



Kingdom of Lesotho

Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report

2022



“Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
1. INTRODUCTION	13
1.1 BACKGROUND	13
1.2 CONTEXT	13
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT	14
2. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE BUILDING BACK BETTER	15
2.1 IMPACT OF COVID-19	15
2.2 OPPORTUNITIES FROM COVID-19 FOR BUILDING BACK BETTER	16
2.3 RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENT TO COVID-19	16
3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOR PREPARATION OF VNR 2022	18
4. POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT	19
4.1. INTEGRATION OF SDGs INTO NSDP II	19
4.2. NATIONAL SDG IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORKS	20
4.2.1. NATIONAL SDG GOVERNANCE	20
4.2.2. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON SDGs OR OPERATIONAL PLAN	20
4.2.3. BUDGETING FOR SDGs	20
4.3. AWARENESS AND OWNERSHIP OF SDGs	21
4.4. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND	23
4.4.1. WOMEN AND GIRLS	23
4.5.2 CHILDREN	23
4.5.3 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD)	24
4.5.4 YOUTH	24
4.5.5 HERD BOYS	24
4.5.6 PEOPLE LIVING IN RURAL AREAS	24
4.5.7 OLDER PERSONS	24
4.5.8 LINGUISTICS MINORITY GROUPS	25
4.5.9 MIGRANTS	25
5. LESOTHO PROGRESS ON SDGs	26
5.1. GOAL 1: END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE	26
5.1.1 STATUS OF PROGRESS	26
5.1.2 KEY INITIATIVES	31
5.1.3 CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD	31
5.2 GOAL 4: ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND 37 PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL	33
5.2.1 STATUS OF PROGRESS	33
5.2.2 KEY INITIATIVES	39
5.2.3 CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD	39
5.3 GOAL 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS	41
5.3.1 STATUS OF PROGRESS	41

5.3.2	KEY INITIATIVES	49
5.3.3	CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD	50
5.4	GOAL 15: PROTECT, RESTORE AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, AND HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS	51
5.4.1	STATUS OF PROGRESS	51
5.4.2	KEY INITIATIVES	56
5.4.3	CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD	56
5.5	GOAL 17: STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALISE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	57
5.5.1	STATUS OF PROGRESS	57
5.5.2	KEY INITIATIVES	64
5.5.3	CHALLENGES	65
6	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	66
6.1	CONCLUSIONS	66
6.2	RECOMMENDATIONS	66
6.2.1	FOR GOVERNMENT:	66
6.2.2	FOR DEVELOPMENTAL PARTNERS:	67
6.2.3	FOR PRIVATE SECTOR:	67
	REFERENCES	69
	ANNEXES	74
	ANNEX 1: SDG COORDINATION FRAMEWORK IN LESOTHO	74

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: GER & NER (2016 - 2018).....	35
TABLE 2: ENROLMENT IN REGISTERED TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS BY AGE AND SEX, 2018	36
TABLE 3: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN LESOTHO ..	41
TABLE 4: PROPORTION OF IMPORTANT SITES FOR TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY THAT ARE COVERED BY PROTECTED AREAS	52

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: NSDP II LINK WITH SDGs.....	19
FIGURE 2: HEADCOUNT RATIO BEFORE AND AFTER COVID19 AT THE INTERNATIONAL POVERTY LINE	27
FIGURE 3: HEADCOUNT RATIO BEFORE AND COVID-19 ACROSS URBAN AND RURAL AT THE NATIONAL POVERTY LINE	28
FIGURE 4: MULTIDIMENSIONAL DEPRIVATION HEADCOUNT RATIO (%) FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-17 YEARS	29
FIGURE 5: NET ENROLMENT TRENDS BY SEX	34
FIGURE 6: ENROLMENT AT HEI BY SEX.....	37
FIGURE 7: LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES ACROSS FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, 2019.....	38
FIGURE 8: GBV STATISTICS 2017-2021.....	44
FIGURE 9: PROPORTION OF WOMEN AGED 20-24 YEARS WHO WERE MARRIED OR IN A UNION BEFORE AGE 15 AND BEFORE AGE 18 IN 2006 AND 2016.....	46
FIGURE 10: THE PROPORTION OF SEATS HELD BY WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT IN LESOTHO, 2012-16..	47
FIGURE 11: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN HIGHER POSITIONS IN CIVIL SERVICE AND PARASTATAL	48
FIGURE 12: FOREST AREAS AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL LAND AREA	51
FIGURE 13: FOREST PLANTED FOREST AREA (1000 HA) FOR LESOTHO, PLANTED FORESTS	53
FIGURE 14: TOTAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE AS A PROPORTION OF GDP	57
FIGURE 15: FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AS A PROPORTION OF BUDGET	58
FIGURE 16: OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AS A PROPORTION OF BUDGET.....	59
FIGURE 17: REMITTANCES OVERTIME: VOLUME (IN US DOLLARS) AND AS A PROPORTION OF GDP	60
FIGURE 18: DEBT SERVICE AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL EXPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES	61
FIGURE 19: DEBT SERVICE AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL REVENUE AND GDP	62
FIGURE 20: FIXED BROADBAND SUBSCRIPTIONS (PER 100 PERSONS)	63

LIST OF BOXES

BOX 1: UNICEF U REPORT 22

BOX 2: U REPORT POLL ON GOAL 1 30

BOX 3: U REPORT POLL ON GOAL 4 38

BOX 4: U-REPORT POLL ON GOAL 5 49

BOX 5. U-REPORT POLL ON GOAL 15 55

BOX 6: U REPORT POLL ON GOAL 17 64

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANC	African National Congress
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
BOS	Bureau of Statistics
CBL	Central Bank of Lesotho
CMA	Common Monetary Area
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CSO	Community-Based Organisations
DSA	Debt Sustainability Analysis
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FY	Financial Year
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Lesotho
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
LAA	Land Administration Authority
LARP	Lesotho Land Administration Reform Project
LCA	Lesotho Communications Authority
LDS	Lesotho Data for Sustainable Development
LRA	Lesotho Revenue Authority
LTP	Lesotho Telecommunications Policy
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MEFMI	Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute of Eastern and Southern African
MoDP	Ministry of Development Planning
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NISSA	National Information System for Social Assistance
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSS	National Statistical Systems
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OAP	Old Age Pensions
OBFC	One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPP	Public-Private Partnership

PSCEDP	Private Sector Competitiveness and Economic Diversification Project
PSIC	Public Sector Investment Committee
QMMH	Queen 'Mamohato Memorial Hospital
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SBTR	Small Business Taxation Regime
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
T-Bill	Treasury Bill
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USB	Universal Serial Bus
USD	United States Dollars
VAT	Value Added Tax
VDP	Voluntary Disclosure Program
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank
WAMPP	Wool and Mohair Promotion Project
ZAR	South African Rand

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Review Process

Lesotho's development agenda is anchored on the Second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II), which aims to transform Lesotho from a consumer-based economy to a producer and export-driven economy. The plan underscores the Government of Lesotho's multisectoral approach of directly engaging citizens, empowering individuals and encouraging participation in the development process. NSDP II is actualised through four key strategic goals or Key Priority Areas (KPAs) namely:

- KPA I: Enhancing Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth and Private Sector Job Creation;
- KPA II: Strengthening Human Capital;
- KPA III: Building Enabling Infrastructure; and
- KPA IV: Strengthening National Governance and Accountability Systems. NSDP II is the nucleus of all development plans in the country, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Voluntary National Review Voluntary Review (VNR) is one of the ways that the country uses to monitor and report on the implementation of SDGs and the achievement of the respective targets. Lesotho prepared its first VNR in 2019 and has committed to be reviewed in 2022. The 2022 VNR takes an in-depth assessment of five goals, namely:

- SDG 1 – No Poverty;
- SDG 4 – Quality Education;
- SDG 5 – Gender Equality;
- SDG 15 – Life on Land; and
- SDG 17 – Partnerships.

The preparation of the 2022 VNR was consultative and aimed at increasing ownership of the process and to ensure inclusivity and no one left behind. The consulted stakeholders include the National Government, the private sector, CSOs, the youth, academia, Parliament (National Assembly and the Senate), UN Agencies, religious institutions, Persons with Disability (PWD) and marginalised groups such as herd boys. The review process was spearheaded by the Ministry of Development Planning with technical and financial support from UN Agencies. A series of workshops were organised, drawing participation from all stakeholders to collect qualitative information on good practices and success stories. Lesotho also adopted the U-report methodologies and tools to foster youth engagement and participation in the process, collecting data and perspectives.

The VNR process was also used to create awareness among different stakeholders and strengthen coordination and collaborative engagement among partners. The review has helped to identify implementation challenges and gaps and challenges in the implementation of the SDGs. It also helped to strengthen dialogues and partnerships with multiple stakeholders as well as being useful for peer learning.

Progress from 2019 to 2022: National Implementation Arrangements

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development was integrated into the national development Plan (NSDP II) to ease implementation and national ownership. Since its adoption in 2016, the Government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Development Planning, embarked on targeted multi-stakeholder campaigns, workshops, and discussion panels to enhance advocacy and awareness creation.

A multi-Stakeholder Coordination Structure established in 2018, was amended in October 2021 as part of processes to develop internal capacities for SDG-aligned development planning, implementation, monitoring and oversight. The review focused on

- 1) Improving Communication and dissemination for enhanced policy coherence,
- 2) Strengthening coordination processes for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation,
- 3) Establishing operational linkages for oversight and accountability including Parliament, the Cabinet and the High-Level National SDGs Forum chaired by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister.

In addressing the data gaps and challenges, the national statistical office, Bureau of Statistics (BoS), developed the second National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS II) with a focus on gender mainstreaming and having a well-coordinated National Statistical Systems (NSS). The strategy also aims to strengthen the national statistical ecosystem through modernisation of NSS; building integrated data management systems; improving data literacy and raising the profile of statistics for monitoring the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

The challenges for mobilising development finance and financing resources remain high. On the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on development financing, the country has adopted the integrated national financing frameworks aimed at addressing the misalignment between the financing and development priorities for the Government and development of a long-term development financing strategy aligned to the SDGs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the existing inequalities, particularly those to education, labour market, and health care. That is, the past progress on the social protection system insulated some vulnerable groups from bearing the full brunt of the pandemic, but people in the informal sector were losing their jobs and incomes, thereby facing rising hunger levels and economic hardship.

Summary of Status of SDG Progress

Lesotho has achieved significant milestones since the SDGs came into effect in 2016. These include preparing SDGs Indicator Baseline report for prioritisation and establishment of baseline, identifying data gaps and development strategies. The country also presented its first VNR in 2019. For the VNR 2022, the country status:

SDG 1 – No Poverty

The GoL has successfully reduced absolute poverty in the past two decades. Between 2002/2003 and 2017/2018, Lesotho's overall national poverty and extreme poverty headcount ratios declined from 56.6 per cent to 49.7 per cent and from 34.1 to 24.1 per cent. The level of inequalities measured as the Gini index, also declined from 51.9 in 2002/2003 to 44.6 in 2017/2018. However, some gains were eroded by the effects of

COVID-19 pandemic, pushing additional 2 per cent of the population into poverty and rendering more than 25 per cent food insecure.

Despite this, the country has made notable progress on social protection, child poverty, and access to basic services. The Government of Lesotho continues to implement social protection programmes across the country with the aim of ensuring that all Basotho, especially the vulnerable and marginalised, are included into the mainstream economy. The country launched the disability grant for people living with disabilities, following the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Equity Act in March 2021. The Government allocates 6.4 per cent of the national budget to social protection programmes, that includes, the cash transfers under Old Age Pensions (OAP), child grants, and school bursary schemes. Access to basic services like education, water, and sanitation has improved while access to electricity, especially in the rural areas, remains low.

The country has made significant progress on the management of disasters and has developed a National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy that is aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

SDG 4 – Quality Education,

Quality Education is also positive with significant improvement recorded at Primary and Early Childhood Care and Development. Between 2016 and 2018, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres, partly due to the Government of Lesotho's decision to provide reception classes in several primary schools to prepare young children for the primary curriculum. Enrolments by location indicate low levels of NER in rural districts. Regarding primary schooling, the country is close to universal primary education (UPE). The Net Enrolment Rates (NERs) increased from 60.2 before FPE in 1999 to 85.8 in 2019. The review also noted high repetition rates, especially among boys, leading fewer boys than girls leaving primary school. The net effects of Covid-19 on the education sector shook the sector to its core, yet with private sector collaborations and innovation, a swift online mode of learning birthed a neo means to learning, a trend likely to impact the sector positively post Covid-19.

Secondary education has shown the least progress, with NER for both boys and girls low but much more adverse in the case of boys and STEM subjects reflecting a low uptake in the girl student population. It is further noted that Net Enrolments in the upper secondary was significantly lower than in lower secondary education, estimated at 11.1 and 21.0 for males and females, respectively. The Gross Enrolment Rate (GRE) in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) has shown limited overall growth in recent years with undergraduate programmes having the largest share of students. The most significant growth has been in the private cross-border institutions while the least growth has been in the denominational providers all offering undergraduate health education. The highest enrolment remains at sub-degree level diploma enrolments constituting the majority (52%). The review also revealed that girls are generally ahead of boys in both access and the quality of learning outcomes, apart from mathematics at school-leaving examinations level.

People with disability are under-represented in both ECCD and Tertiary levels. With the sector facing all these challenges and opportunities to venture into online and other sustainable means of learning, resource mobilisation and education funding model relevant to the current state is thus very key.

SDG 5 - Gender equality

The Government of Lesotho has made progress regarding de jure equality or equality in the eyes of the law, where law reform has seen the removal of various discriminatory laws and the enactment of laws that foster an enabling environment for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality. Notable is the ongoing amendment of the Inheritance Act in 2022, which brings together the customary and the Roman-Dutch law allowing both sexes equal access to an inheritance of property. However, progress is limited regarding de facto equality, where there is no full and effective enforcement of laws, policies and strategies. Regarding violence against women and girls, there are reports indicating an increase in cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) since the beginning of the mandated lockdown due to COVID-19. While the Government of Lesotho has made efforts to end child marriage, data reveals that between 2006 and 2016 there was an increase in the proportion of women who were married before the age of 18. Lesotho, due to its patriarchal system, women still perform most of the domestic responsibilities, but qualitative data suggest that the inequalities in unpaid care may be declining. Lastly, the review noted that the women's representation in parliament has generally been low throughout, but information from BoS reveals that representation of women in decision-making bodies has increased and even overtaken that of men in the civil service.

SDG 15 – Life on land.

There has been notable progress in the proportion of forest area to the total land area between 2015 and 2020. Much of this progress is due to community education programmes on the importance of growing trees. Livestock agricultural projects such as WAMP empowered beneficiaries on wetlands management for the sustainability of wool and mohair harvesting. While the data revealed that the area under formal protection has not changed since 2016, several areas such as Letseng-La-Letsie Nature Reserve and Tsetse are either informally designated or proposed for protection in various parts of the country. And there has not been encroachment on the area covered under protected areas by other land-use activities. Regarding land degradation, the review noted that about 66 per cent of households live on degraded land, and the country loses 2 per cent of its topsoil annually due to soil erosion.

The review also revealed that in 2016 the country had only one animal species listed in the IUCN Red List index, the Lesotho Meadow Katydid. But the country now has additional three species. These include a bird species, bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*), aquatic (fish species) Maloti minnow (*Pseudobarbus quathlambae*) and a plant species, Spiral Aloe (*Aloe polyphylla*).

SDG 17 – Partnerships

Partnerships indicates that the country managed to enhance domestic resource mobilisation, despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The country introduced tax reforms to improve domestic resource mobilisation by bringing about collaboration between all institutions to effectively enable compliance. Government has adopted the roadmap on the Integrated National Financing Framework and will pilot medium-term expenditure frameworks to enhance mobilisation and management of development finance flows, facilitate SDG-aligned expenditures and development of an SDG financing strategy.

Moreover, the Government of Lesotho adopted several initiatives such as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy, the Investment Policy and the Diaspora Strategy Engagement for Trade and Investment and strengthened the One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre (OBFC) to enable investors to register companies easily; get tax registration, industrial and trading licences; get immigration, residence, and labour permits, as well as export and import permits and rebates. The Government managed to develop its telecommunications infrastructure and extend access to mobile communication services in remote areas. For instance, the GoL has constructed 22 towers that facilitated the migration from analogue to digital. On the policy front, the country further undertook to fortify the mobile communication industry by introducing the Communication (Subscriber Identity module registration) Regulations of 2021. The country also managed to develop the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) II (2022/23-2026/27) to strengthen the collection, analysis and dissemination of development data and enhance institutional and technical capacities for monitoring and evaluation of development programmes.

Good Practises

- Coordinating the implementation and tracking of the SDGs is led by the Government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Development Planning. Lesotho has institutionalised stakeholder engagement in the implementation, monitoring, and awareness of SDGs.
- The 2019 VNR highlighted low levels of ownership of SDGs across MDAs, which prompted the Ministry of Development Planning to continuously strengthen the capacity of MDAs in policy coherence so that they can mainstream the NSDP and the SDGs into their policies, plan and strategies.
- The country took several response measures to address COVID-19 impacts to return the economy into the development trajectory in the pre-COVID context. Private sector played an instrumental role in the implementation of COVID-19 response with the hope of building back better after the pandemic. Private sector businesses donated food parcels to households hardest hit by the imposed nation-wide lockdown. The private sector also supported procurement of vaccines and bought 60 000 Sinopharm vaccines and contributed to the transportation and distribution.

Lessons learned and Way forward.

Some of the lessons learned during the preparation of the 2022 VNR include:

- There is a need to periodically monitor and report on the implementation of the SDGs. This means adequate resources must be allocated to the SDG coordination.
- Need to undertake a formal assessment of the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle in the context of Lesotho.
- The need to develop the capacity of government officials about setting priorities that are within the country's resource endowment and then align their budget to priorities. This also underscores the need to align available development finance resources to development objectives and priorities, including SDGs.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Lesotho has been implementing the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development since their adoption in January and September 2015. The two agendas have been integrated into the national planning and budgeting processes. The country's current five-year development plan, NSDP II (2018/19-2022/23), has included programmes and projects aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and AU Agenda 2063. Integrating the two agendas in the planning and budgeting processes is backed by an implementation arrangement that promotes cross-sectoral collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels.

The assessment of the two agendas and the progress towards their achievement started with the first VNR report of 2019. Since its first report, Lesotho has further improved SDG integration into national processes for better data collection, monitoring, and linking to budget processes. Stakeholder engagement improved, allowing for further contextualisation of the goals. This helped address some of the key challenges raised in the first VNR and ensured the engagement of all stakeholders, including the parliamentarians and vulnerable groups.

The 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) began with the highest-level political ownership by the Right Honourable, Prime Minister Dr. Moeketsi Majoro, calling on all government entities, the private sector and the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and UN partners. This report reviews the progress made in implementing the SDG and Agenda 2063 agendas, building on the lessons learnt and challenges from the first review. It highlights good practices in SDGs implementation and draws attention to areas where improvements are required.

An overall preliminary assessment indicates that the lessons learnt and challenges from the first review in 2019 helped Lesotho advance on the SDG goal achievement, given the integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs. Since the last review, the country has improved, however, national processes for better data collection, monitoring, reporting, and linking the budget to plans still need further enhancement. The VNR process revealed that many SDG targets were indirectly incorporated into existing policy documents. It was observed that the country had made notable progress in areas such as poverty reduction, gender equality, access to basic services (e.g., education), and social transfers.

1.2 Context

Lesotho is a lower-middle-income country where most of the population lives in rural areas and is engaged in subsistence farming. Its population is projected to grow to 2,174,825 in 2022, an increase from a 2.16 million persons recorded in the year 2021. The Country has a total land area of 30,355 square kilometres and it is administratively divided into ten districts and four ecological zones. It is surrounded by the Republic of South Africa (RSA), which provides Lesotho with access to markets and advanced infrastructure that create links with the rest of the world. For instance, Maseru City, the economic hub of Lesotho, is about 600 km away from the port of Durban, the busiest port in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Lesotho's economy has been in recession since 2017 because of internal and external factors that lead to contractions in leading economic sectors. Economic growth slowed from an average contraction of 1.5 per cent

between 2015 and 2020, with economic output peaking in 2016 at 3.6 per cent¹. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 was 2 462 million US\$. In June 2021, the economy was projected to grow by 4.3 per cent in 2022 and 4.2 per cent in 2023². The projected recovery is driven by increased activity in the construction sub-sector, services sector, manufacturing, and mining on the back of improved business and consumer confidence. The main sectors of the economy include agriculture, textile manufacturing, and diamond mining. Remittances from Basotho migrant workers in South Africa have been significant drivers of private consumption in Lesotho. Annual remittance flows to Lesotho are estimated at around 24 per cent of GDP in the 2010s, one of the highest rates in the world. Higher recurrent expenditure and ballooning government wage-bill robs the government of any economic prospects of investing in strategic and developmental processes and projects.

The SACU receipts account for a large share of the Lesotho Government's revenue leading to economic volatility and vulnerability. Since 2005/06, SACU revenues have averaged 35 per cent of GDP, the highest of all SACU members. The Government of Lesotho's budgetary operations depend heavily on the volatile SACU receipts, meaning a weak performance in SACU revenues, usually associated with the weak performance of the South African economy, leads to significant fluctuations in total revenue, which in turn affects government expenditure. For instance, SACU revenues fluctuated between a high of 27.8 per cent of GDP and a low of 14 per cent of GDP. The windfalls from SACU have created fiscal space for large government consumption and public sector investment, crowding out private sector participation. SACU transfers are volatile and have exacerbated macro-fiscal vulnerabilities.

