



UNITED NATIONS
LESOTHO



ANNUAL
RESULTS REPORT



2023





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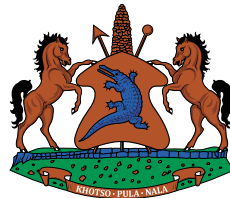
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The United Nations in Lesotho extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Lesotho's ministries, departments and agencies, along with our development partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and the media for their invaluable collaboration with the United Nations Lesotho in executing the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in 2023. We celebrate the unwavering dedication of our development and implementing partners, which have been instrumental in the significant progress achieved within the framework. Special thanks are due to the Co-Chair of the UNDAF Joint Steering Committee, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, for their exemplary leadership in tandem with the Resident Coordinator. Additionally, we acknowledge the crucial roles played by government ministries in the implementation of UNDAF. These ministries include the:

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education and Training
- Ministry of Defense, National Security and Environment

- Ministry of Justice, Law and Parliamentary Affairs
- Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
- Ministry of Trade, Industry, Business Development and Tourism
- Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development
- Ministry of Public Works and Transport
- Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Employment

Your commitment and cooperation have been pivotal to the achievement of UNDAF objectives, supporting the priorities of the Government of Lesotho.



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement
€	euro
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
Global Fund	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
ITC	International Trade Centre
RCO	Office of the Resident Coordinator
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCG	United Nations Communications Group
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
US\$	United States dollar
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization



FOREWORD

As we reflect on 2023, the year – delineated by both closure and the genesis of new opportunities – emerges as a pivotal juncture for the United Nations Lesotho and the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho. It signifies the conclusion of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), a comprehensive initiative that unfolded between 2019 and 2023 and which encapsulated strategic interventions and collaborative efforts aimed at fostering sustainable development in Lesotho. The conclusion of UNDAF heralds a new era, that of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, spanning the period 2024–2028.

Throughout 2023, Lesotho grappled with a myriad of multifaceted challenges that necessitated collective attention and concerted action from all stakeholders. The country's socio-economic landscape was marked by high unemployment rates, especially among the youth, and an economy reliant on remittances and textile production. Health care resources were strained, with the high burden of HIV, tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases impacting life expectancy, prompting the need for urgent attention, comprehensive health care strategies and resilient health systems.

Political instability and governance hurdles intermittently affected policy implementation, influencing the country's long-term planning and development trajectory. Issues such as high rates of gender-based violence and the limited representation of women in parliamentary seats underscored the imperative for systemic changes in societal structures and policies. Agriculture and climate challenges, and vulnerability to external shocks further compounded the array of obstacles faced by the nation. Recurring droughts disrupted agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity, affecting the livelihoods of many, particularly in the rural areas.

“ AS WE CONTINUE THIS JOURNEY, OUR UNIFIED FOCUS REMAINS RESOLUTE – TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, IMPROVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF LESOTHO.



In response to these challenges, the United Nations, in collaboration with the Government of Lesotho, development partners, civil society organizations, the private sector and diverse societal groups (including women, youth, children and people with disabilities), worked together to formulate the new United Nations Development Sustainable Cooperation Framework 2024–2028. This initiative aims to address the developmental challenges remaining following UNDAF's conclusion and aligns with government priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Looking ahead, the mobilization of resources for effective programme implementation remains a shared challenge. Our plans encompass addressing data gaps, enhancing governance and service delivery, tackling climate change issues and combating gender-based violence and HIV through joint programmes. These initiatives reflect our commitment, in collaboration with the Government of Lesotho, to achieve measurable impacts on national developmental outcomes towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we continue this journey, our unified focus remains resolute – to promote sustainable development, improve socio-economic conditions and enhance the quality of life of the people of Lesotho. Together, we enter this new phase, bound by our shared vision and commitment to a brighter future for all.



Amanda Khozi Mukwashi
United Nations Resident Coordinator, Lesotho



LESOTHO AT A GLANCE



2,007,201
million people
(982,133 males;
1,025,068 females)
live in Lesotho¹



6.4%
female seats
in Parliament⁸

POPULATION

40.0% of the youth are not in employment, education or training²

49.7% of people live below the national poverty line³

60.7% of people live below the poverty line in rural areas⁴

2.5% of people live with a disability⁵

GENDER INEQUALITY

Gender inequality index: **0.702**⁶

Gender development index: **0.985** (2021)⁷

Gender-based violence

37.6% of women aged 12–50 have experienced gender-based violence⁹

40.0% have experienced intimate partner violence¹⁰

Child marriage¹¹

19.4% of Basotho girls marry before the age of 18

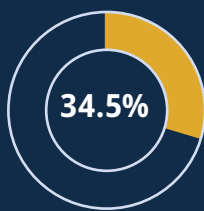
Child marriage is higher among girls in **rural (24.9%)** than **urban (13.8%)** areas

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

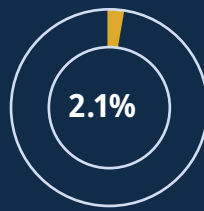
70.0% of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods¹²

14.13% of the land is arable and 2% of topsoil is lost annually¹³

325,000 (22%) of the population likely to be in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification **phase 3** or above (crisis or worse in relation to food insecurity) for the period July 2023–March 2024¹⁵



Stunting prevalence (2018)¹⁶



Wasting prevalence (2018)¹⁷



Global hunger index: **35.5%** (Lesotho is ranked 121 out of 125)¹⁴

MATERNAL AND INFANT MORTALITY

Maternal mortality: **566** per **100,000** live births (2020)¹⁸

Infant mortality: **57** per **100,000** live births¹⁹

Under-five child mortality: **85** per **1,000** live births (2018)²⁰





14.6%
of gross domestic product is spent on education²⁴

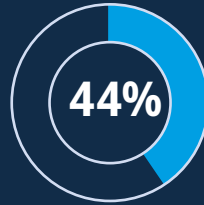
EDUCATION

12.0% of children aged 6–17 are out of school²¹

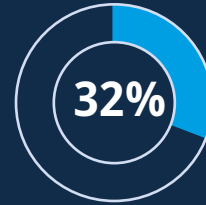
SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES²²



Primary school



Lower secondary



Upper secondary

97.6% net enrolment rate in primary education
66.1% in secondary education²³



As of 2022, according to UNAIDS Spectrum estimates, **270,000** people are living with HIV²⁵

HIV

94.0% of people are aware of their HIV status; 91% of those who are HIV positive are on antiretroviral treatment, of which 98% have suppressed viral loads²⁶

80.0% of new HIV infections are among young people aged 15–34 years²⁷

8.0% mother-to-child HIV transmission rate; higher than the global target of 5%²⁸

47.0% reduction in HIV-related mortality attributed to access to antiretroviral treatment and care services²⁹

1 Bureau of Statistics, Census, 2016; 2 World Bank, 2021; 3 World Bank, 2019; 4 Ibid.; 5 Bureau of Statistics, Census, 2016; 6 World Bank, 2024a; 7 UNDP, 2024; 8 Countryeconomy.com, n.d.; 9 Bureau of Statistics, 2023; 10 World Bank, 2024a; 11 Bureau of Statistics, 2019; 12 World Food Programme, 2023; 13 Trading Economics, 2024; 14 Concern Worldwide, 2023; 15 IPC, 2023; 16 Bureau of Statistics, 2019; 17 Ibid.; 18 World Bank, 2024a; 19 World Bank, 2024b; 20 Bureau of Statistics, 2019; 21 Ministry of Education and Training, 2020; 22 Bureau of Statistics, 2019; 23 USAID, n.d.; 24 Ibid.; 25 UNAIDS, 2024; 26 Be in the KNOW, n.d.; 27 Makara, 2023; 28 UNICEF Lesotho, 2023; 29 UNAIDS, 2024



CHAPTER 1:

Country context

Economic growth in Southern Africa in 2022 lagged behind both global and continental averages, registering only 2.7 percent compared to the world's 3.4 percent and Africa's 3.8 percent. Key contributors to this sluggish performance included South Africa's economic and other challenges, including civil unrest, natural disasters that significantly impacted the region and mixed outcomes in other countries like Angola, Namibia and Botswana. The region's growth was expected to slow to 1.6 percent in 2023 and improve slightly in 2024. This variation reflects differing economic drivers across the region, with some countries benefiting from natural resources and tourism (African Development Bank, 2023).

The region faces substantial risks, including global economic shifts, geopolitical tensions and domestic political challenges. Environmental and climate-related risks further threaten economic stability, especially in agriculture. Southern Africa's near-term economic and social landscape is marked by significant challenges, with disparities in growth and development across the region. While there are pockets of growth, overall concerns about poverty, inflation and debt persist amid a backdrop of geopolitical and environmental risks.

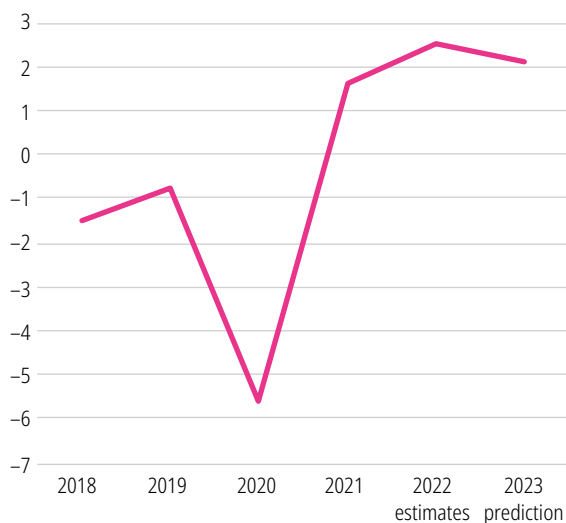
LESOTHO'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Lesotho's socio-economic landscape in 2023 presented a complex picture marked by gradual economic recovery and persistent challenges in social indicators. Lesotho's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth has shown signs of recovery after a significant downturn in 2020. The negative growth rates of -1.5 percent in 2018, -0.8 percent in 2019 and a sharp decline of -5.6 percent in 2020 were followed by an uptick in 2021 at 1.6 percent. Estimated growth for 2022 was 2.5 percent, and 2.1 percent was projected for 2023 (ibid.).

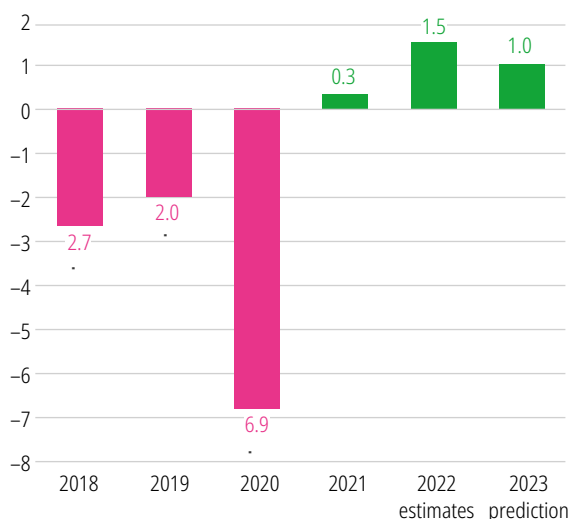


Figure 1: Real GDP growth (percentage)

Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and Bureau of Statistics, estimates and prediction based on authors' calculations

**Figure 2: Real GDP per capita growth (percentage)**

Source: Data from domestic authorities, estimates and prediction based on authors' calculations.



Mirroring the overall GDP trend, real GDP per capita saw a decline from 2018 to 2020, falling to 6.9 percent in 2020. However, a gradual improvement is noted from 2021 onwards, with a projection of 1.0 percent growth in 2023 (ibid.).

Consumer price index inflation in Lesotho has been rising since 2018 and peaked at an estimated 8.3 percent in 2022. A slight moderation was projected for 2023 at 6.5 percent. In addition, the budget balance as a percentage of GDP shows significant fluctuations, with a notable surplus in 2020 (0.2 percent) and projected deficits in the subsequent years, reaching -5.5 percent in

2023. The current account balance also shows a consistent deficit, worsening from -2.8 percent in 2018 to an estimated -6.8 percent in 2022 (ibid.). Government revenue averaged 50.7 percent of GDP, with tax revenues constituting 25.9 percent. Southern African Customs Union revenues contributed about 20.1 percent to GDP during 2018–2022. The public debt-to-GDP ratio was estimated at 59.9 percent at the end of 2022 (ibid.). Official development assistance averaged 4.5 percent of GDP during 2021–2023. Remittances constituted an average of 21.1 percent of GDP during 2019–2022, matching the average contribution from foreign direct investment in the same period (Minister of Finance and Development Planning, 2022 and 2023).

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Approximately 325,000 people, or 22 percent of the population, are expected to face severe food crises between October 2023 and March 2024. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for interventions in food security (ibid.).

HEALTH CARE

There have been significant improvements in health care indicators. Neonatal and under-five mortality rates have decreased and the maternal mortality ratio has reduced. However, child stunting remains high at 31.8 percent and HIV continues to be a critical public health issue, despite a 74 percent reduction in new infections since 2010 (WHO, n.d.-a and n.d.-b; UNAIDS, 2023).

EDUCATION

The literacy rate showed an impressive rise to 96.9 percent in 2021. However, school attendance rates suggest that only 65.3 percent of individuals aged 6–24 years are still in school, indicating potential challenges in educational access or retention (Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

GENDER EQUALITY AND YOUTH

Lesotho's ranking in gender equality declined, signalling an area for improvement. Additionally, about 45 percent of individuals aged 15–24 are neither in education nor employment,

highlighting a significant challenge in youth engagement and employment.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lesotho's socio-economic development in 2023 was characterized by a recovering economy and significant challenges in its social sectors. While economic indicators show signs of improvement, the social landscape, particularly in the areas of health, education, gender equality and youth engagement, calls for targeted policy interventions and sustained efforts for holistic development (World Economic Forum, 2022).

