

“Everyone’s Different – Respect for Minorities”

Episode 08:

The San in Botswana and Their Fight for Land and Water

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O-Töne. Botswana Clips Minorities (LbE Prod.)

Characters

<i>Narrator</i>	male/female	about 30	english
<i>Roy Sesana</i>	male	over 60	san
<i>Jumanda Gakelebone</i>	male	about 35	english
<i>Sithilo Thekiso</i>	male	about 45	san
<i>Mosalagadi Mowawaphuti</i>	female	about 45	english
<i>Mabele Owa</i>	male	about 60	san

Intro

Hello and welcome to episode eight of our “Learning by Ear” series “Everyone’s Different – Respect for Minorities”. Throughout this series we’ll meet various people who are different from the majority of society in the way they live, the way they look, or the way they think. They often face discrimination, but continue to fight for their rights. Today we’re heading to Botswana to meet a group of indigenous people there. The San – sometimes also called Bushmen – have lived in the Central Kalahari for thousands of years. They’re even said to have been the first people in Africa. Not long ago, though, their government tried to force them to leave their land. But they didn’t give in; instead, they fought peacefully for their right to both land and water, and they were successful.

Text

1. Clip Roy Sesana (San)

“My name is Roy Sesana and I am over 60 years old.

I was born here in the Kalahari, just like my grandfather, my father and my brothers.

We live on beautiful land with flat, open spaces.

It's most beautiful here in the rainy season; then there are lots of flowers.

You people in the city have shopping malls where you can buy everything. Here in the bush I can get everything, too. I can gather roots if I'm hungry, or melons. And I can hunt.

I would like my great-grandchildren to live and die in this area.”

2. SFX: Roy shows us his hut

3. Narration

Roy proudly shows me around the place where he lives. Molapo is the name of this little settlement of huts in the middle of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve national park. It's dry and windy, and the fine sand blows into our eyes. Roy invites us into his hut, which is made of wood and branches and roofed with straw. He's happy to be living here again. It's something he had to fight long and hard for.

In 1997 the inhabitants of the national park were forcibly relocated. The government of Botswana claimed that the protection of animals in the national park could not be guaranteed if there were people living there. Roy and other political activists appealed repeatedly against the decision - and in 2006 they won their case. The indigenous people were allowed to return home. It was a great success for the San, and the case attracted worldwide attention. But as Roy explains, their problems didn't end there.

4. Clip Roy Sesana (San)

“Even though the court made clear that we lawfully are allowed to live on our land, the government still troubles us. We are hunters, but there's not a lot to hunt. They promised us special hunting licenses, but we never got them. They don't even provide basic services like water. We ended up getting water by taking the government to court again.”

5. Narration

The piece of land where Roy and his family live is huge. The national park is about the size of Rwanda and Burundi combined - and there's very little water, especially in the dry season. The inhabitants were allowed to return to their homeland, but the government forbade them from digging wells. The San went to court again - and in 2011 they won that case as well. The government accepted the verdict, but it wouldn't help build any wells. That was done by NGOs, and by the mining company Gem Diamonds. Wells were dug in several places, including Molapo.

Jumanda Gakelebone [*pron.* Ju-manda Ga-be-le-bo-ne] has been fighting alongside Roy for years for the rights of the San people. He indicates a pipe running through the ground.

6. Clip Jumanda Gakelebone (English)

“This is the borehole drilled by Gem Diamonds last year. Unfortunately it did not bring good water. If this borehole would really give some water, people's lives would change. People who left the game reserve would come back. And it would stop troubles for people in the dry season.”

7. Narration

Four boreholes were drilled in the national park, but only in one place was the water fit to drink. And that place is more than 100 kilometres from Molapo - too far for those who live in the settlement. So they still have to collect enough water in the rainy season to last them throughout the year.

7a. SFX: Field

8. Narration

Sithilo Thekiso [*pron.* Stilo Tekizo] is sitting on the ground near the borehole in Molapo, taking a break. He's in the process of putting up a fence around a field to prevent animals eating his crops. Like most of the inhabitants of Molapo, Sithilo is wearing a T-shirt and trousers, not traditional garments. Sithilo used to be a hunter, but the government has made hunting illegal. At least he was able to return here after being forcibly relocated.

