DEVELOPMENT AND DISPOSSESSION:
IMPACTS OF LAND REFORM IN BOTSWANA

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INTRODUCTION

The shift from communal to individualized systems of land tenure is a process that has occurred throughout Africa. During the 20th and early 21st centuries there were at least 40 major attempts to reform the basis of land tenure in various African countries (Sanford 1983; Hunter 2004; Anseeuw and Alden 2010). Relatively few of these efforts could be described as successful; many of them exacerbated social inequities, increased poverty and resulted in environmental degradation (Sanford 1981; Peters 1994; Rohde et al. 2006; De Sagte 2011).

A useful example of the costs and benefits of African land tenure reform is that of the Republic of Botswana in southern Africa. Botswana is an interesting case for a number of reasons. First, it differs from its neighbors in southern Africa because it was not a settler state in the classic sense of the term. As a protectorate, the process of colonization of Botswana was somewhat different from its neighbors (Picard 1985). Relatively small areas of land were allocated to European settlers as commercial farms, totaling approximately 5 per cent of the country, as opposed to 43 per cent of the land of Namibia, 40 per cent of Zimbabwe, and 87 per cent of South Africa. Second, in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, when Botswana had become relatively well-off economically as compared to other African countries, the government sought and received substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) in the form of loans from the World Bank and other international donors for large-scale land reform and livestock development projects (Leith 2005). Third, the government of Botswana does not have a general policy of encouraging foreign land acquisition (FLA); foreigners do, however, get access to land through behind-the-scenes arrangements with

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1 For discussions of the importance of Botswana as an example of grazing land reform, see Hitchcock (1980); Picard (1981); Lawry (1983), Sanford (1983), Merafe (1988), Dickson (1990); Tsimako (1991); Peters (1994).
Batswana who have obtained land through purchase (in the case of freehold land) or allocation through land boards (in the case of tribal land).

This chapter considers changes in land tenure over time in Botswana, looking first at the processes of change in land distribution and land tenure reform that occurred in the colonial (1885–1966) and post-colonial periods (1966–present). As we will show, some of the land in Botswana was converted into cattle ranches as part of large-scale livestock development programs, while other land became wildlife reserves, national parks, and towns (see also Andrew et al., this volume).

Two general processes of change in land tenure are considered: (1) the establishment of freehold areas under the colonial government, and (2) the post-colonial reform of land tenure in the tribal lands, which saw leasehold ranches established on what had been communal land. We begin with a discussion of the colonial transformations in land tenure, then address the post-independence land reforms. In the process, we consider the various factors that led to dispossession of sizable numbers of poor people in Botswana, with many of the benefits of these programs going to better-off members of the society and to foreigners. Particular emphasis is placed on the processes of dispossession of some of the poorest people in Botswana, the San, or, as they are known in Botswana, the Basarwa.

In an effort to assist the people in rural communities, the Botswana government initiated several programs: the Remote Area Development Program and Social and Community Development (S and CD), which provided food and other support. Credit schemes were available through the Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) and the Arable Lands Development Program (ALDEP). The initiation of a Community-Based Natural Resource Management program encouraged communities to embark on CBNRM activities, which in some areas included the integration of crops, livestock, and wildlife (for a critical discussion of CBNRM, see Dressler et al. 2010). In this chapter, we examine the ways in which these programs have worked (and not worked), drawing on examples from Ghanzi, the Western Central District, and southern and western Ngamiland, places San are in the majority.

**Land Reform and Livestock Development**

The background of Botswana land reform has roots in its colonial and post-colonial past. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some of the land in the country was allocated by colonial authorities to European individuals