



**IEO** | INDEPENDENT  
Evaluation Office  
United Nations Development Programme

# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION **LESOTHO**





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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability  
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
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**Other stakeholders and partners:** The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, representatives of United Nations agencies, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and bilateral and multilateral development partners.

# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Kingdom of Lesotho. This is the first country-level evaluation conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office in Lesotho and covers UNDP programme interventions implemented between 2019 and 2022.

This evaluation provides an analysis of UNDP's work in Lesotho and the factors that have enabled or hindered its work. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the appropriateness of the UNDP country assistance strategy and programme response in small least development countries (LDCs) such as Lesotho, with limited international assistance but complex development challenges.

Lesotho faces multiple factors that have constrained its economic growth and impacted the country's ability for development. Persistent poverty, political instability, non-inclusive economic growth and inequality are among the challenges acknowledged by the latest National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II), 2018/19–2022/23. In response, in its country programme, UNDP has articulated its commitment to supporting the country to enhance good governance, support inclusive economic growth and promote climate resilience and sustainable natural resource management.

The evaluation found that, given the limitation in international assistance to Lesotho, UNDP's contribution to reform processes and short-term institutional capacity has been important. UNDP demonstrated timeliness and responsiveness to the national reform agenda. Its assistance in bolstering the technical capacities of the relevant ministries contributed to maintaining the momentum, for instance, strengthening the security sector areas.

UNDP support in developing national environmental protocols was important. Its approaches to ensure access to renewable energy and to mobilize communities in curbing land degradation had the potential to scale up. Energy access in rural communities remains a challenge, and viable solutions in renewable energy, climate change resilience and natural resources management areas are critical for Lesotho's development.

Moving forward, UNDP Lesotho should be strategic in its engagements and partnerships to achieve sustainable development outcomes in select priority areas. It should position itself as an expert organization and a policy actor with an emphasis on local development and community security. It can establish a more comprehensive approach to inclusive economic development and should continue its emphasis on promoting women's security and economic development.

I would like to thank the Government of Lesotho and all national stakeholders and colleagues at the UNDP Lesotho Country Office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, who have provided their valuable time, information and support throughout this evaluation. I am fully confident that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will help to strengthen the formulation of the next country programme strategy to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable development pathway for the people of Lesotho.



**Alan Fox**  
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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AfCFTA</b>	African Continental Free Trade Area
<b>BKM</b>	Bophelo – Ka – Mosebelets
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>DFA</b>	Development Financing Assessment
<b>DIM</b>	Direct implementation modality
<b>ETL</b>	Econet Telecom Lesotho
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>HACT</b>	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technology
<b>IEC</b>	Independent Electoral Commission
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office
<b>IFI</b>	International financial institution
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INFF</b>	Integrated National Financing Framework
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LDC</b>	Least developed country
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>MDP</b>	Ministry of Development Planning
<b>MGYSR</b>	Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sport and Recreation
<b>MJL</b>	Ministry of Justice and Law
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>NIM</b>	National implementation modality
<b>NRA</b>	National Reforms Authority
<b>NRTO</b>	National Reforms Transitional Office
<b>NSDP</b>	National Strategic Development Plan
<b>NUL</b>	National University of Lesotho

<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PFM</b>	Public finance management
<b>PMU</b>	Programme Management Unit
<b>PSC</b>	Project Steering Committee
<b>PwD</b>	People with disabilities
<b>RVCC</b>	Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SE4ALL</b>	Sustainable Energy for All
<b>SIMM</b>	Scaling Inclusion through Mobile Money
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>VEC</b>	Village energy centres
<b>VHW</b>	Village health worker
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



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# Evaluation Brief

The Kingdom of Lesotho, a lower-middle-income economy, is among the least developed countries (LDCs). The country is implementing its second five-year National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) 2018–2023, which prioritizes the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and private sector-led job creation, as well as strengthening governance, transparency and accountability systems to address challenges of political instability, persistent poverty, non-inclusive economic growth and inequality.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Programme Document (CPD) for Lesotho 2019–2023 was informed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, anchored in the NSDP II 2018/19–2022/23 and the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Set within the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019–2023, the Country Programme sought to leverage synergies with other United Nations agencies and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its implementation focuses on three areas of intervention: (i) governance, rule of law and human rights; (ii) sustainable economic growth; and (iii) climate resilience and natural resource management.

## Programme Expenditure by thematic area, 2019-2022 (US\$million)



## Country programme funding sources, 2019-2022



## Findings and conclusions

It emerged from the evaluation that UNDP Lesotho has been operating in a challenging context, characterized by low growth and social and political instability, and exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the limitation in international assistance and development finance to the country, UNDP's contribution to reform processes and short-term institutional capacity has been important. UNDP also contributed to maintaining the momentum of the national reform agenda, demonstrating timeliness and responsiveness. However, due to not adequately leveraging such engagement for longer-term engagement has limited its contribution.

UNDP had outlined an ambitious programme with limited human and financial resources or adequate efforts to enable development financing, resulting in a limited contribution to addressing structural challenges. A missed opportunity has been the lack of engagement in strengthening local government capacities, which undermines UNDP's positioning as well as the sustainability of its programme outcomes.

A prolonged phase of short-term and one-off engagement has reduced strategic engagement in inclusive growth (employment and livelihoods) and local area development. The lack of cross-sectoral linkages, combined with parallel and overlapping institutional mechanisms (and mandates), are slowing Lesotho's progress in enhancing productivity. UNDP support was important in providing youth opportunities to improve productive capacities and innovation; however, these efforts require better strategy and support for business incubation and establishment. Green economy initiatives enabled the diversification of livelihoods, but their scale and scope are limited.

UNDP's support for developing national environmental protocols was important. UNDP sought to address key challenges in rural communities in Lesotho to increase renewable energy access and mobilize communities in curbing land degradation with simple approaches and potential to scale up. These efforts are important, but in these early stages, UNDP has yet to demonstrate viable solutions in renewable energy, climate change resilience and natural resources management areas.

UNDP support for women's enterprise development and security was important. Although not consistently pursued, policy support and advocacy efforts continue to be relevant. UNDP has, however, yet to prioritize gender-specific development and peace concerns that require longer-term solutions and to streamline its interventions into coherent programmatic offers, which was undermining its overall contribution. A longer-term programmatic thrust is hampered by an ad hoc programme approach. The siloed approach across the country programme has reduced UNDP's consolidated engagement and positioning. The lack of strategic partnerships undermined contributions to strengthening institutional processes and building sustainable capacities.

## Recommendations

To strengthen UNDP's work in Lesotho in support of national development priorities, the Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) made six recommendations:

**Recommendation 1.** For a meaningful contribution to sustainable development approaches in Lesotho, UNDP should position itself as an expert organization and policy actor, leveraging the organization's comparative advantage in addressing issues of institutional capacities, enabling workable solutions for employment, and addressing land degradation and energy issues. The UNDP programme should be strategic in its engagements and partnerships in order to enable sustainable development outcomes in select priority areas.

**Recommendation 2.** UNDP should prioritize support to strengthening local government capacities with particular emphasis on local development and community security. UNDP should aim to promote programme models that would enable local area-based solutions that strengthen central and local linkages.

**Recommendation 3.** UNDP should refocus its support to Lesotho productive capacities and livelihoods, establishing a more comprehensive approach to inclusive economic development (linked to private sector development and renewable energy solutions). UNDP should aim to develop the enabling environment and customized solutions that can provide models for micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) development and employment, at a scale that is tailored to local circumstances.

**Recommendation 4.** UNDP should accelerate the pace of efforts in energy and climate change resilience. It should also address barriers in the uptake of renewable energy solutions.

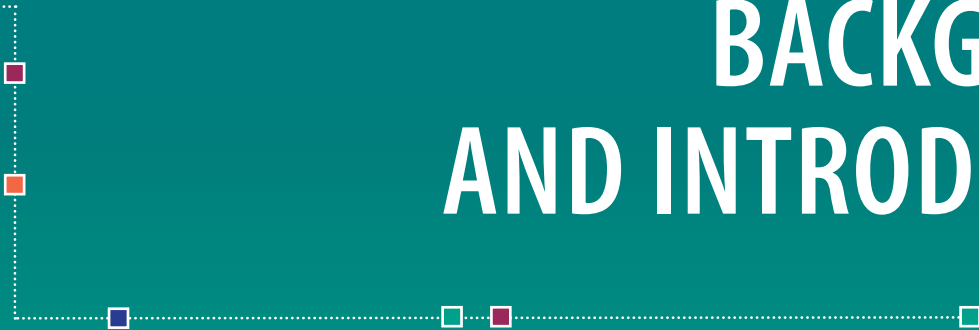
**Recommendation 5.** UNDP should continue its emphasis to promote women's security and economic development to enable gender-sensitive solutions and processes.

**Recommendation 6.** UNDP should strengthen programme coherence and address efficiency issues that reduced its programme contribution. Breaking programme and project silos is fundamental to enhancing UNDP's contribution.



# CHAPTER 1

# BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. The purpose of an ICPE is twofold: to strengthen UNDP's accountability to national stakeholders and to the UNDP Executive Board, and to promote learning. ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.<sup>1</sup>

This is the first independent evaluation of UNDP support in the Kingdom of Lesotho, and therefore covers UNDP's work during its current programme cycle 2019–2023, as well as projects that extend to the previous country programme. The scope of the ICPE includes the UNDP Country Programme in its entirety, covering all funding sources including UNDP regular resources, donors and the Government.

The ICPE is guided by four main evaluation questions (Box 1). Among other areas of focus, the ICPE paid close attention to how the pandemic affected the planned Country Programme implementation and to the extent to which the UNDP response to the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic contributed to the Government's relief and recovery efforts. The ICPE presents findings, conclusions and recommendations, and will serve as an input to the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for Lesotho.

The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Lesotho Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Africa, the UNDP Executive Board and the Government of Lesotho. It is also expected to be used as an input by other United Nations agencies and development stakeholders in the country.

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### BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
  2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
  3. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the country's preparedness, response and recovery process?
  4. What factors contributed to, or hindered, UNDP's performance, and eventually, the sustainability of results?
- 

## 1.2 Evaluation methodology

The ICPE was conducted according to the approved IEO process and methodology (see full Terms of Reference and the evaluation framework in Annex 1) and adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.<sup>2</sup> The evaluation identified and validated the list of all the projects during the country programme cycle, which would form the basis for the assessment (see the complete project list in Annex 4). This was followed by a desk review of reference material, including country programme strategies, project and programme documents, monitoring reports, audits and evaluations (see the full list in Annex 6) and a stakeholder analysis. The evaluation sought a balanced representation of different types of actors

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP Evaluation Policy, <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Evaluation Group, [www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914)



involved in the programme, including government officials, project implementing partners, beneficiary groups, United Nations agencies and other development donors and partners from civil society, the private sector and academia.