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN LESOTHO

Although Lesotho was ranked 135th out of 163 countries in its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2022, by 2023 it fell to 143rd out of 166 countries. This shift indicates that other nations might be making faster progress in their SDG efforts. Regarding individual SDGs, progress in 25.5 percent of the goals has slowed or seen setbacks, progress in 49 percent is slow and 25.5 percent are either on track or have already met their targets, according to the 2023 Sustainable Development Report (Sachs et al., 2023).

Lesotho's overall SDG score decreased slightly from 55.1 in 2022 to 54.9 in 2023, suggesting the need for focused efforts in specific areas. However, the Statistical Performance Index, which measures the quality of data reporting, improved from 55.2 in 2022 to 57.5 in 2023. Despite this improvement, the percentage of missing data in the SDG Index increased from 9 percent in 2022 to 14 percent in 2023, indicating challenges in data collection (Sachs et al., 2022 and 2023).

The country's commitment to the principle of 'leaving no one behind' is essential for inclusive growth. The Common Country Analysis identifies nine vulnerable groups: people with disabilities, women and girls, herders, youth, migrants, the LGBTIQ+ community and female sex workers, older individuals, impoverished rural populations, and refugees and asylum seekers. An extensive 'leave no one behind' analysis is planned for early in 2024 to better understand the specific challenges faced by these groups. The outcomes

of this analysis will assist United Nations Lesotho in devising customized interventions and will influence the United Nation's strategy for the Cooperation Framework 2024–2028, ensuring vulnerable groups are a priority in development plans.

REFUGEES, ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND THE STATELESS

Lesotho is a State Party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, having acceded to these instruments in May 1981. The Refugee Unit in the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police determines the status of refugees and monitors their well-being. The priorities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lesotho are building administrative capacity; providing training and technical support; and improving living conditions for refugees. By the end of 2023, Lesotho had 698 forcibly displaced people. During 2023, twenty-seven refugees and asylum seekers received business training to improve or start their own businesses, and 10 families received in-kind food assistance.

At the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva in 2023, Lesotho committed to include marginalized groups as a high-priority item on the government's agenda and to strengthen the legal protection framework. This commitment will be reinforced by the domestication of the Kampala Convention by the year 2025. The government also committed to finalizing a bill on statelessness, which will grant nationality to children born in Lesotho who would otherwise be stateless.

“ DURING 2023, TWENTY-SEVEN REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS RECEIVED BUSINESS TRAINING TO IMPROVE OR START THEIR OWN BUSINESSES, AND 10 FAMILIES RECEIVED IN-KIND FOOD ASSISTANCE.



CHAPTER 2:

United Nations development system support for national development priorities

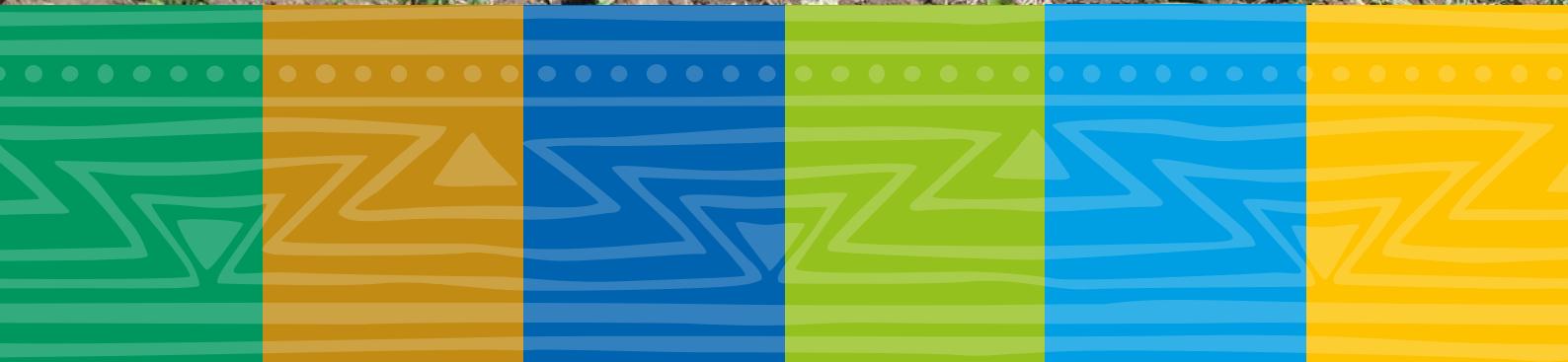
2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE LESOTHO UNDAF

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Lesotho is a medium-term strategic planning document that was produced by the United Nations country team (UNCT) in Lesotho as a collective United Nations vision and response to national development priorities during 2019–2023. The UNDAF was prepared in collaboration with the Government of Lesotho and other stakeholders and informed by the Common Country Analysis, as well as innovative initiatives, including forward planning, scenario-building, public engagement and other processes. In the best interests of the people of Lesotho, the Government of Lesotho and the UNCT have committed to working through partnerships and under the ‘Delivering as One’ modality.

TABLE 1: PILLARS 1–3 OF THE ‘DELIVERING AS ONE’ APPROACH

PILLARS	OUTCOMES
PILLAR 1: Accountable governance, effective institutions, social cohesion and inclusion	OUTCOME 1.1: By 2023, government and non-governmental institutions deliver their mandates and uphold good governance, rule of law and human rights, with all people having improved access to justice and participating in social and political decision-making in a peaceful environment.
PILLAR 2: Sustainable human capital development	OUTCOME 2.1: By 2023, all citizens, including women and children, particularly the poor, most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from evidence-based, shock- and gender-responsive social protection and social services for the sustainable and equitable realization of their rights.
PILLAR 3: Sustainable and inclusive economic growth for poverty reduction	<p>OUTCOME 3.1: By 2023, government and the private sector increase opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improved food security and decent work, especially for women, youth and people living with disabilities.</p> <p>OUTCOME 3.2: By 2023, the people of Lesotho have access to and use natural resources in a more sustainable manner, and the marginalized and most vulnerable are increasingly resilient.</p>

This report presents the significant accomplishments, challenges encountered and valuable insights gained during the concluding year of the implementation phase of the UNDAF.



2.2 UNDAF PRIORITIES, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUT



UNDAF Pillar 1

Accountable governance, effective institutions, social cohesion and inclusion

OUTCOME 1.1

By 2023, government and non-governmental institutions deliver their mandates and uphold good governance, rule of law and human rights, with all people having improved access to justice and participating in social and political decision-making processes in a peaceful environment.

CONTRIBUTING UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

Resident agencies: UNDP, IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO

Non-resident agencies: ILO, UN Women

Related SDGs: 5, 8, 10, 16, 17



PILLAR 1 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



ENHANCING SERVICE DELIVERY AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

- Conducted institutional gap assessment for core governance institutions, providing recommendations for service delivery improvement.
- Supported local government elections.
- Advocated for the establishment of a national human rights institution, the passing of the Human Rights Commission Bill and nationwide human rights governance assessments.



BUILDING PRIVATE SECTOR CAPACITY AND ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS

- Built private sector capacity on business and human rights, raised awareness and promoted responsible business conduct.
- Supported the 41st Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, reinforcing child protection measures.
- Collaborated with the National University of Lesotho in cutting-edge human rights research and strengthened government capacity for human rights reporting.



EMPOWERMENT FOR HEALTH DATA COLLECTION AND STRENGTHENING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ANALYSIS

- Empowered the Ministry of Health in collecting robust Demographic and Health Survey data.
- Strengthened the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police's capacity for gender-based violence (GBV) data analysis.
- Supported the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee for effective vulnerability assessment and food security analysis.



Empowered lives





HUMAN INTEREST STORY PILLAR 1

EMPOWERING VOICES:

A new chapter in migration data analysis in Lesotho

In the serene surroundings of Leribe District, from 19 to 23 June 2023, a transformative workshop was held. The United Nations Lesotho, in partnership with the Bureau of Statistics, hosted an intensive training exercise for Migration Data Working Group members. The three-day workshop was attended by 40 professionals from various government ministries and the National University of Lesotho.

The training, supported by the Southern Africa Migration Management Project (funded by the United States government) and funded by the European Union and the Africa Regional Migration Programme, was to introduce the International Organization for Migration (IOM) migration data portal. (The portal was developed to help connect the dots between global migration trends and local realities.) But this was more than routine training – it was a journey towards uncovering the migration stories waiting to be told.

Among the attendees was Mamots'oane Mofolo from the then Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Employment. As she sat in the training room, her thoughts were on the upcoming 2023 Labour Force Survey. "Migration isn't just a statistic; it's about lives, hopes and dreams. This training is timely," she reflected. The discussions on labour migration were not just academic for Mamots'oane; they were a window into the experiences of countless individuals shaping the future of Lesotho.

Lits'oane Keketsi from the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police, said, "We've been working with definitions that didn't quite capture the reality of migration. Now, with internationally accepted concepts, we can truly align our efforts with global standards." For Lits'oane, the session on 'the missing and deaths of migrants' was particularly poignant. "It's not just about numbers; it's about lives lost and families left behind," he said.

As the workshop concluded, the participants left with more than just enhanced skills. They carried with them a renewed sense of purpose and a commitment to bring to light the stories behind the data, transforming how Lesotho understands and responds to the dynamics of migration.





OUTPUT 1.1.1

Increased capacities of governance institutions to enable (i) effective delivery of mandates, (ii) citizen participation and (iii) commitment to international instruments and reporting on the protection of the rights of non-citizens.

Introducing a merit-based recruitment system and executive leadership training

Technical and policy advisory support to the government resulted in the introduction of a meritocracy system for recruitment of principal secretaries. For the first time in the history of Lesotho, a total of 15 new principal secretaries were recruited through a public and competitive process run by an independent executive selection team. The process, which withstood legal challenges, has been hailed as an international best practice.

In partnership with the government and Envisia Learning, 17 principal secretaries were introduced to executive leadership training, making them the first cohort of executive leaders in Lesotho. Additionally, an executive coaching platform was launched, with the 17 principal secretaries enrolled and now undergoing ongoing leadership skills development. Again, this is the first time such a tool has been made available to senior government executives.

Enhancing service delivery through institutional gap assessment

The United Nations facilitated an institutional gap assessment to support the strengthening of core governance institutions. Validated by diverse stakeholders, the assessment provided recommendations for addressing capacity gaps and streamlining public sector service delivery. Technical and policy advisory support to the government resulted in the completion of the gap assessment, together with a functional review of ministries that were amalgamated during 2023 and the formulation of a capacity-development programme and resource-mobilization strategy. This was bolstered by the formulation of an action plan to implement

recommendations from the gap assessment, rationalize functions of amalgamated ministries and mobilize resources. Based on feedback on the value of the process, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) have since adopted the methodology to undertake the same exercise in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation. A needs assessment on e-government was completed, leading to the identification and training of 60 private e-service providers.

Promoting democratic processes

The United Nations supported Lesotho in conducting local government elections, addressing the decline in voter turnout and providing critical insights for future electoral strategies. The elections saw a continued trend of declining voter turnout. Voter turnout was 38 percent in the October 2022 national elections, which was 10 percent below the previous elections in 2017. For the local government elections of 2023, the Independent Electoral Commission recorded a 19.20 percent turnout of registered voters.

“ VOTER TURNOUT WAS 38 PERCENT IN THE OCTOBER 2022 NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WHICH WAS 10 PERCENT BELOW THE PREVIOUS ELECTIONS IN 2017.



Strengthening human rights governance

The United Nations continued its advocacy with civil society, parliamentarians and relevant government officials for fast-tracking the establishment of a national human rights institution for Lesotho and for passing the Human Rights Commission Bill into law.

The Office of the Ombudsman conducted nationwide assessments to ensure that selected government institutions align with human rights standards, with reports and recommendations forwarded to parliament for remedial action.

In addition, support was provided to civil society to prepare a shadow report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ahead of the July 2023 review of Lesotho's record on civil and political rights by the Human Rights Committee in Geneva. The country was commended for progress made, especially in enacting laws that protect women against discrimination. Lesotho was requested to fast-track the establishment of a human rights commission in compliance with the Paris Principles, and to domesticate the Convention Against Torture by enacting a specific law to criminalize torture and place a moratorium on the death penalty.

The United Nations supported Lesotho's submission of its mid-term report on measures taken to implement the Universal Periodic Review recommendations received in 2020.

The United Nations supported the government in the submission of its fifth periodic report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was due in 2013. The government updated its common core document, providing current information about Lesotho's demographic, political, social and economic data.

Addressing human security concerns

According to the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, 622 people, an average of 62 people per month, were murdered in Lesotho between January and October 2023, mainly due to gun violence. Leribe District tops the list, with 112 people killed.

In December 2023, in commemoration of 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the government made three public pledges at a high-level event in Geneva. These were to (i) fast-track the establishment and operationalization of a human rights commission, (ii) address the backlog of state party reports in line with the country's reporting commitments and (iii) extend standing invitations for country visits for Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.

The United Nations continued to build the capacity of the security sector, finalizing human rights training manuals for inclusion in training curricula and updating the human rights due diligence policy risk assessment, ensuring that support aligns with human rights standards.

“ ACCORDING TO THE LESOTHO MOUNTED POLICE SERVICE, 622 PEOPLE, AN AVERAGE OF 62 PEOPLE PER MONTH, WERE MURDERED IN LESOTHO BETWEEN JANUARY AND OCTOBER 2023, MAINLY DUE TO GUN VIOLENCE.

Strengthening migration oversight and cross-border collaboration

The United Nations facilitated training for parliamentarians, leading to the establishment of a Parliament Working Group on Migration and the development of the gender-sensitive Parliament Advocacy Strategy on Migration, and Action Plan.

