



UNITED NATIONS
LESOTHO
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A scenic landscape photograph showing several traditional round huts with thick thatched roofs in the foreground. The huts are situated on a grassy slope. In the background, there are rolling green hills and rugged, rocky mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

UN NEWSLETTER

2022, ISSUE 1

BY THE OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

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- **Piloting of Electric Pressure Cooker Project in Early Childhood Care Development Centres (ECCD)**

Getting to know the new UN Resident Coordinator for Lesotho...



Amanda Khozi Mukwashi was appointed by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres upon approval of the Lesotho Government on 1 January 2022. Ms. Mukwashi has devoted more than 25 years to public service, working on poverty alleviation, tackling injustice and inequalities at the intergovernmental and non-governmental level while holding leadership positions at the United Nations and externally.

Reitumetse Russell (RR) sat down with the RC to find more about her family, career and aspirations for her new leadership role in Lesotho.

RR: How would you describe your upbringing and how do you feel it has contributed to the person you are today?

RC: I come from a family where our parents believed in education, hard work and integrity. It was also an environment where we were supported to be confident and encouraged to thrive. In our home, I can't remember ever thinking that because I was a girl, I had less opportunities than my brothers or vice versa. We all grew up doing the house chores, regardless of age or gender. The key was that work had to be fairly distributed and that everyone had to play their role. I credit this to my parents and their desire and determination for each child to achieve their best and be respectful of others. Our parents believed in education, they wanted each of us to get as far as we could. So most of our lives revolved around learning, be it at school, at church or at home or at the village.

When I look back, I can see that this contributed to how I have approached my career and life in general. I was never afraid to try. I think that self-belief was instilled in me when I was growing up and while over the years, I have had ups and downs, that foundation has been what I hold on to. I have taken this same ethos of hard work, trying and being true to yourself into everything that I do. Don't be afraid to try. Yes, you might make mistakes and sometimes, it might even be seen as a failure, but you can get up again and try once more. Have a network of support that holds you up when you are down.

RR: With that background, you then worked in the UK and authored a book titled 'But where are you really from?' what inspired you to write this book?

RC: I have spent many years away from home and have interacted with many different cultures over the years. Living in Europe, I became very aware of being a black African woman. I think what became clear to me was the divisive nature of stereotypes. There was much more to black women than mere statistics. I decided that I was going to write my story to encourage other women from all walks of life to know that they were more than a statistic. But where are you really from is a book about identity, human good and hope. I wanted to tell a story of a woman, an African woman and the values that I have that were nurtured in my mother's Home and her mother's before her. They are the ones who taught us about hard work and about being humble.

I wanted the world to know that it doesn't matter where you come from, you could come from a poor or rich family, you could be white, black or any other colour, it doesn't matter, what matters are the values you were raised with. And these good values are found in all parts of the world.



I also wanted to say that while I was made up of different experiences that I have had in my life from different parts of the world, the foundation comes from the home. It is in the home that we must learn about dignity, equality and justice.

While writing and reflecting on this, I realized that as people we are at times more comfortable with 'othering' each other rather than find commonalities that bring us together - that concept of Ubuntu that points to our humanity as a shared core. So the title of the book came about as I was writing the different stories that I had experienced. 'But where are you really from?' was my message to others that there is more that we have in common than what sets us apart.

So I wanted to say rather than focusing on what separates us, if we focus on our shared humanity we would be much stronger and find global solutions together.

RR: You spoke of global solutions and finding solutions together, having lived and worked in the UK and Germany, how would you compare the governance of these countries in contrast to the African countries?

RC: I think that every country is walking its own unique journey in terms of governance. Regardless of whether they are in Africa or any other part of the world. There are countries who have had several hundreds of years to develop their structures and institutions of governance. There are others still in the process of refining them. And there are those who might be at the beginning of the journey. I would like to think that what is important is ensuring that the focus and commitment of governance structures and systems is to serve the people of a nation. To ensure that everyone can enjoy peace, justice and dignity. To provide opportunities for women, men and children to thrive.

To build and safeguard today's developments for future generations. And that is why governance is a work in progress. A continuous work in progress that requires inter generational dialogue and reforms. This is not going to happen in a short period of time. Instead it needs all of us to be engaged. Transparency, accountability and meaningful engagement at all levels are a sine qua non for putting in place sustainable and resilient systems and structures. I believe that it is doable for many countries.

