



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE
AND**

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

HONOURABLE RAMAOTWANA NELSON RAMAOTWANA

ORGANISATION 1700

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

March, 2026



INTRODUCTION

1. **Chairperson**, it is my honour to present to this Honourable Committee the budget estimates for financial year 2026/2027 for Organisation 1700 – Office of the Ombudsman. The total Recurrent Budget estimate for the 2026/2027 financial year amounts to **Sixty-Seven Million, Four Hundred and Twenty Thousand, Six Hundred and Sixty Pula Only (P 67,420,660)** and the Development Budget is **Ten Million, Five Hundred Thousand Pula Only (P 10,500,000.00)**. However, let me first apprise the House on the activities of the Office of the Ombudsman for Financial Year 2025/2026.

MANDATE

2. **Chairperson**, the Office of the Ombudsman is mandated by the Ombudsman Act No.22 of 2021 to investigate complaints and allegations of maladministration and human rights violations against government departments, parastatal organisations and private entities, and recommend remedial action to address any injustice suffered in consequence of any proven maladministration and human rights violation. The office therefore serves as one of the key contributors to good governance, democracy and the rule of Law in Botswana as it constantly holds departments of government and private entities to account for their actions and to remedy any injustice caused to members of the public by their actions, where such are found to flout principles of good administration and respect for human rights. The Ombudsman constantly checks on the legality and fairness of government decisions through its investigations thereby providing

checks on possible abuse of power by those on who it is vested and violation of human rights.

PERFORMANCE DURING FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/2026

3. The total number of cases received for the year 2025/2026 to date is **One Thousand, Three Hundred and Forty-One (1341) cases**, of which **One Hundred and Twenty-Nine (129)** are human rights cases. **Nine Hundred and Fifty-Four (954)** were resolved, representing a resolution rate of **71%**.
4. As at January 2026, there was a cumulative backlog of **Six Hundred and Sixty-Nine (669)** complaints brought forward from previous years and resolved outside the standard of 5 months as compared to **Nine Hundred and Seventy-Nine (979) for the previous year**. From that total, **Three Hundred and Seventeen (317)** complaints were completed leading to a resolution rate of **47.4%** on the complaints brought forward.
5. The total number of recommendations by the Ombudsman to Ministries, Departments and Agencies for financial year 2025/2026, is **Fifty-Nine (59)** of which **Eleven (11)** were implemented representing an overall implementation rate of **18.6%** as at end of January, 2026.
6. **Chairperson**, thus the total case load for the financial year 2025/2026, that is, the total number of new cases plus those carried forward from previous years was **Two-Thousand, One Hundred**

and Sixty-Seven (2167), of which **Eight Hundred and Eighty-Five (885)** were completed, representing an overall resolution rate of **40.8%** as compared to **40.2%** of the previous year.

7. **Chairperson**, the foregoing demonstrates that the Office of the Ombudsman continues to improve its case resolution rate, although the desired level has not been attained. Contributing factors to non-attainment of the desired result include issues of non-response and or delayed response by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and in many instances investigation of cases would be complete, but delayed or non-implementation of corrective action stalls closure of cases.

CHALLENGES

8. **Chairperson**, the office currently has **Thirty-Eight (38)** legal investigators delivering on the core mandate. This poses a challenge of delivery as the mandate has expanded, not only in the area of investigation, but because in addition thereto, the Ombudsman is bestowed with other functions. These functions include but are not limited to, educating the public on maladministration and human rights, advising government on ratification and implementation of human rights treaties and conventions, assisting government to monitor, address and report on human rights issues at national and international level. Further, the office of the Ombudsman is enjoined to collaborate with civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, regional and international organisations in promoting human rights and research thereon.

9. **Chairperson**, for the office to effectively discharge these additional statutory functions, it requires more manpower and financial resources. For the year at issue there was no provision, in particular for public education.

10. **Chairperson**, effective investigations often require onsite inspections, particularly in complex cases or remote circumstances requiring specialised equipment. However, budgetary constraints have limited the ability to conduct these investigations effectively.

