots activism and confrontation, to the mainstream where it seeks to find common ground and common solutions. Similarly in Kenya, ACTS is part of a vibrant NGO sector that has weathered battles with government and industry. It is from this strong base of environmental activism and knowledge that WRI and ACTS are able to speak authoritatively. Environmental NGOs in Botswana perhaps are still in or are just emerging from the conservation and preservation stage of evolution. One also comes up against Botswana's historic shortage of educated manpower. Educated resource economists, planners, social and physical scientists are not in "surplus" and have been absorbed into the civil service as quickly as they have graduated. Up until now there has been little incentive for such individuals to "go it alone" and found their own think tanks.

Parochialism and lack of coordination. At times BNGOs in the natural resource and environment community (pardon the pun) fail to see the forest for the trees. Some groups are only concerned with one species, others with several species in a certain ecosystem but not another. Some groups don't feel agriculture should be their concern, others could care less about pollution in Gaborone. Ultimately all these issues are linked, but there seems to be a resistance among some BNGOs to thinking holistically about the environment. It certainly is easier to mobilize support for a single species or area rather than taking on a complex problem like land degradation, so perhaps there is something to be said for "sticking to one's knitting." But such parochialism makes NGO coordination and collaboration difficult, particularly when it comes to lobbying as a community on a given issue. This situation definitely has contributed to the difficulties faced by the ELG. Environmental groups in Botswana have a strong tendency to question how they benefit directly from coalition membership, what they gain by sharing information. Several people alluded to underlying competition among BNGOs for funding, information and turf. It remains to be seen whether the various consortia can overcome these obstacles. Other, less obvious, factors may also be discouraging effective collaboration and further research

into the dynamics of coalitions (e.g. how tensions between larger shared goals and narrower organizational priorities are handled) and consortia building are needed. Comparison with NGO experiences in other countries or with other NGO sectors in Botswana might also provide insight into why environmental sector collaboration has been underwhelming.

One senses that BNGOs currently lack a vision and a sense of their potential role in civil society. In the opinion of this consultant, BNGOs need an opportunity (or opportunities) to come together to reaffirm common interests, to reenergize and to refocus. But having a vision is not enough--follow through and commitment are necessary. Therefore this "opportunity" should include some clear strategic thinking, not only on potential issue areas to be addressed, but also about the NGOs themselves. Groups need to honestly assess where their interests do and do not lie, what their level of commitment is. They also need to inventory their particular organizational strengths and weaknesses so that they have an idea of the resources at their disposal. On the basis of realistic expectations they can move forward in a coherent and decisive manner.

Heavy reliance on donor funding. Like most NGOs in Africa, BNGOs rely heavily on foreign donors and as the saying goes, "he who pays the piper calls the tune." Because of the ability of Botswana's abundant "charismatic megafauna" to attract outside attention and funding, wildlife conservation has tended to dominate the environmental and natural resource agenda. This is despite the fact that there are other pressing environmental problems which may be of equal or greater concern to the average Botswana. NGOs working on sustainable agriculture, appropriate technologies, and development of bushveld products often have a more difficult time in attracting funding.

In addition BNGOs will increasingly be caught in a double bind. On the one hand donors are starting to pull out of Botswana on the premise that the country has now "graduated." On the other hand not only is there limited revenue to be raised through membership or donation, the withdrawal comes at a time when the country is beginning to experience difficulties and may increasingly call on NGOs to help fill the gap. One NGO stated that in the future it will aggressively seek members outside the country, primarily in South Africa, who have an affinity for wildlife. But as noted above, it remains open to question whether this strategy will only serve to further undermine NGO legitimacy. Without doubt, BNGOs face a daunting challenge in the next five to ten years and the weaker ones will be forced to close their doors. In the short term, however, donors seem eager to develop BNGO capacity, perhaps precisely because of the anticipated drawdown and are providing funds for NGO capacity building activities.

A brief word should be said here about the relationship between the government and BNGOs (more below). Although government attitudes are not negative enough to constitute an outright constraint, NGOs do have to tread carefully given the pervasive influence of government. Because Botswana society values a consensus-based, non-confrontational approach, most NGOs seem to take government sensitivities in stride.