RR: Now you have moved to Lesotho, what are you looking forward to achieving?

RC: There are so many things that I want to achieve. But I know that I cannot do everything. I will need to listen and learn and see where I can add the most value. Maybe if you ask me this question again when I have been here longer, I will be more specific. There is one thing though that I am very keen to do. I would like to connect with the Basotho and understand their lived experiences. The UN is making a difference and through the different UN agencies working together with civil society and government, they are providing support for the delivery of the sustainable development goals.

I would like us to work together in making a difference. Issues of youth unemployment, food insecurity and Gender Based Violence (GBV), are some of the things that rob people of their dignity. I would like to believe that working together we can try and find ways of tapping into the energy and assets that already exist here in the Mountain Kingdom.

RR: The current UNDAF Lesotho is coming to an end next year, do you think this framework and its mandate would have been reached in 2023, and what do you think could be done better for the next corporation framework?

RC: As newcomer, I honestly don't know yet what has been achieved, but once we have the evaluation we would be able to know what we have achieved as the UN, with the development partners and the people of Basotho.



Hoping that when we launch the evaluation process we will engage a diverse group of actors who will give us feedback on what has been achieved, the gaps, missed opportunities and so on. At that point when you ask the same question again I hope to be able to say with evidence what has been achieved. For now I am looking forward to working together with others and addressing some of the issues that can be game changers for sustainable development. I have been so warmly welcomed to Lesotho and already I am beginning to feel at home. Kea leboha

A Human Enriching Voyage of More than Half a Decade: The Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change Project (RVCC) Comes to an Impactful End!



RVCC project beneficiaries. ©UNDP



Permaculture Experts meeting the community. ©UNDP

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Funded Project, Reducing Vulnerabilities to Climate Change (RVCC) finally closes after being implemented for six years in the councils of Khoelenya, Thabo-Mokhele and Lithipeng in the Mohale's Hoek district. The main aim of the Project was to reduce communities' vulnerability to the effects of climate change, thereby making them more resilient through mainstreaming climate risk considerations into the Land Rehabilitation Programme of Lesotho.

This aim is linked to one of UNDP's pillars: environmental sustainability, climate change and resilience, as well as SDG 13, Climate Action.

The biggest questions now that the project has come to an end, are:

- (i) Are people less vulnerable to climate change?
- (ii) Are the communities more resilient to handle the environmental shocks imposed by climate change, and;
- (iii) Will there be sustainability of the work done through the Project?

The Minister of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Honourable Motlohi Maliehe, is pleased with the achievements of the RVCC Project and sees it as a model that can be replicated throughout the country. During his site visit in Lithipeng recently, he indicated that he is committed to leading teams in his Ministry to ensure that the activities of the Project are continued with or without donor funds and in other parts of the country.

What we see at all the project sites is nothing short of a success story, particularly on the land rehabilitation interventions. I visited most of the sites before implementation of the project to review the extend of the degradation of rangelands. Most were infested with invasive shrubs and had many rocks. Today I am so happy to see the impact that has been brought by brush control and removal of rocks. The rangelands are fully rehabilitated and people's livestock enjoys the rich grass, indeed the whole of Lesotho should learn from this Project", he remarked.

For most beneficiaries, including the Government Ministries, capacity building is seen as the biggest gain, something that no one can take away from them. The Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Mr. Lefu Manyokole, is convinced that RVCC has brought lasting changes in people's lives through the capacity it has built. When asked what the biggest achievement of the Project has been, he said, "Knowledge tops all benefits coming from this Project. Capacity building is the biggest takeaway for us as a Government Ministry and other line ministries and particularly for the communities. The communities are resilient because they now know what to do to avert the terrible effects of climate change".

Another objective of the project was to work with the communities to improve their land management skills as well as their farming skills as a way of adapting to climate change. Perhaps the biggest achievement of the project is that communities, including local authorities have been capacitated on various aspect on building their resilience against climate change.

Through the Project, communities learnt innovative approaches to land rehabilitation such as soil conservation skills including donga rehabilitation, brush control, building of stone lines, practicing rotational grazing, practicing crop rotation and conservation agriculture. Moreover, to improve the food security for households, they also learnt climate smart farming methods such as protected farming and permaculture. To implement their newly acquired skills beneficiaries were further supported with farming equipment and seeds, fruit trees, shade nets, water harvesting equipment, chickens, bee keeping equipment, energy efficient stoves and water harvesting tanks, all in an effort to increase their resilience to climate change effects.