The United Nations supported parliamentarians from five parliamentary subcommittees to conduct oversight visits to official borders and informal crossings, thereby improving their capacity to effectively oversee implementation of government interventions and increase budget allocation for priority migration issues.

The United Nations supported the Ministry of Labour and Employment in reviewing and finalizing draft recruitment agency guidelines to strengthen oversight of recruitment agencies. Additionally, collaboration between the governments of Lesotho and South Africa addressed cross-border human mobility challenges and private migrant-worker recruitment monitoring.

The United Nations provided support to the government for the holding of bilateral meetings on (i) migration and security and (ii) cross-border labour migration in an effort to improve implementation of the binational commission resolutions on security and to concretize action on migration.

Strengthening capacities to report safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

Lesotho, as a State Party to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, was trained on how to produce its periodic report on the implementation of the convention. The country's focal point, after participation in a regional capacity-building workshop held in Algeria, returned to train the national team that worked on the elaboration of the report.





OUTPUT 1.1.2

Coordination bodies, oversight, partnerships, structure and systems for implementation of key national frameworks are decentralized, in place and functional at all levels.

Building private sector capacity on business and human rights

Together with the government, the United Nations successfully built the capacity of the private sector and business community on the *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. The United Nations engaged stakeholders in discussions on challenges and opportunities for promoting responsible business and human rights conduct, emphasizing corporate accountability. This resulted in heightened awareness of business and human rights in Lesotho, with active participation from various stakeholders, including business enterprises.

Supporting child rights through the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

The United Nations provided crucial support to the 41st Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child held in Maseru. Stakeholders, including committee members, representatives of Member States, the African Union Commission, United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations, were consulted. This resulted in the adoption of an outcome statement on the protection of children from drug use, reinforcing child protection measures and outcomes.

Advancing human rights research at the National University of Lesotho

The United Nations collaborated with the National University of Lesotho to promote cutting-edge policy research, monitoring and curriculum development on human rights. The university generated policy-oriented research outputs, focusing particularly on achieving the SDGs in Lesotho. Anticipated impact includes the productive utilization of research findings by relevant stakeholders to inform policy advocacy, leverage policy formulation and shape governance and governmental actions.

Strengthening government capacity for human rights reporting

The United Nations, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, bolstered the government's capacity to prepare human rights reports and follow up on United Nations recommendations. Training for the interministerial National Mechanism for Reporting, Implementation and Follow-up covered issues related to reporting under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention Against Torture. This has resulted in enhanced government capabilities for fulfilling reporting obligations, especially regarding the initial report under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (which was due in 2011) and addressing the overdue report under the Convention Against Torture (which was due in 2002).





OUTPUT 1.1.3

Government and partners are able to generate, access and use evidence to inform policy formulation and decisions relating to the implementation of political, social and economic programmes, including the SDGs.

Enhancing health data collection for the Demographic and Health Survey

The Ministry of Health received substantial enhancement of capacity from the United Nations for the design and data collection phase of the Demographic and Health Survey. The United Nations financed key international consultant positions and field data collection, ensuring the ministry had the necessary expertise for a robust execution of the survey. This support elevated the quality and reliability of the health data collected.

Strategic capacity-building for sexual and reproductive health data

Capacity-building initiatives by the United Nations for the ministries of Health, and Education and Training facilitated the generation of data that are crucial for informed decision-making and for the creation of the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy Policy. This vital information can be leveraged for ongoing programmes and policies in the future.

Launch of comprehensive migration profile

The United Nations supported the development and launch of the Migration Profile, a foundational tool for analysing the impact of migration on development. This comprehensive profile serves as a credible and comparable data source, essential for assessing the socio-economic implications of migration in Lesotho.

Improving migration data management in ministries

Three key government ministries – Labour and Employment; Foreign Affairs and International Relations; and Local Government,

Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police – substantially improved their migration data management through United Nations support. This involved digitalizing administrative data and establishing an integrated migration data management system, streamlining data-sharing and reporting, facilitating timely information exchange and supporting generation of evidence for migrant-sensitive policies.

Addressing climate-related migration patterns

A comprehensive study initiated by the United Nations investigated correlations between migration patterns and climate-related occurrences like droughts. The primary aim was to incorporate environmental and climate change dimensions into reintegration processes for migrants, offering strategic recommendations for optimizing effective reintegration.

“ THREE KEY GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES – LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT; FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS; AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, CHIEFTAINSHIP, HOME AFFAIRS AND POLICE – SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED THEIR MIGRATION DATA MANAGEMENT THROUGH UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT.



Study on internally displaced people

The United Nations actively supported the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police in conducting a comprehensive study focused on internally displaced people. This study identified root causes behind internal displacement, serving as a foundational framework for the domestication of the Kampala Convention on displaced people within Lesotho's national context.

Development of geospatial platform for territorial planning

United Nations' support facilitated the development of a geospatial platform for territorial planning, empowering the government with improved resource allocation and planning mechanisms. The fully functional geospatial platform and its accompanying information technology infrastructure were officially transferred to the government in May 2023, marking a significant achievement.

Enhancing assessment of vulnerability and analysis of food security

United Nations' support enabled the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee to seamlessly execute vulnerability assessments and integrated food security phase classification analysis. The outcomes of these

assessments, which provide valuable insights that could inform and guide programming and intervention strategies, were disseminated among stakeholders.

Building capacity for using drones in disaster management

The United Nations provided capacity-building initiatives for government ministries and non-governmental organizations on drone utilization, equipping them with the skills to gather and utilize critical information for early warning systems, disaster preparedness and response strategies.

Development of *Land Cover Atlas of Lesotho* and dashboard

Collaborating with the government, the United Nations published the *Land Cover Atlas of Lesotho*. This innovative tool, accompanied by a comprehensive database, serves as a rich source of information on land cover status in Lesotho over a five-year period (2017-2021). Additionally, the United Nations supported the development of a cutting-edge dashboard with comprehensive land cover data, facilitating informed decision-making.

Strengthening GBV data analysis

The United Nations actively strengthened the capacity of the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police, enabling officials to generate and analyse GBV data. Undergoing a digital transformation, the ministry is now equipped to efficiently collect and analyse GBV information.

The Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development

The United Nations provided support to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in reporting on progress made towards the government's commitments under the Addis Ababa Declaration. The report, which focused on the declaration's six pillars and 88 commitments, showed improvement in several indicators, and gave details of action plans developed.



THE UNITED NATIONS PROVIDED SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN REPORTING ON PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENTS UNDER THE ADDIS ABABA DECLARATION.



OUTPUT 1.1.4

National monitoring and evaluation systems for policy, strategy and programme implementation strengthened to promote national resilience.

Advancing the monitoring and evaluation framework

The United Nations played an instrumental role in assisting the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, recording significant progress. While the framework is still to be fully implemented, its development represents a pivotal milestone that will enable evidence-based assessments of programme effectiveness and the identification of areas for improvement.

Milestone achievement with monitoring and evaluation guidelines

The completion of the monitoring and evaluation guidelines is a notable achievement, signalling

a commitment to develop tailored capacity-building initiatives that are aligned with the core contents of the guidelines. This concerted effort has resulted in substantial capacity-building across essential monitoring and evaluation components, demonstrating the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning's commitment to enhancing public sector performance and fostering accountability.

Review of the Statistics Act

The United Nations, together with other development partners, supported the Bureau of Statistics in reviewing the Statistics Act (2011). This will ensure the development of an updated act better able to meet the data needs of the country.





OUTPUT 1.1.5

Local- and national-level mechanisms are strengthened to (i) facilitate an all-inclusive, open and participatory national reform process and (ii) mitigate conflict.

Steadfast United Nations support for national reform

Together with various development partners, the United Nations has actively maintained its commitment to supporting the national reform process by facilitating consensus-building forums. Despite temporary pauses in the reform processes, United Nations support has remained unwavering, assisting the government in the effective implementation of crucial national reforms.

In partnership with the European Union, United States Embassy, Southern African Development Community Panel of Elders, civil society and faith-based organizations, the United Nations Lesotho contributes to governance and peacebuilding by supporting the national reforms process and strengthening the capacities of government and national stakeholders.

Measures to ensure the equal and effective participation of women, youth and people with disabilities were integrated into the 11th Amendment of the Constitution. The national reforms process involved mainstreaming women and gender issues into different pieces of legislation, with 46 percent of the legislature's proposed amendments directly addressing concerns such as the age of majority, public appointments, the electoral process, inheritance, justice reforms and discriminatory practices within the security sector.

Through United Nations programmes, policy advice and technical support were provided to the National Reforms Transitional Authority in taking forward the national reforms agenda. More than seven consensus-building sessions were held with key stakeholders, leading to the July 2023 agreement among political parties in parliament to support the bill.

The design and implementation of capacity-building activities for civil society organizations, faith-based organizations and the media to participate effectively in the implementation of national reforms were key to enabling the operationalization of the 11th Amendment of the Constitution. This support included the mobilization and deployment of a senior governance, peace and conflict-resolution expert to strengthen the insider-mediation capacity of the Heads of Churches of the Christian Council of Lesotho. This resulted in the completion of governance scenarios and conflict prevention and mitigation studies that have proposed strategies to address the risks and create a roadmap to achieve reforms. A capacity-strengthening programme for peace, dialogue and social cohesion in Lesotho was developed and endorsed by stakeholders to be used in resource mobilization.

The United Nations contributed to improving the capacity of civil society and citizens to actively engage in the national reform process. The enhanced technical capacities for advocacy and social accountability resulted in consensus-building among members of the National Assembly and Senate, as illustrated by the Amendments to Standing Order 105(B) on Reinstatement of Business to fast-track the processing of the impending 11th Amendment of the Constitution. The United Nations also supported the capacity-building of faith-based organizations, civil society organizations and communities in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and social cohesion.

Addressing corruption

The United Nations supported the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences in the development of the new National Anti-Corruption Strategic Action Plan 2024–2028 as a concrete measure to address corruption

in Lesotho. The action plan establishes a comprehensive framework for tackling corruption by setting clear objectives and strategies. District anti-corruption committees were established, with United Nations support, as permanent community-level structures to empower communities to monitor and report on corruption. This decentralized approach will increase transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in addressing corruption.

Strengthening Parliament

A workshop was held with parliamentarians to foster consensus among members from both houses of parliament regarding the 10th Constitutional Amendment Bill (2023). It enabled parliamentarians to seek clarification and gain comprehensive insights into the bill before engaging in parliamentary debates. This continuing United Nations-supported initiative exemplifies a concerted effort to facilitate harmonious deliberations and cultivate collective understanding among leaders. Despite temporary halts, this approach advances the national reform agenda, demonstrating resilience and dedication to achieving consensus, even during challenging periods.

The capacity of Lesotho's National Assembly and Senate to coordinate and monitor national plans, SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063 was strengthened through targeted training of members, the establishment of a portfolio committee on SDGs and the formulation of an action plan for SDG implementation and oversight.

The United Nations Joint Initiative on Improved Governance for Optimized Service Delivery was conceptualized and initiated as a United Nations joint response to augment the government's capacity to govern and deliver services to Basotho. Through this intervention, an institutional gap assessment, which included a Cabinet-endorsed comprehensive programme to address identified gaps and bolster institutional capacity (see page 19), was completed. A functional review of the five amalgamated ministries was completed, resulting in actionable recommendations to optimize their functions and improve efficiency. Institutional partnerships and south-south cooperation were established and institutionalized between the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Rwanda Cooperation Initiative. A meritocracy system for recruiting principal secretaries was introduced (see page 19), ensuring a transparent and competitive selection process.



OUTPUT 1.1.6

Capacity of non-state actors is enhanced for improved civil participation and transparency, social accountability, equity and quality of public investment.

The enhancement of election processes widely led to transparency and inclusion through the promotion of citizen engagement. Support of the media through working with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, enabled the easy flow of credible information.

Support of the Heads of Churches of the Christian Council of Lesotho led to the signing of an electoral

pledge, with political party leaders and other stakeholders agreeing to accept the outcome of election results once certified by the Independent Electoral Commission. This contributed to the efforts targeted at limiting opportunities for electoral violence, which encompassed prevention and mitigation strategies and early warning and mediation mechanisms, such as the initiation and activation of varied roles played by Lesotho's development partners.





UNDAF Pillar 2

Sustainable human capital development

OUTCOME 2.1

By 2023, all citizens, including women and children, particularly the poor, most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from evidence-based, shock- and gender-responsive social protection and social services for the sustainable and equitable realizations of their rights.

CONTRIBUTING UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

Resident agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, WHO, IOM, FAO, UNDP, WFP

Non-resident agencies: IAEA, ILO, ITC, UN Women, UNESCO, UNHCR

Related SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17



PILLAR 2 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS INTERVENTIONS

- Supported and strengthened efforts that have resulted in Lesotho making progress towards achieving the Global AIDS 95-95-95 targets for HIV testing, treatment and viral suppression.
- Mobilized external resources for the national HIV and tuberculosis programmes, technical support and capacity-building for the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Training, the National AIDS Commission, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.
- Provided technical assistance for the development of guidelines and training materials, and the roll-out of advanced antiretroviral medications, with over 100 health care providers receiving training and high-impact interventions being accelerated.



EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Supported the expansion of the National Information System for Social Assistance to cover 90 percent of the country (488,309 households).
- Reached over 48,000 households through United Nations support of the Child Grant Programme.



INTEGRATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- Collaborated with the Ministry of Education and Training to integrate entrepreneurship education into the secondary school curriculum in order to foster a more holistic and responsive education system that prepares youth for diverse opportunities and that contributes to the long-term economic development of Lesotho.



LAUNCH OF THE DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVE

- Collaborated with the Ministry of Education and Training to successfully launch the Digital Literacy Initiative in primary and secondary schools in order to enhance students' digital skills and thus ensure that they are well-prepared for the demands of the modern world.



GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION AND INNOVATIVE PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCING CONTRIBUTION

- Leveraged partnerships with the private sector and foundations, resulting in the commitment of US\$3.5 million to unlock US\$2.5 million from the Global Partnership for Education.



RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND FAITH LEADER ENGAGEMENT

- Supported a national AIDS spending assessment that showed increased expenditure on HIV from US\$43 million to US\$100 million annually.
- Supported collaborative efforts with faith leaders, which culminated in an HIV implementation framework and a statement of commitment to end AIDS signed by all leaders of the faith community, amplifying engagement in the HIV response.





HUMAN INTEREST STORY PILLAR 2

EMPOWERING CHANGE:

Lesotho's dialogue on gender equality and bodily autonomy

In observance of World Population Day 2023, young people from diverse backgrounds convened in Ha Khabo, Leribe District, for a dialogue on gender equality. The event, co-hosted by the United Nations and Limkokwing University, was themed 'Unleashing the power of gender equality'. Participants viewed gender equality as vital for achieving the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development and the SDGs.

The discussion highlighted that embracing gender equality could be a catalyst in achieving Agenda 2030. "Gender equality fosters equitable resource distribution and propels national development, enhancing both human and economic progress," said Zwelithini Matsoso, a prominent local advocate.

Nteboheling Makae, another participant, shed light on specific challenges facing Lesotho. "We face serious issues in gender-based violence and women's political representation. We must intensify our efforts to meet the SDGs," she urged.

Addressing the topic 'bodily autonomy', participants advocated for the right to personal choice and bodily integrity. The dialogue stressed the importance of education, informed choices and respect for consent in sexual relationships. "It is imperative to amplify women's and girls' voices, addressing critical issues like sexual assault, LGBTQ+ acceptance and forced early marriages," the group concurred.

Kefuoe Majoro and Lerato Motleleng, two influential voices at the event, underscored the need for greater political participation of women and for addressing societal issues like forced early marriage due to economic pressures. "These practices endanger young girls' lives and hinder our progress as a society," they highlighted.

The event culminated in a powerful call for action to foster gender equality and empower women and girls in Lesotho.





OUTPUT 2.1.1

Health sector capacity to plan and coordinate promotive, preventative and curative health services, including non-communicable diseases, strengthened.

Enhancing leadership capacity in health management

Through collaborative efforts, the United Nations successfully trained 12 senior health managers using the WHO Regional Office for Africa transformative programme for change leadership. This initiative fostered skills for evidence-based policymaking, implementation and monitoring; harmonized monitoring and evaluation guidelines; and adapted or adopted monitoring and evaluation tools.

Promoting inclusive health sector governance

The establishment of a health sector coordination platform, supported by the United Nations, has significantly improved high-level dialogue and consensus building regarding health policies, strategies, integrated plans and coordinated support for the health sector. This platform plays a crucial role in risk assessment and response during public health emergencies, prompting comprehensive structural and functional reviews across the health sector.

Advancing medications regulation and access

United Nations' assistance to Lesotho's Ministry of Health led to the enactment of the Medicines and Medical Devices Authority Act, ensuring the regulation of pharmaceuticals and medical devices nationwide. This collaboration notably improved access to essential medications in health care facilities, as validated by ongoing client satisfaction surveys.

Transparent health expenditure management

United Nations-supported initiatives facilitated the comprehensive analysis of Lesotho's national health

expenditure accounts (2019/20) and the production of the first national health accounts report. This report enhances transparency and efficiency in health financing and resource mobilization as well as evidence-based decision-making.

Strategic health workforce development

The United Nations significantly contributed to the development of the national health workforce and data enhancement. This involved evaluating and updating the National Health Workforce Accounts Database (NHWA 2.0) and modernizing its systems; adopting the Workload Indicators of Staffing Need guide, establishing staffing standards for primary health care facilities and modernizing the Human Resources for Health strategic plan.

Strengthening health data and information systems

The United Nations supported the strengthening of data and information systems by building capacity in health care facilities and the central Ministry of Health. Capacity was enhanced through guidance on health facility-based data gathering, data quality reviews and the recording of health information using the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and eleventh revision of the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). The maintenance and review of the content and capacities of the DHIS2 open-base data system were also supported, furthering the effectiveness of data management in the health sector.

Strengthening evidence-driven services

The Ministry of Health was supported to undertake data collection and analysis, generate annual HIV estimates and conduct a comprehensive review of national HIV and tuberculosis programmes to guide planning to accelerate the impact of key interventions.





OUTPUT 2.1.2

Health facilities and community structures in all 10 districts have the capacity to deliver integrated, quality, gender-sensitive reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition, HIV, tuberculosis and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Enhancing capacities in four districts

The operational capabilities of Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Mophale's Hoek and Quthing districts were strengthened, empowering them to implement integrated service delivery under the primary health care framework for universal health coverage.

Comprehensive training for senior health managers

Targeted training was conducted for 22 senior health managers and programme managers from the central Ministry of Health, along with 55 district and hospital managers. The training focused on the model of integrated health services delivery aligned with the principles of the primary health care approach.

Emphasizing perinatal health

Perinatal health was established as a core performance indicator to measure the effectiveness of the integrated service delivery approach. This strategic focus ensures a comprehensive assessment of health-service delivery outcomes, aligned with primary health care principles.

Strengthening community health systems

Leaders of civil society organizations, the faith sector and communities were supported to strengthen community mobilization and linkages to health care facilities, and create a demand for integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health services.



OUTPUT 2.1.3

Government, civil society and private sector capacity to deliver quality HIV and tuberculosis prevention, treatment, care and support services strengthened.

Policy and strategy development

The United Nations facilitated the development and costing of various health policies, strategies and guidelines. These included the Expanded Programme on Immunization Policy, the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2018/19–2022/23, the Health Sector HIV Strategic Plan, the National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2019–2023 and a comprehensive training manual integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV and GBV. Advancing pre-service training,

the revised Diploma in Public Health Nursing curriculum now includes integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights, and HIV and GBV elements.

Strengthening service delivery

The collaboration aimed to implement people-centred models of integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights, and HIV and GBV services. Over the period, health workers in six hospitals across four districts received

supervised mentoring to improve the quality of these integrated services and address service delivery challenges.

Adolescent health empowerment

Extensive efforts were made to empower young people in Lesotho. More than 200 health workers received training, covering topics from family planning to GBV. Additionally, this intervention was aimed at enabling 10 districts to provide essential adolescent HIV prevention interventions.

Social accountability and education programmes

Collaborating with ministries and civil society organizations, the United Nations supported empowerment programmes for young people on social accountability, aiding them in holding service providers accountable. Over 20,000 citizens, including in-school and out-of-school youth, received sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV and GBV services. Furthermore, comprehensive sex education was integrated into the education system, reaching over 151,450 children aged 10–12 in schools.

HIV and tuberculosis interventions

Support from the United Nations included technical assistance for developing guidelines and training materials and the roll-out of advanced antiretroviral medications. More than 100 health care providers received training to enhance the quality of service delivery and to accelerate high-impact interventions. A detailed tuberculosis audit and programme review provided recommendations for improvement.

The United Nations supported the Ministry of Health's service response at key official borders in six districts. This intervention was aimed at reaching Basotho labour migrants with HIV and tuberculosis health services during the Easter and December 2023 influx.

These interventions had a direct positive impact on the health outcomes of individuals living with HIV and tuberculosis.

The Global Fund and strengthening health systems

The United Nations supported the implementation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) grant by helping to negotiate terms and conditions, accelerating programme implementation and securing additional funding for expanding HIV-prevention services. Technical assistance included conducting national surveys, strengthening health systems and supporting a successful application for prioritized above-allocation funds.

Improved school-health services access

Implementation of school-health facility referral strategies, supported by the United Nations, established a seamless link between the education and health sectors. The aim was to bolster learners' access to health services to ensure better student health and well-being through improved access to adolescent-friendly health services and uninterrupted education.

The United Nations supported the empowerment of 176 (55 males, 113 females, 8 other) adolescents, migrants and sex workers on financial literacy training. Sixty (10 males, 38 females, 2 other) graduated from vocation skills training, and 56 beneficiaries (11 males, 43 females, 2 other) were linked with the private sector through a business management and marketing workshop.

“ THE UNITED NATIONS SUPPORTED THE EMPOWERMENT OF 176 (55 MALES, 113 FEMALES, 8 OTHER) ADOLESCENTS, MIGRANTS AND SEX WORKERS ON FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING.



Community systems strengthening

The United Nations supported a diagnostic study of the contribution of civil society organizations and communities most affected by and living with HIV in the implementation of interventions, including those supported by the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the Global Fund. Twenty-one civil society organizations participated, including those led by people

living with HIV and other key populations. The recommendations addressed interventions elaborated in the country's Global Fund application, including strengthening institutional capacities of civil society organizations, aligning resources to ensure civil society organizations and communities meet the Global AIDS Strategy 10-10-10 and 30-80-60 targets and ensuring the sustainability of community systems in Lesotho.



OUTPUT 2.1.4

Education sector capacity to provide quality, inclusive, formal and non-formal education for all children, adolescents and youth strengthened.

Education system analysis

The United Nations collaborated with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Local Education Group³⁰ to conduct a comprehensive enabling-factor analysis for the education system. The review, aligned with Global Partnership for Education guidelines, focused on data and evidence; gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring; and volume equity and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education. This analysis is critical for the Ministry of Education and Training to access the Global Partnership's transformation grants system.

daily meals to over 50,000 children across 2,400 early childhood care and development centres from 2019 to 2023.

Advocacy workshop impact on parliamentarians

Forty-five members of parliamentary portfolio committees for the social cluster benefited from an advocacy workshop on HIV and GBV and other sexual and reproductive health challenges. This has resulted in committee members committing to advocate for improved sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people.

Revamped National School Feeding Policy

United Nations support led to the revision of the National School Feeding Policy in 2014. The revised policy increased the threshold for local procurement of food commodities and doubled the unit price per child, ensuring the provision of quality meals despite the rise in food costs. This has facilitated an 80 percent threshold for local procurement of food. The United Nations facilitated the provision of at least two nutritious

Roger Federer's visit and focus on early childhood care

Roger Federer, representing the Roger Federer Foundation, visited Lesotho to highlight the low coverage and availability of early childhood care and development for a significant proportion of children. The visit helped highlight the fundamental role of quality early childhood care and development in school readiness and in the preparation of children for primary and higher levels of schooling.

³⁰ The Local Education Group is a structure within the education sector with a mandate to quality assure and approve education interventions and documents. It is made up of all relevant education stakeholders including teachers' unions, school proprietors, civil society organizations and the United Nations.

Improved education data management

The lack of reliable data in the education sector was addressed through United Nations support, leading to a problem analysis of issues related to the Education Management Information System (EMIS). This identified capacity and resource gaps in managing the OpenEMIS system. United Nations' support resulted in a policy decision to transition from the OpenEMIS system to the DHIS2 system for better data management. As a result of this, all education statistical reports are expected to be available by early 2024. In addition, the United Nations supported the Ministry of Education and Training to accelerate the backlog of Education Statistical Bulletins for 2020, 2021 and 2022. The Education Statistical Bulletin for 2020 has now been published and the 2021 edition is with the Bureau of Statistics for quality assurance.

Education digital learning platforms and Giga initiative implementation

In an effort to promote digital learning platforms, the United Nations continued the roll-out of the Learning Passport, with over 6,000 teachers and learners having been registered on the Learning Passport digital platform.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training and Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation resulted in Lesotho joining the Giga initiative for school connectivity, and mapping 1,783 schools for electricity and internet coverage.

Partnerships and resource mobilization

The United Nations leveraged partnerships with the private sector and foundations, which resulted in them committing US\$3.5 million to unlock an additional US\$2.5 million from the Global Partnership for Education through the innovative financing multiplier grant. Main partners include Vodacom, the Vodacom Foundation, Econet Telecom Lesotho, the Higher Life Foundation, Standard Bank and the Roger Federer Foundation.

Teacher training programmes and comprehensive sexuality education

The United Nations supported the development of a programme document by the Lesotho College of Education that will benefit over 3,000 teacher trainees. The programme includes comprehensive sexuality education aimed at enhancing the quality of pre-service teacher training.

Education for sustainable development

Lesotho, with support from the United Nations, was one of three pilot countries in Africa to provide feedback on the Greening Curriculum Guidance and Green School Quality Standard. This global initiative equips learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to become agents of change in support of the green transition of societies, as enshrined in SDG target 4.7 on sustainable development and global citizenship, as well as the entire 2030 Agenda.

National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

The United Nations supported the development of the Lesotho National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development 2024–2030 to guide the country on five priority areas: (i) advancing policy, (ii) transforming learning environments, (iii) building the capacities of educators, (iv) empowering educators with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for the transition to sustainability and (v) empowering and mobilizing the youth to accelerate local-level actions.

“ THE UNITED NATIONS CONTINUED THE ROLL-OUT OF THE LEARNING PASSPORT, WITH OVER 6,000 TEACHERS AND LEARNERS HAVING BEEN REGISTERED ON THE LEARNING PASSPORT DIGITAL PLATFORM.





OUTPUT 2.1.5

Capacities of key agencies for prevention and mitigation of GBV, violence against children and human trafficking strengthened at all levels.

Strengthening countertrafficking capacities in Lesotho

The United Nations, in collaboration with civil society organizations, enhanced Lesotho's capacities to prevent, protect and form partnerships against trafficking. A total of 61,821 individuals were sensitized and equipped with skills to prevent and respond to trafficking in people. Support to the government included the development of the Trafficking in Persons Awareness-Raising Strategy, the National Referral Mechanism, Standard Operating Procedures for Law Enforcement and a comprehensive legal assessment. Key achievements include creating the *Handbook on Trafficking in Persons for Diplomats*; broadcasting information on trafficking in people to approximately 800,000 individuals through local radio programmes;

distributing 38,791 printed materials on protection and trafficking in people; and providing support to 103 victims of trafficking housed at a shelter.

