

**Speech by T. B. Koontse, Director of Communications & Public Relations of the Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) at the prize giving ceremony of Kalamare Community Junior Secondary School, 8/10/2005**

School Head  
Invited guests  
Chairperson & Members of P.T.A.  
Teachers  
Parents  
Students

It is an honour for me to be here with you celebrating the success of our fellow students, teachers and indeed parents. Please accept greetings as well as apologies from the Chief Executive of the Botswana Telecommunications Authority Mr. C. M. Lekaukau. He would have liked to be here personally but was unable as he is away in London on other official duties.

Before I go into my job for this morning, allow me to briefly introduce to you the Botswana Telecommunications

Authority. BTA is an independent regulatory authority charged with the responsibility to promote free and fair competition within the telecommunications Industry in Botswana. In short, we are the organisation that licenses telecommunications operators such as Botswana Telecommunications Corporation (BTC), Mascom Wireless (Pty) Ltd, Orange Botswana (Pty) Ltd to provide you, consumers, with telecommunications services. We also give licences to Internet Service providers to provide you with Internet connectivity. In addition, the BTA serves as the Secretariat to the National Broadcasting Board (NBB), the organisation that licences broadcast stations – both radio and television.

I have brought with me a few information materials that will give you more information on the BTA and contact details for any follow-up questions that you may have.

Now turning to today's occasion, I understand that Kalamare CJSS has a population of two hundred and sixty seven (267) students, twenty five teachers (25) and twenty (20) ancillary staff. I also understand that the school has shortage of infrastructure facilities such as the school hall, kitchen, teachers' quarters and boarding facilities yet it admits students from as far as Mmutlane and Bonwapitse. Despite this background, I am humbled to note that the school's academic record is impressive having attained a 70.2% pass in 2003 and 77.6% pass in 2004. This performance is worthy of an applause.

We are gathered here today to collectively celebrate and reward our achievements. Of course, given our differing abilities, there are those of us who have managed to reach and even surpass set standards. Those we want to recognise, congratulate and honour.

The Theme for today's ceremony: "***Thuto motswedi wa botshelo lego feta 2016***", is a noble one in that it is consistent with goals of Vision 2016 on Education.

The Vision stipulates that by the year 2016, Batswana will be an **Informed and Educated Nation**. It further states that "*All schools will have access to a computer, and to computer based communications such as the Internet*" and that "*...the people of Botswana will be able to use and apply the potential of electronic information systems through the use of computer equipment in many aspects of everyday life*".

BTA as a regulator of telecommunications that form the basis of all information communications technologies (ICTs), has an interest in promoting ICT development of the highest quality to support our education system. For this reason,

BTA identifies itself with your theme for today and the ideals of Vision 2016 that I have just highlighted.

Let me now address the theme as it relates to you – in particular the students.

I wish to begin by stating the obvious in support of your theme for today and I know your teachers have already mentioned this to you many times. In modern day lives, Education is the key ingredient that distinguishes soft life from hard life because it opens and broadens your mind to many life opportunities.

However, let me warn you that education will not guarantee you a job. Instead, Education will train your mind to sift through various life opportunities and find something suitable to sustain yourself. Indeed **Thuto Kapola Lefifi** as

your school motto rightfully recognises. I therefore wish to encourage you to take your education seriously.

There is an expression that says: *“The roots of education are bitter but the fruits are sweeter”*. If you like, education was never meant to be simple, that is why people with higher levels of education are accordingly rewarded.

So my advice to you students is that a bright future awaits each one of you. However, the formula for realising that future lies entirely in your hands – and that is DISCIPLINE. The easiest goal to achieve in life is to decide to become useless. That does not require any effort nor resources, but simply indiscipline. I urge you all to set yourselves challenging life goals and commit all your efforts to achieve them. Then discipline yourselves, stay focused and you will emerge victorious.

There are times when you may feel like the demands of school work are too much for you and may want to quit - please do not despair. Instead persevere and you will reap the rewards later. Learn to compete and fight your way through because you are never going to get anything for free.

Today, competition is unavoidable. Some of us were lucky in that we grew up at a time when opportunities were many and therefore one could avoid competition by venturing into unexplored areas. Those were the times when there were still a few lawyers, doctors, engineers etc. Unfortunately you do not have that luxury yourselves because after school you will be competing for jobs with the rest of Batswana and indeed other people from the rest of the world.

It would be remiss of me if I could end my remarks without touching on the issues that worry every parent including teachers. These issues include teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. These three issues are the worst enemies of every teenager.

A lot has been said about the issue of HIV/AIDS in our homes, at schools, in churches, even in parliament, let alone in hospitals. However, there is still a concern by all those who are taking this issue seriously that the problem doesn't seem to reduce. Every individual, especially you the youth, hold a solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS. It is only through individuals taking responsibility to avoid getting HIV/AIDS that the problem will disappear. Your responsibility as the youth is to stay away from sex until you finish your studies and that means up to university level. It is only after you marry or get married that you can start practicing responsible and safe sex.

Often there is a tendency for students after sitting their final year examinations to start telling themselves that they have finished school and therefore can start misbehaving. First, let me tell you that you will never finish school. Learn from me, I may not be in a formal school today but I still take opportunity to learn everyday. Second, finishing does not give one a licence to misbehave. In fact, anybody who has gone through school education is expected by society to behave accordingly.

Parents/guardians play a critical role in the upbringing of children both morally and intellectually. Teachers develop understanding of the moral fabrics of society by the child on the foundation already laid by parents.

Success such as the one we are witnessing today is therefore the result of good partnership between teachers

and parents/guardians. Let me congratulate the Kalamare teachers and parents/guardians partnership for producing good results. Partnerships like this one are exactly what Botswana need to be An Educated and Informed Nation by the year 2016.

Let me in the same vein exhort you teachers to avoid the pitfalls that some of your colleagues have previously found themselves in. Whatever happens, please resist the temptation to get emotionally involved with these children. It is not good for yourselves, it is not good for the future of the children and it is not good for the nation. These children look up to us as role models and please let us not disappoint them.

Similarly, I wish to appeal to us parents, to make the education of our children our business. Parents have been known to leave the education of their children entirely in the

hands of teachers. Unless we take keen interest in how our children perform at school the ideals of vision 2016 will remain a dream.

I have spoken at length and I do not wish to spoil the mood of today i.e. celebration, celebration, and celebration of achievements. Once again let me congratulate all those that will be receiving prizes. To those who have not made it to the honours list this year, you already have a goal to work towards - ***“to receive a prize at next year’s prize giving ceremony”***.

Finally, allow me to recognise the efforts of everybody involved, Kalamare staff, both academic and support as well as parents. You seem to have discovered the formula that works. Please continue setting the pace for the rest of the country to follow.

In keeping with your theme for today, BTA wishes to make a humble donation of two (2) personal computers and one (1) printer. It is our hope that this humble donation will go a long way in developing Kalamare children into **technologically informed individuals.**

Pula... Pula... Pula...