1.3 Structure of the report

The VNR report is divided into six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, *chapter (2)* provides a closer look at Lesotho's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen contributions from the government, private sector, and diaspora. It focuses on key initiatives and draws lessons the government could build upon to improve the implementation of sustainable development policies and programmes. *Chapter 3* describes the approach and process followed in preparing Lesotho VNR 2022. *Chapter 4* looks at the policy and enabling environment, including domestication SDGs, creating awareness and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) initiatives. *Chapter 5* closely examines the progress across the five SDGs Lesotho selected for in-depth review for this year's HLPF. The five goals are SDG 1 – No Poverty; SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 5 – Gender Equality; SDG 15 – Life on land; and SDG 17 – Partnerships. *Chapter 6* presents conclusions, challenges and the next steps towards fast-tracking implementation, monitoring and reporting on SDGs in Lesotho.

¹ World Bank, April 2021 Lesotho *Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) Update: Bridging Implementation Gaps to Accelerate Development*.

² Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL), June 2021. *Economic Outlook 2021 – 2023*.

2. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA AND THE BUILDING BACK BETTER

While the COVID-19 has had adverse effects, some still unfolding, certain aspects of the pandemic provide opportunities for building back better. This section gives an overview of the aggregate impact of the crisis in the country, the short-term policies undertaken to mitigate the effects, and it highlights the opportunities for building back better.

2.1 Impact of COVID-19

The general setbacks of the COVID-19 crisis are twofold: the direct health effects and the indirect social and economic effects arising from crisis response measures such as social distancing and mandated lockdowns. Regarding the health effects, Lesotho recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19 reported on May 13, 2020. Since then, the country has recorded 33,358 cases and 698 fatalities, suggesting that morbidities and mortalities experienced moderate severity of the illness. As of 22 May 2022, a total of 948,906 vaccine doses have been administered³.

During the first few months of the outbreak, Lesotho managed the spread of the disease by imposing stringent transmission control measures. The impact of these measures have been widespread and disproportionately affected vulnerable segments of the population, including children, women and girls, older persons, youth, persons with disabilities, Basotho migrant workers who became stranded and destitute in South Africa and those in rural areas. The Government of Lesotho closed primary and secondary schools for more than a year, thereby interrupting learning and exacerbating already existing disparities within the education system. Most importantly, the school closures meant some girls, especially those from rural and poor families, were at risk of teenage pregnancy and child marriage, while some boys may also end up not returning to school.

Women are among the hardest hit economically due to high representation in sectors severely affected by COVID-19. For example, more than 80 per cent of the workforce of the textile and apparel sector are women. Women are overrepresented in the informal economy, accommodation & food services, and front-line occupations, such as health workers, are more likely to be negatively impacted by the economic downturn from COVID-19, in addition to increased risks of domestic violence.

Small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) were also hardest hit by the pandemic, particularly because many of their jobs (or tasks) cannot be performed remotely. Literature suggests that the following sectors are the most hardly hit by the containment measures against COVID-19, namely Hospitality, Textiles and Apparel, Transport, and Construction.

COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate Lesotho's development challenges by reversing the recent trend of poverty and inequality reduction. Survey data from the Bureau of Statistics indicate that households in Lesotho have experienced reductions in employment and income, food security, and physical engagement in education learning activities. The report shows that 61.8 per cent of the surveyed households with wage employment experienced either a reduction in income or did not receive any wage income during the lockdown. The research further revealed that 10.8 per cent of

³ WHO COVID-19 Dashboard. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020. Available online: <https://covid19.who.int/> (last cited: [31/05/2022])

the households received less or no revenue because the usual place of business was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In addition to COVID 19 shock, the war in Ukraine jeopardises the recovery and has intensified the inflationary pressures. Russia and Ukraine are big exporters of many commodities, including gas, oil, coal, fertilisers, wheat, corn, and seed oil, thus, the war led to a spike in food and fuel prices. In April 2022, the inflation in the country was recorded at 7.3 per cent, the highest in recent times. As a result of price increases, many households, especially those whose food expenditures constitute a major part of the household budget, will be impacted more due to the crisis.

2.2 Opportunities from COVID-19 for building back better

Despite the setbacks outlined above, some response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic have created opportunities to build back better to progress on SDGs.

The crisis increased awareness about the necessity of risk-responsive and universal healthcare and social protection systems. This pandemic also provided opportunities for strengthening these systems, and their contribution to the health, employment, poverty, hunger, and equality outcomes.

The pandemic highlighted socio-economic vulnerabilities including food production and distribution, and the need to strengthen local supply chains and capacities for value addition and market access. Covid further revealed a need for the government to invest in quality access to clean water and sanitation in Lesotho.

Apart from that, the emergency response measures put in place to contain the effects of the COVID-19 crisis showed the determination and political will harnessed to rectify some of the deficiencies in policy that have hindered progress toward the SDGs.

Closely related to response measures is the role played by the private sector in helping vulnerable populations with food packages. Many businesses, including private individuals, voluntarily supplied food parcels to the poor and those whose labour markets were hardest hit by the lockdowns. The private sector went further to procure vaccines for COVID-19.

One of the determinants of COVID-19 performance was progress in smartphone and internet penetration (SDG 9). That is, access to the internet helped ensure more excellent communication between the public and the authorities, helping containment measures to be more successful.

2.3 Response by Government to COVID-19

The Government of Lesotho employed monetary and fiscal policy measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the mandated lockdown. Some monetary policy initiatives that included a reduction of the policy rate by the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) to catalyse demand and liquidity into the financial system. Other measures initiated by the CBL included deferment of the implementation of financial regulations requiring higher capital requirements by commercial banks and the repayment of bank loans and insurance payments. The government also used targeted fiscal measures to boost immediate consumption spending of hardest-hit groups of people and firms. For instance, the government launched a Private Sector Covid-19 Relief Fund through the Lesotho Enterprise Assistance Program (LEAP). The fund was allocated 50 million, which was distributed to formal and informal businesses.

The government further initiated the food distribution package program through the Food Management Unit (FMU) for the hardest hit, using food packages were procured directly from local farmers and provided unconditional support amounting to M831 per household (M500 food vouchers and M331 cash to take care of other basic needs) to a total of about 72 676 households for three months. Target beneficiaries included all food-insecure families not covered in any existing or expanded social assistance. Old-age pension (OAP) transfer value was also increased from M750 to M831 per month, and further expanded 10 000 new destitute families such as people with disabilities (PWD) and elderly persons aged 60-69 years old.

In addition to the above, the government provided a wage subsidy of M800/month to 45 000 textile factory workers for three months from May 2020. A total of 64,932 farming households were assisted with inputs amounting to an average of \$56 (M870)/household for this immediate farming season. Cash transfers and food packages were also provided to Residential Care facilities across the country that host 1335 vulnerable children, 23 elderly persons, and 651 people with disabilities. Food stamps were supplied to vulnerable Basotho living in South Africa. The number of beneficiaries was estimated between 9,000 and 12,000.

Lesotho National Development Cooperation (LNDC) increased the government Partial Credit Guarantee (PCG) Scheme from 50 per cent to 75 per cent of loans to Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs); waived all fees; covers all sectors and business activities except normal harmful list activities; and increased the maximum guarantee amount from M5 million to M8 million Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) contributed by introducing tax relief measures to ease cash flow problems. The tax relief entailed deferment of payments of specified taxes that would be paid later and spread out through 6 months and eight months.

3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOR PREPARATION OF VNR 2022

The Department of Monitoring and Evaluation within the Ministry of Development Planning (MoDP) is the focal point that coordinates SDG activities in Lesotho. The Ministry was again mandated to coordinate the preparation of VNR 2022, and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Lesotho, including the respective UN agencies, offered technical and financial support to the VNR process.

The Ministry and UN spearheaded the preparation of the 2022 VNR with the formation of the SDG Steering Committee (SC). The SC was composed of people from the MDAs and UN agencies in the country. The SDG SC oversaw the data collection process, reviewed draft individual reports, and assisted with developing the consolidated VNR report.

The VNR 2022 process started with an official launch by the Prime Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator. The launch was followed by recruiting consultants from the National University of Lesotho (NUL) to draft technical background papers for each of the five SDGs. The individual papers served as inputs into the VNR 2022 report.

In the spirit of leaving no one behind, a multi-stakeholder workshop was organised to get input on SDGs implementation, innovations, and interventions. The workshop included participants from MDAs, civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector, academia, persons with disability (PWD), youth groups and marginalised groups such as herd boys and women.

In addition to the sector-related consultations, the drafting team adopted qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect additional information on the initiatives. They undertook desk review of relevant documents, semi-structured informant interviews and focused discussions with senior officers at MDAs, UN agencies, CSOs, and marginalised groups. To complement the qualitative information on good practices and success stories, the drafting team was given access to statistical data from the Bureau of Statistics (BoS) to assess progress on each indicator.

The draft VNR 2022 report was shared with selected stakeholders, especially those actively participating in the previous consultations. They reviewed the individual draft papers that served as inputs into this report. They further provided an opportunity to share and validate best practices and success stories.

Following the technical review, the draft report was presented at a multistakeholder validation workshop. The validation workshop involved a panel discussion of each of the five goals.

4. POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

4.1. Integration of SDGs into NSDP II

Lesotho has not opted to draft a separate SDG policy document; instead, it chose to implement and monitor them holistically by integrating them into the country's five-year development plan. The current five-year plan is the second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II). NSDP II (2018/19-2022/23) is the nucleus for all development plans and sectoral policies in Lesotho that set out to generate sustained employment through private sector growth. This goal would be achieved by transforming Lesotho from a consumer-based economy to a producer- and export-driven one. NSDP II identifies four Key Priority Areas (KPAs) geared toward job creation, inclusive growth, and further poverty reduction. The KPAs are strongly aligned with the development aspirations and priorities of the 2030 Agenda, as a result, there is consonance between the targets and goals of NSDP II and SDGs.

Figure 1: NSDP II link with SDGs



The Plan explicitly recognises the integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs in pursuit of its development priorities. As a result, the KPAs were specified to ensure that they collectively responded to all 17 SDGs. An assessment of integration (2019) shows that 90% of the Goals are integrated into the NSDP II, however, there is need to ensure alignment of targets and indicators and to leverage synergies for effective policy and investment decision-making and trade-offs.

As part of adapting SDGs Lesotho prioritised the Goals and selected/customised indicators to local context with respect to data availability and planned capacity development. Out of the 152 selected SDGs indicators (out of 244), Lesotho was able to provide baseline data on 81 indicators, (53 per cent) of selected indicators.

4.2. National SDG Implementation Frameworks

4.2.1. National SDG Governance

Lesotho did not create a separate institution to drive SDGs implementation, but these were integrated into the NSDP II to ensure harmonised national planning, budgeting, and accountability processes. In line with the implementation of NSDP II, the primary vehicle for implementing SDGs in Lesotho is the Government of Lesotho which assigns development planning and implementation responsibilities to the MDAs. The MDAs are expected to coordinate, monitor, evaluate, and provide technical backstopping within their realm.

After the 2019 VNR, the government amended the existing coordination structure to improve operational effectiveness by;

- i) Improving policy and implementation coordination and coherence.
- ii) Enhancing technical monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs and the NSDP.
- iii) Strengthening oversight, through the Parliament, the Cabinet and the High-Level National SDGs Forum chaired by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister.

The SDG coordination institutional framework for Lesotho has two core level players: A core team that comprises High-Level National SDGs Forum, Cabinet and Parliamentary Oversight and independent oversight institutions. This level works through a Policy Coordination Committee co-chaired by the Minister of Development Planning and the Minister of Finance. The second core level is a technical team that comprises of the national technical coordination team, the Technical Working Groups (TWGs), district SDG Working Groups (WGs) and community focal persons and cross-cutting representatives from gender, environment, youth, people with disability and climate change (*See Annex 1 for a detailed review of SDG Coordination Mechanism in Lesotho*).

4.2.2. Monitoring and Reporting on SDGs or Operational Plan

SDGs in Lesotho are implemented through NSDP II, their monitoring and reporting are managed through existing national monitoring systems. The implementation of NSDP II is monitored by the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in the Ministry of Development Planning. The main functions of the Department of M&E include a periodic assessment of the status of the sectoral policies and plans against their stated goals, objectives, and activities. The Department tracks the progress of national strategies by using Result-based M&E, which focuses more on *outcomes* (long-term results of a plan or strategy) and impacts (broader changes occurring within the community, organisation, society, or environment the outcomes contribute to rather than traditional implementation-focused M&E that emphasises inputs, activities, and outputs).

4.2.3. Budgeting for SDGs

Lessons learned from the implementation of the MDGs suggest that the inclusion of SDGs into national development plans is insufficient for their achievement but must be allocated sufficient resources to ensure successful attainment.

Through their alignment with NSDP, SDGs are integrated into the national budget processes. The Government of Lesotho's budgeting process is done through the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), which incorporates all the sectors of the economy. In collaboration with the Ministry of Development Planning, the Ministry of Finance issues a Budget Strategy Paper (BSP), which informs MDAs of the priorities of the government for the next financial

year. Therefore, for every financial year, the national budget reflects the projects and total resource allocation for each sector, thus, the same financing and partnerships can be linked to relevant SDGs. One of the challenges to financing SDGs is that the priorities in the BSP are often not aligned with the national priorities contained in the NSDP II implementation plan.

4.3.Awareness and Ownership of SDGs

The Government of Lesotho has taken a lead role in raising awareness and disseminating information about SDGs across all levels and sectors of government, civil society, private sector, parliament, and other stakeholders are founding principles of 2030 Agenda and to facilitate SDG-alignment in planning, implementation, and financing for development priorities. For the development of the Lesotho 2022 VNR, various stakeholders were engaged to build a wider societal ownership and participation and to gather contributions, collect updated data and inputs towards the report. During the two-day stakeholder workshop, thematic discussions were undertaken with participants from government, private sector, development partners, religious organisations, civil society/NGOs, media, academia, and special groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

The awareness assessment revealed that most stakeholders were broadly aware of SDGs and viewed them as closely aligned with the country's development plans. Many agreed that a detailed knowledge of SDG targets is necessary to integrate SDGs into respective plans and can enhance coordination with other organisations. They suggested that the government, through the Ministry of Development of Planning, should partner with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to provide and coordinate SDG awareness programmes. These initiatives should ensure that a broad group of stakeholders is more conversant with the SDGs and their alignment with NSDP II, thereby enhancing the ownership and interest in SDGs. They also reiterated the need to strengthen implementation, monitoring, and reporting on NSDP II.

Moreover, a series of interviews and discussion panels were held with special and marginalised groups to ensure inclusivity in the VNR process and gauge their level of awareness. These unique and marginalised groups include ex-migrants, youth, disabled, and herd boys. The general findings are that the level of understanding has improved compared to the last review. However, more still needs to be done, especially on advocacy campaigns and translating SDGs into local languages to enhance a more comprehensive understanding.

The Government of Lesotho views public participation and stakeholder engagement as an integral element in developing and implementing national policies and strategies.

The following bodies highlight the impactful role played by different stakeholders in the realisation of SDG goals and targets:

- *Government of Lesotho.* The country's first VNR in 2019 highlighted the need to improve awareness of SDGs across citizens and build ownership across public and private actors, CSOs, and academia. Subsequently, through the Ministry of Development Planning, the government undertook several activities, including dissemination of information and education materials, trainings, and advocacy dialogues to enhance awareness and participation in the implementation of SDGs.
- *Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)* play a vital role of ensuring no one is left behind through their grassroots engagements. Through the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN), the CSOs have led advocacy and awareness

campaigns for transition from and the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and introduction of the Agenda 2030. However, the weak coordination between CSOs and the government, lack of depository hub for SDGs and poor data quality are some challenges that CSOs face that have limited effectiveness of their interventions.

- *Private Sector.* The private sector has a high awareness of SDGs but lacks adoption and mainstreaming of SDGs in its operations and business models. The assessment of the overall contribution of the private sector to the realisation of SDGs is hindered by sporadic activities, usually not aligned with the SDGs. The private sector has also collaborated with government and development partners to implement notable initiatives that impacted on the SDGs, such as the national campaign to reduce plastic waste and have mainstreamed gender equality into the corporate policies. In the response to COVID-19, the private sector assisted the Government of Lesotho by contributing personal protective equipment for the health workers, laboratory and ICU equipment, and facilitated supply and distribution of vaccines.
- *Development Partners and the UN system* have made substantive contributions to the realisation of the SDGs through the NSDP II. These include financing and technical support in the implementation of development programmes, reporting and accountability for SDGs, institutional capacity building and contribution to development financing. In response to COVID-19, the UN mobilised and reprogrammed US\$10 million to support the Kingdom of Lesotho's COVID-19 response and recovery.
- *Academia.* The 2030 Agenda recognises the role of academia and research institutions in implementing the SDGs by providing an invaluable source of expertise in research and education on all sectors of the SDGs. As a development policy thinktank, the National University of Lesotho has provided technical leadership in the development of the 2019 and the 2022 VNR.

Box 1: UNICEF U-Report

In support of the 2022 VNR process, Lesotho adopted U-Report, a messaging, and polling tool developed and managed by UNICEF Lesotho to engage young people in the reporting process. The poll was conducted over seven weeks through a weekly poll that collected data on youth perceptions and perspectives on Lesotho's progress on the implementation of the SDGs. A summary of findings per Goal are provided in Chapter 5.

At the end of the seven week, a total of 991 responses were received from those under 24 years old. Of the youth (under 24 years) answered, more than 65% were female youth, possibly indicating that female youth are more engaged and interested in the SDGs. At least 75% of the participants were from outside Maseru city. Registration and participation on the U-report poll required a cell phone with a minimum of 2G connection and one to be literate. This means some youth, particularly from low-income families and from areas without connection were excluded from the poll. At the end of the polls, the responses were consolidated by the VNR working group consisting of officials from the government of Lesotho and the United Nations and youth representatives.

At least 3 out of 10 ten youth (38.3%) were aware of the SDGs and 7 out of 10 (72.6%) were aware of the process for SDG assessment, suggesting that the polling process had enhanced the awareness of the SDGs among the youth. Almost all of the polled youth expressed a desire to partake in the next VNR, which further indicates the possibility of engaging youth in the promotion of SDGs and VNR in the future. Overall, more than half had acknowledged the effort the Government of Lesotho had made on achieving the SDGs, around 40% of those responded feel that it is still far from enough.

All the goals had significant support from the youth as a national priority. Goal 1 “No Poverty” stood out as the perceived country’s biggest priority among the 5 goals examined with many comments pointing to the linkages Goal 1 has with other goals such as SDG 2 on zero hunger, SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 4 on quality education, and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong institution.

Among the vulnerable groups, people living in the rural areas, people with disabilities and people living in poverty emerged as being perceived as some of the most vulnerable groups that are common to Goal 1, 4, 5 and 15. Other vulnerable groups that were perceived as particularly left behind includes youth, elderly and children for “no poverty”, LGBTIQI + people for “Gender Equality”.

Sources: UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

4.4. Leaving No One Behind

Leaving no one behind (LNOB) principle has been at the heart of Lesotho’s development policy, which ensures equitable access to opportunities while increasing well-being and quality of life across all segments. It involves empowering people, including the vulnerable and marginalised, to participate in the development process and achieve a better quality of life with dignity. In Lesotho, the groups that are in danger of being excluded from participation in economic or productive activities include women and girls, people with disabilities, the youth, herdboys, older persons, returning migrants, and the LGBTI community, and the people living in the rural areas, are often excluded.

4.4.1. Women and Girls.

Women are the majority, at 51 per cent of the total population in Lesotho. Women and girls also have higher educational achievement than men and have a higher share in the labour market. However, women are still discriminated against because of cultural and patriarchal practices. Women often represent a majority in the informal sector, thus more vulnerable to economic shocks. Women and girls often face multiple and intersecting deprivations, harm, and exclusion. For example, there are often gendered differences in access to economic opportunities because of the time constraints due to household responsibilities and unpaid care work. While much progress has been made in the past 30 years regarding eliminating discrimination against women, some key areas for dedicated attention must be focused on.

4.5.2 Children.

Children in Lesotho are defined as all persons under the age of 18 years. According to the 2016 LHPC, there are 765,614 children in Lesotho, representing about 36 per cent of the total population. Many children in Lesotho are vulnerable to maltreatment, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and exploitation. Child marriage, rape and defilement

of children remain a challenge to development. The transition into adolescence and adulthood brings risks to children as they do not have the appropriate knowledge, support and confidence to navigate their environment. Children from rural areas and poor communities are usually the furthest behind.

4.5.3 Persons with disabilities (PWD).

Persons with disabilities (PWD) face inequalities in access to education, employment, health care, and public facilities, with those in rural and remote areas facing even greater risk. Children with disabilities are often less likely to attend school, access medical services, or have their voices heard in society. They risk physical and emotional abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation. Lesotho has a developed policy and legal frameworks and strategies for disability mainstreaming and inclusion, including provision for the rights of access to services, including health and the provision of quality education.

4.5.4 Youth.

Lesotho's youth constitute 39.6 per cent (794, 940) of the population aged 15- 35 years old⁴. A large proportion of the Basotho youth is facing challenges such as a high unemployment rate (32.8%), high HIV and AIDS prevalence estimated at 40% by the age of 35 years, lack of access to quality education, a mismatch of education and industry, limited access to start-up capital, and lack of opportunities for political participation.

4.5.5 Herd boys.

Herd boys and young boys are among the most vulnerable people in Lesotho. They are usually from rural areas and the poorest communities in the country. Many boys in the country tend to resort to the herding of animals because they live in poverty. They have little formal education and appreciation of major societal issues such as HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health and other basic rights.

