

Speech by C. M. Lekaukau, Chief Executive of Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) on the occasion of the prize giving ceremony of Mariba Junior Secondary School, Mabule 23rd September 2005

**Member of Parliament For Ngwaketse West
Hon. R.M. Reatile**

The School Head and Staff

Members of the Parents Teacher's Association

Parents

Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I officiate at this occasion of the prize giving day for Mariba Community Junior Secondary School here in Mabule. As I understand it, Mariba is a boarding school that admits mainly children from Metlobo, Mmakgori, Tshidilamolomo, Sekhutlane and Lerolwane.

My organisation is called Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA). BTA which is an independent regulatory authority charged with the responsibility of promoting 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 other service providers to provide you with Internet, there is obviously a lot that I can say about the organisation I represent but we will distribute some information disseminating brochures to read at your leisure.

We are gathered here today, to celebrate success and erect a sign post, to mark Mariba's change for the better from this point moving forward. Since the school started operating in 1990, the school appears to have been delivering average performances obtaining a percentage pass of 58.6 in 2001, 56.7 in 2002 and 54.8 in 2003. However, in 2004, the school improved its performance by 15.3% from 54.3 obtained in 2003 to 70.1%. This performance moved Mariba's position in the region from 36 up to 22. A marked improvement such as this one,

particularly in a rural setting, deserves a lot more than just an applause. I definitely congratulate the School Head and the staff as well as you parents for this marvellous job.

On 10 June 2005, Mariba Community Junior Secondary School was among seven junior secondary schools in the South South-West Arts Association region that won themselves a computer each from the BTA for excelling in the subject of ART. Today's ceremony endorses Mariba's general academic performance as simply the best.

To you parents, I wish to emphasise that education is a partnership between teachers and parents. The teachers have a shorter contact hours with non boarders on a daily basis and from Mondays to Fridays only. You have longer contact hours with them and therefore you must see to it that a student does school work at home as well. Study your children's term reports and counsel them if they are not doing well. This is the only way to ensure the success of your child and the school at large.

Now I turn to you, students. I know that your teachers talk to you everyday about the importance of education. I also know that teenagers are often victims of peer pressure, especially in a boarding school like this one with students from various villages. Peer pressure often teaches you that you should rebel against your parents and teachers and indulge in things that your peers recommend. Peer pressure would be more relevant in a boarding school like this one where students spend a good part of their time away from parents. Most students usually realise that they have wasted their only time when the final year results come and they have registered a very poor pass or at the worst a fail.

May I take this opportunity to urge you to take your education seriously. Education is the key ingredient that distinguishes soft life from hard life because it opens and broadens your mind to many life opportunities.

I know that you may be discouraged from taking your education seriously because you see university graduates roaming the streets without jobs. We are latecomers in this problem but many countries have experienced this problem for many years. Let me hasten to warn you that education will not guarantee you a job. Instead, focused education will train your mind to sift through various life opportunities and find something suitable to sustain yourself.

Gone are the days when Batswana entirely depended on manual agricultural practices for a living. However, you do realise that nowadays we have erratic rainfall and we are perhaps experiencing perpetual drought. Education will allow you to engage in both white collar and blue collar jobs in a lot more focused manner. Without education, it will be difficult to be self employed today than it would have been during our times. With the prevailing circumstances of scarcity of jobs we should try to learn skills which may readily make us self-employable. As such, the importance of focussed education can not be overemphasised.

BTA is one of those public agencies charged with the responsibility to ensure effective development of the ICTs (Telecommunications in particular). To this end our main aim is to ensure that Batswana are a nation in possession of computer literacy, which no doubt is a pre-requisite for being part of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) global village.

My remarks will not be complete if I do not touch on the issues that worry the government and 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 bright future awaits each one of you in Botswana and worldwide, but the formula for realising that future lies entirely in your hands is DISCIPLINE. The easiest goal to achieve in life is to be useless. That does not require any effort nor resources, but only 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. You should know that the power to create quality of life is within yourselves because you cannot take a horse to the river and force it to drink. It lies in your ability to develop and use your own inner compass so that you can act with integrity in the moment of the available bad and good choices of life.

I would never let an opportunity like this one pass without talking to my audience particularly children about the number one enemy of our nation today, HIV/AIDS or SEGAJAJA. A lot has been said about the issue of HIV/AIDS by government, in our homes, at schools, in churches, parliament, hospitals and at various fora. 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 becoming HIV/AIDS positive that the problem will disappear. Your responsibility as the youth is to abstain from sex until you

marry. Even after marriage you still have to practice responsible sex by sticking to your partner in marriage.

In the Roman Catholic Church we believe that abstinence and morality are the key to an aids free tomorrow. The Sixth Commandment “You shall not commit adultery,” subsumes virtue of chastity which prevents someone from being governed by impulses, desires and temptations.

Bagaetsho, do not allow yourselves to be misguided by people who show you the wrong way by offering you condoms. There is a Catholic saying that one should use “common-sense not condom-sense. Abstain from sex before marriage and be faithful to your spouse in your future marriage – this is what Christ teaches us and it is the only teaching that we espouse in the Catholic Church. If you read at 1 Corinthians 3 verses 16 – 17 it says; “Surely you know that you are God’s temple and that God’s spirit lives in you. So if anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you yourselves

are his temple,” and 1 Corinthians 6 verse 13 says; “...The body is not to be used for sexual immorality but to serve the Lord; and the Lord provides for the body.” The Lord Jesus also prescribes the following text as a rule for abstinence and morality to all of us.

“A man does well not to marry. But because there is so much immorality every man should have his own wife and every woman should have her own husband Now, to the unmarried or widows I say that it would be better for you to continue to live alone as I do. But if you cannot restrain your desires, go ahead and marry – it is better to marry than to burn with passion. (1 Corinthians 7:2 and 8).

Those who try to depart from these prescribed principles by introducing concepts like condomising are trying to amend the Bible which is not possible. Whilst man made law governing the Church can be amended or even

repealed, the laws of God in the Bible cannot be tempered with by acts of a human being.

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. Firstly, 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. Secondly, finishing at any institution of learning does not give one a licence to misbehave. We are all expected to behave responsibly by the society which spent resources to educate us.

I have spoken at length but the mood of today is 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 or a benchmark to work towards receiving a prize at next year's prize giving ceremony.

Finally, allow me to recognise the efforts of everybody involved, the School Head and Mariba staff, both academic and support as well as parents. Keep up the good work. At this rate, Botswana will indeed realise one of her Vision 2016 ideals: **An educated and informed nation.**

It is now my pleasure and privilege to donate to the school two computers and a printer on behalf of BTA in order to augment what you may have to enable the school to raise its computer literacy.

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

19 September 2005

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