The evaluation employed a rating system to assess the performance of the country programme using the five internationally agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.<sup>3</sup> The relevance and coherence of the programme were assessed with respect to key national development policies and strategies, changes in the national context, and the interventions of other international actors in the country. UNDP capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to national development needs and priorities was also considered. The effectiveness of the UNDP country programme was analysed through an assessment of progress towards expected outputs and the extent to which they contributed to the intended CPD outcomes. To better understand UNDP performance and the efficiency and sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE examined the specific factors that have influenced the programme, positively and negatively.

The evaluation collected evidence from different sources, which was triangulated before the final analysis. These sources included:

- a review of UNDP documentation on projects and programmes in Lesotho, audit reports, decentralized evaluations,<sup>4</sup> research papers and other available country-related publications;
- a standard stakeholder survey to collect evidence on results, completed by the UNDP Country Office and national stakeholders prior to the field mission, and further discussed and validated during interviews;
- an analysis of the programme outcomes and the underlying theories of change and the mapping of implemented projects against the goals set in the CPD. There was a country visit for in person meetings and beneficiary consultations. A total of 132 stakeholders of the programme were interviewed (see Annex 5 for a complete list). Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and seven focal groups with beneficiaries were conducted to collect data, assess perceptions on the scope and effectiveness of programme interventions, determine factors affecting performance, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

In line with the UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming across the country programme and operations using gender markers and the IEO Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).<sup>5</sup> Where available, sex-disaggregated data were collected and assessed against programme outcomes. The number of women interviewed was over 50 percent of the total number of stakeholders approached.

The draft ICPE report was quality-assured through internal and external review processes before being submitted to the Country Office and the Regional Bureau for Africa for comments and the identification of factual errors. The revised report was then shared with the Government and other national partners for comment. A final stakeholder debriefing was held over videoconference, bringing together representatives

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2021), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>.

<sup>4</sup> Seven decentralized evaluations were conducted in the period under review. The quality assessment of the reports was classified as follows: one was deemed satisfactory; two, moderately satisfactory, and four, without quality assessment. Evaluation reports are available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/units/122>

<sup>5</sup> The gender marker is a corporate monitoring tool used to assign a rating score to project outputs during their design phase and track planned expenditure towards outputs that contributed to achieving Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE). It does not reflect the actual expenditure assigned to advancing GEWE. Since the gender marker is assigned by project output and not project ID, a project might have several outputs with different gender markers. The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative, gender-blind, gender-targeted, gender-responsive and gender-transformative.

of major programme stakeholders. The event offered an additional opportunity to discuss the results of the evaluation and ways forward for UNDP in the next cycle, including the management response presented by the UNDP Country Office.

### 1.3 Country context

Since its independence, for the past five decades Lesotho has engaged in comprehensive planning exercises for example, National Development Plans (NDPs), the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the National Vision 2020, to support its development path. Currently, the country is implementing its second five-year National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) 2018/19–2022/23, which prioritizes the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and private sector-led job creation, as well as the strengthening of governance, transparency and accountability systems to address challenges of political instability, persistent poverty, non-inclusive economic growth and inequality. The NSDP II recognized political uncertainty, poor coordination and limited dialogue with development partners among the factors constraining economic growth in the past and impacting the country's ability to attract foreign direct investment, which showed a sharp decline from US\$206 million in 2015 to US\$30 million in 2020.<sup>6</sup>

Lesotho is among the least developed countries (LDCs) and has a lower-middle-income economy. Its gross domestic product (GDP) has significantly declined since 2016, breaking a positive trend since 2009. As a result, its GDP per capita decreased from US\$1,140 to US\$970 between 2016 and 2021.<sup>7</sup> Due to the COVID-19 shock, its GDP growth (annual percent) was -8.4 percent in 2020.<sup>8</sup> Public debt levels reached 61 percent of GDP at the end of 2020.<sup>9</sup> Services comprised 60 percent of GDP, and agriculture was slightly higher than 5 percent.<sup>10</sup> Lesotho's economy, largely based on textile manufacturing and remittances from mineworkers in South Africa, is not adequately diversified. The Government is the largest employer of skilled labour, accounting for one-third of total employment.<sup>11</sup> Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are highly undercapitalized, but provide employment to almost 120,000 people, mostly women and youth.<sup>12</sup> The private sector remains small and largely informal, despite its integration into the world economy, in particular through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and as party to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The poverty rate fell from 61.3 percent in 2002 to an estimated 49.7 percent in 2018.<sup>13</sup> However COVID-19 has been reversing these modest gains. About two-thirds of the population live in rural areas with agriculture as their main source of livelihood and where the incidence of poverty is twice as high as in urban areas.<sup>14</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated unemployment rates, especially affecting employment in textile and apparel, and wholesale and retail sectors. Youth unemployment was also disproportionately affected. The mine closures in South Africa caused thousands of Basotho to return home, which posed risks to regaining jobs, increased food insecurity and reduced the volume of remittances from mine workers.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD?locations=LS>

<sup>7</sup> GDP per capita in constant 2015 US\$. See World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/lesotho>

<sup>8</sup> See World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/lesotho>

<sup>9</sup> IMF Country Report No. 20/228, July 2020.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, 2017 as cited by the Government of Lesotho, Beijing +25 Review, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Verite Lesotho Country Overview. <https://verite.org/africa/explore-by-country/lesotho>

<sup>12</sup> Lesotho Financial scope 2021. [www.uncdf.org/lesotho](http://www.uncdf.org/lesotho)

<sup>13</sup> Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Development Planning, Government of Lesotho. Poverty rate, 2017/18 Poverty Trends.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank and Bureau of Statistics: Lesotho Poverty Assessment: Progress and Challenges in Reducing Poverty, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP. Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Kingdom of Lesotho, 2020.

Lesotho ranked 168 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2021. Its HDI had improved from 0.479 in 1990 to 0.514 in 2021, but at a slower pace than comparable countries starting from a similar level.<sup>16</sup> According to data for 2017, Lesotho is a highly unequal country, with a 2017 Gini index of 44.9.<sup>17</sup> The overall loss to HDI due to inequality was 27.6 percent in 2021.<sup>18</sup> Youth (aged 18–35) make up 40 percent of Basotho, and a large proportion face a high unemployment rate (32.8 percent).<sup>19</sup> Although the literacy rate for both boys and girls is above 90 percent, their academic skills do not meet the private sector requirements, leading to high unemployment rates and underemployment. This has led to high levels of labour migration across the border and into the urban centres.<sup>20</sup>

Lesotho grapples with challenges of political instability, insecurity and fractious politics. Governance indicators showed a decrease over the years as well. Notably, the perception of rule of law and of government effectiveness decreased significantly between 2012 and 2020 (from 47 to 36 percent, and from 43 to 17 percent, respectively).<sup>21</sup> Although a signatory to key international and regional human rights agreements,<sup>22</sup> public accountability and transparency in Lesotho remain a challenge. The Human Rights Commission is yet to be established; the process for its establishment has been underway since the amendment to the Constitution in 2011. Currently, a draft bill to establish the Commission forms part of the Omnibus Bill of proposed amendments to the Constitution and electoral laws. Lesotho's performance on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index remained low and decreased slightly between 2012 and 2021 (from 45 to 38 percent).<sup>23</sup> Factors underlying these challenges include capacity and funding gaps in democratic institutions. One area that has improved is e-governance,<sup>24</sup> which showed an increase from 0.26 in 2014 to 0.46 in 2020, reflecting progress in terms of online service delivery, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity. A new coalition government was installed in October 2022 after general elections to elect members of the National Assembly.

Lesotho's gender equality efforts are enshrined in national legislation and are a priority in national development strategies.<sup>25</sup> However, there have been some reversals in progress made in bridging the gender gap, as the country slipped from 0.706 in the global gender gap index (ranked 61 out of 145 countries) in 2015 to 0.700 (rank 87 out of 146 countries) in 2022.<sup>26</sup> Women are engaged in low-end retail enterprises and not adequately engaged in export-related whole business or high-tech and engineering sectors. Lesotho still faces significant gender gaps in political empowerment despite a high level of education among women.<sup>27</sup> Customary practices and laws continue to restrict their political rights, and hence their empowerment. Despite the existence of electoral gender quotas and gender protocols,<sup>28</sup> women are under-represented

<sup>16</sup> UNDP: Human Development Report 2021/2022.

<sup>17</sup> World Bank, Gini Index. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=LS>

<sup>18</sup> UNDP. 2022. Human Development Reports. Lesotho. <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22>

<sup>19</sup> Government of Lesotho. Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report. 2022

<sup>20</sup> Bureau of Statistics. 2019 Labour Force Survey (LFS) Report. Lesotho 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs). The WGI uses a percentile rank score, ranging from 0 to 100 (highest rank).

<sup>22</sup> These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in Africa (1990).

<sup>23</sup> The CPI uses a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). [www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2018/index/dnk](http://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2018/index/dnk).

<sup>24</sup> E-Government Development Index (EGDI), United Nations E-Government Knowledge Base.

<sup>25</sup> For example, the 2003 Sexual Offences Act, 2006 Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, the 2008 Lesotho Bank Amendment Act, the 2010 Land Act repealed gender inequality.

<sup>26</sup> World Economic Forum. 2022. Global Gender Gap Report. Geneva.

<sup>27</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2021.

<sup>28</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Gender Quotas Database. [www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/174/35](http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/174/35)

in decision-making; in the last elections in 2022, the number of parliamentary seats held by women rose from 23 percent to 26 percent.<sup>29</sup> COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on women's livelihoods and rights due to limited access to the justice system caused by the lockdown restrictions.<sup>30</sup>

With a Gender Inequality Index of 0.557 in 2021, the country ranked 144 out of 162 countries.<sup>31</sup> The poverty rate for female-headed households was higher than for male-headed households, at 55.2 percent compared to 46.3 percent.<sup>32</sup> Despite having a higher literacy rate and secondary education, Basotho women work in jobs with a lower status and wages than men.<sup>33</sup> Women and girls spend about 16 percent of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 6 percent of men.<sup>34</sup> Lesotho's indicators on gender-based violence (GBV) and homicide are among the highest in the world; the homicide rate was 43.5 per 100,000 persons in 2019,<sup>35</sup> the 6th highest in the world and the highest in Africa, and rape incidence was 82.68 per 100,000,<sup>36</sup> the highest in Africa. These rates have been exacerbated within the context of economic lockdown and spiralling unemployment, which has disproportionately affected youth and women.

