

# LESOTHO DATA

FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT



EUROPEAN UNION



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

END OF PROJECT  
**EVALUATION  
BRIEF**



## Introduction

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Lesotho, as part of its Country Programme Document (CPD) - 2013-2018<sup>1</sup>, supported the Government of Lesotho in the implementation of the Lesotho Data for Sustainable Development (Lesotho Data) Project between November 2016 and June 2019 to mitigate the issue of quality, availability and use of data to inform policy and planning. The European Union (EU) and the UNDP jointly funded the Project, with a total budget of USD 1,426,550 (€ 1,286,339).<sup>2</sup>

## Evaluation Scope and Objectives

With the Project coming to an end in June 2019, UNDP commissioned an end-of-project evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the Lesotho Data Project has met the intended objectives, provide evaluative evidence on the contribution of UNDP to fulfill its accountability requirements, and generate lessons to inform the planning of similar interventions to maximise achievements of development results. The evaluation covered the entire implementation period from November 2016 to June 2019.<sup>3</sup>

## Key Findings and Conclusions

### Relevance

The Lesotho Data Project was highly relevant to the need of Lesotho on data for development and result-based management. The Project was consistent with the national policy framework and priorities as defined by NSDP, UNDAF for Lesotho, and EU initiatives in Lesotho. The Project's method of delivery was appropriate as it chose to work with BOS and DM&E to address both statistics and M&E system issues that are interlinked. Both BOS and DM&E were seen as the most appropriate partners. While the Project design was appropriate for the issues

at large in Lesotho and to establish a national ecosystem for statistics and M&E, it was ambitious for the time and resources that were available to implement the Project.

### Effectiveness

The Lesotho Data Project was moderately effective, primarily due to its ambitious scope and objectives not matched with time and resources available. The Project created awareness of the data gaps/weaknesses in Lesotho and also made the country take initial steps in addressing the gaps and in establishing the processes for an ecosystem for statistics and M&E, although at very nascent stages. In support of building the national M&E Framework, the Project was instrumental in developing critical foundational elements for Lesotho, such as the SDG customisation, SDG 2016 baseline report, and the VNR 2019 reporting.

The capacity development activities such as the study tours and various training (RBM, Excel, SPSS, Basic Statistics, and Administrative Data) of the Project laid the foundation to contribute towards improved use of data use in decision-making, policy formulation, and planning in the future.

- The eight study tours and attendance at international conferences/forums have led to improved methodologies and processes in data collection and/data analysis.
- The training on statistical software packages (to 150 officials) has helped trainees to help their respective MDAs in the creation of databases (from paper reports received from districts), present data (using charts and tables), perform analysis using functions and formulas, and improve their work efficiency
- The training on Basic statistics to 144 field and clerical staff of BOS has enlightened the staff on the data value chain and appreciate their role in contributing to it.
- The training on administrative data to 157 officials across BOS, DM&E, and 10 pilot MDAs "opened eyes" on data the ministries had and how they could be used for decision-making and reporting on SDGs, NSDP and regional commitments such as for SADC

450  
officials trained  
on statistical  
packages and  
statistics/data

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Programme%20Documents/Lesotho%20CPD%202013-2017%20\(en\).pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Programme%20Documents/Lesotho%20CPD%202013-2017%20(en).pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Project Document/ROM Report: - EU - € 1,071,731 (USD 1,188,550); and UNDP - USD 238,000

<sup>3</sup>The evaluation was conducted between August and November 2019. Key methods used for data collection included key informant interviews, focus group discussions, review of documents (n=70), and semi-structured observations. As part of data collection 98 stakeholders (50 women and 48 men) were met.

<sup>4</sup>Including use of CAPI in CMS, development of an application to collect price data, cell allocation planning and ability to highlight the contribution made by cell-mates, collection of data on production prices (for the first time) and adding additional modules in surveys

- Furthermore, the Project built capacities of 76 participants on RBM (5-day training) and 22 participants as trainers (3-day training). Additionally, eight officials were supported to attend training on public sector/outcome-based M&E in South Africa.