VI. Interest in Participatory Policy Formation and the NGO/Government Relationship

The NGOs consulted expressed guarded interest in the Center's project in participatory policy formation. This reaction may be attributable to the fact that the underlying premise of the WRI project -- that African NGOs are effective grassroots project implementers who now wish to have greater policy influence -- does not readily apply to NGOs in Botswana, and in fact the exact opposite set of circumstances is the case. BNGOs believe that on the whole they have had some policy successes and can point to instances where genuine collaboration with relevant government agencies exists. Rather, they seem more inwardly focused, more concerned with carrying out their organizations' own projects and reversing the legacy of top-down development by working more effectively at the grassroots. As noted above, this may reflect the fact that BNGOs have been somewhat cut off from larger NGO trends, that the BNGO community is still young, and that the BNGOs have a certain donor wariness/weariness.

But this is not to say that there is no interest. In particular, Richard Kashweeka of FONSAG agreed that the lack of NGO documentation is a problem and that a main NGO weakness is the lack of capacity to participate effectively at the policy formation level. He voiced the hope that Botswana NGOs would soon have input into the formulation of the national budget as Zimbabwean NGOs have. The formation of the NGO Council and its stated objective "to strengthen the indigenous NGOs to participate effectively in the policy fora in Botswana and at the international level" (second out of 20 objectives) indicates that increasing NGO participation in policy formation is a strong, if as yet unspecified, interest of BNGOs. The reaffirmation by the ELG that lobbying forms part of its purpose is a hopeful sign as well. A few NGOs noted that while they themselves may not have lobbying as part of their mission, they do look to other NGOs or NGO networks, both formal and informal, to fulfill this function. And several groups, for example the Botswana Society, FONSAG and Kalahari Conservation Society, do see lobbying, policy research, and promotion of dialogue as their mandate.

Opinions vary greatly as to how constructive NGO-government relations are, with donors often sounding a more pessimistic note than the Botswana NGOs. On the negative end of the spectrum, some NGOs felt that "NGOs don't exist in government offices" and characterized the relationship as one of mutual suspicion and grudging collaboration. They felt that the government listens to NGO views, says the "right" things, but only acts when it feels it has to act. It was noted that National Development Plan 7 emphasizes NGO work in complementing government development strategies, but the government has yet to release any money to support NGO activities. Explanations for government's perceived negative attitude vary. Non-governmental organizations are by definition non-governmental, and in a culture that prizes consensus and discourages the questioning of authority, NGOs can be seen as a threat to the government's interests. Several interviewees characterized the government as inherently conservative, and resentful of past interference by international NGOs. There was a general feeling that any criticism of the government had to come from a Botswana and be sorted out internally at the government's own pace. Finally, one donor posited that "Botswana was modeled on the Scandinavian countries in terms of social welfare. The government has a difficult time accepting that it can't meet the needs of all its people -- it considers it a weakness."

On the positive end of the spectrum, many NGOs believed that the government attitude toward NGOs is changing and that it values NGOs. Said one NGO representative, "You can think that they are stubborn but they do comment favorably on the work of NGOs, including the President." Another commented, "A few years ago it was definitely competitive. NGOs were either seen as undermining government or competing for resources, like donor money. But it's changing. Now we are fighting for real partnerships....Development is like a baby, it needs everyone possible to help raise it." Several NGOs felt that government was really beginning to listen, particularly on issues such as the Basarwa and women's issues.

Interviewees cited numerous examples where they felt they had meaningful collaboration with government or were able to influence government actions. They noted, however, that government responsiveness was by no means uniform. Some ministries were considered more open to NGOs than others. There were also cases of recalcitrant departments within "good" ministries, and vice versa. And this landscape tended to change over time as officials within the government and civil service were shuffled. Despite these realities, they believed they could point to some successes.

As for the government perspective on the relationship, on the whole it mirrors the "mixed signal" picture of the NGOs. The National Conservation Strategy, for example, states convincingly that "the successful implementation of many of the Strategy proposals and projects will call for the continued support and involvement of NGOs" and that it has a responsibility to provide "support and appropriate assistance to conservation NGOs and private sector organizations in the execution of their responsibilities." And as evidenced above, there are many instances of NGO-government collaboration, and a general feeling that the relationship is improving and fairly open. However, many government ministries and departments still have a problem with NGOs. An interviewee noted that the NGO-government relationship often works well at Permanent Secretary level, but breaks down at the district and local government levels. This is often due to the personalities involved, the belief that NGOs are not representative of legitimate interests, or because an NGO takes a confrontational approach. In sum, one senses that there is interest in greater NGO participation, yet frustration in how to go about it and some residual distrust from past experiences with NGOs.

