The purpose of this paper is to explore the opportunities for earth construction in Botswana. In the past two decades, there has been a decline in the use of traditional local building materials, techniques and styles. There are several possible causes that led to this decline including: socio-economic and cultural transformation / growth, invasion of industrial / modern building materials and changing value systems (modern replacing traditional values).

Building with modern / industrial materials is hindered by several factors such as the high cost of producing these materials, and excessive transportation costs to deliver them from the production to the building sites. The use of modern industrial building materials in Botswana is therefore not sustainable. There is need to seek for alternative non industrial materials which can be affordable to the majority of people especially those in rural areas. At independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world. However, since diamonds were discovered, the country's fortunes have made it one of the most rapidly developing countries in the world averaging an annual growth of about 10% p.a. between 1980 and 2010. The country has invested heavily in infrastructure especially water supply, transport and social services (health and education). With a population of only 2 million in an area of about 600,000km² (same size as France), the population is quite scattered (about 3.5 per km²) as shown on Figure 2, and therefore providing services can be very expensive.

In the past ten years, there have been discussions about the rising cost of building schools and hospitals. Most building materials are imported from neighbouring countries. The few that are produced in the country are concentrated in a strip along the east of the country. Thus, the delivery of some of these building materials like bricks, cement, steel etc. involve 1000-1500 km by road to the various construction sites as can be seen on Figure 1. As a result, projects are very expensive. All these projects are erected in either clay face bricks or sand cement bricks made far from the construction sites. At the same time, not only does the country have a long tradition of building in earth, it has the ideal climate for building using earth. Countries with similar climate in West Africa (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso) have made great progress in promoting earth construction. In Botswana, earth buildings are limited to residential building in rural areas. Despite all the developments in earth construction technologies (UNCHS 1989), there is no initiative or programme to support / encourage its use. This paper attempts to document the strength of earth construction by looking at the various options and recommending some possible techniques that can be adopted in Botswana. It concludes by recommending the establishment of a building materials research centre as well as introducing the subject to construction colleges and brigades.

**Key words:** Traditional, Local, Building Materials, Adobe, Soil Blocks, Rammed Earth, Construction, Technology.