106  
officials  
trained on  
RBM/M&E

As part of the contribution to national data collection, measurement, and analytical systems, a key highlight achievement by the Project has been the recruitment of six Assistant Statisticians and ensuring that they were absorbed permanently in the respective Ministries. The Assistant Statisticians have made key contributions in the Ministries, including collecting and using administrative data to report on SDGs, creating databases, modeling energy demand for up to 2055, helping develop gender-based violence data collection tool, in addition to being the go-to persons for data solutions.

The Project was not able to ensure functioning harmonised national coordination mechanism for M&E and statistics. There is no coordination unit in BOS but one person (the newly appointed Assistant Statistician). While a national platform was conceived for coordination and information sharing, it was not functional. Establishing an effective functioning national coordination mechanism will require continued support and a longer period than envisaged by the Project..

### Efficiency

The Project's efficiency was moderately unsatisfactory. The efficiency of the Project was affected by long delays in recruiting project staff and early ending of the contract of CTA, in addition to conflicting priorities and slow government-UNDP processes. Funding delays, especially at the beginning of each year, delayed implementation of activities. Fundamental inefficiency noted was the last-minute invitations sent to MDAs for Project events and activities (including training), which did have some negative effect on effectiveness and sustainability. All these led to two no-cost extensions. However, project activities were cost-efficient, and financial resources were used efficiently.

### Sustainability

The sustainability of the Project is considered modest and is still a work in progress. Some of the aspects of the Project have potential (most likely) to be sustainable. Capacities developed at an individual level will benefit insti-

tutions, as individuals will continue to use the skills, where applicable; nevertheless, it is too early to talk about institutionalisation of the capacities. A key hindering factor will be the enabling environment on the MDAs, as the Project had not sufficiently sensitised the senior officials on data and then need to support statistical and M&E activities. The absorption of the Assistant Statisticians into respective Ministries is a strong positive factor for sustainability. The Project produced various manuals and tool-kits from conducting several training, which have been shared and are available for future reference and training. The National Data Portal has the potential to be sustainable. Lack of statisticians or statistical units in MDAs and/or lack of updated NSDS, M&E policy, and a revised Statistical Act do not bode well in creating an enabling environment for an effective ecosystem for statistics and M&E.

### Partnerships

Although conceived as a multi-stakeholder initiative, the Project did not build on the foundation of the UNDP-EU partnership. Potential for partnerships with the private sector (in training) is evident but not tapped yet.

### Cross-cutting issues

The Project did not mainstream gender; however, gender relevance is evident. The Project advocated disaggregated data to enable gender analysis. The Project ensured gender-balanced participation in all its events and activities.





## Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned from Lesotho Data Project implementation for future programming on data related and other initiatives include:

- Project design should match resources and time available for implementation to be effective and efficient. If the objective of the Project, like in Lesotho Data, is to change an ecosystem, it takes a longer time and hence should be planned for a phased-approach.
- The consultative and inclusive processes adopted by the Project were important to building ownership among national stakeholders.
- Sending invitations for the project events/activities, including training at the last minute, affected effective attendance and led to a “not so” appropriate staff attending such events, which affected the effectiveness and also sustainability.
- Postponing of project events due to conflicting priorities leads to “bunching up” of events, eventually contributing to inefficiencies and affecting effectiveness. This included delays in preparing reports for the concluded event and rushed preparation for the next event.
- Sensitising senior officials is vital to garner support at the working level for statistical and M&E activities.

- Tailoring training to the appropriate level of staff is essential for better appreciation and better understanding.
- Enlightening each other (Government and UNDP) of their respective established processes and time requirements will help a more realistic event/activity planning or approvals and healthier working partnership.
- While posting Assistant Statisticians, there was not enough briefing on what they should be doing or what the Ministries can expect of them or what support should be given to them. A proper briefing/orientation and/or guidelines would have been good for better integration (although, in this case, it turned out well eventually).
- The participation of agencies in meetings may not necessarily translate into partnerships or coordinated activities.



