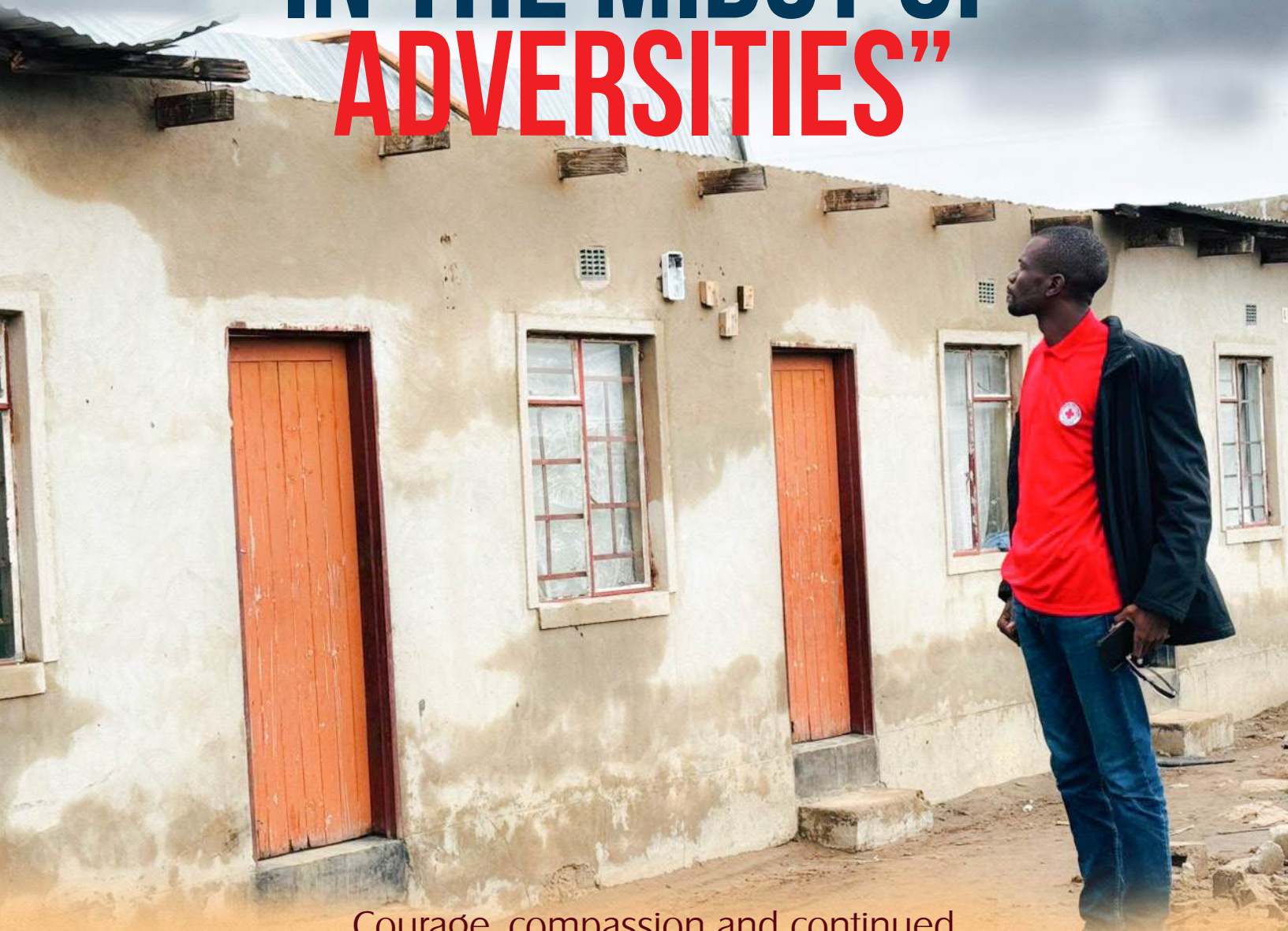




OUT REACH

JUN 2025

“STANDING STRONG IN THE MIDST OF ADVERSITIES”



...Courage, compassion and continued
commitment to serve humanity wherever
and whenever the need arises.

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Foreword

As we navigate the challenges we face, the resilience of our communities and the unwavering spirit of humanitarian response has never been more evident.

From prolonged drought conditions affecting livelihoods and food security, to sudden and destructive floods displacing thousands, we have witnessed both the extremes of nature and the extraordinary strength of collective action.

In response to the drought, our teams have worked tirelessly to ensure the affected communities have access to clean water and to distribute food relief items to the hardest-hit communities. These efforts are not only about meeting urgent needs, but also about helping communities adapt and build resilience for the future.

At the same time, our flood response had mobilized emergency shelter and psychosocial support for those impacted. In coordination with local authorities and volunteers, we have reached affected families swiftly, ensuring safety, dignity and hope during times of great upheaval.

Health remains at the heart of our mission. Through initiatives such as Saving Lives and Livelihoods, we continue to improve access to life-saving vaccines and protect vulnerable populations from the impact of disease outbreaks. Additionally, our Malaria prevention and response efforts reached those in high-risk areas with timely education, helping to reduce transmission and save lives. This newsletter brings you stories of courage, compassion and of the continued commitment of the Botswana Red Cross Society to serve humanity wherever and whenever the need arises. We thank our partners for standing with us and for making this work possible.

Kutlwano Mukokomani, PhD.





Editor's *Note*

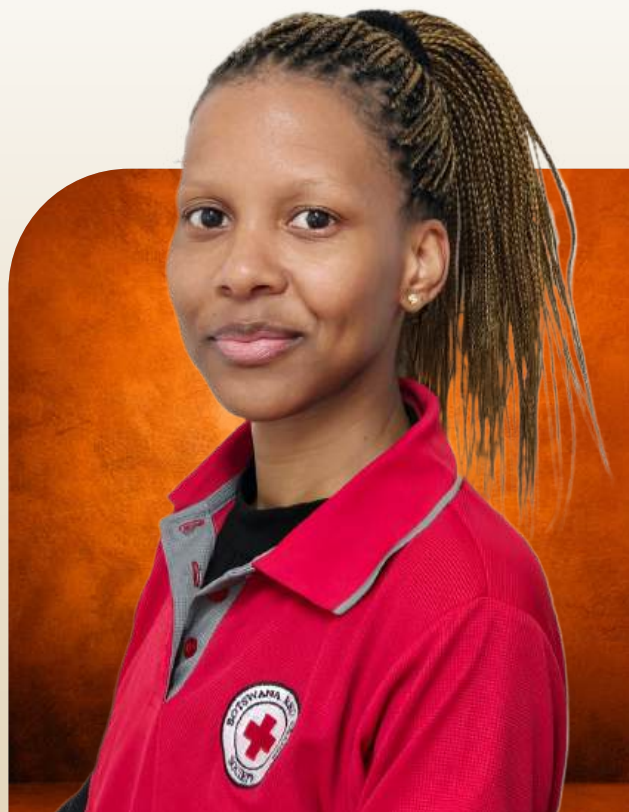
Each time we bring together an issue of The Outreach, I am reminded of the remarkable heart, dedication, and resilience that define our work, not only within our offices, but more importantly, in the communities we serve.

