

Sino-Botswana Development Cooperation: Assessing the Opportunities and Risks in Chinese Economic Assistance

Fatema-Tuj-**Zohura** *
Jahangirnagar University

Sarwajit **Bhoumik** **
Jahangirnagar University

Sabrina Hasan **Rakhi** ***
Jahangirnagar University

Abstract

This research explores the connection between Botswana and China, particularly emphasis on the considerable influence of Chinese economic support for Botswana's growth in several areas, such as infrastructure, social welfare, and economic cooperation. It critically evaluates the advantages and difficulties presented by Chinese assistance, bringing to light problems including political ramifications, labour rights violations, environmental damage, and debt sustainability. The research emphasizes the importance of supporting stakeholder participation, accountability, and openness in assistance projects to guarantee sustainability and efficacy. Important conclusions highlight the need for evidence-based policy choices and strategic partnerships to maximize the benefits of Chinese help while reducing related dangers. The study's findings include suggestions for more research and ongoing observation of how Chinese assistance has affected Botswana's economic development, intending to promote a fair and advantageous bilateral relationship between the two countries. This paper offers a thorough examination of Sino-Botswana relations and the impact of Chinese assistance, which is beneficial for policymakers

and development professionals who want to advance sustainable and equitable development in Botswana.

Keywords: *China, Botswana, economic relations, Chinese aid, development aid*

1. Introduction

Botswana's growth trajectory has been impacted by Chinese support, especially in the areas of infrastructure, commerce, and employment. With Botswana's strong regulatory framework and dedication to openness, the two nations have established broad collaboration in a multitude of industries since establishing diplomatic ties in 1975, with infrastructure development being the main area of emphasis (Chen, 2009). As seen by initiatives like the Morupule B Power Station, Chinese investment has had a revolutionary impact on the development of infrastructure in Africa. China is investing heavily in Africa intending to close the continent's large infrastructure deficit, which is expected to cost between USD130 and USD170 billion a year (Vaidyanathan, 2022). By increasing connections and enabling commerce inside Botswana as well as with neighbouring nations, these initiatives have supported economic development (Zi & Mogalakwe, 2018). However, the inflow of Chinese businesses and traders has brought with it difficulties, such as language and cultural divides that have caused conflict at work and made local workers feel exploited (Moahi, 2015). Despite these problems, Chinese retail establishments have helped to reduce poverty and provide more job possibilities, which has encouraged local entrepreneurship (Sekakela, 2016). Trade between Botswana and China has significantly shaped the economic landscape of Botswana, particularly in terms of the types of goods exchanged and their impact on infrastructure development. Botswana primarily exports primary products to China, such as diamonds, which are a major component of its economy, contributing significantly to its GDP (Sekakela, 2016). In return, Botswana imports intermediate and capital goods from China, which are crucial for the country's infrastructure projects, including roads, power stations, and airports (Njoku et al., 2014). This trade dynamic has facilitated the

development of essential infrastructure, which is a core focus of Botswana's long-term national programs aimed at sustaining economic growth and attracting foreign investment. The political and governmental systems of Botswana have also been touched by Chinese support, both positively and negatively. Research has shown that Chinese assistance initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Botswana, have the potential to erode public confidence in governance by creating negative views of corruption and low evaluations of government efficacy (Akrofi & Atitianti, 2022). Chinese engagement in Botswana's labour market has indeed led to a toxic work environment and conflicts between Chinese employers and local workers. This tension is primarily driven by cultural and linguistic differences, as well as divergent work ethics and expectations. Chinese merchants, motivated by Confucian capitalism, often perceive their Botswana employees as having poor work ethics, while the local workers view their Chinese employers as exploiters of cheap labour (Gukurume & Matsika, 2022). Notwithstanding these obstacles, Chinese investments have made a substantial contribution to economic expansion, especially in industries like mining, where higher production is anticipated (Zi & Mogalakwe, 2018).

Concerns about the protection of decent labour under the international ILO framework have been raised by the preponderance of Chinese noncitizens in the workforce. The complicated character of these relationships is reflected in the media's portrayal of China-Botswana relations, which is a mixture of optimism and scepticism (Sautman & Hairong, 2009). In addition, despite efforts by regulators to restrict them, the flood of Chinese goods—which are often seen as being of inferior quality—continues to satisfy local demand. In terms of corporate governance, Botswana has created its code, although many businesses continue to use the South African King code, suggesting that new governance ideas have not yet been completely embraced (Zi & Mogalakwe, 2018). Instead of promoting drastic political and economic changes, democracy aid in Botswana has mostly concentrated on procedural democracy, which has assisted in maintaining elite privileges and power.

Since the two countries' diplomatic relations were established in 1975, there has been a significant shift in their bilateral relationship, which is now characterized by respect for one another, non-interference, and cooperation in a variety of sectors (Makhura & Rapanyane, 2020). This relationship was first

fueled by China's non-aligned stance and policy of non-intervention in domestic affairs, which have been the cornerstones of its foreign policy since 1954 (Kirby, 2020). Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has improved Botswana's capacity to pursue sustainable development, China has been a major contributor to furthering Africa's development (Sekakela, 2016).

Reciprocal visits by high-ranking officials from both countries highlight the equality and respect that define their public diplomacy and sustain their bilateral relationship (Moahi, 2015). Cultural exchanges may be a part of diplomacy, as shown by the Confucius Institute in Botswana, which supports the Chinese language and culture (Alden, 2019). China has emerged as a significant economic partner for Botswana, investing in industries including mining, telecommunications, and infrastructure, despite the country's unrealized agricultural potential (Morapedi & Manatsha, 2015). China has shown its smart power strategy by providing major financial assistance for important infrastructure projects in Botswana, including stadiums, bridges, and roads. This policy combines economic aid with cultural diplomacy (Chen, 2009).

