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BY THE OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

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United to end Gender Based Violence in Lesotho

Lesotho has one of the highest incidences of sexual and gender-based violence in the world. According to the World Population Review 2022 report, 86% of Basotho women have experienced gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetime. Lesotho also ranks third in the world with the highest rape instances per capita and sixth highest murder rates ahead of countries at war.

It has become imperative to seek alternative ways of dealing with this scourge. Although there have been strides toward addressing gaps in legislation and customary practices that perpetuate GBV against women in Lesotho, there is a lot that still needs to be done to ameliorate the situation of women and girls in terms of prevention and response to SGBV.

There have been a number of International Partners operating in the Kingdom of Lesotho supporting the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of GBV, either through specific programs and initiatives or through mainstreaming efforts. The government and several civil society organizations have also put in place initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing SGBV. The United Nations in Lesotho has identified addressing SGBV as one of the priority areas for program implementation. The situation of safety and lives of women in particular and other groups vulnerable to violence has become worrying and therefore requiring an approach that is structural, systematic and collaborative.



Participants at the Anti Gender Based Violence Forum @RCO



To harmonize and create a synergy of interventions as well as leverage resource mobilization, there is an increased need for effective coordination to avoid duplication as well as stimulate national ownership through a coordinated approach towards governmental and civil society stakeholders.

In July 2022, the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, therefore, found it fitting in collaboration with the UN, civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners to reconvene and re-energise the Anti-Gender Based Violence Forum. The aim of the forum remains focused on a systematic coordination and programming for SGVB in Lesotho. It shall do this by informing, strengthening, and facilitating as well as coordination of multi-sectoral and gender-inclusive efforts in Lesotho.

Opening the forum, the Minister of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation Honourable Likeleli Tampane, highlighted that the ministry has made progress in formulating laws that protect women from GBV, such as the Counter Domestic Violence Law and the Harmonization of Rights of Widows under customary law with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons' Act.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi applauded the ministry for creating a platform for decision-making on GBV issues in the country and for leading the forum. "Despite the current challenges in dealing with GBV, I am hopeful that this platform will facilitate and be catalyst to the achievement of multi-sectoral approach response to GBV in Lesotho", she remarked.

Ending GBV in Lesotho will be a driver for progress across all the other Sustainable Development Goals that Lesotho aims to achieve by 2030, we all have a role to play, let us end it today.



Hon Likeleli Tampane, Minister of Gender, Youth and Sports Recreation delivers her remarks @RCO



Validation workshop of Nutrition Action Mapping Results

The Government of Lesotho, through the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office, alongside the UN Nutrition Secretariat, organized a one-day workshop on July 20, 2022, at the Avani Maseru Hotel in Maseru to validate the results of the stakeholder and nutrition action mapping, which was undertaken in 2021.

The nutrition mapping exercise assists to improve coordination among partners and provide necessary information for strengthening nutrition actions and planning purposes across sectors. For districts, the mapping provides information on how many beneficiaries are being reached and which actions may need to be scaled up. For ministries, it assists in identifying gaps in the coverage of districts and beneficiaries, and for the UN, NGOs, and donors the mapping supports identifying actions that may need more support.

Key stakeholders made statements during the opening ceremony, including senior representatives from the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office (FNCO), FNCO officers from all districts, UN Nutrition Secretariat, and the World Food Programme.

Opening the workshop, the PS of Economic Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office, Bereng Makotoko remarked: "It is fulfilling to note that we are gathered here today to share the findings of the nutrition actions mapping conducted by our technical people to establish "Who is doing What Where and How" with one goal of addressing food and nutrition insecurity. I do hope you will be able to identify gaps and devise means of doing better in improving the livelihoods of our people and building a resilient nation."

The efforts of the mapping exercise will prove valuable as Lesotho grapples with malnutrition, which has negatively affected physical and cognitive development, leading to poor social and economic outcomes. While Lesotho made significant gains in reducing stunting and wasting over the last two decades, the burden of malnutrition remains high with stalled progress in recent years and inequities persist across wealth quintiles and regions. About a third of children under five are stunted in Lesotho, and child undernutrition is estimated to cause 20% of child deaths in the country and a loss of 7% of GDP annually.