VII. NGO Involvement in Policy Reform

The relative effectiveness and impact of BNGOs is open to widely varying assessment. One interviewee observed, "on any given issue NGOs will have five-to-ten percent influence, the government will make it sound like it's zero percent and the NGOs will say that it's sixty percent." but the percentages could easily be very different depending on to whom one talks. In the absence of any research into and analysis of the NGO role in policymaking, NGO claims of policy influence must be taken at face value.

A few examples of collaboration and influence cited by BNGOs follow:

- The Ministry of Education invited an NGO to provide input into the environmental studies and social studies curriculum. Another NGO worked closely with the Ministry to shape the agriculture science syllabus. The Ministry has also supported the NGO's proposals to donors for training of its extension managers.
- BNGOs are seeking a seat on the Rural Development Council, the body within the Ministry of Finance that coordinates rural development.
- National Conservation Strategy Agency is in the process of developing EIA legislation and has invited NGO representatives to a conference to discuss how to proceed. This process is still ongoing. The NCS also hosts a brainstorming meeting with NGOs every few months. Finally, an NGO representative sits on the NCS Board.
- The government has had dreams of planting sugar in the Chobe Enclave plains (an area very rich in wildlife). So far an NGO has dissuaded the government from moving further on this.
- NGOs have contributed to the Land Tenure and National Food Strategy. It is delayed in revision awaiting further NGO input.
- NGOs would like hunting suspended for a number of years until certain species can recover. So far NGOs have been able to delay the sale of licenses, which normally would have been announced by February.
- NGOs have put a halt to communal land fencing. It was to have commenced 2-3 years ago, but to date fencing has not gone forward.
- NGOs have recently been able to halt the Agricultural and Land Development Program, a flawed program which encouraged the destumping of land by paying for every stump removed. In effect, the program paid people to cut trees.
- NGOs are routinely asked to sit on reference committees for government projects.
- KCS, USAID and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (Ministry of Commerce and Industry) are cooperating in carrying out the Chobe Enclave Project. The project aims to empower the local communities to make decisions regarding management of their natural resources. A local board has been established to manage the communities' wildlife quotas and distribute the resulting revenue.

When all interviewees were asked for examples of effective NGO policy influence, three cases were repeatedly cited: the Southern Okavango Integrated Water Development Project, the Ghanzi Farms Consortium and the National Conservation Strategy consultation.

- *The Southern Okavango Integrated Water Development Project* -- In 1985 the government of Botswana drew up the terms of reference for a project known as the Southern Okavango Integrated Water Development Project. It was to create 10,000 hectares of large scale commercial irrigation and a reliable water supply for the town of Maun and the diamond mining center of Orapa. Two phases of the project were proposed: the dredging of the Boro Channel, and the construction of three reservoirs, each serving a different interest. One of the planned reservoirs was later dropped, and the irrigation was subsequently scaled back to 1,300 hectares after engineering studies showed it would be economically infeasible. Initially the overall project was viewed favorably as a way to alleviate chronic water shortages in the area. However, based on failed dredging projects of the past and fears concerning possible impacts on the river and local livelihoods, the dredging portion of the scheme was disliked. The Maun branch of the Kalahari Conservation Society (mainly resident white expatriates)

was particularly vocal and played a catalytic role in informing the other residents about the scheme and mobilizing opposition. By late 1990 the project was encountering stiff grassroots opposition. A kgotla meeting convened in Maun in December 1990 ended in less than 15 minutes when villagers demanded the attendance of more senior government representatives. The Minister of Mineral Resources and Water Affairs attended a second (seven hour long) kgotla in January 1991 at which the 700 villagers in attendance asked the government to halt the project. At the same time, Greenpeace International had been alerted to the situation by the newly formed local environmental action group TOCT and was poised to call for a worldwide boycott of diamonds.⁷ The concerned diamond interests backed away from the project, undercutting one of the justifications for the project. Because of continued opposition, the government suspended work on the project pending further evaluation and in an effort to blunt criticism it asked IUCN to carry out an independent evaluation. A 13-member IUCN team came to Botswana and carried out a field evaluation which was critical of the project. In May 1992 the government ultimately was forced to shelve the project, although it never admitted the project's flaws or the impact of NGO advocacy. Thus the door remains open for the revival of SOIWDP, or a variation thereof, at some time in the future.