It is critical to understand how Chinese support has impacted Botswana's progress as the nation strives to achieve the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP) and Vision 2036 (DU PLESSIS, 2016). Academic studies have emphasized a range of policies that China has put in place, including building projects and initiatives to increase capacity (Brautigam, 2009; Corkin, 2008). The literature does, however, also highlight the negative effects Chinese-funded projects have on the environment and society. For example, studies by Brautigam (2011) and Mohan and Tan-Mullins (2009) describe societal instability, violations of worker rights, and environmental damage linked to Chinese investments in Africa. To guarantee sustainable development results, these concerns emphasize the need to enhance transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation in Chinese aid initiatives.

Scholars have also examined how China's economic presence in Africa affects political dynamics and the sustainability of debt. Researchers who have studied the effects of Chinese loans and investments on debt levels, fiscal governance, and political relations in African countries include Gallagher and

Myers (2019) and Alden et al. (2015). Their conclusions highlight how crucial it is to manage Chinese financing carefully to reduce debt risks and protect national sovereignty. Mwamfupe (2016) and Moyo (2013) highlight the importance of resource-led growth strategies and the components of effective development outcomes via comparative case studies of African countries such as Botswana and Zambia.

The study looks into how Chinese aid has impacted Botswana's growth in some areas. It attempts to provide a nuanced knowledge of the influence of Chinese help on Botswana's development through literature analysis, primary and secondary data analysis, and case studies of Chinese assistance programs in Botswana. To provide a more comprehensive view, quantitative analysis of project budgets, economic indicators, and result metrics were utilized.

Generally, this study aims to provide thorough and useful insights into the dynamics of Sino-Botswana relations and the significance of Chinese aid in Botswana's development trajectory.

Specifically, the study wants to:

1. Assess the extent and effects of Chinese assistance initiatives in Botswana in some areas, such as infrastructure, social welfare, and economic collaboration.
2. Identify and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese assistance in Botswana, with an emphasis on political consequences, labour rights violations, environmental damage, and debt sustainability.
3. Assess how Chinese assistance may affect social welfare, economic expansion, and environmental sustainability as they relate to Botswana's development trajectory.
4. Investigate the significance of stakeholder engagement, accountability, and transparency in Chinese assistance efforts in Botswana, as well as their function in guaranteeing the efficacy and long-term sustainability of aid projects.
5. Provide suggestions for more research and monitoring of how Chinese help has affected Botswana's economic trajectory, highlighting the need for strategic alliances and evidence-based policy choices to improve aid cooperation between the two nations.

The results of the analysis of this study can set the direction to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of China-Botswana cooperation, highlighting the significance of strategic alliances and evidence-based policymaking.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, academics have been more interested in China's rising influence in Africa, particularly its relationship with Botswana. Several research works have examined various aspects of China's complex connection with African countries, providing insight into its socio-cultural, political, and economic aspects.

One popular field of study is China's help to African nations in the form of aid and development assistance. The reasons, mechanisms, and effects of China's assistance initiatives in Africa have all been thoroughly examined by academics including Brautigam (2009) and Corkin (2008). They have emphasized the variety of Chinese assistance programs, from developing capacity to implementing infrastructure projects, and they have evaluated how well they work to advance the goals of sustainable development.

The environmental and social effects of Chinese-funded projects in Africa are a common issue in the literature. Research conducted in African nations by Mohan and Tan-Mullins (2009) and Brautigam (2011) has shown instances of environmental degradation, abuses of worker rights, and social dislocation linked to Chinese investments and infrastructure projects. To address these issues and guarantee sustainable development results, these academics stress how crucial it is to improve stakeholder involvement, accountability, and transparency in Chinese assistance programs.

The effects of China's economic involvement in Africa on political dynamics and the sustainability of debt have also been studied by academics. Scholars like Gallagher and Myers (2019) and Alden et al. (2015) have investigated how Chinese loans and investments affect the amount of debt, fiscal governance, and political ties in African nations. Their research shows that to reduce debt risks and preserve national sovereignty, cautious handling of Chinese funding is required, as is more openness.

Aside from doing empirical research, academics have also benefited from comparative case studies of African nations that have successfully used

their natural resources for development. Important lessons from nations like Botswana and Zambia, who have managed their resource richness to produce sustained economic development and poverty reduction, are offered in the works of Mwamfupe (2016) and Moyo (2013). These case studies provide important insights into what makes development results effective as well as the difficulties that come with resource-led growth initiatives.

In general, the material that is currently available emphasizes how complicated the interactions are between China and Botswana as well as how Chinese assistance affects sustainable development. Researchers add to a deeper understanding of the opportunities and difficulties present in China-African relations by combining insights from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. They also offer practitioners and policymakers useful information for advancing inclusive and sustainable development in Botswana.

3. China-Botswana Relations

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in January 1975, the relationship between China and Botswana has undergone significant changes. It currently covers a broad spectrum of fields, such as business, healthcare, education, building, politics, culture, and diplomacy. However, not much focus has been placed on cooperation in the agricultural sector (Makhura & Rapanyane, 2020). This collaboration stems from China's overarching goal to increase its global influence and reshape its national image, particularly in Africa, where it has strategic interests (Amupanda, 2020). This engagement is a component of China's African strategy, which is aimed at diversifying commerce, investment, and political influence. The aim to protect the energy supply in the long run and promote market interests drives this strategy (Lisimba, 2020).

