

Office of the
UNDP Resident Representative



**Official launch of the
Kgalagadi South
Indigenous Vegetation Project**

Bokspits, 10th April 2003

UNDP Comments by

Bjoern Foerde
Resident Representative

*Director of Ceremonies
Honourable Member of Parliament, Rre Lesedi Mothibamele
Kgosi Toto II
Kgosi Esterhuizen and your colleagues from neighbouring villages
District Commissioner
Council Secretary
Council Chairman
Land Board Secretary
Land Board Chairman
Honourable Councillors
Heads of Departments
Visiting Communities Representatives from Boteti and Kweneng
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to be here in Bokspits today at the launch of the **Indigenous Vegetation Project** for Kgalagadi South.

The launching here today is a testament to the hard work that many people have put into making it a reality. This is a birth towards which we, and many of our partners here and elsewhere in Africa, have been working for, for a long time.

Last year the United Nations Development Programme assisted in organizing the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. At this summit, nations of the world came together and discussed their progress in achieving global goals of reducing poverty and environmental decline. There was consensus at the Summit that although targets have already been set and agreed upon, we must actively move to a phase of **implementation**, so as to actually reach these targets.

I regard what we are doing here today as a step towards the practical implementation of the goals that the government of Botswana, alongside other governments of the world, have committed themselves to. This is commitment in action to realizing what has been written in the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biodiversity, the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, the Millennium Development Goals, as well as Botswana's own National Vision of pursuing a fully integrated approach towards conservation and development by 2016.

We at the United Nations Development Programme in Botswana have been working hand in hand with our colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture for this project to come this far. I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for hosting and implementing the Indigenous Vegetation Project.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Finance for their commitment as signatories on behalf of the government of Botswana, for providing a very substantial contribution in kind to the implementation.

Project team members have committed themselves to supporting and working together with the communities in order to make this project a success. I encourage you to keep up the good work to ensure that your endeavours bear the desired fruits.

Most importantly, I would like to thank the BORAVAST and Khawa communities for having agreed to participate in this project. Your participation does not only represent the Kgalagadi District. It represents Botswana as a country.

You have been told that we are participating in it with two other countries; Kenya and Mali. And I am very happy to see you gathered here today, for you are the people who will make this project work. You are the men and women who will demonstrate how community members can stand together and rehabilitate their environment. You will show how community members can join hands to fight poverty, and ensure that your future generations will inherit an environment which is able to provide them with healthy and secure livelihoods.

Over the next five years you have an opportunity to effectively address the environmental challenges that you face.

I see among us here today there are community representatives from the other two project sites in Botswana – Mopipi and Kweneng. I am told your community representatives were also present at Mopipi when their project was launched last month. This is the spirit you should adopt. I urge to keep learning from each other and exchanging ideas on these projects for your mutual benefit.

Director of Ceremonies!

Considering all the work that has been put into the project to bring it to this stage, this launch marks only the beginning of a great task that lies ahead. And you are the very people to ensure that we achieve what we have set out to do.

This project has Community Support Managers resident here in Kgalagadi. I will encourage you to make use of them. They are here to help you manage your environment better. But you the community are the owners.

In five years time, we hope that you, alongside your colleagues from Kweneng and Boteti, will be demonstrating implementable models for community-driven rangeland rehabilitation. These models are also aimed

at increasing our knowledge and understanding about the biodiversity that exists in our arid areas, and above all, reducing poverty and hence improving livelihoods especially at grass root level.

Furthermore, the models are aimed at transforming the way communal rangelands in Botswana are managed and utilised, and will be showcased and contribute towards the revitalisation of rural economies in Botswana and elsewhere in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Me and my colleagues from the Government of Botswana have been given the honour of planting three trees here in your kgotla. We will plant these trees to mark the launch of this project in your area.

The planting, like the launch, marks the beginning of a process that you now carry responsibility for. I will not be able to return to Bokspits every week to nurture and water the tree that I plant. I leave it with you. It is yours to protect, look after, and help grow. You will enjoy its shade when the sun is hot, and the protection it provides from the wind.

I trust that when I am able to return after a few years to your area that this will be one of many new trees I will find flourishing in Kgalagadi south. I am confident that you can make this project a success, and I wish you all the best in your efforts.

PULA!