- *The Ghanzi Farms Consortium* -- In 1991 a consortium of five NGOs was invited by the Ghanzi District Council to develop three large farms in Ghanzi for the benefit of Remote Area Dwellers (a.k.a. Basarwa) and the local communities. The idea was to encourage local management of the farms and to develop veld products as an additional source of income, rather than relying solely on cattle ranching. The consortium worked with the Basarwa to improve the land and install boreholes, but ran into a host of political and operational obstacles. A few government ministers decided to take back the farms for their personal use. The NGOs were outraged but the consortium foundered because not all of the members were equally prepared to do battle with the government (one member of the consortium, for example, was a parastatal). Nonetheless, two NGOs applied pressure on the government to return the farms. The government relented and several high-ranking officials were forced to resign. However, in retaliation, officials initiated deportation proceedings against two expatriate staff of the opposing NGOs. When this planned action came to light the NGO community rallied once again, there was extensive coverage of the issue in the press and ultimately the decision was reversed only by dint of Presidential decree following pressure from the diplomatic community. The NGOs were kicked out of the district but subsequently have been invited to return.
- *The National Conservation Strategy consultation* -- Botswana has a longstanding commitment to comprehensive consultation in preparation of its National Development Plans. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning first consults with all the ministries and

⁷By this time the KCS Maun branch had broken off from KCS headquarters and formed Tsomarelo Okavango Conservation Trust (TOCT) under the leadership of Paul Sheller, a former Peace Corps volunteer residing in Maun. KCS was a member of the Okavango Water Development Committee, an inter-ministerial committee formed in 1982 to plan water development in the region. Although KCS headquarters expressed reservations about the project, it felt it had to go along with the government's decisions in good faith since it had been a participant in the decisionmaking process. KCS headquarters forbade its Maun branch from dissenting, resulting in the formation of TOCT.

departments including the local authorities, which in turn solicit input from village leaders through district conferences. The development of the National Conservation Strategy followed along similar lines. The process was initiated in 1983 and concluded in 1987. In addition to the normal governmental consultations, consultations were held with churches, journalists, local governments, NGOs, district conservation committees and trade unions. The Botswana Society organized seminars and workshops on behalf of the government to which these groups were invited to participate. Many NGOs in turn held meetings and conferences to which government officials were invited. Kgotla meetings were also held to solicit the environmental concerns of the general public. In addition, NGOs provided extensive input into the technical chapters accompanying the National Conservation Strategy policy narrative. For example, the chapter on forestry was written by the Forestry Association of Botswana. Writes Liphuko (p. 236), "As a result of the consultation of [sic] NGOs, the government became aware that while those concerned with natural resources are making a significant contribution to the conservation effort, they lacked an institution which could mobilize them into the mainstream conservation effort." The NCS consultation culminated with the National Conservation Strategy which laid out national priorities on the environment; an Action Plan which was subsequently deemed unworkable (a new plan will start to be developed this year); and the formation of the National Conservation Strategy (Coordinating) Agency.

Although these cases are cited as "successes," closer analysis reveals a somewhat different picture. In the Okavango case, KCS suffered a split in its ranks and it is by no means clear that the NGOs were the decisive factor in derailing the project. In the Ghanzi farms case, the initial project was plagued by confusion among the consortium members and does not stand out as a testament to effective NGO collaboration. Only when the farms were snatched from them were two of the five NGOs able to mobilize to oppose the action. In the NCS collaboration NGOs were provided an opportunity to participate substantively in a national planning exercise and thereby raise their profile. However, the ultimate outcome, the National Conservation Strategy (Coordinating) Agency has been widely deemed a disappointment (it lacks any real clout) and the NGO community has not been able to remedy the situation.

In all these examples, the NGO community has been largely reactive. Recognizing the existing political culture in Botswana, most NGOs stressed that a persuasive, non-confrontational approach was the best way to accomplish their goals. One interviewee even firmly rejected using the term "advocacy" to describe her group's activity, regarding it as too confrontational. The successful BNGOs know that Botswana's small size guarantees that one will deal with the same people again and again. In such a situation, the non-confrontational approach seems to make sense.