China's exponential speed of participation in Botswana has elicited diverse reactions, as seen by the local media's coverage of economic activity, particularly in the retail, construction, and industrial sectors (Huang, 2021). China's public diplomacy activities define its approach to Africa, including Botswana. One such project is the Confucius Institute, which aims to deepen bilateral relations while promoting the Chinese language and culture (Zi, 2017). To optimize cooperation, especially in the agriculture industry, challenges including communication and cultural barriers must be addressed despite the advantages. Understanding current dynamics necessitates understanding the

China-African connections' historical context, which is rooted in anti-colonial struggles. For several African countries, including Botswana, China has become an important ally. China is a rising global power that is offering an alternative model of growth and contesting Western hegemony. These aspects of the country's rapid economic growth affect the connection.

From a political stance, China's backing for African liberation movements and its pursuit of political alliances against superpowers and the former Soviet Union strengthened connections with Botswana (Makhura & Rapanyane, 2020). Particularly once China opened to the outside world in the late 1970s, economic cooperation supplanted this political foundation (Amupanda, 2020). Africa was less important to China during the Deng Xiaoping period, but during the Jiang Zemin administration, significant economic growth was achieved, and this success continued into the twenty-first century, with a focus on acquiring raw materials from Africa (Lisimba, 2020). Strong democratic institutions and steady economic growth made Botswana a desirable destination for Chinese investment, particularly in infrastructure projects.

Chinese construction firms have been operating in Botswana since the 1980s when they completed projects such as building schools and hospitals and updating railroads (Zi, 2017). The complex relationship characterized by political, social, and economic exchanges exists between Botswana and China. The varying responses to the rapidly increasing number of Chinese citizens in the nation reflect this. Furthermore, by promoting Chinese language and culture, China hopes to improve bilateral ties via its public diplomacy programs, such as the Confucius Institute (Huang, 2021). More significant geopolitical shifts have also affected the connection; by 2012, China was Africa's main commercial partner, surpassing both the US and Europe (Lisimba, 2020). A multitude of historical, economic, and cultural factors have shaped the intricate relationship between Botswana and China, demonstrating how dynamic and ever-changing these relationships are.

When China and Botswana established diplomatic ties, their relationship underwent a significant upheaval. On February 6, 1975, official diplomatic links were established when Botswana recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate government of China. Botswana made this decision in response to the PRC's increasing global influence and its desire to maintain an

autonomous foreign policy (Zi, 2017). The forging of diplomatic ties prepared the groundwork for future partnerships based on equality and mutual respect in a variety of areas, such as trade, investment, and development assistance.

China and Botswana's economic cooperation has grown over the years, with an emphasis on trade, mining, and infrastructure development. When China and Botswana signed the Economic and Technical Relationship Agreement in 1986, it was a turning point in their economic relationship (Zafar, 2007). This agreement enabled Botswana's development projects to benefit from Chinese financial and technical support, particularly in the fields of agriculture and infrastructure. Through grants, loans, and assistance packages, China has made a significant financial and technical contribution. For instance, China pledged in 2018 to provide Botswana with USD\$14.7 million toward various development projects, such as building roads and putting in place healthcare systems. As to Keimetswe (2023), the aid agreements stated earlier have strengthened bilateral relations and facilitated Botswana's infrastructure improvements and socioeconomic growth.

Political and cultural contacts have had a major influence on relations between Botswana and China as well. High-level visits and discussions have strengthened the mutual understanding and collaboration among government officials. For instance, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2018 was attended by Mokgweetsi Masisi, the former president of Botswana (Schilirò, 2022). Cultural interactions have risen thanks to programs like the Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana, which promotes Chinese language and culture across the country. These contacts have improved intercultural understanding and led to the people of China and Botswana enjoying closer, more amicable relations today.

The historical synopsis of China-Botswana relations emphasizes the establishment of diplomatic ties, the expansion of economic cooperation and aid agreements, and the importance of political and cultural interactions. These advancements, in Thrall's (2015) opinion, have strengthened bilateral relations and prepared the way for future cooperation and partnership. Relationships between China and Botswana are dynamic and constantly shifting, reflecting larger trends in interactions between China and Africa. These patterns are characterized by opportunities as well as challenges brought about by political, economic, and historical factors.

4. Financial, Technical, and Comparative Views on Chinese Assistance to Botswana

China's help to Botswana has a considerable influence on the infrastructure, technology, and finance sectors, among others. China gives Botswana financial help in the form of grants, concessional loans, and assistance packages that are intended to complement various development initiatives. These subsidies support important initiatives in agriculture, healthcare, education, and infrastructure. For example, one of the most important infrastructure applications of Chinese assistance is the construction of roads and bridges, which improve connectivity and ease trade and commerce inside Botswana and with neighboring countries (Moahi, 2016). Furthermore, Chinese assistance is used to promote the development of healthcare facilities, educational programs, and agricultural projects that enhance the social welfare and economic opportunities for the people of Botswana.

China provides Botswana with significant technical support in addition to cash contributions. Supporting capacity expansion, knowledge transfer, and skill improvement across several industries are the goals of this help. For instance, China offers government officials and experts in Botswana seminars and training courses in the areas of infrastructure development, agricultural practices, and healthcare management. China assists Botswana in developing its institutional capacity and human capital via the transfer of its expertise and best practices, hence fostering self-sufficiency and sustainable development (Zi, 2014).

The efforts of Botswana to enhance its infrastructure have also been significantly impacted by Chinese help. Chinese assistance often leads to the funding and execution of large-scale infrastructure projects that fundamentally change Botswana's development environment. Building roads, dams, communication networks, and energy infrastructure boosts the country's ability to endure and adapt to modern problems while also promoting economic development. China encourages Botswana to invest in key infrastructure to create an environment that is favorable for long-term development, draw in investments, and advance social cohesion and inclusion.