Workshop participants. @FAO



ECHO and UNICEF to increase COVID19 vaccination among children

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the education systems across the world to a halt, forcing schools to adapt to a completely new way of learning. For Lesotho, where only about 40% of the population has access to the internet, this proved much more difficult. The rapid move to remote learning during the pandemic was extremely difficult for students and learners, as they had to adapt to a completely new way of learning with less personal interaction.

Getting back to a safe learning environment for children was a challenge as the number of new infections was increasing in schools. To create a safe learning environment for students, the Government of Lesotho introduced vaccination against COVID-19 for children and adolescents 14 to 17 years old. To get the message across, the risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) group has been leading COVID-19 demand creation and advocacy efforts at all levels in the country.

Pulane Seloane, a secondary school student from Mafeteng High School says she had to get her COVID-19 vaccine dose so that she does not worry about missing school due to being sick from COVID-19.

"I am getting vaccinated so that in case I get infected from COVID-19, I will not be severely sick. I am protecting myself and my friends," says Pulane.

Pulane and other students like Atang Mosenene had to take their COVID-19 vaccine shots as they had a school excursion to another district. "I am looking forward to the school trip and happy that I have finally received my first dose of vaccine," he said.

Atang and all the students will benefit from the excursion as they will explore and gain real-world experience.



Pulane Seloane (Right) with her friend after receiving their first dose of COVID-19 vaccines. Seloane received her first dose before traveling to Botha Bothe district on an education. @UNICEF



Atang Mosenene receives his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at school before traveling to another district for an educational trip. Atang is one of approximately 100 students at Mafeteng High School who received their first dose of the vaccine at school. @UNICEF



UNICEF and ECHO Support

UNICEF has set out to support the Government of Lesotho through the Ministry of Lesotho to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to approximately 1.6 million Basotho from 12 years and above of which approximately 240,000 should be 12 – 17 years. To date, 57% of adults 18 years and above and 26% of children 12 to 17 years have received at least one dose of approved COVID-19 vaccines. This means the country will gradually return to normal where children will be safe, healthy, and stay in school to finish their education.

UNICEF received funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) to support the introduction and roll-out of COVID-19 vaccination and strengthen community engagement for vaccine acceptance and demand promotion in 12 UNICEF Eastern, Southern, West, and Central African countries including Lesotho. It is through this funding that UNICEF together with the Ministry of Health, and other local partners have provided technical support and capacity strengthening of ten district RCCEs which are made of representatives from civil society organizations, traditional leaders, education officers, and members of health facilities to name a few, in leading COVID-19 vaccines demand creation activities and establishment of community feedback mechanisms, ensuring a community that is engaged and knowledgeable about COVID-19 vaccines.

WFP supports government in establishing school gardens

To address high rates of micronutrients deficiencies in the country and specifically among school age children, WFP, through funding from the Government of Japan, is working with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food Security and Ministry of Education and Training to advocate for construction of vegetable gardens at the Early Childhood Care Development Centres (ECCDs) to complement the food basket provided by WFP at these pre-schools. A total of 85 ECCDs have been sensitized and present during the sensitizations were the ECCD caregivers, parents, and community Chiefs. Following these sensitizations, 7 schools have established the vegetable gardens.



Construction of key hole gardens. @WFP



UNDP Lesotho CO engagement on the new global UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025



UNDP staff members.@UNDP

UNDP Lesotho Country Office (CO) undertook a collaborative team engagement of the 2022-2025 UNDP Strategic Plan as a means of adopting the new value and direction of the new strategic plan. The CO team engagement leveraged on creating a better awareness of the core values, directions of change, the six signature solutions and the three enablers of the strategic plan for better alignment and scale to UNDP Lesotho programming to the strategic plan and the Africa Promise.