Interviewees agreed that personal contacts and the personal touch played a crucial role in influencing government decisionmakers in Botswana. Successful BNGOs seem particularly adept at the strategic use of their leadership to this end. Several environmental NGOs have been able to attract highly influential board members either from the government or the private sector. These board members in turn can often be instrumental in opening the right doors. For example, the Ian Khama, son of former President Seretse Khama and head of the Botswana Defense Force, is an ardent conservationist and sits on the boards of the Khama Rhino Sanctuary, Kalahari

Conservation Society and Mokolodi Wildlife Foundation. Louis Nchindo, of Debswana, sits on the KCS board. This situation catches NGOs in a double bind. In addition to provision of access on an as-needed basis, influential board members create instant overall stature and visibility for a group. Such recognition is key, because the gateway to the policymaking process is often the consultative bodies connected with the various ministries. In a society where participation and process are paramount, the government's subtle power to recognize and include (or ignore and exclude) groups is not insubstantial. However the need for well-connected individuals potentially compromises the ability of NGOs to take on the "sacred cow" issues. KCS, for example, has on the one hand been widely criticized for being too cozy with government officials; but on the other hand it is seen as one of the most effective NGOs in Botswana. One could argue that this dilemma is more or less faced by NGOs the world over. Yet it is particularly acute in Botswana, where the society is small and relatively homogenous, government plays a pervasive role at all levels of society, and the economy depends almost exclusively on three natural resource-based industries: mining, beef production, and wildlife-based tourism.

The ability to marshal substantive information is another important determinant of policy influence. Because of the resources at its disposal, KCS has been able to commission technical reports and studies, so that at times it has actually had more information on certain topics than the government. This kind of technical expertise can be critical to the success of BNGOs. The civil service in Botswana is comprised of a highly educated elite which over the years has come to perceive of itself as society's bastion of "the best and brightest." Its technocratic/informational advantage is often used to blunt the potential the influence of less well-equipped elected officials and NGOs. Those groups that can build credibility by meeting the bureaucracy on equal terms stand the best chance of having an influence. In terms of public information and the mass media NGOs use this to varying degrees and with varying success. The potential for environmental groups to be more effective in this area is great. For example, Ditswanelo-The Botswana Center for Human Rights recently has sparked a debate on the death penalty which has featured prominently in the newspapers over the last several weeks. There is no reason why environmental concerns cannot be debated equally vigorously.

VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations for Follow-up

In reviewing the scope of work for this report and the WRI project description, it is evident that the project rests on the assumption that NGOs in Africa have evolved from the ground up, that for a variety of reasons they have been kept from contributing to the policy making process and that they now want to participate more fully but lack the experience. However, this consultant found that Botswana NGOs operate from an entirely different set of premises -- that they have evolved more as top-down organizations, that they have contributed somewhat to the policy making process and that they need to reach the grassroots more effectively. NGOs, as one interviewee described it, inhabit a kind of "ambiguous middle ground" in Botswana: they clearly have not been effective at the grassroots, and yet they also are not strongly linked upwards into the policy making arena. Both in terms of implementing activities at the grassroots and affecting policy change, they are at a disadvantage to the greater resources and overarching predominance of the central government, which has successfully coopted or

marginalized most groups. A twist on a familiar phrase comes to mind when summarizing the NGO situation in Botswana: "Too few chiefs, not enough Indians." The impression one gets is of a handful of NGOs and respected NGO leaders trying to do everything while in search of members and constituencies. Mindful of these circumstances, thought had to be given to whether WRI's project was at all relevant and appropriate to Botswana.

After careful consideration it can be concluded that yes, although development of BNGO capacity at the grassroots should clearly be a priority, a project to assist BNGOs in further developing their efforts in natural resource policy influence is appropriate on several counts:

- There are environmental policy issues in Botswana which are not currently being addressed.
- BNGOs are interested in greater participation in policymaking as evidenced by the mandates of the ELG and NGO Council, as well as their own organizational mandates.
- There is some existing experience among BNGOs in the area of lobbying and policy formation, but improvement is especially needed in the areas of information sharing, policy analysis, documentation, coordination and strategy development.
- There are no evident legal restraints to greater BNGO participation. Indeed, opportunities exist for BNGOs to better exploit existing political structures, media and cultural beliefs.
- BNGO policy successes and the means by which they were achieved can serve as a resource for NGOs in other countries.