## Recommendations

Support and handholding<sup>5</sup> from UNDP/UN RCO in collaboration with UN agencies and development partners would be required to carry out many of these recommendations, even though the primary responsibility will be that of the Government of Lesotho (more specifically BOS and DM&E).<sup>6</sup> Key recommendations are:

### Recommendation 1:

To ensure a sustainable national ecosystem, an enabling

<sup>5</sup>Sustainable capacity development is integral to these recommendations.

<sup>6</sup>The support by UNDP and other UN agencies/development partners could be for one or more of the recommendations but overall, they should have a coordinated approach.

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environment supported by appropriate legal frameworks and policies has to be put in place. This includes updated NSDS, a national M&E policy, revised Statistics Act. (BOS and DM&E).

### Recommendation 2:

Projects such as the Lesotho Data Project with an objective to develop a functional national ecosystem for statistics and M&E should have a phased approach and should be developed as a multi-stakeholder initiative with multiple stakeholders supporting different activities with resources.

- Depending on resources, the Project (programme) may initially focus on a few selected ministries and then roll-out instead of spreading thin. (BOS/DM&E; and UNDP and UN agencies/EU and other development partners).

### Recommendation 3:

Sensitise top-level officials on data awareness and data literacy. This would not only help in creating demand for data for decision-making and policy planning but also would enable them to appreciate and support work being done by the mid-level officials on statistics (who have received training from the project). BOS/DM&E; UNDP/ UNRCO and development partners, including EU.

### Recommendation 4:

Create a national data warehouse<sup>7</sup> to also act as a backup of databases from MDAs in addition to ensuring wider accessibility based on security protocols as deemed essential. Currently, databases and analysed data are in desktops and laptops of officials with backups only on USB keys (jump drives). This does not enable even officials in the ministry to access data. Surveys collect data, and not all data is analysed and published; however data not published may be useful for other programme/project design and/or other decision-making. In the current situation this data is not available/accessible, as many are not aware of its location. (BOS & DM&E; UNDP and other UN agencies/EU and other development partners).

### Recommendation 5:

A harmonised national coordination mechanism for statistics and M&E should be established with a strengthened role for the BOS as a coordinator.

- It is important that the work of M&E and statistics is synchronised, and therefore, there should only be one national mechanism.
- The national coordination structure should have clear mandates with specific roles and responsibilities

(backed by policies/legal frameworks) and could be multi-tiered. BOS and DM&E should act as “agents of change” in creating this mechanism. (BOS/DM&E; UNDP/UNRCO and UN agencies/EU and other development partners).

### Recommendation 6:

UN support on data to the Government of Lesotho should be coordinated and harmonised to “deliver as one.”

- It could be a “One Data Strategy for Lesotho,” wherein different agencies contribute technical and financial resources and work to achieve specific areas/results of the strategy. This not only avoids duplication but also saves costs to have a coherent approach and avoid confusion at the government’s end.
- When multiple agencies work with or support the same ministry on data collection there could be lead/co-leads.
- UN agencies should also explore option of “One Fund” mechanism for the country or multi-donor trust fund to improve data and the ecosystem in Lesotho. Funding from bilateral donors (including EU) could be mobilised for improving data availability and improving ecosystem through this one basket fund. (UNDP/UN RCO and UN agencies).

### Recommendation 7:

Coordination between BOS and DM&E to avoid conflicting priorities and having an advance calendar of events of the Project activities shared with MDAs will help the MDAs to be informed and ensure them to be prepared to nominate appropriate and adequate delegates for participation. This should be done in addition to invitations sent with adequate notice time and not at a day or two before the event. (BOS/DM&E).

### Recommendation 8:

Continue to use a collaborative approach and modality with ministries to deliver/manage projects including having project coordinators in the ministry, housing the project team in the ministry while making focused efforts to leverage partnership and resources among UN agencies and development partners (including EU) for joint design and delivery of projects to enhance cohesive support in the country.

Building partnership with CSOs and private sector will bring added value, complementary and synergistic skills and capacities including expertise on new tools and technologies. (UNDP).

<sup>7</sup>The data warehouse should be an architectural construct of an information system which provides MDAs and users with current and historical decision support information (which is currently difficult to access and not present in Lesotho).

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