The communities attested to the fact that their lives will never be the same after the impact brought by the RVCC Project. 'Mapoloko Leteane, one of the villagers from Lithipeng, expressed her gratitude to the Project for reducing food insecurity in their villages. She explained that through the Project, all households have been given all the support in a form of tools, seeds, and other inputs, to produce food. "We all have vegetables in our gardens. Our children are enjoying the abundant produce of vegetables such as tomatoes and can be seen picking them freely. We have highly nourished children. The malnutrition, which we once saw increasing in our villages, is now history. We have enough food for the whole year. We preserve excess food where necessary", she said.

The Project team was made of different experts who brought tremendous value to the work done among the communities. Among them was the Permaculture Expert, Mr. Kevan Zunkel, who taught people how to produce food through the permaculture farming method. Permaculture is new to most of the communities and has been completely embraced as many are already enjoying the greatest yields from their gardens. Mr Zunkel was instrumental in facilitating the development of an exit strategy, which he says is one key deliverable that has given him hope that the Government remains committed to continue the work done. He said that the process that was followed to compile the sustainability strategy challenged the implementing partners to take cognisance of what the project had achieved and to develop strategies aimed at capitalizing on these achievements. Indeed the implementing partners identified the achievements, prioritized them and then specified exactly how they would go about ensuring that these impacts were sustained.



FAO delivers emergency fodder seeds to vulnerable livestock farmers in Lesotho...

The high-quality animal fodder seeds will reach 1 200 livestock farmers to restore their livelihoods



Some of the livestock farmers who received fodder seeds at the Maqhaka resource centre, Berea district. ©FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with financial support from the World Bank, is distributing emergency fodder seeds to vulnerable Lesotho livestock owners affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The intervention seeks to make a quick impact on about 1 200 vulnerable farmers from wool sheds and livestock communities in five rangelands districts which were affected by COVID-19 related restrictions that included restricted movements and closure of some economic activities. During the national lockdown in Lesotho, livestock keepers were unable to buy animal feeds due to access challenges and related price hikes.

Matsepo Mohapi, 48 years old, has a family of six members. She keeps 60 livestock including sheep, goats, donkey and horses in Mokhethoaneng Tocha village, Berea district. Once a year she shears her sheep for wool and goats for mohair to sell to generate income for her household. Her husband who works in the mines in a neighboring country sends her money to buy livestock feeds.

“During the lockdown my husband stayed at home; the mine had been closed. We didn’t have money to buy livestock feed. The animals looked underfed because we were feeding them on residuals from the farm. In August and May this year when I took them for shearing, I realized the quality and quantity of the wool and mohair had reduced, I was given little money compared to previous years,” said Matsepo.

“COVID-19 affected my family in terms of incomes and food security. Getting food for the animals was a challenge. I had to borrow corn residuals from neighbors’ farms to feed the animals, yet there were no buyers of the animals during that time. We lacked food at home,” explained Mootisi Mocase, a father of two, from Liphiring village. He keeps 30 livestock including, sheep, donkey, rabbits, chicken, and pigs. The targeted communities rely on livestock for food and income from wool and mohair production. They received animal fodder seeds, including grazing vetch, lucerne, barley, rye, and oats, to help protect their animals and restore their livelihoods.



Making livestock more resilient.

The fodder seeds are expected to boost livestock production and incomes of the farmers.

“We’re delighted that the fodder seeds have been distributed in time as the planting season starts. Most of the livestock keepers are first time fodder growers; the seeds will encourage them to grow more nutritious animals fodder crops in the future and reduce dependence on rangelands for grazing,” said David Mwesigwa, FAO Emergency and Resilience Coordinator in Lesotho. Additionally, fodder seeds like the grazing vetch fix nitrogen in soil thus helping to provide a high protein, palatable forage.

Piloting of Electric Pressure Cooker Project in Early Childhood Care Development Centres (ECCD)

In December 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) steered the Electric Pressure Cooker (EPC) pilot project in five pre-schools in Maseru district to assess the use of the EPC to displace biomass energy cooking systems from the school feeding program. The main objectives are to reduce deforestation, promote clean energy consumption, encourage efficiency in food preparation as well as decrease the cost associated with food preparation for sustainability. WFP will conduct comparative analysis to evaluate the best approach for promoting the EPCs in schools.