4.5.6 People living in rural areas.

Consisting of around 71 per cent⁵ of the population, people living in the rural areas are also a group particularly vulnerable in Lesotho. Often with less access to basic services such as health, education, and energy, as well as income-generating opportunities, the people living in the rural areas tend to be multidimensionally poorer than their urban peers.

4.5.7 Older Persons.

In Lesotho, the elderly is defined as all persons aged 60 years and above, and their population share about 8 per cent (i.e., roughly 150, 000 older adults in the country). The elderly are physically and economically challenged since they have few opportunities of earning income through work. The changing family structure (i.e., breakdown of extended family) and living arrangements have left many elderly Basotho vulnerable to abuses such as rape,

⁴ Bureau of Statistics. Analytical Report, Volume IIIA Population Dynamics. 2006 Lesotho Population and Housing Census.

⁵ World bank estimates based on the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision (accessed from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=LS>)

property grabbing and neglect. The Government of Lesotho has made significant strides in supporting older persons through an old age pension for citizens who are at least 70 years old. Unfortunately, these cash transfers to older persons have also been reported to increase their vulnerability to social and financial burden as other families, and community members tend to depend on them for support (Ansell et al., 2018).

4.5.8 Linguistics Minority groups.

As homogeneous a country Lesotho is, it remains rich not only in variable languages but also in the diversification of culture, traditions, and colourful manner of existence. However, Sesotho and English remain the only two nationally recognised languages, which excludes languages including Xhosa, Ndebele, which are more prevalent in the southern districts of the country.

4.5.9 Migrants.

Due to its location and economic structure, migration movements have long affected Lesotho for socio-economic, cultural, and political purposes. Besides the migrant mine workers, there has been an increasing number of women migrants over the last twenty years to work as domestics or seasonal farm labour. Almost 20 per cent of the population of Basotho depend on remittance income for livelihood. The COVID-19 pandemic forced migrants to return home while some could not go home, thus stranded in South Africa. Therefore, in Lesotho, both former and returning migrants are among the vulnerable groups. These groups must be reintegrated into the economy, communities, and families. There is a lack of programmes to cater for the skills development needs of migrants. The government has developed the National Diaspora policy to enhance the contribution of the Basotho diaspora to the socio-economic development of the Kingdom of Lesotho

5. LESOTHO PROGRESS ON SDGs

Prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lesotho had achieved significant progress on targets related to the reduction of poverty, elimination of gender inequalities, implementation of effective social policies, and increasing access to basic services, particularly education, healthcare, and clean water. However, many have been eroded as a result of the negative impact of the pandemic. This chapter reviews the progress achieved and the performance of Lesotho for SDGs under review, highlighting key initiatives, prominent developments and areas needing improvement.

5.1.GOAL 1: END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

5.1.1 Status of Progress

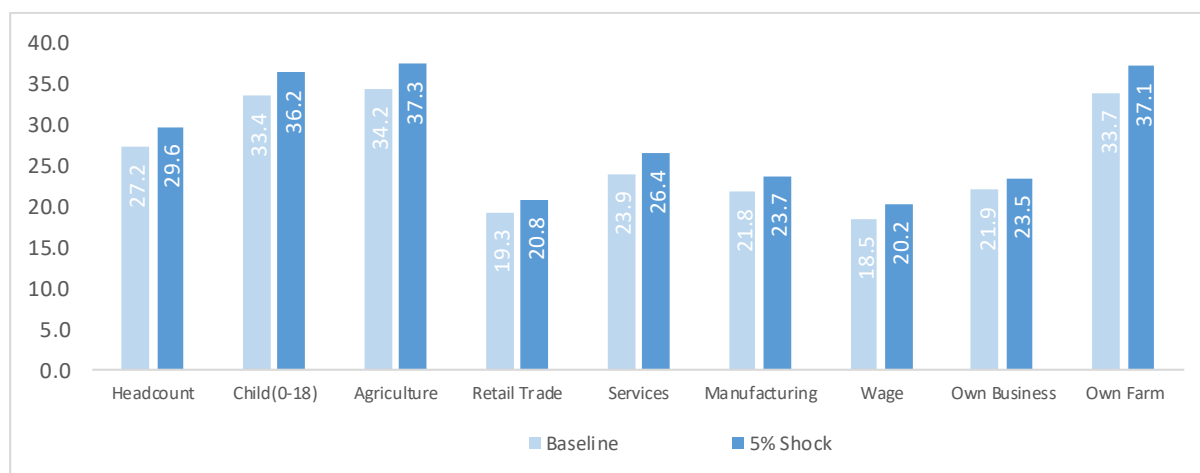
Indicator 1.1.1: Proportion of population below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)

Lesotho has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty, accompanied by improvements in shared prosperity. The proportion of the population living below the international poverty line of US\$1.90/day (in 2011 PPP terms) declined from 57.1 per cent in 2010 to 27.2 per cent in 2017⁶. Between 2002 and 2017, there was an inclusive growth in household consumption for the poorest of the population. This led to the Gini coefficient declining by seven percentage points from 51 per cent to 44.9 per cent.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a real threat to reversing the efforts that have resulted in poverty reduction. Estimates indicate that the proportion of Basotho living below the international poverty line increased due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Assuming a five per cent decline in consumption of all households, the poverty rate at US\$1.90 a day rises to 29.6 per cent (Figure 3). The same trend is observed even under sectoral shocks. Across the four economic sectors, households whose head is engaged in agriculture are expected to have the highest increase (3.1-percentage points), followed by those in the services sector (2.5). As expected, a household whose main economic activity is farming is also expected to experience the largest increase in poverty (3.4). The predictable unpredictability of climate change is sure to widen and deepen the roots of poverty in Lesotho, especially on food production and water harvesting for irrigation.

⁶ The poverty rate figures are extracted from the SDG Baseline report for 2010 and from UNICEF simulation results for 2017.

Figure 2: Headcount ratio before and after Covid19 at the international poverty line



Source: UNICEF-ESARO Poverty Simulation Model

Note: The baseline figures are the official national figures for poverty. The simulations are based on shocking (reducing) the household consumption expenditure by 5%. Sectoral shocks are applied to households in a specific economic sector rather than all households. A household is assigned to a sector based on the reported economic activity sector of the household head. If the head is not working or does not report a sector, we use the sector of the spouse, followed by the sector of the oldest adult in the household.

Indicator 1.2.1: Proportion of population living below the national poverty line

The poverty rate based on the national poverty line⁷ has not changed since the last VNR of 2019. The proportion of Basotho who are classified as poor decreased by about seven percentage points, from 56.6 per cent in 2002 to 49.7 per cent⁸ in 2017. In absolute terms, this translates to 994,000 people living below the poverty line, meaning one million Basotho do not live at a basic level of consumption sufficient to survive, and half a million live at an extreme level of vulnerability.

Given different population growth and urbanisation rates, the largest decrease in the absolute number of poor has been in the rural areas, while in percentage terms, the largest drop has been in urban areas. In urban areas, the poverty rate declined from 41.5 to 28.5 per cent, while in rural areas, poverty decreased marginally from 61.3 to 60.7 per cent.

Comparing the absolute number of poor in urban and rural areas shows an increase of about 16,000 in urban areas. In contrast, in rural areas, the absolute number of poor fell by 63,000, which drove the 47,000 reductions in the number of poor at the national level.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively impacted the country's progress on poverty reduction. At the start of the pandemic in 2019, 49.7 per cent of Basotho were living below the national poverty line. After the pandemic, the national poverty level was expected to increase to 51.7 per cent due to the overall decline in household consumption

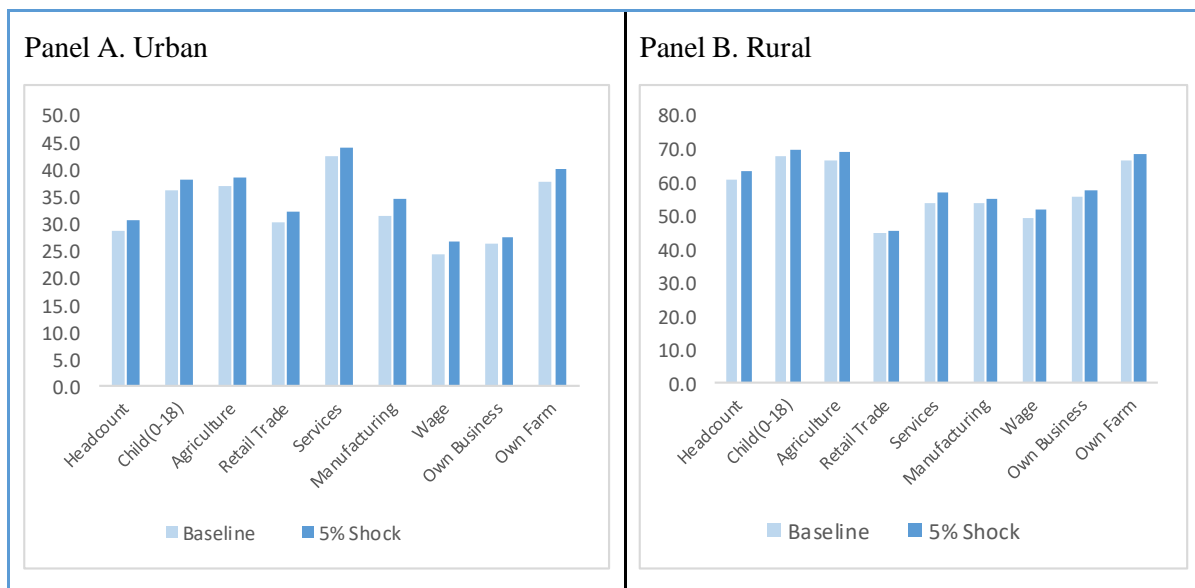
⁷ The national poverty line of Lesotho Maloti (LSL) is 648.88 (2017 prices) per adult equivalent per month. The poverty line is a consumption-based measure using the *cost-of-basic-needs* method based on a food basket required to achieve the minimum daily calorie requirement (2,700 kilocalories per adult equivalent per day) plus basic non-food consumption items.

⁸ Sulla, Victor; Zikhali, Precious; Mahler, Daniel Gerszon. *Lesotho Poverty Assessment: Progress and Challenges in Reducing Poverty* (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

expenditure. For all children, the poverty headcount rate was expected to increase to 31.9 per cent from 29.5 per cent. For children residing in rural areas, the poverty headcount was expected to increase to 69.6 per cent from 67.5 per cent.

The COVID-19 crisis may also have slightly narrowed the rural-urban poverty gap from 32.4 in 2017 to 32.2 after the crisis. The poverty headcount for the rural population would increase to 62.8 per cent from 60.7 per cent at baseline, compared to an increase to 30.4 per cent from 28.5 per cent for the urban population. The poverty gap increased by two percentage points for children due to COVID-19. At the baseline in 2017, households whose head was in the services sector had the highest incidence of poverty in urban areas. The poverty rate of the rural population in the services sector is expected to be 56.8 per cent because of the crisis. This represents an increase of 3.4 percentage points before the pandemic. The urban population in the manufacturing sector is expected to record a rise of 3.1 percentage points due to the crisis. The lowest percentage increase is expected for the population whose main economic activity is their own business at 3.2 per cent.

Figure 3: Headcount ratio before and COVID-19 across urban and rural at the national poverty line



Source: UNICEF-ESARO Poverty Simulation Model

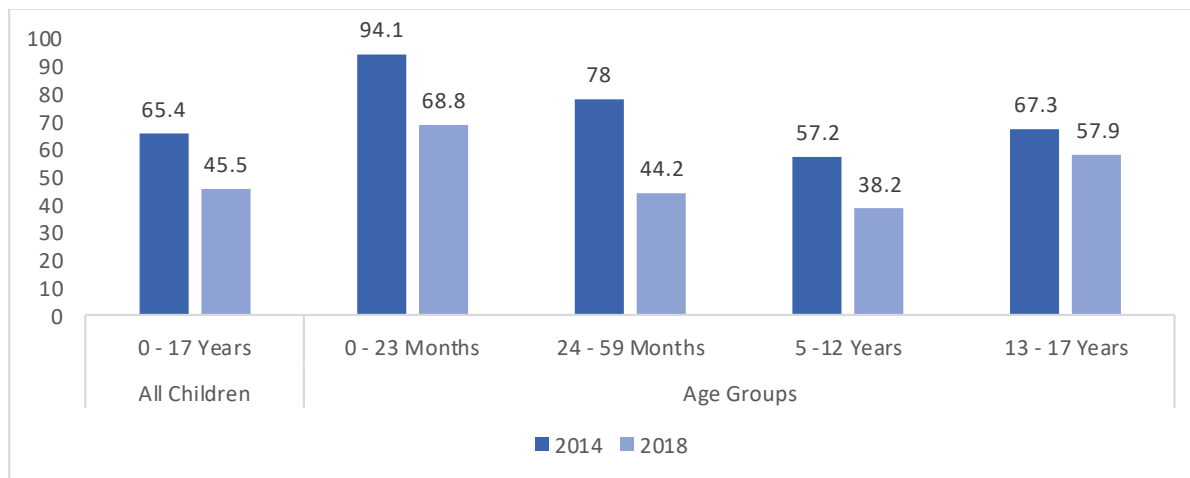
Note: The baseline figures are the official national figures for poverty. The simulations are based on shocking (reducing) the household consumption expenditure by 5%. Sectoral shocks are applied to households in a specific economic sector rather than to all households. A household is assigned to a sector based on the reported economic activity sector of the household head. If the head is not working or does not report a sector, we use the sector of the spouse, followed by the sector of the oldest adult in the household.

Indicator 1.2.2: Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions

Lesotho currently only measures multidimensional poverty for children aged 0 -17 years. The country has recorded an improvement in multidimensional child poverty from 2014 to 2018⁹. The proportion of children in all age groups, who are multidimensionally poor, declined by 19.9 per cent from 65.4 per cent in 2014 to 45.5 per cent in 2018. A child is considered multidimensionally poor if they are simultaneously deprived in three or more dimensions of their well-being in their respective age group. The largest drop in multidimensional poverty is in the two middle-age groups and the lowest drop (6.9 per cent) is experienced by infants ((0-23 months). For instance, early childhood (aged 24-59 months) and primary childhood (5-12 years) experienced 20.4 per cent and 21.1 per cent, respectively. With regards to different age groups, infants (children aged 0-23 months) still have the largest incidence of poverty at 68.8 per cent while primary childhood (aged 5-12 years) has the lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty at 38.2 per cent.

The deprivation overlaps are relatively higher among infants and early childhood than in the older age groups, which is further evidence of the vulnerability of children younger than five years in Lesotho.

Figure 4: Multidimensional Deprivation headcount ratio (%) for children aged 0-17 years



Note: A Child is identified as multidimensionally poor if he/she is deprived in three or more dimensions of well-being. There is no new information on men and women to show the change or reduction in poverty, therefore we will focus on multidimensional child poverty.

Individuals living in households headed by females and someone with no education are more likely to be poor. In 2017, the poverty rate for female-headed households was 55.2 per cent and 46.3 per cent for male-headed households. Widows and child-headed families on account of HIV, GBV and other socio-economic factors keep the trend of poverty on the rise. The poverty rate among individuals living in a household headed by someone with no formal education was about seven times the poverty rate among individuals living in a household in which the head had

⁹ UNICEF December 2021, Multidimensional Child Poverty Report.

completed tertiary education. The pace of poverty reduction increases with education levels, highlighting the role of education as a socioeconomic equaliser.

Similarly, COVID-19 may worsen the child deprivations in nutrition for infants and education, especially for adolescents. As a result of COVID-19, schools were closed for more than a year and many households, particularly those working in the informal sector, lost their incomes.

Box 2: U Report poll on Goal 1

A summary of findings on Lesotho's progress and achievements on SDG 1.

Of those answered, 76.6% answered that they think “No Poverty” is Lesotho’s biggest priority. There was only one person who answered that this is not very important for Lesotho. This possibly reflects the sense of urgency for this goal due to the high level of poverty that Lesotho is facing. This is supported by the many comments by the respondents which mention the severe level of poverty, including food poverty faced by Basotho as the reasons that this goal is important for Lesotho. Other comments also allude to the connection of this goal and the foundational nature of the goal to achieve other goals. Other comments also mention the positive economic impact of poverty alleviation and, in turn, their contribution to the economy of Lesotho.

On the changes since the last VNR, 63.9% of those answered felt that it had become worse. Additionally, for the question on “How did COVID-19 affect poverty”, most of the youth respondents had answered that it had become worse to a small extent. On the question on access to basic services, only 16.7% had answered that everyone had access and around half had answered that only a limited number of people had access. When asked, who are left behind in the access to these services, nearly half (49.2%) had answered people in the rural area as the group that were left behind. This was followed by those that mentioned youths, people with disabilities, elderly, children, LGBTQ+, as well as Migrants and Refugees as those who were left behind.

Source: UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

Indicator 1.3.1D: Population covered by social protection systems, distinguished by main social protection schemes

Lesotho has a generous social transfer system covering older persons, people with disabilities, and orphans and vulnerable children. The country has six key social assistance programmes whose coverage varies by year, namely the OAP, School Feeding, Child Grants Programme (CGP), Public Assistance (PA), Orphan and Vulnerable Children Bursary (OVC-B), and Cash for Work.

The proportion of older persons (i.e., over the age of 70 and not receiving civil service pension) covered by social protection systems was 83 751 in 2017/18 with a transfer value of M800 per month. During the same year, the coverage for CGP was estimated at 26 681 with monthly transfer values varying between M120 – M360 depending on household size. By 2022 the CGP coverage has increased to 48,000 households nationwide. The OVC bursary, which supports access to education, especially secondary education, for orphans and vulnerable children, had 23 000 beneficiaries.

Indicator 1.5.1: Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000

Lesotho frequently experiences a number of climate-borne shocks, drought is the most significant environmental risk due to reliance on rain-fed agriculture and increasingly recurrent rainfall disruptions. Major droughts over the last decades have affected large parts of the population, making hundreds of Basotho food insecure and triggering humanitarian response both from the international donor community and the government.

The two most recent drought occurrences are El Nino 2015/2016 and 2019/2020. The 2015/16 drought was the worst experienced in Lesotho in 35 years and it affected 979,000 people and left around 709,000 people food insecure (LVAC). In the 2015/2016 event, 477,000 Basotho were classified as having a “survival deficit” or inability to meet basic food and non-food needs.

5.1.2 Key Initiatives

- i. Lesotho’s social protection system and its evolving strategy is the notable initiative that the country uses to fight poverty and protect vulnerable groups. In the 2000s, facing impacts of HIV/AIDS epidemic and growing poverty, larger programs were established aimed at vulnerable elderly and children, including: 1) Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Bursary program established in 2000; 2) OAP initiated in 2004, and 3) Child Grant Program (CGP) launched in 2009. These programs are aimed to protect people from shocks across their life cycle.
- ii. The Government of Lesotho is implementing the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) with financial support from the World Bank, Government of Japan and the international Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The purpose of the project is to provide credit to young and emerging commercial farmers so as to support the increased adoption of climate smart agricultural technologies in Lesotho’s agriculture, enhanced commercialization and improved dietary diversity among targeted beneficiaries.
- iii. Component three of the Improving adaptive capacity of vulnerable and food-insecure populations (IACOV) has a direct link to poverty by designing and implementing, through a community-based planning process, local resilience and adaptation plans focusing on robust asset creation schemes, income diversification and market linkages, for increased adaptive capacity and household resilience.

5.1.3 Challenges and way forward

- i. The consultations and review meetings revealed that a significant proportion of the population lacks adequate knowledge of the SDG. There is therefore an urgent need to expand the current awareness-creation efforts using institutions with access to communities and grassroots populations across the country.
- ii. Effective implementation of the SDGs requires adequate capacity at the Ministry of Development Planning and Ministry of Finance. There is a lack of capacity to monitor the progress and implementation of SDGs, and to ensure the alignment of MDAs’ priorities with national priorities.

- iii. Implementing SDG 1 and promoting the “Leaving No One Behind” policy requires strong research capacity and output. There is a lack of requisite data to undertake a detailed analysis of the poverty situation in the country. Where efforts are made, they are uncoordinated and often go unnoticed.
- iv. Limitations in data capabilities and lack up-to-date data on poverty, including lack of necessary disaggregation to account gender, geographic, economic and other social dichotomies as well as the multi-dimensional poverty analyses

Key recommendations for way forward

- Adopting multi-stakeholder approaches to operationalising the SDGs has the potential to increase wide participation in policy formulation and implementation towards realising the SDGs targets
- Lesotho's progress on SDG 1 – poverty reduction has been steady. Poverty has been on the decline between the period of 2002 and 2017 with 47,000 people lifted out of poverty from national poverty line. The country also made significant reductions in multidimensional child poverty.
- Similarly, Lesotho witnessed an expansion of the old-age pension while other social protection programs have stagnated. Access to basic services like education, sanitation, and water has improved while a large share of the rural population remains without electricity.
- While COVID-19 may have increased the level of poverty and widened existing inequalities, it also presented an opportunity to build back better, especially the manner that all stakeholders participated in mitigating the setbacks of the crisis

5.2 GOAL 4: ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND 37 PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

5.2.1 Status of Progress

Indicator 4.1.1: *Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.*

Lesotho's progress since the last review continues to be close to universal primary education (UPE). The Net Enrolment Rates (NERs) increased from 60.2 before FPE in 1999 to 85.8 in 2019. However, the system is characterised by high repetition rates at the primary level at 65 per cent¹⁰. More boys than girls start in Grade 1, but about forty per cent (40%) of those boys are not able to reach Grade 7 in the seven years, while only twenty-two (22%) of girls are unable to reach Grade 7 in the seven years¹¹. These repetition rates are higher (59%) in rural areas than in urban areas (41%).¹² Similarly, a very high percentage (80%) of learners do not complete primary education¹³, with only 69 per cent of boys completing primary education compared to 92 per cent of their female counterparts¹⁴. Like repetition, drop-out rates are higher in rural areas at 87 per cent compared to 13 per cent in urban areas¹⁵.

