

[Minority Rights Home \(/\)](#) [Minority Voices Newsroom \(http://www.minorityvoices.org/\)](http://www.minorityvoices.org/)
[Minority Stories \(http://www.minoritystories.org/\)](http://www.minoritystories.org/) [Peoples Under Threat Map \(http://peoplesunderthreat.org/\)](http://peoplesunderthreat.org/)
[Directory \(http://minorityrights.org/directory/\)](http://minorityrights.org/directory/)

[\(https://www.youtube.com/user/minorityrights\)](https://www.youtube.com/user/minorityrights)
 [\(https://twitter.com/minorityrights\)](https://twitter.com/minorityrights)

[\(https://www.facebook.com/minorityrights\)](https://www.facebook.com/minorityrights)

Search Website

[DONATE \(/ABOUT-US/DONATE/\)](#)

Botswana - Wayeyi

HDI RANK: **131** POPULATION: **1,765** GNI PER CAPITA: **5,180**

LIFE EXPECTANCY: **34**

Minority Rights (<http://minorityrights.org>) > Directory (<http://minorityrights.org/directory/>) > Wayeyi

Updated April 2008

Profile

The Wayeyi live mainly in the North-West of Botswana. There is no up-to-date official census figure on the size of the population. However, Wayeyi campaigners estimate a population of over 100,000. The Wayeyi speak a distinct language Shiyeyi, and have their own cultural practices. Traditionally, they rear livestock and grow crops. But also, during the annual flooding of the Okavango Delta, they fish.[1] ([wayeyi.html#_ftn1](#))

History

The Wayeyi are reportedly the first Bantu speakers to emigrate to the Okavango delta. They came to Botswana from Central Africa. In the nineteenth century, the Tswana tribe, the Batwana, conquered their land, and subjected the Wayeyi to slavery.[2] ([wayeyi.html#_ftn2](#)) Those who spoke Shiyeyi were punished, and gradually Setswana became the dominant language. Like all the unrecognized minority tribes in Botswana, the Wayeyi have suffered from the policies of assimilation pursued by the Tswana elite. They have been unable to educate their children in their own language and have not been able to elect their own chiefs to Botswana's House of Chiefs (Ntlo ya Dikgosi), although in March 2008 the outgoing president of Botswana named a Wayeyi chief to the body for the first time. Membership of this body is dominated by the eight recognized Tswana tribes. In 1999, in an attempt to assert their identity, the Wayeyi announced they were seceding – and installed a paramount chief, demanding that the government recognize him. Subsequently, the demand for secession was dropped – but a court case was lodged which challenged the exclusion of the paramount chief from the House of Chiefs on grounds of discrimination. In 2001, the High Court ruled that there had been a breach of the constitution, saying it amounted to 'unfairness and discrimination which is unjustified.'

Current issues

The government dragged its heels over implementing the court ruling – attracting criticism from, among others, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its 2006 report on Botswana. In 2008, Botswana's parliament was poised to pass the 'Bogosi Bill', which would repeal and replace the Chieftainship Act. However, the UN Human Rights Committee criticized the government for failing to ensure full consultation on the bill with all interested parties. In a step indicating that perhaps political pressure for reform is paying off, on 27 March 2008, outgoing President Festus Mogae named a Wayeyi representative, Shikati Fish Matepe Ozoo, to the House of Chiefs for the first time.

At a grass-roots level, there has been a revival of interest in Shiyeyi, and in the holding of annual cultural events. The language is, however, highly endangered. Most Wayeyi children do not speak their ancestral tongue at all. Although the government has expressed some willingness to allow limited education in other tongues apart from English and Setswana, the parliament rejected a bill which proposed this. Broadcasting in minority languages is prohibited.

[1] (wayeyi.html#_ftnref1) Survival International factsheet, The Wayeyi, a minority tribe of Botswana; <http://www.survival-international.org>

[2] (wayeyi.html#_ftnref2) Nyati-Ramahobo, Supra

Botswana (<http://minorityrights.org/country/botswana/>)

Minorities

Basarwa »

Wayeyi »

Share this content:

[Tweet](#)

[Share](#)

MAP



(<http://www.peoplesunderthreat.org>)

Peoples Under Threat 2015 Map (<http://www.peoplesunderthreat.org>)

The Peoples under Threat ranking highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing.

+ LEARN MORE

([HTTP://WWW.PEOPLESUNDERTHREAT.ORG](http://www.peoplesunderthreat.org))

COMMUNITY JOURNALISM



(<http://minorityvoices.org>)

Minority Voices Newsroom (<http://minorityvoices.org>)

The Minority Voices Newsroom is an online multimedia library that allows members of minority and indigenous communities to upload, download and share their stories.

+ LEARN MORE ([HTTP://MINORITYVOICES.ORG](http://minorityvoices.org))

JOIN THE TEAM



(/jobs)

Jobs, Internships and Volunteering (/jobs)

Are you passionate about protecting the rights of minority and indigenous people worldwide? Check the Minority Rights Group jobs page for vacancies, internships and volunteering opportunities.

+ LEARN MORE ([/JOBS](#))

NEWSLETTER SIGN UP

Sign up to Minority rights Group International's newsletter to stay up to date with the latest news and publications.

Your first name

Your email address

SUBSCRIBE

ADDRESS

Minority Rights Group International
54 Commercial Street
London E1 6LT, UK

CONTACT

Email: minority.rights@mrgmail.org
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7422 4200
Fax: +44 (0)20 7422 4201

LEGAL STUFF

[TERMS AND CONDITIONS »](#)
[PRIVACY AND COOKIES »](#)
[ACCESSIBILITY »](#)

© MRG 2016

[Image Credits \(http://minorityrights.org/image-credits/\)](http://minorityrights.org/image-credits/)

[Site map \(/site-map/\)](/site-map/)

[Contact \(/contact/\)](/contact/)

[Donate \(/donate/\)](/donate/)

A Hands Up project
» (<http://www.handsup.co.uk>)