

# **THE RISK OF EXCLUSION FROM THE GLOBAL DIGITAL ECONOMY: THE CASE OF BOTSWANA.**

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The phenomenal advances in the telecommunication and information technologies especially in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have continued to create new possibilities as well as pose new challenges, particularly to underdeveloped countries like Botswana. Whilst there are many who see the emerging digital global economy as the key to the much vaunted African renaissance, an opportunity to leap frog over the barriers of underdevelopment and claim a place in a post-industrial information economy, there are others who fear that these developments may further widen the gap between the rich North and the poor South. There is no longer any doubt that the underdeveloped countries like Botswana are faced with a new, dangerous and complex situation in which they must adjust and adapt or, be left out of the only path that can assure some form of sustainable economic development. This paper examines the situation in Botswana, which is in many respects singular.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part presents a general picture of Botswana and its evolution since independence. This shows how the country has moved from being one of the poorest in the world into a middle ranking country with one of the fastest growing economies. The second part examines the way Botswana, with the considerable wealth and other advantages that it possesses, has attempted to adjust to the digital global economy. It is shown that there have been tremendous investments by the Government in ICTs. The next part of the paper shows that there remain serious obstacles to keeping Botswana within the mainstream of the digital global economy and that heavy investments in ICTs are not necessarily an end, nor are they the answer to the challenge. The final part of the paper looks at some of the critical issues that need to be addressed to avert the risks of marginalisation or exclusion that loom on the horizon.