The percentage of learners who reach a minimum proficiency level in reading in both Sesotho and English at Grade 3 is low (17%), and less than 10 per cent in numeracy at Grades 2,3 and 4.¹⁶ The share of children with foundational reading is generally higher among males compared to their female counterparts whereas the share of learners with foundational numeracy skills is higher among girls (15%) compared with 11 per cent among their male counterparts¹⁷. It is generally more learners from urban areas who achieve both foundational literacy and foundational numeracy skills.

Secondary education has shown the least progress in Lesotho. Transition rates from primary to secondary were low before the introduction of free primary education. However, they have been improving since the complete implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2006, and the rate has remained as high as 80.5 for the 2018 Form A entrants. Access has generally remained relatively low at the secondary level, and the equity and quality indicators are illuminative of the lack of progress. This may be explained by the fact secondary education fees are relatively not subsidised by the government.

The net enrolment rates for secondary schools show an improvement in both GER and NER rates between 2016 and 2019. The NER for both boys and girls is low but much more adverse in the case of boys. The variation in participation by sex revealed that female participation in the official school-age population, while relatively low, was higher than

¹⁰ UNICEF 2021. p.44

¹¹ Ministry of Education and Training (2007). (Draft) Lesotho's Education Statistics Report

¹² Ibid; p.44

¹³ Ibid; p. 17

¹⁴ Ibid; p. 14

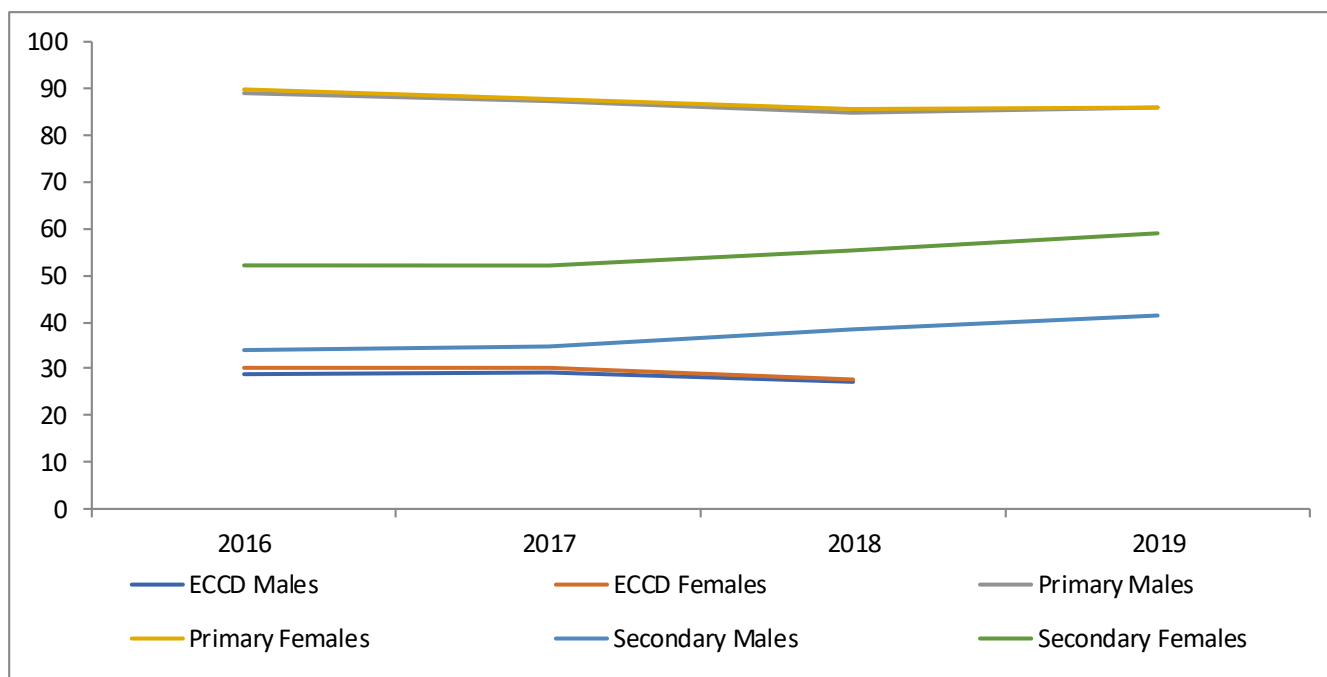
¹⁵ Ibid; 17

¹⁶ Ibid; p.3

¹⁷ Ibid; p.2

that of males. It is further reported that Net Enrolments in the upper secondary is significantly lower than in upper secondary education, estimated at 11.1 and 21.0 for males and females, respectively.

Figure 5: Net Enrolment trends by sex



Source: UNESCO UIS Database

There are fewer repetition rates (26%) in lower secondary compared to the situation obtained at the primary education level, although the drop-out rates are much higher at 56 per cent. Completion rates are low at 44 per cent at lower secondary and even lower at upper secondary (32%). Like patterns in primary, it is primarily learners from rural areas (78%) who do not complete school at lower secondary and higher secondary. The Proportion of learners with foundational skills in reading both Sesotho and English is high at lower secondary 92 per cent and 94 per cent in Grade 8 and 9, respectively. However, the share of learners with foundational numeracy skills is low at 37 per cent and 42 per cent in Grade 8 and 9, respectively. In general, 56 per cent and 87 per cent of 7-14 year-olds are not learning reading and numeracy, most of which are in rural areas.

Indicator 4.2.2D: Net Enrolment Rate at ECCD, by sex

There has been an overall increase in the enrolment rate for Early Childhood Care and development (ECCD). Between 2016 and 2018, Net Enrolment Rate (NER) for boys increased from 28.8 per cent in 2016 to 29.2 in 2017, then declined to 27.2 per cent in 2018. NER stagnated for girls during the same period between 2016 and 2017 and fell from 27.7 per cent in 2018. Net enrolment rates have generally remained relatively low, particularly for boys. The increase could be explained by the Government of Lesotho’s decision to provide reception classes in several primary schools to prepare young children for the primary curriculum.

Enrolments by location indicate low levels of NER in rural districts such as Quthing, Qacha’s Nek and Mokhotlong. Pre-primary education has traditionally been offered through private providers, meaning that marginalised groups in low-income families and those in rural areas would not have access.

The Government of Lesotho has established the ECCD Unit with the Ministry of Education and Training to support ECCD education. Progress has been made in Lesotho College of Education, continuing to produce qualified ECCD teachers.

Table 1: GER & NER (2016 - 2018)

Year	Net Enrolment Rate (NER)		
	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
2016	28.8	30.2	29.5
2017	29.2	30.2	29.7
2018	27.2	27.7	27.5

Source: MOET Statistical Bulletin, 2019

Indicator 4.3.ID: Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at Higher Education Institutes (HEI)

The Gross Enrolment Rate in HEI has shown limited overall growth in recent years, with undergraduate programmes having the largest share of students. The most significant growth has been in the private institutions (Botho and LUCT), while the least growth has been in the denominational providers (MAC, PSN, RCN and SCN), all offering undergraduate health education. Secondly, most (93%) of HE enrolments across all institutions are in undergraduate programmes. The highest enrolment in Lesotho remains at sub-degree level diploma enrolments constituting the majority (52%), and despite the Education Sector Plan raising serious concern about the ‘diploma explosion’, it does not seem as if any intervention has been implemented.

Data on the sub-sector illustrates the urgency for initiatives and enrolments to intervene in a number of trends. First, the low GERs and the low provision of postgraduate and specialised programmes indicate the need to develop a funding policy that will support growth, particularly in specialised programmes that Lesotho is spending a lot on education obtained from abroad. It is also evident that female participation will only improve in STEM fields in higher education with specific interventions to support female students’ performance through secondary school.

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) has a range of programmes from the more technical skills dominated by male students and handicrafts dominated by females. The TVET is characterised by low enrolments, which suggest that it is not a popular choice for young people seeking careers. It can be noted that males enter TVET institutions at an older age than females. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many male students join TVET institutions after dropping out of formal schools. However, the numbers are relatively modest and the low quality of TVET is possibly the reason for its lack of popularity among young people.

Table 2: Enrolment in Registered Technical and Vocational Schools by Age and Sex, 2018

Age range	Male	Female	Total
Below 18	49	75	124
18 – 21	662	1036	1698
22 – 25	705	1259	1964
Above 25	522	276	798
Total	1938	2646	4584

Source: BoS – 2018 Education Statistics

The ownership of TVET institutions in Lesotho in 2018 can be divided into three main categories: Private, Church (the three main churches being the Roman Catholic Missions, Lesotho Evangelical Church and Anglican Church of Lesotho) and Public (Government or Community) agencies. The distribution of enrolment indicates that most students are privately (39%), followed by the church (34%), and public (27%). This suggests that public investment in this sub-sector is the lowest and certainly does not align with the commitment to expand TVET opportunities towards skills development, particularly as an alternative to formal post-secondary education.

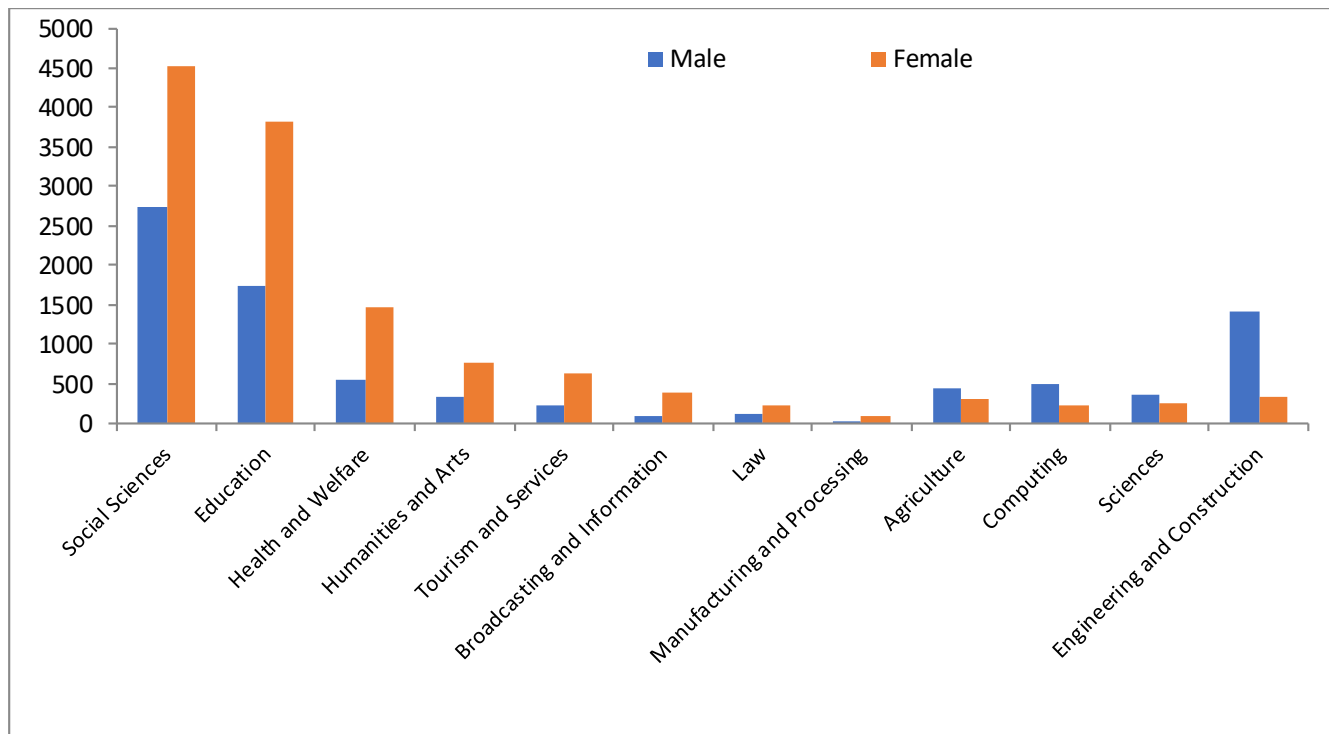
***Indicator 4.4.1:** Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill.*

The foundational literacy and numeracy skills of Basotho children may have improved in terms of the latest SACMEQ study, but they remain lower than the international average. Foundational skills would be expected to have an impact on building relevant skills for decent work, and in this knowledge era, information and communications technology (ICT) skills are a good indicator of the prevalence of relevant skills for decent work. Fourteen per cent of youth between the ages of 14 and 24 years reported ICT functionally literate, with the level of education found to be the biggest driver of ICT skills.

***Indicator 4.5.1:** Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated*

Girls are generally ahead of boys in both access and the quality of learning outcomes, apart from mathematics at the school-leaving examinations level. The effect of these gender disparities at the school level is the following patterns at higher education, where girls generally outnumber boys by a ratio of 2:5, translating to a gender parity index of 1.6. However, the gender distribution by field of study indicates that female students are grossly under-represented in Agriculture, Computing, Sciences and Engineering and Construction.

Figure 6: Enrolment at HEI by sex

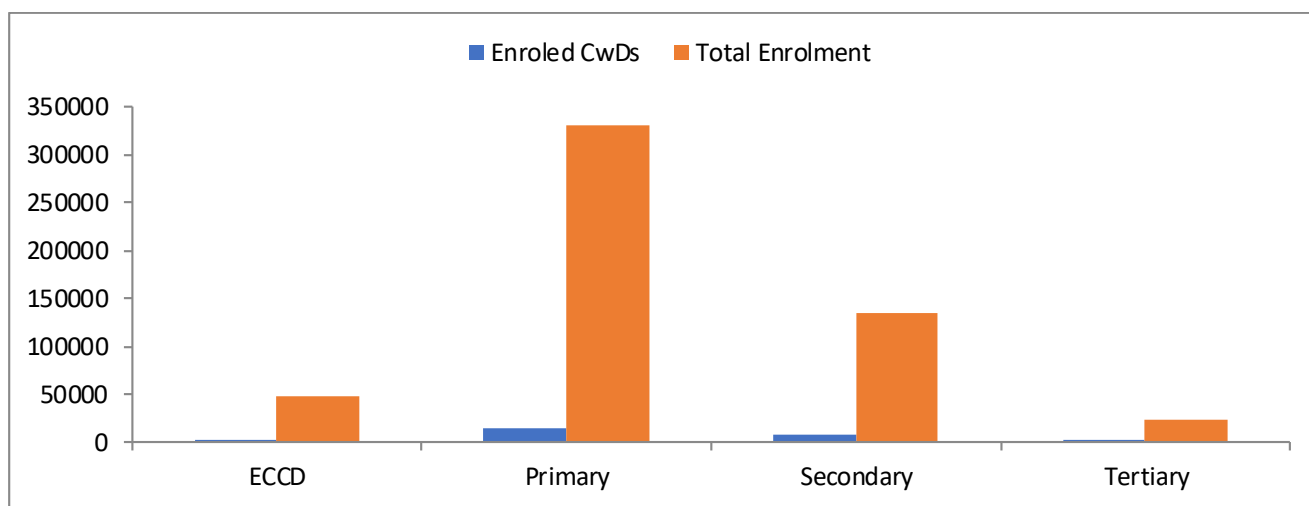


Source: CHE State of Higher Education Report, 2015/16

Indicator 4.5.1A: Proportion of persons with disability aged five years and above by educational attainment and sex

People with disability are under-represented in both ECCD and Tertiary levels. The latest education report indicates that the proportion of children with disability (CwD) is proportional to the general population statistics. The significance of the low enrolments at ECCD should be considered alongside the findings that children who do not attend ECCD or Pre-Primary education are unlikely to progress and attain the same competencies as those who attended ECCD. Therefore, it is likely that children with disabilities cannot fulfil their academic potential in school, and it is for that reason that they are so under-represented in tertiary institutions.

Figure 7: Learners with disabilities across formal education programmes, 2019



Source: MoET Statistical Bulletin, 2019

Box 3: U Report poll on Goal 4

Summary of U-Report findings on SDG 4.

At least sixty percent (60.4%) of those under 24 years old who answered the poll feel that “Quality Education” is the most important SDG for Lesotho, and 31.2% thought the goal was very important. On the changes in learning since the last VNR, more than half answered that it had generally improved for all or some children. When asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their Education, 77.9% of the total respondents had answered that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their education negatively, while 22% responded positively.

On pre-school opportunities, more than half of the respondents feel that all or a large proportion of children have this opportunity. In contrast, around 32% think that only a few children can access such opportunities. However, this answer needs to be taken into consideration that U reporters who answered polls are not very likely to have children of their own yet. On the question of the most pressing issue in Education for Lesotho, “Improving the quality of teaching and learning” ranked as the highest among those polled as the biggest priority. Some comments gathered through the polls had suggested integrating digital technology in the education system. Others pointed to the importance of education in gaining employment and getting out of poverty, while others pointed to the lack of connection between the education system and employment. One comment also suggested including entrepreneurship skills in the secondary school curriculum.

Sources: UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

5.2.2 Key Initiatives

- i. Review of the Curriculum Policy in line with a Draft Lesotho Basic Education Policy to include a three-tier model of curriculum
- ii. Drafting of Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy Policy to address the issue of girls who may drop out of school because of early and unintended pregnancies.
- iii. Education Plus Initiative- The country is one of the champion countries which have adopted the high-level political Initiative which seeks to ensure the completion of secondary education by girls, as well as ensuring that they get access to comprehensive sexuality education, friendly sexual and reproductive health services, and that they are protected from gender-based violence and exposed to curriculum that prepares them for school to work transition.
- iv. The Government is implementing a Lesotho Basic Education Improvement Project (LBEIP) that seeks to reduce drop-out rates in Grades 1-6 and 8-9 and improve performance in targeted schools, to improve student retention and teaching quality in junior secondary schools in targeted community councils of Lesotho and support the rollout of a new curriculum to strengthen ECCD service delivery. The government is also investing in capacity building for ECCD, primary and secondary teachers on the implementation of the inclusive education policy implementation
- v. The government has restructured secondary education from a five to a four-year Ordinary Level followed by Advanced Subsidiary (AS) in pilot schools towards a three-year Bachelor's Degree.
- vi. The government has introduced a TVET Policy with focus on improving access, quality and relevance, including to support the development of a Quality Assurance Framework and guidelines for short-term TVET provision
- vii. In response to COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure continuous learning, the government and many private-owned schools piloted distance learning through radio and television for (pre)schoolers. The Lesotho College of Education also utilised online teaching and learning for its student teachers, thereby avoiding a backlog of students repeating a year. This was supported through a zero-rated internet access for educational applications and the learning management systems such as NUL's *Thuto* by mobile technology operators.

5.2.3 Challenges and Way forward

- Training of teachers on the new Curriculum and its implementation was limited, including in supporting learners with a wide variety of learning abilities/orientations and providing formative assessment and portfolio of evidence and reporting, especially by primary schools.
- Limited stakeholder participation in the development and dissemination of policy, including the involvement of practising teachers and schools on alternative performance management systems in place of external examinations; training institutions on how to prepare teachers for the new curriculum; as well as parents, which led to the misinterpretation, and lack of support to learners and teachers and even clashes between teachers and schools.

- COVID-19-induced disruptions led to reduced teaching and learning opportunities in real-time, due to the impact on among teachers and learners on teachers and the limited industry placement. In some cases, this has compounded existing households' vulnerabilities, increased orphanhood and child-headed households.
- The declining economic situation leading to poverty and unemployment is reportedly evidenced by high migrations of families and reduced parental support, especially in highly privatised ECCD and secondary schools, and increased dropout rates due to high fees as push factors and economic and social activities (child marriages and early and unintended pregnancies) as pull factors out of school for very young boys and teenage girls from low-income families.
- Stigmatisation of children with disabilities owing to societal and cultural attitudes; limited access to transportation, schools, health care, public spaces and service delivery in all areas, especially in rural communities; the scarcity of documents and information in Braille; and the absence of disaggregated data on children with disabilities by type of disability, age and gender¹⁸. Only a few schools have inclusive facilities and infrastructure for specialised leaning and the visually impaired persons.

The recommendations for the way forward are as follows:

- Data:** The ministry must ensure that data collection, analysis and publication of the statistical bulletins through the Education Management Information System (EMIS) are in place.
- Pre-Primary Education:** there is an urgent need to make pre-primary education more accessible to the most disadvantaged by expanding the reception classes throughout the public school system.
- Resilient Education systems:** Following the pandemic, the government must to expand learning beyond classroom-based instruction, by integrating multiple alternative options such as: learning packs, radio/tv and online platforms with classroom-based instruction.
- Harness technology:** Focus has to be on harnessing high and low-technology options including the establishment of ICT-based library service across the educational system, to enhance both in-school and beyond school teaching and learning; and fitting the entire knowledge society of today's digital era. This will also enable children and young people out of school to acquire foundation literacy, numeracy and digital and life skills (21st-century skills).
- Non-formal education:** A learning package that combines the best of traditional learning with 21st-century skills has to be developed to achieve the target that all children and young people acquire the skills for the future world of work.
- Inclusion, equity, and gender responsiveness:** All the interventions must be planned and executed with inclusion and gender responsiveness and equity integrated into it. This will facilitate that no one is left behind.