Parliamentary engagement

The United Nations raised awareness among 40 members of parliament from five parliamentary portfolio committees on effective migration management and the protection of vulnerable migrants, trafficking victims, displaced populations, stateless individuals and unaccompanied children. An action plan focused on policy advocacy for priorities like countering trafficking and migrant protection was developed and submitted to Parliament. As a result of this intervention, Lesotho's status was upgraded from 'Tier 2 Watch List' in 2019–2020 to 'Tier 2' in 2021–2022 in the United States Global Trafficking in Persons Report. This improvement demonstrates increased government commitment to effectively prevent trafficking in people.

Child protection measures and comprehensive response plan

The United Nations, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Training; Ministry of Health; and Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police, successfully produced a fully costed response plan to address violence against children.

The continued support of the United Nations in advocating for the amendment of the Child Protection Welfare Act has significantly contributed to the alignment and harmonization of diverse legislation, ultimately safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children.



SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT

INCLUDED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AWARENESS-RAISING STRATEGY, THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND A COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL ASSESSMENT.



OUTPUT 2.1.6

Lesotho has an improved gender- and shock-responsive, integrated and equitable social protection system.

Expansion of social assistance system

The United Nations support of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development resulted in the expansion of the National Information System for Social Assistance to cover 90 percent of the country, significantly improving targeting of the most vulnerable households in the country and providing vital support to 488,309 households (157,309 urban and 331,000 rural). Through the Child Grant Programme, over 48,000 households received monthly cash grants. This significantly improved household food consumption, ensuring access to a more nutritious diet. The assistance also played a crucial role in mitigating negative coping strategies, particularly in households led by women, and empowering families to meet other essential needs, including educational expenses of their children. This initiative showcases the effectiveness of the social protection system.

Utilization and impact of National Information System for Social Assistance data

National Information System for Social Assistance data have been instrumental in

targeting beneficiaries of various programmes such as child grants, bursaries for orphans and vulnerable children and public assistance.

Strengthening social protection frameworks

Several policy frameworks were developed, including the National Social Protection Strategy II, which was approved by the Cabinet. Additionally, the United Nations supported the development of the first social assistance policy, which will lay a foundation for the development of a legal framework for social assistance that will safeguard support to the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Improved efficiency for delivery of social assistance programmes

The United Nations supported the adoption and roll-out of digital payments for social assistance programmes. Over 9,000 Child Grant Programme beneficiary households (about 20 percent) have been transitioned to digital payments. This has improved the cost-efficiency of the programme, with the savings being used to reach more households.





OUTPUT 2.1.7

National capacity for prevention of, preparedness for, response to, mitigation of and recovery from emergency and humanitarian needs strengthened at all levels.

Strengthening disaster preparedness and response system

Under the Strengthening Disaster Preparedness and the Response System in Lesotho project, funded by the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department, the United Nations, in collaboration with the Disaster Management Authority, achieved significant milestones. The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Bill was updated and key strategies, including the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and Early Warning Strategy, a disaster-risk-reduction-and-early-warning plan and a standard operating procedures manual were developed. As part of the Regional Urban Preparedness Project, the United Nations successfully delivered three key outcomes: (i) a comprehensive report highlighting urban vulnerabilities, shocks and dynamics, (ii) standard operating procedures defining clear roles and responsibilities for urban actors in emergency preparedness and response and (iii) a draft urban vulnerability framework designed to guide targeting. Additionally, efforts were directed at supporting the integration of the Minimum Expenditure Basket into the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment as a crucial response mechanism that takes into account essential and food needs in the estimation of transfer values for the urban population. Through the Adaptation Fund, the United Nations further assisted the government in developing an anticipatory action plan for drought, which provides a strategic guide for implementing mitigation interventions in anticipation of drought.

Implementation of geospatial platform project

The United Nations has made remarkable progress in implementing the geospatial platform project, officially launched on 31 May 2023, with the simultaneous handover of information technology equipment to the government. A local company has been engaged to facilitate the roll-out of the platform across pilot ministries, which include the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition; Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police; and Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation. To ensure effective utilization of the platform, government staff, including Disaster Management Authority staff, underwent comprehensive training on drone usage, enhancing their capacity to monitor disaster preparedness and response activities. This initiative underscores the commitment of the United Nations to strengthening Lesotho's technological capabilities for proactive disaster management and response.

Culture and emergencies

An assessment of the integration of culture and heritage in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation mechanisms was conducted in nine southern African countries, including Lesotho. The conclusions and recommendations of this study will inform future United Nations, government and other stakeholder initiatives on culture and emergencies, particularly in terms of ensuring that culture and heritage are protected during disasters and considered in recovery processes.





OUTPUT 2.1.8

Community members have improved knowledge of quality, responsive social services and positive practices.

Strategic development

Technical support provided by the United Nations led to the expansion of the evidence-based nutrition interventions managed by the government's Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office. The development of the National Advocacy, Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy, aimed at fortifying national food security and nutrition systems, was an important step towards a more comprehensive approach to nutrition.

Stakeholder capacity enhancement

Nutrition-education training workshops significantly bolstered the capacities of central and district stakeholders, ensuring a more informed and capable workforce for nutrition education delivery.

Amplified media collaboration

Collaboration with media outlets resulted in broader coverage of the nutrition programme. Community radio stations emerged as vital platforms for disseminating nutrition

information to communities, contributing to the improvement of community knowledge about best nutrition practices and principles.

Tailored nutrition messaging

Comprehensive nutrition messages tailored for diverse audiences were developed and published, addressing different demographic groups. This approach ensured that specific nutrition information reached the intended target groups more effectively, contributing to wider adoption of healthy practices.

Tackling malnutrition

Focused efforts were concentrated on strengthening the capacity of the government and other stakeholders in multisectoral coordination, evidence-building and planning and implementation of nutrition policies and programmes in four districts with the highest prevalence of stunting: Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Quthing and Butha-Buthe. These initiatives aimed to tackle the root causes of malnutrition and enhance the efficiency of interventions in these districts.





UNDAF Pillar 3

Sustainable and inclusive economic growth for poverty reduction

OUTCOME 3.1

By 2030, government and the private sector increase opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improved food security and decent work, especially for women, youth and people with disabilities.

CONTRIBUTING UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

Resident agencies: IOM, UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP

Non-resident agencies: UNCDF, UNEP, ILO

Related SDGs: 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15



PILLAR 3

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



PRIME MINISTER'S YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE

- Supported the government launch of Sebatatso, the Prime Minister's youth entrepreneurship initiative which was attended by over 3,000 youth, with 100 youth innovators and entrepreneurs pitching their businesses and ideas for possible investment and mentorship support.
- Mobilized US\$68,385.26 to support youth innovators and mentorship programmes, contributing to the development of a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.



SDG INVESTOR MAP

- Supported the formulation of an SDG investor map, identifying key development sectors and untapped opportunities for private sector investment.



AFRICA CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

- Developed with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Small Business and Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture, strategies to enhance Lesotho's readiness for participation in the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).
- Reached more than 1,000 stakeholders across all 10 districts of Lesotho through awareness-building campaigns and information-sharing sessions focused on AfCFTA.



FORTIFYING NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

- Supported the government in updating the National Trade Policy and Strategy to strengthen Lesotho's national coordination mechanisms for policy, implementation and oversight.
- Provided ongoing support to the process of developing an action plan tailored for AfCFTA that strategically aligns with Lesotho's priority sectors to boost export.



MOBILIZING AND UNIFYING TEXTILES AND APPAREL MANUFACTURERS

- Fostered inclusive and sustainable economic growth through the mobilization and unification of local textiles and apparel manufacturers, with a specific emphasis on enhancing their productive capacities.



CATALYSING PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENTS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Attracted over US\$10 million in private sector investments for renewable energy initiatives through the catalytic funding model and leveraged approximately US\$1 million as a catalyst.
- Facilitated enhanced access to clean energy for more than 300 households, as well as health clinics, schools, businesses and a police station.
- Established village energy centres, introducing renewable energy technologies that directly benefit more than 500 households.



NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS FINALIZATION, INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION AND DECISION SUPPORT TOOLS

- Enabled Lesotho to finalize the revision of its Nationally Determined Contributions to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.
- Piloted a project in the southern regions that focuses on watershed management through the integrated catchment management framework, significantly restoring critical ecosystem services, enhancing land productivity and providing improved access to clean water.
- Created decision support tools, including policies and bills, that help guide investments and shape the design of effective interventions for sustainable natural resources management.



HUMAN INTEREST STORY PILLAR 3

SUSTAINABLE TRIUMPHS: Success in Mohale's Hoek and Mafeteng

In Ha Nkhetheleng in Mohale's Hoek and in Mafeteng, beneficiaries of Global Environment Facility-funded interventions are telling tales of success.

Three years after their engagement as beneficiaries of the Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change Project, the smallholder farmer group in Ha Nkhetheleng is thriving. Under the leadership of Solomon Molomo, the chairperson and local chief, the farmers boast an orchard with over 2,000 trees, beekeeping and honey products, dried fruits and protected farming areas, enabling them to feed the community and sell their produce.

Molomo, a dedicated leader, expressed gratitude for United Nations support. Although the group started with 200 members three years ago, 27 committed farmers have remained. Molomo is particularly proud of their collaboration with the local secondary school, to foster a love of farming among the youth.



“I am so grateful that the United Nations is here today to witness our success three years after they sponsored us. They gave us a start and we worked hard to sustain what we started together. We now have this huge field where we have grown wheat and peas under block farming. We are going to get a bumper harvest of wheat, enough for household consumption and for sale,” he said.

Malimpho Litlamo, a member, attributed their success to dedication, a shared goal of feeding the community and the motivation derived from witnessing the benefits.

“Our common goal is to see our community successful and to motivate our children. This community is full of women who are single mothers and widows, so we have learned to stand together. We are unemployed, so it is our duty to make sure that we create jobs through our farming so that we break the poverty circle,” Malimpho explained.

She acknowledged the approach of fostering togetherness and community mobilization taken by the Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change Project as a key factor to their success. She also expressed gratitude for the support of various government entities and for the partnerships the group has formed with various organizations to ensure their growth. She said these partnerships have helped them in sustaining themselves even after grants have ended.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Jacqueline Olweya, visited three parts of the farm – the block farming area, the protected farming area and the orchard, expressing admiration for the hardworking men and women. She promised to return during harvest time to witness their progress.

An equally inspiring success story unfolds in Mafeteng with ‘Mampho Thulo, the dynamic Director of the Rural Self-Help Development Association. ‘Mampho and her team, previous beneficiaries of the Global Environment Facility Small Grant Programme implemented by the United Nations, have transitioned

from subsistence to commercial breeding of indigenous chickens, known as khoho ea Sesotho.

But the Rural Self-Help Development Association team’s success story extends beyond raising chickens. They have become a source of inspiration for others in the smallholder farming community. The association now plays a pivotal role in breeding and selling chickens and eggs to fellow smallholder farmers, while also imparting knowledge through training programmes on poultry farming. The association is looking into including horticulture and planting animal feed, as well as working towards meeting global standards so that their products can sell around the world.

‘Mampho, proud of her journey with the Small Grant Programme, highlighted her organization’s independence; they have secured grants from other organizations to continue growing and inspiring women. She emphasized the importance of partnerships with other organizations as a means of not only learning from them but also for collaborating in production.

‘Mampho’s leadership in transformation highlights the potential of sustainable development initiatives. The Rural Self-Help Development Association’s dedication and entrepreneurship provide a shining example of how one organization’s journey can uplift and empower many.

“ MAMPHO EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AS A MEANS OF NOT ONLY LEARNING FROM THEM BUT ALSO FOR COLLABORATING IN PRODUCTION.





OUTPUT 3.1.1

National institutions (public and private) strengthened to formulate and implement inclusive, innovative and evidence-based policy instruments in service sectors (information and communications technology (ICT), tourism), agriculture, and extractive and manufacturing value chains.

Promoting financial literacy and business management

With United Nations support, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition received assistance for tailored training sessions to equip cottage industry groups with expertise in financial record-keeping and an understanding of the importance of accurate record-keeping. These sessions equipped 389 individuals from 38 cottage industry groups in the Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing districts with essential financial literacy and business management skills. The inclusive approach of the sessions ensured that individuals from diverse backgrounds, including people with disabilities and those living with HIV, benefited.

Facilitating market linkages for smallholder farmers

The United Nations facilitated buyer-seller round-table meetings, creating an effective platform for 101 smallholder farmers, including youth and individuals with disabilities. These meetings were strategically designed to foster robust market linkages, disseminate critical information on market requirements and product specifications, and ultimately enhance agricultural productivity. The initiative focused on establishing sustainable market connections in Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing districts, contributing to the growth of smallholder farming in Lesotho.

Honey production

The United Nations successfully implemented a pilot programme in Mohale's Hoek District to raise honey production standards. Engaging 135 smallholder and community-based beekeepers, the initiative empowered participants through the participatory guaranteed system, a locally based food

quality assurance approach that emphasizes stakeholder involvement. This strategic effort resulted in improved honey production standards and the positioning of beekeepers to access lucrative markets, contributing to the overall growth of the honey production sector.

Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship

The United Nations supported the government in launching the Prime Minister's youth entrepreneurship initiative, Sebatatso, which incorporates STEAM (science, technology, education, arts and mathematics). This initiative is aimed at cultivating entrepreneurship among young individuals and fostering connections between aspiring entrepreneurs and the private sector for potential investment opportunities. A comprehensive training programme and national conference, focused on refining the business planning, design and pitching skills of young entrepreneurs and innovators, were organized and an amount of US\$68,385.26 was mobilized in support of the initiative.