The impact of HIV/AIDS has been severe. As of 2020, HIV prevalence was 23 percent.<sup>37</sup> Due to GBV and marginalization, women are more susceptible to HIV/AIDS: the HIV prevalence rate among women is 30 percent compared to 19 percent among men.<sup>38</sup> Youth also experience a high prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS, estimated at 40 percent by the age of 35 years.<sup>39</sup> There are efforts by the Government such as the Test and Treat strategy to ensure that all those who test HIV-positive are immediately eligible to begin treatment. Lesotho has been a leader in adopting policies recommended through the United States' President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) programme and has achieved significant progress, achieving the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS' (UNAIDS) "90-90-90" definition of epidemic control by 2020.<sup>40</sup>

Lesotho has ratified all the major international environmental conventions and protocols.<sup>41</sup> it ranked 124 out of 182 countries in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index 2021, signifying high vulnerability and low readiness for adaptation.<sup>42</sup> Vulnerability to the effects of extreme climatic conditions characterized by droughts and floods is a recurrent issue. Droughts are the most frequent source of risk and drive food prices higher, further worsening food insecurity. Due to limited investment and private sector participation, smallholder farmers lack access to irrigation or climate-smart agricultural technologies, which impacts the sector's productivity.<sup>43</sup>

With low electricity access rates, Lesotho relies on biomass fuels for basic energy needs, especially in rural areas, and on imported fossil fuels for other household and industrial requirements. In 2017, at the beginning of the current UNDP programme, 34 percent of the population had access to electricity

<sup>29</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Gender Quotas Database. [www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/174/35](http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/174/35)

<sup>30</sup> USAID and Advancing Rights in Southern Africa (ARISA) Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Customary Land Rights and Livelihoods in Southern Africa. December 2020.

<sup>31</sup> UNDP: Human Development Report 2021/2022.

<sup>32</sup> Government of Lesotho. Voluntary National Review of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Global Gender Gap Report, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> UN Women, Lesotho Country Profile. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/lesotho>

<sup>35</sup> World Health Organization. Violence Info. <https://apps.who.int/violence-info/country/LS/>

<sup>36</sup> World Population Review. Rape Statistics 2022. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/rape-statistics-by-country>

<sup>37</sup> Lesotho Population-based HIV Impact-Assessment, 2020. <https://phia.icap.columbia.edu/lesotho-summary-sheet-2>

<sup>38</sup> UN Women, Lesotho Country Profile. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/lesotho>

<sup>39</sup> Government of Lesotho. Voluntary National Review of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report. 2022

<sup>40</sup> Under this goal, 90 percent of people are tested and know their status, 90 percent of those who know their HIV status are on medication, and 90 percent of those on medication are virally suppressed.

<sup>41</sup> University of Oregon. International Environmental Agreements Database Projects.

<sup>42</sup> Afrobarometer. AD524: Climate change – A little-known reality in Lesotho, 2022.

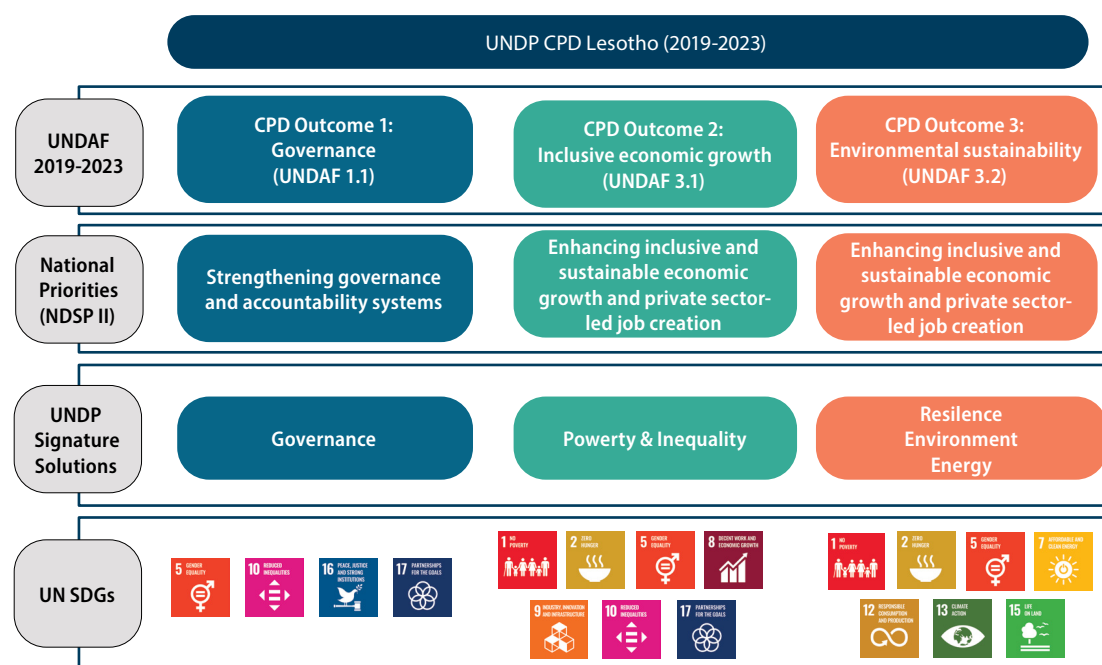
<sup>43</sup> World Bank. Climate Risk Country Profile Lesotho. Washington, D.C., 2021.

through the national grid, which is higher for urban areas than for rural areas (70 percent and 20 percent, respectively).<sup>44</sup> The potential for renewable energy resources such as wind, hydropower and solar remains largely untapped,<sup>45</sup> and the consumption rate of renewable energy decreased between 2011 (42 percent) and 2018 (38 percent).<sup>46</sup>

## 1.4 The UNDP programme under review

UNDP has supported development efforts in Lesotho since its independence in 1966. UNDP Lesotho's current programme (2019–2023) is informed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, anchored in the NSDP II 2018/19–2022/23 and the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Set within the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019–2023, the Country Programme sought to leverage synergies with other United Nations agencies and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP in Lesotho is supported by UNDP's Regional Service Centre for Africa (RSCA), which supports Africa's transformation agenda by: (i) enhancing inclusive and sustainable growth; (ii) widening political participation and giving everyone a voice; and (iii) developing responsive institutions that deliver desired services and promote inclusive processes of state-society dialogue.

**FIGURE 1. Structure and source of alignment of the UNDP CPD for Lesotho 2019–2023**



Source: UNDP IEO.

<sup>44</sup> UNDP and UNCDF, 2020, *Lesotho Energy and the Poor*. New York.

<sup>45</sup> UNDP Country Programme Document 2019–2023.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank, Renewable energy consumption (% of total final energy consumption) – Lesotho. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.FEC.RNEW.ZS?locations=LS>

The UNDP Lesotho programme 2019–2023 is structured around three outcomes: (i) governance, accountability, social cohesion and stability; (ii) sustainable and inclusive economic growth; and (iii) environmental sustainability, climate change and resilience. The programme aligns with the strategic priorities set out by the UNDAF and is planned to contribute to SDGs 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17. UNDP Lesotho CPD alignment of the thematic areas of interventions is illustrated in Figure 1.

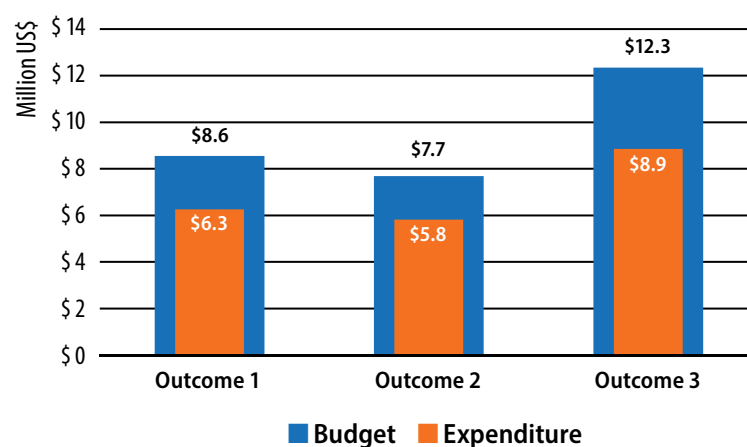
The **governance** pillar (Outcome 1) aimed to contribute to enhancing good governance, social accountability and cohesion. The programme aimed to support the implementation of inclusive national reforms, which are considered important for political stability and institutional effectiveness, and the transparency and accountability of the Government. For peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts, UNDP planned to target districts with a history of violent conflicts to strengthen preventative and response capacities, with a deliberate focus on the inclusion of women and youth in community reconciliation processes. The programme emphasized women’s empowerment by supporting women’s groups on issues such as national reforms, peacebuilding, leadership and human rights, and aimed to enhance youth participation in socioeconomic and political processes. UNDP aimed to support human rights by providing capacity building to key governance institutions and planned to promote social accountability and civic participation through voter and civic education.

Under the **inclusive economic growth** pillar (Outcome 2), the programme envisaged support to address poverty, inequality and livelihoods, especially among women, youth and people with disabilities (PwDs) in priority sectors to foster social inclusion and equity. UNDP aimed to support government capacities for evidence-based policymaking by providing policy and issue briefs, national SDG and human development reports, and an analysis of the national multidimensional poverty index. Leveraging its role as an integrator, UNDP sought to create collaborative platforms that strengthen mechanisms for SDG implementation, monitoring and reporting. Private sector development was expected to be strengthened by UNDP’s support to the competitive business environment and employment creation through enhanced institutional coordination. Lastly, UNDP aimed to generate demand for inclusion, especially among women, youth and PwDs, through skills development and behaviour change for economic transformation.

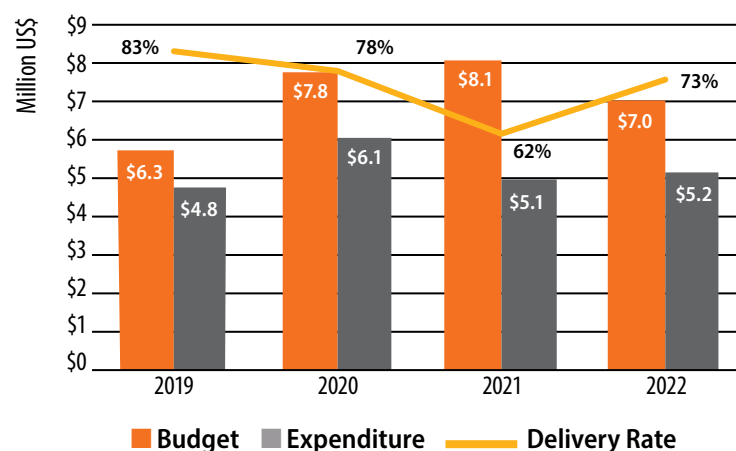
In the area of **environmental sustainability** (Outcome 3), the programme aimed to enhance national prevention and recovery capacities, promote nature-based solutions, and close the energy gap. It planned to focus on scaling up piloted sustainable land management models and strengthening capacities for implementation of integrated water catchment management programmes, focusing on community groups, women, PwDs and youth in regions prone to climate change impacts, environmental hazards and land degradation. UNDP also aimed to mainstream climate change in national and local strategies and policies, and leverage eco-friendly and climate-smart technologies to stimulate the diversification of livelihoods. UNDP planned to facilitate the participation of the private sector towards the achievement of universal access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy.