¹⁸ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Lesotho CRC/C/LSO/CO/2, 25 June 2018 para 41

5.3 GOAL 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

5.3.1 Status of Progress

Indicator 5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex

There is significant progress regarding *de jure* equality or equality in the eyes of the law. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Lesotho provides an encouraging legal framework for promoting gender equality. However, with some reservations, as in the case of Section 18 of the Constitution, which allows discrimination based on customary law. The Government of Lesotho reinforces the demands of the Constitution through several supporting legislation, policies and strategies, as shown in Table 3.

The principle of non-discrimination does not apply where the Customary Law of Lesotho governs the parties concerned to the extent of inheritance. However, The Inheritance Act is in process of being amended, to bring together the customary and the Roman-Dutch law allowing both sexes equal access to an inheritance of property. Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030 summarises the legal position of the Kingdom by stating that it aims at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and assist in the adoption of a standard definition of discrimination against women at the administrative level.

While significant progress has been made regarding *de facto* equality, there is still much to be done, especially *vis a vis* the full and effective enforcement of laws, policies and strategies. For instance, the Land Act of 2010 and the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, 2006 give women the opportunity to participate in economic resources such as agricultural activities and use the land as collateral to access financial institutions credit. Still, in practice, this has proven difficult.

Table 3: Legislative Framework Promoting Gender Equality in Women Empowerment in Lesotho

Legal and Policy Framework	Relevance to Gender Equality	Year
Constitution of Lesotho	Chapter II provides for bill of rights and freedom of all forms of discrimination though with exception where customary law is applicable	1993
Sexual Offences Act	Consolidates all offences of sexual nature and further makes provision that not even in marriage or any other relation would be used as a defence in a charge of rape or any other sexual offence.	2003
Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act	Abolishes marital power. Treats married persons equal	2006
Land Act	Guarantees right to hold title to land for all persons above the age of 18. Provides for joint titling for persons married in community of property.	2010
Penal Code	Criminalises marital rape and all forms of violence	2010
Education Act	Provides for equal opportunity to education for females and males	2010
Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act	Provides for prohibition, prevention, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of the offence of trafficking in persons and other related offences	2011
Children's Protection and Welfare Act	Incorporates principles of human rights and gender equality for all children and also recognises child's right to equality on various grounds, including "gender", "disability", "health status" and "other status"	2011

The National Assembly Electoral Act	Provides for a system that aims at promoting women in the legislature. Section 47 (2) (b) requires that all political parties contesting Proportional Representation (PR) elections submit ‘zebra’ party lists to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The rationale is to create ‘critical mass,’ nonetheless there is a decline from 2015 snap election where it was 23%. Currently, women representation from the 2017 National Election is 22%.	2011
Local Government Amendment Act	Provides for the allocation of one-third of the seats in the municipal, urban and community councils to women. The act provides for gender equality in politics by increasing women’s participation and representation in community councils/urban councils.	2011
Domestic Violence Act	Conveys State’s commitment towards the elimination of domestic violence	2022
Disability Bill	Commits to the rights and dignity of people with disability and is aligned to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability	2018
National Gender and Development Policy	Aligned to national, regional and international obligations on gender equality, equity and empowerment Agenda 2030, and AU Agenda 2063)	2018- 2030
National Strategic Development Plan II	Development Plan II Mainstreaming gender in all the thematic areas	2018/2019-2022/2023

Moreover, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2011) observes that although the Constitution of Lesotho prohibits discrimination of any kind and unfair treatment, it is still concerned at the absence of a specific prohibition of discrimination against women as defined in article 1 of CEDAW. The Committee urges the country to speedily review and repeal sections of the Constitution that allow discrimination based [on sex/gender](#) and to include in the Constitution and other appropriate legislation provisions prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women on all grounds relating to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property, death or other matters that fall within the provisions of personal law.

The Government of Lesotho has implemented some of these recommendations. While the pace has been slow, the country has enacted Counter Domestic Violence Act (June 2022) with the hope of curbing the violence against women and girls.

Indicator 5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

Despite many sex abuse cases being unreported in the country, thus available statistics giving a sub-optimal analysis, many women in Lesotho are victims of violence. While most available statistics in Lesotho do not show the age and gendered nature of GBV, it is, however, inferred that woman are likely to be at the receiving end, as supported by several studies (Figure 8). An Afro barometer poll conducted in 2018 showed 25 per cent believe that it is justifiable for a husband to beat his wife¹⁹. Furthermore, the Lesotho Common Country Analysis (2020) claims that 86% of

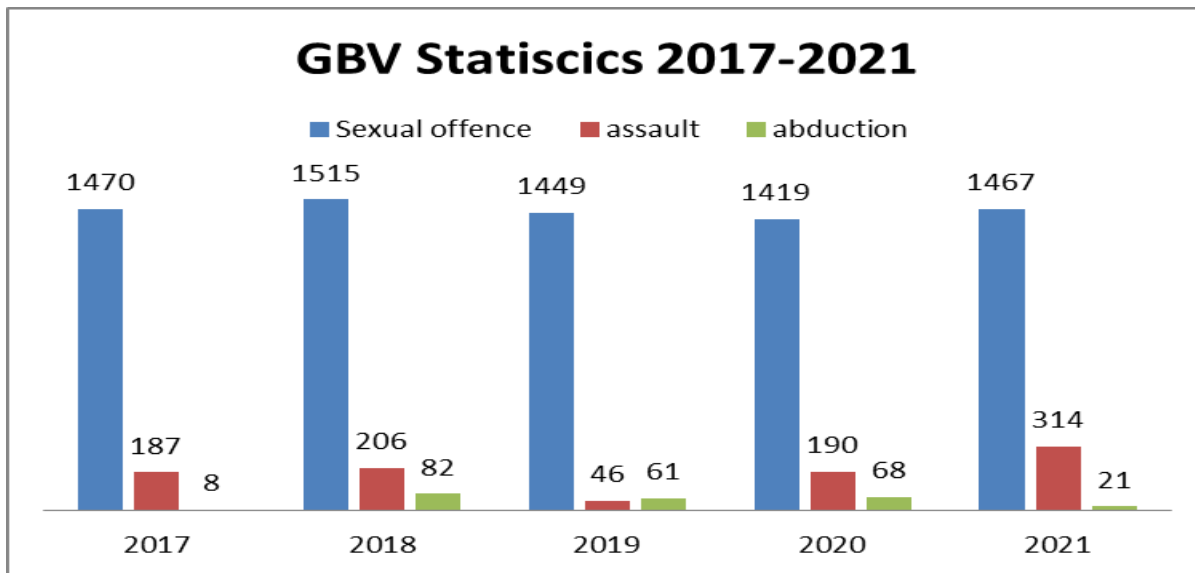
¹⁹ Adams, P.; Nkuebe, M. (2018). *Rights in Lesotho: Citizen views on police abuse, media and personal freedom, gender equality*. Maseru. Afrobarometer.

women experience some kind of violence in their lifetime, and 40 per cent of men accept being perpetrators of some kind of violence against women.

Although Lesotho has made progress in passing a number of acts designed to protect women from sexual violence and domestic abuse, this problem is difficult to combat due to "a culture of silence and stigmatization associated with the scourge." (Ibid). The local definitions of rape tend to underestimate the actual occurrence of sexual violence²⁰. For instance, some Basotho women consider sexual assault by someone the women knew as not rape. According to the Government of Lesotho (2020) violence against women in Lesotho is pervasive and seems by all indications, to be on the increase.

²⁰ Maseru Evaluation: Sexual Violence Against Women in Lesotho

Figure 8: GBV Statistics 2017-2021



Source: CGPU 2022

A very important aspect of violence against women is the high-frequency repeat victimisation. Figure 5 shows that 75% of women and girls experience violence more than once during the 12-month time period. Common forms of violence were in line with earlier findings, with emotional violence being the most prominent.

The lack of basic services, water in particular, disproportionality harms women, girls and boys as they face a greater risk of harassment, threats, assault and sexual violence when fetching water or using sanitation facilities outside the home. In fact, scarcity of water sources means that children, adolescents and young women, who are usually responsible for collecting water, have to travel a longer distance in search of it. Thus, the lack of access to water fuels gender-based violence, particularly in rural communities, and by extension is connected to a chain of events, including child marriages, as part of coping strategies in the face of drought.

Indicator 5.2.2D: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

Lesotho has one of the highest rates of rape and sexual violence in the world (World Population Review, 2020). The issue of rape and sexual violence against women has been identified as one of the contributors to the AIDS and HIV gender gap crisis in Lesotho (Brown, Thurman and Kendall, 2006). Twenty eight percent of men and twenty seven percent of women believe that women do not have the right to refuse sex (World Population Review, 2020). This leaves them without protection from disease, and without control over contraceptive methods.

The Ministry of Social Development (2020)²¹ also reports a high prevalence of sexual abuse among children and adolescents, but the prevalence is much higher among females. The Ministry reports that violence, in general, is very

²¹ Ministry of Social Development, Lesotho. (2020). *Lesotho: Violence Against Children and Youths Survey, 2018*. Maseru. UNICEF.

high among the boy-child (57.4% compared to the girl-child (32.9%), but when it comes to gender-based violence, the girl-child takes the lead. The issue of rape and sexual violence against women has been identified as one of the contributors to the AIDS and HIV gender gap crisis in Lesotho²².

The Ministry of Gender and the Police have also reported an increase in cases of GBV since the beginning of the COVID 19 lockdown. The lockdown conditions meant that victims of GBV had to stay close to their abusers and have limited access to support mechanisms. Perspectives from stakeholders point to the fact that there is widespread violence against both married and unmarried young women by intimate and non-intimate partners.

Qualitative reports from married female students point to the same viewpoint above. The interviews also established that even the law enforcement officers like the police are not giving them the protection they deserve when it comes to domestic or intimate partner violence.

A recent quantitative study on the economic cost of violence against women and girls revealed that the country is losing 1.3 per cent of its GDP or (an equivalent of M462.9 million). This cost is an estimated direct and an economy-wide indirect cost. The direct costs, estimated at M428.2 million (1.234 per cent of GDP) includes costs of out-of-pocket expenses by victims and income loss. Indirect costs estimated M34.7 million (0.100 per cent of GDP), including the national output loss due to a reduction in consumption. The cost of VAWG to girls was estimated at 0.822 per cent of GDP) or learning time lost in school) while the cost of the public sector was equivalent to 2.262 per cent of GDP.

This state of affairs calls for more intensive and extensive strategies to change the Basotho mindset *vis a vis* the girl-child. There have been workshops and training for the police and the public; supportive new legislation and reforms as already shown above; advocacy and campaigns; and translation of international conventions and protocols and national legal documents into indigenous and simple language, but still, it seems most of these messages are not reaching the desired destination.

Indicator 5.3.1: Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18

The Government of Lesotho in collaboration with international partners is making effort to eradicate child marriage. The country began to harmonise all relevant laws and policies in 2015 which hitherto were contradictory concerning child marriage. In July 2016, Lesotho tabled the motion to Eradicate Child Marriages.

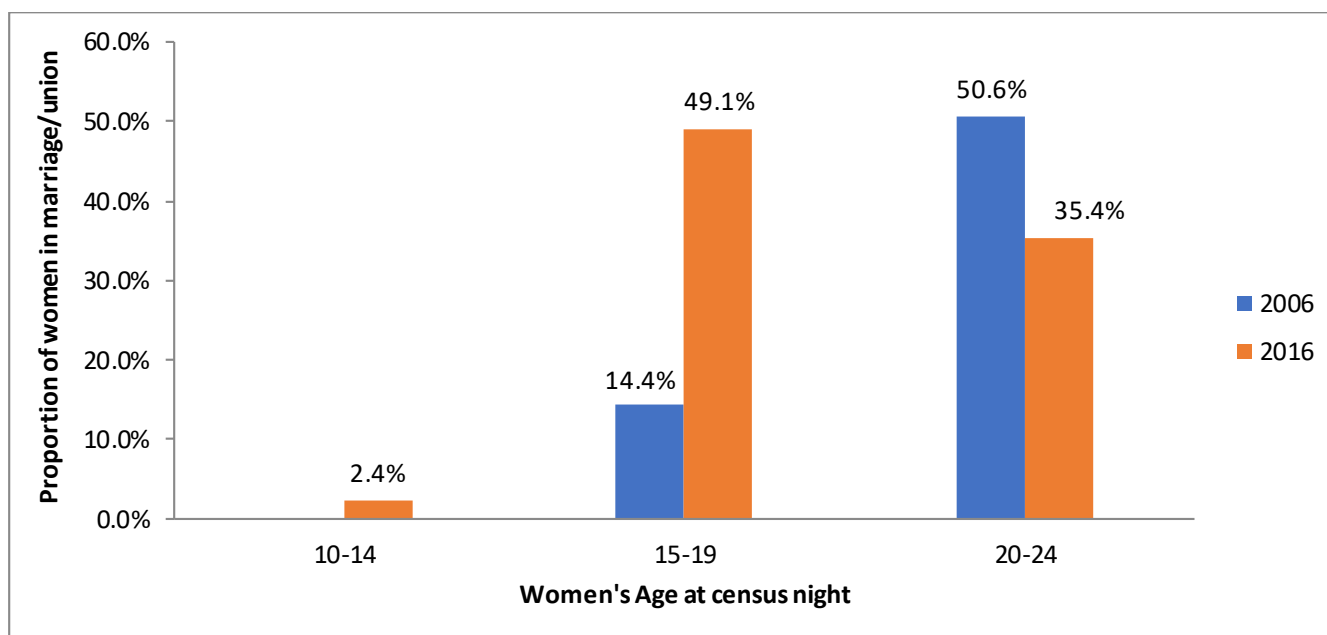
Between 2006 and 2016, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of women who were married before age 18 among women aged 15-19, while there was a decline among women aged 20-24 during the same period (Figure 3). The Ministry of Social Development (2020) also established that although child marriage was an issue for both girl-child and boy-child in Lesotho, it was more prevalent for the girl-child at 38.5% than for the boy-child at 10.2%. Lesotho women are on average 22 years old, and men are 28 years old when they marry. This shows that although the government is determined to stop child marriages, they are still prevalent in the country, especially in the rural

²² Brown, L.; Thurman, T; and Kendall, C. (2006). "Sexual Violence in Lesotho". *Studies in Family Planning*. **37** (4): 269–280.

areas, calling for more aggressive initiatives and effort from the government, civil society and other stakeholders to help stop the problem.

Data relating to child marriage is scarce and difficult to locate in Lesotho, but studies show that the government of Lesotho in collaboration with international partners is making effort to eradicate child marriage. The country began to harmonise all relevant laws and policies in 2015 which hitherto were contradictory concerning child marriage. In July 2016, Lesotho tabled the motion to Eradicate Child Marriages. Thereafter, the Parliament is yet to adopt the SADC Model Law on Eradication of Child Marriages²³.

Figure 9: Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18 in 2006 and 2016



Source: Lesotho Housing and Population Censuses 2006 and 2016

Indicator 5.5.1: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments

In Lesotho, women's representation in parliament has been generally low throughout the MDGs. The country has made efforts to include women in leadership positions, enabling them to effectively participate and take opportunities for leadership at all levels. Following the Local Government Elections of 2004, women were 58% of representative positions in 2005 and the share decreased to 49% in 2011.

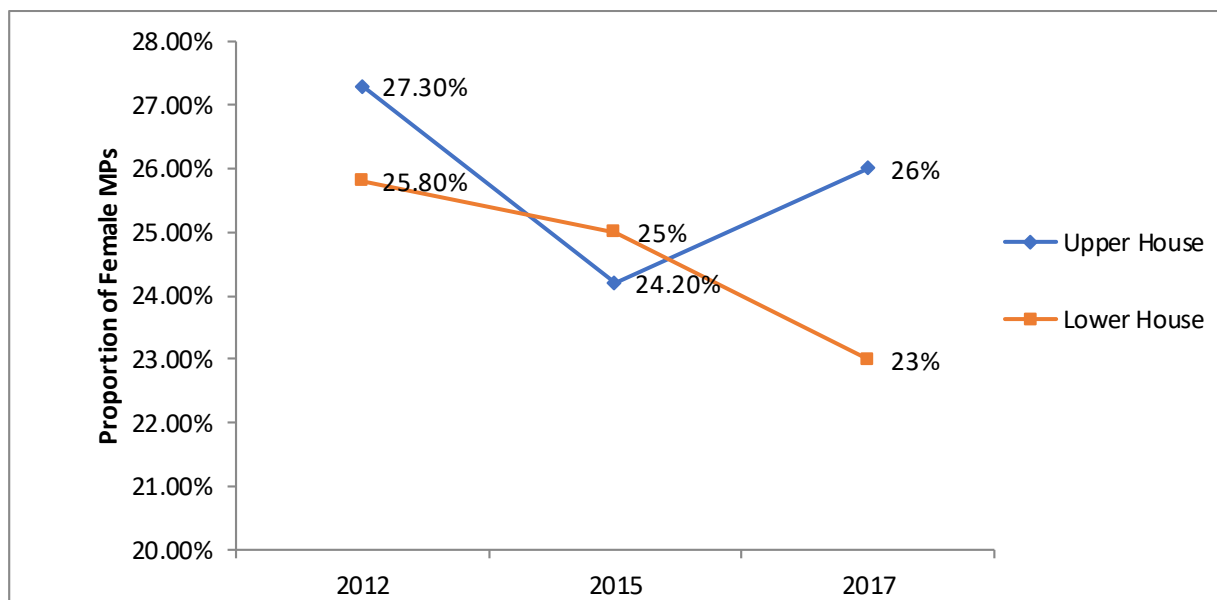
The National Assembly Electoral Act (2011) provides for a system that aims at promoting women in the legislature. Section 47 (2) (b) requires that all political parties contesting Proportional Representation (PR) elections submit 'zebra' party lists to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). The 2017 elections yielded 28 of 120 (23%) seats in the National Assembly for women. Nevertheless, women representation in decision-making roles, such as in

²³ UNICEF (2021). *Child Marriages: Lesotho Case Study*. <https://www.unicef.org>. Accessed 31-05-2022.

politics, is still lagging and far below the SADC and AU set standards of attaining 50% representation of women in parliament.

The proportion of women in the lower house of parliament has been declining since 2012. The decline has however been significant in the upper house compared to the lower house. This is mainly due to the fact that the majority of seats in the upper house are traditionally assigned to principal chiefs who are predominantly male due to customary succession laws which require males to succeed their parents.

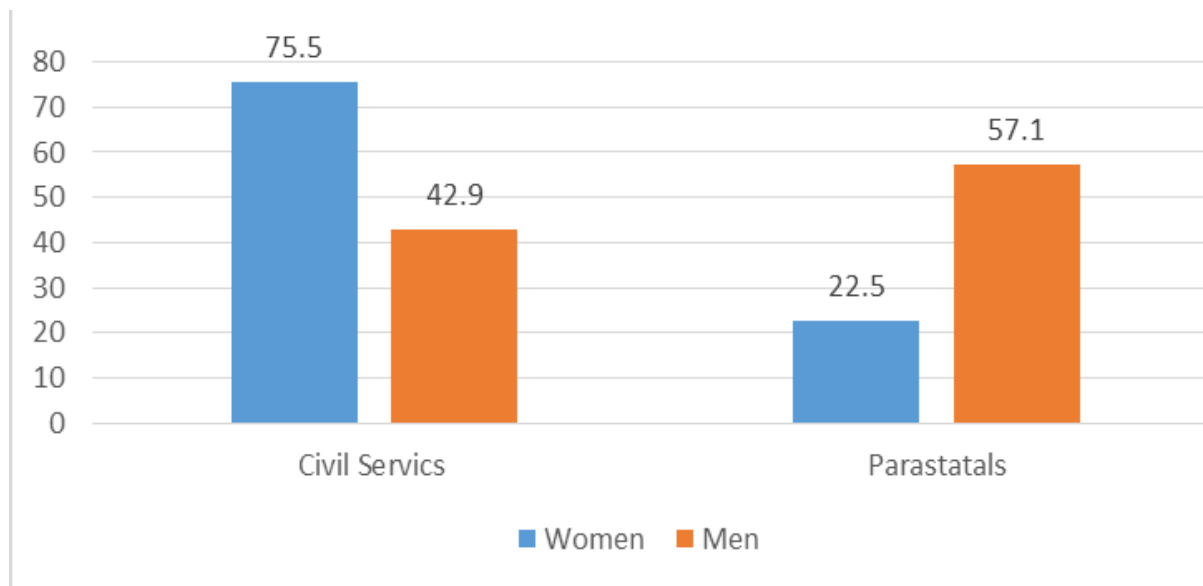
Figure 10: The proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament in Lesotho, 2012-16



Source: Bureau of Statistics, 2019

There are conflicting views on the representation of women in decision-making bodies. For the Bureau of Statistics (2019) representation of women in decision-making bodies has increased and even overtaken that of men in the civil service (Figure 11). In government institutions and the civil service, women outnumber men in high positions while in parastatals and the private sector men dominate in occupying higher positions. Inclusive of the private sector, on average, female participation in the labour market is 60%, compared to 75% for men; and only 36% of firms have female senior management

Figure 11: Percentage distribution of men and women in higher positions in civil service and parastatal



Source: Bureau of Statistics, 2019

Indicator 5.6.1: Women making their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care (% of women age 15-49)

Lesotho has made significant progress in ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights with most women aged 15–49 years making their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care. CEDAW (2021), has also strengthened adolescent health programmes aimed at educating young girls and boys about reproductive health issues and integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education into the school curriculum. The Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation through the assistance of United Nations Population Fund revitalized Youth Resource Centres in ten districts by engaging Youth Leaders who educate youth about sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as HIV & AIDS. Furthermore, Ministry of Health is continuing with adolescent corners where adolescent girls and boys get education on sexual and reproductive health issues.