This June 2025 edition offers a glimpse into moments where humanity truly triumphed, a hand extended, a life touched, and a community strengthened. Whether it is volunteers travelling great distances to reach the most vulnerable, or teams responding swiftly to disasters and health emergencies, each story reflects the unwavering spirit of compassion in action.

To all who give their time, skills, and hearts to this cause, thank you. These pages belong to you. May they serve as both a celebration of your impact and a reminder of the profound purpose behind our mission.

With deep appreciation,

Sandra Rottah Sèthaiso
Communications & Public Relations Officer



Botswana Red Cross Leads the Charge in Drought Relief: A Lifeline for Communities Amidst Crisis

Disaster Risk Management

The 2023/2024 agricultural season brought more than just dry weather to Botswana, it brought one of the most severe droughts the country has seen in over a decade. Fields turned to dust, livestock weakened, and more than 72,000 people were left facing a growing crisis of food and water insecurity. With blistering heatwaves and parched land stretching across the country, the situation was dire.

But when the land stopped giving, the people didn't give up and neither did the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS).

With support from the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), BRCS launched an emergency response in some of the hardest-hit areas being Mabutsane, Hukuntsi, and North-East Districts bringing life-saving relief where it was needed most.

Between September 2024 and February 2025, hundreds of families received unconditional cash grants—support that gave them the power to choose, to buy food, essentials, and start reclaiming their independence. In a time when every pula mattered, these grants gave people back a sense of control.

But the work didn't stop at short-term relief. BRCS knew that building back stronger meant investing in the future. That's why 111 people (mostly women) received training and assets to start their own poultry layer businesses. What began as a crisis is now turning into a path toward sustainable income and self-reliance.

For the youngest victims of the drought, being children under five, malnutrition became a growing threat. BRCS stepped in with specially designed food and hygiene packages, reaching 300 children with three months of vital care. Volunteers also made weekly home visits, sharing practical hygiene tips and offering a friendly, familiar face in tough times.

And where there was no water, BRCS helped bring it back. Working with the Water Utilities Corporation, they solarized a borehole in Kutuku, revived another in Monong, and brought life back to the Butale dam. In Matshelagabedi, two large water tanks now serve the community, a small but powerful shift toward water security. Local WASH campaigns helped make sure this precious resource would be better managed and respected moving forward.

As the emergency operation ended, BRCS brought together everyone who mattered, community leaders, government reps, and the very people who lived through the drought for a two-day reflection workshop in Francistown. It wasn't just about looking back, it was about learning, growing, and preparing for the next challenge. Because one thing is certain: droughts may come again, but communities, when empowered and supported, can rise stronger every time.

Through compassion, quick action, and a deep belief in human dignity, the Botswana Red Cross Society didn't just respond to a drought. They helped write a different kind of story. One of resilience, recovery and hope.





Disaster Risk Management



Growing Food Security and Climate-Smart Agriculture

Botswana Red Cross Society is committed to ensuring food security by continuing to support the community of Gweta with fresh produce and training on climate smart agriculture. The Gweta Farm Project is currently planting vegetables for sale, mostly tomatoes and cabbages. The planting plan largely depends on the seasons. Apart from planting crops, vegetables and fruits for sale, the farm also houses beneficiaries' (communities') projects.

The farm acts as a demonstration site for locals to observe and improve their own farming practices. Four farmers are engaged in the day-to-day running of the farm. Additionally, one family has had the opportunity to learn about farming through the project, as they were using it as a benchmark before starting their own farm in Gweta. This year, we have had about four new farmers, and a local teacher also consulted us about farming

in Gweta as he explores agricultural opportunities in the area.

Adding to this, we have about three beneficiaries from the drought relief project whom we have housed at the farm. They are currently keeping about 170-layer chickens. Furthermore, there are about five active beneficiaries who have each been allocated approximately one hectare to plant rain-fed crops for themselves.

The local police department in the village also benefits from the farm, as they collect grass and crop residues to feed their exhibit livestock.





BRCS as part of the National Flood Emergency Coordination

As a leading humanitarian organization, the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) played a pivotal role in the multi-sectoral National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), which was activated to coordinate the national response to the recent floods. Guided by its humanitarian mandate and commitment to the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, and Independence, BRCS ensured that the needs of the most

vulnerable were placed at the center of response efforts.

From conducting rapid needs assessments to supporting relief logistics and multi-agency coordination, BRCS helped bridge the gap between affected communities and the broader emergency response system. Its presence was crucial in ensuring that the most vulnerable were not left behind and that aid was delivered where it was needed most, when it was needed most.



BRCS Responds to Devastating Floods Across Botswana

Botswana has recently experienced one of its most devastating flood events in recent history, affecting more than 23,000 people across 14 districts.

The heavy rains brought widespread damage, destroying personal property, displacing thousands of families, and disrupting livelihoods. Critical infrastructure such as schools, bridges, and key access roads were damaged or rendered impassable. In just a matter of days communities found themselves stranded.

In the hardest-hit districts (Gaborone, Tlokweng, Ghantsi, Kweneng and

Francistown) a total of 1,489 households were evacuated to eight temporary shelters.

These emergency evacuation centers have been vital in providing immediate safety and support to displaced families. In response, BRCS delivered a comprehensive and multi-faceted response to the flooding crisis, prioritizing support that helps families recover with dignity and resilience. This includes unconditional cash grants to help meet immediate basic needs, and conditional grants to assist households in repairing their damaged homes. In addition to

financial support, BRCS provided a range of essential services such as temporary shelter, non-food items.

The National Society also provided trainings on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), Psychosocial First Aid (PFA), and Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI).

A total of 135 volunteers, staff and stakeholders were trained.

Community engagement and accountability (CEA) remain central to the response, ensuring that affected families are not only supported, but heard and involved in decisions that impact their recovery.



Disaster Risk Management

Bringing Hope After the Floods: BRCS and Partners Reach Underserved Communities

When the floods swept through Botswana in early 2025, the damage was swift and severe. While much of the national response focused on the hardest-hit districts, some affected communities quietly slipped through the cracks.

To fill this gap, the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS), in partnership with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, launched a compassionate, community-centered Flood Relief Project in Kanye, Molepolole, Moshupa, and Tlokweng.

BRCS worked hand in hand with district leaders, Social and Community Development (S&CD) officers and District Commissioners to ensure no one was left behind. Guided by government reports and real-time assessments, the project prioritized people who had not yet received assistance.