The UNDP Strategic Plan calls for a #FutureSmartUNDP which adapts to the ever-changing planet and social, economic and environmental needs of our world. As development changes, UNDP also aims to change its approach to development by ensuring longevity of its programmes which address problems as they evolve, seize opportunities as they come and anticipate the unknown.

Although the Strategic Plan is defined for the period between 2022-2025, UNDP aims is to implement the 3x6x3 approach to the strategy which will guide people and the planet beyond 2025 in establishing solutions that are intergenerational. This combination will help UNDP continue to deliver on what it does best; integrated development solutions driven by country priorities.

UNDP will be accompanying countries towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through country programmes, driven by national development choices, and with poverty eradication at their core, and supporting countries in pursuing the three directions of systemic change: Structural transformation, leaving no-one behind, Building Resilience interdependently.

Building Resilience is central to the work of the Governance and Peacebuilding Unit (GPU) as conflict prevention, peacebuilding, disaster management and crisis response are crucial.



This has been demonstrated in the Security Sector and Justice Sector Reforms Projects through which UNDP is supporting the Government of Lesotho in building the resilience to carry forth adequate security and implement accessible and fair justice during times of political unrest, especially those involving high-ranking political figures.

The Six Signature Solutions are the areas of highest country demand, and where UNDP best supports the United Nations (UN) system by scaling up development to capacitate countries to meet evolving needs.

Poverty and Inequality

Poverty and Inequality focuses on tackling inequality of opportunities by investing in enhanced capabilities which will drive people's ability to move above the poverty line. By 2025, UNDP hopes to have assisted 100 million people to escape poverty, marginalisation and exclusion. Scaling up on youth economic empowerment, with a special focus on social entrepreneurship, green jobs, decent jobs and protecting informal workers.

UNDP Lesotho will help to address the multi-dimensional poverty which almost 1million Basotho live under (further worsened during the COVID19 pandemic) through the increase of opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth and improving food security and decent work especially for women and persons living with disabilities. The country office has started addressing these through the implementation of five (5) projects, namely Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth, Green Value Chains Project, Plastic and Waste Management, Accelerator Lab and the Sustainability Support for Trade Project.

Governance

Governance focuses on helping countries to address emerging complexities by creating future-proof governance systems through anticipatory approaches and better management of risk. UNDP Lesotho's support to the impending national elections serve as an example of the ever-evolving world of development and how UNDP continues to capacitate countries to reach a harmonious and future-proof unity by addressing complexities through enhanced governance systems. Additionally, UNDP Lesotho in partnership with the European Union (EU) are supporting the Government of Lesotho in the National, Justice and Security Sector Reforms Projects so that the impunity of political crimes by high ranking-officials can be put to an end in addition to creating systems which are efficient, accountable and serve ordinary Basotho with fairness and integrity.

Resilience and Environment

Resilience focuses on supporting countries and communities in building resilience to diverse shocks and crises, including conflict, climate change, disaster and epidemics, with Environment focusing on putting nature and the environment at the heart of national economies and planning; helping governments protect, manage and value their natural assets.

UNDP Lesotho has provided supported to the Government of Lesotho to become resilient by mitigating future environmental shocks through the Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change Project (RVCC), and the Green Value Chains Project (GVC) where communities are capacitated on ways to tackle environmental shocks to protect their arable land, sustain food security in Lesotho and to harness markets in green value chains. UNDP through these projects has capacitated the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation with the adoption of an AutoCAD system which will assist in designing water sources such as dams for the benefit of helping Lesotho to withstand future draughts. Through the Energy and Environment Unit, UNDP Lesotho further supports Lesotho in the renewable and affordable energy initiative through the Sustainable Energy for All Project (SE4All) where UNDP Lesotho is mobilising 20% of the private sector to establish energy centres and mini grids.