The CPD Results Framework set out three outcomes and eleven specific outputs. The total funding estimated for the 2019–2023 period was \$25.4 million. As of April 2023, UNDP mobilized \$28.6 million in the budget, which is more than the estimated resources for the whole cycle, and spent \$20.9 million, mostly on Outcome 3, which represents 42 percent of the total expenditure. The second largest portfolio was Outcome 1, representing 30 percent of the total expenditure, followed by Outcome 2, representing 28 percent of the total expenditure (Figure 2).

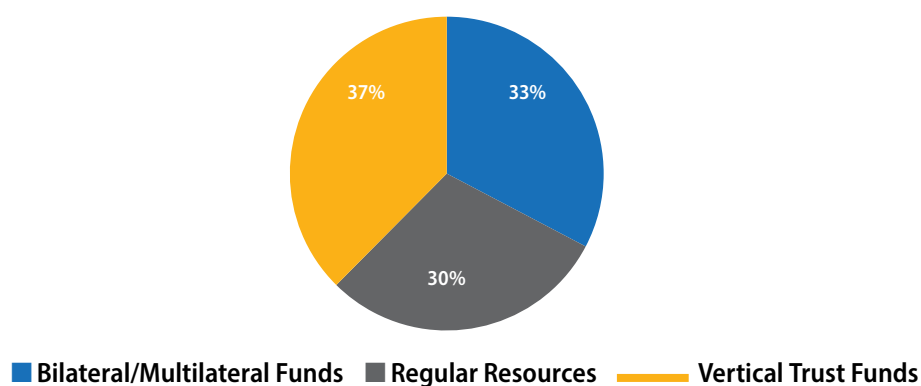
**FIGURE 2. Budget and expenditure by the outcome (2019–2022)**



**FIGURE 3. Annual Budget and Expenditure (2019–2022)**



**FIGURE 4. Expenditure by fund category for overall CPD programme (2019–2022)**



Source: UNDP Power BI/ATLAS. Data as of April 2023.

The annual budget and expenditures over the last two CPD cycles indicate that the current programme slightly increased from the previous CPD cycle, given the increase in budget and expenditure in 2020–2022<sup>47</sup> (Figure 3). The execution rates remained around 77 percent over the two CPD cycles.

During the evaluation period, UNDP Lesotho implemented 22 projects of varying sizes and at various stages of implementation, some of which continued from the previous cycle: 7 for governance (Outcome 1); 9 for inclusive economic growth (Outcome 2); and 6 for environmental sustainability (Outcome 3).<sup>48</sup> Across all outcomes, half of the projects (11) used the direct implementation modality (DIM), representing 59 percent of the expenditure, while the other half of projects had a national implementation modality (NIM), representing 41 percent of the expenditure. Approximately 37 percent of the expenditure was funded by vertical trust funds (\$7.9 million), followed by 33 percent funded by bilateral and multilateral funds (\$6.8 million), and the remaining 30 percent funded by regular UNDP resources (\$6.2 million) (Figure 4). The main programme donors in terms of executed expenditure were the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (38 percent of the expenditure, UNDP (30 percent), the European Commission (13 percent) and the Peacebuilding Fund (10 percent).

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<sup>47</sup> The budget for 2022 cover the period up to April 2023.

<sup>48</sup> See Annex 3 for the complete list of projects.



# CHAPTER 2

# FINDINGS



This chapter presents the evaluation findings on UNDP's role and contribution to development outcomes in Lesotho. The evaluation analysis is broadly presented under the sections on strategic programme positioning, three thematic portfolios, cross-cutting issues and programme efficiency. Section 2.1 presents an overarching analysis of UNDP's programme relevance and positioning in Lesotho. Section 2.2 analyses governance support (including to the security sector), followed by inclusive growth in Section 2.3, and climate resilience and natural resource management in Section 2.4. The cross-cutting issues are analysed in Section 2.5, and programme efficiency in 2.6. The final section, Section 2.7, presents programme performance ratings.

## 2.1 Programme positioning

This section assesses relevance, strategic positioning and underpinning factors in UNDP's role in and contribution to Lesotho with regard to programme prioritization and approach, programme efficiency and partnerships.

**Finding 1.** UNDP programmes were responsive to the evolving needs of national priorities and the reform agenda. Given the limited international assistance to Lesotho, UNDP's contribution to keeping the momentum of reform processes has been important. With three decades of development support to Lesotho, UNDP is well-positioned for establishing stronger partnerships with national institutions.

Lesotho, a least developed country (LDC) and a lower-middle-income economy, has faced persistent conflict and political instability that have hampered service delivery. The absence of a substantive and contextually responsive national peace architecture remains a problem. The slow governance reforms have reduced the impetus for regulatory frameworks, which are much needed for leveraging trade concessions that are available for LDCs. Slow labour market recovery from COVID-19-related measures further aggravated the unemployment situation. Despite increased women's participation in decision-making, there remain significant gender gaps in economic, legal and social empowerment. The labour market and unemployment situation may become further complicated when the special work permit with South Africa ends in 2023. Recurring climatic hazards adversely impact the agricultural sector and exacerbate food insecurity, particularly among the rural population. Development interventions at the Maseru level have diverted attention from local service delivery capacities and processes.

For UNDP, Lesotho's contextual constraints call for well-conceptualized and collaborative solutions with purposeful partnerships. Political instability notwithstanding, UNDP has been consistent in its support of the reform efforts. The UNDP Country Programme is largely aligned with the priorities identified in the national development strategies, and UNDP is well regarded by the national stakeholders for its consistent engagement and support. Broad engagement across ministries and with other partners in Lesotho has positioned UNDP as a reliable development partner. The fiduciary role that UNDP played in some areas is also due to this comparative advantage.

UNDP's reforms intervention and support was based on the 'Lesotho We Want: Dialogue and Reforms for National Transformation', a national document and roadmap on the steps and processes that must be taken going forward. Short-term assistance to bolster the technical capacities of the ministries contributed to keeping the momentum of the reform process. Support to South-South collaboration has been at the centre of UNDP programming, especially in the governance portfolio. The dialogue and reform processes have benefited from regional good practice models. Facilitating development exchange through South-South and South-North cooperation has a considerable potential to enable development solutions appropriate for Lesotho. Catalytic efforts in the area of energy have significant relevance in Lesotho. UNDP's comparative

advantages highlighted by the various stakeholder groups included its broad development mandate and longer-term focus, and its ability to draw lessons from its global engagement and to enable development financing and exchange with other countries. However, UNDP has made a deliberate choice to focus on umbrella reforms rather than sector reforms, and therefore must leverage these strengths to engage more substantively in key reform areas or enable sustainable development solutions linked to employment generation, climate resilience and public administration.

UNDP's added advantage of long-standing engagement in Lesotho and partnerships with key ministries that provide entry points for engagement is significant. However, this is yet to be leveraged to position UNDP as a key development and policy actor. UNDP operates in a context where international funding available for its programming is predominantly for the short term, which is a known limitation that is likely to continue. Lesotho faced significant challenges in mobilizing development financing. A consequence of this is limitations in Lesotho's readiness to benefit from the trade concessions or leverage other development financing. While UNDP programme engagement is highly relevant, there is scope for improving the nature of support with an emphasis on addressing structural challenges critical for Lesotho to accelerate SDG progress. UNDP Lesotho is yet to more persistently explore alternative ways of programming, combining policy engagement, and promoting programme models underpinned by connecting relevant actors who can support Lesotho's development trajectory.

When observing the relevance of UNDP's response, a related question concerns UNDP's engagement in small countries with limited international cooperation, and how UNDP should position itself. While corporate rationale on this is evolving, UNDP should rethink the approach that would be required in countries such as Lesotho where there is a need for greater focus on enabling development financing and addressing structural constraints for better productivity. Lesotho's programme shows that core funding is essential for longer-term engagement in the reform agenda, and addressing structural constraints where external funding may not always be available. In addition, a focus on short-term programme support is not relevant if combined with addressing longer-term development issues, as in Lesotho. Enabling development financing, or connecting Lesotho with other countries for development exchange and collaborative partnership also needs a different country staff profile, which often does not receive the attention it deserves.

UNDP in Lesotho should be credited for facilitating vertical funds such as the GEF and other funding and initiating programmes that are critical to addressing climate change issues, land degradation and alternative energy options. However, these efforts need better processes in order to be harnessed. In the climate change resilience area, despite securing government contributions, the pace of initiatives does not enable the desired change processes. Similarly, in the inclusive growth programme, the approach to balancing policy support and workable programme models for generating employment and livelihoods is yet to be strategized. In the governance programme, UNDP had identified the suitable areas for engagement, such as a security sector, elections and broader reforms, which would be a strong basis for future engagement. While policy engagement in areas such as public finance management (PFM) or trade is important, these areas need longer-term engagement and partnerships, and specific components for making progress or achieving outcomes need to be identified. While this is discussed in further detail in the following sections, a more important point is the need to outline a programme model that would respond to the structural challenges and enable development financing and partnership options for Lesotho.

UNDP has yet to balance predominantly short-term projects and longer-term development solutions, as both are much needed to accelerate Lesotho's development processes. A wide programme spread and short-term initiatives did not help in consolidating UNDP's engagement. The short-term engagement

became counterproductive for UNDP's role and positioning as an expert organization. In Lesotho, the district-level government has limited powers and resources, as well as limited local development and service delivery capacities. UNDP's capacity development engagement was largely centred in Maseru, which therefore limited support to strengthen local capacities and streamline local and Maseru coordination. Lack of smooth engagement of the district and Maseru-level institutions has impacted the progress and quick uptake of programmes in climate resilience and energy areas. Without strategic linkage, lessons from local successes and failures may not inform national programmes, and the catalytic impact of local solutions supported by UNDP may be missed.

There is considerable scope for UNDP to showcase innovative and new development models, and facilitate the transfer of regional and international good practices that are relevant for the Lesotho context. These efforts would also improve progress of ongoing programmes in the climate resilience and entrepreneurship development areas; moving forward, Accelerator Labs have the potential to enable this.

## 2.2 Governance

**CPD Outcome 1:** By 2023, government and non-governmental institutions deliver their mandates and uphold good governance, rule of law and human rights, with all people having improved access to justice and participating in social and political decision-making processes in a peaceful environment.

