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Is Botswana's Current Development Sustainable?

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Poster Presentation 46

IS BOTSWANA'S CURRENT DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABLE?

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Botswana is a landlocked country located in the heart of Sub-Sahara Africa. In 1966, the country achieved independence, the population density was low and Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world with a subsistence agriculture based economy. An economic "boom" occurred from the discovery of diamonds in 1967 after a search of twelve years. This placed Botswana as one of the leading suppliers of diamonds in the world. Today, as one of Africa's few success stories, Botswana is predicted to be the second fastest growing economy in the world with a growth rate of seven percent in the past four years.

The supply of diamonds is the basis for Botswana's economic success. While the supply may last for many years ultimately it is finite. Taking this into account there is a question of whether Botswana is living sustainably or if the economic boom will be short lived. The sustainability criterion suggests that at a minimum, future generations should be no worse off than current generations. In the case of Botswana's mineral-based economy, sustainability is determined by the maintenance of economic and environmental standards during the depletion and through the extinction of the finite mineral supply.

Botswana is experiencing many environmental problems that may not be solved by the discovery of diamonds and they are compromising Botswana's sustainability. The country is currently experiencing problems such as shortages of water, drought, desertification, overpopulation and poverty. All of these problems threaten the sustainability of Botswana's economy, leading to the question of whether future generations will be able to live as the present generations are with the current depletion of the diamond supply and the damage that is being done to the environment.