An evaluation of the scope and magnitude of Chinese assistance initiatives in Botswana indicates an intricate network of development initiatives spanning many industries. Chinese assistance programs in Botswana are renowned for their vast extent and ambitious nature, with an emphasis on tackling the country's major developmental difficulties and advancing its socioeconomic objectives. These programs often need large financial investments, which makes it possible to carry out extensive infrastructure and development plans that radically change Botswana's economic trajectory (Sekakela, 2016). These initiatives include a wide range of sectors, including telecommunications, energy, transportation, healthcare, and education.

A range of technical cooperation initiatives and capacity-building initiatives are also included in Chinese assistance projects in Botswana. These comprehensive packages often include possibilities for skill development, technical competence, and information transfer in addition to cash help. Chinese help might, for instance, finance the construction of educational facilities in conjunction with workshops for teacher training or support the establishment of healthcare facilities in conjunction with programs for medical professional training. Chinese assistance programs are more effective and long-lasting when local institutions and stakeholders are given the autonomy to decide on their development objectives and initiatives thanks to this integrated strategy (Yanyin, 2015).

Analyzing the differences between help from China and other foreign partners may provide valuable insights into the dynamics of development cooperation and the impact of distinct types of aid on Botswana's development trajectory. Though it is important to compare Chinese help with that from Western countries, multilateral institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Chinese aid is a substantial source of support for Botswana (Chen, 2009). Comparing the financial terms and conditions of help from various sources is one crucial point of comparison. Compared to conventional Western help, Chinese aid often comes with better financial terms, such as longer payback terms, low-interest loans, and fewer requirements. Because of this, Chinese assistance is especially appealing to Botswana since it offers much-needed money for important development projects without imposing strict regulations or requirements.

Chinese assistance programs in Botswana are well known for their ability to move rapidly and adapt to shifting needs and priorities. On the other hand,

political circumstances, donor goals, and bureaucratic processes might cause delays and inefficiencies for help from other international partners (Fernando, 2007). But the analogy also highlights the possible drawbacks and restrictions of Chinese assistance. For instance, there are many complaints about the sustainability and the quality of projects financed by China; many infrastructure projects are accused of having inadequate building standards, weakened durability, and exorbitant long-term maintenance requirements. Assistance from other international partners, on the other hand, may place a higher priority on environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and quality control, producing more robust and sustainable development results.

Additionally, Chinese contractors and businesses often oversee Chinese assistance projects in Botswana, which may restrict chances for local participation, skill transfer, and capacity development. Alternatively, assistance from other foreign partners might prioritize community engagement, local ownership, and capacity development, enabling Botswana's institutions and people to become more autonomous and self-sufficient (Youngman, 2014). Policymakers and development professionals may find areas of collaboration, make use of the benefits of various assistance models, and deal with the difficulties and limitations that come with each by carrying out a thorough comparative study. Ensuring that the assistance partnership successfully supports fair and inclusive growth for all citizens of Botswana while supporting the nation's sustainable development objectives is the aim.

Financial, technical, and comparative aspects are all included in China's help to Botswana, which reflects larger patterns in Sino-African ties. China is a source of financial support for Botswana's economy via project assistance and development loans, which have increased investment and gross domestic savings (Broich, Szirmai, & Adedokun, 2020). This assistance fills in the gaps left by Western donors who have moved their attention to capacity development and governance reforms, especially focusing on infrastructure, agriculture, and industry (Assefa & Mengesha, 2020). Theoretically, Chinese help includes capacity building and technology transfer, especially in areas like agriculture where there is potential for major collaboration despite underdevelopment now. According to Wazha, Morapedi, and Manatsha (2015), Chinese infrastructure projects have also improved local labour markets

by generating short-term employment possibilities during construction and in adjacent industries.

Chinese assistance is different from conventional North-South Development Cooperation (NSDC) in that it is centred on reciprocal benefits and non-interference in domestic matters, rather than having strict conditionalities (Alhassan & Wang, 2018). This strategy has drawn criticism for possible geopolitical motivations while also receiving praise for its adaptability. Particularly in economic areas like construction and retail, media coverage in Botswana presents a nuanced picture of Chinese engagement, showing both hope and caution (Gellers & Jeffords, 2019). Furthermore, Botswana exports basic products and imports capital and intermediate goods from China, which influences Botswana's trade dynamics with other nations while also promoting local infrastructure development. Despite social isolation and competitiveness, Chinese merchants in Botswana find chances in the local market because of the country's distinct economic environment. Given the circumstances, Chinese assistance to Botswana is complex, offering both countries opportunities and difficulties while promoting economic growth.

5. Chinese Aid's Effects on Botswana's Economic, Societal and Environmental Policies

Botswana has seen the economic, social, and environmental policy ramifications of Chinese assistance in a variety of ways. Chinese assistance has been a major factor in Botswana's economic growth, especially in infrastructural projects. The financing and construction of large-scale projects including energy facilities, airports, bridges, and highways have improved the physical infrastructure of the country and generated jobs and economic development (Mphemelang & Velempini, 2021; Akhidenor, 2013). As a result of these infrastructural improvements, Botswana is now a key centre for commerce in Southern Africa, with lower transportation costs, more efficient logistical operations, and increased overall economic efficiency (Taylor, 1998).

Additionally, Chinese assistance has increased Botswana's commercial and trade potential. Chinese-funded initiatives have increased market access for Botswana's products and services, enabling easier trade flows, by enhancing infrastructure and production capacity. Economic diversification initiatives have been bolstered by the inflow of Chinese investment money,

which has lessened dependency on traditional revenue streams and fostered expansion in the mining, industrial, and agricultural sectors (Sekakela, 2016; Dintsi, 2019). Additionally, one of the main results of Chinese support has been the creation of jobs; infrastructure projects have increased employment indirectly in the retail, hotel, and transportation sectors while also offering a multitude of career prospects for engineers, labourers, and technicians (Li, 2016).