### Related outputs:

OUTPUT 1.1: Capacities of government and national stakeholders strengthened to undertake and sustain gender-responsive, inclusive and participatory institutional and governance reform processes

OUTPUT 1.2: Constitution-making, electoral and parliamentary processes and institutions strengthened to promote inclusion, transparency and accountability

OUTPUT 1.3: Civil society and citizens have strengthened technical capacities for advocacy, public participation, oversight and social accountability

OUTPUT 1.4: Capacities of civil society organizations, communities and institutions at the national and local levels strengthened for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and social cohesion

OUTPUT 1.5: Rule of law and national human rights institutions and systems have strengthened technical capacities to promote inclusion, transparency and accountability

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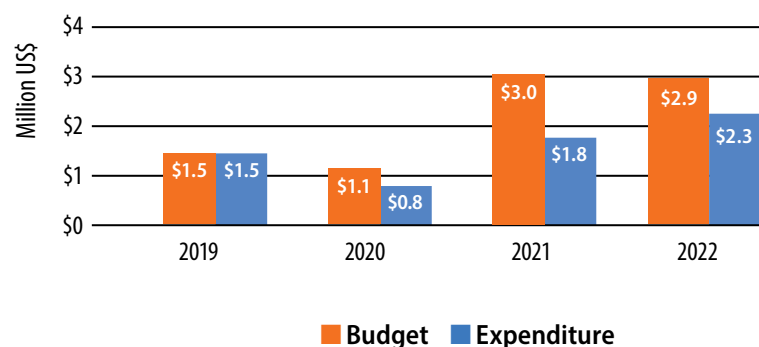
## BOX 2. Governance (Outcom

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**FIGURE 5.** Evolution of budget and expenditure: Outcome 1 (2019–2022)

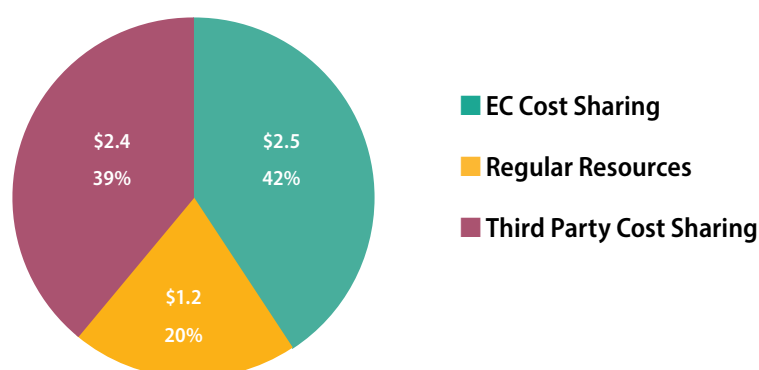
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**FIGURE 6.** Expenditure by fund category: Outcome 1 (2019–2022) in million US\$

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Source: UNDP ATLAS/Power BI. Data as of April 2023

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During this programme cycle, UNDP implemented seven projects under this outcome, with a budget of \$8.6 million and expenditure of \$6.3 million, i.e. a 73 percent delivery rate as of December 2022. The Country Office mobilized approximately \$2.8 million over the estimated budget in the CPD resource framework. The annual budget and expenditure showed an upward trend (Figure 5). The main source of funding for Outcome 1 was bilateral and multilateral funds (\$4.9 million, 80 percent of portfolio expenditure), followed by UNDP regular resources (\$1.3 million, 20 percent of portfolio expenditure) (Figure 6). Major donors for this portfolio include the European Commission (41 percent of portfolio expenditure), the Peacebuilding Fund (35 percent of portfolio expenditure) and UNDP regular resources (20 percent of portfolio expenditure); 80 percent of portfolio expenditures were implemented under direct implementation modality (DIM) (\$5.0 million), while the remaining 20 percent were of national implementation modality (NIM) (\$1.3 million).

**Finding 2.** UNDP programmes were relevant, responding to the national imperative of improved governance, peace and stability, and to changes in the country context. UNDP's support, together with that of other development partners, contributed to advancing the national reform agenda to the stage where reforms gained acceptance from the broad spectrum of stakeholders represented by government, political parties and Basotho.

UNDP responded to Lesotho's national priorities, namely, enhancing governance, rule of law and accountability in institutions, and promoting stability. Successive governments, citizens and other stakeholders have considered these priorities critical, which have been highlighted in the NSDP II (2018/19 to 2022/23) as essential for the achievement of inclusive growth. UNDP support is closely aligned with three of the 11 intermediate outcomes under Priority IV of the NSDP II, namely: Outcome 4.4, Peace, security and stability, Outcome 4.5, Respect for human rights and protection of civil and political rights for all, and Outcome 4.6, Effective, transparent, efficient and equitable justice system, as well as the cross-cutting outcome of mainstreaming gender equality in policies and programmes. The challenges that need to be addressed within these areas have been identified by the NSDP II as critical to address the economic and social development challenges faced by Lesotho.

UNDP was responsive to changes, particularly with the reforms 'on hold', pending the adoption of the Omnibus legislation. UNDP has continued to identify areas and provide support to lay the foundation for implementing the reforms, even though the enabling legislation was still pending. For example, with the financial support of the European Union (EU), UNDP has embarked on institutional gaps assessments for key sectors; and making the necessary adjustments to its programme to support the National Reforms Transition Office (NRTTO) during 2022, to enable the NRTTO to continue providing the Government with technical and operational support with the national reform agenda. Consultations with government counterparts, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other development partners agreed that UNDP support has been important in keeping the momentum in addressing critical governance challenges. There is strong ownership of the national reform agenda among government officials, civil society and communities that were engaged in the dialogues on the reforms, which is critical for its eventual implementation.

## National reform agenda

**Finding 3.** UNDP's technical and financial support capacitated the Government and national stakeholders to embark on wide-ranging institutional and governance reforms for Lesotho. The reform agenda is huge and complex, and is likely to be an ongoing process for the next two country programme cycles. While the initial dialogue process has been inclusive and participatory, there appears to be a lapse in the engagement with local communities since the adoption of the reform proposals.

UNDP played a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to taking forward the fundamental reforms recommended by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The *Lesotho National Dialogue and Stabilisation Project*, which commenced in 2018 and concluded in 2019, laid the foundation for taking forward the national reform agenda. UNDP supported 76 dialogues covering all 10 districts of Lesotho, provided urgent psycho-social support to security force members and their families, trained 500 trainers in human rights conventions, and disseminated information on the reforms and roadmap.<sup>1</sup> The partnership with the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations facilitated the dialogue processes

<sup>1</sup> In terms of gender equality, UNDP gave specific support to women to engage in the dialogue and reforms process. Of the 400,000 Basotho participating in the first National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Plenary, 43 percent were women. The ICPE did not verify actual numbers.

at the national and district levels and provided inputs to the Plenary II reforms report.<sup>2</sup> The most important outcome of the dialogues was the national consensus that it achieved on the content of the reforms and on the need to establish an independent, participatory structure, namely, the National Reforms Authority, to oversee the reform process. Most stakeholders consulted for the ICPE referred to the dialogues as inclusive platforms that built trust among stakeholders with diverse and conflicting interests, and that would not have succeeded without the support of UNDP and other development partners. While UNDP played a leading role within the United Nations in Lesotho, SADC provided the political oversight, ensuring ongoing dialogue among political parties and mediating disputes and deadlocks.

Subsequent initiatives such as the *Programme of Renewal of the Governance Architecture* provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Justice and Law (MJL) to establish the National Reforms Authority (NRA) Secretariat to coordinate the implementation of the national reforms. Support to the functioning of the NRA was important through technical expertise to design the organizational structure of the NRA, terms of reference (ToRs) for the positions, the recruitment and induction of executive management and technical and operational staff of the NRA, and payment of salaries. Having a capacitated secretariat to coordinate the technical work of the reform agenda was a critical factor in ensuring that reform proposals were analysed and informed the political deliberations of the NRA. UNDP, in partnership with other actors, namely, SADC and the EU, successfully advocated for the establishment of a Cabinet Sub-Committee to monitor progress and address deadlocks at the NRA, and of a multi-stakeholder Management Forum to oversee the reforms process and resolve problems hindering their progress.

Although the reforms process was participatory, using district dialogues to reach out to citizens beyond the capital, it has largely been a national, centralized process. The evaluation did not find evidence of continuous feedback to local communities on the reforms and the progress with their implementation. Civil society and development partners emphasized the need for outreach to local communities to better understand the reforms and the current status of the reforms. It is important to note, however, that women represented women's interests at the National Plenary I, and forged a Common Position on Basotho Women that was integrated into the national reform agenda. Further consultations on the Common Position were held at the district level, with a total of 1,099 women participating in 12 gender-specific district consultations.<sup>3</sup>

The challenges notwithstanding, bringing the reforms process to its current state was a major achievement when viewed against the political instability and uncertainty in Lesotho over the past two decades. The mandate of the NRA expired in April 2022 and a NRTTO is in place to continue the implementation of the reforms. The national reforms process is currently on hold, as the new Government, which took office in October 2022 settles in. Consultations indicate that the current Government was committed to passing the Omnibus legislation amending the Constitution. The Omnibus legislation sets the constitutional framework and must be complemented with specific legislation or legislative amendments to give effect to the constitutional changes. According to the NRTTO, legislation is required to replace the NRA, and some changes to the Constitution may require a referendum. The Law Reforms Office of the MJL will require capacity to execute the comprehensive law reform process needed to give a legal status to the national reforms.

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<sup>2</sup> The Lesotho Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations was the lead implementing partner and received support for 13 of its member organizations to be trained and equipped to conduct the 500 in-district, diaspora and sectoral consultations.

<sup>3</sup> Momoh, H. Lesotho National Dialogue and Stabilisation Project: End of Project Evaluation, November 2020, p. 25.

It is worth noting that UNDP did not provide support to implementing the public sector reforms set out in the national reform agenda. The Office of the Prime Minister's Public Sector Improvement and Reform Unit was closely involved in the reform agenda until the establishment of the National Reforms Authority. More recently, the Office participated in the institutional capacities gap assessment, and expressed uncertainty about their role in the national reform agenda going forward. Concern was also expressed about the exclusion of the managerial or senior levels of the public sector from the reform dialogues, which could have contributed towards shaping the public sector reform agenda. The new Government has identified public sector reform as a high priority, and will need to manage the reforms process judiciously to minimize resistance to reforms.

## Peacebuilding and conflict prevention

**Finding 4.** UNDP has been pivotal in advancing the implementation of security sector reforms and contributed to strengthening the capacities of political parties and local communities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Security sector reforms are integral to peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and Lesotho is close to finalizing its first national security policy and strategy. Despite initial delays, the draft policy was developed through a consultative process involving the key security sector institutions and endorsed by the National Reforms Authority for presentation at national stakeholder consultations. The draft is pending a final round of outreach consultations. Final approval of the Government will have to await the passage of the Omnibus legislation, which is also necessary for establishing or reforming the security sector's oversight architecture.

UNDP contributed to the capacity building of security sector institutions and oversight bodies, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It also supported the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy Assessment for the security sector, serving as the basis for capacity building. This entailed the training of trainers (254 trainers) on the following topics: (i) inter-agency coordination; (ii) the Code of Conduct for the security sector in democratic settings as standard operating procedures; (iii) civil-security relations; (iv) human rights and United Nations Conventions; and (v) leadership and crisis management. A total of 135 Correctional Officers and all 300 National Security Service field operatives were trained on human rights, and the police, correctional services and the defence force received support to develop human rights manuals.<sup>4</sup>

UNDP provided training in human rights for CSOs, gender advocates and youth. Views on the training were mostly positive; for example, the training of trainers and the provision of a human rights manual were seen as beneficial by the National Security Service. The fact that the human rights training included civil society, the media and the different security sector agencies was seen as a positive experience that generated interactions between the state sector and the non-state sector. While the human rights training was appreciated, key informants indicated that UNDP and development partners should not overlook operations training, as this is where there is a significant gap in capacity and capability.

