

LESOTHO 2022 VNR Key Messages

- 1. Over the past two decades, Lesotho has made strides in poverty reduction, with poverty declining from 56.6% in 2002 to 49.7% in 2017 and multidimensional child poverty dropping from 65.4% in 2014 to 45.5% in 2018.** However, poverty is mostly concentrated in the rural areas and hard to reach areas. For instance, urban areas recorded a strong poverty reduction from 41.5% in 2002 to 28.5% in 2017, while poverty in rural areas changed slightly from 61.3 per cent to 60.7 per cent, adding to an already large urban-rural gap.
- 2. The economic disruptions caused by COVID-19 led to a loss of wages for many households, thus reversing poverty reduction gains.** For instance, more than 40,000 people fell into poverty nationally as a result of a 5 per cent decline in household consumption expenditure. In rural areas, poverty increased by 2.12% in 2020.
- 3. While Lesotho has made significant investments in improving access to basic and tertiary education, however, many school-age children, especially in rural areas, are not in school and education quality is low.** The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the learning crisis: while many children dropped out of school due to COVID and those who remained in school learned very little. There are notable drop-out rates among adolescent girls. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the glaring gaps in Lesotho's education system, ultimately reversing some of the progress made towards the achievement of SDG 4. Some of the impact of the long absence from school due to COVID-19 is evident in the decreased learner performance in the Junior Certificate and School Leaving examinations.
- 4. To counter the COVID-19 effects, the Government undertook several initiatives to build a resilient and equitable education system.** The initiatives include:
 - Implementation of accelerated teaching-learning curriculum in response to reduced opportunity to learn
 - Engagement of temporary assistant teachers to fast-track teaching-learning to address lost time
 - Launch of learning passport (e-learning) and learner packs for primary school education and revision booklets for secondary school education
 - Inclusive assistive technology devices for special education needs

5. **The existence and application of the dual legal system contradicts the principles of gender equality and a universal approach to gender issues as the system allows discrimination on the basis of culture and tradition.** The country is in the process of enacting The Counter Domestic Violence Bill and harmonizing the provisions of the system through the amendment of the Laws of Lerotholi (1903). The Amendment Bill (2022) for the latter seeks to remove all legal restrictions imposed on women regarding full exercise of their rights in harmonization with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act (2006). More attention is required on the existing violence against women and girls; and gendered harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage.
6. Natural resources play a fundamental role in sustaining Basotho, particularly for the rural poor whose livelihoods depend heavily on rangelands, indigenous plant species, wetlands and ecotourism. More than 65% of communities are rural poor and derive their livelihoods from the exploitation of natural resources. Their livelihoods are threatened as Lesotho is losing approximately 40,000 tonnes of soil per year. The situation is caused by among others mismanagement of natural resources as well as terrain and topography that make the country susceptible to degradation and biodiversity loss. To reverse the situation, the Government is implementing a number of initiatives for restoration and protection of wetlands and forests through an integrated catchment management system. The country needs to scale up action to disseminate green energy technologies to lessen pressure on biodiversity and to build the resilience of communities, particularly vulnerable households, to climate change hazards.
7. To accelerate SDGs implementation, the country has introduced tax modernisation aimed at improving domestic resource mobilisation by bringing about collaboration between all institutions to effectively enable compliance. The country continues to strengthen partnerships through engagement of the diaspora and the private sector. During the Covid 19 pandemic, the private sector organised itself and pulled together resources to finance the country's purchase of Covid vaccine. However, building back from the pandemic, strengthening domestic resource mobilisation remains critical and the call for international community for partnership cannot be overemphasised in accelerating the SDGs implementation while investment in implementing the second National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (2022/23-2026/27) will be of utmost importance to close the current data gaps.