In total, 58 local stakeholders helped shape the project, offering crucial insights and data that made the relief effort more effective

and better tailored to community needs. In Kanye, 65 individuals received essential items being mattresses, blankets, hygiene kits, and food. For 10 families who lost their homes, tents provided much-needed temporary shelter.

In Kweneng, 78 people were supported from the RAC warehouse, while in Moshupa, 58 beneficiaries across 11 villages were reached with help, thanks to the district's provision of a vehicle to support logistics. In Tlokweng, 40 people were supported with food and non-food essentials.

At the heart of the effort were 32 volunteers, who brought not just supplies but compassion, trust, and understanding to the communities they served. Their connection to the people helped smooth the distribution process and build confidence in the work BRCS was doing.

In Mochudi, where the geography and flood risks made conditions especially difficult, BRCS ran door-to-door Water,

Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) campaigns, reaching 49 households and 103 people with life-saving messages. Meanwhile, psychosocial support (PSS) was provided to 85 people in Kgatleng. At Linchwe II Junior Secondary School, a group of 21 visually impaired students received targeted support after floods damaged their dorms and study materials.

Individual counselling sessions also reached migrants, unemployed individuals, and families struggling with economic hardship.

BRCS counsellors offered psychological first aid, helped people process trauma, and connected those in need with further professional support through S&CD offices.

All volunteers were trained in disaster preparedness, WASH, and psychosocial support, ensuring they could provide more than just physical relief. They brought empathy, strength, and a human touch to the recovery process.

BRCS Partners with Multiple Organizations to Respond to Devastating Floods Across Botswana

In early 2025, Botswana experienced one of the most severe flood events in recent history, affecting more than 23,000 people across various districts. The heavy rains caused widespread destruction, displacing thousands of families, damaging homes, schools, bridges, and critical access roads, and disrupting livelihoods. Many communities found themselves isolated and in urgent need of support.

In the hardest-hit districts, hundreds of households were evacuated to temporary shelters, which became important safety shelters for those highly affected by the floods. Recognizing the scale of the crisis, the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) joined forces with multiple partners to deliver a comprehensive and compassionate response reaching both the worst-affected areas and underserved communities.

The BRCS-led response included a broad spectrum of assistance designed to support immediate survival and longer-term recovery. This ranged from unconditional cash grants to assist families with their basic urgent needs, to conditional grants aimed at helping households repair flood-damaged homes. Alongside financial aid, BRCS

provided temporary shelter solutions and essential non-food relief items such as mattresses, blankets, hygiene kits, and food supplies.

Recognizing the importance of health and safety, BRCS conducted door-to-door Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) campaigns, particularly in flood-prone areas, delivering life-saving information to prevent waterborne diseases. Psychosocial support and individual counseling were offered to help affected individuals cope with trauma, economic hardship, and displacement-



related stress. Special attention was also given to vulnerable groups, including visually impaired students whose dormitories and study materials were damaged.

To enhance the effectiveness and reach of the intervention, BRCS worked closely with district leaders, Social and Community Development officers, and local stakeholders. Community engagement and accountability remained central, ensuring affected families were involved in the decision-making process regarding their recovery.

Training was another critical element of the response. More than 135 volunteers, staff, and partners received capacity-building in disaster preparedness, WASH, psychosocial first aid, and protection principles covering gender and inclusion. These trained volunteers were crucial in not only distributing aid but also delivering compassionate, culturally sensitive support and fostering trust within communities.

Through this multi-partner, multi-sectoral approach, BRCS ensured that no one was left behind, reaching thousands of displaced and vulnerable people across Botswana with timely and dignified assistance to help them rebuild their lives after the devastating floods.

BRCS Brings Water Closer to Home



As an auxiliary to the government, the Botswana Red Cross Society partnered with Water Utilities Corporation to enhance water infrastructure development.

Through a project supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), BRCS successfully solarized a borehole in Kutuku village, significantly improving water supply for Kutuku and surrounding

communities, benefiting 3,439 people with access to clean water. BRCS further rehabilitated the Monong village water system in the Hukuntsi District, restoring full functionality and enhancing water access for over 1,800 residents. Under the same initiative, BRCS also provided two (2) 5,000-litre Jojo tanks to serve as water boosters during shortages. This intervention aims to improve potable water access for a village with a population

of approximately 3,986 people, ensuring a more reliable water supply for the community. Through these strategic interventions, the BRCS continues to uphold its commitment to improving community wellbeing and resilience. By investing in sustainable water solutions, BRCS is not only addressing immediate water shortages but also ensuring long-term access to clean and safe water for thousands of people.

BRCS Empowers Entrepreneurs



When the floods swept through Francistown between December 2024 and February 2025, they didn't just damage roads, homes and infrastructure, they washed away businesses and livelihoods that took years to build. For many small business owners, the aftermath wasn't just about cleaning up, it was about figuring out how to start again.

With support from the Botswana

Red Cross Society (BRCS), in partnership with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the National Disaster Management Office, 35 of those business owners took part in a two-day Business and Financial Management training program designed to help them get back on their feet and move forward even stronger than before.

When officially opening the training, BRCS Secretary General and CEO Dr. Kutlwano Mukokomani said the objectives of the training were to strengthen business and financial management skills to support effective recovery and growth after the floods, to equip participants with practical tools and strategies for rebuilding and sustaining their businesses in the face of future challenges and to promote long-term economic resilience among flood-affected entrepreneurs and their communities.

This initiative is part of a much larger effort by BRCS to reach more than 10,000 people across Botswana who were hit

hardest by the floods especially those in remote areas where help can be slow to arrive.

BRCS is deeply grateful to the University of Botswana especially Senior Business Management Lecturer Mr. Rudolf Boy, for their invaluable partnership in facilitating the training.





Disaster Risk Management

Strengthening Community Resilience: EVCA Training Empowers Local Action

The Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) has taken a significant step in disaster risk management through the recently conducted Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) training, made possible by the generous support of the Netherlands Red Cross. This initiative is part of the Community-Based Disaster Risk



Reduction (CBDRR) Project, which focuses on equipping communities with the knowledge and skills needed to manage disaster risks effectively.

The training was held in Selibe-Phikwe, bringing together 60 participants from national, district and local levels. The four-day training paved the way for in-depth EVCA assessments in Bobirwa District and Bobonong, where community members actively engaged in hazard identification and risk mapping exercises. One of the key highlights was the participation of representatives from Tsetsebjwe, Mathathane, Semolale, and Bobonong, who provided valuable insights into local vulnerabilities and capacities. Their contributions are essential in developing practical disaster preparedness and response plans tailored to their specific needs.

Through this initiative, communities are not just being assessed—they are being empowered. By utilizing the resources at their disposal and strengthening their resilience, they will be better prepared to respond to crises in the future. With continued collaboration and capacity-building efforts, BRCS remains committed to empowering communities, one assessment at a time!