9. Clip Sithilo Thekiso (San)

“Life was very difficult for me. I was not familiar with the area there. When I am here I can at least go out and dig for roots and grow some crops to eat. But in the other area that was not possible.”

10. Narration

Sithilo and his wife, Mosalagadi Mowawaphuti [*pron.* Mota-hadi Mowaputi] like the traditional life, and they see their future as being in Malapo. They were very happy when the court allowed them to return to their homeland. At last, says Mosalagadi, they were able to leave New Xade [*pron.* New Kadi], the place they were moved to.

11. SFX: Women talking

The mother-of-four is sitting on the ground in front of a hut with the other women from the settlement.

12. Clip Mosalagadi Mowawaphuti (San)

“The lifestyle in New Xade was different and difficult for me. That’s why I came back. Just one of my children stayed there. I really miss her, but I don’t know how I am going to make her come back here.”

13. Narration

Fewer than half the people who were forced to leave have returned to the national park. Those who have returned are mostly old people and young children. Sithilo and Mosalagadi's 18-year-old daughter stayed in New Xade. To find out why, I head for New Xade, one of the three resettlement camps.

14. SFX: Car arrives

It's a six-hour drive to the village, which is outside the national park. Here, the government has created a functioning infrastructure: a hospital, schools, and houses for officials. The relocated San live in traditional huts.

15. SFX: Women talking in New Xade

It's in one of these that we eventually find Bankganetse Sethilo [*pron. Ban-ka-neti Stilo*]. She's been living here with her grandmother for a year now. She doesn't look like a village girl; she's wearing modern army trousers and a trendy top. But Bankganetse mumbles, embarrassed, that she does want to go back to her village - Molapo - sometime.

It doesn't sound very convincing. She doesn't talk much, but she does say that all her friends live here in New Xade.

The story of Bankganetse and her family highlights the problems that threaten the life and culture of the San today. It's very difficult to incorporate the traditional ways of hunter-gatherers into modern life. In New Xade, the San from Molapo experienced a new way of life. They went to school, got used to having water any time, and bought groceries in a shop. But many couldn't cope with the change. Mabele Owa is one of them. The old man was forced to relocate to New Xade, but he definitely doesn't want to go back and live in the national park.

16. Clip Mabele Owa (San)

"I used to be a hunter. Here I don't really have anything to do. I just hang around with my friends and we drink. There is nothing I can do to say: this is for my future, or this is for my life, or my children. I was forced into this kind of life, so now I have given up."

17. Narration

All of his family have gone back to Molapo. But Mabele is an alcoholic. He starts drinking his illegally brewed beer first thing in the morning - and he's by no means the only drinker in New Xade. Many people try to drown their problems in alcohol. But blaming the government for all of the problems is too easy. Botswana is rich in natural resources, and unlike in many other African countries the elites here have not just made money for themselves; they've also invested in the development of the country.

The intention is for the San to be given access to education and health services as well. And of course this is easier if they're living in the resettlement camps, not scattered across a national park. Roy Sesana, the activist from Molapo, knows this. But for him, education and homeland are of equal importance.

18. Clip Roy Sesana (San)

“I would like my great-grandchildren to live and die in this area. For that we need schools here, where they are taught in their own language; they have to be taught their own culture. And at the weekends they can learn from their mothers about our cultural activities, and their fathers can teach them how to hunt. We don’t want to lose our culture; it’s very important to us.”

19. Narration

Roy would like his children to get to know both worlds: the one inside the national park, and the one outside. Then they can decide for themselves where and how they want to live. This is something for which the 60-year-old activist will continue to fight - as he’s been doing all his life.

20. Clip Roy Sesana (San)

“Oppressed peoples must stand up and fight for their rights. Land is very important; it’s like a mother or father. That’s where you are born, grew up, and it makes you what you are.”

Outro

The words of San activist Roy Sesana, ending today's Learning by Ear story from Botswana. Our reporter was Adrian Kriesch. If you'd like to hear the other reports from this series about respect for minorities, visit our website at dw.de/lbe. You're also welcome to join us on Facebook. And, of course, tune in next time! Bye for now!