UN RC signs a Peace Building Fund

The United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator, Salvator Niyonzima, congratulated the Government of Lesotho and all the partners, national and international, who have joined together to make possible the launch of Lesotho National Dialogue and Stabilisation Project (LNDSP). He made these remarks at the signing of the project document with Lesotho’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Lesego Makgothi. Funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and managed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the LNDSP is seeking to facilitate consensus building and catalyse a conducive environment for the long-anticipated national reforms in Lesotho.

The project’s specific aims include generating a national agreement on the content and processes of comprehensive political reforms and national reconciliation in Lesotho; supporting preparatory steps towards the reform of the security sector; and enhancing the participation of the Lesotho public in the national dialogue and reforms through access to timely and accurate information. Women empowerment and human rights will be mainstreamed throughout the project.

Present at the launch were amongst others, government ministers and senior civil servants, opposition leaders, international development partners, Heads of UN Agencies resident in Lesotho, and the project’s implementing partners who include the Government of Lesotho, Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women, Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) and Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (LCN).

In his address, Minister Makgothi thanked the United Nations Secretary General as well as the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) “for heeding our call and generously supporting the aspect of the reforms process with a generous amount of USD2 million.” The Minister also announced that the Government had set aside 7.9 million Maloti ($500,000) to support the reforms process and that part of the money will be used to support the project.
As the nightfall, Tšosane’s family would be in despair as to how they would rest for the night until the next day. This was caused by a fear that the family lived in as the 21 year old ‘Mafusi who is mentally challenged and has an infant with an unknown absent father lived in a mud hut with her 12 year old nephew Lehlohonolo. Both ‘Mafusi and Lehlohonolo are double orphans and the only family they have is themselves and good Samaritans who on random days would assist the trio with the basic needs of life.

On one rainy day, ‘Mafusi Lehlohonolo and the infant found themselves stranded standing in the middle of their house without roof and with the walls shattered beyond repair. Then the youth volunteers and the community assisted with erecting a temporal shack structure for them. Meanwhile, the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) started a fund raising to build a decent two-roomed housing structure for Tšosanes. With further support from the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) office, Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation (MGYSR) and TED, a well housed two-roomed structure was build up and opened for the family to move in on the launch of Lesotho National volunteer Week in Tsime Ha Katamelo in Butha-Buthe district where the Tšosane family lives.

The Minister invited all Basotho nation to come together under the universal identity and pride, to support the implementation of this important project that will shape the Lesotho political and democratic future. The major component of the LNDSP is the multi-stakeholder national dialogue which will include preliminary consultations leading to a National Leaders Forum for the purpose of ‘political level consensus-building’; two national stakeholder dialogue plenaries; and at least seventy-six community level consultations in between the first and the second national dialogue plenaries. A national communication strategy is intended to ensure the Lesotho public has access to timely and accurate information on the national dialogue and the reforms. UNDP, working closely with the Government of Lesotho and the partners, has the ultimate responsibility for the project’s results and management.

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Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Lesego Makgothi and the UN Resident Coordinator Salvator Niyonzi-ma signing the LNDSP document agreement

Nightfall despair

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Under the theme #VolunteerismAddValueChangeLives, Minister of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, Dr. Mahali Phamotse noted that the theme of the National Volunteer Week resonates well with the recently adopted National Youth Policy 2017–2030 which is intended to provide an operational framework to facilitate meaningful involvement of Youth in national development.

Dr. Phamotse also thanked the community of Ha Katamelo and the young volunteers for ensuring that the lives of the two orphans have been taken care of despite the noticeable challenges of a shelter and she further encouraged the community through the area chief and the community councilor to make sure that these vulnerable children continue to live in peace in the village.

Supportive to this year’s theme, the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (DRR) Ms. Christy Ahenkora noted that truly volunteers do add value as “Here in Lesotho, Volunteerism has been an integral part of the culture, infused with values of Ubuntu; and rooted in our community daily practices of belonging and caring for one another.” Ahenkora also said the UNV is a United Nations programme administered by UNDP and it works towards supporting Member States efforts to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through volunteerism. As a result, “the UNV/UNDP have supported Government of Lesotho in several projects aimed at youth development”.

On the other hand, Mr. Ambrose Toolit, the UNV Programme Officer for Lesotho and South Africa, when contacted for comment noted that the National Volunteer Week calls for introspection and commitment from government, private sector and development partners towards addressing the numerous challenges facing young people in the Kingdom. He further said that youth participation in volunteer work at community level enables them to become responsible actors in their own development as well as being active models of change.
Orientation training for Assistant Statisticians

In 2018, six Assistant Statisticians were recruited under Lesotho Data for sustainable development Project and they received a comprehensive orientation from the Director of Bureau of Statistics (BOS), Director of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), BOS Human Resource, National Strategy for the Development of Statistics Coordinator (NSDS), Project Manager, Heads of BOS Divisions, Information Technology (IT) manager and the consultant Chief Technical Advisor (CTA).

The entire orientation was presided over by Ms Nyefolo Seboka NSDS Coordinator, Pauline Makopela who is the BOS Head of Field Operations Division and Ms Tsoamathe Maseribane the Project Manager for Lesotho Data for Sustainable Development Project.