Chinese assistance has had a major social influence on local employment and poverty reduction. Infrastructure projects have improved local abilities in a variety of fields, including manual labour, professional, technical, and administrative roles, and generated temporary work possibilities (Mengesha, 2022). Furthermore, Chinese retail establishments in Botswana have encouraged local business and helped to reduce poverty despite obstacles including market saturation and cultural differences (Manatsha & Manatsha, 2016). China has contributed financially and technically to develop medical facilities, equipment, and capacity-building activities. Support for healthcare and education programs has also been considerable. Scholarships, teacher training programs, and educational materials have all contributed to the nation's increased human capital and better access to high-quality healthcare services (Kalusopa, 2009).

Chinese assistance has a mixed effect on the environment. Xu and Zhang, 2022; Xabadiya & Hu, 2019) Positive contributions include financing for pollution control, habitat restoration, and environmental conservation projects, as well as assistance for renewable energy projects like wind and solar power. The goals of Botswana's environmental sustainability, including lowering deforestation, halting desertification, and solving water shortages, are met by these initiatives. Large-scale infrastructure development, however, has dangers for nearby populations and ecosystems, such as heightened pollution, habitat destruction, and biodiversity loss. Concerns over resource depletion and environmental harm are raised by Chinese companies engaging in resource extraction operations including mining and forestry (Large, 2007). To reduce these risks, it is crucial to manage them well and put in place strict environmental safeguards, stakeholder engagement processes, and transparency regulations.

According to Madzoke and Wu (2024), Chinese help has given Botswana more policy leeway, enabling more adaptable economic plans and lowering reliance on conventional Western aid models. Strong labour regulations are necessary to maintain fair and stable globalization, as shown by the prevalence of Chinese non-citizens working on Chinese projects, which has prompted worries about local labour rights (Guo & Jiang, 2020). Chinese assistance has had a political impact on Botswana's domestic policy and development objectives. Some political players raise worries about debt sustainability, transparency, and possible undue political influence, while others favorably consider Chinese assistance as necessary support for infrastructure, economic growth, and poverty eradication (Thompson, 2005; Caruso, 2020).

In summary, while Chinese assistance has supported social welfare and economic growth in Botswana, it must be managed carefully to balance the advantages with policy and environmental risks. Botswana can improve the country's overall development trajectory by tackling these problems and ensuring that Chinese assistance promotes equitable and sustainable growth.

6. The Complexities of Chinese Aid in Botswana

Chinese help to Botswana is complicated, including elements of the political, labour, environmental, and economic spheres. The sustainability of the debt incurred via Chinese loans is a major worry. Although these loans sometimes have advantageous conditions such as extended payback durations and low interest rates, they have sparked questions about Botswana's capacity to manage and repay its growing debt in the long run (Singh, 2020). Multiple Chinese-funded projects have resulted in a debt buildup that might put a burden on Botswana's fiscal resources and could cause financial distress or the necessity for more borrowing to cover current obligations.

In Chinese loan arrangements, accountability and transparency are also divisive topics. The opaque terms and circumstances of these loans, according to critics, make it difficult to evaluate Botswana's debt commitments and their consequences for the financial health of the nation (Behuria, 2018). The usefulness and value for money of Chinese assistance are further questioned considering incidents including project delays, cost overruns, and quality issues in projects supported by China. Furthermore,

Botswana's growing reliance on Chinese funding raises concerns about the erosion of its sovereignty and independence in determining its development priorities because it may make it more vulnerable to Chinese influence in decisions about its foreign policy and domestic affairs (Hanauer & Morris, 2014).

Two major problems associated with Chinese help in Botswana are resource exploitation and environmental deterioration. Big infrastructure projects like dams, roads, and mining activities put Botswana's fragile ecosystems and wildlife in danger (Schoeman, 2008). These projects' construction operations may result in soil erosion, habitat damage, deforestation, and disturbance of natural watercourses. Moreover, Chinese trade and investment agreements may make it easier to exploit natural resources, which would worsen environmental deterioration and deplete priceless ecological assets.

There has been evidence linking soil contamination, water and air pollution, and health hazards for nearby populations to industrial projects supported by China, especially in the mining industry (Zezeza, 2014). These environmental hazards may increase due to inadequate enforcement of environmental legislation and oversight capacities, which can hurt the health and quality of life of impacted communities. The sustainability and resilience of Botswana's ecosystems and populations are at risk because of the drive to achieve short-term economic advantages, which often ignores the long-term effects of resource depletion and environmental deterioration.

Violating labour rights in projects financed by China is a fundamental problem as well. Chinese development and investment projects in Botswana often result in reports of exploitation, subpar working conditions, and violations of labour laws (Zezeza, 2014). Chinese corporations undermine local employment possibilities and attempt to build local skills by often using cheap labour practices and favoring Chinese migrant workers over local ones. Workers on Chinese-funded projects confront some difficulties, including long working hours, low pay, poor access to housing and healthcare, and few channels for resolving grievances (Large, 2008).

There is disagreement on the political ramifications of Chinese assistance as well. There are still worries over China's use of assistance as geopolitical leverage, even though Chinese help is often portrayed as being exempt from the strict requirements usually placed by Western donors. Chinese assistance,

according to critics, is consistent with Beijing's larger geopolitical goals and foreign policy, including gaining access to natural resources and boosting its diplomatic influence (Moyo, 2020). This connection begs the issue of how much Botswana's sovereignty and capacity to freely pursue its own national goals may be jeopardized by Chinese assistance.

The assistance relationship is further complicated by the perceived power differential between China and Botswana. Although Chinese finance is a useful source of assistance for Botswana's economic and infrastructure projects, there are worries that China may have too much influence over the country's internal and external policies (Thrall, 2015). Dependency might result from this imbalance of power, making it more difficult for Botswana to exercise its sovereignty and adopt policies that run counter to China's interests.

