

Sprinkling Joy on National Children's Day

By: Lebohlang Maluke

MASERU

UNICEF in collaboration with World Vision celebrates National Children's Day at Phelisanong Children Centre - Pitseng, this special day is dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of investing in our children. It serves as a reminder that investing in our children is investing in the future of our nation.

The future belongs to our children. As adults, it is our responsibility to ensure that they have a bright and secure future ahead of them. It was established in 1954, National Children's Day is celebrated all around the world. It is a day to recognize the rights and well-being of children and to promote their happiness and well-being.

With the current global situation, where the education and well-being of children have been greatly impacted, National Children's Day holds even more significance. It is a reminder to all of us that we must come together and invest in our children's future.

UNICEF representative Mr. Deepak Bhaskaran mentions that, they need to stop violence against children. As NGO, they support efforts of the government of Lesotho in ensuring that every child has access to support and protection. They also created platforms like U-Report and the Youth Power Hub which helps children, supporting youth by amplifying their voices and providing mentorship and training, to build a future that matches their dreams and needs.

Investing in our children goes beyond providing them with material possessions. It means

investing in their education, health, and overall well-being. It means creating a nurturing and supportive environment for them to grow and thrive in.

Education is one of the crucial aspects of investing in our children. It is the key to empowering them and preparing them for a successful future. However, it is disheartening to know that millions of children around the world do not have access to quality education. This has a detrimental impact on their future and the future of our world.

On National Children's Day, we must reflect on the state of education and do our part in ensuring that every child has access to education. This could be through supporting organizations that provide education to underprivileged children or advocating for policies that prioritize education for all.

Investing in children's health is another important aspect of securing their future. It is our responsibility to provide children with a healthy and safe environment to grow in. This means ensuring access to nutritious food, clean water, and proper healthcare.

Sadly, many children around the world face malnutrition, lack of access to clean water, and inadequate healthcare, which greatly affects their growth and well-being. As responsible adults, we must work towards eradicating these issues and promoting a healthier future for our children.

One of students Motsieleng mentions that "children must stand up and fight for their rights, gender equality for all. Investing in our future is investing in children. Children should be re-

named appropriately without humiliation because as children they have rights."

Furthermore, investing in our children also means investing in their emotional and mental well-being. The challenges of the modern world can be overwhelming for children, and it is crucial to provide them with the necessary support and guidance to navigate through it.

This day make a conscious effort to create a safe and supportive environment for our children. This can be done by being there for them, listening to their concerns, and providing them with the necessary tools to build their resilience.

Investing in our children also means investing in their safety and protection. Every child has the right to feel safe and secure. As adults, it is our responsibility to ensure that they are protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

We must also support and advocate for policies that protect the rights of children, including their right to safety and protection. This day serves as a reminder to all of us that we must do everything in our power to safeguard the well-being of our children.

As we celebrate National Children's Day, it is crucial to remember that our actions today will shape the future of our children and our nation. By investing in our children, we are investing in a brighter, more prosperous future for all of us.

Moreover, by investing in our children, we are also breaking the cycle of poverty and creating a better society for future generations. A child who receives proper education, healthcare, and emotional support is likely to grow up to be a productive member of society.

However, disabled children in Pitseng faces serious challenges which has bad impact to their education: lack of security, lack interpreters and lack of grinds to the teachers which hinders their learning process.

National Children's Day serves as a reminder that investing in our children is crucial for a better tomorrow. As responsible adults, it is our duty to create an environment that nurtures and supports our children's growth and well-being. Let us pledge to invest in our children's future today, and make this world a better place for them to thrive in. Happy National Children's Day!



Acknowledge and support children's rights

EU-UNDP partnership drives empowerment for communities

By: Thoboloko Ntšonyane

MASERU

The partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) over the past two decades continues to deliver results in advancing sustainable human development. The benefits of this collaboration foster hope and bolster efforts in good governance, youth and women's empowerment, renewable energy in rural communities, business opportunities, innovative solutions to global challenges, and the transformative effect on female-headed households.

Recently Informative Newspaper, sat down with the EU's Head of Delegation in Lesotho, Paola Amadei and the UNDP's Lesotho Resident Representative Dr Jacqueline Olweya to reflect on the significance, achievements and the transformative potential of their two institutions' partnership.

Reflecting on the background of their partnership with the UNDP, EU's Head of Delegation said it is a long journey and was formalized in 2004 through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in around 1996.

It spans the same period globally including Lesotho, 170 corporations in 70 countries including Lesotho focusing on various developmental goals, including poverty alleviation, climate resilience, and inclusive governance. This cooperation reportedly aligns with the framework of EU and UNDP engagements, which address post-conflict recovery and sustainable development globally.

"At the core of the UNDP-EU corporation are the promotion of good governance, sustainable development, and peace, and these objectives have been promoted and targeted in the corporation in Lesotho. You will note that at the core of the UN corporation is 'leaving no one behind,' which is exactly what we try to achieve in Lesotho in cooperation with the government of Lesotho and by working hand in hand with the civil society organizations," said Amadei.

Dr Olweya pointed out that central to the partnership are three key objectives: improving people's lives, amplifying their voices especially

those of the most vulnerable populations and communities and implementing local solutions to address local challenges.

She said they have been targeting to work in the rural areas on renewable energy project under 'Renewable Energy for All' project, formerly Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) where they leverage private sector involvement in mounting 10 mini-grids across the country in the most rural places in the country to ensure that communities that are left behind access electricity for education, for health purposes, for lighting and for cooking in a sustainable way.

