

Assessing the applicability of the Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) for biodiversity management in Botswana

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Key words: Cadastre; Land management; Security of tenure; Inclusiveness

SUMMARY

Effective biodiversity management in Botswana depends on how land is governed, as more than 70% of the country's territory is under customary tenure and supports both rural livelihoods and critical ecosystems such as the Okavango Delta and Chobe. The Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA), endorsed by the United Nations, provides practical pathways, because it covers tenure security, geospatial data, inclusive governance, and institutional capacity that can directly support biodiversity objectives. Applying FELA in Botswana highlights clear opportunities. Secure community and household land rights can strengthen incentives for sustainable use of rangelands, forests, and wildlife resources. Improved geospatial data integration can enable monitoring of habitat change, carbon stocks, and land-use pressures, while inclusive governance mechanisms can enhance the effectiveness of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programs. However, challenges including fragmented policies, limited interoperability of land and biodiversity data, and uneven distribution of conservation benefits often reduce the incentives for local stewardship. Aligning FELA with Botswana's biodiversity strategy therefore requires legal and institutional reforms, investment in integrated data systems, and safeguards for women and vulnerable groups. Harnessing FELA offers Botswana an opportunity to connect land administration reforms with biodiversity conservation, climate commitments, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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FIG Congress 2026

The Future We Want - The SDGs and Beyond

Cape Town, South Africa, 24–29 May 2026