

2020 UN COUNTRY ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT



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Foreword

2020 marked 75 years since the UN Charter was ratified, on the 24th October 1945. In 1945, the United Nations had 51 member states; today we have 193 member states and a growing responsibility to serve a plethora of issues. It is our responsibility to support peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, governance, climate change, food production, to respond swiftly and appropriately to health and humanitarian emergencies, and much more.

Today, we as the United Nations face a number of critical emergencies that we must support to develop the future we want and the future we need. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the world and turned from a health crisis to the most severe socio-economic crisis in almost 100 years. At the same time, the devastating effects of climate change are accelerating and must be quickly brought under control to prevent another crisis.

Due to the necessary lockdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19, the economy of Lesotho is expected to shrink by 4.8% in 2020, poverty levels are expected to increase by between 1.2 to 1.9% and those facing food insecurity increased to 764,000 individuals by July. Many Basotho have lost their jobs, particularly those working in MSMEs, the mining and textiles sectors and those migrating to South Africa for work. The fall in remittances from these migrants will further exacerbate household vulnerability. Access to essential health services has been made more difficult due to movement restrictions and challenges in maintaining trade flows that provide essential medicines.

Finally, many children have experienced a long period without access to education, including many that were reliant on school feeding programmes. There is a very real threat that the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 will reverse a decade's progress under the sustainable development goals.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations in Lesotho has been committed to stay and deliver and to mitigate the threat to our guiding principles - the SDGs.

At the start of the pandemic, we undertook a socio-economic impact assessment in collaboration with the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and African Development Bank.

The impact assessment then guided our responses to the pandemic to ensure that in our response, nobody was left behind, and human rights and gender equality was upheld. Our current Socio-Economic Response Plan for the Kingdom of Lesotho outlines 18 new activities to combat the socio-economic fallout from the pandemic with a total budget of US\$68 million that we are currently fundraising for.

Whilst there is still lots to be done, our 2020 achievements under the COVID-19 socio-economic response plan demonstrate a very successful and comprehensive response to the pandemic. To name just a few, we have successfully supported the continuation of health services in all 193 health facilities in the country under new guidelines; we have provided support to over 17,000 community health workers to maintain essential services; we have increased access to water and sanitation for over 360,000 people; we have supported over 225,000 children with distance education solutions and have provided take home rations to over 270,000 children who were reliant on free school meals before the pandemic.

We have conducted a number of assessments, including, but not limited to, assessments on employment and productivity, gender, migrant returnees and the 2020 Lesotho National Vulnerability Assessment; all of the aforementioned support informed policy making and support a comprehensive response to the pandemic.

At times, our urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic may have diverted us away from our planned activities as guided by our UNDAF. This is to be expected as we shift our focus from development assistance to humanitarian assistance under an exceptional and unexpected situation. Looking forward we will need to assess how to balance the humanitarian and development response to ensure that the Kingdom of Lesotho does not renege in the accomplishment of the SDGs.

To conclude, the United Nations in Lesotho stands together with the Kingdom of Lesotho to Build Back Better from 2021, and to ensure that the Kingdom of Lesotho is not permanently scarred from the COVID-19 crisis. The United Nations will support the Government of Lesotho to create a Lesotho that is green, equal and fair; to support private sector development and job creation, but in a manner that is green and provides fair working conditions to all; and to develop strong social safety systems to ensure that all Basotho have access to decent health and education and that nobody falls through the cracks.

Salvator Niyonzima
UN Resident Coordinator



UN Country Team



Members of the Lesotho Country Team at the annual UNCT retreat. Image: RCO

The UNCT in Lesotho is represented by eight Resident Agencies, Funds and Programmes:



And, eighteen Non- Resident Agencies:



Key Development Partners of the UN development system in the country

Partnerships are one of the key pillars for achieving the 2030 agenda, the Government of Lesotho's Second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) and the Lesotho United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The UN in Lesotho has two categories of partnerships: Development Partners (DPs) who offer technical and financial resources for UN to employ its technical capacity to support the Government of Lesotho in implementing and realising its development goals; and Implementing Partners (IPs) who work with the UN to implement programmes and projects.

Development Partners include the Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Lesotho (EU), American Embassy, Chinese Embassy, GIZ and World Bank. Development Partners have supported the UN in Lesotho in a range of areas including, but not limited to, governance, decentralization and peacebuilding, social protection, education, nutrition, and water and sanitation. Implementing Partners include government line ministries, parastatals, civil society organizations and the private sector and have supported the same areas highlighted above.



Development Partners at the annual UNCT retreat, December 2020. Image: RCO

Chapter 1: Key developments in the country & regional context

COVID-19 destabilised the Kingdom of Lesotho's development agenda in 2020, reducing economic growth and destroying people's livelihoods. Businesses and farms were forced to close under lockdowns, some of which may never reopen, causing massive increases in unemployment; vulnerability increased, both in terms of absolute poverty, but also gender based violence and psychosocial stress; whilst the health and education sectors faced insurmountable pressure. Aside from COVID-19, the Kingdom of Lesotho continued to battle rising food security in the wake of climate change.

COVID-19 caused a paradigm shift in Government and donor priorities from development to humanitarian interventions and threatened Lesotho's progress towards the 2030 Agenda[1]. In response, the United Nations in Lesotho repurposed approximately US\$ 9 million from the UNDAF to the United Nation's COVID-19 response [2].

Economic growth is expected to have decreased by 4.8% in 2020 as a direct result of COVID-19 containment measures and the global economic contraction, following three years of lacklustre growth that has eroded household wealth. Inflation remained low throughout 2020, but food price inflation continuously exceeded the average figure, thereby exacerbating food insecurity.

Massive increases in unemployment domestically and in neighbouring South Africa (which hosts numerous Basotho labour migrants, 100,000 of whom returned due to COVID-19 in 2020 [3]) has significantly increased household vulnerability. Before the pandemic 24% of the population were unemployed [4] and this is expected to have increased substantially throughout 2020.

Poverty is forecast to have increased by between 1.2% to 1.9% in 2020 as a direct result of the pandemic [5], in addition to the 50% of the population that already lived below the national poverty line before COVID-19[6].

Agricultural production chains were severely impacted under COVID-19 [7]. Harvests were lost due to closed markets and/or farmers not being allowed to access their fields and there were delays in the onset of the wool and mohair shearing season, which compromised both quality and quantity of material produced. It is estimated that during the height of the pandemic over 50% of households were unable to perform normal activities on their farm, whilst 46% of households had products that they were unable to sell [8].

COVID-19 exerted unsustainable pressure on an already pressured health system suffering an ongoing HIV epidemic. Movement restrictions affected access to essential health services, including HIV treatments, contraception and maternal health services.

A strike by healthcare workers in 2020 also weakened the capacity of Lesotho's health system. It is estimated that 30% of those in need were unable to access health services during the peak of the pandemic [9]. Nonetheless, the Kingdom of Lesotho made significant progress in HIV detection in 2020. It is estimated that 90% of people living with HIV (PLHIV) know their status. Of these, 97% are on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 93% are virally suppressed [10].

COVID-19 severely impacted the education sector: all schools closed in March 2020 and only begun to reopen from October 2020 (although they have since closed again in January 2021). Approximately 511,318 learners were affected by school closures at the height of the pandemic [11]. Further, only 20% of households with children that were previously attending school are estimated to have maintained access to some form of education; 80% of households with children in school experienced a complete halt in education during the lockdown [12].

Before 2020, the Kingdom of Lesotho suffered high levels of GBV; 86% of women in Lesotho are estimated to have experienced GBV and 41% of men to have perpetrated GBV. COVID-19 has increased the frequency of gender-based violence, particularly domestic and intimate partner violence, in both high- and low-income families. Additional stress, due to loss of income or employment, and confinement to smaller living conditions under lockdowns and social distancing requirements, has contributed towards the increase in GBV.

The COVID-19 pandemic will also exert increasing pressure on the fiscal position; the Government of Lesotho will need to increase spending to support the health and socio-economic response (the Central Bank anticipate that Government expenditure must increase by 25% to adequately support the recovery [13]), amidst dwindling financial resources available (SACU receipts propped up government revenue in 2020 to offset the impact of COVID-19 on tax revenue, but both are expected to fall significantly in 2021 [14]). The Government estimates that it will need US\$ 70 million to support the economic recovery from COVID-19. However, there is no Government recovery plan in place as it has been repeatedly delayed [15].

A joint bilateral commission of cooperation (JBCC) between the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa was also rejuvenated in 2020 in response to COVID-19. Between June and November 2020, 34 Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed to foster cooperation in agriculture, mining, infrastructure development, defence and security, economy and finance, trade and investments as well as social and humanitarian affairs.

Food insecurity continued to deteriorate in 2020, largely driven by the effects of climate change. 582,000 people, or 40% of the population, are expected to face acute food insecurity between October 2020 and March 2021 [16].

The Government of Lesotho collapsed in May 2020 and a new Government took office. However, frequent changes in government have eroded public trust; 57% of Basotho report dissatisfaction with how democracy operates in Lesotho and 66% of Basotho would support the abolishment of elections and parliament in favour of the monarchy [17]. Nonetheless, the new Government appear committed to achieve results: towards the end of 2020, the Prime Minister created four Ministerial committees under which all ministries work together to achieve greater coordination in public service delivery under the NSDP II. The four committees are (i) investment, (ii) human capital, (iii) infrastructure and (iv) governance.

Finally, the Kingdom of Lesotho ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on the 2nd November 2020 [18]. The AfCFTA provides an opportunity for Africa to create the world's largest free trade area, comprising 1.2 billion people and a US\$ 2.5 trillion market. In turn, the opportunity for Lesotho to increase its trade with the continent, and to trade more competitively, offers an opportunity to support real economic growth, the balance of payments, employment creation and thus poverty alleviation. However, the positive impacts are unlikely to be experienced in 2021 due to diverted government focus and continued trade and movement restrictions under the ongoing pandemic.

1] Sachs et al, Sustainable Development Report 2020

[2] United Nations in Lesotho, 2020, COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan

[3] IOM, 2020, Rapid Assessment of the Livelihood Situation of Returnees and COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Migration Affected Areas in Lesotho

[4] World Bank, 2020, Country Overview, Lesotho

[5] UN Lesotho, 2020, Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Kingdom of Lesotho

[6] World Bank, 2020, Country Overview, Lesotho

[7] LENAFAU (2020) Impacts of COVID 19 Lockdown on Agriculture and Food Security Sector in Lesotho: A Rapid Assessment. International Fund for Agricultural Development, European Union and Farmers Organization for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Countries Project.