It is difficult to gauge fully the policy formation capacity of natural resource NGOs in the brief assessment this paper affords. Certainly many of the NGO leaders are well acquainted with art and science of lobbying and policy analysis (although there is always more to learn). What is needed is for these skills to be diffused to other staff members. But perhaps more critically, BNGOs need to reenergize themselves, to build trust, to create a vision of what they can accomplish collectively (or individually) and then to strategically focus their abilities on a few key issues. By starting modestly, NGOs can determine for themselves the benefits to be gained from more coherent planning and information sharing. It is at this basic organizational level that most of the work needs to be done. What can make this happen? It is hoped that WRI's interest in the policy influencing capacity of Botswana NGO's (and seed money for initial brainstorming meetings) could serve as a small catalyst. WRI's role would be not only to provide seed money but to provide a window into NGO policy efforts in other parts Africa. These examples, and the information sharing that would result, could spur Botswana's NGOs to greater policy activism.

There are some factors that will need to be taken into account should WRI proceed in Botswana. As part of the USAID Natural Resource Management Project the U.S. NGO consortium PACT will begin working with the BNGO community in September 1995 to build institutional capacity to identify, mobilize and manage community-based natural resource management projects (the initial project design had overestimated the project implementation abilities of BNGOs). This major effort will also provide technical assistance to NGO umbrella organizations, e.g. work to develop a mechanism for allocating sub-grants. At this time it appears that the thrust of the USAID effort on the NGO side will be in developing technical, project skills, with little emphasis on policy and advocacy. There is also some provision to assist the government in the development and coordination of natural resources policies and program and to

improve communication and collaboration among government offices, NGOs, donors and the business community. Although specific project activities are uncertain, the infusion of significant resources into the environmental NGO sector has the potential to energize NGOs and create a synergy that enhances WRI's interests and strengthens its efforts. However USAID's effort also has the potential to seriously stretch NGO resources given the small size of the NGO community. Careful coordination and information sharing will be needed to avoid possible conflict or duplication of effort between USAID activities and potential WRI project activities. Timing is another important factor for WRI to consider. The ELG and NGO Council have expressed interest in policy dialogue but both are just finding their footing. On the one hand WRI's project potentially could be a helpful catalyst to these groups; on the other hand WRI interest may be premature. In all cases the local collaborator will need to give guidance to WRI on the best course of action.

Having concluded that WRI's project can make a contribution in Botswana, the task becomes to recommend a suitable collaborator. Again the answer is not self-evident. The number of NGOs concerned with sustainable development and natural resource use in Botswana to begin with is rather small. Limit the field to effective organizations that are more representative of Botswana, and the field narrows considerably. None of the potential collaborating organizations were without serious weaknesses. However, after weighing the various choices, it is recommended that WRI consider Richard Kashweeka, Coordinator of the Forum on Sustainable Agriculture (FONSAG), as a potential collaborator for its project *Expanding Nongovernmental Organization Participation in African Environmental Policy Reform*. Although he represents a young organization/consortium that is still finding its footing, this consultant believes that FONSAG presents the best available organizational "fit" and, in short, has the best potential. Of all the NGOs, FONSAG understood most intuitively what the WRI project was about, in large part because facilitating resource user/government dialogue is the group's main objective. Richard Kashweeka is very active in the NGO and environment communities. He and the work of FONSAG are generally well regarded and respected, and were mentioned favorably by donors and NGOs alike on repeated occasions. Furthermore, this choice presents WRI with the opportunity to build the capacity of a truly indigenous NGO.

The following steps are also recommended:

1. WRI should contact Mr. Kashweeka and establish a mutual understanding of the project's objectives, parameters and possible activities, and of NGO community concerns in Botswana. FONSAG can then be invited to prepare a report examining in further detail the policy formation process, relevant institutions, NGO experiences, opportunities for future policy advocacy within Botswana and any other issues which may be of particular importance to the Botswana NGO community. Mr. Kashweeka should also be asked to suggest possible follow-on activities in consultation with his NGO colleagues.
2. Based on its working relationships with government officials in the natural resources field and track record in fostering collaborative dialogue, this consultant believes that FONSAG may be in the best position to identify a government official or academician to prepare an overview of the policy and legislative initiation and reform processes in Botswana. WRI

should invite FONSAG to recommend a suitable individual or institution for this task. The National Institute of Development Research and Documentation at the University of Botswana is one possibility.