11. Capacity building initiatives for investigators has been affected by limited funding and the various moratoria on spending. For the financial year 2025/2026, the office had planned to train investigators to capacitate them to deliver on functions bestowed by the Act, but this was not carried out due to the financial challenges.

12. **Chairperson**, the Office of the Ombudsman, as the National Human Rights Institution, has applied for accreditation to various networks of national human rights bodies including, the Network of African Human Rights Institutions, to enable the office to fully participate in the deliberations of bodies such as the African Commission of Peoples and Human Rights etc. Accreditation to Regional and International networks requires compliance with the **Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions** and the **Venice Principles on Ombudsmanship**, including demonstrating financial independence and adequate resourcing of the mandate. In

this context, accreditation to some bodies has not been successful due to failure to demonstrate the foregoing.

13. **Chairperson**, following a long-standing concern that the Ministries and Departments delay in addressing Ombudsman cases, the office has resorted to using the power of subpoena to compel attendance. Additionally, there is a deliberate intent to address all Heads of Department on principles of good public administration, best administrative practices and compliance with the Human rights norms and standards and to monitor their compliance.
14. In line with the Human rights mandate, the office has commenced engagement with the Ministry of Child Welfare and Basic Education to assess the status of Human Rights education at the Basic education level, in accordance with the Ombudsman strategic plan for 2024-2029.
15. **Chairperson**, Human Rights Education and public outreach in general, are the proactive means of promoting respect for human rights and curtailment of maladministration.
16. A total of **Fifty-Six (56)** public education activities were conducted reaching a total population of **Two Thousand Four Hundred and Ninety (2490)**, was directly reached out of a targeted population of **Fifty Thousand (50 000)** in the financial year 2025/26. Others would have been reached through indirect platforms. The office also conducted Kgotla meetings to create awareness on the mandate in North West and Kgalagadi District.

17. In addition, the office attended the national exhibitions including the Business Botswana Northern Trade fair, visited Serowe Prison, Baines Drift Prison, Dukwi Refugee Camp, inspected children and women centres and further took services to Maun, Jwaneng, Mmopane, Metsimotlhabe, bus ranks, various areas in the Kweneng District, Mahalapye, Francistown, Dukwi, Tonota, Tsabong and Tutume.
18. **Chairperson**, the office is in collaboration with Legal Aid Botswana, aimed at enhancing Public Education and Awareness on human rights and improving access to justice, Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime, in respect to addressing maladministration and corruption related complaints, and Botswana Public Service College to inculcate principles of good public administration and respect for Human Rights. Memoranda of Understanding with these institutions have been signed to pool resources, share costs and expand outreach activities, ultimately reaching larger audiences while keeping expenses in check.

INTERVENTIONS

19. **Chairperson**, to address the delays caused by non-responsiveness, it is essential to encourage departments to establish clearer communication protocols and timelines for responses to Ombudsman.
20. The Office shall prioritise allocation of resources for onsite investigations, particularly in the 2026/ 2027 financial year, as well as exploring cost-effective investigative methods.

21. The office will adopt measures that focus on staff well-being, recognition, and retention. These will include introducing mental health support programmes and providing opportunities for staff professional growth.

DIGITISATION

22. **Chairperson**, in the financial year 2024-25, the Office deployed a Case Management System (CMS). It is worth noting that the system was developed in two phases. The first phase which was completed during the financial year 2023-2024, focused on internal use to allocate cases, schedule meetings within a case, track caseload of users and generate statistical reports etc. thereby providing investigators with a centralised workspace, improving efficiency, and reducing distractions and delays. The second phase involved integrating the system with the 1Gov Portal, which would enable the public to register cases, check status, request case summaries, and withdraw cases. This integration was expected to enhance service efficiency and accessibility and connectivity in remote areas.

23. **Chairperson**, since April 2025, the Case Management System (CMS) has not been operational due to persistent system errors and performance delays. The absence of an active contractual arrangement has stalled the restoration process, as a result, CMS has remained non-operational, thereby affecting the full integration and functionality of services on the 1Gov Portal. The Digital Transformation Coordination Office (DTCO) has been formally engaged and requested to expedite the migration of the servers to restore full system functionality.