[8] Bureau of Statistics, Covid-19 Socio-Economic Impact on Households Survey, October 2020

[9] Bureau of Statistics, Covid-19 Socio-Economic Impact on Households Survey, October 2020

[10] Lesotho Population-Based HIV Impact Assessment (LePHIA) Preliminary Results, Ministry of Health, Lesotho, 2020

[11] UNESCO, 2019, Education Management Information System (EMIS)

[12] Bureau of Statistics, Covid-19 Socio-Economic Impact on Households Survey, October 2020

[13] Central Bank of Lesotho, 2020, Lesotho Economic Outlook – June 2020

[14] Parliament of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 2020, 2020/21 Mid Term Budget Review

[15] United Nations in Lesotho, 2020, COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan

[16] IPC Analysis Portal, Lesotho, 2020

[17] AfroBarometer, Lesotho, 2020

[18] UNECA, 2020, Media Center, Tunisia and Lesotho join growing number of countries to ratify AfCFTA one month to start of trading

Chapter 2: UN Development system support to the COVID-19 pandemic

Overview of UN response to COVID-19

US\$42.1 Million

Financing gap under the COVID-19 socio economic response plan



US\$9.4 Million

Re-programmed funds



US\$67.7 Million

Budget for the COVID-19 socio economic response plan



US\$25.5 Million

Expenditure under the COVID-19 socio economic response plan



At the start of 2020, UN programming in Lesotho shifted from its long-term development focus to responding to the immediate humanitarian threat posed by COVID-19. A socio-economic impact assessment was conducted by the UN, World Bank, IMF and African Development Bank to estimate the impact that COVID-19 would have on the economy and population of Lesotho, including the impact on economic growth, government revenue, the agriculture, manufacturing, mining and retail sectors, food security, poverty, education, health, social protection and WASH sectors, gender equality and social cohesion.

Following the socio-economic impact assessment, a socio-economic response plan was drafted to guide and coordinate the UN's response to COVID-19. The socio-economic response plan outlines 18 outputs, with a timeframe of 0-36 months, a budget of US\$ 67.6 million and a financing shortfall of US\$ 42.6 million. Approximately US\$ 9.4 million was reprogrammed by the UN in Lesotho to support the Kingdom of Lesotho's COVID-19 response and recovery, whilst a total of US\$ 25.5 million was spent in 2020 to support the Kingdom of Lesotho's response to and recovery from COVID-19.

The outputs are divided in to five categories: (i) Health First: Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis; (ii) Protecting People:

Social Protection and Basic Services; (iii) Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and Informal Sector Workers; (iv) Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration; and (v) Social Cohesion and Community Resilience; and the UN has reported on them on a quarterly basis to monitor their implementation.

The UN's fast response to COVID-19 and proven flexibility to adjust programmes and funds towards the immediate need proved valuable to the population of Lesotho. As the vulnerable population grew and changed in composition, the UN supported the population by ensuring access to essential health services, providing and expanding the reach of cash transfers, providing food parcels and home garden kits to improve food security and sustainability and supporting distance learning solutions.

The UN also conducted many analyses to understand the real impact of COVID-19 and to ensure that interventions were appropriately targeted and embraced digital solutions that would provide long-term development gains, but also were responsive to the needs of COVID-19 in allowing economic activity to continue alongside social distancing.

2.1 Results of the UN COVID-19 Socio economic response plan

2.1.1 Health first: protecting health services and systems during the crisis

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- UNAIDS
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- WHO


Output: Health sector capacity strengthened to continue normal (non-COVID-19 related) health services, including promotive, preventative and curative health services, including NCDs.

WHO's guidance under Pillar 9 of the COVID-19 strategic preparedness and response plan on Maintaining Essential Health Services and Systems was implemented, establishing practical actions at national, subregional and local levels to reorganize and safely maintain access to high-quality, essential health services in the pandemic context. Indicators for monitoring essential health services were established, and a strategy was devised on when to stop and restart services as COVID-19 transmission recedes and surges.

As a result of the protection of essential health services, all 193 health facilities in the Kingdom now have modified routine immunisation sessions in line with COVID-19 IPC regulations. 891 outreach immunisation activities and 18 trainings were held during the pandemic, to the benefit of 22,501 children that still received vaccinations despite COVID-19.

 **193**
Health facilities now providing immunisation sessions

 **891**
Outreach immunisation activities

 **18**
Training sessions conducted

 **22 501**
Children vaccinated despite the pandemic



Routine vaccination session in Morija. Image: UNICEF

Output: Health facilities and community structures in all 10 districts maintain the capacity to deliver integrated quality gender sensitive Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), nutrition, HIV, TB and WASH services in the wake of COVID-19.

The UN supported the Government of Lesotho to establish Lesotho's first COVID-19 testing facility at the National Reference Laboratories, and focused on building capacity at district levels, so that the COVID-19 response could be decentralised and effective throughout the entire Kingdom.

In order to protect and increase the capacity of the health sector 11,480 health care workers were trained to provide essential health services in wake of COVID-19 and a further 1,720 community health workers were trained to use a new digital application, *Bophelo-ka-Mosebeletsi*, to survey and monitor community COVID19 cases.

The development and roll-out of *Bophelo-ka-Mosebeletsi* was achieved under a collaboration between the UN, Ministry of Health and Econet and offers a digital solution to handling COVID-19 at the community level, where less capacity exists. Further, by providing a community solution that allows less serious patients to remain in their homes, hospitals are less overwhelmed, and transmission is reduced.

To protect health workers against COVID-19 and enable them to continue to support and sensitise communities, a further 8,036 community health workers were provided with personal protection equipment (PPE) and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) material by the UN and 9,642 community health workers were remunerated.

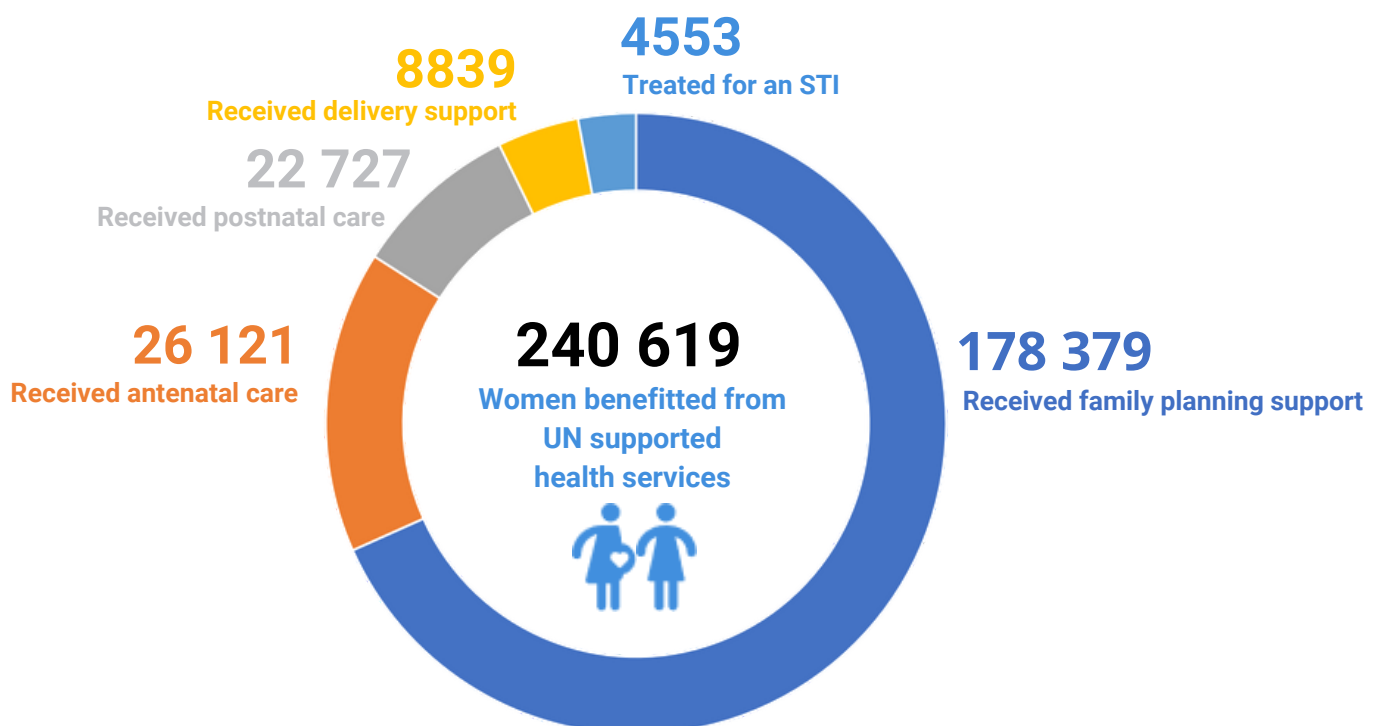
361,162 people benefitted from improved access to WASH, which provides a critical source of protection against COVID-19. Both health facilities and the general public were provided with sanitation and hygiene products and access to handwashing facilities.

63 handwashing stations were installed in bus stops, market centres and at meeting points around the country. In addition, 90 handwashing stations were installed in health facilities, whilst three key hospitals, used to isolate and treat COVID-19 patients, were provided with environmentally friendly cleaning equipment to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Gender- and youth-sensitive healthcare was also prioritised and was particularly important under the rise in gender-based violence (GBV) associated with the pandemic. In total 240,619 women benefitted from UN-supported maternal health services during the pandemic: 178,379 women received family planning support, 26,121 women received antenatal care and 22,727 women received postnatal care, 4,553 pregnant women were treated for an STI, and 8,839 pregnant women were supported through their delivery by a trained midwife or obstetrician.

Further, 89 health facilities (out of 193 nationwide) were supported to deliver adolescent youth friendly services, including through training 349 health practitioners in adolescent and youth-friendly health services (AYFHS) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Finally, the UN continued to support nutrition programmes during the pandemic to ensure that the health crisis was not exacerbated and that children did not continue to suffer disproportionate multi-dimensional poverty outcomes. During the pandemic, the UN supported health facilities to treat 802 children for severe acute malnutrition and to provide micronutrient powders to an additional 3,244 children.