Energy

Energy focuses on increasing energy access for that furthest behind and accelerating the transition to renewable energy. UNDP Lesotho aligns with the above two signature solutions as they put nature, environmental preservation and access to energy at the heart of their work with the Government of Lesotho. This has been implemented through the RVCC and the SE4ALL Projects referred to above. The SE4ALL Project also aims to electrify rural Basotho homes through renewable energy sources.

Gender Equality

Gender Equality focuses on confronting the structural obstacles to gender equality and strengthening women's economic empowerment and leadership. UNDP Lesotho will assist the government of Lesotho to adopt policies which will enhance Gender Equality. A Gender Audit is currently ongoing within all the government ministries to provide baseline information to the extent to which Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) has been institutionalized in Lesotho's public sector. UNDP is supporting the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation to strengthen capacities for gender mainstreaming, gender equality and women's empowerment, in the context of the adopted the Gender and Development Policy (GAD) of Lesotho.

To achieve the UNDP 6 signature solutions, there are three (3) enablers which UNDP will undertake to maximise development impact.

Digitalisation

Will be used to support countries to build inclusive, ethical and sustainable digital societies. Digitalisation has been used as an enabler to assist Lesotho's digitisation of public services for sustainability through the UNDP AccLab, which has led initiatives such as the Nulistic Expo and Hackathon where they invited young innovators to employ digital solutions to address Lesotho's problems.

Strategic Innovation

Will be used to empower governments and communities to enhance the performance of entire systems, making them adaptive and resilient. The Strategic Planning Unit projects outlined above reflect strategic innovation as they aim to capacitate Lesotho to enhance performance and make her adaptive and resilient.

Development Financing

Will be used to advocate for partnerships with governments and the private sector to align public and private capital flows with the SDGs and mobilise finance at scale.

This includes the mobilisation of 20% of the private sector to build energy centres and mini grids through the SE4ALL Project which will assist in the acceleration of capacity building of the private sector through Development Financing. Invariably, this leads to Lesotho's economic structural transformation where a private sector led economy can be achieved.

Communications is a central to the implementation and documentation of the country office efforts towards the implementation of the new strategic plan. The role of communications is to tell stories which have never been told, give voices to communities and show off the faces of development - the human beings whose lives have changed for the better because of UNDP development initiatives. Communications taps into all the signature solutions, draws links in between them through development of success stories and delivering through digital platforms. It is imperative that messaging is packaged coherently and in alignment with UNDP's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, while also driving access to information through comprehensible language and captivating imagery. Ultimately, a #FutureSmartUNDP can be showcased to the world.

Implementation of 2GETHER4SRHR programme- successful

“Amazing job”, that is how the Programme Manager for 2Gether4SRHR programme based at the East and Southern Africa Regional Office, Richard Delate summed up the Joint United Nations (UN) Regional Programme - 2Gether4SRHR programme which for four years brought together the collective and combined strengths of four United Nations agencies and entities in Lesotho (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO) to provide catalytic support to the government of Lesotho to scale up quality integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)/HIV and Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) services so that all people, particularly women, adolescent girls, young people and key populations can exercise their SRH rights, reduce unmet need for family planning and improve access to integrated SRHR/HIV and SGBV services.

Speaking during 2Gether4SRHR Amplification Workshop held in Maseru, Lesotho recently, the Programme Manager commended Lesotho for the partnerships formed to implement the programme and thanked the Heads of UN agencies and the Government of Lesotho for “so much great work which has been achieved.” He advised Lesotho to learn from Eswatini by introducing an electronic system to record information on SRHR, in order to further improve efficiency.

The workshop had brought together District Administrators, District Medical Officers, Academia, Civil Society Organisations, Media and other health stakeholders to take stock of the progress made in SRHR/HIV/SGBV services in Lesotho, review the contribution to SRHR/HIV/SGBV integration of services and indicators between 2018 and 2021, advocate for the scaling up of promising interventions and to explore pathways for sustainability of SRHR/HIV/SGBV in the country.