24. **Chairperson**, the new mandate necessitated restructuring of the office of the Ombudsman which entailed the development of Organisational, functional and deployment structures. The functional structure has been approved and the positions for Deputy Ombudsman Human Rights, (F1 salary scale) and two Assistant Ombudsman positions, (F2 salary scale) were filled in the financial year 2025/26. Submission of the departmental structure, deployment structure and associated costing was done on 07 October 2024, and up to November 2025, the Ombudsman and Directorate of Public Service Management were in consultation regarding the number of posts necessary for effecting the deployment structure and the funding thereof subject to approval by the relevant structures.

25. **Chairperson**, for financial year 2026/2027, the planned activities include the development of the Human Rights strategy and monitoring and evaluation framework. The office will also conduct public education on Best Administrative practices and Human Rights protection and promotion, targeting multiple stakeholders, including the private entities. In the discharge of its advisory role, the office will raise awareness on the importance of ratifying relevant international human rights instruments targeting policy and decision makers and legislators. The office will conduct a continuing programme of research to inform its advisory role.

26. The office has also budgeted for consultancy services conducting a national survey on the status of Human Rights in Botswana for financial

year 2026/27. The results of the survey shall enable the institution to carryout targeted planning and programming.

2025/26 BUDGET UTILISATION

27. **Chairperson**, during financial year 2025/2026, the Office of the Ombudsman was allocated an amount of **Sixty-Six Million, Five Hundred and Eighty-Four Thousand, One Hundred Pula Only (P66,584,100.00)**, under the recurrent budget. Out of this amount, **Forty-One Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Eight Thousand, Four Hundred and Eighty-One Pula only (P41,688,481.00)** representing **62.61%** was spent, as at 31st January 2026. The figure is expected to grow beyond this by the close of the financial year.

28. Under the Development Budget, the office was allocated **Ten Million, Two Hundred Thousand Pula Only (P10,200,000.00)**, and revised to **Four Million, Six Hundred and Sixty-Nine Thousand, Five Hundred and Six (P4,669,506)** for Maun office accommodation and refurbishment of staff housing in Francistown.

29. There was underspending on these projects due to the following:

a. The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure is in the process of outsourcing services to expedite completion of Maun Office.

b. The Francistown staff house refurbishment project commenced in the financial year 2025/2026 but has been delayed due to

adverse weather conditions and late payment of the contractor's claims. Progress is at **66%** as opposed to the planned **82%**.

30. **Chairperson**, based on the above, only **One Million, Two Hundred and Forty-Six Thousand, Eight Hundred and Thirty-Seven Pula Only (P1,246,837.00)**, representing **26.7%** of the revised budget was spent during the plan period.

2026/27 BUDGET PROPOSALS

RECURRENT BUDGET

31. **Chairperson**, the provision requested to meet the financial requirements for the Office of the Ombudsman for the Financial Year 2026/2027 is **Sixty-Seven Million, Four Hundred and Twenty Thousand, Six Hundred and Sixty Pula Only (P67,420,660)**. This represents an increase of **only 1.256%** over the 2025/2026 provision to cater for the resourcing of the new mandate of Human Rights.

DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

32. **Chairperson**, a total of **Ten Million, Five Hundred Thousand Pula Only (P10,500,000)** for the financial year 2026/2027 is requested under the Development Budget, to cover for the completion of the Maun office project, Maun staff housing design and refurbishment of Francistown staff housing apartments.

CONCLUSION

33. **Chairperson**, this concludes my budget proposal. I therefore move that the sum of **Sixty Seven Million, Four Hundred and Twenty Thousand, Six Hundred and Sixty Pula (P67,420,660)** under the Recurrent budget for organization 1700; be approved and stand part of the schedule of the Appropriation (2026/2027) Bill, 2026 (Bill No.1 of 2026), and that the sum of **Ten Million, Five Hundred Thousand Pula (P10,500,000)** under the Development Budget for Organisation 1700; be approved and stand part of the Estimates for the 2026/2027 financial year.

34. I move accordingly.

I thank you, **Mr. Chairman.**