Over 3,000 youth attended the three-day launch event, while 100 youth innovators and entrepreneurs pitched their innovations and products for possible funding and mentorship support. Thirty outstanding youth entrepreneurs received prize money, with individual amounts ranging from US\$1,000 to US\$5,000, to enhance their business ventures thus facilitating further development of their enterprises. The top 10 entrepreneurs had the opportunity to attend the YouthConnekt Africa Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya, expanding their networks and knowledge.

The subsequent mentorship of the top 30 innovative projects aligns closely with the National Strategic Development Plan's objectives of promoting youth empowerment

through entrepreneurship development and supporting youth-led business start-ups. These entrepreneurs were given the opportunity to engage with ongoing projects that offer financing for entrepreneurship. Beyond financial support, some of them were also provided with market opportunities, business incubation, mentorship and other forms of support from larger corporations and individual benefactors. These efforts collectively aim to establish a robust ecosystem for nurturing youth entrepreneurship.

The World Heritage Futures Lab

The United Nations supported Lesotho through the World Heritage Futures Lab project to strengthen the capacity of creative technologists and local community members from Maloti Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site to use digital technologies, including virtual and augmented reality, to interpret and showcase the site's world heritage value.

Development financing and policy framework: SDG investor map

The United Nations provided support to the government in formulating a groundbreaking SDG investor map as a tool to help leverage private sector financing for development. This tool has identified key development sectors and untapped opportunities for private sector investment, recommending the mobilization of private sector investment in the agricultural, manufacturing (consumer goods), renewable energy, finance and health (pharmaceuticals) sectors. Investment in these selected priority sectors is aligned with the National Strategic Development Plan II objectives of stimulating economic growth and guiding Lesotho towards sustainable development.

Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement

Strategies developed in collaboration with the government to facilitate Lesotho's participation in AfCFTA seek to enhance private sector engagement and leverage opportunities for economic development. Together with Lesotho's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Small Business and Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture, the United Nations is actively spearheading efforts to enhance the nation's

readiness for the implementation of AfCFTA. With United Nations' support, the government will adopt strategies aimed at ensuring awareness and effective participation in AfCFTA.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Small Business is developing a national implementation plan for AfCFTA that is based on the National Export Strategy. This will establish the institutional mechanisms necessary to facilitate the implementation and mobilization of the agreement by the private sector and key national stakeholders. Through a comprehensive series of awareness-building campaigns and information-sharing sessions, this initiative has successfully engaged more than 1,000 stakeholders across all 10 districts of Lesotho, including representatives from the media, youth, women-led enterprises and private sector entities.

Mobilizing and unifying textiles and apparel manufacturers

A notable aspect of the United Nations support is the focus on mobilizing and unifying local textiles and apparel manufacturers, with a specific emphasis on enhancing their productive capacities. This strategic approach aims to position them advantageously, enabling them to capitalize on emerging trade opportunities, including those emanating from the AfCFTA. This concerted effort reflects the commitment of the United Nations to fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Lesotho through strategic interventions and capacity-building initiatives.

Engaging with the diaspora

The United Nations, together with the government, conducted an extensive analysis of existing trade and investment policies, identifying barriers to diaspora investment in the country. Based on the findings, strategic engagements were initiated to provide clear direction for effective diaspora involvement. A significant milestone was achieved in December 2023, with the United Nations supporting the government in hosting the inaugural diaspora homecoming event. This event served as a platform to foster stronger connections and encourage diaspora investment in Lesotho.





OUTPUT 3.1.2

Gender-responsive and evidence-based policies, strategies and programmes are in place and implemented to generate decent employment and promote the green economy, particularly for rural and urban youth, migrants, vulnerable women and men, and people living with disabilities.

Empowering cottage industry groups

With United Nations support, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition provided financial management training to 22 cottage industry groups primarily comprised of women and youth (see page 44). The training ensures governance adherence to group constitutions, thereby promoting stability, trust and accountability among members, which, in turn, enables them to access loans or grants, manage resources efficiently and make informed decisions, all of which foster sustainable growth.

Enhancing livelihoods through entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship skills training proved instrumental in empowering vulnerable individuals – predominantly women and youth – to become self-sufficient entrepreneurs. With tailored business start-up kits and comprehensive training, beneficiaries were equipped to confidently launch their own enterprises. This initiative not only elevated their economic status, but also fostered social cohesion within communities through collaborative community development projects. The acquired skills and business acumen instilled independence and pride in beneficiaries, boosted their self-confidence and contributed to their overall well-being. Through empowering 264 vulnerable individuals with entrepreneurial skills training and business start-up kits and supporting a further 378 beneficiaries with skills training, this initiative fostered social cohesion and community development across five districts/community councils.

Facilitating market engagement for smallholder farmers

Through buyer-seller round-table meetings, the United Nations provided market engagement sessions for smallholder farmers, comprising mostly women and youth. Providing insights into market dynamics and demands, the sessions aimed to influence the farmers' production strategies so that they align their output with consumer needs and improve market linkages. The initiative benefited 101 smallholder farmers (55 females and 56 males) in the Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing districts.

Self-reliance for refugees and asylum seekers

The government has pledged arable land at Thaba Bosiu to improve food security and support the livelihoods of refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR will partner with the government and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to explore effective ways of utilizing the allocated land for agricultural activities. This joint effort seeks to empower refugee and asylum-seeker communities by providing them with sustainable opportunities in agriculture, thereby fostering self-sufficiency and contributing to overall well-being.





OUTPUT 3.1.3

Knowledge and capacity of communities, smallholder farmers and service providers improved to diversify livelihoods and production systems for increased incomes, food and nutrition security particularly for poor and vulnerable households.

Community-led climate initiatives

One hundred and forty-two community council members in Mohale's Hoek District were trained in climate change awareness and resilient water supply systems, empowering them to initiate climate-resilient projects. The project led to improved living conditions for 1,500 households through climate-proof clean-water supply infrastructure.

Climate adaptation and climate financing

An amount of US\$236,000 in climate finance was mobilized to develop 17 village water supply projects, benefiting 6,000 individuals across four community councils in Mohale's Hoek District. This ensures resilience to climate-induced challenges.

Sustainability through community planning

Local communities were empowered through inclusive bottom-up planning at the project inception stage, ensuring the long-term sustainability of community-driven projects.

Facilitated direct market access for farmers

Organized buyer-seller meetings between 138 farmers and 10 buyer representatives fostered direct market access, resulting in increased revenue of US\$4,100 from produce sales. This initiative enhanced access to various markets, expanding farmer reach and income generation.

Insightful agricultural assessments and digital solutions

Together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, the United Nations conducted a thorough assessment, identifying priority value chains and areas for post-harvest management interventions. This detailed assessment directed resources towards critical areas, ensuring better productivity.

Strengthened value chains through private sector collaboration

Over 120 farmers received comprehensive training in productivity, business management and market access across the horticulture, poultry and piggery sectors. This resulted in increased productivity and diversified income sources, boosting agricultural outputs.

Improved agricultural practices for food security

The United Nations supported enhanced farming practices through advanced training for 684 smallholder farmers. The training focused on conservation agriculture and integrated pest management, which promotes food security through sustainable farming practices. Climate-smart vegetable gardens enhance production and enable farmers to grow a variety of vegetables even in dry conditions.

Expanding commercial fruit production

More than 100 fruit farmers took part in a pre-incubation programme, focusing on farm-management best practice, business plan development and packaging.



Enhanced honey production and market access

The United Nations conducted specialized training sessions for 135 smallholder and community-based beekeepers, focusing on handling and production standards. Most beneficiaries were women and youth, leading to significant empowerment and socio-economic improvement within these demographics. The initiative resulted in higher-quality honey production and enhanced market penetration for local beekeepers.

National adoption of food fortification guidelines

The United Nations facilitated the development, validation and government adoption of food fortification thereby ensuring the production of fortified foods and the consumption of a balanced diet by the people of Lesotho.

Efforts in reintegrating returnees and local training initiatives

The United Nations conducted a comprehensive programme for government officials and local leaders in five districts aimed at benefiting Basotho returnees, mitigating irregular migration and fostering social cohesion.

OUTCOME 3.2

By 2023, the people of Lesotho have access to and use natural resources in a more sustainable manner, and the marginalized and most vulnerable are increasingly resilient.

CONTRIBUTING UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

Resident agencies: FAO, UNDP, WFP, WHO, IOM

Non-resident agency: UNEP

Related SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17





OUTPUT 3.2.1

Gender-responsive and inclusive policies, regulatory frameworks and financial mechanisms strengthened and implemented to improve access and promote utilization of sustainable energy technologies.

Enhanced access to clean energy has a positive impact on essential services

More than 300 households, as well as two health clinics, two schools and a police station, now enjoy reliable access to clean energy, primarily through solar-powered mini-grids installed with United Nations' support. This shift has significantly reduced dependence on traditional and environmentally harmful energy sources like firewood and kerosene.

Access to clean energy has notably improved the operations of the health clinics by ensuring a continuous power supply for medical equipment and the refrigeration of vaccines. Similarly, the schools have benefited from adequate lighting and power for educational tools, both of which positively impact the learning environment. The police station's operations have been bolstered with stable electricity, enhancing security measures.

Community development

The proliferation of renewable energy sources has not only transformed access to household energy but also contributed to community development. It has facilitated better internet connectivity, allowing for improved communication and access to information.

Impactful village energy centres

Over 500 households benefit directly from United Nations-supported village energy centres, which have introduced renewable technologies such as solar panels, biogas and efficient cookstoves. These centres contribute to an improvement in living standards and enable income-generating activities that foster community development.

Catalysing private sector investments in renewable energy

The United Nations' catalytic funding model attracted over US\$10 million in private sector investments for renewable energy initiatives. Leveraging approximately US\$1 million as a catalyst, the initiative provided not only financial incentives but also technical support for establishing a mini-grid regulatory framework for successful private sector engagement.

Government-private sector collaboration for sustainable energy

There is ongoing collaboration between the United Nations, the government and the private sector to advocate for sustainable energy and implement projects that align with national development objectives, ensuring long-term, positive impacts on communities and the environment. This sustained partnership acts as a catalyst for the broader adoption of renewable energy solutions, aiming to create lasting change by empowering communities and fostering economic growth in communities across Lesotho.



OVER 500 HOUSEHOLDS
BENEFIT DIRECTLY
FROM UNITED NATIONS-SUPPORTED
VILLAGE ENERGY CENTRES, WHICH
HAVE INTRODUCED RENEWABLE
TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS SOLAR
PANELS, BIOGAS AND EFFICIENT
COOKSTOVES.





OUTPUT 3.2.2

The capacity of farmers, communities and institutions at national, district and local levels strengthened to design, implement and monitor climate-smart and sustainable natural resources management initiatives.

Nationally Determined Contributions finalization and integrated catchment management implementation

United Nations' support enabled Lesotho to finalize the revision of its Nationally Determined Contributions, aligning with international environmental goals in preparation for COP28. The Nationally Determined Contributions detail Lesotho's contribution to global mitigation efforts in terms of its efforts to reduce emissions, adapt to climate change and replicate the integrated catchment management framework for watershed management in the upper Sebakala Sub-catchment. The United Nations piloted a project in the southern region that focuses on watershed management through the integrated catchment management framework. Interventions contributed significantly to restoring critical ecosystem services, enhancing land productivity and providing improved access to clean water for domestic and agricultural purposes. The revitalization of ecosystems and improved environmental health resulted in an overall enhancement in the quality of life for communities dependent on agriculture and natural resources.

United Nations impact in environmental management and community resilience

United Nations facilitated the creation of vital decision support tools, including the Irrigation Policy, National Water and Soil Conservation Policy, Rangeland Management Bill, Contract Farming Bill and the *Land Cover Atlas of Lesotho*. These tools play an important role in guiding investments and shaping the design of effective interventions for sustainable natural resource management.

Addressing climate change, environmental degradation and migration

A comprehensive study established links between climate change, environmental degradation and migration. Findings influenced the integration of human mobility into the National Adaptation Plan and the development of a gender-sensitive migration environment and climate change strategy. Dissemination of findings increased awareness among migrants and vulnerable communities, with 60 percent showing openness to climate change adaptation schemes for enhanced resilience.

Community resilience and empowerment

The United Nations empowered 142 members of community councils in Mohale's Hoek District on climate change awareness, resulting in the development of their capacity to implement climate-proof clean-water supply infrastructure projects. Collaborative efforts in the district enhanced inclusivity in community-based participatory planning, with the United Nations contribution of US\$236,000 in climate finance facilitating the construction of 17 village water supply infrastructure projects, benefiting 6,000 individuals and bolstering community resilience.

Enhancing natural resource management capacities

Capacity development efforts included training stakeholders on creating annual land cover databases and utilizing high-resolution environmental data. Modern technology, including free satellite data and machine learning algorithms, was leveraged for annual production and analysis of land cover changes, enabling effective natural resource management.



OUTPUT 3.2.3

National-, district- and community-level early warning systems strengthened to safeguard human security, build resilience and support preparedness and response.

Lesotho Meteorological Services capacity-building and training

The United Nations, in collaboration with the International Research Institute of the University of Columbia, helped to enhance the capacity of Lesotho Meteorological Services staff to generate and disseminate timely climate and weather forecasts. Twelve staff members (8 males and 4 females) underwent training in advanced climate and weather forecasting models and 40 extension service staff (24 females and 16 males) received climate services training. A data library server and a high-powered computing system were installed to augment data analysis capabilities. Seventy-six automated weather stations were procured and installed to strengthen the observational network.