The BOS Director Ms Malehloa Molato gave the preliminary orientation. The Director of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) under the Ministry of Development Planning, Ms Malefu Nyakhapa, came in mainly for the M&E component. She took the opportunity to encourage Assistant Statisticians to work closely with both their BOS and M&E focal points in sourcing out baseline data for the SDGs Baseline report. In complimentary to her words of encouragement to Assistant Statisticians, the CTA Mr. Nicholas Jonga, included a “Meta Data” component in their orientation training. Having received this orientation, assistant statisticians were quick to be productive. Although with some challenges, they managed to visit all Ministries, Developments and Agencies (MDAs) that had a potential to provide the baseline data for SDGs indicators. The baseline data they have so far gathered has already found its way in the SDG Baseline report.

The Assistant Statisticians went further to apply the acquired skills to the MDAs level training on administrative data. The training package included sensitizing the respective MDAs on their expected contribution to the M&E and NSS, sensitizing MDAs on the statistical value of administrative records, developing metadata for selected SDG Indicators/Minimum Essential Indicators, data collation, data management and analysis using Excel as well as using data for monitoring, planning and decision making.

Furthermore, the assistant statisticians productively applied themselves to a data management assessment that was administered to selected ministries during the last week of March 2018. They demonstrated an in-depth understanding of questionnaire design, interviewing techniques, field procedures and data editing. After the data collection, the analytical work was performed by Mr. Jonga.

The impact of the CTA on the career of assistant statisticians was undeniable; as they voluntarily appreciated the orientation and presented an adorable Lesotho Hat to him on the eve of his departure from Lesotho.

Fragmented components of the National Statistical System integrated

The complexity of the Agenda 2030 requires high quality data for monitoring the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the SDGs. As such, a strong National Statistical System (NSS) is the prerequisite for designing, monitoring and evaluating national policies and managing results on socio-economic development. In recognition of this imperative need, the Ministry of Development Planning, through its departments of Monitoring & Evaluation and Bureau of Statistics (BOS), with support from EU and UNDP, successfully conducted several initiatives under the Lesotho Data project.

A workshop-based “Know Your NSS” campaign was conducted in November 2017 brought together representatives of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), National University of Lesotho (NUL) and BOS. Basically, the awareness was raised through a generic presentation of the components of the NSS that was followed by an exhaustive show-casing of statistical products produced by the BOS and selected MDAs. The NUL representative gave an account of the academia contribution to the NSS. So far, the steps taken to bring together MDAs, academia and BOS have been commended by several stakeholders. Manager in Research and Development, Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation, Mr Mojalefa Mosoeu said “I really appreciate this initiative that is bringing all NSS stakeholders together. This is happening for the first time in a while. I wish it could continue.”
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and FinMark Trust, hosted the first ever Hackathon on innovation for inclusive financial services under the Lesotho Scaling Inclusion through Mobile Money (LSIMM) Project.

The purpose of this Hackathon was to promote innovative solutions addressing some of the identified challenges to financial inclusion, focusing on access and use of mobile financial services (mobile money and mobile banking) in Lesotho, especially among the poor and rural population.

Competing innovators had to: 1) Design and develop the next-generation applications to improve on existing digital financial systems and product offering; 2) Facilitate use of technology to bridge the financial inclusion divide in Lesotho; 3) Create Lesotho-relevant technological solutions to solve local challenges; and 4) Leverage existing information, networks and human capacity to build innovations.

The event was held over three days, from 22nd to 24th April 2018. There were 65 participants, organised into 17 teams, which competed for the Cash Prize of US$ 5,000.

Even though all participants’ pitches were breathtaking, the jury winnowed 7 teams whose pitches were exceptionally outstanding. The prize included USD 5000, mentorship and technical support to enable financial support of all selected prototypes, and one participants’ price of USD 500 which was won by Money Bag.

The winners were Money Bag; Cashflow; Trio; Bundle-Up; Technify; Nova; and InfoCrasp.

Profiles of Winning teams:

Technify – Resolved the challenge of different and long steps for payment and the name of their solution product was Integrated Taxi Management System (ITMAS). The team members were: Thato Rammoko, Pule Molise, Mohale Molielieng and Tlhotliso Mafantiri.

Info Crasp – Resolved the challenge of limited usability of financial services among semi-literate, aged and visually impaired and their solution product is Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System and voice recognition. The team members are: Sello Mafantiri, Rats’omo Rats’omo and Tseko Moshe

Cashflow – Resolved the challenge of location of merchants and agents not clearly known and their solution product was cash flow. The team members were: Mothusi Kabi, Tokelo Kamohi, Tsekiso Thokoana, Morapeli Thetsane and Motlatse Lesole.

Bundle-Up – Resolved the challenge of location of merchants and agents not clearly known and their solution product was: Know Your customer (KYC) + GPS BASED MM SYSTEM. The team members were: Kabelo Ramaboli, Nyakallo Moleko, Tankiso Kolobe and Kabelo Lekhatla

TRIO – Resolved the challenge of management of community group savings and credit programs and their solution product was Sesiu. The team members were: Mohau Ramakhula, Seboka Matsoso and Mosiuoa Sesing.

NOVA – Resolved the challenge of limited usability of financial services among semi-literate, aged and visually impaired and their solution product was Buddy Rescue. The team members were: Pule Maanela, Thabo Majoro and Thoola Shai.

Money Bag – Resolved the challenge of limited usability of financial services among semi-literate, aged and visually impaired and their solution product was money bag. The team members were: Lehlohonolo Makotli, Makhaba Sennane and Teboho Nitlane.
Our collaboration and support to the Government and people of Lesotho is governed by the Country Programme Document 2019-2023 and the Lesotho United Nations Development Assistance Plan (2019-2023), which is based on the priority needs of the country expressed in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDPII) 2018/19-2022/23. We are committed to building on and sharing experiences with our wide range of partners, to maximize the impact of development initiatives of the Government of Lesotho and other partners.