

From Namibia, you are heading back into Botswana, on a more southern road than last week's, all the way to Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana. It is known for the Gaborone Game Reserve, sheltering native animals like wildebeest and impala, plus resident and migratory birds. To the city's southwest, rhinos and giraffes inhabit the Mokolodi Nature Reserve. Gaborone is also part of the Kalahari Desert, a geographical feature that covers 70% of Botswana and touches 9 African countries.

The **Botswana Retired Nurses Society (BORNUS)** with its headquarters in **Gaborone** is a local NGO with a countrywide membership of retired nurses. It originated as an interest group in 1999, with the initial hope of establishing an elder home, but after the emergence of "the scourge of AIDS" and a call for action from the President, the nurses decided to step up and help. Now, 20 years later, they continue to try to meet a diverse set of needs, from day care for orphaned children and children of ill parents, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, support for grandmothers, and home based and palliative care. This is currently carried out with three operational branches in three villages. As a community-based organisation, BORNUS draws its expertise in service from a pool of experienced nurses, social workers and other professionals who are an integral part of the community where they work(ed). They therefore understand sensitive and health issues in the community and are able to design interventions that are both appropriate and culturally acceptable. They believe in their vision and would someday like to see this model spread into other African countries.

The retired nurses first introduced the Community Relief Day Care Centre in Tlokweng (greater Gaborone) back in 2000. Its aim is to provide comprehensive care and support to People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) and those with chronic illnesses, as well as Orphans and Vulnerable children. This has been done through a holistic approach that involves working with the family unit and providing integrated services.

All of these programs are reliant on a patchwork series of grants. There's an inherent instability to the system. Breaks in funding cause staff to leave, or year to year arbitrary shifts in sponsor's mission goals create whiplash between different priorities. Sometimes when funding runs out, the Botswana government will provide bridging funds, but these are temporary, just to cover a short term gap.

The BORNUS initiative supported by the SLF is the "Orphan and Vulnerable Children Project". This project consists of developmental stimulation for 2.5 – 6-year-olds, as well as after school tutoring, a youth group and a grandmother support group. The children are assisted with their homework, and they participate in skills development opportunities and sporting activities which are provided to encourage the children to pursue their dreams!

In addition, the SLF obtained funds from a private Canadian charitable foundation called the Blue Lupin Foundation to help build a library for the community relief centre in Tlokweng in 2015. BORNUS proudly displays the Canadian flag on their website in gratitude (<https://botswanaretirednurses.org/>):



Community Library Services

BORNUS

The library was constructed with funds solicited from Blue Lupin Foundation by Stephen Lewis Foundation in Canada and was officially opened in 2015.