Lesotho Meteorological Services was equipped with new forecasting models, such as the Python Climate Predictability Tool, enabling the generation of timely short- to long-term forecasts. The preliminary seasonal forecast for the summer period in May 2023 was successfully

disseminated, facilitating informed climate change adaptation decisions across sectors.

Proactive disaster response and coordinated mitigation

United Nations' support facilitated disaster response through the disaster risk management team, which effectively strategized for and responded to adverse events like snowfall, hailstorms, strong winds, localized floods and early frost. World Bank funding was secured to address severe food insecurity caused by floods, focusing on crop and livestock rehabilitation in partnership with district agricultural officers and the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II project team. Analyses of potential drought impacts due to the anticipated El Niño phenomenon were initiated, with a focus on humanitarian work. These initiatives significantly bolstered Lesotho's meteorological capabilities and disaster response mechanisms, enabling proactive actions and informed decision-making to mitigate adverse climatic events.



IMPACTING DEVELOPMENT IN LESOTHO: AT A GLANCE



HEALTH

20,000 citizens received sexual and reproductive health, HIV and GBV services

Over **100 health care providers** received training to accelerate HIV and TB interventions

300 health workers trained to deliver essential adolescent HIV-prevention interventions



SOCIAL PROTECTION

488,309 of the most vulnerable households (157,309 urban and 331,000 rural) received vital support

48,000 households receive monthly Child Grant Programme cash grants, with **9,000 (about 20%) households** receiving digital payments

Trafficking in people

61,821 individuals equipped with **prevention and response skills**

800,000 individuals reached with **information** via **local radio programmes**

38,791 printed **materials** distributed

103 victims provided with **shelter**

90% of the population now included in National Information System for Social Assistance

EDUCATION

Over **6,000 teachers and learners** registered on the **Learning Passport digital platform**

Over **50,000** in **2,400 early childhood development centres** received at least **2 nutritious meals daily** (2019–2023)



1,783

schools mapped for electricity and internet coverage

CLIMATE ACTION

Over **300 households, 2 health clinics, 2 schools** and **1 police station** gained access to **clean energy** via **solar-powered mini-grids**

17 village climate-proof clean-water supply infrastructure projects undertaken in Mohale’s Hoek District improved living conditions for **6,000 individuals** and **1,500 households**

12 Lesotho Meteorological Services staff members (8 males and 4 females) trained in **advanced climate and weather forecasting models**



Over

500

households benefited from village energy centres

FOOD SECURITY

138 farmers and **10 buyer representatives** benefited from buyer–seller meetings, resulting in an **increase of US\$4,100 from produce sales revenue**

Over **120 horticulture, poultry and pig farmers** received training in productivity, business management and market access

Over **100 fruit farmers** participated in a programme focused on farm management, business plan development and packaging



684

smallholder farmers received advanced farming practices training





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1,000 stakeholders from across Lesotho informed about the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement

101 smallholder farmers (55 females and 56 males) from 3 districts benefited from buyer-seller round-table meetings

Sebatatso: Youth entrepreneurship initiative

100 youth entrepreneurs pitched their businesses and ideas for potential investment and mentorship support

30 outstanding youth entrepreneurs received prize money to enhance their businesses

10 entrepreneurs travelled to Nairobi, Kenya for the YouthConnect Summit, funded by UNDP

3,000
youth attended
the launch

Training recipients

378
vulnerable
individuals –
skills training

389 individuals from 38 cottage industry groups in 3 districts – financial literacy and business management training

135 smallholder and community-based beekeepers from 1 district – specialized training to raise honey production standards

22 cottage industry groups (mainly women and youth) – financial management training

264 vulnerable individuals – entrepreneurial skills training and business start-up kits

2.3 PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

Holistic private sector engagement in Cooperation Framework and joint programme development

Private sector entities participated in the development of the United Nations Cooperation Framework 2024–2028 by attending the strategic prioritization workshop and theory of change development sessions. Some of the entities, including Vodacom Lesotho and Standard Lesotho Bank, also contributed resources for the launch of the Cooperation Framework. This collaborative involvement signifies a shift towards more supportive and impactful corporate social responsibility strategies. Additionally, the private sector has been involved in the development of the joint programmes that will commence in 2024, and some entities have pledged support for seed funding.



Financing opportunities for youth entrepreneurship

The United Nations collaborated with the government to establish the Prime Minister's youth entrepreneurship initiative, Sebatatso (see page 44).

Strengthened development partner coordination

The United Nations organized bimonthly development partners coordination forums, creating a conducive platform for diverse partners to deliberate on topics such as electoral commission readiness, national reforms, demographic challenges and vulnerability assessments. This enhanced collaboration optimized aid effectiveness and prevented the duplication of efforts by partners.

2.4 'DELIVERING AS ONE' IN LESOTHO: COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

2.4.1 Results in joint programming: Catalysing impact across SDGs

In 2023, the Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO) identified three high-impact joint programme areas – GBV, food systems and governance – as strategic to expediting the achievement of the SDGs in Lesotho. These programmes were crafted to wield catalytic and multiplier effects, addressing the interconnected challenges across SDGs. The RCO played a pivotal role in supporting the joint programme teams, providing expert technical guidance and ensuring the development of nationally owned programmes through extensive stakeholder consultations.

One such achievement was the expansion of the GBV joint programme to five other countries in the region with similar contexts, an initiative coordinated by RCO Lesotho. This collaboration resulted in the drafting of a comprehensive subregional Joint Programme on GBV. Key milestones included the development of the programme proposal, a joint partnership round table to gather government and donor commitments across the six participating countries and the successful securing of seed funding. Eswatini secured €500,000 from the European Union, Zambia received US\$129,000 in seed funding from Ireland, and Lesotho, through a high-level aid coordination forum, committed to a bankable national project on GBV endorsed by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning.

The United Nations also supported organizations of people with disabilities to establish the Multi-sectoral Coordination Platform, the mandate of which is to coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders in advancing disability rights in the country. The stakeholder disability sensitization approach has resulted in improved streamlining of disability advocacy and political will has been demonstrated by all stakeholders involved.

In Lesotho, the government and the United Nations achieved a significant milestone by jointly committing to financing and mobilizing resources for bankable projects that focus on improved governance and optimized service



delivery; building resilient food systems; and tackling the scourge of GBV. This commitment, sealed through a joint agreement, ensures the financial support critical to the successful implementation of these impactful projects. Furthermore, Lesotho solidified its dedication to advancing the SDGs by partnering with the private sector to establish a GBV shelter, set to launch in May 2024. Ongoing efforts in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana involve resource mobilization and partnership discussions with prospective donors and the private sector, reinforcing the collaborative regional commitment towards these transformative initiatives.

2.4.2 National SDG Summit commitment statement

In the lead-up to the 2023 SDG Summit, the RCO played a pivotal role in guiding the government to formulate a robust national commitment statement. The inter-agency programme coherence team provided technical leadership while a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning led to the establishment of a Joint United Nations SDG Summit Task Team, involving the United Nations and relevant ministry representatives. The team produced a comprehensive SDG Insights Report, which was approved. Ten key reports integral to the SDG Insights Report were also approved, showcasing the depth of collaboration. The Government–United Nations SDG Summit Task Team, guided by the RCO, actively contributed to the design of stakeholder consultations that informed and validated the report contents, report reviews and quality control processes. The United Nations funded the stakeholder consultations, and also engaged a consultant to facilitate workshops. The United Nations further supported the drafting of national commitments contained in the SDG Insights Report, solidifying its commitment to Lesotho's SDG agenda.

This success story is reflected in the form of high-impact policy changes and investments, designed to yield substantial multiplier effects across diverse goals. Commitment to SDG actions garnered robust support from varied stakeholders, signalling a transformative shift in Lesotho's development trajectory. The government prepared a national commitment statement that is poised to generate impactful initiatives.

2.4.3 Disability inclusion and transformation

In 2023, the UNCT demonstrated significant progress in enhancing disability inclusion across its operations, with notable achievements.

Disability inclusion project

In line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019–2023, the United Nations Lesotho secured funding for a disability inclusion project through the Multi-partner Trust Fund. The project aims to revamp the United Nations Lesotho's systems, premises, programmes and services to be more disability-aware and inclusive. A United Nations volunteer was engaged to oversee the project.

Disability accessibility audit and improvement plan

Between December 2022 and January 2023, the RCO, on behalf of the UNCT, led an accessibility audit. This assessment engaged local organizations of people with disabilities representing four disability groups and covered physical accessibility, human resources, procurement, programmes and ICT systems. The outcomes of the audit included an accessibility audit report and a five-year accessibility improvement plan, endorsed by the UNCT in September 2023. A shorter six-month action plan, addressing immediate priorities, was developed and endorsed under the umbrella of the five-year plan.

Programming advocacy and support

By advocating for the implementation of the Persons with Disability's Equity Act (2021), the RCO facilitated support for organizations of people with disabilities. This advocacy led to the initiation of a pilot programme by the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, providing financial support through a disability grant strategy in two districts. The funds were used to make the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024–2028 accessible in various formats, including video and audio, and to translate it into Braille and local languages. Training programmes on mainstreaming disability were conducted for organizations of people with disabilities, further promoting inclusion.

Organizational culture and training

In February 2023, the RCO organized a training session for 20 United Nations staff members on disability inclusion, covering topics such as understanding disability, disability rights as human rights and stages of inclusion in the workplace. A subsequent training in March 2023 targeted 32 people with disabilities, focusing on how to apply for United Nations jobs and covering areas like disability rights as labour rights, the United Nations reasonable accommodation policy and practical online application procedures.

In the ongoing journey towards fostering a more inclusive United Nations environment, the following actions are recommended: sustaining sensitization efforts, advocating for enhanced disability inclusion and mobilizing resources for continuous support. Leveraging the expertise of the Disability Inclusion Officer and advocating for broader staff engagement remain crucial to fortifying a truly equitable United Nations presence in Lesotho. The UNCT's collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities underscores a steadfast commitment to inclusivity. Maintaining these efforts through continuous sensitization and broader staff involvement will solidify an environment that values and embraces diversity in Lesotho.

2.4.4 Unified communication for impactful development results

In 2023, the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) drove impactful sustainable development initiatives across several areas.

Cooperation Framework launch

The UNCG executed a media engagement strategy, securing coverage from six media houses, including the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Ensuring inclusivity, Cooperation Framework fact sheets were translated into Sesotho and Braille. A video detailing the Cooperation Framework development process and key messages further enhanced awareness and understanding.

Empowering youth through the Sebatatso initiative

The UNCG played a crucial role in supporting the Sebatatso initiative (see page 44), which

strategically addresses youth unemployment. Tailored messaging, amplified through social media and local media collaborations, significantly increased youth engagement. Multimedia content creation, including videos and infographics, enhanced accessibility and understanding among the youth demographic.

Strategic engagement with and promotion of international days

Active participation in various international days, such as World AIDS Day and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, showcased the UNCG's commitment to raising awareness and fostering advocacy. Efforts on International Women's Day and during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence included video messages focusing on innovation and technology for gender equality. Active advocacy in the form of a social media campaign consisting of short messages and videos during the 16 Days of Activism raised public awareness of GBV. The UNCG actively supported the Prime Minister's environmental campaign on World Environment Day (Operation Hloekisa Lesotho), rallying stakeholders for environmental cleanliness. Extensive media coverage, including radio interviews, significantly increased the campaign's reach, ensuring widespread public awareness.

Preparations for the SDG Summit

The UNCG effectively communicated SDG Summit consultations, leveraging one-minute video messages from leaders and government officials. Widespread circulation of these messages on social media platforms played a pivotal role in amplifying national awareness and commitment to the SDGs.



THE UNCG
EFFECTIVELY

COMMUNICATED SDG SUMMIT
CONSULTATIONS, LEVERAGING
ONE-MINUTE VIDEO MESSAGES
FROM LEADERS AND
GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.



2.4.5 'Operating as One'

The following overview reflects the diverse achievements and ongoing initiatives of the United Nations Agencies Operations Management Team across multiple technical working groups, showcasing its efforts towards efficiency, sustainability and inclusive practices.

The Operations Management Team, chaired by the UNICEF Representative, reviewed the Business Operation Strategy by 31 March 2023 and prepared a workplan for 2023. This team then led the implementation and monitoring of the plan, with oversight and guidance from the UNCT. The efforts of five working groups (human resources, common premises, ICT, procurement and finance) ensured enhanced efficiency in business operations.

The Human Resources Working Group made substantial progress in enhancing organizational coherence and efficiency. Key achievements include the successful completion of a salary survey, ensuring transparency and equity. The introduction of monthly local payroll processing streamlined financial operations, guaranteeing timely and accurate compensation. The implementation of an integrated induction package enhanced consistency in onboarding, ensuring an effective welcome for new personnel. Mandatory training for all staff on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse demonstrated a commitment to a safe work environment and to ethical and secure partnerships. Ongoing initiatives, such as financial literacy training and structured recruitment processes, demonstrated

the group's dedication to continuous improvement and professional development.

The ICT Technical Working Group made progress in optimizing technological solutions, enhancing operational efficiency and ensuring alignment with sustainability goals. Initiatives like the proper disposal of ICT equipment and the installation of solar panels underscore a commitment to environmental responsibility and the adoption of sustainable energy. Efforts to reduce printing, implement digital signature systems and improve internet connectivity demonstrate a drive towards paperless operations and enhanced communication. Ongoing initiatives, such as upgrading the boardroom booking system and making the boardroom more accessible to people with disabilities, indicate a commitment to innovation and improvement in the technological landscape of United Nations agencies.

The Procurement Working Group's achievements reflect a commitment to efficiency and sustainability in the procurement processes of United Nations agencies. This working group demonstrated effective management of both external services (e.g., advertising, call/data contracts and freight forwarding) and internal services (e.g., printing, heating, cooling, compound security and cleaning). Ongoing initiatives related to energy monitoring, environmental sustainability and improvement of facilities reflect the proactive approach taken. Pending actions in areas such as catering services and improved conference facilities highlight issues that require further attention.