UNDP has contributed to a peaceful social and political environment through direct interventions on the ground and through knowledge products to inform policymakers. At the local level, UNDP, in partnership with the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace and the Christian Council of Lesotho, has supported the Peace Building and Social Cohesion Initiative in Ribaneng in the Mafeteng District. The area is reported to have been in protracted conflicts for many years, with high levels of violent crime and gang-related conflicts,

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<sup>4</sup> Matlosa, K, 2022. Evaluation of the role of UNDP in conflict prevention and political stabilization in Lesotho, August 2022.



and sexual and GBV. Therefore, support to the establishment of the Ribaneng Peace-Making Committee, with representation from churches, schools, local government and traditional leaders, assumes significance. It provided capacity building for the community policing forum and supported the piloting of an app to enable the local community to give police early warning of criminal activities before they escalate into major conflicts, and act as a crime deterrent. However, while there have been claims that the level of crime in Ribaneng has declined,<sup>5</sup> they have not been supported by statistical evidence.

UNDP commissioned two important studies, namely, Intra- and Inter-Party Democracy in Lesotho, and Understanding Conflict, Peace and Gender Context in Lesotho, both launched by the Prime Minister in June 2021. These two studies generated evidence that informed interventions in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, which included the training of parliamentary political parties as well as political parties not represented in Parliament in the governance of political parties, and the training of women political leaders. The first study found that political coalitions were a major source of instability and conflict, among other factors, and recommended the enactment of legislation to address the deficiencies in the regulatory framework of political parties, including floor-crossing legislation to bring greater stability to the coalition government, and capacity building for political parties.<sup>6</sup> The floor-crossing legislation is included in the Omnibus Bill, which is to be resubmitted to Parliament in 2023. The second study provides a comprehensive assessment of the triggers for conflict in Lesotho; it identified the Ribaneng multi-stakeholder peace forum as an effective model for peacebuilding at the local level, and made several recommendations, including to establish a national peace architecture in Lesotho. Based on the evidence of these two studies, UNDP supported consultative and training workshops for political parties (30 parties outside Parliament, and 14 parties represented in Parliament) and a workshop and training for 30 CSO participants.

## **Institutional capacities (electoral, parliamentary, judicial)**

**Finding 5.** The scale of UNDP engagement was insufficient to achieve marked and sustained improvements in the institutional capacities of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Parliament, the Ministry of Justice and Law, and the Directorate for Corruption and Economic Offences.

Too many needs assessments raised expectations of UNDP's role in several areas of intervention where UNDP is one of the few actors providing support to the national institutions. A consequence was unmet support needs in several areas, such as the IEC or the Parliament. UNDP support was one of the inputs that enabled preparations for national elections. While the elections were declared free and fair, and the results accepted by the major parties, the IEC remained under-resourced to address the weaknesses in the current electoral system in time for the 2023 local government elections. Voter education was not fully implemented as planned; the electoral register has not been updated since 2012; and the IEC did not receive support to implement the gender and social inclusion policy. Progress on women's participation in elections has been mixed. The proactive engagement of CSOs in voter education, the peace-building interventions of organizations such as the Christian Council of Lesotho, security sector processes, particularly the Lesotho Defence Force, the media and the work of SADC structures were all contributing factors to the relatively free and fair elections in addition to a strengthened IEC.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs . Intra- and Inter-Party Democracy in Lesotho, June 2021.

UNDP provided financial support to the IEC for the appointment of its new Commissioners, and technical support for the updating of the electoral register, for the election dispute resolution mechanism, and for the deployment of a Needs Assessment Mission aimed at identifying the IEC's capacity needs to conduct free and fair elections in 2022. This is in addition to financial assistance for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment and the printing and translation of voter education material. The IEC was not able to implement several of the recommendations of the Needs Assessment Mission in time for the 2022 election, primarily as a result of financial constraints. The budget from the Government arrived late and was insufficient, and the level of financial assistance from UNDP did not materialize. UNDP stated that it was unable to support the IEC in resource mobilization, as the IEC was unable to meet prospective donors outside Lesotho due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Direct support to strengthen parliamentary processes was limited to providing equipment to enable business continuity and assisting the Senate in reviewing its standing orders. UNDP envisaged supporting the implementation of the legislative reforms identified under the national reform agenda, carrying out a comprehensive assessment of the current legislative, oversight and representative capacity of Parliament, and providing the technical capacity of parliamentary staff, resources and platforms for citizen participation. However, support to Parliament declined in 2019 as more resources were earmarked to support the NRA; with the onset of COVID-19, UNDP provided ICT equipment to enable both houses to function during the pandemic restrictions.

With technical support from UNDP and OHCHR, the Parliamentary Counsel reviewed and revised the Human Rights Act, 2016 to be in line with the Paris Principles on Human Rights. Working with CSOs and youth formations, UNDP has engaged in advocacy for the establishment of the Commission. Legislation establishing the National Human Rights Commission forms part of the Bill to amend the Constitution. UNDP has also supported the National University of Lesotho (NUL) to establish a policy think tank to support the National Human Rights Commission once the institution is formally established. Efforts to establish the National Human Rights Commission predate the current Country Programme, and with the delay in passing the Omnibus Bill, there will be further delays in operationalizing the Commission. Even once the legislation is passed, the operationalization of the Commission will be a challenge because there are other priorities competing for the shrinking state financial resources.

UNDP also contributed tangible outputs to capacity strengthening of the Human Rights Unit in the MJL, in the preparation of the state party reports on international obligations and to raising awareness of human rights issues through commemoration of International Human Rights Day. The Government established the National Mechanism Reporting Framework and an inter-ministerial Universal Periodic Review Task Team replacing the former ad hoc approach to reporting. In collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNDP provided technical support to the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sport and Recreation (MGYSR) for the Beijing+25 Report and for the revision of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Report. There has been some improvement in reporting, but overall, the problem of backlogs and delayed reporting persists.

UNDP's assistance in the implementation of the justice sector reforms was not at the scale and pace required for improving access to justice for all. Justice sector reforms are essential for advancing the overall reform agenda and for social stability in Lesotho. Several activities that received UNDP support are important, but overall, there was a lack of greater strategic engagement in select areas. Two important initiatives were reportedly a success.. Support for the handling of high-profile criminal cases by independent foreign judges sent a clear message that all Basutos are equal before the law, including those in the security sector who were implicated in extrajudicial killings. In addition, the development of a system for managing the flow of

cases and their associated documents has allowed for more effective management of the judiciary. While case management can assist in improving the efficiency of the disposal of cases, it does not address the underlying problem of a lack of a sufficient number of judges to hear the cases. Consultations pointed out that while there have been improvements, for example, a more transparent process in the appointment of judges since 2020, there was still a huge backlog of cases.

UNDP supported the review of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan (NACSAP I). Needs and gaps identified include the need for investigative, analytical and prosecutorial capacity, public education officers, and capacity building of the district anti-corruption committee. The development and implementation of NACSAP II has yet to materialize. The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences and UNDP are interested in supporting this new national strategy.

## 2.3 Sustainable and inclusive economic growth

**CPD Outcome 2:** By 2023, the Government and the private sector have increased opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and improved food security and decent work, especially for women, youth, and people with disabilities.

### Related outputs:

OUTPUT 2.1: National and local-level institutions have enhanced technical capacities to coordinate and facilitate effective planning, implementation, analysis and national reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals using innovative and data-driven solutions.

OUTPUT 2.2: The capacities of government institutions and the private sector improved to create a competitive and gender-sensitive business environment and enable effective economic participation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

OUTPUT 2.3: Capacities of national public and private sector institutions strengthened to promote enterprise development.

During the 2019–2022 programme cycle, UNDP implemented nine projects under the outcome on sustainable and inclusive growth, with a budget of \$7.7 million and expenditure of \$5.8 million, i.e. a 76 percent delivery rate as of April 2023. The Country Office mobilized slightly more than the estimated budget of \$7.0 million estimated in the country programme results framework. The budget increased year-on-year from 2019 to 2022 (Figure 7). The main source of funding for Outcome 2 was UNDP regular resources (\$4.2 million, 72 percent of portfolio expenditure), followed by bilateral and multilateral funds (\$1.6 million in total, 28 percent of portfolio expenditure) (Figure 8). Both direct (\$3.3 million or 57 percent) and national (\$2.5 million or 43 percent) implementation modalities were used.

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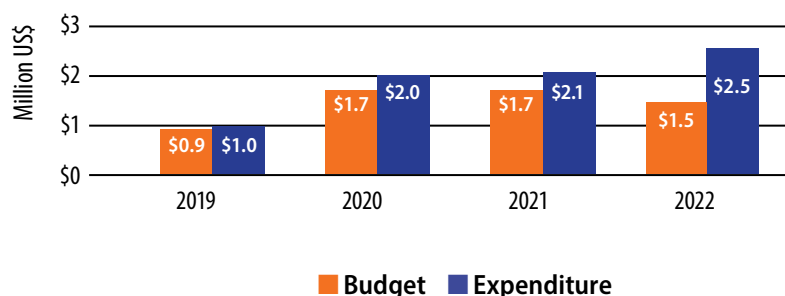
### BOX 3. Inclusive growth (Outcome 2)

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**FIGURE 7. Budget and expenditure: Outcome 2 (2019–2022)**

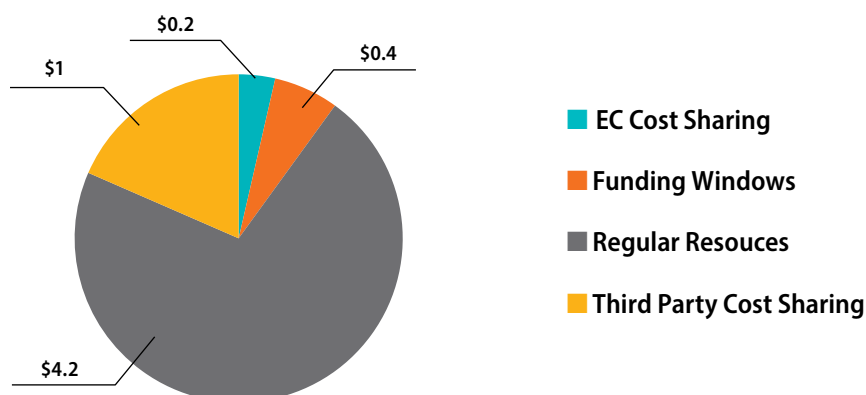
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**FIGURE 8. Expenditure by fund category: Outcome 2 (2019–2022) in million US\$**

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Source: UNDP Power BI/ATLAS. Data as of April 2023.

