



UN NEWSLETTER

BY THE OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR



SDG session at Morapeli High School. Photo: RCO



SDG session at Lithabaneng High School. Photo: RCO

Mobilizing action for the SDG's in Schools

The global week to act for SDGs which occurs annually in September, started five years ago with its goal to mobilize millions of people throughout the world to take actions towards the achievement of SDGs.

The UN in Lesotho this year engaged over five hundred high school learners in Maseru and Mafeteng districts, from 20- 23 September 2021, these engagement sessions were aimed at promoting awareness among learners and proving a better understanding of the SDGs, realizing that schools are important stakeholders in catalyzing the sustainable development agenda for 2030.

“The SDG session made me realize that I too can contribute to this big agenda, which I never thought I could contribute to as a teenager, but today I learnt at all our actions count”, explained Limpho Tjopa from Letlapeng high school.

Learners from Letlapeng, Morapeli and Lithabaneng high school committed to taking concrete actions as well as introducing SDGs in their communities.





SDG session at Morapeli High School. Photo: RCO



SDG session at Letlapeng High School. Photo: RCO



SDG session at Morapeli High School. Photo: RCO



Art work by Rorisang Motlamelle. Photo: RCO



Winners of the UN art competition. Photo: RCO



Art work by Lesoana Tshepang. Photo: RCO

All schools were provided with SDG knowledge resources, which focused on the introduction of the SDGs at high school level and possible individual and community actions.

“We are very grateful for the SDG learning materials which we received, our wish is to have perhaps a module on SDGs in the Lesotho curriculum, its important to start teaching children at an early age about the SDGs if we want a better future for this country, ”remarked Leboa Chabela Principal teacher at Lithabaneng High School.

The UN art competition was also launched in the three schools during the SDG sessions. The competition called on learners to prepare submissions for an art competition under the theme: “Reimagine, Rebalance, Restart: recovering together”. The artwork was in any form: paintings, pictures, collages etc.

Ten learners, out of one hundred and twenty who submitted artworks from the three high schools were awarded in the three art categories at the UN day event in Maseru which was held on 22nd October.

“I see an industrial revolution after COVID19, I also see a positive change in the lives of the Basotho people especially those in the highlands because the fertile soil is at their advantage for agriculture, if we go back aggressively into agriculture, I believe that can transform the economy and achieve SDG 2 which is zero hunger” said a jubilant Kamohelo Nthahisane from Lithabaneng high school who was the first prize winner in the painting category.

The Minister of education, Hon Mamookho Phiri who presented the awards the learners, congratulated them: “I applaud all the learners who are going to receive prizes today, I also want to recognize everyone who participated in SDG week and the UN art competition. Young people are indeed the future of our country.”

The competition entries reflected Basotho learners who all want a better future for Lesotho, and this vision can be achieved only if we are in it together, as the UN continues to advocate for the acceleration of the SDG’s with only 9 years remaining.



“Reimagine, Rebalance, Restart: Recovering together”, celebrating the UN’s 76th Anniversary in Lesotho



UN fair stall displays. Photo: RCO



UN fair stall displays. Photo: RCO



Visibility materials for stakeholders at UN Day. Photo: RCO

The COVID19 pandemic as a shared global crisis, has affected economies, health systems, education and so much more of life as we knew it. Since the record of the first case in Lesotho in May 2020, the UN stayed and delivered through various COVID19 response and recovery interventions in support of the Government of Lesotho.

The UN supported the capacity building of health personnel on COVID-19 prevention and care in health facilities across the country, more recently, with all the 206 health facility staff being capacitated on COVID19 vaccine administration. The UN further supported government in the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility, with the country having now administered at least 383 341 doses (about 11% of the population), exceeding the target set by WHO that by the end of September 2021, every country and territory should have vaccinated 10% of its population.

Women were also supported with maternal health services, an effort for the continuity of health essential health services. Over 800 000 people and 500 000 school learners benefited from improved access to water and sanitation, which is key in the protection against COVID19 through the provision of handwashing facilities throughout the country.

The UN day was commemorated through a UN Fair under the theme: “Recovering together” an opportune moment for the UN, on its 76th Anniversary, to reflect and celebrate joint achievements and impact of the various COVID19 response programmes across all the UN agencies in Lesotho.

“I have come here today to salute the United Nations and the people of Lesotho for the progress in transforming this great Kingdom into a prosperous, peaceful and stable nation. We are all aware that we still have a long way to the optimum ‘Lesotho We want’,” remarked the UN Resident Coordinator a.i, Betty Wabunoha at the opening ceremony.



She highlighted the importance of working together in finding ways to collectively find solutions to complex challenges that face the country including COVID19.

Further, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Matshepo Ramakoa, reiterated the importance of “building back better” from the pandemic which has affected millions of people, however, commending the UN in continuing to work with the government in the fight against it, and in its effort in assisting the country to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030, or the Sustainable Development Goals.

Beyond the COVID19 response, the UN continues to support the government in the promotion of good governance, rule of law and human rights, gender responsive social protection systems, sustainable economic growth, food security and decent jobs, and sustainable natural resource use.



