



Republic of Botswana

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 2026 COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
SPEECH**

**Presented by
Honourable Minister**

Ramaotwana Nelson Ramaotwana

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INTRODUCTION

1. **Mr. Chairman, I** wish to present to this Honourable House the 2026/2027 Budget Estimates for the Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services – Head 2900.
2. **Mr. Chairman,** before presenting the Ministry’s Budget Estimates, please allow me to brief this Honourable House on the performance of the Ministry during 2025/2026 financial year.
3. My Ministry remains committed to enhancing the justice sector through legislative and policy development that is inclusive. As you are all aware, inclusivity is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 which requires of UN member states like Botswana to “*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*”. The theme of my Government’s maiden development plan, NDP 12, is *Building a Diversified and Inclusive Deep Economy for sustainable jobs*, which is very consistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, and the NDP 12 true north of transforming the nation into a *high-income, digitally enabled, export driven and economically diversified Botswana where every citizen is employed, empowered, and fulfilled*.



Gender Mainstreaming in the Criminal Justice System

4. **Mr Chairman**, in implementing strategic reforms to strengthen a child-friendly justice system, a key initiative during this financial year has been the launch of a multi-sectoral Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for handling children's cases and the holding of a Judges' Colloquium to consult on the SOPs. These efforts aim to transform the legal and institutional framework so it becomes more responsive, inclusive, and sensitive to children's needs, ensuring stronger protection of children's rights within the justice system. The development SOPs is to guide child-sensitive legal processes. The Judges' Colloquium is part of the broader national effort to establish a fully functional child-friendly justice system. My Ministry will continue collaborating with stakeholders to support these reforms and ensure a justice system that upholds fairness, protection, rehabilitation, and the dignity of every child in Botswana.

5. **Mr Chairman**, my Ministry has made progress in institutionalising gender mainstreaming within the criminal justice system by engaging a consultant to train justice sector stakeholders on Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines and develop an implementation plan. The Guidelines ensure that policies, processes, and services within the justice system are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the different needs and experiences of all genders. The Ministry



is now cascading and integrating this process across the justice sector through strategic annual plans and progress will be monitored periodically using the developed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework.

6. **Mr Chairman**, in so far as ensuring that children of refugees access equitable and quality tertiary education is concerned, government obligation under the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is providing basic education only. It is against the foregoing that my Ministry has partnered with tertiary educational institutions and private sector to sponsor refugees at tertiary institutions.

Legal Aid Services

7. **Mr. Chairman**, further to the legislative development and policies in pursuit of access to justice, we have Legal Aid Botswana (LAB) whose primary mandate is to provide legal education, advice, and representation to indigents members of our society who cannot afford legal services in the private sector.
8. **Mr. Chairman**, LAB continues to bring legal services closer to the people of Botswana. Under the current strategy, dubbed '*re a ba latela*' LAB aims to ensure that indigent members of the public do not travel more than a 150-kilometre radius to access legal aid



services. In pursuit of this objective, LAB has significantly enhanced accessibility by commencing the establishment of a new operational centre in Ghanzi, adding to the six (6) operational centres delivered under NDP 11.

9. Furthermore, LAB has access to four (4) visiting offices. The facilities are situated across Botswana in Mochudi, Letlhakane, Kavimba and Ghanzi. Some of the sites are in collaboration with Stepping Stone International (SSI) which LAB has an established partnership to utilize their offices during visiting schedules. These initiatives demonstrate LAB's continued efforts to decentralise services.
10. **Mr. Chairman**, LAB has made significant strides in the provision of legal representation. An official launch of the Criminal Legal Aid Programme, incorporating media and stakeholder engagement, was done in January 2026. Further to that, regional launches were done in all the six (6) centres. This will enable stakeholders to become aware of the programme and to take advantage of same, through referrals.
11. In addition, the outsourced mediation service continues to gain traction, with a notable increase in cases referred for mediation. As



at end of the third quarter, mediated cases surpassed the target 115 by 26. This has resulted in improved service delivery turnaround times and positive settlement rate.

12. **Mr. Chairman**, let me acknowledge the support extended to LAB by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has yielded tangible benefits over the years. One notable outcome of this collaboration under the current financial year is the UNDP-funded billboard advertising LAB services at strategic locations in Gaborone.

13. **Mr. Chairman**, LAB has embraced technology and digital transformation to improve service delivery, internal systems, and operational efficiency. Following the development of ICT strategy, a five-year ICT development blueprint, known as the Statement of User Requirements (SOUR), has been developed to guide the phased development and deployment of LAB's digital infrastructure.

14. **Mr. Chairman**, despite the above achievements, LAB is faced with several significant challenges such as shortages in human capital and high staff turnover, inadequate resources (laptops, vehicles, furniture) and limited office space.



Human Rights & Equity

15. **Mr. Chairman,** Botswana continues to demonstrate its commitment to the uplifting the dignity of San people. His Excellency the President at the occasion on his maiden SONA acknowledged the sanctity of the rights of indigenous communities and committed remedying past transgressions.