Botswana Red Cross Society SG & CEO Calls for Life-Saving Action on World First Aid Day

In an inspiring speech commemorating World First Aid Day in September last year, Botswana Red Cross Society Secretary General and CEO, Dr. Kutlwano Mukokomani, emphasized the critical importance of first aid training and its life-saving impact. Addressing participants at the annual Inter Mine First Aid competition, he highlighted how this event is not just a thrilling competition, but a powerful reminder of the preparedness required to save lives in times of crisis.

Reflecting on the over forty-year history of the Inter Mine First Aid competition, Dr. Mukokomani praised the mining industry's long-standing commitment to safety. He acknowledged the importance of first aid services in reducing fatalities and injuries in the workplace and beyond, underscoring that first aid is a cornerstone of the Red Cross's humanitarian mission to alleviate suffering and save lives.

"Zero Harm" was a key theme in Dr. Mukokomani's address. He explained how this mantra has played a vital role in building confidence among industry workers, enabling them to respond quickly and effectively in emergencies. "The readiness and ability of responders to save lives cannot be overstated," he said, stressing that first aid skills are essential not only in the workplace but also at home, on the road, and in communities.

This year's theme, "First Aid and Sports," drew a powerful parallel to the dedication of Olympic athletes. Dr. Mukokomani encouraged everyone to view themselves as beacons of hope, just like athletes who endure rigorous training to achieve their goals. He urged first aid trainers to rise above challenges and stay focused on the ultimate goal: saving lives.

He also reminded the audience of the tragic loss of life due

to fires, injuries, and motor accidents, stressing the urgent need for communities to be equipped with life-saving skills. "We must empower ourselves to respond to crises and save lives, whether it's for our families, colleagues, or fellow citizens," he said.

While commending the mining industry's efforts to ensure top-tier first aid training and facilities, Dr. Mukokomani urged companies to engage with local communities, sharing their expertise and empowering them with the knowledge to act in emergencies. "Kgetsi ya tsie, e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa" — we can achieve great things when we come together.

The Botswana Red Cross Society continues to advocate for widespread first aid training, urging every individual to become competent in responding to life-threatening situations. "Everyone has the ability to save lives," Dr. Mukokomani affirmed, reiterating the importance of making first aid knowledge accessible to all.

As the event kicked off, Dr. Mukokomani wished participants good luck and encouraged them to embrace the challenge: Ready, Set, Respond! Through collective action and preparedness, he reminded everyone that we can work together to tackle humanitarian challenges and create safer, healthier communities.

The Botswana Red Cross remains steadfast in its commitment to saving lives and spreading first aid knowledge, empowering people to respond confidently and effectively in times of need.





BRCS Shows Up for Botswana on Election Day



On October 30th, as Botswana lined up to cast their votes under the hot sun, the Botswana Red Cross Society showed up for the citizens with water bottles and First Aid kits.

Over 330 Red Cross volunteers and staff spread out across the country, standing by at polling stations. One could spot them in their branded bibs, carrying first aid kits. It was all about being ready, just in case someone needed help.

And they were needed. By the end of the day, BRCS had helped 153 people. Most of them - over 70% - were women. Nearly half were elderly, pregnant, disabled or there with small children. But no one was turned away. Everyone was met with the same care and kindness.

Then there was the heat. It was a scorcher, but the Red Cross team had come prepared. They handed out more than 41,000 bottles of water, keeping people hydrated, cool and in good spirits as they waited to vote. Thanks to support from the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund and the BRCS partnership with the Independent Electoral Commission, BRCS was able to play this vital role. But at the heart of it all were volunteers who gave their time and energy

First Aiders Support Kazungula Bridge Marathon

On the morning of 20th February 2025, as the sun rose over the iconic Kazungula Bridge, excitement buzzed through the air. Runners from all over Botswana gathered at the Kazungula Bridge Mall to take part in one of Botswana's most scenic and anticipated athletic events — the Kazungula Bridge Marathon. Among the eager participants and cheering spectators stood a dedicated team of unsung heroes: the First Aid volunteers from the BRCS Kasane Sub-Branch.

A group of 20 committed volunteers had answered the call to serve. Clad in their Botswana Red Cross Society branded bibs and carrying medical kits, they were more than just support staff, they were guardians of safety, ready to spring into action whenever needed. Deployed across all race categories (5 km, 10 km, 21 km, and the challenging 42 km) the First Aiders covered the entire route from Kazungula Bridge Mall to Kasane.

Their responsibilities extended beyond administering medical attention. Working alongside the Sports Volunteer Movement, many also served as marshals, guiding runners and providing encouragement. This dual role showcased not only their medical readiness but also their spirit of community and teamwork.

Throughout the day, the First Aiders tended to several minor casualties, with most complaints being muscle pulls, dehydration and fatigue which common issues in long-distance running. For many runners, a brief pause at a First Aid station meant a much-needed moment of relief, a word of reassurance or a chance to stretch tight muscles before continuing their journey. Events like the Kazungula Bridge Marathon are more than just races, they are a celebration of community spirit, health, endurance and unity. And thanks to the unwavering commitment of the Kasane Sub-Branch volunteers, participants could focus on pushing their limits, knowing that help was always close by. The Kasane team's presence was a shining example of volunteerism in action quietly impactful, deeply compassionate and essential to the event's success. Their contribution reminds us that every successful marathon is not only about those who run but also about those who stand by, ready to catch others if they stumble.



BRCS & BCM Meet For Quality Assurance



"Since its inception, the Botswana Red Cross Society has played a pivotal role in First Aid training as testament to the responsibility bestowed upon by the Mines Quarries, Works and Machinery Act of 1978 regarding First Aid in the mines and the Chamber of Mines for trusting the BRCS through the running or judging of First Aid competitions."

This was said by Botswana Red Cross Society Head of Programmes - Health Services Ms Neo Mogowa during the Annual First Aiders meeting in March this year.

Ms. Mogowa stated that the meeting provided an opportunity to review feedback from the previous Inter-Mine First Aid competition held in Palapye and to prepare for the upcoming event.

She said a key focus would be revising the competition regulations and tests based on insights and findings from the last event.

In addition, Ms Mogowa said as a National Society, the BRCS continues to expand First Aid training to fellow men and women in the mines as well as the community so that they can be able to provide the necessary interventions in case of any emergency when in duty and

fulfilling the three basic principles of First Aid being to; save lives, prevent further injury and promote recovery.

Furthermore, she noted that in recent months, Botswana experienced devastating floods, leading to tragic loss of lives, injuries and displacement of communities, adding that the heavy rains caused widespread infrastructure damage, disrupting transportation, livelihoods and access to essential services. Additionally, Ms Mogowa said the floods have heightened health risks, including waterborne diseases and road accidents, as communities struggle to navigate the aftermath of the disaster.