The Common Premises and Services Technical Working Group handled asset management, fire safety, waste collection and long-term service agreements for generators, ensuring operational preparedness and safety. Ongoing initiatives include catering services, environmental sustainability efforts and disability inclusion, underscoring a continuous commitment to service improvement. Pending actions related to bathroom proposals, maintenance tasks, printing services and arrangements for conference-hall tables require further attention. The work of the Common Premises and Services Technical Working Group demonstrates a commitment to efficiency,



INITIATIVES LIKE THE PROPER DISPOSAL OF ICT EQUIPMENT AND THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PANELS UNDERSCORE A COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY.

sustainability and inclusive practices across various operations of United Nations agencies.

The Finance and Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers Technical Working Group has made significant strides in advancing the efficiency agenda by breaking down silos. This was achieved through leveraging the United Nations Partners Portal for the collaborative planning and execution of implementing partner management processes. In the next phase, the working group aims to further enhance efficiency by exploring the automation of implementing partner management systems. This strategic initiative is designed to streamline processes and establish an audit trail for all transactions, accommodating a broader range of agencies utilizing the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers.

2.4.6 Best practices in ‘Delivering as One’

As we concluded the implementation of the UNDAF, a reflection on the transformative journey was undertaken by the UNCT. A set of best practices, emphasizing the significance of collaborative efforts and drawing on lessons from the past, emerged during implementation. The practices are invaluable not only in acknowledging achievements but also in shaping the foundation for future programming, partnerships and sustainable development endeavours. They provide insights useful beyond the current UNDAF cycle since they can be utilized in the implementation of the new Cooperation Framework 2024–2028, in continuous pursuit of the SDGs.

Stakeholder forums

Regular stakeholder forums have allowed systematic engagement with various stakeholders, providing insights into achievements, challenges and opportunities for collaboration. These forums enhance transparency, accountability and inclusive decision-making.

At the second Global Refugee Forum held in December 2023, the UNCT jointly pledged to support advocacy and efforts to ensure that all children, including refugees, receive quality basic services such as health, education, protection and shelter.



**REGULAR
STAKEHOLDER
FORUMS HAVE ALLOWED
SYSTEMATIC ENGAGEMENT
WITH VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS,
PROVIDING INSIGHTS INTO
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
COLLABORATION.**

Resuscitating the Development Partners’ Coordination Forum has enhanced relationships, facilitated discussions on key issues and resulted in joint solutions. Increased support for the government demonstrates the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving development goals.

The role of the United Nations in reviving the Gender and Anti-GBV Coordination Forum has fostered collaborative endeavours among stakeholders. The joint approach taken serves as a powerful tool in addressing the GBV crisis collectively and promoting sustained efforts towards gender equality. This has led to the initiation and development of the Joint Programme on GBV and other joint initiatives.

Private sector engagement

Initiatives such as the creation of collaborative proposals and consistent engagement through regular meetings with the private sector have enhanced this sector’s involvement, significantly contributing to sustainable development. Involving the private sector stimulates economic expansion, fosters job creation and broadens the range of funding sources.

Media capacity-building

Collaborative initiatives with the media aimed at responsible reporting on GBV recognize the media’s role in advancing the SDGs. These initiatives challenge societal norms and contribute to creating awareness and advocacy for gender equality.



2.5 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Progress made in resource mobilization in 2023

The UNCT has been instrumental in fostering opportunities for youth entrepreneurship, particularly through facilitating access to finance. This was achieved by the UNCT aiding the government in connecting young entrepreneurs with the private sector with the aim of attracting investment support for their business ideas and initiatives. This effort aligned with the Prime Minister's youth entrepreneurship initiative, Sebatatso (see page 44), which is focused on generating employment through private sector investment.

TABLE 2: CONTRIBUTIONS TO SEBABATSO

Organizations	Contributions (US\$)
UNDP	29,692.11
UNICEF	20,000.00
WFP	10,000.00
IOM	2,500.00
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	5,000.00
Total contribution	67,192.11

“ THE UNCT POOLED US\$59,628 FOR THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE A VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS. THE ASSESSMENT SHOWED THAT 580,000 PEOPLE WOULD BE FOOD INSECURE BETWEEN OCTOBER AND DECEMBER 2023.

The UNCT pooled US\$59,628 for the Disaster Management Authority to undertake a vulnerability assessment and analysis (see Table 3). The assessment showed that 580,000 people would be food insecure between October and December 2023. These findings informed programming for food systems, social protection interventions and other mitigation programmes. An example of this is the joint food systems project aimed at supporting farmers to increase their agricultural production through the use of modern, advanced agricultural technology for production, storage infrastructure, branding and marketing, and linkages to sources of markets. First National Bank pledged US\$277,777 in support of this initiative.

TABLE 3: CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT THE LESOTHO VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Organizations	Contributions (US\$)
World Vision	4,174
WFP	23,454
UNFPA	5,000
FAO	12,000
UNICEF	15,000
IOM	10,000
Total contribution	69,628

Increased awareness and contribution of the private sector

The United Nations hosted a workshop for chief executive officers and heads of corporate social responsibility departments of big corporates in Lesotho to raise awareness of the sustainable development agenda and to sensitize them on how and why to contribute to it. Private sector companies such as Vodacom Lesotho, Standard Lesotho Bank and First National Bank have moved to collaborate with the United Nations on food systems and to support the launch of the United Nations Cooperation Framework.

UNDAF budget, mobilized funds and expenditure for 2023

	Outcome	Budget (US\$)	Available (US\$)	Expenditure (US\$)	Delivery rate
Pillar 1: Accountable governance, effective institutions, social cohesion and inclusion	Outcome 1.1: By 2023, government and non-governmental institutions deliver their mandates and uphold good governance, rule of law and human rights, with all people having improved access to justice and participating in social and political decision-making in a peaceful environment.	7,841,698	5,642,768	5,229,000	92.6%
	Pillar 2: Sustainable human capital development	Outcome 2.1: By 2023, all citizens, including women and children, particularly the poor, most vulnerable and marginalized, benefit from evidence-based, shock- and gender-responsive social protection and social services for the sustainable and equitable realization of their rights.	40,286,875	20,087,279	18,386,862
Pillar 3: Sustainable and inclusive economic growth for poverty reduction	Outcome 3.1: By 2023, government and the private sector increase opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improved food security and decent work, especially for women, youth and people living with disabilities.	15,114,665	9,262,733	8,506,491	91.8%
	Outcome 3.2: By 2023, the people of Lesotho have access to and use natural resources in a more sustainable manner, and the marginalized and most vulnerable are increasingly resilient.	14,045,581	9,652,361	8,614,180	89.2%
Total		77,288,819	44,645,141	40,736,533	91.2%

Source: United Nations Development Coordination Office (n.d.)





Joint Statement



As the United Nations Country Team, together with the Government of Lesotho as the undersigned, commit to delivering all the strategic priorities of the Lesotho United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2024 - 2028), in line with the National Strategic Development Plan II (2023/24 - 2027/28).

Together we will work efficiently and effectively towards Agenda 2030 for the prosperity, peace, and stability of all Basotho people, leaving no one behind.

The Government of Lesotho
Right Honourable
Samuel Ntsokoane M...

*Ka lebelo la Ntsoekhe
With the Speed of Ntsoekhe*

UNITED NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
LESOTHO 2024 - 2028

The mobilized resources for each pillar and related outcomes generally fall short of the planned budgets, indicating an overall gap of US\$29,475,026 for all pillars in 2023 translating into a UNDAF resource mobilization rate of 63 percent in 2023. This suggests that still more work needs to be done to secure adequate financial resources, especially from non-core sources (donors). Resource mobilization rates for pillar-related outcomes are as follows: outcome 1.1 (which focuses on effective governance) – 71.9 percent; outcome 2 (which focuses on human capital development) – 49.8 percent; outcome 3.1 (focusing on inclusive economic growth, food security and decent work) – 61.2 percent; outcome 3.2 (focusing on the sustainable use of natural resources, and climate action and resilience) – 68 per cent.

Additionally, the overall delivery rate averages 91.2 percent demonstrating that the mobilized resources have been utilized optimally for implementation although not at 100 percent at the time reporting.³¹

2.6 KEY CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The journey in pursuit of sustainable development has been marked by valuable lessons and formidable challenges. The following key lessons and challenges demonstrate that flexibility, adaptability and strategic foresight are crucial in steering the course of development. From political dynamics to global emergencies, the web of challenges necessitates a nuanced and collaborative response. The lessons derived from these experiences provide pivotal guideposts, offering insights that will shape our collective endeavours in the ongoing pursuit of sustainable development.

Political and capacity challenges

The occurrence of snap elections and changes in government create resource diversion and delays in planned initiatives. Frequent turnover of government officials disrupts programme implementation and high attrition rates hinder capacity-building efforts, challenging the retention of institutional knowledge. Political instability exacerbates shifts in public administration, impacting the continuity of development programmes.

Some national elections, such as the 2022 national election, impact programme traction, necessitating strategies to mitigate the political effects on implementation. Maintaining programme continuity during election years is essential.

Data and humanitarian emergencies

Insufficient comprehensive data impedes baseline establishment and the monitoring of development interventions. The dearth of data hampers evidence-based decision-making, making it difficult to assess programme impact and adjust strategies accordingly.

Climate-related emergencies, such as extreme weather events, divert attention and resources from development to immediate humanitarian interventions. There is a need for flexible and adaptive programming that is capable of responding to unforeseen crises.

Returning migrants and vulnerable groups, including those with micro, small and medium enterprises, encounter difficulties accessing basic services. Tailored interventions are essential to address the specific needs of these groups.

Limited donor presence and a small private sector complicate fund mobilization, affecting the scalability and sustainability of development efforts. Overcoming this financial challenge necessitates innovative financing solutions and diversified partnerships.

³¹ The implementation of some joint activities detailed on UN INFO are still being finalized and are likely to be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2024.





CHAPTER 3:

United Nations country team's focus areas for 2024

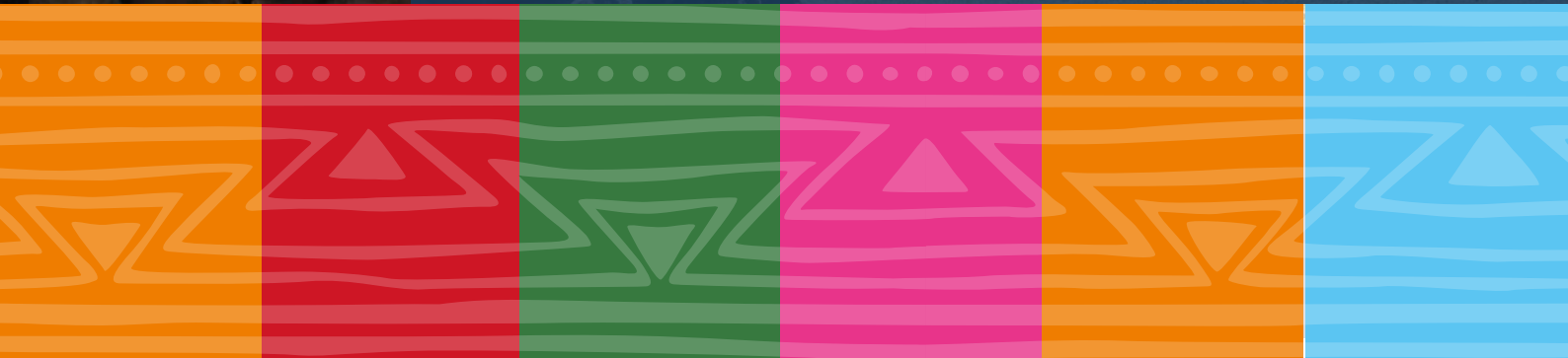
In alignment with the imperatives set forth by the SDGs, insights gleaned from the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report and lessons learned from UNDAF 2019–2023, the UNCT in Lesotho is poised for transformative action across six key transition areas, in alignment with the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change (United Nations, 2023). The strategic focal points for 2024 are as follows:

1 Food systems, education transformation, energy, climate and environment, jobs, social protection and digital transformation

- Develop, with the government, national bankable projects through joint programmes. This strategic move from activity-based to impact-based programming emphasizes holistic progress across the SDGs.

2 Strategic foresight

- Undertake rapid adaptation and foresight activities in response to a dynamic environment.
- Develop and implement strategies fostering inclusive development, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.



3 Innovation

- Leverage innovative approaches to engage non-state actors in national development, transcending traditional upstream partnerships.
- Embrace a mix of upstream and downstream collaborations, ensuring meaningful participation of local civil society actors, including youth.
- Strengthen partnerships conducive to learning, capacity-building and resource mobilization.
- Support the establishment of a government partnership portal and tailor resource mobilization efforts to attract local businesses, philanthropists and international donors.
- Explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as impact investing, to diversify funding sources.

4 Behavioural science

- Integrate insights from behavioural science into programming for enhanced effectiveness and impact.

5 Digital transformation

- Initiate the development of a joint programme on digital transformation, leveraging digital solutions for impactful interventions.

6 Data

- Commit to the development of a joint programme on data in 2024, aiming to address critical data gaps and fortify government capacities in data management.

In steering these strategic initiatives, the UNCT underscores its commitment to advancing Lesotho's sustainable development agenda, emphasizing adaptability, inclusivity and innovation, and leveraging insights from behavioural science to maximize impact and foster sustainable positive change.



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THE UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations Country Team in Lesotho is represented by eight resident United Nations agencies, funds and programmes – the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO).

There are 18 non-resident agencies – the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women), United Nations Volunteers, UN World Tourism Organization and World Trade Organization.