16. **Mr. Chairman,** Extensive consultations of the San communities have been carried out but had to be halted due to economic meltdown currently besieging Botswana. My Ministry facilitated the participation, inclusion and integration of San communities in the development of the government' National Development Plan 12. San Communities were facilitated to participate in the development of the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP). As part of this inclusion effort, interviews were conducted with San representatives and subject matter experts to gather their perspectives on San economic inclusion. Representatives from San communities across five Districts of the Okavango, Kgalagadi, Boteti, Ghanzi, and Charleshill were physically present at the BETP LABS. During the LAB sessions, representatives of the San developed a culturally appropriate programme, which was subsequently submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Development to inform the National Development Plan 12.



Adoption of the Government's National Plan in November 2025 and the Human Rights Chapter of the Plan fully address human rights claim for redress for Indigenous peoples of Botswana by among other things, committing to positioning Botswana as an Authority in advocacy and protection of rights of indigenous peoples, the ratification of all Regional and International instruments that promote the protection of rights of indigenous peoples, making Central Kalahari Game Reserve a symbolic with recognition of Indigenous People and the Right of Return and formalizing participation mechanism for San Communities to ensure their meaningful participation in development.

17. The Government's commitment to uplifting the dignity of indigenous peoples has also been acknowledged and positively received at the international level. In this regard, attention is drawn to the End-of-Mission Statement issued in September 2025 by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, following his working visit to Botswana from 1st September to 12th September, 2025. The Special Rapporteur commended Botswana's demonstrated political will, openness to reform, and growing leadership in the region with respect to the recognition, protection and promotion of Indigenous Peoples' rights.



18. **Mr. Chairman,** Botswana continues to demonstrate strong performance in governance and human rights. According to the 2024 Mo Ibrahim Index, Botswana scored 65.8 percent, ranking 5th in Africa, well above both the continental and Southern African averages. This reflects sustained commitment to good governance and the rule of law.
19. **Mr. Chairman,** my Ministry remains actively engaged with regional and international human rights mechanisms. In compliance with Article 62 of the African Charter, Botswana presented its 4th and 5th Periodic Report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in October 2025 Banjul, The Gambia.
20. Additionally, in collaboration with civil society, Government submitted follow-up reports under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in the year 2025.
21. **Mr. Chairman,** my ministry is currently coordinating the submission of the CERD substantive Human Rights State Report which is due in March 2026, as well as the Universal Periodic Review Mid-Term Report, which is due by September 2026. Timely



submission of human rights State Reports enhances Botswana's human rights rankings.

22. **Mr, Chairman**, these efforts reaffirm Botswana's commitment to strengthening human rights, meeting international obligations, and maintaining our leadership in governance in the continent.

Anti- Human Trafficking

23. **Mr. Chairman**, my Ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to the fight against human trafficking, and we are fully committed to strengthening regional and international cooperation to combat this transnational organised crime. In fulfilment of this commitment, my Ministry has advanced the process towards the ratification and domestication of the SADC Protocol Against Trafficking in Persons. The Protocol provides a comprehensive framework for cooperation among SADC Member States in preventing and combating trafficking in persons, protecting and assisting victims, and prosecuting offenders. Ratification and implementation of this Protocol will further enhance our ability to work collaboratively with neighbouring countries in addressing cross-border trafficking networks.

24. Furthermore, **Mr. Chairman**, I am pleased to report that my Ministry, with the support of the International Organization for



Migration (IOM), moved from policy development to full-scale implementation of the four human trafficking operational frameworks, namely the Standard Operating Procedures, the National Referral Mechanism, the Communication Strategy, and the Trainer of Trainers Guide. These frameworks have significantly strengthened coordination, clarified institutional roles, and improved victim-centred responses across the country.

25. **Mr. Chairman**, my Ministry has intensified training of frontline service providers such as police officers, prosecutors, immigration officers and social workers across the country. Through this capacity-building efforts, a total of 1,591 officers have now been capacitated, enhancing detection, investigation, and prosecution of trafficking in persons cases. In addition, nationwide awareness-raising campaigns have been conducted and are aimed at preventing human trafficking as well as informing the public on available reporting mechanisms, and reducing vulnerability, particularly among women and children.

Refugee Management

26. **Mr. Chairman**, my Ministry is committed to the welfare and management of recognised refugees and asylum seekers in line with the provisions of the international law and our domestic statutes. On the 1st of November 2025, I commenced the Refugees



(Recognition and Management) Act whose provisions are aligned to international best practices such as protection of family members of a refugee and a robust status determination process that will ensure that only eligible persons are granted refugee protection in Botswana.

27. In so far as remove reservations Botswana entered on the ratification of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees;
28. **Mr. Chairman,** the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has revised and changed its level of representation in Botswana. The UNHCR field office in Dukwi has been closed and UNHCR will support Botswana from Pretoria, South Africa. This means that some of the refugee management and welfare roles that were implemented by UNHCR will be done by government. This means an increase in the Department's 2026/2027 budget, where most costs associated with their upkeep, in terms of procurement of food and non-food items will be borne by Government.