She said beyond the impact of floods, motor vehicle accidents continue to claim numerous lives across the country, further emphasizing the need for immediate action and A Call To Action: Expanding First Aid Training Beyond The Mining Communities.

"Equipping families, employees and communities with First Aid skills is essential in ensuring they are prepared to respond effectively not just in their communities but also in their homes, workplaces and on the roads." She concluded.



"The BRCS continues to expand First Aid training to fellow men and women in the mines as well as the community."

When
adversities
hit...





**BRCS was
there to
respond**



MENTAL HEALTH

By Ms Goitsemodimo Thake

World Health Organization states that health is a state of full physical, mental and social well-being not the absence of disease or sickness and mental health is fundamental to good health and wellbeing. Therefore, just because someone is not ill or does not have a sickness we cannot say they are healthy. Mental health is explained as a state of mental well-being that makes it possible for individuals to deal with the pressures of life, realize their capabilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community.

Mental health is very important and maintaining mental health is vital for all individuals young and old. Everyone experience some kind of mental illness at one point or another in their life, so we have all been in same boat in our lifetime. Evolutionary psychologists propose that violence developed to achieve and was needed for survival, therefore it is part of our genetics. Our forefathers needed to be aggressive and violent before we had concrete house, security fences and walls for safety to fend themselves against danger including wild animals. Thus, individuals experiencing a mental illness are not likely to be violent than any other person and a lot of individuals with mental illness are not violent contrary to popular believes.

According to developmental psychology human development is influenced by heredity (nature) and environment

(nurture). Mental health has been found to be caused by factors like life experiences, biology and the environment which we do not have control over, and it is not personal weakness as people sometimes think. Mental illness affects everyone regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, age (children and adults), religion, gender or sex (men or women), and seeking for help is a sign of strength and willingness to be vulnerable.

Physical pain has a pain scale which is a tool used to aid individuals to communicate the intensity of their pain to a health professional, whereby individuals rate their pain on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing no pain and 10 representing the worst possible pain. Psychological and emotional pain on the other hand does not have such a simple scale of pain, and it is difficult to understand the pain and distress that comes with mental health issues. Additionally, usually the client, caregivers, guardians, parents, loved ones and partners do not understand this pain or how to deal with it.

Therefore, mental health issues and episodes can be scary at times and feels like you are experiencing and dealing with something invisible and unreal. That can lead to individuals feeling confused, miserable, fearful, embarrassment, shameful, and resort to self-harm and self-medicating with substances like drugs and alcohol to feel better and escape. Individuals with mental health

condition need professional help and professional treatment to deal with it and they cannot just pick themselves up or snap out of it. Healthy coping mechanisms include eating healthy, exercising, seeking professional help, talking about the problem with trusted people, relaxation techniques and using reliable social support systems.

As efforts to support mental health Botswana Red Cross Society has dedicated mental health services which includes mental health professionals, mental health facilities offering both traditional physical counselling to children, adults, couples and families and tele counselling.



Online Counselling

There is an increase in mental health issues in the world Botswana included especially since the outbreak of Covid 19. Online counselling existed before Covid 19 pandemic since 1960s (for example ELIZA and it available freely if anyone is interested in check it out) but gained popularity during that time due to protocols like lockdown and social distancing restrictions. Online counselling also known as ecounselling or etherapy is a procedure of mental health intervention which takes place through digital platforms like phone, video call and online messaging or chat. Etherapy making mental health care more accessible and offers clients the convenience and the flexibility of being able to access counselling from anywhere in the world and form the comfort of their homes.

Additionally, online counselling provides the privacy that face-to-face counselling lacks and clients can share things which they will not share in person. Ecounselling also decreases the stigma, discrimination, shame that is associated with going for in person counselling attributed to having mental health problems and inhibits the decision to seek counselling. Furthermore, for those individuals who cannot access face to face counselling due to obstacles like distance (for example being outside the country and seeking counselling from someone who speak same language as you and understand your culture) online counselling bridges that gap.

Even though there are some positivity that comes with online counselling some mental health professionals mentioned that there are some problems in terms of emotional connectedness when there is physical distance between the client and the therapist.

Moreover, research shows that there is no difference between cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) offered online and in person CBT, and therapeutic alliance can be achieved with both platforms of counselling. Ecounselling, specifically telephone counselling has been found to be associated with higher session impact and a stronger therapeutic alliance especially for those individuals who are not comfortable with face-to-face counselling.

Some research also suggests that online counselling is as effective as in- person counselling for treating disorders like anxiety (social anxiety) and depression, especially if the client cannot be outside for example due to their mental health issue. Therefore, even though online counselling comes with its challenges having negative views about it is the greatest challenge for both therapists and clients as you cannot benefit from something that you do not think will work for you.

Free health care services to everyone Botswana is made possible by the fact that the government of Botswana provides more than 60 percent of health care funding every financial year. As an auxiliary to the government Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) has dedicated mental health services which includes mental health professionals, mental health facilities offering both traditional physical counselling to children, adults, couples and families and online counselling.

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Tobacco: The First Step into the Trap of Substance Use

By: Mr Motlaleng Motlaleng

Centre Head - Maun
Rehabilitation Centre

At the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) Maun Rehabilitation Centre, we continue to welcome individuals seeking help—not just for tobacco use, but for a range of other substances.

This trend highlights a concerning truth: for many, tobacco was the first step down a dangerous path.

Often underestimated because of its legal status and social acceptability, tobacco becomes the “gateway” that introduces users to the world of substances. Many of our clients share a similar journey—they started smoking to fit in, to cope with stress, or out of curiosity. But tobacco rarely satisfies the growing urge to experience stronger effects. Before long, the craving

for a greater “high” drives them to experiment with alcohol, cannabis, and eventually, harder substances like methamphetamine or opioids.

This dangerous progression fuels the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Botswana, including cancers, heart disease, and chronic respiratory illnesses. Substance use not only harms individual health but also places a heavy burden on families and health systems.

At BRCS Maun Rehabilitation Centre, we remain committed to helping those caught in this cycle. Our doors are open to anyone ready to break free and rebuild their lives because the first cigarette should not be the start of a lifetime of harm.

BRCS Champions Immunization in Remote Communities

The launch of the Saving Lives and Livelihoods (SLL) project on the 14th of March this year marked a significant milestone in Botswana’s ongoing efforts to strengthen public health. At the event, the Ministry of Health (MoH) applauded the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) for its vital role in advancing immunization services, especially in underserved communities.

As part of the project, BRCS with support from the Mastercard Foundation, is working hand-in-hand with communities to bring health services closer to those who need them most. The mission is simple but urgent: to ensure that every child, no matter how remote their village, has access to life-saving vaccines and health education. As part of the project’s early activities, BRCS joined the North West District Health Management Team on a mobile outreach mission to Xaxaba, one of the most remote villages located deep within the Okavango Delta. Despite the challenging terrain, the team reached over 50 residents, delivering essential clinical services and sharing key health messages on immunization, malaria prevention, and diarrhoea. This outreach underscores BRCS’s commitment to making healthcare accessible to all, regardless of location.