Panel discussion members at the workshop.@UNFPA

Also speaking at the workshop, the UN Resident Coordinator Ms Amanda Khozi Mukwashi lamented the high rate of Gender Based Violence in Lesotho which she said it “robs our women, girls and every single one of us of our dignity.” She said a 2019/20 Commonwealth study shows that GBV in Lesotho is not just hindering development, but costing the government and Basotho about M1.9 billion annually in healthcare costs, production, education, food security and other issues.



She said Lesotho loses over M1.9 billion per year in initiatives geared towards the fight against GBV, through costs related to healthcare, lost production, education, food security and all other things incurred when women and girls experience violence and are unable to produce or work due to GBV, adding, “they are also a cost to government.”

At the same occasion, the Minister of Health Hon Semano Sekatle said evidence showed that the 2Gether4SRHR programme helped the country achieve a lot adding that a recent survey showed that Lesotho is in control of the HIV epidemic after the country achieved the UN goals of 90-90-90 and is on course to achieving the 95-95-95 goals.

During the workshop, it emerged that Lesotho has made significant gains in the provision of integrated SRHR, HIV and SGBV services through the implementation of the 2Gether4SRHR programme as an enabling environment has been created through the multi-sectoral development of strategic documents and guidelines such as the National HIV Policy (2019) which is now incorporating SRHR, SGBV, key populations and Sustainable Development Goals, and the National HIV Operational Plan (2020-2023) that will guide fast-track plans for integrated SRHR, HIV and SGBV .

There was also a panel discussion where districts shared their experiences with the implementation of 2gether4SRHR programme, focusing on key differences the programme has made in each district and what could have been done better during the programme implementation.

The 2Gether4SRHR programme has been implemented in five countries in Southern Africa, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The programme, whose implementation has been led by UNFPA, had been designed to support the government of Lesotho to create an enabling legal and policy environment that empowers all people, but particularly women, adolescent girls, young people and key populations to exercise their Sexual and Reproductive Health rights and access quality integrated SRHR/HIV and SGBV services and to scale up the provision of client centered quality assured integrated and sustainable SRHR/HIV and SGBV services.



UN RC Amanda Khozi Mukwashi delivers her remarks at the work shop opening @UNFPA



Technical validation held to present Research findings on Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC)

Under the project “Research: Mainstreaming Environmental Dimension in Integration, Reintegration and Relocation Initiatives,” Lesotho and Mauritius are pilot countries to initiate the research on the emerging issues on the Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC). The project aims to support the Government of Lesotho in evidence-based policy development. The main activity of this project is the rapid assessment on the MECC. The overall objective of this research is to explore the interlinkages between environment, climate change and migration in Lesotho with the aim to contribute to the sustainability of integration, reintegration and planned relocation as adaptation strategies to climate change. The research collected the evidence on the issues around environmental-induced migration and displacement, climate change-induced migration and displacement in Lesotho, and proposed the way-forward.

Since late 2021, the research has been carried out by the research Consortium and the first draft report was developed. On 12 April 2022, IOM Lesotho held a technical validation meeting to present the draft report to the relevant stakeholders including Government, UN agencies and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

Environment and climate change affect a wide range of migrants and populations throughout the migration process by limiting their livelihood options and available natural resources due to environmental degradation and/or disasters. These consequences may thus be experienced by populations in countries of origin, including internal migrants, migrants in countries of destination, as well as return migrants in their country of origin. The situation is particularly compelling in the Southern African region where the livelihoods in many countries depend essentially on natural resources, and where resources are often affected by tropical storms, prolonged droughts, or other disasters. These have direct effects on the local/community economy and can impede development and lead to unsafe, unorderly, and irregular migration.

This activity is financially supported by IOM Development Fund (IDF) and implemented by International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Lesotho.



Workshop participants. @IOM

86% of Basotho women have experienced GBV in their lifetime.

Gender based violence in Lesotho must stop!

The Lesotho Gender & Anti-GBV Forum will promote gender equality & the elimination of GBV in Lesotho.



Say no to Gender based Violence!

Information Source:
World Population Review 2022



UNITED NATIONS
LESOTHO



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