2025/26 BUDGET UTILISATION

RECURRENT BUDGET ESTIMATES

29. **Mr. Chairman**, during the 2025/2026 financial year, my Ministry was allocated a budget of One billion and fifteen million, Three Hundred and Fourteen thousand, Six hundred and Ninety pula (**P1,015,314,690**). As at end of January 2026, a total of Seven Hundred and Fourty-Eight Million, Four Hundred and Fifty-Seven Thousand and Seventy-Five Pula (**P748,457,075**) has been utilised representing 74%.
30. **Mr. Chairman**, it is important to note that due to the moratorium on issuance of Government Purchase Orders, overtime and travel, the expenditure has drastically reduced, save for Botswana Correctional Services, as their business had to continue none the less.
31. **Mr. Chairman**, it is also important to highlight that the Ministry has a new structure which will be implemented during the next financial year and Botswana Prison Services, will be an Independent Department hence a decrease in my Ministry budget.



2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSALS

Recurrent Budget

32. **Mr. Chairman**, now it gives me great honour to present to this esteemed Parliament the **Recurrent Budget Estimates** for the financial year 2026/2027 for Organisation 2900: **Ministry of Justice and Correctional Services**.
33. **Mr. Chairman**, I hereby request that the sum of One Hundred and Fifty-Three Million, Two Hundred and Ninety-Five Thousand, Five Hundred and Sixty Pula (**P153,295,560**) be approved to enable the Ministry to fulfil its mandate effectively. The proposed budget is to be shared as follows:

2901-Headquarters (MJCS)

34. **Mr Chairman**, I propose One hundred and Twenty-Nine Million and Ninety-One Thousand, Seven Hundred Pula (**P129,091,700**) to be allocated for Headquarters. These funds will cover; Payment to headquarters salaries, allowances, subvention to Legal Aid Botswana and office Accommodation.

2904-Refugee Management and Anti-Human Trafficking

35. **Mr. Chairman**, I propose an allocation of Twenty-Four Million, Two hundred and Three Thousand, Eight Hundred and Sixty Pula



(P24,203,860). This budget will cater for provision of core relief items to refugees, welfare and repatriation of refugees, food supplies for asylum seekers and recognised refugees, maintenance of houses and other related needs.

Development Budget

36. **Mr. Chairman**, allow me now to give an overview of my Ministry's 2025/26 Development Budget performance.

37. **Mr. Chairman**, my Ministry was allocated funds amounting to Seventy-Two Million, Five Hundred and Eleven Thousand, Six Hundred and Fifty-Four Pula (**P72,511,654**) to fund Ministry Headquarters', Prisons and Legal Aid Botswana projects. Expenditure as at the end of January 2026 stood at Eleven Million, Seven Hundred and Seventeen Thousand, Two Hundred and Sixty Pula (**P11,717,260**) or (**16%**) of the 2025/2026 Development Budget. The under-expenditure is due to poor project management by some Contractors, delayed procurement processes and protracted resolution of complaints on tenders awarded resulting in delayed project commencement.

38. **Mr. Chairman**, in our attempt to enhance and improve the status quo, my Ministry is requesting Forty-Eight Million, Nine Hundred and Forty Thousand, Four Hundred Pula (**P48,940,400**) for the



Development Budget, for the year 2026/2027 financial year. The amount requested will be allocated as follows;

Ministry Headquarters- 2901

39. **Mr. Chairman**, I request the Honourable House to approve a total of Sixteen Million, Five Hundred and Six Thousand, Five Hundred and Thirty Pula (**P16,506,530**) to cater for rehabilitating key infrastructure, including the water supply system, access and internal roads, sanitation facilities, Records Management System and administrative infrastructure at Dukwi Refugee Camp.
40. **Mr. Chairman**, The Legal Aid Botswana development budget for **2026/27** totals Thirty-Two Million, Four Hundred and Thirty-Three Thousand, Eight Hundred and Seventy Pula (**P32,433,870**). This will fund three key initiatives: **P10 million** for ICT infrastructure upgrades and digitalisation to improve service delivery; Nineteen Million, Four Hundred and Thirty-Three Thousand, Eight Hundred and Seventy Pula (**P19,433,870**) for the establishment of a Legal Aid Botswana office in **Letlhakane**; and **P3 million** for the relocation and fitting of the Head Office and Gaborone Centre.



CONCLUSION

41. **Mr. Chairman**, this concludes my presentation of the 2026/27 Budget estimates for my Ministry. I therefore move that the sum of One hundred and fifty-three million, Two hundred and Ninety Five Thousand Five hundred and Sixty Pula (**P153,295,560.00**) under the Recurrent Budget for Organisation 2900 be approved and stand part of the Schedule of the Appropriation (2026/2027) Bill, 2026 (Bill No.1 of 2026), and that the sum Forty-Eight Million, Nine Hundred and Forty Thousand, Four Hundred Pula (**P48,940,400**) under the Development Budget for organisation **2900** be approved and stand part of the estimates for the financial year **2026/27**.

I thank you **Mr. Chairman**.