3. Based on its experience and familiarity with the issues facing rural resource users, FONSAG should be encouraged to provide WRI with other ideas on how such individuals and groups can be integrated into environmental policymaking. FONSAG may also be well positioned to carry out cooperative research on the interaction between national institutions and district and sub-district institutions as it affects rural resource users.
4. Based on FONSAG and Mr. Kashweeka's involvement in the ELG and the NGO Council and the currently "fluid" state of these groups, it is recommended that particular thought be given to ways in which WRI could strengthen, support and/or build their lobbying capacity. In the short term, WRI should consider funding a meeting to draw together members of FONSAG's policy working group in order to initiate a "re-energizing" process as mentioned above. From this members may decide that activities such as workshops to strengthen policy analysis skills, the establishment of a newsletter/facsimile bulletin that provides legislative/policy updates, support to NGOs on a particular natural resource issue or policy, and/or documentation, analysis and dissemination of NGO policy "successes" is most needed. This consultant would be interested in continued involvement in with this project, working in an advisory capacity on WRI's behalf.
5. This study has raised several interesting questions vis-a-vis the NGO community in Botswana, questions that present the potential for further collaborative research. For example, this consultant has spoken with Dr. Onalenna Selowane, the University of Botswana faculty member who is the lead researcher for the Botswana portion of the GECOUC project of the Open University of London. She is writing case studies of two environmental policies where NGOs have had some policy influence and the methods that were used. However, rather than looking at these isolated "successes," she expressed interest in exploring the question of why NGOs in Botswana have only been marginally successful in influencing natural resource policy. This paper has touched broadly on some possible contributing factors. I believe it would be particularly interesting to contrast the experience of the environment groups with the seeming success of the human rights and women's rights groups in Botswana. The objective would be to identify specific obstacles and potential remedies while gaining insight into the other groups' "secrets of success." The consultant recommends that she pursue these ideas further with Dr. Selowane and that she remain abreast of the GECOUC project.
6. In a related vein, this paper raises questions about NGO consortia. Everyone seems to agree that they are a good idea, particularly donors, and yet in reality there are often serious problems of participation, coordination, agenda setting and information sharing. What is required for a successfully functioning consortium? Has experience shown that the benefits to participation in a consortium outweigh the costs incurred? What factors can maximize the benefits of collaboration? Are there lessons to be learned from experiences in Latin America and Asia, where NGOs are more developed? From other

parts of Africa? From other sectors? In terms of policy influence are there certain kinds of issues that best lend themselves to a consortium-based approach? This consultant is unsure what literature exists on NGO consortia in Africa but recommends that AID, PACT, the PVO/NGO NRMS project and other resources at WRI be tapped to look into this further and that this potentially is a topic for further collaborative research. This consultant is already aware of an individual in South Africa who is interested in this topic from a democracy and governance perspective.

Annex

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FONSAG is a non-profit NGO established in 1991 to bring together farmers, NGOs and government representatives to discuss problems and possible interventions regarding agricultural development and natural resources management. The organization's objectives are:

- "to develop and facilitate cooperation and collaboration between NGOs involved in agriculture, farmers and farmer organizations and relevant government departments. FONSAG is also involved with groups, individuals and organizations working on related issues such as environment and management of natural resources."
- "to develop and promote the understanding and practice of an agricultural system which is ecologically sustainable, socially and culturally acceptable as well as economically viable. In essence, FONSAG advocates for agricultural practices that facilitate proper and efficient use of locally available natural and human resources for optimum benefit without harm to the environment."

FONSAG's present and planned activities include organizing local and regional NGO meetings to share information on issues related to agriculture and environment., collection and dissemination of information to members on sustainable agriculture, organizing and implementing seminars/courses, publication of a quarterly newsletter to facilitate documentation and incorporation of indigenous knowledge into research.

FONSAG is directed by a Steering Committee which meets quarterly. The Committee is comprised of chairpersons from the three Working Groups (Extension, Policy, and Research), the FONSAG's chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer and the Committee's ex-officio member, the FONSAG Coordinator. The Working Groups include representatives from government departments, NGOs and farmers. Daily operations are overseen by the Coordinator, who manages a staff of four: a finance officer, a technical assistant, a librarian and a secretary.

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Karen Ross, Conservation International
Jon Grant, Botswana Bird Club
Mark MacKay, Mokolodi Nature Reserve (Peace Corps volunteer)
Jody Camp, Mokolodi Nature Reserve (Peace Corps volunteer)
Bronwyn Mitchell, Conservation International (Peace Corps volunteer)
Delys Spear, Mpandamatenga Conservation Trust (Observer)

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Erica Burman, World Resources Institute (Observer)
Bernard Sobotta, representing proposed Tswapong Hills Nature Park (Observer)
Marek Marchiniak, representing proposed Tswapong Hills Nature Park (Observer)