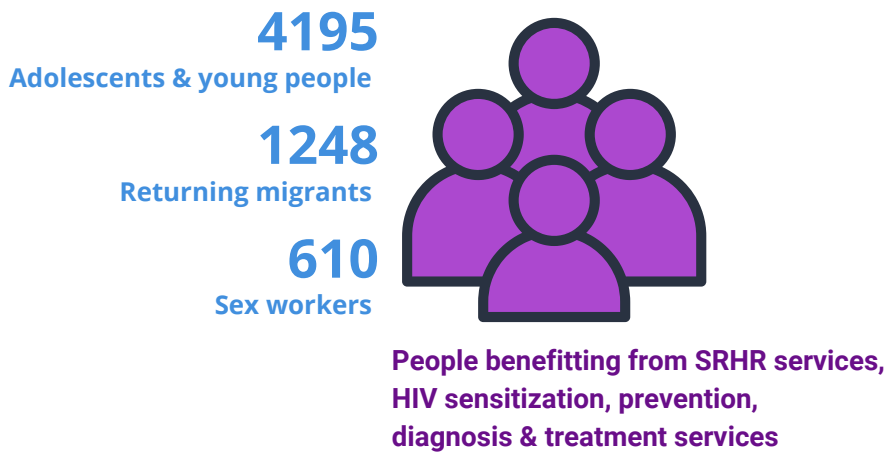


Output: Government, civil society and private sector maintain capacity to continue to deliver quality HIV and TB prevention, treatment, care and support services in the wake of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic created newly vulnerable groups, such as returning migrants that had no income and limited access to many basic services, including healthcare. At the same time, many previously vulnerable groups experienced heightened vulnerability.

Returning migrant workers, sex workers and adolescents and young people became the most vulnerable, as a whole, with regards to their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Within this group, 6,053 people were provided with SRHR services, including sensitisation on HIV and SRHR, and available services for prevention, diagnosis and treatment. 4,195 adolescent and young people, 1,248 returning migrants and 610 sex workers benefitted from the above.



Returning migrants at the Qacha's Nek border post. Image: IOM

2.1.2 Protecting people: social protection and basic services

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

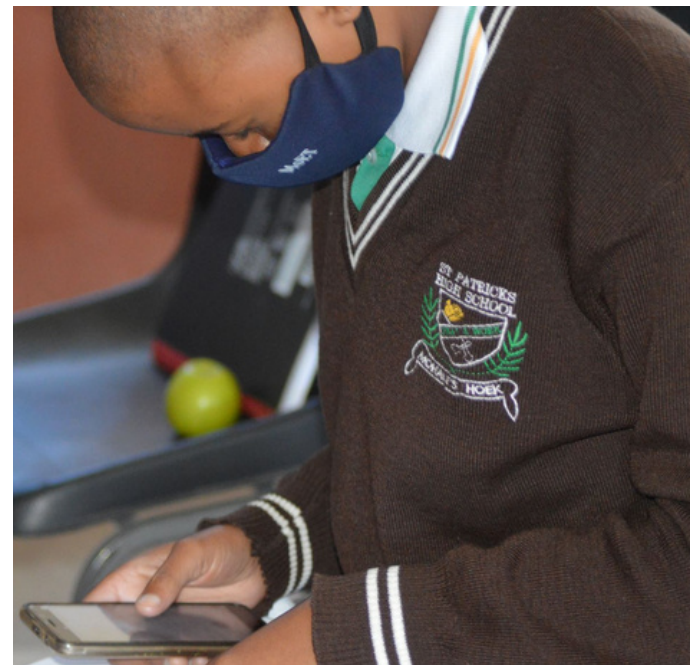
- UNFPA
- UNHCR
- UNICEF

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

During the second quarter of 2020, the Kingdom of Lesotho was put into a national lockdown in an attempt to limit the transmission of COVID-19. The lockdown also forced schools to close. In response to the closure of schools and the lost education opportunities faced by many children in Lesotho, 224,917 children, 107,960 boys and 116,957 girls, were supported with distance education solutions.

COVID-19, and the closure of schools, also posed an increased risk of children permanently dropping out of school as they instead had to support their families and protect their livelihoods. To protect livelihoods and increase the likelihood that children would remain in school, the UN provided cash transfers to vulnerable families, including families that had been made newly vulnerable due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, many children that had previously been reliant on school feeding programmes faced increasing vulnerability from schools being closed. To protect children's access to school meals, 273,008 primary school and Early Childhood Care and Development children, 137,250 boys and 135,758 girls, who were previously enrolled in school feeding programmes received take home rations from the UN.



Online learning. Image: UNICEF

224 917

children supported with distance learning solutions in response to school closures



School feeding programme. Image: WFP

273 008

Primary school, early childhood care & development children received take home rations from the UN



Output: Community members have improved knowledge on quality responsive social services and positive practices.

The UN undertook many assessments during 2020 to understand the changing nature of vulnerability faced by individuals, households and communities as a result of COVID-19. A rapid assessment conducted between July and August 2020 assessed how returning migrants fared upon their return to Lesotho and their ability to reintegrate into their host community.

The assessment highlighted that many returnees were newly vulnerable and in need of support to feed and protect their families. Consequently, new projects were quickly developed to protect returnees and vulnerable households in host communities, and to sensitise mobile populations regarding COVID-19.

The UN also implemented numerous inclusive social protection programmes in response to COVID-19, including sensitisation of COVID-19 (presented above), access to WASH (presented above), cash transfers and food parcels.

14,635 individuals (6,898 men and 7,737 women) benefitted from food parcels or food vouchers during the pandemic and another 17,727 individuals benefitted from psychosocial support services. 162,462 Basotho benefitted from cash transfer programmes during the pandemic.

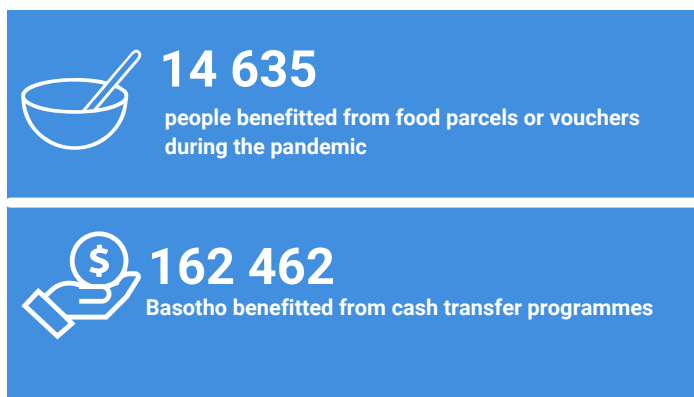
180 newly vulnerable returnees and youth, recognised through the UN's responsive cash transfer programme and through impact assessments, have also been selected for skills trainings in 2021. By identifying newly vulnerable individuals, and expanding their skillset, the UN is able to prevent a group of youth and returnees from becoming disenfranchised and dependent on social protection programmes, and instead support their reintegration into a productive labour force.

Activities to protect women and victims of abuse also took precedence during the pandemic, driven by the increase in gender-based violence (GBV) as victims were trapped at home with their perpetrators, whilst perpetrators faced increasing stress from rising income insecurity. The UN embraced advocacy campaigns against GBV, including through distributing over 200 information, education and communication (IEC) materials to female factory workers and migrants and informal traders operating in the industrial area.

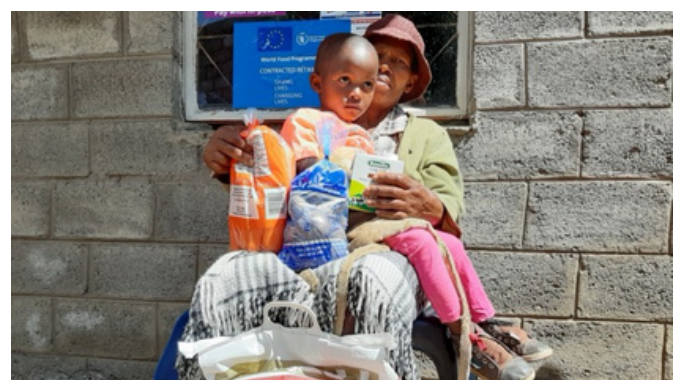
2,300 dignity kits were provided by the UN to empower women against GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse. 50 women, who had been victims of abuse, were also trained to offer and promote essential social services to local communities.

During the pandemic, the UN ensured that shelters for female victims of trafficking (VoT) stayed open and supported the rehabilitation of a new crisis shelter, which is due to be completed in early 2021. Upon completion by the UN, the shelter will be provided to the Ministry of Home Affairs for the Government to own and will be managed by a local NGO that specialises in protecting VoTs.

Finally, in line with the UN's ambition to support a digital economy, and for digitalisation to drive the COVID-19 economic recovery, the UN developed a community security application, the Lehokela Crime Alerts App, which enables victims to report incidences of abuse without alerting perpetrators. To support the roll-out of the app, 30 community policing committee members (21 female and 9 male), 4 chiefs (3 male and 1 female) and 2 police members (1 male and 1 female) have been trained and recruited to respond to reports of violence.



Handing over of dignity kits in Quthing District. Image: UNFPA



Mamatshela with one of her gran children after receiving assistance. Image: WFP

2.1.3. Economic response and recovery: protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- FAO
- IOM
- UNDP
- UNICEF
- WFP

Output: National institutions (public and private) strengthened to formulate and implement inclusive, innovative and evidence-based policy instruments which enhance efficiency and development effectiveness in selected sectors.

The UN conducted **four national assessments to determine the impact of COVID-19** on (i) **Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)**, (ii) **Unemployment and Economic Productivity**, (iii) **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**, and (iv) **MSMEs**.

The assessments provided an accurate picture of the impact of COVID-19 in Lesotho and so supported the UN to provide reliable and effective policy advice to the Government of Lesotho, particularly in drafting the national COVID-19 recovery plan.

The MSMEs assessment also provided a clear basis to establish a national database for informal and own account workers, as these individuals constitute the majority of the working population and were otherwise left out of government COVID-19 support programmes.

The UN responded quickly to develop a database of all MSMEs in the country, alongside the Ministry of Small Businesses Development and the Street Vendors Association, so that MSMEs may benefit from business support packages.

The UN has also been proactive in supporting the Government's response to COVID-19, including through the development of climate and environmentally sensitive, and inclusive and gender responsive fiscal, monetary and legislative stimulus packages.

Output: Gender responsive and evidence-based policies, strategies and programmes are in place and implemented to generate decent employment and promote green economy particularly for rural and urban youth, migrants, vulnerable women and men, and PLWDs.

In response to the increase in private sector unemployment during the pandemic, the UN provided enterprise development and entrepreneurship trainings to 128 MSMEs, all of which were led by youth or women, and 129 youth.

In addition, 560 women also benefitted from livelihood training programmes. The trainings provided will build capacity amongst women and youth, two groups with particularly high unemployment rates, so that they may build successful businesses, safeguard their families' resilience and support private sector development.

Three larger private sector companies were also provided with grants to stay afloat during the pandemic. The resilience of the private sector will be critical in supporting Lesotho's economic recovery from COVID-19, to provide employment and generate economic activity.