To overcome these obstacles, Botswana must increase responsibility, openness, and monitoring in its interactions with Chinese assistance. To reduce the risks connected with Chinese-funded projects and make sure they successfully support Botswana's sustainable development objectives, it might be helpful to strengthen local capacity for project review, implementation, and monitoring (Omoruyi, 2015). Maintaining Botswana's independence and adaptability in determining its development path may be facilitated by a well-rounded and varied approach to foreign collaborations.

7. Enhancing China-Botswana Cooperation: Strategies for Sustainable Development and Transparency

A multimodal approach that makes use of shared strengths and tackles critical areas for improvement is required to strengthen China-Botswana cooperation for sustainable development and transparency. Primarily, agricultural cooperation has to be greatly improved. Agricultural cooperation has been historically neglected in comparison to other sectors. However, it may be reinvigorated via knowledge transfer, education, marketing, irrigation, and the development of rural infrastructure. By using China's vast agricultural production knowledge, Botswana may increase its food self-sufficiency (Wazha, Morapedi & Manatsha, 2015). According to Kgomotso and Moahi (2015), encouraging academic partnerships and research collaborations like the ones started by the University of Botswana may also improve

understanding and creativity amongst parties involved in environmental conservation and cultural heritage preservation.

China-Botswana cooperation is still based on infrastructure development, with Chinese investments in projects such as the Morupule B Power Station establishing a standard for open and responsible operations (Chen, 2009). To preserve amicable relations, it is important to tackle labor-related disputes and guarantee equitable labour practices by comprehending the legal and cultural distinctions in labour laws between the two nations (Zhou, 2023). By strengthening cultural relations and enhancing China's reputation, expanding public diplomacy via programs like the Confucius Institute may boost China's standing and create a more cooperative atmosphere (Zhou and Ma, 2022).

As a worldwide economic superpower, China offers trade and investment possibilities for Botswana, allowing it to diversify its exports and draw in capital across a range of sectors. According to Eisenman and Heginbotham (2019), Botswana's natural resources, which include minerals and agricultural goods, are in high demand in China and provide a means for the country to capitalize on this market. Companies from both nations may create synergies and maintain economic development via joint ventures and collaborations (Tsaurai, 2014).

Another critical area for partnership is human capital development. Training initiatives and scholarship programs may enable China to provide top-notch education and technical capabilities in vital disciplines such as STEM (Omoruyi, 2015). Botswana can establish a skilled labour force that promotes innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development by sending professionals and students to study and train in China. Additionally, involvement in information exchange programs, research partnerships, and capacity-building efforts may improve Botswana's competitiveness in the international market and fortify its human capital foundation (Meidan, 2006).

Encouraging interpersonal communication may help Botswana and China become more amiable and understanding. Cultural and educational events like language classes, academic exchanges, and festivals may promote intercultural cooperation and communication while fortifying cultural links (Schilirò, 2022). Mutual respect and appreciation may be fostered in both

nations' cultural contexts by including cultural and heritage treasures in conservation plans.

Strategic project selection may assist Botswana by concentrating on sectors like infrastructure, healthcare, education, and renewable energy that are in line with its long-term development goal and strategic objectives. It is essential to maintain openness and accountability throughout the negotiation and implementation of projects sponsored by China (Singh, 2020). Botswana could enhance its regulatory frameworks and procurement processes to guarantee the transparency of assistance agreements and the ethical and efficient use of money. Credibility and public confidence may be increased by making assistance agreements, project budgets, and spending reports publicly available (Moyo, 2020).

The viability of assistance efforts depends on increasing local ownership and participation. Project preparation, implementation, and supervision stages should include civil society groups, local communities, and pertinent stakeholders to guarantee that initiatives are adapted to local goals and requirements (Dintsi, 2019). Creating strategic partnerships with international organizations, development partners, and donor agencies may provide Botswana access to the knowledge, resources, and best practices it needs to manage and maximize the advantages of foreign assistance (Omoruyi, 2015).

According to Thurl (2015), Botswana needs to give precedence to all-encompassing development plans that integrate sustainability concepts into every sector of the economy, to guarantee sustainable development results. To guarantee compliance with environmental laws and encourage responsible resource management, institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks should be strengthened. A sustainable culture will be promoted, and locals will be empowered to participate in sustainable development projects via investments in human capital development, education, and awareness-raising initiatives (Tsaurai, 2014).

Establishing protocols for the public publication of assistance agreements, project budgets, and spending reports may help improve accountability and openness in aid projects. It is essential to establish autonomous supervision entities and regulatory agencies to oversee project execution and investigate misbehaviour (Zhou & Ma, 2022). Aid management will be even more transparent and accountable if stakeholder participation is prioritized, and technology is used for project monitoring and data distribution

(Zhou, 2023). Through the implementation of these techniques, Botswana may successfully advance its objectives for sustainable development, minimize related risks, and maximize the advantages of Chinese help.

8. Conclusion

The relationship between China and Botswana as well as the effect of Chinese aid on the country's development have been thoroughly examined throughout this research paper. One of the most important conclusions is the size and reach of Chinese aid programs in Botswana, which cover social welfare, infrastructural development, and economic collaboration. Aside from that, issues with the sustainability of debt, breaches of labour rights, environmental damage, and political ramifications of Chinese aid have all been brought up. Nonetheless, chances to improve collaboration and optimize the advantages of Chinese assistance while minimizing hazards have also been found, emphasizing Botswana's potential for sustainable development results.