Box 4: U-Report poll on Goal 5

A summary of U-Report findings on SDG 5.

Less than half of the polled youth (46%) had answered that gender equality was the biggest priority in Lesotho and only 3% had answered that this was not a priority for Lesotho. On the question of whether gender equality has changed in the past 2 years, 68.5% of the young respondents had answered that it had improved generally or in some aspects. 15.2% think that it has worsened to some extent. This seems to differ between men and women, with more proportion of women thinking that it had worsened. On the impact of COVID-19 on violence, only 26% of the respondents answered that there was no impact with the rest believing that it had worsened for some groups. More than half of those who answered the polls felt that violence had increased violence for women, girls and boys alike. This perception did not seem to differ much among the male and female respondents. This, however, seems to differ between respondents from Maseru and Other districts, with less proportion of those living in Maseru believing that it had increased. On the question on what the most pressing issue in gender equality in Lesotho is, 35.3% of respondents voted that child marriage is the most pressing issue.

Some comments that were provided also pointed to traditional thinking and values around boys and girls as one of the causes of inequality in gender. Similarly, other comments also point to the unequal treatment of boys and girls in the households as issues that should be tackled in Lesotho. In the question of who is most left behind in terms of gender equality, more than half had answered that people in the rural areas are facing more issues in gender equality. This is followed by people with disabilities, people living in poverty and LGBTQ+ People.

Sources: UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

5.3.2 Key Initiatives

As per the stakeholders' workshop, the following measures were undertaken to ensure implementation of SDG5: improvement of infrastructure to accommodate people living with disability, new legislation and policies including the Disability Act, Anti-trafficking Act, child marriage and social security programmes for children and the elderly.

The Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation in collaboration with the civil society has simplified, translated and disseminated Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Ministry has also conducted CEDAW sensitisation campaigns in the districts where at least three campaigns per district are held each year in order to raise awareness about the convention.

To protect women who suffer sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the Government of Lesotho established the Lapeng Care Centre, a one stop centre that provides temporary shelter for survivors of SGBV. The Centre collaborates with the Child and Gender Protection Unit and other stakeholders for referral of the survivors of domestic and gender-based violence.

The government has organised capacity building workshops and training for police, prosecutors and judicial officers to sensitise them on the upcoming law to counter domestic violence. The government has enhanced data collection tools in key service points such as health centres and police stations to document cases of domestic violence.

In order to de-stigmatize victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence, the Ministry of Gender organised advocacy and community engagements on the importance of reporting abuse and violence in all its forms. A toll-free number was established for reporting of GBV cases. An information sharing centre was established where victims, and people in general can access information about GBV and gender related information.

The government and civil society organisations jointly run campaigns on gender-based violence prevention and human rights. These campaigns target women and men, girls and boys. Though there is slow progress in attitudes change, there is an improved understanding of GBV and its impact. Different civil society organisations conducted studies on gender-based violence which will inform the government to design appropriate interventions in addressing GBV issues in Lesotho.

5.3.3 Challenges and the Way Forward

While significant strides have been made in striving towards attainment of SDG 5, there are still several challenges to complete and effective implementation of gender equality and women empowerment in Lesotho, including amongst others, the following:

- i. Weak implementation of the law and policies in place to advance gender equality.
- ii. Inadequate budgetary allocations for the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment, and a failure to mainstream gender budgeting.
- iii. COVID 19 has negatively affected the gains that the country has made in the area of gender equality and women empowerment. The feminisation of poverty, with women out of jobs and mainly engaging in the informal sector.
- iv. High GBV incidences, high child marriages, and high teenage pregnancies prevent progress towards achieving gender equity and equality. For example, marriage is almost universal in Lesotho, but women marry more than five years earlier than men on average.
- v. Women's representation in decision-making roles, such as in politics, is still lagging and stands at 23% of women in parliament after the 2017 National Assembly Elections. This is below the SADC and AU set standards of attaining 50% representation of women in parliament.
- vi. Current programming efforts do not have a coherent and systematic focus on changing gender stereotypes and harmful socialisation.
- vii. The gap between upstream and downstream work continues to create bottlenecks in the systematic planning and multisectoral implementation of gender-related plans.

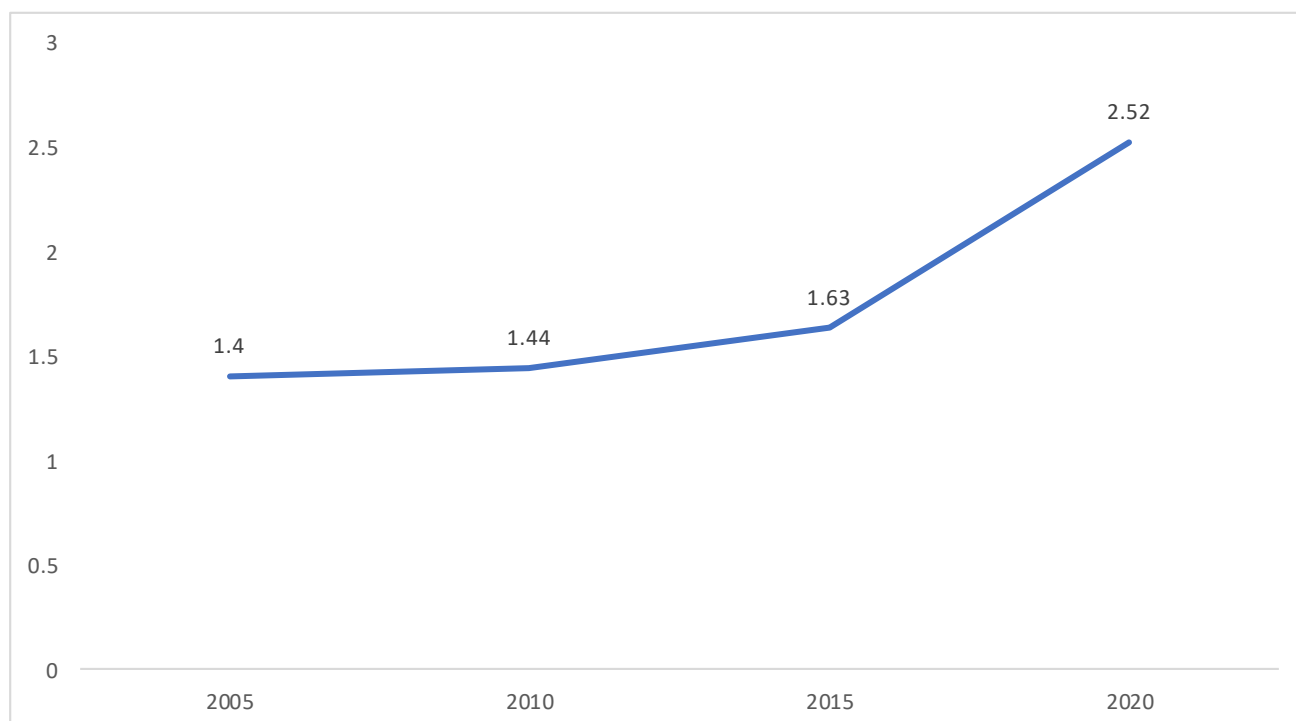
5.4 GOAL 15: PROTECT, RESTORE AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, AND HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

5.4.1 Status of Progress

Indicator 15.1.1: Forest area as a proportion of total land area

Lesotho's achievement on this indicator has increased, largely driven by efforts by Government, donors, and development partners. There has been a gradual improvement in the proportion of forest area to the total land area between 2015 and 2020 (Figure 12). The proportion of forest area to total land increased by 0.37% between 2015 and 2020. Much of this progress is due to efforts by the government with the assistance of its partners that have resulted in various initiatives such as community education programmes on the importance of growing trees. It is important to note that although tree-planted forest area would be higher in terms of acreage, the survival rate is low for some reasons. This is why there is a gradual improvement in forest area as a proportion of the total land area.

Figure 12: Forest Areas as a Proportion of Total Land Area



Source: Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (Field Data, 2022); FAO, Global Forest Resource Assessment, 2020

Note: The figure shows a pre-baseline and post-baseline trend of forest area as a proportion of the total land area of Lesotho. The indicator is defined as all land bearing a vegetative association dominated by trees of any size, exploitable or not; including all alpine, medium-altitude forests, wetland and riparian forests, plantations, and trees, whether on land held in trust by the government (gazetted Forest Reserves, National Parks and Wildlife Reserves) or non-gazetted land (leasehold, freehold or customary lands). It is calculated as $\text{Forest area (reference year)} / \text{Land area (2015)} * 100$

Indicator 15.1.2: Proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type

Lesotho’s achievement on this indicator has increased, largely driven by the government's efforts to expand protected areas. Official statistics indicate that the area under protection has not changed since SDGs Baseline Survey in 2016. Data from the BoS (2019) suggests that the total area under formal protection is only 13817.5 hectares which is merely 0.48% of the country’s surface area. In addition to these designated protected areas, several areas such as Letseng-La-Letsie Nature Reserve and Tsetse are either informally designated or proposed for protection in various parts of the country. There has not been encroachment on the area covered under protected areas by other land-use activities (See Table 4). The government has already identified and informally designated new areas to expand protected areas. Some cultural and heritage sites also serve as protected areas conserving biodiversity. These include Thaba-Bosiu, Masitise, Ha Baroana, Menkhoaneng and Butha-Buthe Plateau.

Table 4: Proportion of Important Sites for Terrestrial Biodiversity that are Covered by Protected Areas

	<i>Liphofung National Monument and Reserve</i>	<i>Bokong Nature Reserve</i>	<i>'Muela Nature Reserve</i>	<i>National University of Lesotho (botanical garden)</i>	<i>Tsehlanyane National Park</i>	<i>Sehlabathebe National Park</i>	<i>Masitise nature reserve</i>	<i>Total Area of Terrestrial Biodiversity</i>
Area (Ha)	4	1972	45	1.5	5, 300	6, 475	20	13, 817.5
Proportion (%)	0.03%	14.27 %	0.33%	0.01%	38.36%	46.86%	0.14%	100%

Source: Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (2018)

The number and area under important sites for freshwater biodiversity under protection has not changed, but the country has made progress regarding expansions of these areas through identification and proposals to include new areas. The Ministry of Water through an integrated approach is leading the process of declaration of wetlands as protected areas. The integrated approach would involve stakeholder mapping, meeting with relevant stakeholders, wetlands identification, local authorities and community awareness and mobilisation; site visits and ensure concurrence from relevant Ministries.

Projects such as ReNOKA also seek to support collective action to protect and restore land and water for the shared prosperity of the communities living and working within the Orange-Senqu River Basin. The project also seeks to reverse the increasing degradation of Lesotho’s wetlands which is a threat to the Orange-Senqu River.

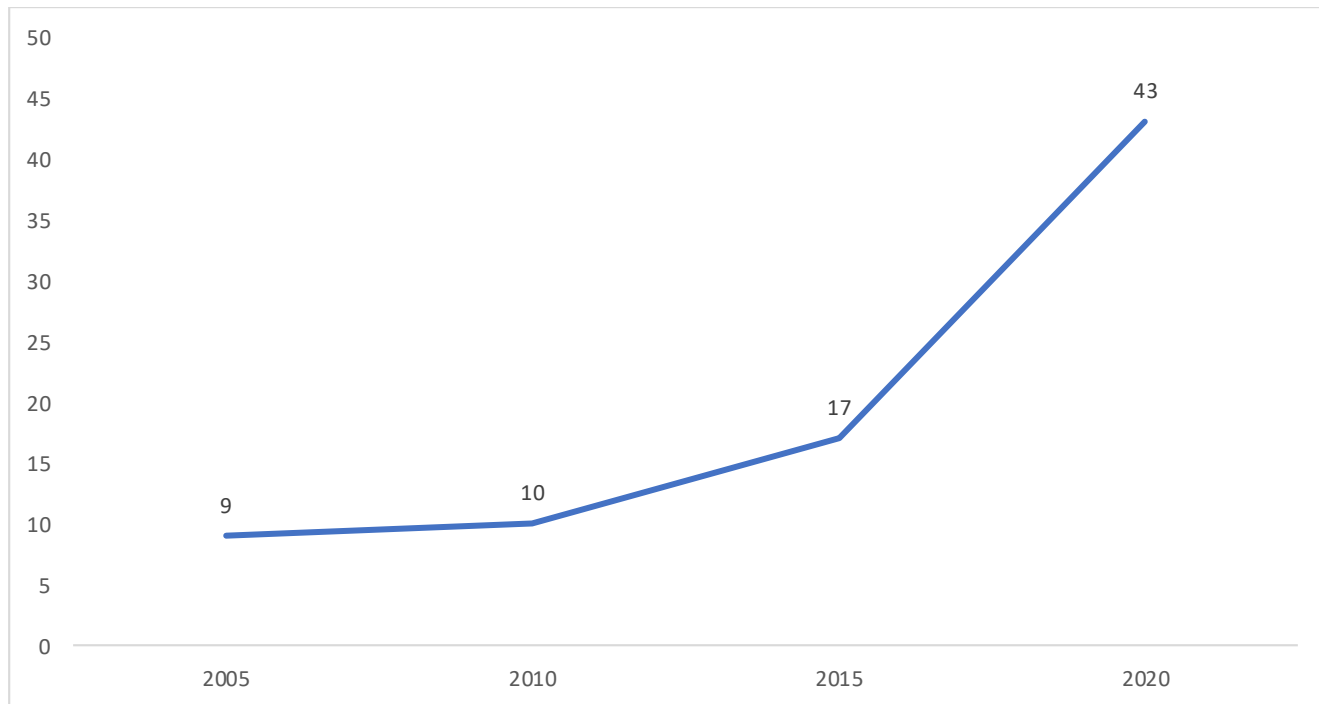
The main challenges in the country’s efforts to conserve and protect wetlands include inadequate planning systems and instruments, imbalance in the distribution of costs and benefits of wetland conservation, policy conflicts and

institutional weakness. High mountain wetlands continue to degrade due to uncontrolled livestock grazing and trampling infrastructure development, siltation and erosion, encroachment by cultivation and overexploitation of resources hence their need for their declaration as protected areas to conserve and protect them.

Indicator 15.2.1D: Planted Forest Area

The planted forest area has increased because of support from various projects that the Department of Forestry has received. The indicator shows steady growth in planted forest area when one compares the 2020 indicator value with the 2015 baseline indicator value. Financial institutions such as Standard Lesotho Bank through their social responsibility program buys trees every year and donate them to the Ministry for planting. There are also community education initiatives that create awareness of the importance of tree growing and discouraging cutting down of trees. Although forest planted area is normally high the survival rate due to factors such as climate change and vandalism. The Department of Forestry is in the process of working with its partners to establish strategies to increase the survival rate of grown trees.

Figure 13: Planted Forest area (1000 ha) for Lesotho, Planted Forests



Note: The figure shows a pre-baseline and post-baseline trend of planted forest area for Lesotho. *Indicator definition:* Forest is predominantly composed of trees established through planting and or deliberate seeding. *Baseline:* 17 000 ha, *Base Year:* 2015.

Indicator 15.3.1: Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area

Land suitable for agriculture makes up only 9 per cent (279,773 hectares) of the total land area in Lesotho (3.5 million hectares)²⁴. The country loses 2 percent of its topsoil annually due to soil erosion²⁵. An estimation of about 66 percent of households lives on degraded land in Lesotho²⁶. Traditional herding culture and livelihood are under threat due to erosion in the catchment areas of Lesotho which are alarming. Main drivers of land degradation in Lesotho include poor agriculture and land management practices including animal overstocking, burning of rangelands, deforestation, increasing population pressure, and climate change induced impacts such as recurrent droughts and flooding.

UN agencies such as UNDP and FAO have supported GoL in reversing land degradation through contributing towards rehabilitation of degraded land. The European Union and GIZ are among the donor organisations working with The Government of Lesotho in efforts to contain land degradation. Lesotho also has a dedicated ministry responsible for range and soil conservation. ReNOKA ‘We are a river’ is a national programme and active citizen movement to advance integrated catchment management in Lesotho and the Orange-Senqu River basin. The programme has identified six (6) priority sub-catchments in Lesotho severely degraded and in need of urgent rehabilitation (ReNOKA,2021).

Indicator 15.5.1D: Number of Local Species in Red List Categories

There is some positive progress made on this indicator since the last report in 2016. The country had only one animal species listed in the IUCN Red List index that is the Lesotho Meadow Katydid, according to the SDGs Indicator Baseline Report 2016. Since that last report, Lesotho has a few other species that are now on this list. These include a bird species bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*), aquatic (fish species) Maloti minnow (*Pseudobarbus quathlambae*) and a plant species, Spiral Aloe (*Aloe polyphylla*). The Department of Environment will see to it that these endangered species receive protection.

The GoL is implementing some programmes and activities with the aim of conserving the status of these threatened species in order to increase their population. Although there is currently no systematic monitoring, there are indications that population sizes of some species (for example Spiral Aloe) have increased following conservation and protection interventions (Lesotho National Report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020).

²⁴ <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/countries/lso/en>

²⁵ World Bank (2016)

²⁶ United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Lesotho 2019-2023

Indicator 15.8.1D: Existence of relevant national legislation and adequately resourcing the prevention or control of invasive alien species

According to the SDGs Indicator Baseline Report 2016, relevant national legislation did not exist. In 2022, the National Range Resources Management Act was presented to Parliament for enactment. This legislation will assist the country in its progress by providing relevant legislation as a platform for stakeholders to ensure the prevention or control of invasive alien species.

Besides progress made regarding legislation, there has been significant progress in bush control (removal of invasive alien species) and reseeded of rangelands. The Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change (RVCC) is an ongoing project supported by UNDP whose commencement was January 2015, and it is expected to phase out in December 2022. RVCC has been instrumental in the removal of invasive species in projects areas that covered 20 000 ha. Part of the interventions of the RVCC project in this reporting period include reseeded of rangelands especially after removal of invasive species.

Box 5. U-Report poll on Goal 15

A summary of U-Report findings on SDG 15.

More than half of the youth (56.9%) had answered that “our environment” is the biggest priority for Lesotho and only 2.6% had said that it is not very important for Lesotho. 56.9% had answered that “our environment” is the biggest priority for Lesotho and only 2.6% had said that it is not very important for Lesotho. For the most pressing environmental issues in Lesotho, more than half (53.5%) of those answered thinks that soil erosion and “lengope” is the most pressing issue in Lesotho. In addition to general suggestions and calling out for more action by the government and cooperate, as compared to the other goals, many of the comments that were shared on this goal by the U-report youth, reflected the need for a change in the individual perception or action. This included the need to change the people’s mind and educate citizens about the importance of environmental protection, proper grazing and improving recycling.

Sources: UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

5.4.2 Key Initiatives

- There are ongoing community education programmes on the importance of growing of trees by the government through support from development partners. The Government of Lesotho also receives support from various projects which has intensified tree planting while discouraging cutting down of trees and promotes sustainable land use and management, agroforestry and afforestation.
- Lesotho has developed Land Cover Atlas (2017) which provides statistics on hectares of trees, shrubs and grassland. This has enabled decision-making on land use planning and rehabilitation.
- ReNoka represents a strategic vision for Lesotho in implementing the Lesotho Integrated Catchment Management programme which is a multi-stakeholder process promoting integrated, sustainable and risk-informed development and management of water, land and related resources.

5.4.3 Challenges and Way forward

While significant strides have been made in striving towards attainment SDG 15, there are several challenges which if addressed will improve country's performance on targets and indicators and some of them are as follows:

- i. Although the government has adopted policies for climate-smart and resilient environmental management, there is a general lack of implementation and enforcement for compliance to environmental management plans and regulations.
- ii. Inadequate planning systems and instruments, imbalance in the distribution of costs and benefits of wetland conservation, policy conflicts and institutional weakness affect efforts to conserve and protect wetlands.
- iii. High mountain wetlands continue to degrade due to uncontrolled livestock grazing and trampling infrastructure development, siltation and erosion, encroachment by cultivation and overexploitation of resources hence their need for their declaration as protected areas to conserve and protect them.

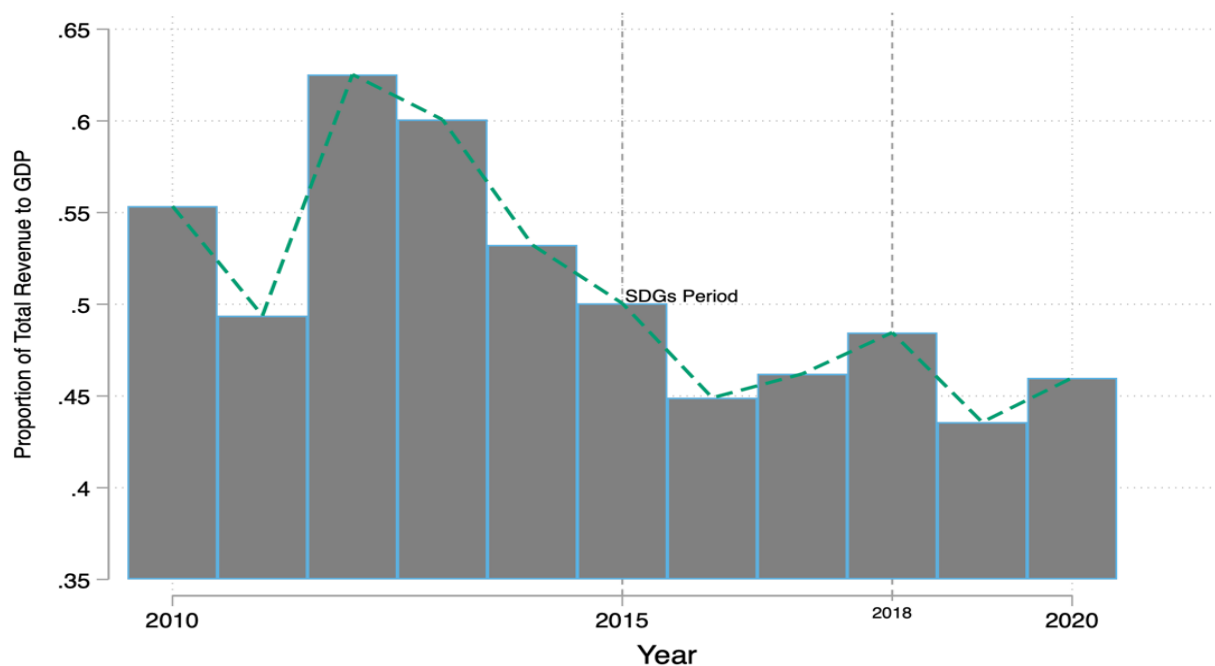
5.5 GOAL 17: STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALISE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5.5.1 Status of Progress

Indicator 17.1.1: Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source

The share of total government revenue to GDP has declined by about 46 percent in 2020 (Figure 14). Total government revenue to GDP was about 50 percent in 2015 before falling to approximately 45 percent in 2016. Although total government revenue to GDP increased to about 48 percent in 2018, it plunged to about 43 percent in 2019, but marginally recovered to about 46 percent in 2020. These developments in total government revenue to GDP were largely driven by volatile SACU revenue over the same period.