Still in the North West district, BRCS trained a group of dedicated volunteers in Risk Communication and Community Engagement. These volunteers, many of whom are members of the communities they serve, are now equipped to effectively share vital health information, address concerns and promote the benefits of immunization. The goal is to protect children under five and help parents make informed choices about their health.



...Malaria Ends With Us: Reignite, Reinvert, Reimagine



The 2025 theme calls on all of us to take bold, renewed action to end malaria. Malaria continues to affect many lives, but the strength and resilience of our communities offer real hope. In the spirit of partnership and action, the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS), working closely with the District Health Management Team (DHMT) and the Ministry of Health, trained 152 volunteers, staff and stakeholders in April to join the fight against malaria, an important step in building local strength and ownership in the battle against this preventable disease.

Over the course of two days, the volunteers gained practical skills and knowledge to support their communities. They were trained in how to engage people around malaria awareness and prevention, how to explain and demonstrate the proper use of Long-Lasting Insecticidal Nets, and how to support safe indoor spraying practices. Most importantly, they learned how to speak with their communities in a way that builds trust and encourages action.

After the training, these passionate volunteers joined the district response teams for a four-week period of community outreach. They visited households, shared important health information, and supported early detection and prevention efforts on the ground. Their presence not only helped deliver life-saving resources but also reassured communities that they are not alone in this fight.

One of the most impactful parts of their work was the distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets. These nets offer

a simple but powerful layer of protection, especially for the most vulnerable—children and pregnant women. In handing out the nets, volunteers also took the time to demonstrate how to use them correctly, making sure every family understood how to keep themselves safe.

In villages like Qabo, BRCS went the extra mile by sharing messages in local languages. This helped ensure that the information was not only understood but truly connected with people's lives and experiences. When messages are delivered in familiar, culturally appropriate ways, they become more than just advice—they become tools for change.

Through these community-centred efforts, BRCS and its partners are helping people protect themselves and their loved ones. The message is clear: malaria can be defeated, and the power to end it lies within our communities. With knowledge, compassion, and collective action, malaria truly can end with us.

"With knowledge, compassion and collective action. Malaria truly can end with us."





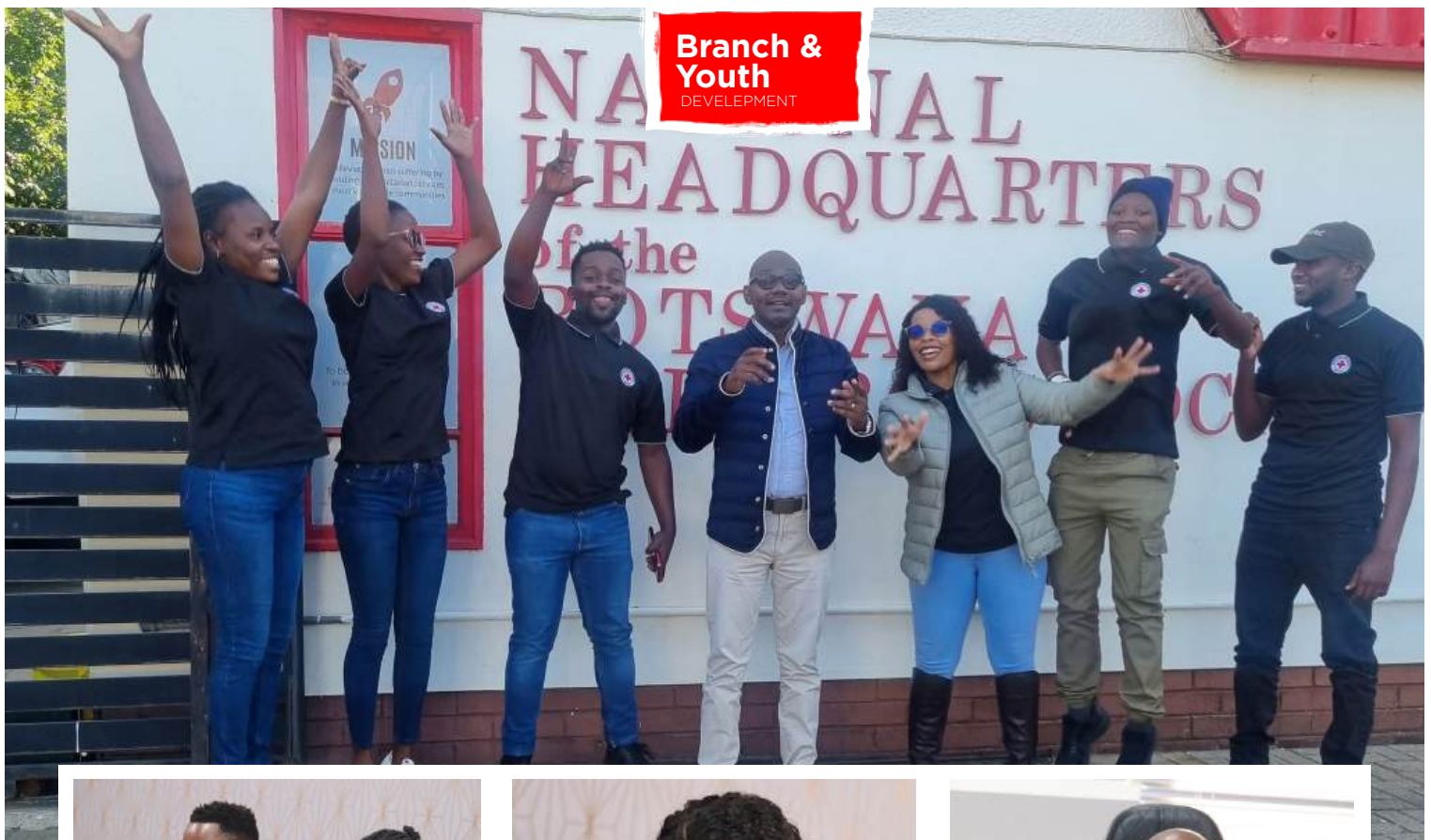
Bokaa Sub Branch Shows Care for Elders

The Bokaa Sub-branch, under Kgatleng District (Southern Division), has launched a heartwarming initiative to support the elderly members of their community. For the past three months, as elders gather at the local Post Office to collect their old age pension funds, they are now provided with a hot meal, courtesy of the Sub-branch's volunteers.

Volunteers noticed that many elders arrived at the Post Office early in the morning, some before sunrise, waiting patiently often on an empty stomach, just to collect their pension funds.

Using their own contributions, the Subbranch managed to provide hot meals for the months of April, May and June. For the elders, these meals mean more than just food, they are a reminder that they are seen, valued and loved.