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The Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth outcome aims to strengthen the capacities of private and public sector stakeholders to create decent and sustainable jobs, promote economic diversity, and facilitate increased economic participation by promoting innovative and technological interventions. This outcome comprises three streams of support, namely policy development for employment and livelihoods, MSMEs, and the enhancement of youth and women's economic empowerment. Overall, the initiatives are consistent with the priorities of the NSDP II, 2018–2023, particularly on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and private sector-led job creation, as well as addressing challenges of non-inclusive economic growth and inequality.

### The strengthening of policies and institutional capacities for inclusive growth

**Finding 6.** UNDP support for upstream, inclusive economic growth policy contributed to the efforts to create an enabling environment for pursuing NSDP II. Lack of consistent engagement and short-term support to complex areas of employment and livelihoods have reduced UNDP's contribution.

During the current programme period, UNDP supported employment-related policy processes. The gender-sensitive economic policy framework stimulates employment and economic growth linked to the NSDP II. Regular support to the Ministry of Development Planning (MDP) enabled its periodic review of the NSDP (in 2020 and 2021) to establish progress and adjustments on the implementation strategies. Mapping policies for the implementation of the NSDP II, as well as an assessment of its alignment to the SDGs contributed to much-needed groundwork for coordinated planning, harmonization for policy implementation and monitoring in line with the national development priorities. The outcome of initiatives such as the Lesotho data for Sustainable Development (Lesotho data) is the first Lesotho Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs in 2019, taking stock of the country's progress towards achieving the national development objectives including SDGs.

UNDP, jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), supported the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) and Development Financing Assessment (DFA) to restructure the planning and financing systems critical to accelerating SDG progress. The INFF and DFA are considered a milestones in the development financing landscape of Lesotho. As part of the DFA process, tracing of development financing capacities and institutional and policy frameworks for planning, execution and accountability were carried out. Although this mapping is important, the recommendations of the DFA are yet to be implemented. Limited development finance resources in the country continue to be a serious challenge in the implementation of the NSDP II and its future iterations. Integrating public and private, and domestic and international sources requires coordinated and consolidated engagement by the Government and other development actors. The DFA is yet to result in enabling more streamlined international cooperation or viable reform proposals for the mobilization of development financing. The political instability and frequent changes in the Government were also a factor that contributed to a lack of momentum in defining the reform agenda and its financing.

Together with UNFPA, support for the Gender and Development Policy 2018–2030 has been important in Lesotho's efforts to institutionalize gender equity and equality as an integral component of social, economic and political development, and to fulfil the commitments to international and regional frameworks. The policy provided guidelines for the integration of gender equality in the development agenda, and to some degree, highlighted gender mainstreaming at the sector level, resulting in strategies such as the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Energy Sector, 2020–2024. A coordination forum on gender equality and women's empowerment was established to develop a theory of change for gender equality in Lesotho, thus providing a basis for gender mainstreaming in sectoral plans. While initiatives such as a pilot gender audit of the MGYSR were important, further momentum is needed to establish mechanisms for implementing the Gender Equality Seal for the public sector.

UNDP has not kept the momentum of its engagement in the area of PFM and is yet to identify areas for longer-term engagement. PFM is a vast area that needed collaboration with other international agencies and consistent engagement with the Ministries for Development Planning and the Ministry of Finance in strengthening nascent institutional capacities for planning and public finance-related processes (setting the wage bill, capital investment, improving revenue mobilization, improving transparent procurement process). While there are other domain actors such as IFIs, some United Nations agencies are also supporting select activities; for example, UNICEF is supporting PFM for children and a transparent and participatory budget). There are areas such as local-level fiscal processes and participatory budgeting where UNDP could have engaged in strengthening capacities. UNDP has been less consistent in its engagement in PFM reducing its potential to strategically contribute to institutional capacities in this area. Areas that UNDP pursued, such as support to credit information sharing, need further engagement

since challenges persisted related to the Central Bank of Lesotho policies and its approach to credit information sharing, which only covers individuals and not companies. Some of this work has been taken up by the World Bank, which is considering a credit scoring system.

Development organizations recognize the important role that UNDP can play in facilitating financing from Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and vertical funds. UNDP is the main implementing entity and the fiduciary manager for the implementation of the EIF. Initiatives under the EIF aim to mainstream and integrate trade in the national development strategies and policies as a measure for advancing economic growth and employment creation. Caught up in the fiduciary role, UNDP did not use such initiatives as an entry point for more substantive engagement on trade issues or demonstrate possibilities of combined United Nations support in Lesotho's efforts to strengthen its productive capacities.

Lack of clarity on areas to engage in and the inability to forge partnerships that are needed for addressing complex macro issues have reduced UNDP's potential contribution. World Bank and the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) partnered with revenue authorities to address issues related to trading across borders in order to develop new modules, such as a single window for trade. Also, World Bank is partnering with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to provide support to economic diversification. While UNDP has fiduciary partnerships, it is yet to forge programmatic partnerships within and outside the United Nations for concrete engagement in economic diversification or trade areas. UNCTAD has domain expertise in this area and has several well-tested solutions that can be applicable to Lesotho (e.g. company registration, trade regulations and trade facilitation). UNDP has yet to leverage the comparative advantage of partnerships with other United Nations agencies, such as UNCTAD, for a more comprehensive engagement.

Policy briefs and assessments by UNDP may have the potential to inform policy processes; however, the evaluation could not clearly ascertain this. During consultations, national stakeholders often referred to an assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, a policy brief on socioeconomic policies and gender equality post-COVID-19 (regarding gender empowerment in the context of COVID-19), and to the publication on the conflict, peace and gender linkages in Lesotho.

## Improve statistical capacities

**Finding 7.** UNDP support to strengthen national data and statistics was an important step in building capacities for monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. UNDP was proactive in its support to addressing data challenges.

Lesotho's Statistical Capacity Index is 67.8 against a global average of 74.4,<sup>7</sup> and there remains a significant need to build economic and other development data and statistical capacities. Initiatives such as the Lesotho data for Sustainable Development (Lesotho data) were critical to developing capacities for the collection, analysis and dissemination of development data. This initiative was critical for building sector data capacities and strengthening institutional and technical skills for effective utilization of data in development programming. Notwithstanding the limited scope, there were tangible outputs providing the basic plans for building data and statistical and monitoring capacities, and a framework for coordination mechanisms for statistics and M&E was developed. This initiative also generated the necessary momentum for the preparation of the first Lesotho VNR. A diagnostic assessment was carried out, identifying key constraints

<sup>7</sup> This index is used as a proxy for assessing the availability of economic resources in national statistics offices. In theory, the larger the amount of resources (i.e. the closer that the Index is to 100) devoted to statistics offices, the better the quality of statistics. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/statistical-capacity-indicators>

in the statistical system, which resulted in the development of a capacity-building plan. While this plan may be used for future support in this area, the implementation of the plan by the Bureau of Statistics and the MDP has been stalled due to a lack of resources. Under the capacity development plan, resource problems were experienced in the training for statisticians as well as in the training for Ministry staff on results-based management.

Initial support by UNDP through exchange programmes is considered useful for the current push to develop monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans. The Prime Minister's Office is interested in developing an M&E strategy for government programmes and projects. An evaluation strategy is being supported by UNICEF. A robust data system is fundamental to M&E efforts, which calls for joint United Nations efforts rather than siloed engagements of agencies. The capacity-building plan for strengthening data, which is not implemented, identified areas to be addressed for effective systems, such as the provision of human resources to selected ministries, departments and agencies, which required policy decisions from the Government to effect proposals. There remain significant gaps in human resources and technical capacities necessary for data collection and documentation, and easy access for use in policy processes. UNDP support through the Chief Technical Advisor in the MDP, which supplemented other positions within the Minister's (e.g. the monitoring and evaluation and statistics), was not a sustainable option in the absence of other measures when the support ended.

Lack of data on enterprises hampered policy decisions and support to businesses and services. UNDP supported the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Business Development and Tourism in developing the business registry in order to provide disaggregated data by sector, gender, geography and by the age of the directors, and to provide information on the closure of businesses. Since the validation process for the business owners is cumbersome for quick registration of enterprises, UNDP supported the Ministry of Small Business Development, Co-operatives and Marketing in establishing a business register and database during COVID-19. There is need for better harmonization of different data streams under various ministries to address and build on synergies instead of parallel efforts.

As a way of fostering partnerships to address sustainability of data capacities, UNDP collaborated with the NUL (through its Department of Statistics and Demography), engaging them in initiatives such as developing a basic statistics training module for the Bureau of Statistics field and clerical staff, participating in the validation sessions of assessments conducted and establishing a cadre of the training of trainers. A cadre comprising 22 members from the NUL, the Institute of Development Management and the MDP is a good example that can be taken further.

Data-strengthening efforts need longer-term engagement for enabling sustainable capacities; the Lesotho data initiative responded in a context where there were significant structural and extensive sector data challenges. Efforts are needed to retain the progress made and to build on it; for example, progress made in strengthening the capacities of the Bureau of Statistics to generate disaggregate data should be sustained. There is a need for updating the Lesotho Statistics Act to better respond to the statistical and data digitalization needs. Data use for evidence-based planning and resource mobilization is evolving, and short-term efforts were not sufficient to address multiple challenges in data policy loop linkages. Coordination and alignment of the SDGs and national development planning remain weak, which is due to, *inter alia*, limited data. Limited attention to sector data and related capacities has been a factor constraining progress in strengthening national data and statistics. There is scope for UNDP to engage in this area more comprehensively, forging a joint United Nations response.

## Livelihoods development and diversification

**Finding 8.** UNDP is yet to strategically engage in enterprise development and livelihood diversification that would take into consideration creating an enabling environment. Due to UNDP's short-term interventions and lack of partnerships, the structural challenges of entrepreneurship development could not be addressed.

The NSDP II outlines the importance of building a business ecosystem focusing on value chains in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. MSMEs in Lesotho call for streamlined policies, mechanisms and institutional arrangements, to which UNDP's policy engagement contributed to certain extent. There are several ongoing initiatives by the Government, and national and international agencies to strengthen the business ecosystem, but the progress remains slow in the absence of consolidated action. Market linkages are weak, and leveraging the AfCTFA agreement as well as other agreements that provide concessions lacks momentum because of the weak institutional capacities and lack of regulatory frameworks. Consultations point to the importance of streamlining policy and institutional processes, and stronger sector focus, particularly in agro- and textile manufacturing sectors addressing value chain bottlenecks.