The research emphasizes how complex the connection between China and Botswana is, with both opportunities and difficulties. Chinese assistance has aided Botswana's development tremendously, but it also presents issues with responsibility, sovereignty, and dependence. To guarantee the efficacy, integrity, and sustainability of aid projects, it is critical to promote openness, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. The report also emphasizes the necessity of a strategic and well-balanced approach to China-Botswana collaboration, emphasizing equality, respect for one another, and shared prosperity while tackling issues with debt, the environment, labour, and politics.

Research on the effects of Chinese aid on Botswana's development must continue because of the dynamic character of development cooperation and the ever-changing nature of relations between China and Botswana. To fully grasp the long-term effects of Chinese aid, including its political, social, economic, and environmental facets, more research is required. In addition, continuous oversight and assessment of aid initiatives are required to determine their efficacy, pinpoint obstacles, and support fact-based policy choices. To maximize the advantages of Chinese aid for sustainable development outcomes, Botswana can improve its ability to

negotiate the difficulties of relations with China by conducting thorough research and monitoring activities.

The analysis emphasizes the significance of a nuanced and balanced strategy for China-Botswana collaboration, one that takes advantage of the advantages brought about by Chinese assistance while tackling the related difficulties. Botswana can improve the efficacy and integrity of aid projects by promoting accountability, openness, and stakeholder involvement. This will help the country achieve its sustainable development goals and build a win-win cooperation with China. Sufficient investigation and oversight are critical to guarantee that Chinese assistance augments Botswana's developmental trajectory, advocating for equitable growth, social fairness, and ecological durability to the advantage of all concerned parties.

Notes

***Fatema-Tuj-Zohura** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, Savar-1340, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She is the Corresponding Author of this article. Her research interests include security studies, contemporary global politics, and African studies. Email: <fatema.zohura@juniv.edu>

****Sarwajit Bhounik** is a formal graduate student of the Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, Savar-1340, Dhaka, Bangladesh. His research interests include international affairs, Migration, and African studies. Email: <sarwajit71@gmail.com>

*****Sabrina Hasan Rakhi** is an MSS student of the Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, Savar-1340, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her research interests are security studies, Migration, and boundary dispute. Email: <sabahasranrakhi@gmail.com>

References

- Akhidenor, A. E. (2013). Code-switching in the conversations of the Chinese trading community in Africa: The case of Botswana: How English, Setswana, and Chinese are used to accomplish business goals in Botswana. *English Today*, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 30–36.

- Akrofi, P., & Atitianti, A. (2022). The impact of Chinese aid on political trust. *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 233–259. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3683>
- Alden, C. (2019). Evolving debates and outlooks on China–Africa economic ties. In *China–Africa and economic transformation*, (pp. 84–97). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198830504.003.0005>
- Alhassan, B., & Wang, Y. (2018). Comparative analysis of development aid modalities and institutional architecture between the North-South and South-South development cooperation: Perspectives from donor recipients. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Vol. 61, pp. 12–18.
- Amupanda, J. S. (2020). Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese developmental state: Lessons for Namibia. *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 53–. <https://doi.org/10.35293/SRSA.V38I2.249>
- Isaksson, A., & Kotsadam, A. (2020). Chinese aid to Africa: Distinguishing features and local effects. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.3643781>
- Assefa, Y., & Mengesha, M. (2020). The economic effects of Chinese foreign aid. *Journal of Economics and International Finance*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 262–277. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JEIF2020.1095>
- Brautigam, D. (2010). *China, Africa and the international aid architecture*. Working Papers Series No. 107. African Development Bank, Tunis, Tunisia.
- Brautigam, D. (2011). Chinese development finance in Africa. In *Perspectives on Emerging Powers in Africa: Analysis & Commentary from Foham's Emerging Powers in Africa Initiative*, Issue 16 December 2011.
- Broich, T., Szirmai, A., & Adedokun, A. (2020). Chinese and Western development approaches in Africa: Implications for the SDGs. In *Sustainable Development Goals* (pp. 33–48). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14857-7_4
- Caruso, D. (2020). China soft power and cultural diplomacy: The educational engagement in Africa. *Cambio. Rivista sulle trasformazioni sociali*, Vol. 10, No. 19, pp. 47–58.
- Chen, A. Y. (2009). China's role in infrastructure development in Botswana. *South African Institute of International Affairs*. <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1452842/chinas-role-in-infrastructure-development-in-botswana/2084662/>
- Corkin, L. (2008). Competition or collaboration? Chinese & South African transnational companies in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 35, No. 115, pp. 128–134. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20406483>
- Dintsi, G. G. (2019). Sino-Botswana relations: Drivers, status, determinants. *University of Botswana*. <https://www.ub.bw>
- Du Plessis, R. (2016). China's African infrastructure projects: A tool in reshaping global norms. *South African Institute of International Affairs*.