12 000

Farming households provided with maize, beans and sorghum seeds



21 000

Farming households identified to be provided with vegetable seeds



6142

Households received home gardening kits

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

12,000 farming households were provided with maize, beans and sorghum seeds to address COVID-19 related logistics constraints and to maintain agricultural systems. In addition, another 21,000 farming households have been identified to be provided with vegetable seeds, whilst 15,000 farming households have been identified to be provided with cereal seeds.

In order to protect food security and ensure smallholder farmers were able to produce sufficient nutritious food for their households in the wake of COVID-19, 6,142 households received home garden kits.

The UN also prioritised farmers access to markets during COVID-19, to protect food supply chains as well as farmers' livelihoods. An e-market platform, *Marakeng oa Basotho*, was established to connect farmers to markets and to encourage a digital economic recovery. 90 food suppliers have to date been registered on the e-market platform.

Whilst not related to agriculture, 187 individuals in rural communities also received assistance and training in establishing sewing, welding and carpentry businesses, which will diversify incomes in rural communities and thereby also increase rural communities' resilience.

2.1.4 Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- IOM
- UNDP
- UNICEF

Output: A National Recovery Plan that protects the ambitions of the NSDP II and the SDGs

The UN supported the Government of Lesotho to identify sectors acutely affected by the pandemic and to engage with communities and CSOs, in order to develop a national recovery plan that protects the NSDP II and the SDGs.

In order to first understand the impact of COVID-19 on the socio-economy, including the changing face of vulnerability, the UN undertook numerous impact assessments, including the UN COVID-19 socio-economic impact assessment, undertaken with the AfDB, IMF and World Bank at the very start of the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, the UN continued to undertake impact assessments to adequately recognise and respond to Lesotho's most important needs due to COVID-19.

Further impact assessments included, an assessment on (i) the continuity of essential health services, (ii) Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), (iii) Unemployment and Economic Productivity, (iv) Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, (v) MSMEs, (vi) migrant returnees, (vii) informal/formal cross-border traders, (viii) the impact of drought on water, agriculture, food security and nutrition, paying particular attention to the impact on women and people living with HIV, (ix) a Development Finance Assessment, and (x) the 2020 Lesotho National Vulnerability Assessment.

The numerous impact assessments were able to guide Government policy so that it suitably supports Lesotho's socio-economic recovery, including through policies related to employment, the labour market, social protection, climate resilience and women's empowerment. In recognition of the high levels of emigration, and remittances, in Lesotho, and the potential of the diaspora to contribute towards the development agenda, the diaspora network has also been engaged and strengthened.

Whilst in response to other impact assessments, the UN supported the development of a national MSME stimulus package, to support the most vulnerable businesses, who employ vulnerable individuals, through the pandemic; and provided support to the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation to implement the Gender and Development Policy, which directly targets marginalised and vulnerable women.

2.1.5. Social cohesion and community resilience

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- FAO
- UNICEF
- IFAD
- WFP
- UNDP
- UNHCR

Output: Gender responsive and inclusive policies, regulatory frameworks and financial mechanisms strengthened and implemented to protect employees and maintain formal work opportunities.

The aforementioned UN impact assessments, in particular two on leaving no-one behind and on gender equality and women's empowerment, have supported recent government decision making and COVID-19 responses to be inclusive and gender responsive.

Another UN impact assessment, on MSMEs, led to the creation of a national database for informal and own account workers. The database is currently under development and will ensure that informal, own account workers and MSMEs will be included in the Government's COVID-19 response plan. It will also enable those in need to access government support, both financial and technical.

The UN has also supported two Cabinet Ministers' and Permanent Secretaries' Retreats to discuss the socio-economic response, national reforms and policy, which are important to ensure that the response and reforms are validated and will be implemented effectively.

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

To promote social cohesion and community resilience at the same time as government-imposed movement restrictions limited citizen participation in the national development process and may have risked limited the need to engage citizens altogether, the UN and Government of Lesotho collaborated to ensure that citizen participation remained, albeit altered to adhere to COVID-19 safety measures.

The UN hosted 22 community dialogues on social cohesion within COVID contexts, including 6 dialogues in communities with high migrant returnees to discuss COVID-19 prevention methods and to respond to growing tension between host communities and migrant returnees from SA.

In response to growing GBV due to heightened stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN worked with three women's organisations: Gender Links, Female Lawyers (FIDA) and Women in law of Southern Africa (WILSA) to sensitise communities around domestic, and gender-based, violence, to assess gender-based rights violations and to provide recommendations to recover social cohesion.

The UN also partnered with two youth organisations, through Help Lesotho, to sensitise communities on non-discrimination, human rights and gender-based violence.

People living with HIV/AIDS and people living with disability were also highlighted as two particularly vulnerable groups during the pandemic, due to limited appropriate COVID-19 communications materials for people living with disabilities and the increased risk of experiencing severe symptoms, which increased mental stress and the ability to move freely, for people living with HIV.

Recognising their extreme vulnerability, the UN partnered with 30 community-based organisations representing people living with HIV/AIDS and/or people living with disabilities, to provide COVID-19 sensitisation and to respond to stigma.



COVID-19 sensitization campaign in Quthing District. Image: IOM

2.2. Evaluations and lessons learned

COVID-19 exacerbated existing weaknesses in Lesotho and highlighted the need to improve community resilience and social cohesion and to include the most vulnerable members of the population in the development agenda. The pandemic firstly highlighted the important need for universal healthcare coverage and the need to break the relationship between individuals' vulnerability and health outcomes.

The pandemic also highlighted the importance of agricultural productivity to protect food security and livelihoods, and the importance of working with functional district and community systems to deliver programmes efficiently.

Chapter 3: UN Development system support to national development priorities through the cooperation framework

Overview of cooperation framework results

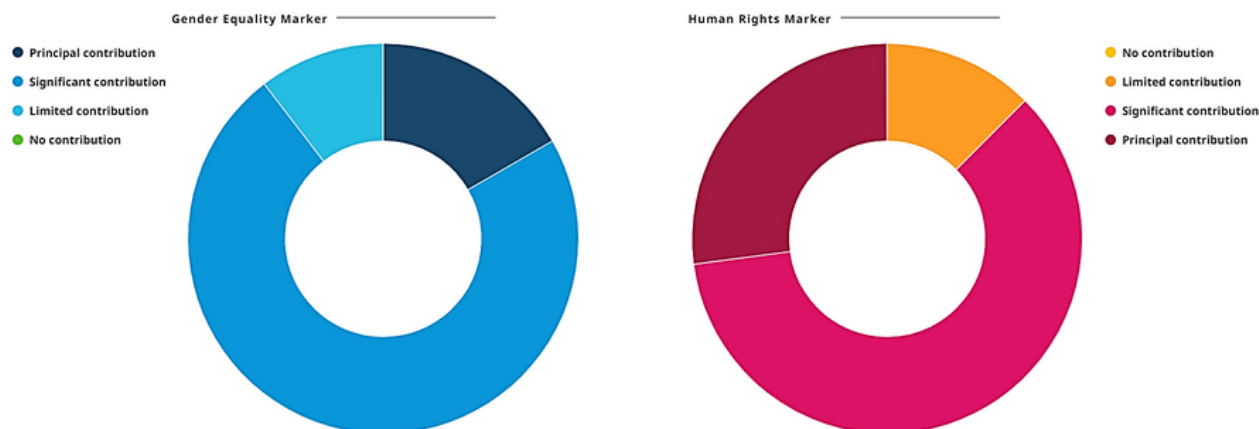


Figure 1: Programme contributions to gender equality and human rights

The onset of COVID-19 in early 2020 disrupted many workstreams and caused an immediate shift in long-term development programming to an urgent humanitarian response.

The UN in Lesotho undertook a Programme Criticality Assessment on the 2020 UNDAF Joint Work Plans to make legitimate and justifiable decisions on the how to balance programme delivery, risk, threats to health and capacity shortages. The Program Criticality Assessment determined the most critical UN outputs and tasks that should be maintained during the COVID19 pandemic and were critical for the COVID-19 response. 44 UNDAF outputs were reviewed, of which 15 outputs were deemed absolutely critical and should be prioritized during the pandemic.

Prior to the development of the current Lesotho UNDAF (2019-2023), a Common Country Analysis (CCA) was conducted in 2017, which presents an analysis of the socio-economic context of the Kingdom of Lesotho. The Common Country Analysis was based on a desk review of literature and consultation with government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

In 2020, the UN Lesotho updated the 2017 CCA report to present the emerging issues the Kingdom now faces, particularly in respect to COVID-19, and to inform UN programming looking forward.

Although the UN had to reassess its 2020 plan due to COVID-19, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and its four priority outcomes, remained the overarching framework for the UN's interventions.

Under the UNDAF, the UN is implementing 49 key activities in Lesotho. SDGs 3 (good health and well-being), 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) have the most activities attributed to their progress, in line with the targets of the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II); whilst SDGs 7 (affordable and clean energy), 10 (reduced inequalities), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land) have no activities attributed to their development.

In addition to the rapid COVID-19 response, the UN still achieved many successes under its long-term programming in 2020, including achieving UNAIDS 90-90-90 2020 targets, drafting the Human Rights Bill, which will see the establishment of the National Human Rights Committee in 2021, developing an MSME database so that MSMEs, who are frequently excluded from formal activities, may be included in government relief packages, and developing education materials for learners with disabilities, so that they may too be included in quality education provision.

All of the UN's interventions in 2020 contributed to the key cross-cutting themes of gender equality and human rights, with the majority of programmes providing significant or principal contributions to both gender equality and human rights (figure 1).

3.1 Cooperation framework priorities, outcomes and outputs

3.1.1 PILLAR 1: Accountable governance effective institutions, social cohesion and inclusion

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- ILO
- UNFPA
- IOM
- UNWOMEN
- UNDP
- WFP
- WHO

Outcome 1: By 2023, government and non-governmental institutions deliver their mandates and uphold good governance, rule of law and human rights, with all people having improved access to justice and participating in social and political decision-making processes in a peaceful environment.

To support the Government of Lesotho to deliver their mandate, the UN provided the National Assembly with ICT equipment and the necessary supporting infrastructure to hold virtual meetings throughout the pandemic and beyond. Two Cabinet Ministers' and Permanent Secretaries' Retreats were held to discuss the socio-economic response, national reforms and policy, which are important to ensure that the response and reforms are validated and will be implemented effectively.

A US\$ 9 million programme was developed with the UN, Government of Lesotho and Development Partners that will support the National Reforms process in Lesotho. The National Reforms are critical to enabling political stability, and thereby policy consistency and effective public service delivery.