Amadei stated that some of the mini-grids have already been installed, while others are in the process of being installed. The beneficiary communities are in Matsoaing in Mokhotlong, Semonkong, Mashai in Thaba-Tseka, Lebakeng and Sehlabathebe in Qacha's Nek, Tosing and Sebapala in Quthing, Ketane in Mohale's Hoek, Ribaneng in Mafeteng, and Makebe in Berea.

She noted that there is already a noticeable improvement in these areas. She explained: "Some households have been waiting for electricity [for over] 20 years. They had already installed electric wiring in their homes, but there was no electricity. They were still relying on paraffin and biomass for cooking, which not only had a negative impact on the environment but also limited their access to modern [conveniences]."

"If you visit these households now, they have installed fridges and electric stoves. Some women in the communities have even been able to start businesses, such as providing lunches. Schools have experienced improvements in their operations, as have health clinics, which were previously forced to limit their activities. As part of this project, four public schools, one police station, 13 small businesses, three health clinics, and an estimated 20,000 people are benefiting."

Regarding ownership and inclusion, Amadei stated that all processes, from the design stage to the selection of mini-grid locations, are agreed upon with the communities. Members of the communities are actively involved in the construction, which also creates job opportunities.

She noted that only technicians are brought in from outside to lead the projects, while the majority of casual work is carried out by residents in the beneficiary areas. She emphasized that the process is consistently coordinated and communicated with the community.

"I have observed a lot of buy-in from each and every community," she said.

Dr Olweya echoed her sentiments, highlighting environmental management and sustainability within these areas where these projects are undertaken. She stated that

two other notable successes of the partnership in establishing mini-grids include an example in Quthing where they had undertaken a joint visit with the EU Ambassador, the British High Commissioner, and the United States Embassy delegation.

"One of the things we learned there was that, previously, sick people, particularly women requiring caesarean sections, had to be transported over 100 kilometers for emergency procedures. Imagine a woman in labour, needing a caesarean section, being driven on a very rough road."

"But now, [thanks to the] support we have provided, caesarean sections can be performed at the same health center connected to the mini-grid. This has been life-saving, protecting both the lives of women and the children."

She mentioned that during their visit, they were even introduced to a baby who had been born as a result of this project.

She continued: "The second success is in security. Police stations have been connected to the mini-grid, and during our discussions with the communities, we learned that they now feel safe walking at night because the area is lit. The police are better equipped to respond to emergencies at night due to the electricity supply."

The rocky topography of the country, Dr Olweya said is one of the challenges that had resulted in delays with power installations and construction of the mini-grids but indicated that they have to work in areas that they have to work on in concert with the government and the private sector.

"Indeed, this impact will be felt in the years to come. It is a process, the businesses that have started will continue to develop over time, and more children will be able to attend school and pursue their studies as families gain access to resources," said Amadei.

She highlighted instances where some members of the Baphuthi community had migrated from parts of Quthing, and others had sent their children to South Africa or Mohale's Hoek for education due to a lack of facilities.

However, she noted that this might soon become a thing of the past with the installation of electricity in these communities. She emphasized that this development could bring significant change, as access to electricity is now available in these areas.

The EU's Head of Delegation continued: "It is more than just an infrastructure project, but it is a project of changing lives and that is a very good example of the UNDP-EU corporation."

When asked about the extent of government involvement in complementing these efforts, Dr Olweya stated that its contribution had exceeded the initial estimates set at the project's inception.

She explained that government support is provided in various ways, including the deployment of technical staff to facilitate processes as the project progresses, participation in steering committees to offer policy direction, and the establishment of a framework that encourages private sector involvement. Dr Olweya also highlighted the govern-

ment's role in the creation of the forthcoming electricity fund.

Amadei also noted that the government contributes significantly to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all by 2030.

She added that, given the country's topography, the government, through the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC), would not be able to connect the entire country to the national grid, as this would be a very expensive exercise. Some of the villages are particularly isolated, which would require even higher costs for connection hence the mini-grids solution.

She said with the energy project this partnership is helping the country to reach the access to clean energy for all by 2030.

The UNDP's Resident Representative said the Renewable Lesotho project that will focus on household solar panels aims to reach 6 000 female headed households over the next three years and address cost elements to it.

When asked why specifically females, she explained that, according to statistics in Lesotho, female-headed households experience poverty in a more multidimensional way than male-headed households.

She reiterated that the partnership targets the most vulnerable members of society. "Their vulnerability, their inability to, for instance, pay school fees for their children, and their inability to provide for their households, often forces them to leave their children behind while they fend for resources to support their families."

She further pointed out that, according to statistics both elsewhere and in Lesotho, girls are more likely to be left behind when it comes to education. Therefore, by providing solar panels in female-headed households, both girls and boys in the household are targeted equally.

"By bringing the project closer to the people you guarantee that they become the custodian of the infrastructure," said Amadei addressing the sustainability of their projects.

The other areas the partnership is focusing on, as highlighted by the UNDP Resident Representative, include governance to ensure appropriate frameworks are in place for an enabling environment and the creation of conditions where people are actively engaged in policy and decision-making processes.

"We have the SDGs to look forward to, and we are still working towards supporting member states in their progress towards achieving these goals. Furthermore, following the recent UN General Assembly held in September in New York, the Pact for the Future emerged from the discussions.

"This Pact highlights several areas where I am confident the EU-UNDP partnership will align, as we are committed to global agreements. Among other things, it focuses on using digitization to enhance sustainable development and growth- digitization that ensures no one is left behind, including the most vulnerable, who are likely to be most affected as we move forward with this process," said Dr Olweya.



EU's Ambassador Paola Amadei and UNDP's Resident Representative Dr Jacqueline Olweya