

Message from the Chairman of the Board

Dr Eagilwe Segosebe was one of the founders of ST in 1992 in response to what the founding members saw as a growing problem of environmental deterioration. During the 1970s and 1980s decades Botswana was conspicuously characterised by widespread pollution, especially litter. Rapid economic growth and consequent urbanisation broadened the diversity of consumption goods in the country. Consumer goods shifted from being predominantly agricultural to a wide range of diverse and non- agriculture based goods. This naturally increased the diversity of waste from those that were easily biodegradable to some which were non-biodegradable. While the former could easily be dealt with by natural processes such as decomposition, the latter often tended to persist in the environment. Such persistence facilitated universal dispersion, thus resulting in pollution and eyesore. In particular two triggering events come into mind when reminiscing on the formation of ST. One was the indiscriminate waste disposal. The other was disposal of used oil at the landfill near Notwane River by local motor vehicle service companies.

Concern about what this indiscriminate waste disposal might do to the land, water resources, and eventually national health or for that matter to the country's burgeoning tourism industry motivated the founding members to form an environmental watchdog for Botswana. Among other factors, human attitude was singled out as being at the forefront of indiscriminate waste disposal. Somarelang Tikologo (ST) was born out of this desire to transform citizen habits of indiscriminate waste disposal to responsible environmental stewardship. First on ST agenda was raising public awareness about the importance of protecting our environment. As you may be aware, public awareness was later largely achieved as it was not uncommon in those days to hear people from all walks of life in Botswana expressing environmental sentiments. The irony of it was that very few people showed this sentiment in their acts. Where the problem lay remained a mystery. This is because we had a problem that everybody knew about, but that no one seemed to want to act upon urgently.

For those already converted, our challenge was how we could transform the newly found environmental values toward environmental protection. Part of our challenge as an organisation but also as members was to turn the often rhetorical uttering about the environment into environmental stewardship. Over time and in response to this challenge ST broadened its strategy beyond just awareness raising to hands on activities that encompassed, among others; community tree planting and litter picking, development of Bowasetso Park (Phase II) and the Eco Park, energy conservation project, pilot project on sorting household of waste in Old Naledi, recycling centre, Old Naledi out of school youth, the plastic petition, and a demonstration community organic garden.

In recent years the organisation was not lucky with securing international funding and was forced to look more and more inside the country for support. In the process of adapting to this newly changed economic environment, ST experienced a low growth, particularly with its action projects. I am, however, happy to observe that some locally based companies responded to our call for help by supporting some of our projects. This coupled with member support kept the organisation running. Perhaps, now ever than before is the time to start thinking about our future survival as an environmental movement. I know that ST can count on all of us as was the case in the past to get us here.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you all our donors, our members both individual and corporate for the support you have accorded ST over the years. I also wish to thank our Board Members for their contribution and unwavering support to ST. They are a wonderful group of people. Finally, and probably most importantly let me thank our management staff [Tamocha – projects and Wilken – fundraising] and their support staff for keeping the organisation running during a period of great difficulties and uncertainty.

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