To complement the National Reforms process, the UN secured US\$ 1 million to strengthen public financial management, accountability and transparency and to align government expenditure with the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) and the SDGs, and commissioned a policy mapping exercise, to identify the capacity of the Government of Lesotho's policy framework to deliver the NSDP II objective of economic growth and employment creation.

The study concluded that the Government of Lesotho currently has 122 active policies, but only 14% are fully implemented, whilst another 37% remain in draft.

National Security is also key to supporting political stability, rule of law and human rights. With UN support, the Ministry of Defence and National Security developed the framework for the National Security Policy and Strategy, which will be developed during the course of 2021.

Intelligence capacity was also strengthened within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and agents that work in migration, so as to combat human trafficking in Lesotho, which threatens to undermine the country's development achievements.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is very important to judge the success of a policy or strategy, to judge its feasibility or to recognize any obstacles in implementation.

To support M&E, the National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD) Project was launched, to build technical M&E capacity within the Government of Lesotho, and M&E technology-based platforms were developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Development Planning.

The UN also partnered with the Bureau of Statistics to launch and disseminate the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) results throughout all 10 districts in the country.

The draft Human Rights Bill, which will provide basis for the Human Rights Commission to be established in 2021, was prepared in line with the Paris Principles, by the Ministry of Justice and Law, CSOs and with UN support. Ahead of the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission, the UN also held 6 national dialogues on human rights and supported 3 national umbrella organisations to ensure that they are well represented within the upcoming Human Rights Commission.

3.1.2 PILLAR 2: Sustainable human capital development

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- FAO
- IAEA
- ILO
- UNAIDS
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- UNWOMEN
- WFP
- WHO

Outcome 2: By 2023, all people, particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from gender-responsive social policies and programmes for the sustainable and equitable realization of their rights.

The health sector was necessarily prioritised in 2020, to ensure that it had the capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to maintain the continuity of essential health services.

The National Health Strategic Plan (2019-23) was updated to reflect the changing environment, approved and endorsed by stakeholders. The Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, which centered around the health response to COVID-19, was rapidly developed and implemented, establishing practical actions at national, subregional and local levels to reorganize and safely maintain access to high-quality, essential health services in the pandemic context.

Demand for HIV and TB treatment persisted throughout 2020, despite health facilities focusing on the pandemic. Nonetheless, the UN continued to support the HIV and TB response in Lesotho and made significant gains particularly in HIV. In 2020, the Kingdom of Lesotho successfully achieved the UNAIDS 2020 90-90-90 targets: 90% of people living with HIV know their status, 97% of people diagnosed with HIV are on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and 92% of people on ART are virally suppressed. The achievements of the 90-90-90 targets is an enormous milestone for the Kingdom of Lesotho and allows the UN to increase its ambition to target 95-95-95 by 2025.

A TB prevalence survey was also conducted in 2020, albeit complicated by movement restrictions and social-distancing requirements, and will provide a reformed response in 2021.

A midwifery gap analysis was conducted by the Ministry of Health, with technical support provided by the UN. The results will be used to strengthen midwifery education, practice and legislation in 2021.

Educational packs have been developed for persons living with disabilities, which will be distributed through the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD). Community sensitisation was prioritised to ensure that communities are aware of the need for inclusive education, and are equipped to demand for it.

Demand increased for cash transfer programmes in 2020 in both rural and urban areas. At the start of the pandemic, drought drove the demand for cash transfer programmes and so programmes were centred in rural areas. However, towards the second half of 2020, the impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods worsened, whilst the impact of drought lessened. As a result, demand for cash transfer programmes increased in urban areas and amongst newly vulnerable groups, such as families of returning labour migrants.

In response, the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) was expanded to include both the urban and rural poor, so that it might respond quickly to emergencies (by having mechanisms to scale up and down and capture a wider vulnerable group).

Demand also shifted to prioritise cashless and non-physical distribution methods, in line with COVID-19 restrictions, and the UN adapted through partnering with Mpesa to provide cashless solutions to swiftly recognise and respond to the changing faces of vulnerability in Lesotho.

Finally, as the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a shift to digital solutions, which are depicted as central to Lesotho's economic recovery, Government information systems were strengthened so that they can continue to provide valuable and accurate data during the pandemic.

The Education Management Information System (EMIS), National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) and the District Health Information System 2 (dhis2) all received UN support to provide essential information throughout 2020.

3.1.3 PILLAR 3: Sustainable and inclusive economic growth for poverty

reduction

Related SDGs:



Related Agencies:

- FAO • IOM • UNDP • UNWOMEN
- IAEA • ITC • UNEP • UNWTO
- IFAD • UNCDF • UNICEF • WFP
- ILO • UNCTAD • UNIDO • WHO

Outcome 3.1: By 2023, government and private sector increase opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improved food security and decent jobs

To support economic growth, decent jobs and food security, the UN continued to focus on developing evidence-based policy instruments to support public service delivery, implementing policies that would generate green growth and employment, and supporting agricultural value chains and diversification of rural livelihoods.

Evidence-based policy instruments, that promise to support public service delivery include an MSME database, enhanced diaspora coordination, impact assessments to determine the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, strengthening the Agricultural Census, and developing a pesticides legislation.

Lesotho has enormous emigration and thus a sizeable diaspora that regularly send remittances home to relatives. If remittances were channelled to development, then they would provide a large source of development financing that would drive Lesotho's development agenda.

To better engage the diaspora and remittances, the UN, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations (MoFAIR), strengthened inter-Ministerial coordination on all matters relating to the diaspora. The Lesotho National Diaspora Policy is also under development and has engaged the voices of the diaspora abroad.

Outcome 3.2: By 2023, the people of Lesotho use natural resources in a more sustainable manner and the marginalized and most vulnerable are increasingly resilient.

Given Lesotho's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, in particular droughts and extreme floods, it is extremely important to support the Kingdom's resilience to climate change, through mitigation and adaptation activities. In response to climate change, and related land degradation, the UN has focused on improved access to clean energy, natural resource management, and climate change adaptation initiatives, including early warning mechanisms.

Four renewable mini-grids were established and supported by innovations to regulatory frameworks, enabling policies and concession agreements between energy providers and the Government of Lesotho. Clean energy stoves were also purchased and distributed to rural communities, where they will improve health outcomes by reducing smoke inhalation and reduce deforestation, by offering clean slow-burn briquettes.

To protect Lesotho's abundant natural resources, 50,000 hectares of new land was protected and designated to sustainable land management in 2020, whilst wetlands continued to be protected.

The Agricultural Census (2019-20) was reviewed to include agriculture at the community level, which accounts for the majority of smallholder farmers, and thus the results will strengthen the capacity of the Government of Lesotho and the UN to accurately identify and respond to the needs of smallholder farmers.

The development of agricultural value chains and the diversification of rural livelihoods remained important to protect food security and livelihoods, particularly in rural areas. To directly support agricultural value chains, 8,971 metric tonnes of maize meal was purchased from local farmers, including 971 metric tonnes to support school feeding programmes, and 12 farmers and 4 farmers' associations were formally linked to private sector buyers.

129,897 farmers were provided with business development and productivity training. Two national breeding centers were rehabilitated, and supported by a 981-strong flock of sheep and 206-strong flock of goats that will be solely used for breeding. The UN also prioritised farmers access to markets during COVID-19, to protect agricultural value chains as well as farmers' livelihoods. An e-market platform, *Marakeng oa Basotho*, was established to connect farmers to markets and to encourage a digital economic recovery. 90 food suppliers have to date been registered on the e-market platform.

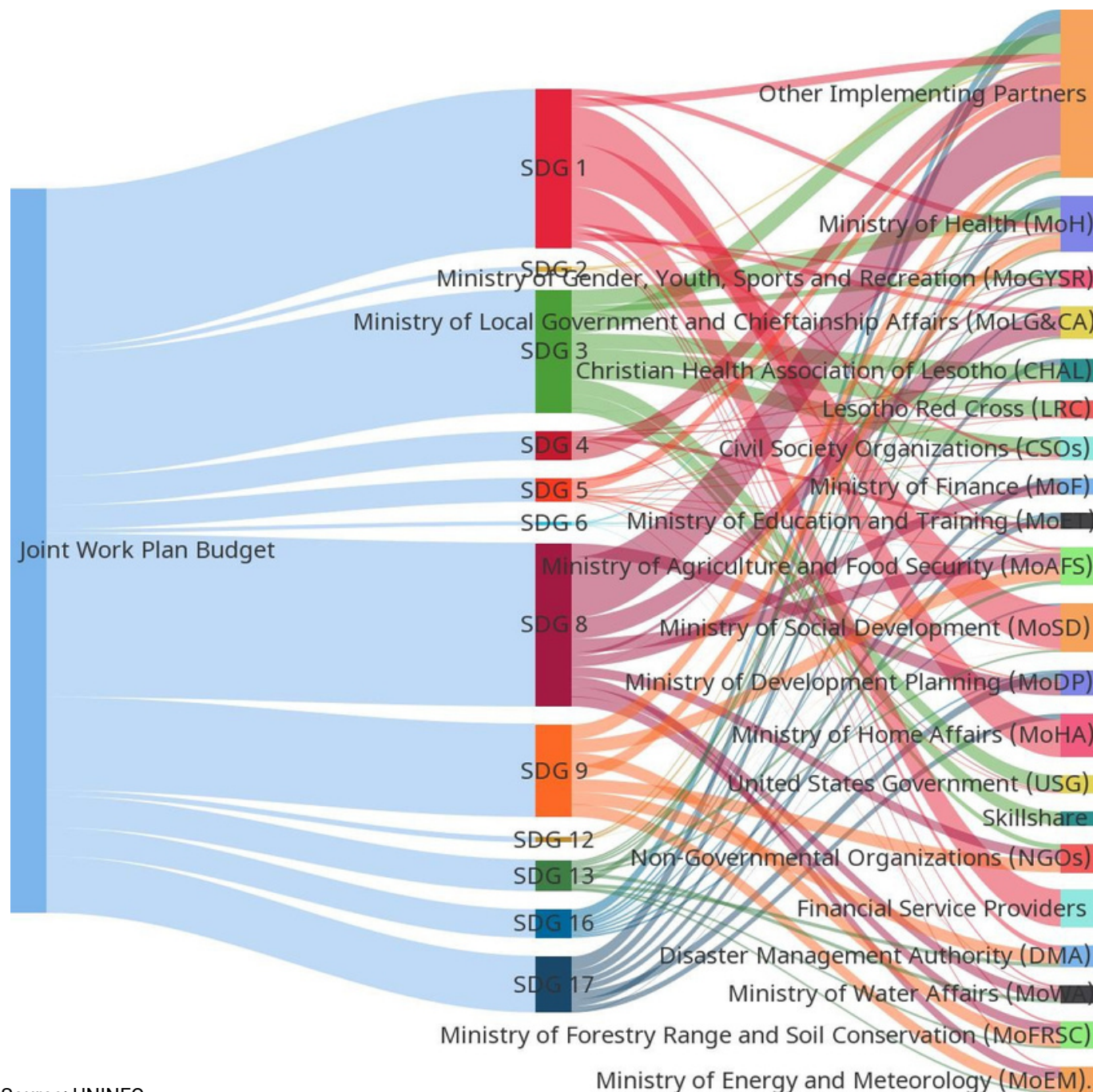
To support land management further, communities were trained on the governance of natural resources and were supported with improved access to clean water for agricultural and domestic use. Over 6,000 households were employed in land reclamation, which will restore damaged land and also protect livelihoods, so that in the long-term the land may instead support livelihoods and communities may see the importance of sustainability.