National Youth Committee and Secretariat Dialogue on Advancing Youth Participation in the Society

On May 23rd this year, the Botswana Red Cross Society National Youth Committee held a strategic meeting with the Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer Dr Kutlwano Mukokomani at the National Society's headquarters in Gaborone. The engagement provided a valuable opportunity for both parties to reflect, update and align on key issues impacting youth within the National Society.

The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration between youth leadership and senior management, with the shared goal of ensuring that young people continue to play an active and meaningful role in shaping the future of the organisation. Discussions centred around the Youth Annual Activity Plan, which outlines the programs and initiatives set to take place throughout the year.

The Youth Policy was also revisited,

with updates shared on its development and the importance of its timely implementation.

Another important aspect of the meeting was the Youth Engagement Strategy, which aims to deepen youth involvement

across all levels of the Society's work. In addition, the capacitation of Red Cross school clubs was highlighted as a priority area, with emphasis on improving support, training and resources to ensure these clubs remain vibrant and impactful.





National Society Development Workshop – Southern Africa Practitioners Meeting

The National Society Development (NSD) Workshop brought together practitioners from across Southern Africa in a powerful demonstration of peer-to-peer learning, innovation, and collective growth.

At a time when the humanitarian landscape is rapidly evolving, with complex emergencies, climate change, urbanization and shifting social dynamics, our National Societies face unprecedented challenges. The workshop underscored the need not only to respond but to anticipate, adapt, and build lasting resilience within our communities.

More than just a gathering, the workshop served as a platform for transformation. Through sessions on NSD in emergencies, branch development frameworks, and collaborative initiatives, participants engaged in meaningful dialogue,

shared best practices, and strengthened our collective capacity.

The event created a valuable space where ideas flowed freely, experiences were honored, and our shared purpose was reaffirmed—to support one another, align with community priorities, and advance the goals of our broader Movement. Together, we took important steps toward building stronger, more resilient National Societies equipped to meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.



BRCS Leadership visits Branches and Sub-Branches

From April 14 to 17, 2025, the Vice President and Secretary General of the Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) Ms Otshidile Tshegetsang and Dr Kutlwano Mukokomani, undertook a significant outreach mission to sub-branches and volunteer action teams in the Central District. The visits took place across four key locations being Bobonong, Selibe Phikwe, Palapye and Serowe and brought together a total of 78 volunteers from the respective branches.

This strategic engagement aimed to foster a stronger, more seamless working relationship between the BRCS Secretariat and the governance structures at the local level. It also provided a platform for open dialogue, sharing of insights and aligning on key issues critical to the growth and unity of the National Society.

Throughout the sessions, several important topics were covered. These included discussions on strengthening volunteer and membership drive initiatives, with an emphasis on attracting and retaining committed individuals to support the Society's mission. The leadership also addressed the importance of clearly defined membership benefits and the need to continually improve volunteer support systems.

In light of the ongoing evolution of the humanitarian landscape, the team explored BRCS's digital transformation journey and reviewed key policy and legislative frameworks, including the BRCS Act. There was also a focus on member induction, management practices and enhancing awareness and understanding of the BRCS Constitution and policies.

Volunteers were further capacitated on the Code of Conduct, the proper use of the Red Cross emblem, and approaches to effective conflict resolution and management within the Society.

The visits marked a meaningful step toward reinforcing unity, shared purpose and operational transparency across BRCS structures. It also highlighted the commitment of national leadership to stay engaged with volunteers at grassroots level.

Health, Unity, Impact: Sefhare Leads the Way

In a vibrant show of unity and commitment to wellness, the Sefhare Stimulation Centre hosted a dynamic Staff and Caregivers Wellness Activity aimed at promoting physical and mental well-being among its dedicated team. The event was packed with engaging team-building activities, insightful health talks and community interaction, creating a memorable and impactful experience for all involved.

The day began with a series of energetic team-building games designed to foster collaboration and morale among staff and caregivers. These activities set the tone for a positive, participatory atmosphere that carried through the day.

A series of health talks followed, delivered by key stakeholders and professionals from the community. A Botswana Police Officer led a compelling discussion on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Awareness, emphasizing prevention and support mechanisms. A Social Welfare Officer tackled the topic of Mental Health,



highlighting the importance of emotional well-being and stress management. Lastly, a nurse delivered an informative session on healthy eating, offering practical tips on nutrition for both caregivers and children.

The talks were interactive, with participants actively engaging by asking questions and sharing their views. This open dialogue enriched the discussions and allowed for meaningful exchanges on critical health and wellness topics.

Among the distinguished guests and stakeholders present were Kgosi, representatives from the sub-branch office, Youth Office, Pretty Stars, Mmutle Primary School, Sefhare Primary School, and the Member of Parliament's Office. Their presence underscored the importance of community-wide collaboration in supporting caregivers and promoting child development.

One of the key objectives of the wellness day was to equip caregivers and staff with the skills and knowledge to address health-related challenges through sports and educational sessions.

As a token of appreciation and support, caregivers were gifted toiletry packs to take home for student use. Although some parents were unable to attend, the event's impact was clearly felt among those present. The Wellness Day was a resounding success, leaving participants motivated, informed and better connected. It served as a reminder that by coming together we can build a stronger, healthier future for all.



Kasane Sub-Branch Rebuilds Hope After Fire Tragedy

This past Valentine's Day, while many were exchanging flowers and chocolates, volunteers from the Kasane Sub-Branch chose a different kind of love story one written in compassion, care and community spirit.

The team came together to support a local family of ten (eight siblings and two adults) who had lost their home and belongings in a devastating fire. Instead of celebrating with their own families, the volunteers rolled up their sleeves and spent the day building a new outdoor cooking site for the affected family.

The kitchen is more than just a place to prepare food. It's where memories are made, stories are shared, and the warmth of family is felt. Recognizing this, the team didn't just rebuild a physical space, they helped restore a sense of home and dignity. Alongside the kitchen, the family received essential donations including a full kitchen set, clothes and blankets. It was a day filled with emotion, reflection and connection. The family, deeply touched, expressed heartfelt thanks for the kindness shown to them during such a difficult time.



“Partnership creates impact, and generosity fuels change” – Dr Mukokomani



The BIHL Trust has shown that when organisations and communities work together, devastation can be turned into restoration and despair into hope.

Speaking at the official hand-over ceremony of the BIHL Trust P500,000 cash donation towards the flood relief efforts in March, Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer of Botswana Red Cross Society Dr. Kutlwano Mukokomani said the BIHL Trust's partnership with BRCS is a testament to the power of corporate social responsibility and the impact that can be made when organisations come together for the greater good.

He said Kgatleng District as one of the hard-hit regions had been selected to benefit from the donation, with interventions such as cash assistance for 100 households, school support for 100 children, shelter and housing assistance for 75 households, further adding that in total this initiative would support 275 households, benefiting 1,285 individuals.