Figure 14: Total Government Revenue as a Proportion of GDP



Source: Central Bank of Lesotho

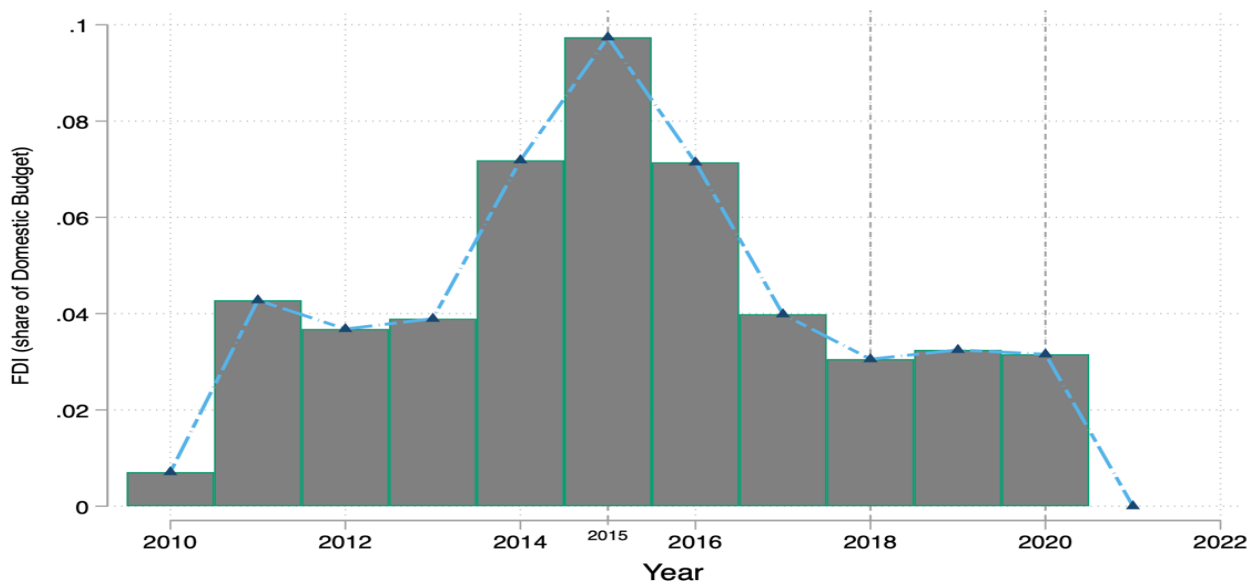
Indicator 17.1.2: Proportion of domestic budget financed by domestic taxes

Domestic tax revenue contributed more than other sources towards total government revenue, reaching about 22 per cent of GDP in 2019, before declining to about 18 per cent of GDP in 2020. Figure 2, which shows total government revenue as a ratio of GDP disaggregated by source, indicates domestic tax revenue to GDP increased slightly to about 22 per cent till 2019 before falling to about 18 per cent in 2020 because of COVID-19 control measures. On the contrary, SACU revenue receipts to GDP declined to about 15 per cent in 2018 but recovered moderately to about 22 per cent in 2020. Total grants to the government as a proportion of GDP increased marginally from 3 per cent in 2015 to about 5 per cent in 2020, while other government revenues to GDP roughly stayed constant at about 5 per cent during the same period.

Indicator 17.3.1: Foreign direct investments (FDI), official development assistance and South-South Cooperation as a proportion of total domestic budget

FDI as a proportion of the domestic budget has declined significantly to about 3.2 per cent in 2020. Figure 15, which presents FDI as a proportion of the domestic budget, reveals that FDI’s importance in the domestic budget plummeted from about 9.8 per cent in 2015 to about 3.2 per cent in 2020. Given that Lesotho’s FDI mainly depended on the developments in equity and investment fund shares, particularly from commercial banks, the observed fall was due to higher FDI outflows owing to the increasing foreign assets of commercial banks. This was because commercial banks in Lesotho enjoyed high liquidity positions domestically and searched for better returns abroad due to the lack of appropriate instruments given the country’s underdeveloped debt market²⁷.

Figure 15: Foreign Direct Investment as a Proportion of Budget



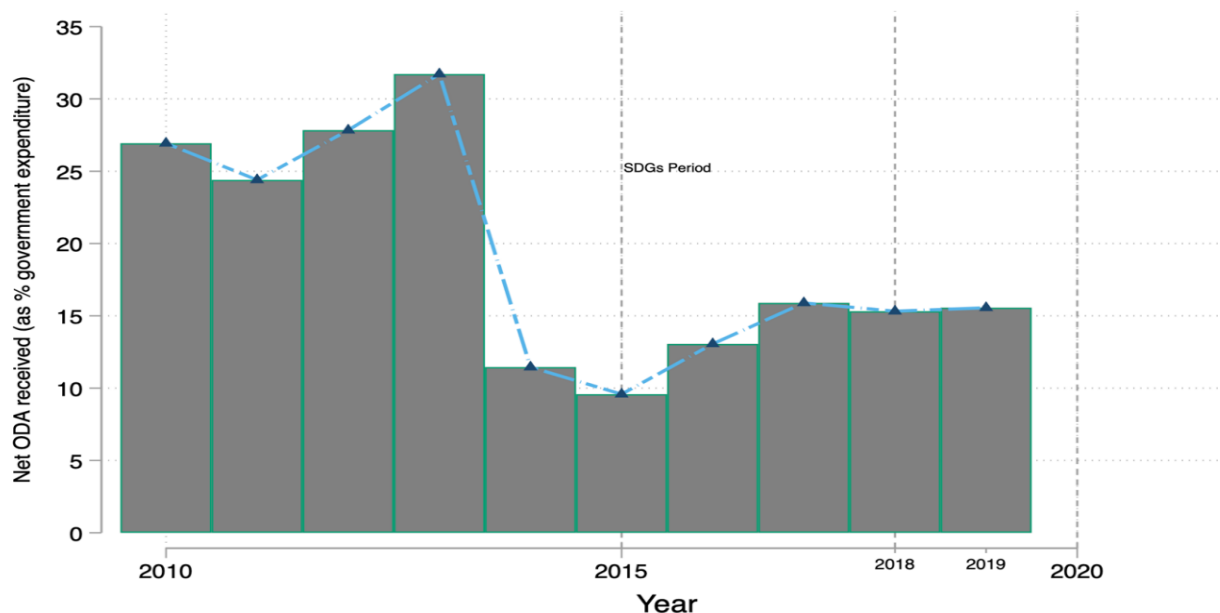
Source: Central Bank of Lesotho

The share of net ODA to the domestic budget is almost half of what it was in 2013. The dynamics of Lesotho’s ODA are strongly correlated with the country’s political cycles. The 2012 national elections ushered in the first coalition government and a renewed hope of an improvement in the institutions. As a result, the international community responded by increasing their investment and official assistance to Lesotho. However, the political instability that ensued between 2013 and 2015 resulted in the government’s international partners cutting net ODA. As seen from Figure 16, net ODA as a share of the domestic budget plunged from about 32 per cent in 2013 to less than 10 percent of the domestic budget in 2015, before recovering only 7 percentage points to sit at about 16 percent in 2019. Post 2015, after the second coalition government came to power, net ODA recovered to about 17 percent of the budget, potentially reflecting the international community’s perceived political stability. However, ODA dropped slightly

²⁷ World Bank (2021) “Lesotho Systematic Country Diagnostic Update.”, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36910> (Accessed on the 5th May 2022)

after the third coalition government came to power following the 2017 national elections. It is therefore largely perceived that the government’s ability to mobilise resources for the SDGs has been greatly hampered by the country’s political instability.

Figure 16: Official Development Assistance as a Proportion of Budget



Source: OECD

Indicator 17.3.2: Volume of remittances (in United States dollars) as a proportion of total GDP

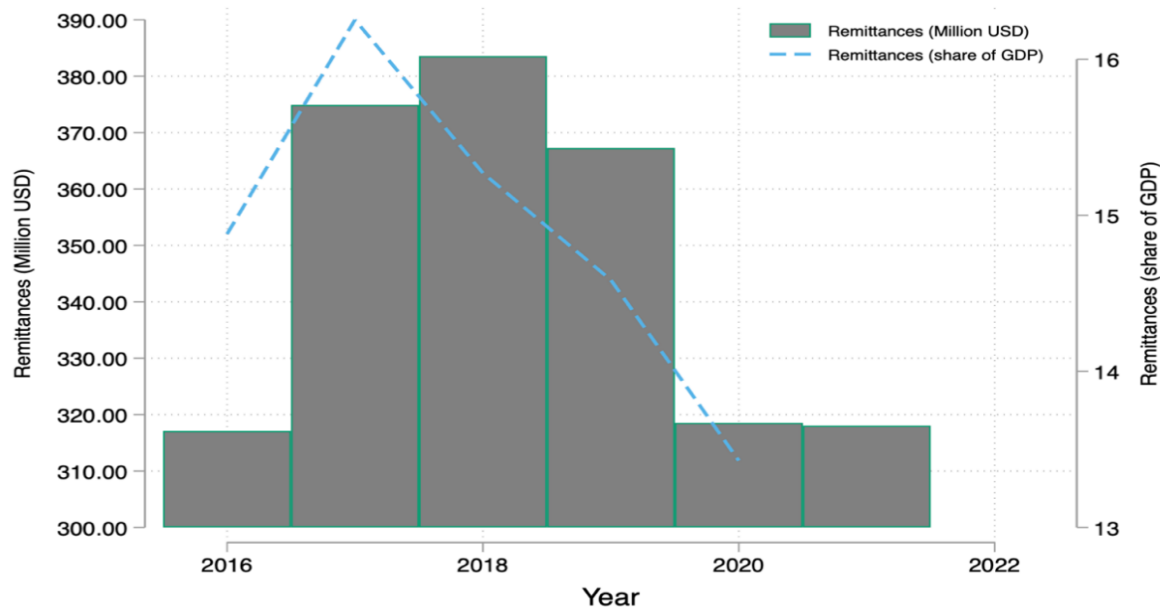
Although remittances as a share of GDP increased to about 16 percent in 2018, they have since declined to about 13.4 percent in 2020. In March 2015, the Shoprite cross-border money transfer service was launched in Lesotho to enable Basotho living in South Africa and South Africans to send money to and from Lesotho.²⁸ Therefore, remittance flows (in US dollars and as a percent of GDP), rose to about US\$375 million (which is about 16 percent of the GDP) in 2018, before slightly dropping to about US\$368 million in 2019 (or 15.5 percent of GDP), potentially due to the continuous decline in the number of migrant mine workers in South African. Between 2019 and 2020, remittances (as share of the GDP) plunged by about 2 percentage points largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions imposed during that period which led to loss of jobs for several Basotho migrants employed in South Africa.

This decline in remittances followed a similar trend across the world and the sub-Saharan African region in particular.²⁹

²⁸ Sekantsi, L.P. (2018). “The Assessment of International Remittance Markets in Lesotho: Implications for Social and Economic Development”, *Journal of Payments Strategy and Systems*, Vol. 12, No.2 (Forthcoming).

²⁹ Blake, P. and Wadhwa, D. (2020). “2020 Year in Review: The impact of COVID-19 in 12 charts” available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/2020-year-review-impact-covid-19-12-charts> (25 May 2022).

Figure 17: Remittances Overtime: Volume (in US dollars) and as a Proportion of GDP



Source: Central Bank of Lesotho

Indicator 17.4.1: External Debt service as a proportion of exports of goods and services

Debt service as a proportion of total exports of goods and services increased to about 3.7 per cent in 2020 before falling to about 2.8 per cent in 2021. Figure 18 presents the country’s debt service (i.e. interest payments on foreign loans) as a share of total exports of goods and services, and shows that debt service increased from about 1.8 per cent in 2016 to a peak of about 3.7 per cent in 2020, before falling to about 2.8 per cent in 2021. The observed increase in debt service to total exports in recent years was largely attributable to the dominance of the public sector, which led to a rise in government debt, registering 64.7 per cent of GDP in 2020³⁰

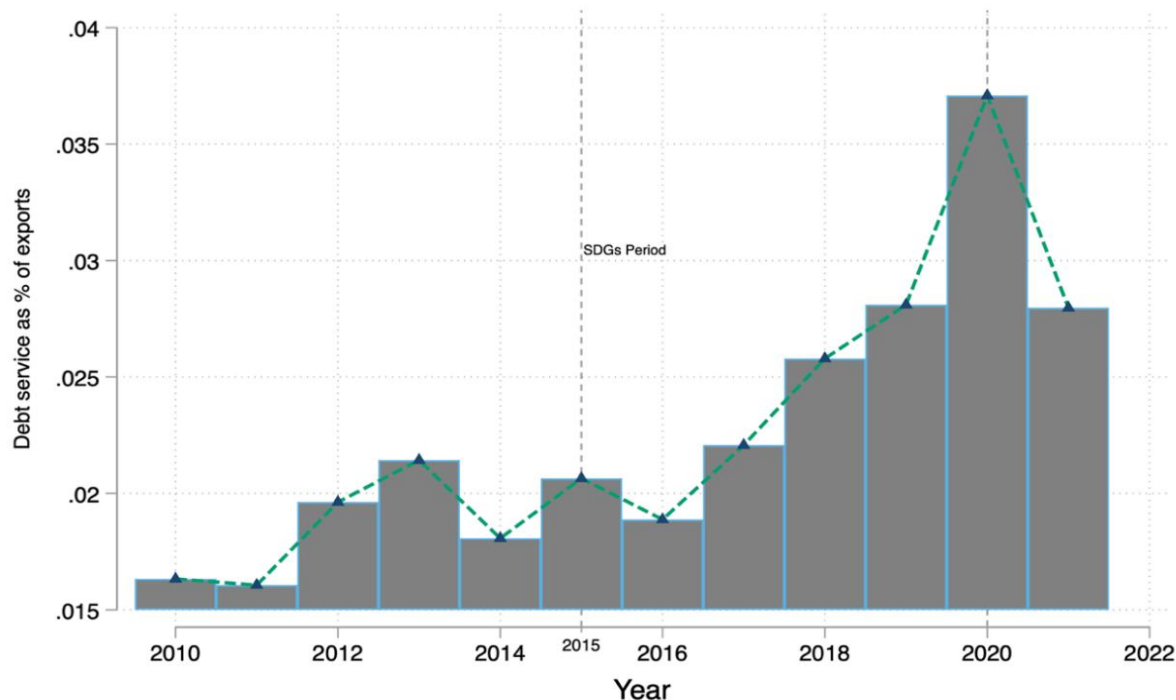
Further, this debt service dynamics were also affected by the depreciation of the Loti exchange rate against the US dollar over the same period, especially because external debt formed about 70 per cent of Lesotho’s government debt, with interest payments largely being denominated in US dollars³¹. The fall in debt service to total exports in 2021 could be due to some temporary debt relief measures given to developing countries like Lesotho in order to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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World Bank (2021) “Lesotho Systematic Country Diagnostic Update.”

³¹CBL (2019) “Monthly Economic Review”. March. (Accessed from https://www.centralbank.org.ls/images/Publications/Monthly_Economic_REVIEW/2019_CBL_March_Monthly_Economic_Review_-_Singles_-_16.05.2019.pdf, on 21st May 2022).

Figure 18: Debt Service as a proportion of Total Exports of Goods and Services



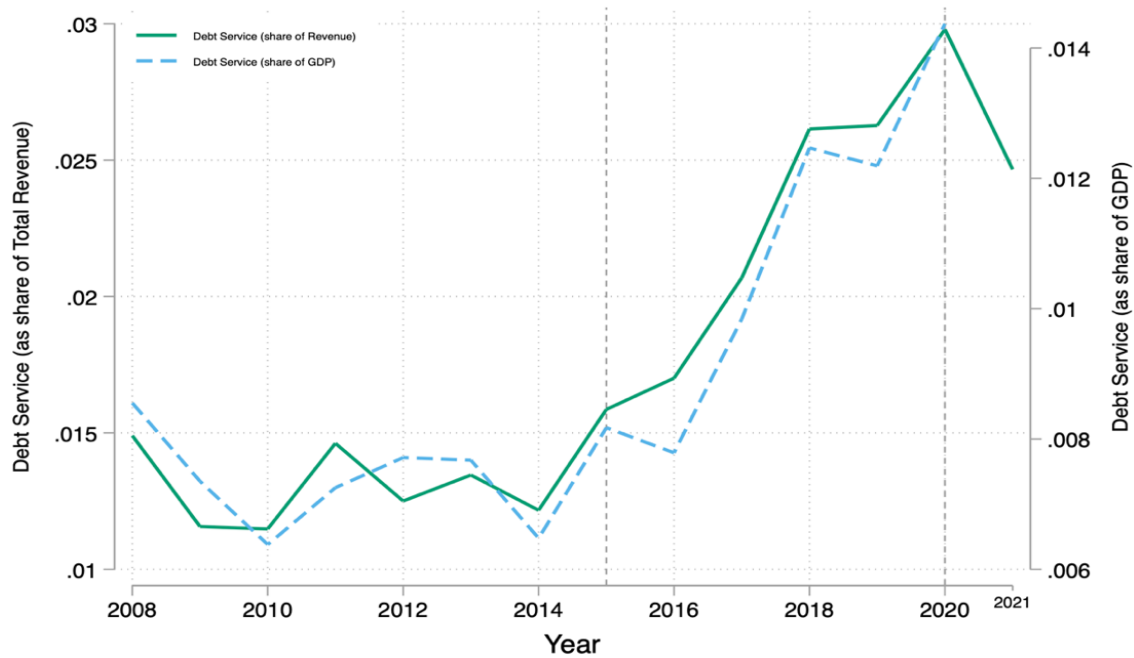
Source: Central Bank of Lesotho

Since 2014, debt service, both as a share of total revenue and as a share of GDP, has been increasing. Figure 8 depicts the country’s debt service as a proportion of total revenue and that of GDP. The figure shows that debt service increased from about 1.6 per cent of total revenue (or 0.8 per cent of GDP) in 2015 to about 3 per cent of total revenue (or 1.4 per cent of GDP) in 2020.

However, owing to the temporary debt relief measures given to developing countries including Lesotho immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic, debt service dropped to 2.5 per cent of total revenue. This debt service trajectory is tightly linked to the dynamics in total revenue (see Figure 14) and real GDP growth since 2017. Although debt service is relatively low, the increasing debt service added pressure on the already stretched government revenues. Furthermore, Lesotho’s borrowing has been less concessional when compared to the pre-SDGs period³² which implies that more government borrowing will likely increase the country's debt burden.

³² World Bank (2021) “Lesotho Systematic Country Diagnostic Update.”

