Child protection, as stipulated in the UNICEF Lesotho’s Country Programme Document (2013-2017) aims to create “The protective environment for children at risk of, and exposed to, violence, exploitation and abuse will be strengthened through implementation of the Child Protection and Welfare Act (CPWA) 2011. It will also enhance child and gender sensitive social protection systems for vulnerable children and their families, including those infected and affected by HIV”. There is growing acknowledgment among formal and informal child protection actors of the need to focus on strengthening a holistic child protection system rather than dealing of stand-alone issues.
SUMMARY OF TRENDS IN THE PROGRAMMING ENVIRONMENT

• The Child Protection Strategy (2014-2019) and costed CPWA 2011 now inform advocacy for improved budgetary and human resourcing.

• Improved reporting on child abuse cases by Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU), Juvenile Training Centre (JTC) and Children’s Court.

• Violence against children in families, schools and communities continues to affect children and is underreported.

CHALLENGES

• Incoherent coordination of child protection initiatives by formal and informal actors leading to ineffective safety nets for vulnerable children. As such, UNICEF supported the resuscitation of the non-governmental organisation child rights/protection coordination body (Letsema Network/Sentebale) and facilitated its affiliation to Child Rights Network in Southern Africa (CRINSA).

• Poor reporting and management of child abuse cases by justice for children. This is due to, among other factors, disharmony among various pieces of legislation and inadequate resourcing of child protection programmes by government and non-governmental partners alike.

KEY STATISTICS

- According to the Lesotho Demographic Health Survey, 43% of children’s births were registered up till 2016.

- Through the One Stop Shop (OSS) initiative, an additional 2,000 births were registered between September 2015 and March 2016.

- 31 children were sentenced to the Juvenile Training Centre by the Children’s Court. Of the sentenced children, 26 were boys and 5 were girls.

- 22% of children reported to have experienced some form of violence in schools.

- According to the State of the World’s Children (2016) 19% of children are married.

- 69,000 children affected by the El Nino-induced consequences. Cases of sexual and physical abuse as women and girls walk to and from water sources; children and caregivers suffering from increased psychosocial distress; girls are dropping out of school to marry as a family’s negative coping mechanism to the drought.

PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

- UNICEF supported the submission of both the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child’s combined report (1999-2013) to ACERWC in November 2015 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) in November 2016. Concluding remarks and recommendations for the African Charter have been received in 2016 and scheduled to be presented to the Parliament in the second quarter of 2017. Under the auspices of the AU and technical support from UNECA, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Home Affairs to conduct the comprehensive CRVS assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses of the CRVS system as well as draft a national Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Strategic Plan. In collaboration with the Social Protection/Policy section – under the umbrella of the OSS initiative – child protection accelerated the registration of births of children and general population.


- In collaboration with Ministry of Social Development and World Vision Lesotho, hosted a National Shadow Children’s Parliament to take stock of the implementation of the Children’s Protection and Welfare Act (2011) and call for improved protection of all children five years into its enactment.
ACHIEVEMENT AT A STRATEGIC LEVEL BY MID 2016

- 2,000 births registered through the OSS centres.

- Engagement of the Justice for Children (J4C) consultant to support the strengthening of the J4C system.

- Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) completed, and report shared with Southern Africa El Nino Affected countries and national stakeholder. A special child protection in emergencies publication released in March (see attached).

- Inroads made into community sensitisation of communities and schools on Violence against Children (VaC) – 1150 children and 83 villages addressed.

- CPWA 2011 regulations reviewed to facilitate implementation of the Act.

- Child Rights Network in Southern Africa (CRINSA) successfully capacitated and affiliated NGO child-focused coordination body.

UNICEF’S CONTRIBUTION

The Child Protection in collaboration with relevant partners continue to:

- Collaborate with Social Protection to strengthen the provision of birth registration at OSS centres;

- Collaborate with Basic Education sector to enhance the capacity of selected schools piloting Child Friendly School initiative;

- Provide technical support to the Government of Lesotho to reform and harmonise relevant pieces of legislation for effective prevention and response to violence against children;

- Mobilisation and resourcing of government and non-government partners to sensitise communities and policy makers on child marriage;

- Finalise, present and disseminate the national Comprehensive CRVS report and its accompanying costed strategic plan;

- Support the strengthening of the Justice for Children system through capacity, technical and material assistance.

KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2017

- Finalization, presentation and dissemination of the national comprehensive CRVS report and CRVS strategic plan.

- Submit the CRC Alternative/Shadow and UNICEF independent reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

- Accelerate birth registration and meet (and possibly exceed) the 450,000 target.

- Strength the J4C system at community, district and national levels through improved reporting and introduction of child protection modules in the National University of Lesotho, Police Training College, Lesotho College of Education and Lesotho Correctional Services Training Centre.

- Strengthen child protection in emergency capacity among government, NGOs and communities.

CONCLUSION

The child protection sector has endeavoured to achieve the objective of the country programme by working in close partnership and collaboration with relevant formal and information actors to “create a protective environment” for all children. Through its collaboration with the social protection/policy sector, the section has managed to increase registration of children’s and adult’s births, thus contributing to the efforts to “enhance child and gender sensitive social protection systems for vulnerable children and their families.”