Finally, the US\$ 10 million Adaptation Fund project was launched, which includes an early warning system. Under the early warning system, weather reporting will be strengthened and the Kingdom of Lesotho will be equipped to react pre-emptively to potential risks. Resources were also mobilised to research the impact of climate change on health and migration.

3.2 Support to partnerships and financing the 2030 Agenda

The UN has increasingly focused on developing partnerships where common agendas overlap, in particular to finance the SDGs. Partnering with institutions that have a common agenda allow for greater results and greater efficiency as partners may complement one another by focusing on their comparative advantage.

Figure 2: Expenditure on SDGs and implementing partners



Source: UNINFO

Figure 2, above, presents how the UN has financed the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs that have received the most financing. It also shows over 20 of the UN's implementing partners in 2020.

SDGs 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being) and 8 (decent work and economic growth) have received the largest shares of financing under the 2030 Agenda in Lesotho, whilst the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Development Planning and Ministry of Home Affairs have been the largest recipients of project finance.

New partnerships in 2020 include: a project to control spread and minimize the social economic impact of COVID-19 in Lesotho, whereby the UN partnered with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, Ministry of Water, Ministry of Police and Public Safety, National University of Lesotho, Ministry of Development Planning, Lesotho Red Cross, Gender Links, Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association and LENASA; and a project to improve public finance management, whereby the UN partnered with the Ministry of Development Planning, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Small Business Development, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, Lesotho National Development Corporation, and Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The UN also strengthened its partnership with Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD) in 2020 through financing the celebrations for International Day of Persons with Disabilities, including through raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities. Further, the UN partnered with LNFOD throughout the pandemic to ensure that persons with disabilities were included in the COVID-19 response and were also sensitised on safety precautions, this involved producing braille communications material for visually impaired persons and video communications material for persons with speech and hearing impairments.

Partners not mentioned above that the UN continued to work with in 2020 include: the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Forestry Range and Soil Conservation, Women's Groups, private sector, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Development for Peace Education, Christian Health Association of Lesotho, RISE International, and Econet Telecom Lesotho.

3.3 Results of the UN working more and better together: UN coherence, effectiveness and efficiency

Through greater UN collaboration to deliver as one, the UN has been able to increase its presence on the ground in Lesotho, achieve greater results, and greater efficiency in operations. Through working together, the UN has been able to better support the Government of Lesotho, through a cohesive approach with the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team and using each agency's comparative advantage. This was facilitated through the greater collaboration shown by inter-agency working groups, including the Monitoring and Evaluation Group, the UN Communications Group, the Disaster Risk Management Team and the Operations Management Team.

Evidence based planning in emergencies

The UN in Lesotho has demonstrated its technical expertise in dealing with emergencies in 2020, including drought at the start of 2020 and COVID-19 thereafter, and in conducting much needed comprehensive analysis to guide evidence-based programming and to provide policy advice.

Working together, the UN delivered a COVID-19 socio-economic response plan in August 2020, where agencies recognised the greatest needs of Lesotho to recover from the pandemic and collaborated on interventions to support the recovery. Between September and December 2020, the UN also worked together to conduct a Common Country Analysis (CCA), which is a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic situation in the Kingdom of Lesotho and the key challenges and opportunities that the Kingdom faces looking forward. The CCA will be updated on an annual basis to remain relevant and will guide joint programming.

Communicating as one

The UN Communications Groups (UNCG) consists of communication experts across various UN agencies worked effectively together over the course of 2020 to raise awareness of UN interventions, but more importantly to support the effective roll-out of national communication strategies that have been particularly vital in sensitising communities to prevent and treat COVID-19 and to overcome the spread of dangerous misinformation through the Verified campaign.

In response to COVID-19, the UNCG rapidly developed a crisis communication plan and implemented it to ensure a regular and safe flow of information from the UN to Basotho, to strengthen the capacity of local media so that they may also share reliable and accurate information to the Basotho, and in doing so strengthen the capacity of the Basotho population to endure the pandemic and avoid risky behaviour.

The UNCG also supported the celebration for the UN's 75th birthday through engaging youth, academia, civil society organisations and the Government of Lesotho to give their voices for 'the future we want, the UN we need'. Mass SMS campaigns and online dialogues were also conducted to reach out across the population of Lesotho, including in remote and rural areas, so that everyone could contribute towards the UN's campaign to collectively achieve a better world by 2045 (the UN's 100th birthday).

Popular actress, Liteboho Molise, was also engaged to support the campaign. A youth essay competition was also held, whereby young Basotho provided their insights on 'the future we want, the UN we need', and the top 10 essay writers were invited to lunch, to present their work to the EU ambassador, Mr. Christian Manahl, and the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Salvator Niyonzima. On the day of the UN75 celebrations, the UNCG organised a clean-up campaign, whereby UN staff swept 1 kilometre surrounding the UN building, in support of his Majesty King Letsie II's Operation Hloekisa Lesotho campaign.



UN RC Mr Salvator Niyonzima engaging with youth at the UN75 essay competition prize giving ceremony. Image: RCO

UN coordinated efforts to drought response

The Disaster Risk Management Team (DRMT) comprises of senior UN staff across every agency and INGOs and was established so that the UN may rapidly respond to, and deploy resources towards, emerging disasters.

At the start of 2020, the DRMT responded to the drought engulfing the country, by facilitating more than 15 projects across health, WASH, food security and social protection, launching a flash appeal to mobilise additional financing for the drought response, and continuously appealing to donors, and raising their awareness surrounding the drought in Lesotho.

In 2019, the DRMT coordinated drought related projects under the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

In 2020, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) awarded a second round of funding, worth US\$ 3,050,000 to continue to support the pressing needs of the population due to drought. 293,418 individuals, 54,952 men, 75,878 women, 66,625 boys and 95,963 girls, and 15% more than planned, benefitted from 5 projects in health, WASH, nutrition, agriculture, food security and social protection.

By the second quarter of 2020, the DRMT also prioritized the COVID-19 response, through supporting the Government of Lesotho and the Disaster Management Authority to rapidly develop and implement response plans to the pandemic.

Funds mobilized through CERF

US\$ 3 050 000



Total number of people assisted

293 418



Total number of men assisted

54 952



Total number of women assisted

75 878



Operating as One

The Operations Management Team (OMT) have supported the UN to work better together, to be more effective and efficient internally, thereby allowing UN staff and agencies to focus on their core mandate to support Agenda 2030. The OMT led the development and launch of BoS 2.0 aimed at further enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN in Lesotho, ensuring that funds are focused on impact and less on processes.

BoS 2.0 was loaded into the online system by the global set deadline of 31st July 2020. Through the OMT, the one UN House (common premises) was provided with adequate maintenance (replacement of exterior lights ; furniture etc). In adherence to the COVID-19 precautions, OMT facilitated hand washing stations and sanitisers in the UN House and provided sanitisers, masks and thermometers to all UN staff.

Joint Monitoring and Evaluation

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3.4 Evaluations and lessons learnt

Through Delivering as One, the UN has managed to increase its impact in Lesotho and offer multi-agency interventions that take advantage of each individual agency's expertise. The UN balances both upstream policy analysis and advice and downstream community programme delivery in the Kingdom of Lesotho. For a middle-income country, the Kingdom faces an unusual need for both policy guidance and improving livelihoods and community resilience, which the UN has to balance.

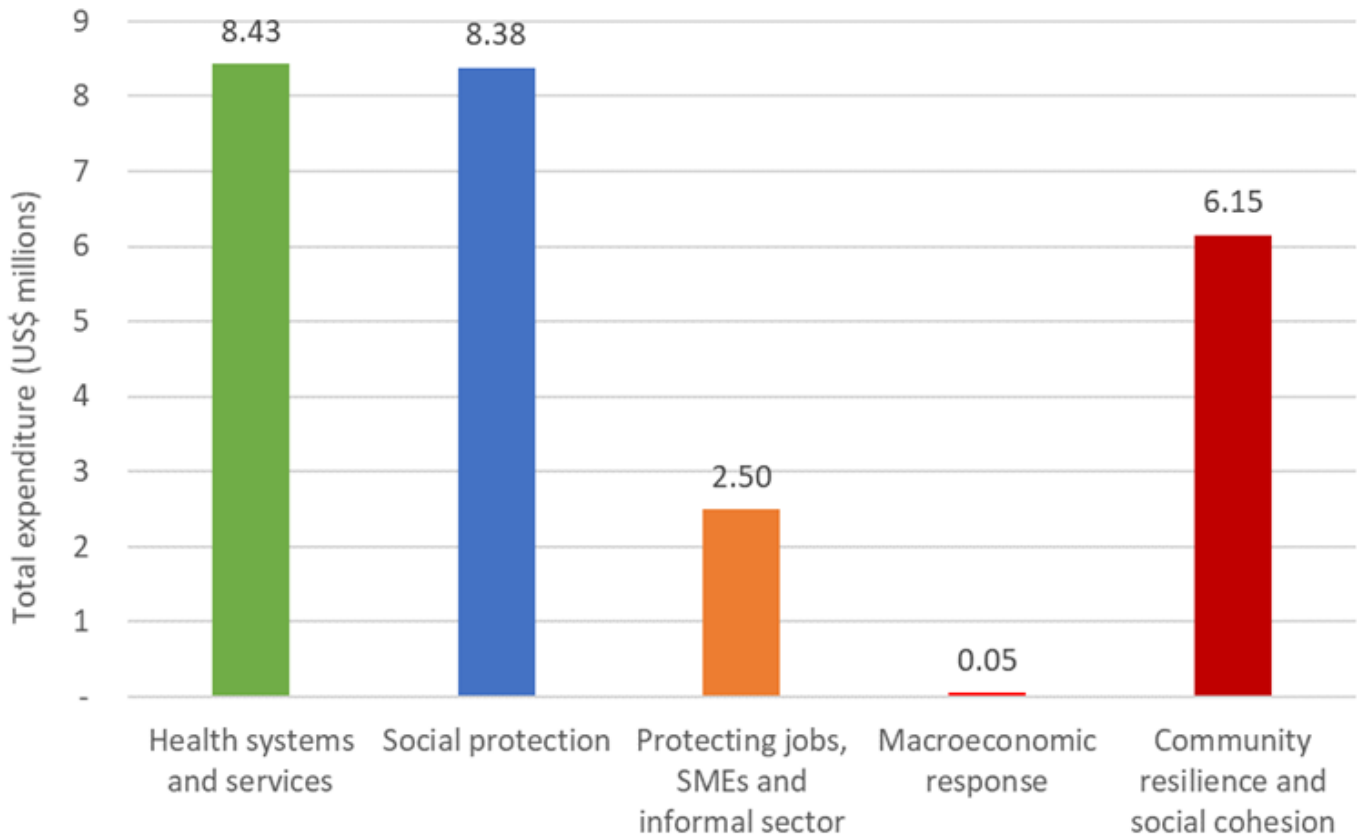
The change in Government in May 2020 illustrated the importance of institutions to handle emergencies and support stability and public service delivery. Further, the UN's engagement with Government, and the Government's trust in the UN, is critical to ensure that the Government of Lesotho and the UN can work together to support Lesotho's development.