Figure 19: Debt Service as a proportion of Total Revenue and GDP



Source: Central Bank of Lesotho

Indicator 17.5.1: Number of countries that adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for developing countries, including the least developed countries

Over the past three years, the country introduced some changes in the regulatory environment, including the adoption of new policies mainly the Lesotho National Diaspora Engagement Policy (2020), the National Diaspora Investment and Trade

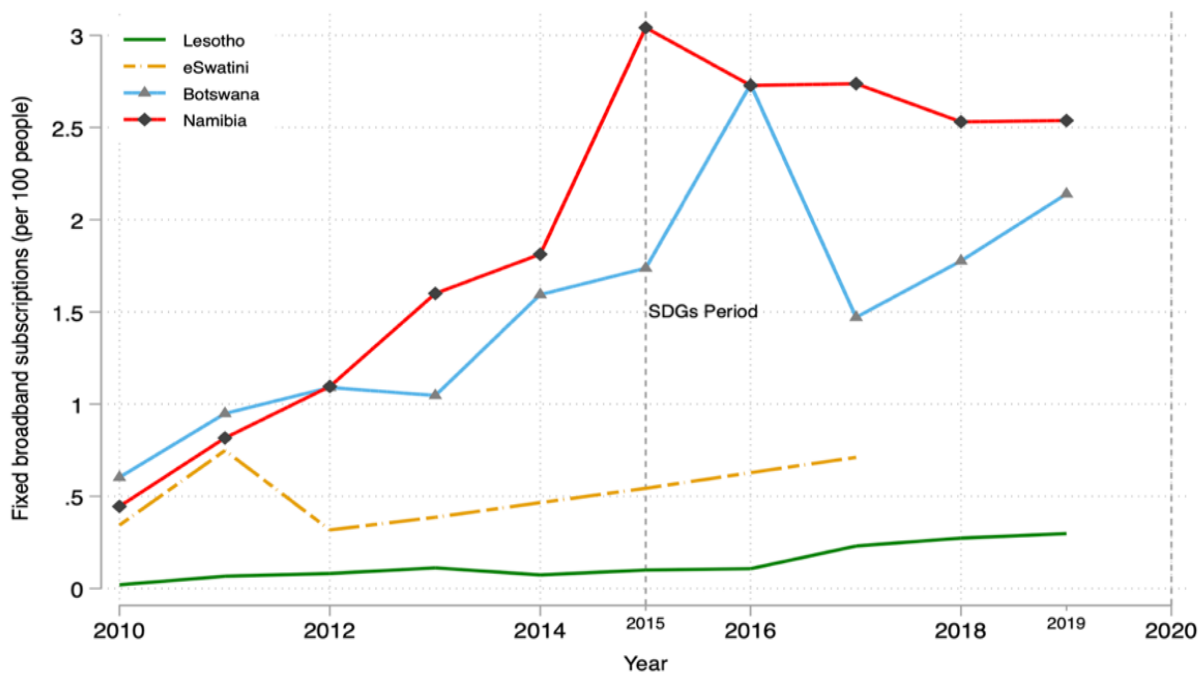
Strategy (2019), and the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2018. The Amendment allows dual citizenship and restores lost citizenship to former Lesotho citizens. These created an enabling environment for diaspora to take part in the sustainable economic development of the country. The government has also established a Diaspora Directorate to facilitate coordination of diaspora communities keen to investing in Lesotho and ensure implementation of the investment strategy

Indicator 17.6.2D: Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions

Fixed internet broadband subscriptions in Lesotho remain low. As of 2016, 32.7 per cent of Basotho nationwide who had access to the internet and fixed internet connections were still low. Only 3.57 per cent of those with access to the

internet had fixed connections while 2.43 per cent were connected through fibre or ADSL³³. In 2016/2017, the fixed broadband subscriptions increased to 5,636³⁴ before declining significantly to 3,574 in 2018/2019. However, the subscriptions recovered by 45 per cent to reach 5,189 in 2019/2020. Despite this, fixed broadband subscriptions are low in Lesotho comparatively in the regional. Between 2015 and 2019, fixed broadband subscriptions increased from about 0.1 to 0.3 subscriptions per 100 people. In 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, the fixed broadband penetration increased by miserly 0.03 to 0.3 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants³⁵. The statistics do not show a significant difference between males and females in the adoption of fixed internet by household heads.³⁶ However small, this increase in fixed broadband penetration is in line with the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology’s strategic objectives of increasing internet coverage among Basotho. For example, in 2019, the Ministry managed to install internet fibre from Maseru to Mohale’s Hoek, and some projects are in the pipeline to install internet fibre from Roma to Thaba-Tseka. Furthermore, the digital transformation brought by the COVID-19 pandemic also induced the private sector through Econet Lesotho to extend its fixed internet infrastructure.

Figure 20: Fixed broadband subscriptions (per 100 persons)



Source: International Telecommunication Union

³³ Lesotho Communications Authority State of ICT in Lesotho 2016.

³⁴ Lesotho Communications Authority Annual Report 2016/2017.

³⁵ Lesotho Communications Authority Annual Report 2018/2019.

³⁶ Lesotho Communications Authority State of ICT 2016

17.18.3: Existence of a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation, by source of funding

The government implemented the Lesotho Data for Sustainable Development Project (2017-2019), funded by the European Commission Lesotho and the United National Development Programme. In March 2022, the government approved and launched NSDS II, with the support from PARIS21. During NSDS II development, an assessment for availability of gender data was conducted to address data disaggregation challenges. Out of the 44 identified gender related SDG indicators, 84 per cent have data available. Moving forward, the idea is to develop the financing strategy to enhance coordination of development partners and resource mobilisation for implementation of activities of the strategy. Plans are also there to review the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics Act of 2001 (which is in line with fundamental principles of official statistics) to address emerging data needs such as non-traditional data sources (e.g. geo-spatial data, citizen-generated data and in general big data).

Box 6: U Report poll on Goal 17

A summary of U-Report findings on SDG 17.

On the question of how Lesotho can mobilise more funds for SDGs, 42.4% of participants answered “more partnership with donor countries”, possibly reflecting the situation of the current SDG financing. This is followed by “More public-private-partnerships”, “investing more from national budget” with a few answering “raising taxes” and “leveraging on diaspora remittances”. On the changes on SDG financing since the last VNR, 43.6% of the youth respondents had answered that they do not know of the situation. This possibly could mean that public communication, advocacy, and public spending for the SDGs, is not sufficiently done in Lesotho. On the other hand, 55.1% of the youth respondents feel that the Government of Lesotho is less able to invest in the SDGs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly reflecting the general ambience of slow economic activities felt by the youths in Lesotho during the COVID-19 pandemic in the last 2 years.

Sources: UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

5.5.2 Key Initiatives

- i. Despite broad challenges brought by COVID-19 pandemic, Lesotho implemented strategies that enhanced domestic resource mobilisation and management. The government has adopted the roadmap towards implementation of the integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs) to enable alignment in development planning and financing decisions, to accelerate achievement of the SDGs and national development priorities.
- ii. The country successfully introduced tax reforms aimed at improving domestic resource mobilisation by bringing about collaboration between all institutions to enable compliance effectively.
- iii. The Government of Lesotho (GoL) adopted several initiatives such as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy, the Investment Policy and the Diaspora Strategy Engagement for Trade and Investment and strengthened the One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre (OBFC) to enable investors to easily register

companies; get tax registration, industrial and trading licences; get immigration, residence, and labour permits, as well as export and import permits and rebates.

- The government also embarked on the development of industrial infrastructure to attract FDI.
 - In addition, the government developed a medium-term debt management strategy and produced Development Corporation Reports to promote transparency and accountability in ODA management.
 - It also improved human rights conditions and addressed governance issues, which enabled the country to receive further assistance from developmental partners.
- v. The country implemented measures to improve access to technology and quality data for sustainable development.
- Although the fixed broadband connections remained low in Lesotho, the government managed to develop its telecommunications infrastructure and extend access to mobile communication services in remote areas. For instance, the GoL has constructed 22 towers that facilitated the migration from analogue to digital.
 - In addition, Lesotho, through the support of PARIS21, managed to develop the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics. This strategy was to strengthen the collection, analysis and dissemination of data for development, enhancement of institutional and technical capacities for monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and has developed the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) II (2022/23-2026/27).

5.5.3 Challenges

- i. Despite the positive progress made, some strategic challenges need to be addressed.
- Access to and timely availability of quality, disaggregated data for effective monitoring of SDGs progress is still a challenge
 - Despite the remarkable progress in increasing domestic revenue collections in the past decade, there is now limited scope to further increase tax revenue by expanding the tax base.
 - Lesotho's fiscal spending is unsustainable and threatens the country's debt sustainability and the government's ability to spend on infrastructure projects geared toward attaining the SDGs.
 - There is a lack of absorptive capacity that affects the speed of implementation of projects to achieve SDGs.
- ii. There is a collection of systemic issues that will likely derail Lesotho's efforts to achieve the SDGs, including the loti depreciation, increasing public debt, and debt risk, political and or government instability.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 Conclusions

- i. Lesotho's progress on SDG 1 – poverty reduction, has been steady. Poverty was on the decline between 2002 and 2017, with 47,000 people lifted out of poverty from the national poverty line. The country also made significant reductions in multidimensional child poverty. Similarly, Lesotho witnessed an expansion of the old-age pension while other social protection programs have stagnated.
- ii. Access to education has improved significantly at the pre-primary and primary levels. There are pockets of reception classes at selected primary schools though enrolment of ECCD in rural areas remains low. Secondary education has shown the least progress, with NER for boys and girls low but much more adverse in the case of boys. The GRE in HEI has shown limited overall growth in recent years, with undergraduate programmes having the largest share of students.
- iii. Notable progress on enacting laws and developing policies on equality and non-discrimination of women and girls. There are indications of an increase in cases of GBV since the beginning of the mandated lockdown due to COVID-19. While women's representation in parliament has been generally low, their representation in decision-making bodies has increased and even overtaken that of men in the civil service.
- iv. Land degradation is still a significant concern with more than 66 per cent of the households living on degraded land, and the country loses 2 per cent of its topsoil annually due to soil erosion. While the area under formal protection has not changed since 2016, several areas are either informally designated or proposed for protection in various parts of the country. The country now has additional three species in the IUCN Red List index.
- v. The country also managed to develop the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS) II (2022/23-2026/27) to strengthen the collection, analysis and dissemination of development data and enhance institutional and technical capacities for monitoring and evaluation of development programmes.
- vi. While COVID-19 may have increased poverty and widened existing education inequalities, it also presented an opportunity to build back better, especially in the manner that all stakeholders participated in mitigating the setbacks of the crisis. Yet the downfall of SACU revenues that the country relies on to finance SDGs might affect further achievement in relevant indicators and nullify the progress made so far.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 For Government:

- i. While awareness creation efforts target and prioritise citizens, conscious efforts must be made to sensitise public sector workers for them to understand and relate their work to the SDGs.
- ii. Government should take immediate steps to implement mechanisms to improve coordination and multi-partnership collaboration by establishing SDGs and NSDP Technical Steering Committee (TSC). Divide the TSC into thematic sub-groups to make it more manageable, focused, and effective.

- iii. Future VNR should be preceded by Local Voluntary Reviews (LVRs) and include qualitative data from implementation efforts from districts and community councils.
- iv. The government should continue to implement strategies that increase resource mobilisation, including tax modernisation, the attraction of remittances, and securing international support.
- v. The government needs to establish the SDGs coordination body, which will be responsible for evaluating and monitoring the progress made towards achieving all the SDG targets and ensuring that no one is left behind.
- vi. Implement a tertiary funding model that includes capital and resource-intensive projects.
- vii. Lesotho needs a national policy that will harmonise initiatives of the key Ministries implementing SDG 15. An independent entity will be fundamental to coordinating related activities implemented by the key Ministries and facilitating effective mainstreaming of SDG 15 activities in planning priorities.
- viii. The Economy needs to be diversified, and formal employment increased if the Country counts on reducing its reliance on SACU revenues and increasing its tax base domestically.
- ix. Debt management and national debt service should be a key priority and area of urgent actionable concern for the government. Prudent debt management and service are key in setting a promising future for the coming generations in Lesotho.
- x. Resource usage and wastage must be met with a very tight tone of accountability and responsible proactive resource management and leadership.
- xi. Lesotho should invest in the development of a digital SDGs monitoring data management system for a clear monitoring and evaluation of SDGs.

6.2.2 For Developmental Partners:

- i. Development Partners should identify a way to report on their contributions to the implementation of the SDGs in Lesotho, whether technical or financial.
- ii. They should demand strong accountability and transparent reporting of all the technical and or fiscal assistance offered to the government.
- iii. There is a need for more international support to accelerate the achievement of SDGs and implement the second National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS II) (2022/23-2026/27) to enhance the availability of quality data for sustainable development.

6.2.3 For Private Sector:

- i. Umbrella private sector organisations and associations should consider a common platform to synergise their engagement on SDGs.

- ii. The private sector should continue to strengthen partnerships with the government. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the private sector organised itself and mobilised resources to finance some of the country's purchases of COVID-19 vaccines. Such partnerships could also be utilised in other sectors such as education, quality and disaggregated data collection, as well as data sharing and dissemination.
- iii. A private sector public sector relationship must be forged to establish a sustainable education financing model which will also have economic benefits for Lesotho.

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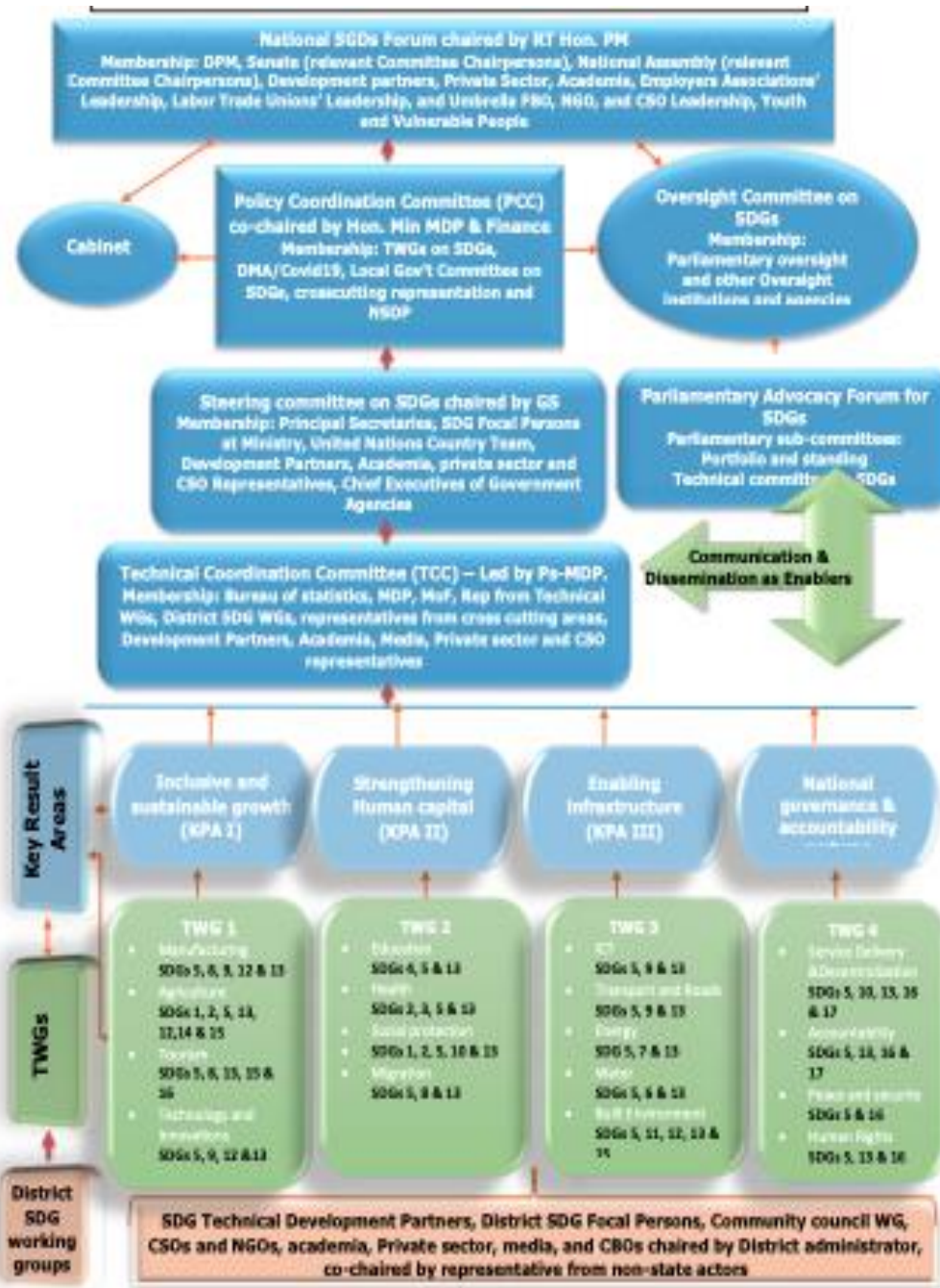
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ANNEXES

Annex 1: SDG Coordination Framework in Lesotho.



National SDGs Forum: Recognizing the collective ownership of the SDGs, the overall responsibility of the National SDGs Forum for Lesotho will be to provide stakeholders with opportunities to contribute toward the implementation and communication of the SDGs as well as provide input to the national reporting framework. The National SDGs Forum will be chaired by RT. Hon. Prime Minister with membership from Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Senate

(relevant Committee Chairpersons), National Assembly (relevant Committee Chairpersons), Development Partners, Private Sector, Academia, Employers Associations' Leadership, Labour Trade Unions' Leadership, and Umbrella Faith-based organisations (FBO), NGO, and CSO Leadership, Youth and Vulnerable People. The responsibility of National SDGs Forum is in threefold:

- Provide a mechanism for engaging key stakeholders on an ongoing basis in the national implementation of the SDGs;
- Provide a platform for direct inclusion of voices from groups at risk of social exclusion and/or discrimination in the national implementation of the SDGs;
- Inform further development of the SDG national implementation framework to parliamentary oversight and other oversight institutions.

Oversight committee on SDGs: This will be composed of parliamentary oversight and other oversight institutions including supreme audit institutions, national anti-corruption institutions, national human rights institutions and other oversight agencies among others.

- Parliamentary oversight has a leading role through dedicated parliamentary sub-committees. Parliament plays a significant role in mobilising and allocating resources and in providing oversight in the implementation of the SDGs. In addition, due to their closeness to the people in their constituencies, Members of Parliament are advocates, mobilizers and ambassadors for the SDGs. Parliament will be supported by the Parliamentary Advocacy Forum for SDGs and Parliamentary sub-committees which include Portfolio and standing committee sub-committees.
- Independent oversight institutions or watchdog institutions which include supreme audit institutions, national anti-corruption institutions, national human rights institutions and other oversight agencies including CSOs exercise oversight of the executive and public administration in a different and more specialised way compared to how parliaments exercise oversight. As Members of Parliament conduct oversight on policies at specific times and often in a more generic way, independent oversight institutions do so continuously by specialised staff with an explicit mandate based in legislation.

Policy Coordination Committee (PCC): Policy Coordination Committee with support from Steering Committee on SDGs) will be co-chaired by the Minister of Development Planning and Minister of Finance. The committee will be composed of TWGs on SDGs, Disaster Management Authority (DMA)/Covid19 Nacosec, Local Government Committee on SDGs, crosscutting representation from Gender, climate change, environment, disability and youth and NSDP. The Policy Coordination Committee will be responsible for providing guidance and developing mechanisms to align the SDG implementation process with other national frameworks including providing policy direction.

- **Steering Committee on SDGs:** Steering Committee on SDGs under the chairmanship of Government Secretary (GS) comprising of Principal Secretaries, SDG Focal Persons at Ministry, United Nations Country Team, Development Partners, Academia, private sector and CSO Representatives, Chief Executives of Government Agencies as special invitees will oversee and periodically review operations of Technical Coordination Committees for monitoring, evaluation and reporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with associated targets. Specifically, the roles of Steering Committee on SDGs will include the following:

- To review and refine the National Indicator Framework with a view to add additional indicators, modify or delete the existing indicators.
- To consider and approve the methodology for computation of new additional and modified national indicators.
- To examine and suggest addition/deletion/modification of indicators and their methodology for National Indicator Framework. The recommendation of the Technical Coordination Committee will be submitted to the Steering Committee on SDGs for its consideration and approval.
- To suggest and recommend new surveys to collect data for the indicators where data is not available on the recommendation of the Technical Coordination Committee.

Technical Coordination Committee: The Technical coordination committee will be responsible for the following.

- Supporting oversight of the implementation of the SDG Coordination Framework.
- Coordinating monitoring and assessment of implementation and progress of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs within the government annual performance reporting
- Coordinate the preparation of SDGs national progress reports including the Voluntary National Reviews Building strategic partnerships with the stakeholders on financing and innovation for the SDGs.
- Providing technical support, advice and expertise to the Technical Working Groups, Ministries, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academic Institutions and development partners to accelerate the implementation of the SDG agenda.
- With support from the National Statistics Office, will coordinate and cooperate with other MDAs, HLGs and CSOs in the NSS to improve statistical capacity for the production of relevant data and statistics to support SDG indicator monitoring and reporting.
- Serving as a convergence centre and hub of SDG information and data for the government and other stakeholders.
- Provides a platform for discussion and stakeholder engagement in a structured manner

Communication and Dissemination

Ineffective communication and pathways for dissemination remain a challenge in the enhancing visibility of SDGs. The proposal to address gaps in communication and information gaps will be key towards effective implementation of coordination framework, reinforcing vertical and horizontal policy coherence as well as multi stakeholder engagements.

- The Ministry of Development Planning will lead the Communication and Popularisation TWG. The Ministry will collaborate with other TWGs, CSOs, local governments and other relevant partners to create awareness about the relevance of SDGs and ensure that Lesotho's efforts in implementing and reporting on the goals in the decade of action are realised. The different stakeholders will conduct nation-wide sensitization on SDGs through local government structures for increased popularisation. The desired awareness raising will be regular to ensure the public gets vital knowledge on SDGs and a means of reporting on the status of realising the SDG targets.
- The role of the media in SDG implementation is to raise awareness about the global goals, focus on issues of sustainable development for the national media, and build and support a learning community.

Technical Working Groups: The Technical Working Groups will be responsible for overall monitoring, evaluation and reporting of SDGs.

- All TWGs will ensure that the plans, national budgets and other reports are reflective of their alignment to the NSDP Programme Areas and SDGs.
- Local Governments are the key implementers of SDGs and work through TWGs. They are at the forefront of implementing SDGs at the local level by addressing local challenges through service delivery as well as producing disaggregated data that feeds into the National Statistical databases, thereby helping identification of those that are being left behind in the journey towards sustainable development.

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of the Technical Working Group will be led by the Ministry of Development Planning and the Data Technical Working Group led by Bureau of Statistics Lesotho who will engage the various ministries for SDG monitoring, as it addresses the data gaps and data differences. To improve coordination for data at both national and sub-national levels, District SDG Working Groups have been established to spearhead the monitoring and reporting on SDG indicators.