"This contribution of P500,000 amplifies the BIHL impact to disaster relief and reinforces its commitment to saving lives and restoring hope. The BIHL Trust generosity is not just an act of giving, but it is a demonstration of solidarity, compassion and the spirit of community resilience." Said Dr Mukokomani.

For her part, the BIHL Trust Chairman Ms Ngwatshi Enyatseng said this contribution reflects their unwavering dedication to supporting communities in distress, and they are confident that through the Botswana Red Cross Society's structured and impactful approach, this assistance will reach those who needed it the most.

In addition to this financial commitment, Ms Enyatseng recognised the volunteerism efforts of the staff of the BIHL Group, who had personally contributed P40,000 in food hampers and second-hand clothing through the Trust. "To the BRCS, we commend you for your unwavering commitment to disaster response and humanitarian aid. Your tireless efforts have provided comfort and relief to countless individuals and families, and we are honoured to stand alongside you in this critical work."

In closing, Mr. Rona Letlhogile said, "We are deeply grateful for the generosity and solidarity shown by BIHL Trust during this devastating flood crisis. Their support has been essential in helping the Botswana Red Cross Society provide relief and hope to the most vulnerable communities."



"This contribution of P500,000 amplifies the BIHL impact to disaster relief and reinforces its commitment to saving lives and restoring hope."



BRCS and partners collaborate to assist the MBECW



This partnership is about more than just aid; it's about restoring dignity and hope to children and families who need it most. By building strong partnerships, the goal is to help families recover and rebuild with resilience and dignity.

In the wake of recent floods that disrupted lives across parts of Botswana, in March this year UNICEF Botswana joined hands with the Botswana Red Cross Society to bring urgent help and hope to families especially children who have been hardest hit.

With an initial commitment of P700,000, this partnership is focused on providing immediate relief and recovery support in affected areas, such as Mochudi and Ghanzi. In times of crisis, children are among the most vulnerable. This partnership is about more than just aid; it's about restoring dignity and hope to children and families who need it most. By building strong partnerships, the goal

is to help families recover and rebuild with resilience and dignity.

The aid intervention focused on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and Child Safeguarding. The districts of Kgatleng and Ghanzi, among the hardest hit, experienced widespread evacuations involving children and newborns. The Botswana Red Cross Society (BRCS) responded to these urgent needs by providing counselling, psychoeducation, and promoting good hygiene practices, helping to restore dignity and resilience among the most vulnerable.



34TH INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT GENEVA CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

On 28 to 31 October 2024, representatives from the Government of Botswana, the Botswana Red Cross Society, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and 184 National Societies, accompanied by their governments, participated in the 34th International Conference in Geneva.

The conference attracted 2,424 participants, representing 184 National Societies, 172 States, and 49 observer organizations. As the supreme deliberative body of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, a global humanitarian network, the ICRC provides a unique platform where representatives from National Societies, States Parties to the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC, and the IFRC come together to deliberate, collaborate, and reaffirm their commitment to humanitarian action worldwide. The Conference made the following resolutions:

01

Resolution

Building a Universal Culture of Compliance with International Humanitarian Law.

02

Resolution

Protecting Civilians and other Protected Persons and Objects against the potential human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict.

03

Resolution

Strengthening disaster risk governance through comprehensive legal and regulatory frameworks.

04

Resolution

Enabling local leadership, capacity and delivery in principled humanitarian action and strengthening resilience.

05

Resolution

Protecting people from the humanitarian impacts of extreme climate and weather events: Working together to strengthen anticipatory action.



Botswana Red Cross Society's Ms Bothepha Botsile Kgosidiile Appointed to IFRC Audit and Risk Commission in Geneva

The Botswana Red Cross Society is proud to announce that Ms Bothepha Botsile Kgosidiile, currently serving as the Botswana Red Cross Society's National Board Treasurer, has been appointed to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Audit and Risk Commission in Geneva Switzerland. This significant appointment was confirmed during the 24th General Assembly held in Geneva from October 23rd to 25th, 2024.

The IFRC Audit and Risk Commission is a six-person Commission appointed from deserving candidates worldwide. It plays a critical role in advising on the management of financial and non-financial risks within the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). It oversees the internal audit function, ensuring transparency and accountability, and reviews any issues that could impact the IFRC's mission or reputation.

Ms Kgosidiile is a Chartered Accountant by Profession. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Accounting, an MBA, and a CIMA professional qualification. Her new role is a testament to her dedication and commitment to the Botswana Red Cross Society. This is a proud moment for the Botswana Red Cross Society, highlighting Botswana's growing presence in the global humanitarian landscape. We Congratulate Ms Kgosidiile on this well-deserved recognition and achievement!

Disability & Inclusion:

Creating a Society Where Everyone Belongs

By Mr Mwiimbi Muuny

Tlamelong Rehabilitation Center



Disability can affect any of us, whether from birth, through accidents, or as we grow older. Individuals with disabilities encounter barriers that hinder their full participation in daily life in Botswana and around the world. These challenges extend beyond physical limitations, encompassing both the constructed environment and societal attitudes.

In 2024, Botswana enacted the Persons with Disability Act, formalising its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This marks our nation's recognition that individuals with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else: to pursue education, employment, family life, political participation, and live with dignity. It also requires the removal of physical



A widespread misconception is that people with disabilities cannot form meaningful relationships or raise children, which is incorrect. Everyone has the right to love, be loved, and start a family.



and social barriers that impede inclusivity. Education is a right, not a privilege, and no child or individual should be excluded because of a disability. The same principle applies to employment, where individuals with disabilities are eager to work but face obstacles in securing jobs because of inaccessible workplaces or employer hesitancy. The Persons with Disability Act mandates that employers provide reasonable accommodation and fair treatment. By fostering inclusive environments, businesses can harness the talents and skills of all individuals, including those with disabilities.

Accessibility extends beyond the availability of ramps. It encompasses having information in formats that work for everyone, such as Braille, sign language, or easy-to-read text, and ensuring that government services, clinics, buses, schools, and websites can be used by all. Universal design, which involves creating things that are usable by as many people as possible from the start, is a goal that we should work toward.

Inclusion transcends accessibility and professional or educational environments; it encompasses love, friendship, and family life. A widespread misconception is that people with disabilities cannot form meaningful relationships or raise children, which is incorrect. Everyone has the right to love, be loved, and start a family. Communities must actively confront these negative stereotypes and safeguard the personal rights of all individuals.

Inclusion begins at home, in our workplaces and educational institutions, and in our communities. Therefore, it is cardinal to shift our perceptions of disability, treat individuals with respect, and build environments where everyone feels they belong and can contribute. Botswana's vision for the future is one in which no one is left behind. By collaborating, whether it be the government, businesses, families, or individuals, we can turn this vision into reality.



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