UN fair stall displays. Photo: RCO



Guests attend UN Day. Photo: RCO



UN fair stall displays. Photo: RCO



UN Country Team Members and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon Matshepo Ramakoa and Minister of Education Hon Mamoekho Phiri. Photo: RCO



‘I see change in the lives of the people’: King Letsie III of Lesotho commends FAO work in Lesotho

His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho, FAO Special Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition, toured several project sites in Lesotho’s Mafeteng and Thaba-Tseka districts where the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is implementing activities to restore ecosystem services and improve food and nutrition security.



FAO project site. Photo: FAO



His Majesty King Letsie III. Photo: FAO



FAO Project site. Photo: FAO

“I am happy with the work of FAO in the communities. I see change in the lives of the people where the project was implemented, and the testimonies from the farmers themselves is a confirmation. Better nutrition has improved relations in households. I wish the achievements of the project could spread to the whole country,” King Letsie III said. “I am proud to have a special relationship with FAO”.

The project “Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation through Support to Integrated Watershed Management in Lesotho” was funded by the Global Environment Fund (GEF) through the Least Developed Countries Fund.

The project has strengthened climate change adaptation through improved watershed management. Implemented since 2015, it has promoted protection of land and water resources through an integrated approach, and strengthened and diversified the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people so that they can better respond to climate change impacts.

It has benefited local communities in most vulnerable livelihood zones by rehabilitating their rangelands and water sources, and making them realize notable and progressive improvement in their production systems, especially in homestead vegetable production. As a result, communities produce enough fodder and have access to water both for their livestock and household use. Nutrition has improved, and they have been supported to engage in other income-generating activities to diversify their livelihoods.

During the visit, King Letsie III inaugurated water storage reservoirs and animal drinking points constructed under the project to facilitate access to water for communities and their livestock owners. He commended FAO work in improving the lives of the communities and urged the communities to sustain the gains.

UK Minister for Africa, Ms. Vicky Ford, Visit to UNICEF Lesotho Country Office

On September 30th, 2021, the Minister for Africa at the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), Ms. Vicky Ford (MP), visited Lesotho. During her stay in the country, she also visited the UNICEF Lesotho Offices, where she had a meeting with the country team on the support that the UK government, through the FCDO, has provided to Lesotho.

Lesotho is one of the three countries in Eastern and Southern Africa receiving resources under FCDO's Programme "Supporting life-saving multi-sectoral interventions responding to the impact of climate shocks on children in Southern Africa." UNICEF Lesotho has received a total of US\$ 1,763,044 to support response in the WASH, Nutrition, and Child Protection interventions.

Ms. Vicky Ford was accompanied by the British High Commissioner to Lesotho, Ms. Anne Macro, and the Minister's Secretary, Ms. Izzy Coomer. The high-level delegation learned about Lesotho's experience with droughts and the government's interventions with support from UNICEF and funds from the British people.



UK Minister Vicky Ford visits UNICEF Lesotho Offices Photo: UNICEF



A UNICEF project site. Photo: UNICEF

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The majority of resources (80%) support critical climate-resilient programmes in the WASH sector. UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Water, through the Department of Rural Water Supply to rehabilitate and construct 79 rural water systems (67 rehabilitations, 12 boreholes, and reticulation) that provide water to 22 communities, 69 schools, and 12 health care facilities in seven most drought-affected districts.

The total number of beneficiaries is 101,321 people, including 14,052 learners. These systems are developed with a climate-resilient approach.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Water are also working to build capacity on climate-resilient WASH and manage rural water supply systems at sector and community levels, including strengthening climate resilience information.

On Nutrition, the UKAID funds have been used to purchase anthropometric equipment for the Ministry of Health (MoH) to support community-based infant and young child feeding practices and referral systems through active case finding by community health workers and nutrition extension officers. The equipment has already been handed over to MoH.

On Child Protection, efforts are being made to increase coverage and access to quality Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC) prevention, risk mitigation, and case management services.

UK Minister Ford expressed appreciation for the work done with UKAID financial support.

Raising faith in COVID19 vaccines in Lesotho

Myths and misinformation around COVID-19 vaccines are rife in Lesotho, where over 85% of nearly 500 health workers surveyed recently report widespread misconceptions.

A rapid survey, conducted in July by the World Health Organization (WHO) the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners covering five of Lesotho's 10 districts showed conspiracy theories may be driving up fear, confusion and reluctance to get vaccinated in this highly religious society.

"My biggest fear was to be dragged into some cult and get the mark of the beast, so I watched and waited for others to get vaccinated to observe their health and behaviours," says Mamookho Masamane, a church leader in the northern region of Leribe.

It is estimated that over 90% of people in Lesotho are Christian, and religious leaders are highly respected and trusted by their followers. The church provides over 40% of Lesotho's health services through a network of hospitals, health centres and nursing colleges.

"We understand our calling is not just church-based, but it is also community-based. We are trusted by people and what we communicate can influence their decisions," says Mapoloko Mabena, Secretary of the Christian Council of Lesotho in the northern city of Butha-Butha.