- Eisenman, J., & Heginbotham, E. (2019). Building a more 'democratic' and 'multipolar' world: China's strategic engagement with developing countries. *China Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 55–84.
- Fernando, S. (2007). Chronology of China-Africa relations. *China Report*, Vol. 43, No. 3, pp. 363–373.
- Gallagher, K., & Myers, M. (2019). China's development finance to Africa: A media-based approach to data collection. *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 1, pp. 115–134.
- Gukurume, S., & Matsika, F. (2022). Labour dynamics in Chinese small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *Africa Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 305–331. <https://doi.org/10.1163/09744061-bja10030>
- Guo, S., & Jiang, H. (2020). Chinese aid and local employment in Africa. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3718578>
- Huang, Z. A. (2021). China's public diplomacy and Confucius Institute. In *Public Diplomacy and the Politics of Uncertainty* (pp. 197–223). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gellers, C. J., & Jeffords, C. (2019). Environmental determinants of Chinese development finance in Africa. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 111–141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1070496518825282>
- Kalusopa, T. (2009). Chinese investments in Botswana. In *Chinese Investments in Africa: A Labour Perspective* (pp. 124).
- Keimetswe, L. A. (2023). The impact of the Chinese government scholarship program and Confucius Institute on China's national image in Botswana: A soft power perspective. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, pp. 1–12.
- Kirby, J. (2020). Between two Chinas and two Koreas: African agency and non-alignment in 1970s Botswana. *Cold War History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 21–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2019.1632291>
- Kgomotso, H., & Moahi, H. (2015). An analysis of Botswana-China relations in the Botswana print media. Pula: *Botswana Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 61–75.
- Maunganidze, L., Ikanyeng, S., & Malila, I. (2013). Emerging complexities and ambiguities of Chinese aid: The case of Southern Africa. Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 89–100.
- Large, D. (2007). Beyond 'Dragon in the Bush': The study of China-Africa relations. *African Affairs*, Vol. 107, No. 426, pp. 45–61.
- Li, A. (2016). Technology transfer in China–Africa relations: Myth or reality. *Transnational Corporations Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 183–195.
- Li, H., Kopiński, D., & Taylor, I. A. (2022). China and the troubled prospects for Africa's economic take-off: Linkage formation and spillover effects in Zambia. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 5, pp. 861–882. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2023.2146410>

- Lisimba, A. F. (2020). China–Africa relations: Historical perspective. In *China's Trade and Investment in Africa* (pp. 3–19). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9573-8_1>
- Looy, J., & Haan, L. D. (2006). Africa and China: A strategic partnership? *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 562–575.
- Makhura, B., & Rapanyane, M. (2020). China–Zambia political and economic relations in historical context. *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 6–. <<https://doi.org/10.4102/APSDPR.V8I1.350>>
- Manatsha, B. T., & Manatsha, B. T. (2016). Prospects and challenges for China-Africa agricultural cooperation: The case of Botswana. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 18–31.
- Meidan, M. (2006). China's Africa policy: Business now, politics later. *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 69–93.
- Mengesha, Y. A. (2022). The social effects of Chinese foreign aid. *International Journal of Accounting and Finance Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 61–. <<https://doi.org/10.22158/ijafs.v5n2p61>>
- Moahi, K. H. (2015). An analysis of Botswana-China relations in the Botswana print media. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 61–75.
- Mohan, G., & Tan-Mullins, M. (2009). Chinese migrants in Africa as new agents of development? An analytical framework. *The European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 588–605. <<https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2009.22>>
- Morapedi, W. G., & Manatsha, B. T. (2015). Prospects and challenges for China-Africa agricultural cooperation: The case of Botswana. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 18–31.
- Moyo, T. (2020). Globalisation and industrialisation in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC): Challenges and opportunities. *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 103–124.
- Mphemelang, J. K., & Velepini, K. (2021). Wilding educational policy: The case of Botswana. *Policy Futures in Education*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 358–371. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210320986350>>
- Madzoke, I., & Wu, J. (2024). The impact of China's aid to Africa on Africa's development. *OALib*, Vol. 11, pp. 1–20. <<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1111324>>
- Njoku, O. A., Kagiso, T., Mangadi, H. A., & Ama, H. A. (2014). Characterization of informal cross-border traders across selected Botswana borders. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 85–102.
- Omoruyi, M. E. M. (2015). The impact of China's economic activities in Africa on the economic growth of African countries. *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 47–90.

- Sautman, B., & Hairong, Y. (2009). African perspectives on China-Africa links. *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 199, pp. 728–759.
- Schilirò, D. (2022). Botswana's economy and the question of diversification. Vol. 13, pp. 2066–2073.
- Sebudubudu, D. (2010). The impact of good governance on development and poverty in Africa: Botswana—A relatively successful African initiative. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. 4, No. 7, pp. 249–.
- Sekakela, K. (2014). The impact of trading with China on Botswana's economy. *Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA)*.
- Sekakela, K. (2016). The impact of trading with China on Botswana's economy. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 2–23. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCEFTS-09-2014-0022>
- Singh, A. (2020). The myth of 'debt-trap diplomacy' and realities of Chinese development finance. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 239–253.
- Tang, X. (2021). *Coevolutionary pragmatism: Approaches and impacts of China-Africa economic cooperation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, I. (1997). The 'captive states' of Southern Africa and China: The PRC and Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 75–95.
- Thrall, L. (2015). Chinese presence and behaviour in Africa. In *China's Expanding African Relations: Implications for U.S. National Security* (pp. 21–74). RAND Corporation.
- Vaidyanathan, V. (2022). An examination of Chinese BRI projects in Africa: An Indian perspective. In *The Belt and Road Initiative in Asia, Africa, and Europe* (1st ed., pp. 14). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003156246>
- Wazha, G., Morapedi, B. T., & Manatsha, B. T. (2015). Prospects and challenges for China-Africa agricultural cooperation: The case of Botswana. *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 18–31.
- Xu, Z., & Zhang, Y. (2022). Lightening up Africa: The effects of Chinese aid on the economic development in Africa. *China Economic Quarterly International*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 178–189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ceqi.2022.08.004>
- Zi, Y., & Mogalakwe, M. (2018). Decoding relationships between Chinese merchants and Botswana shop assistants: The case of China shops in Gaborone. *African Study Monographs*, Vol. 54, pp. 171–189. <https://doi.org/10.14989/230159>
- Zhou, T., & Ma, T. (2022). Enhancing China-Africa health cooperation for a healthier and safer world: A multilateral perspective. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 39–59. <https://doi.org/10.1142/s2377740022500014>

Zhou, Y. (2023). Advancing China-Africa cooperation in the new era: Achievements and challenges. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, pp. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1142/s2377740022500117>