The success of this pilot project will serve as a basis to mobilise more funding to rollout the programme in other districts. The Ministry of Agriculture through the Department of Nutrition and Home Economics and Ministry of Education through ECCD and school feeding unit were instrumental in undertaking food trials and the compilation and development of the cookbook to support pre-school cooks. Ten cooks including ECCD owners received capacity building training on use of the EPC.

Ministry of Labour and Employment teams up with recruitment agencies in fighting human trafficking

The International Organization for Migration, IOM supported the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) in November 2021 in conducting a workshop on counter trafficking and victim identification, and referrals for recruitment agencies including factory worker focal points and employee representatives.

The Workshop was facilitated by the Ministry of Labour and Employment officials, Anti-Trafficking in Persons (TiP) focal points, and the Migration Control Unit of the Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS) as well as IOM’s regional expert. A total of 139 persons attended the workshop. The participants had basic knowledge on countering Trafficking in Person but had not thought about how “ethical recruitment” could be an important process to minimize TiP.

Another consideration was also on how the human resource management /administration departments can play a key role to identify potential victims of trafficking who seem to have no freedom of movement, or document confiscation by their employers. The training sessions further raised various issues such as the existing reporting channels which are not effective and potential solutions towards improved identification and reporting, and the referral of potential victims.



Key Recommendations from the workshop:

- The draft Standard Guidelines for Recruitment outside of Lesotho should be finalized, translated and disseminated among stakeholders.
- Operational user's guide on Anti-TIP and recruitment agencies should be translated into Sesotho.
- There are currently no regulations regarding the recruitment of labourers who are recruited for work in Lesotho.
- Ministry of Labour and Employment officials requested IOM to support and develop regulations for recruitment agencies working with recruitments in the country as this will contribute to strengthening oversight of recruiters who are currently unregistered.
- The participants requested to receive further training on TIP as this would enable them to pass the knowledge to other industry peers and stakeholder especially on the ethical recruitment processes to minimize the risk of human trafficking.

All key stakeholders were encouraged to strengthen migration governance and management, through proper coordination among the stakeholders, including reintegration of returnees and VoTs to curb human trafficking.



Workshop participants. ©IOM



Workshop participants. ©IOM

UNAIDS Supports civil society workshop on PEPFAR COP 22

The UNAIDS Country Office provided technical and financial support to Civil society organizations to prepare for their engagement in the PEPFAR Country Operational Plan 2022 (COP22). The workshop which was held on 20th to 21st January, was attended by a wide range of local and international organizations implementing HIV programs across the country. The purpose was to reflect on the civil society engagement in previous COP processes, identify priorities for COP22, and make recommendations for strengthening the HIV response, civil society coordination and accountability in the country.

Morephe Santi from Masepese Foundation Development Forum coordinated participants' preparations and attendance of the workshop. Speaking at the opening of the meeting, Alfred Thotolo, the Executive Director of the Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV provided a comprehensive overview of the COP process. He highlighted how civil society has engaged in COP process in previous years. Ntate Thotolo challenged civil society to critically participate in the meeting to ensure that the COP process has full engagement of the civil society and that civil society priorities are well represented by those who will be selected to represent the sector in COP meetings. Other participants shared their experiences with previous COP processes.



The workshop was aligned to the focus of the UN Joint Team on AIDS on a people-centred approach, focusing on the most affected people particularly women and girls in Africa and key populations, and supporting the leadership and empowerment of communities including community-led responses. The participants deliberated on the country's HIV status, achievements, gaps, challenges, and priorities. Looking forward, the participants reflected on the state of the epidemic in Lesotho and developed priorities for presentation during the country's COP process.

A session of the meeting was dedicated to discussions on civil society coordination, including self-coordinating and national coordination through the National AIDS Commission. The meeting resulted in consensus on CSO's representation during the COP process, and a draft of the civil society key priorities for accelerating action towards ending HIV as a public health threat in Lesotho and for funding through PEPFAR.



Workshop participants. ©IUNAIDS

Strengthening health systems through access to the COVID-19 acceleration programme

The World Health Organization (WHO) held a one-day dialogue in November 2021 with private health service actors with the objective to strengthen health systems in Lesotho through the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator(ACT-A) programme.