WHO training session. Photo: WHO



WHO training session. Photo: WHO



WHO training session. Photo: WHO

With support from WHO and the Christian Council of Lesotho, the Ministry of Health is training religious leaders to spread life-saving facts on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.

“Prior to each training, participants are asked how much they know about COVID-19 vaccines. Most say they have very limited information, while some say they have no information at all, so we’re working to build up this knowledge,” says WHO Immunization Officer Selloane Maepe.

Six training sessions for 50 religious leaders have taken place in five of Lesotho’s 10 districts so far, starting with the northern districts of Berea, Leribe, and Butha-Buthe, as well as Mafeteng and in the capital, Maseru, which have all been hit hard by COVID-19.

“I never believed in this vaccine. I never wanted to take it myself or to encourage others to get it, but through this teaching I realized that a lack of information is actually a sin and getting vaccinated is important. I will share what I learned with everyone in my village, with friends and my church-mates.” says Mamookho Masamane at a training session in Leribe.

With a population of 2.1 million, Lesotho has recorded over 14 000 cases of COVID-19 and over 600 deaths. Nearly 10% of the population have received a first COVID-19 vaccine dose.

“The ability of religious leaders to effectively participate in responding to outbreaks depends on their understanding of them,” says Dr Richard Banda, WHO Representative in Lesotho.

“These workshops aim to impart knowledge to religious leaders as they play a crucial role in community mobilization, raising awareness, dispelling myths and misconceptions, boosting vaccine acceptance and bringing compromises where public health measures are considered to be discordant with religious values,” added Dr Banda.

The Ministry of Health, WHO and partners have five further workshops planned with religious and community leaders in five districts in the month of November 2021.

Lesotho participates in the second round of migration governance assessment

IOM is piloting the first Migration Governance country level follow-up assessment in 10 countries. Lesotho is among the 10 countries participating in this round of assessments. The follow-up assessment aimed at showing the progress that each country has made on six policy domains covered by the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) since the first assessment conducted in 2018 and to verify accuracy and how up-to-date the data being collected through MGI is.

IOM Lesotho country office facilitated consultations with stakeholders which were followed by a workshop for the National Consultative Committee (NCC) of officials from institutions with migration related functions to validate over 90 indicators of the MGI.

The workshop was held from 14-15 September 2021 in Maseru. Findings of the assessment showed that Lesotho has made some progress in all six domains, migrants rights, whole of government approach, partnerships, well-being of migrants, mobility dimensions of crises, and safe and orderly migration. Key improvements are needed in the development of policy and legal frameworks to ensure the well-being of migrants. This activity was supported by IOM through the project titled “Migration Management Framework: Capacity Building to Support Evidence-Based Migration.”

WFP building resilience in Southern Districts

In collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, WFP is providing support to vulnerable food-insecure people in the three southern districts (Mafeteng, Mofale's Hoek, Quthing) through engagement of community and household assets creation activities. The household level assets include vegetable production, small stock rearing for dual purposes of consumption and sales, bee keeping, savings clubs to accumulate capital for inputs for homestead projects. Community projects include brush control, land rehabilitation, soil and water conservation.



Community based assets creation; Lithakaling community in Mofale's hoek planting fruit trees. Photo: WFP

In support of the Government's initiative of creating employment through commercialized farming, WFP procured a total of 18,000 fruit trees worth LSL 756,000.00 for establishment of orchards across the three operational districts (Mafeteng, Mofale's Hoek, Quthing). To assist smallholder farmers (SHFs), selected individuals and organised groups that have suitable and enough land to produce fruit trees were buoyed to establish orchards and engage them in group marketing for their varying produce.

UN convenes human rights training for Lesotho Correctional Service officers

Through the National Dialogue process of 2018 and 2019, recommendations were made which included reforms to the security sector in Lesotho, to ensure that security sector agencies conduct their operations in line with international human rights standards. The reforms call for capacity building of officers working in the security sector on human rights.

As a party to several international and regional human rights conventions and treaties, Lesotho is under obligation to comply with the human rights commitments that the country has made including the rights of persons deprived of liberty.

The Bill of Rights in the Lesotho Constitution provides for rights that are supposed to be protected, promoted and enjoyed by all. There are rights that relate to the treatment of persons deprived of liberty including inmates held in correctional facilities.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) today convened the start of a three-day training for Correctional Service officers in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Resident Coordinator's Office.

The Senior Human Rights Adviser to the UN in Lesotho who spoke on behalf of the acting UN Resident Coordinator quoted a popular saying by one human rights defender who once said: "A society should be judged not by how it treats its outstanding citizens but by how it treats its criminals".

Among other topics such as "Human Rights Principles of Good Prison Management", the training will further sensitize correctional service officers on the rights of inmates, other correctional service employees and the community at large.

"I hope this training will remind you all of your duty to respect and ensure that the rights of inmates are respected, because they also have rights" remarked Assistant Commissioner of the Lesotho Correctional Services, Mr Sekila Joel Majara.

This training of trainers (ToT) is a part of a training programme which will identify trainers who will be equipped with knowledge, skills and tools for conducting human rights training to fellow correctional officers throughout the country.



Training of correctional service officers in Maseru. Photo: RCO



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