The UN and Government of Lesotho have a strong relationship, illustrated by both party's mutual commitment to support the National Reforms Agenda. However, both parties need to continue to work together to develop strong and robust institutions that can uphold the National Reforms.

COVID-19 exacerbated existing weaknesses in Lesotho and highlighted the need to improve community resilience and social cohesion and to include the most vulnerable members of the population in the development agenda. The pandemic firstly highlighted the important need for universal healthcare coverage and the need to break the relationship between individuals' vulnerability and health outcomes. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of agricultural productivity to protect food security and livelihoods, and the importance of working with functional district and community systems to deliver programmes efficiently.

3.5 Financial overview and resource mobilization

Figure 3: COVID-19 expenditure



In 2019/20, the UN disbursed US\$99.4 million in programmes and interventions to the Kingdom of Lesotho, amidst US\$369.6 million total donor disbursements. Areas that received the largest shares of funding were primary education and the national school feeding programme, basic nutrition, HIV/AIDS and SRHR, and community resilience.

The UN's total expenditure on Lesotho's COVID-19 response and recovery in 2020 amounted to US\$ 25.5 million. US\$ 8.4 million was spent on protecting health systems and services; another US\$ 8.4 million was spent on social protection and basic services; US\$2.5 million was spent on protecting jobs, SMEs and informal sector workers; US\$50,200 was spent on the macroeconomic response; and US\$6.2 million was spent on building social cohesion and community resilience (figure 3).

New funds and programmes mobilised and implemented in 2020 include numerous COVID-19 responses to protect health systems, including HIV and TB programmes, to expand social protection schemes, and to provide distance learning solutions. Aside from the immediate COVID-19 response, funds were also mobilised to support public financial management and climate change.

US\$1 million was mobilised under the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund to control spread and minimize the social -economic impact of COVID-19 in Lesotho. The funds will strengthen coordination, planning and monitoring at national, district and community level, enhance disease surveillance for rapid case detection and management, investigation, tracing and monitoring of contacts, strengthen mechanisms and measures for infection prevention and control at health facilities and in community settings and will ensure that the continuity of other health services is maintained.

US\$ 4,053,688 was also mobilised in grant financing under the GF CR-19 Mechanism (C19RM) to support the Government of Lesotho's Integrated National COVID-19 Plan and National Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19. The grant will work towards mitigating the impact on HIV and TB programs from COVID-19, reinforcing the national COVID-19 response and urgent improvements in health and community systems through to 2022.

Over US\$ 5.5 million was mobilised to expand social protection schemes, including cash transfers to vulnerable persons. US\$ 3.5 million was mobilised from the Global Partnership to support the continuity of learning and safe reopening of schools.

US\$1.1 million was mobilised for the Joint Programme on Economic and Financial Management Integration for the Achievement of SDGs (JP-EFMIS). The goal of the joint programme is to support the Government of Lesotho to establish a functional and sustainable integrated planning and public financial management (PFM) ecosystem that contributes to accelerated achievement of the SDG targets and the National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II). The joint programme aims to support the Government of Lesotho to achieve private sector-led economic growth and employment creation through facilitating the creation of a conducive policy environment, strengthening PFM processes, providing platforms for dialogue and generating evidence for private–public collaboration.

Finally, a US\$ 10 million Adaptation Fund project was launched: Improving Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable and Food Insecure Populations in Lesotho (IACOV). The project seeks to (i) strengthen government capacities to generate climate information and promote its use to forecast risks of climate shocks, mobilise early action, and co-develop tailored and locally relevant climate services for communities, (ii) raise awareness amongst communities, women, youth, people living with HIV, and other vulnerable groups on the impacts of climate change, the importance of adaptation, and the use of climate information for seasonal planning and climate risk management, (iii) design and implement, 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.

Chapter 4: UNCT key focus for next year

The key strategic priorities for UNCT in 2021 are premised on the outcomes set out in the UNDAF 2019-2023, the UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan and the Lesotho 2021/22 national budget. On Thursday 4th March 2021, the UN Development System in Lesotho held their annual UNDAF Joint Steering Committee Meeting with the Government of Lesotho, co-chaired by the Hon. Minister of Development Planning, Mr. Selibe Mochoboroane, and the UN Resident Coordinator a.i., Ms. Anurita Bains.

The UN Lesotho presented their 2020 results, summarised from the ONE UN Report that had been shared prior, and the anticipated 2021 challenges and opportunities, summarised from the 2020 Common Country Analysis that had also been shared prior. The 2020 ONE UN Report, 2020 CCA update and the strategic priorities for 2021 were reviewed and endorsed by the Government of Lesotho.

The Lesotho 2021/22 national budget has the theme 'Navigating the New Norm towards Transformation and Economic Recovery'. The Government of Lesotho's 2021/22 priorities include finalizing the COVID-19 economic recovery plan and fast-tracking the National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) to drive economic growth in sectors that have already been identified to provide the largest socio-economic dividends. In fast-tracking the NSDP II, the Government of Lesotho will prioritise private sector development, infrastructure development, human capital accumulation, and the agriculture, manufacturing, mining and tourism sectors.

The Lesotho COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) was developed in 2020 and is an 18-month plan (September 2020 – February 2022). The SERP is anchored on the UNDAF (2019 - 2023) and was designed to complement established development plans to the extent that they are responsive to COVID-19 and the National COVID-19 Response Integrated Plan 2020. As of 2021, the SERP has been fully integrated into the UNDAF 2021 Joint Work Plans to avoid parallel planning and to also infuse the humanitarian and development nexus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1 2021 strategic priorities by pillars

4.1.1 PILLAR 1: ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE, EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS, SOCIAL COHESION AND INCLUSION

Strengthened national structures for effective delivery on their mandates

- Continued support for the establishment of National Human Rights Commission
- Support the Independent Electoral Commission
- Develop the National Peace Architecture infrastructure
- Support capacity building within Parliament (both Houses) to better serve the reforms process
- Support judicial case management and judicial reform

Enhanced civic engagement with women and youth on development issues

Strengthened strategic information systems, monitoring and evaluation of national plans and programmes

- Support capacity building for Government Staff on M&E
- Support the remote monitoring and digitalization of data collection to modernize statistics system in Lesotho
- Analysis of multi-dimensional poverty for children

Promote evidence-based and informed policies and strategies

- Support DMA to develop the LVAC (Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment) strategy
- Support GoL in strengthening migration management and enhance migration governance in all aspects

Support improved civil registration and vital statistics systems

- Improve universal coverage of childbirth registrations, especially for current births (newborns) and > 5 children
- Strengthen institutional collaborations for Vital Events registration
- Improve advocacy and communication on the importance of Civil Registration

Support the National Reforms process

- Support the operationalization and work of the National Reforms Authority and stakeholders

4.1.2 PILLAR 2: SUSTAINABLE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Long-term support to the health sector for a resilient health system

- Conduct assessments of the performance of the health sector and the national immunisation programme
- Support the finalization and implementation of EPI, child and adolescent health operational plans
- Introduce an integrated preparedness and service readiness assessment tool in all health facilities in relation to COVID-19
- Support evidence generation and update the essential health services package for the country
- Adapt the "Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) strategic guidance" into a Lesotho specific operational plan for accelerated action for adolescent health
- Strengthen support to health systems to deliver integrated HIV and TB services
- Hold dialogues on SRHR, HIV and GBV to advocate for inclusive policies and strategies for migrants, young vulnerable people and sex workers
- Support health facilities through community change agents to facilitate health sessions for clients that integrate SRHR, HIV information to support access to services

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

- Support the education sector to catch up the two lost years under teacher strikes and COVID-19 school closures
- Support quality and integrated community owned early childhood development care and learning, complemented by the provision of school feeding

Provision of social protection to the vulnerable and those impacted by COVID-19

- High delivery of cash transfers and food parcels will continue in 2021 as people will remain vulnerable from the impact of COVID-19
- Assess needs of out of school youth and people living with disability and develop strategies for assistance
- Support to returnees, refugees and other vulnerable migrants affected by COVID-19 to be included in social services, including their reintegration into their community of origin

Strengthen nutrition outcomes to improve individuals resilience

- Finalisation and implementation of the National Advocacy, Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy on nutrition

Strengthen prevention and mitigation of GBV, violence against children, fight against Trafficking in Persons (TIP)

- GBV has risen during the pandemic, whilst a new vulnerable group has emerged (returnees). SRHR, HIV and GBV dialogues at the community level may prevent the spread of GBV amongst newly vulnerable groups
- Increase community sensitisation on GBV and COVID-19 preventive measures

4.1.3 PILLAR 3: SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Support innovative and sustainable entrepreneurial development initiatives and financial services, particularly for women, youth and marginalized groups.

- Support informal sector and MSME empowerment as active agents of economic transformation, with a focus on the green economy
- Provision of market-oriented skills training to improve livelihoods of vulnerable returnees and other vulnerable youth affected by COVID-19
- The 4 apps established by the UN in 2020 have highlighted an increasing appetite for new innovations and an increasing pace of innovation. Further advances in 2021 will support a digital recovery to Build Back Better.