The ACT-A programme funded by the Canadian government is a novel initiative that brings together governments, scientists, businesses, civil society, philanthropists, and global health organizations to address COVID-19 challenges and help protect everyone from the virus and its impact.

The purpose of the ACT-A is to support the development and equitable distribution of diagnostics, treatments, vaccines, and protective personal equipment to reduce mortality and severe disease, restoring full societal and economic activity globally.





The initiative provides cross-cutting health systems support for the COVID-19 response, including the deployment of tools, vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, PPE, and oxygen to Lesotho. The WHO Country office further focuses on supporting Lesotho to undertake critical actions to unlock health system bottlenecks that stand in the way of COVID-19 tools deployment.

Dr. Richard Banda, WHO country Representative said this marked a new chapter in private sector collaboration and support and should not be taken for granted, “If there is one thing that COVID-19 has taught us that collaborated efforts are the pillar of good health systems but mostly that the role the private sector and non-governmental organizations play is pivotal in times of crisis” Dr. Banda said. He said WHO has three billion targets in the general program of work, the first target is to one billion people benefiting from access to universal health coverage, “people should not be impoverished trying to access health” he said.

Second is, one billion people are better protected from health emergencies and thirdly, one billion people are enjoying better health and well-being, “this can be achieved only through partnerships such as these; where we can work together to strengthen health systems, tackle other diseases like non-communicable diseases.

Dr. Mesfin Zbelo, the Essential Services lead at WHO said there are so many areas this partnership can bring change into.

Moving mountains to bring life-saving COVID-19 vaccines to hard to reach areas in Lesotho

In a country where almost 70% of the population resides in hard to reach mountainous areas, the journey to the nearest health centre in Lesotho can take up to 6 hours.

Getting life-saving medicine to these areas is a gruelling journey – one that often takes various forms, from a helicopter ride to a horse-back ride. This requires the dedication of front-line health workers like Nurse Lithlare Nkhathi.

Nurse Nkhathi says the journey on horseback (to and fro) often takes anything between four and six hours to reach populations residing in hard to reach mountain areas who cannot access health services easy. “Our out-reach services are now combining COVID-19 vaccination as well as other health interventions,” she says. Nurse Nkhathi adds that to effectively ensure that their outreach services are effective and that people are available for the services being rendered on the set day.

They rely on community platforms such as chiefs and village health workers for community mobilization and ensuring that people come for services especially for the Covid-19 vaccine. “At the end of the day I feel very fulfilled when I see people’s happy faces after they receive the services we have worked hard to deliver to them,” she says.



Nurse Lithlare Nkhathi on a horse delivering COVID-19 vaccines in the mountainous sparsely populated region of Lesotho. Photo: UNICEF



Nurse Likonelo Shea at the Leribe Hospital preparing vaccines to be delivered from the District Health Management Team Office to villages across the district. Photo: UNICEF

UNICEF and the WHO have set out to support Lesotho to reach her target of delivering COVID-19 vaccines to approximately 1.6 million people residing in this mountainous country by the end of 2021. To date, close to 40% of people 18 years and above have received one or two jabs of approved COVID-19 vaccines. This means the country is on track to reaching the WHO goal of vaccinating eligible populations and ensuring equitable access to life-saving health interventions.

Furthermore, UNICEF together with WHO, the US Government, the African Union and other local partners, have provided technical support for the deployment of 174 units of cold chain equipment for 173 out of 216 health facilities, ensuring adequate cold chain capacity for both COVID-19 vaccines and routine vaccination in Lesotho. Additional support also includes diluents and syringes as well as well facilitating donation of donation of 560 packages (4mg tabs/PAC- 5*10) of dexamethasone as part of COVID19 treatment.

With the recent arrival of 100, 620 vaccine doses donated by the US government through COVAX, UNICEF has also supported Ministry of Health with 4 ultra-low temperature freezers to store this vaccine. This support to the cold chain is making it possible for vaccines to get to even the hardest to reach areas in the country.

Tackling misinformation

As more COVID-19 vaccines arrive in the country and people receive their jabs, myths and misinformation still abound in communities.

To address this, UNICEF is supporting community engagement by working closely with civil society structures, village health workers, community leaders, churches, and local associations to educate communities on COVID-19 vaccines benefits and addressing myths and misinformation that would otherwise reduce vaccine uptake.



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