Support development and implementation of evidence-based, gender-sensitive and inclusive strategies and programs to promote decent work, and access to local, national and regional agri-value chains and agricultural development

- Support the development of policies relating to livestock, animal health, and pesticides, which offer greater coordination and productivity in the agricultural sector and integrate climate resilient agricultural practices. Ongoing initiatives to register and sensitize farmers will increase the reach of supportive agricultural legislation.

Support evidence-based sectoral development plans and MTEF-based strategic budget planning to improve financial accountability and reporting

- Promotion of private sector participation and investment for SDGs acceleration
- The Joint Programme on Economic and Financial Management Integration for the Achievement of SDGs (JP-EFMIS), 2020-2022, promises greater transparency and accountability in the public budget and greater resource mobilisation and private sector participation to support NSDP II and Agenda 2030.

Support climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, including early warning systems and climate smart agricultural technologies and practices

- Finalisation of the National Climate Change Awareness Raising and Communication Strategy to promote awareness of climate change and mitigation and adaptation techniques, including climate smart agriculture.
- Support the development of an early warning system to identify emerging food security risks and enable a rapid response

Support gender responsive financial assistance and seed capital for revenue generating investments and green economic development

- The regulations for the establishment of mini-grids are likely to be finalised in 2021, enabling the development of 10 mini-grids and energy centres.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Results And Expenditure For COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan Pillar 1 - Health First: Protecting Health Systems And Services During The Crisis

Output	2020 Results	Agencies	Expenditure
Health sector capacity strengthened to continue normal (non-COVID-19 related) health services, including promotive, preventative and curative health services, including NCDs	22,501 children received vaccinations; 240,619 women accessed maternal services; 6,053 individuals benefitted from SRHR/HIV prevention and referral services; 3,244 children received micronutrient powders; 802 children treated for severe acute malnutrition	IOM WHO	\$79,860.00 \$130,018.00
Health facilities and community structures in all 10 districts maintain the capacity to deliver integrated quality gender sensitive RMNCAH, nutrition, HIV, TB and WASH services in the wake of COVID-19	193 health facilities have modified RI sessions in line with COVID-19 IPC regulations for all healthcare services; 891 immunisation outreach activities conducted; 18 immunisation trainings conducted; 193 health facilities reporting on vaccine stock status; All health system and services protected with a set of core essential services to be maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic defined, a multisectoral mental health and psychosocial support technical working group established, and health sector policies informed by socio-economic impact assessment focused on at-risk populations being implemented. Vaccination UN supported MoH to plan to conduct district trainings on standard operating procedures that will be followed for effective vaccine management; Meetings for CCE OP and COVID-19 vaccine preparations conducted. WASH 3,476 people reached with water supply in communities and healthcare facilities; installation of handwashing facilities in 40 healthcare facilities benefitted an estimated 40,000 people;	IOM UNAIDS UNDP UNFPA	\$18,150.00 \$5,061,153.00 \$36,196.96 \$421,798.00
	50 handwashing stations operational at the health centers across the country. 15 stations in MCC installed; the two sets of washing stations are estimated to serve 100,000 people; Hygiene and environmental cleaning supplies provided to three key hospitals used for isolation and treatment of COVID-19 patients, benefiting 20,544 people. PPE Procuring COVID-19 diagnostics and PPE for health workers and vulnerable groups, and acceleration of HIV and TB services; Procure PPE for health workers with focus on RMNCAH services and oxygen devices.		

<p>Government, civil society and private sector maintain capacity to continue to deliver quality HIV and TB prevention, treatment, care and support services in the wake of COVID-19</p>	<p>38 health facility nurses supported to conduct outreach services; 13,200 community health workers trained to provide essential health services in light of COVID-19; 8,036 community health workers provided with PPE and RCCE; 9,642 community health workers remunerated; 2,400 members of the LGBTI community and their families were reached with informaton on HIV, of which 866 successfully accessed HIV and SRHR services; 238 members of the LGBTI community and their families were reached with GBV services of which 30 were referred and 18 cases successfully documented; 10,000 PLHIV households were provided with dettol soap, masks and household sanitizing products; 466 village health workers and MDRTB supporters trained and 11,646 PPE provided to village health workers.</p>	<p>UNDP, UNAIDS, UNICEF</p>	<p>\$10,000 \$14,000 \$452,448.42</p>
<p>Health sector capacity strengthened to provide COVID-19 related health services, including coordination, RCCE, surveillance, laboratory services, infection prevention and control and case management</p>		<p>WHO</p>	<p>\$2,203,657.00</p>
<p>Total expenditure</p>			<p>\$8,427,281.38</p>

ANNEX 2

Results And Expenditure For Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan Pillar 2 – Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services

Output	2020 Results	Agencies	Expenditure
Education sector capacity strengthened to provide quality, inclusive formal and non-formal education for all children, adolescents and youth, including capacity for distance learning	107,960 boys and 116,957 girls supported with distance/home based learning (figures only refer to Q2 as schools began to open in Q3). In addition, 137,250 primary school boys and 135,758 primary school girls benefitted from take home rations.	UNICEF, WFP	\$43,229.00 \$2,719,862.29
Community members have improved access to quality responsive social services and positive practices	162,462 beneficiaries of cash transfers; 14,635 beneficiaries of food vouchers/parcels; 17,727 beneficiaries of psychosocial support services; WASH 361,162 people reached with critical WASH supplies; GBV Continuous sensitization of COVID 19 and protection issues targeting mobile populations along the borders and at community level in partnership with NGO partner; Development of Lehokela Crime Alerts mobile App (https://sacclab.co.za/apk/lehokela.apk) completed. 30 community policing committee members (21 female and 9 male), 4 area chiefs (3 male and 1 female) and 2 police members (1 male and 1 female) were trained and recruited. Piloting ongoing in Tsakholo, Mafeteng; Provision of 2,300 dignity kits to empower women in vulnerable communities against GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse. 50 women, who had been victims of abuse, were also trained to offer and promote essential social services to local communities;	IOM, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA	\$89,540.00 \$5,303,454.00 \$227,189.62
	Development of Bophelo-ka- mosebeletsi app for surveillance and monitoring COVID-19 suspect cases. 687 village health workerts trained on the use of the application; Provision of 1,081 gadgets for village healthworkers to enable surveillance and monitoring of COVID-19 cases at community level.		
Total expenditure			\$8,383,274.91

ANNEX 3

Results And Expenditure For Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan Pillar 3 – Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, SMEs and informal sector workers

Output	2020 Results	Agencies	Expenditure
National institutions (public and private) strengthened to formulate and implement inclusive, innovative and evidence-based policy instruments which enhance efficiency and development effectiveness in selected sectors	UN supported employment policies and a regulatory environment conducive to economic recovery and decent work for own account workers and family workers (as proxy for informal workers); UN also provided policy advice for fiscal, monetary and legislative stimulus packages for COVID- 19 economic response and recovery that are climate and environmentally sensitive, and inclusive and gender responsive; Impact assessments were conducted on the impact of COVID19 on Leaving No One Behind, Unemployment and Economic Productivity, Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment and MSMEs, with a clear recommendation to support the establishment of a national database of informal and own account workers; 2021 Lesotho National Vulnerability Assessment conducted; Socio-economic needs assessment and response developed by Government; A rapid assessment to assess socio-economic effects of COVID-19 on informal / formal cross-border traders impacted by COVID-19 is underway.	UNDP	\$33,901.86
Gender responsive and evidence-based policies,	128 youth and gender run MSME supported with enterprise development skills;	IOM	\$90,000.00
strategies and programmes are in place and implemented to generate decent employment and promote green economy particularly for rural and urban youth, migrants, vulnerable women and men, and PLWDs			
Knowledge and capacity of communities, smallholder farmers and service providers improved to diversify livelihoods and production systems for increased incomes, food and nutrition security particularly for poor and vulnerable households	128 youth and gender run MSME supported with enterprise development skills; 3 private sector companies provided with grants; 13,142 households provided with home garden kits; 6,500 households provided with maize, beans and sorghum seeds; 90 farmers registered on newly established Marakeng oa Basotho e-market platform; 16,964 households (67,856 beneficiaries) benefitted from the vaccination of 508,923 animals.	FAO UNDP	\$2,365,000.00 \$10,000.00
Total expenditure			\$2,498,901.86

ANNEX 4

Results And Expenditure For Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan Pillar 4 – Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration

Output	2020 Results	Agencies	Expenditure
A National Recovery Plan that protects the ambitions of the NSDP II and the SDGs	Impact assessments conducted on Development Finance Assessment, labour, employment and productivity, Lesotho National Vulnerability Assessment, socio-economic effects of COVID-19 on migrant returnees, socio-economic effects of COVID-19 on informal / formal cross-border traders, gender equality and women's empowerment, MSMEs, and LNOB; National stimulus package for MSMEs established by government in response to socio-economic COVID assessment; MGYSR supported to implement the Gender and Development Policy; Lesotho National Vulnerability Assessment conducted for 2020	IOM, FAO	\$24,200.00 \$26,000.00
Total expenditure			\$50,200.00

ANNEX 5

Results And Expenditure For Covid-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan Pillar 5 – Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

Output	Activities	Agencies	Expenditure
Gender responsive and inclusive policies, regulatory frameworks and financial mechanisms strengthened and implemented to protect employees and maintain formal work opportunities, in particular for sustainable energy technologies	2 Cabinet Ministers and Permanent Secretaries Retreats supported to discuss socio-economic response, national reforms and policy; Support to NUL to develop a Gender Responsive Policy for the University; Gender mainstreaming in the Curriculum of LMPS; Impact assessments to ensure that policies are inclusive and gender responsive; National database for informal and own account workers under development to ensure that they are included in the Government response plan.	UNFPA	\$25,000.00
National, district and Community level early warning systems strengthened to safeguard human security, build resilience and support preparedness and response	Early Warning Systems project initiated as part of the US\$ 10 million Adaptation Fund intervention in Lesotho; National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) under expansion to include both the urban and rural poor and to respond quickly to emergencies (by having mechanisms to scale up and down).	WFP UNICEF	\$25,000.00 \$6,064,704.00
Increased capacities of governance institutions to enable; (i) effective delivery of mandates; (ii) citizen participation; and (iii) reporting to international instruments and commitment (protection of the rights of non-citizens)	6 national dialogues on human rights; 3 national umbrella organisations supported ahead of the establishment of the national human rights commission; establishment of the national human rights commission; 22 community dialogues completed on social cohesion within COVID contexts, including 6 dialogues in communities with high migrant returnees to discuss COVID prevention and respond to tension brought about by re-entry of returnees from SA.	UNDP	\$40,000.00
Total expenditure			\$6,154,704.00