UNDP has engaged in the LDC agenda to a very limited extent. While Lesotho is categorized as one of the fastest growing LDCs, it is lagging on all parameters of LDC graduation, such as income, and on the Human Assets Index and on the Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index. Although the national development strategies, highlight pathways that would eventually lead to graduation, they are yet to translate into concrete action. Long-term efforts are needed to: mainstream productive capacity development to address market-income inequalities; support private sector development; prepare the country for benefiting from trade concessions available to LDCs by strengthening regulatory frameworks; and boost their capacity to respond to and recover from crises. Lesotho is not able to capitalize on the trade concessions available to it as an LDC because of a lack of productive capacities and enabling policy ecosystem. The European Partnerships Agreement and the AfCFTA Agreement are yet to be exploited, since a necessary trade ecosystem has not yet been created. While the UNDP inclusive growth programme acknowledges the priorities in these areas, the approach to addressing them did not reflect the funding realities in Lesotho and the need for collaborative approaches. In addition, UNDP was not able to secure funding for its programme offer.

The approach of UNDP's livelihoods and enterprise development efforts had limited success in providing programme models that would consolidate multiple and parallel efforts in Lesotho. UNDP outlined a comprehensive programme to address the structural challenges of enterprise development and competitiveness ecosystem (including private sector development). The programme could not be implemented as planned, as required resources could not be mobilized. There were limited efforts to develop concrete approaches for business incubation and business networks that can attract partnerships for investment and collaboration. UNDP is yet to develop a viable enterprise development model (through incubation) and strengthen its collaborations to jointly explore ways to enable the financial services that are affordable. The growth of MSMEs is also hampered by business choices that are commercially less viable, requiring support in identifying sectors and activities that can improve the profitability of enterprises as well as overall productivity. While UNDP supported training for improving the managerial and creativity skills of youth entrepreneurs (discussed in the section on youth economic empowerment), systemized approaches to training and business services are needed. There is scope for UNDP to develop incubators with wider partnerships with the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other businesses, and also actively collaborate with IFIs in their initiatives (e.g. The World Bank is planning to support incubators in three sectors).



There were initiatives that had tangible micro-level outputs. UNDP support to enhance the productivity of the beekeepers (through the Small Grants Programme) had tangible outputs. In five districts (Botha Bothe, Maseru, Mafeteng, Quthing and Qacha's Nek), the training of beekeepers on hive and disease management, and the introduction of new technologies, in addition to business management improved the yield of hives. Moving from activities to outcomes that would inform development practices in Lesotho needs more sustained engagement. Private sector development is an area where there have been missed opportunities. The field visits observed that the transition from small-scale subsistence beekeeping using traditional practices to commercial beekeeping is difficult, but in the communities that received support, the project motivated beekeepers to shift from small traditional beekeeping to modern practices, and the process of transition is promising. Notwithstanding these achievements, the market linkages for developing bee product value chains are slowly evolving. Most actors in Lesotho are focusing on modernizing beekeeping infrastructure and organizing beekeepers, with considerable gaps in market linkages for commercializing bee products. There is scope for UNDP to network associations for improving bee product value chains and commercialization.

UNDP programmes are short-term to enhance productivity capacities, lacking the necessary depth for enabling the sustainability of enterprises and strengthening regulatory frameworks. A case in point is the green economy value chains to strengthen the resilience of agricultural practices, enhance local productivity, enable the transition from subsistence to commercial production, and generate export demand. Green economy initiatives enabled the diversification of livelihoods, but their scale and scope are limited. While there are household/unit level successes of women farmers who have gone beyond subsistence agriculture, these initiatives are not linked with other UNDP livelihood initiatives in terms of using tools or conceptualization for consolidated support. It is also not evident whether the partnership with Lesotho National Development Corporation is used to develop prototypes that can inform other initiatives. The evaluation points out that there are other actors who are interested in green value chains and who wish to learn from UNDP's experience. To meet the objectives of green value chain initiatives, well-conceptualized programmatic partnerships are essential in increasing commercial value and market linkages. Wider collaborations are also needed for institutional products such as the online platform for agricultural produce trading. UNDP has supported one of the platforms, which is currently not regularly updated by the suppliers for buyers to market online. The success of the platform in enhancing agro-produce trade is not evident; UNDP is now developing a mobile app to complement the online platform. There are other agencies that have similar online platforms for trade, but unless they are fully developed, they will not be able to provide better market options for agro-produce.

For the past five years, UNDP has supported youth economic empowerment initiatives, some of which have been absorbed by the Government into the national programmes (see next section on *Youth economic empowerment* for further analysis). During the current programme, design thinking to realign and upscale enterprises, job creation and space for youth to try new ideas have been important. Putting the design into practice and developing programme models for scaling up have been challenging due to several factors such as: lack of follow-up and incubation support; poor mentoring; minimal private sector linkages; and lack of innovation that can be developed into prototypes with market potential, which has reduced the potential of business development. Consultations revealed that entrepreneurship was not a popular option since many preferred to have a job rather than to have their own businesses. Therefore, there is a need for the development of a culture of entrepreneurship and an enabling environment to raise interest among those reluctant to engage.

As discussed in the section on programme context, Lesotho is not an exception to the overall global pattern of unequal participation of men and women in productive activities. Women are engaged in low-end retail enterprises and not adequately engaged in export-related businesses or high-tech and engineering sectors. Global macro-economic challenges and Lesotho's structural challenges are contributing factors; current efforts in the country to increase the participation and competitiveness of women-led businesses remain insufficient to expand economic opportunities and jobs. While there is a gender stereotypical engagement influencing women's choices, the larger problems are business viability and market linkage. There also remain significant challenges overall in the enabling environment for enterprise development and entrepreneurship in productive sectors. Initiatives that have a wider reach and those that address financing challenges are fewer in Lesotho and are fragmented in the absence of institutional linkages. UNDP initiatives such as training for women entrepreneurs, an initiative of the Accelerator Lab, which trained 18 women business owners to improve their competitiveness, business sustainability and job creation, are important at the micro level.<sup>8</sup>

UNDP programme engagement shows that private sector policies and institutional frameworks to reduce business informality need consistent engagement through policy advocacy and partnering with relevant actors; however, there were missed opportunities in this area. The Government is working both as a service provider and facilitator through institutions such as the Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation, but this is yet to produce desired outcomes. One of the areas that UNDP supported as part of the COVID-19 response was the setting up of a register and database on MSMEs to complement the registry by the One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre. The evaluation consultations point out that the Ministry of Trade is yet to address the compatibility of various registries dealing with companies and MSMEs. Multiple databases under different ministries (Ministries of Home Affairs, of Trade, and of Small Business Development) with overlaps and differences is a larger issue that is yet to be resolved for their full utilization. Consultations highlight that lack of proper data on enterprises has been a hurdle even in tracking programme beneficiaries, often resulting in the Government and other agencies allocating resources to the same recipients.

Initiatives such as the Scaling Inclusion through Mobile Money (SIMM) initiative (as part of the UNDP Regional Programme) has potential, but the scope was not sufficient to produce tangible outputs in contributing to a cashless ecosystem and advance inclusive finance among MSMEs. The SIMM aimed at advancing an extensive agenda of access to formal and semi-financial services for the poor through the provision of coordinated support for the development of an inclusive ecosystem for mobile financial services. Digital financing solutions are crucial for Lesotho, for *inter alia*, the transmission of remittances that play a vital role in many Basotho livelihoods, particularly from South Africa. While there are mobile operators and banks, the enabling and regulatory environment to support further innovation and market entry is still rigid. More importantly, the Government is yet to use electronic payments across its services to businesses and citizens. Lesotho needs to develop inter-operability between different products and services, and improve consumer protection. In 2018, UNDP held a Lesotho SIMM Hackathon (in partnership with FinMark Trust), which created interest in and visibility of innovative ideas in mobile money product diversification to unlock opportunities for improved access to financial services. The three-day Hackathon in Maseru provided a platform for young innovators to collaborate and explore the role of data in product design while interacting with financial service providers, mobile network operators, business development partners and civil society. Seven solutions were identified as having a potential for the mobile money sector, but could not be pursued further, to some extent due to constraints in legal frameworks, such as a non-bank

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<sup>8</sup> The women entrepreneurs were from sectors such as solar energy, plastic recycling, legal and law enforcement, agriculture, information and communication technology (ICT), beauty and wellness, and retail, and received six months of mentorship training and interactive learning.

player to link payments between the mobile operators. The mobile operators and financial institutions were reluctant to back some of these solutions due to the potential loss of revenues the potential loss of revenues, or the lack of necessary support specifically to financial institutions.

Acceleration and innovation efforts have had limited success in enabling options for enterprise development and enhanced value chain and incubation. There is scope to better position Accelerator Lab initiatives as a collaborative effort to partner with other actors to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem (developing incubators that can produce jobs on a larger scale).<sup>9</sup> UNDP's Accelerator Lab and other efforts in the country, such as the World Bank's Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility, have the potential for collaboration for scaling up job creation.

## Youth economic empowerment

**Finding 9.** UNDP invested in youth economic empowerment, a priority area for Lesotho. Training for youth entrepreneurship development, while important, needs sustained engagement to produce tangible livelihood outcomes. Initiatives such as Lesotho Youth Connect, which can enthuse youth entrepreneurs, are moving at a slow pace.

Through a set of initiatives, UNDP aimed to improve capacities for entrepreneurship, creativity and innovations among Basotho youth. The Enhancing Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development (EYES) project aimed to enhance creative and innovative thinking in entrepreneurship and social development among youth, and to improve their ability to establish sustainable businesses. Productivity in tourism, agriculture, technology and manufacturing sectors, areas prioritized in the NSDP II, were identified for engagement. UNDP provided different types of training (e.g. design thinking training, workshops for management services, boot camps on financial management, marketing and the legal aspects of the business) and shared success stories through the media (Youth Diaries initiative and Tsa Mahlale). While the evaluation did not ascertain the number of people reached, overall, the numbers of people reported to have received training were substantial and realistic: in 2019–2020, 299 received training in design thinking, of whom 145 were female, and 128 people attended three regional boot camps, of whom 73 were female; management services were provided to 71 MSMEs; and 750 youth received either new or follow-up training, of whom 225 were female. UNDP support was important in providing youth opportunities to improve productive capacities and innovation, but these efforts require better strategizing and streamlining to improve the sustainability and productivity of enterprises.

A positive outcome of the Enhancing Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development (EYES) initiative is the creation of a database on youth enterprises, which enables the MGYSR to identify opportunities for strengthening internal programmes for youth development and support. The Ministry can now identify new practices among youth entrepreneurs. However, the Ministry is yet to have a system in place to enable design thinking for new enterprises or for other ministries to take the training beyond youth enterprises. According to the MGYSR, for developing viable businesses that integrate youth innovations into the economic ecosystem of Lesotho, over 100 youth enterprises need more customized training, follow-up training, mentoring and exposure, and technical support. The evaluation points out that while design thinking brought a new tool to youth entrepreneurs' way of working and structuring enterprises, there are significant gaps between the training needs and what is provided. While UNDP reports show that the

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<sup>9</sup> One of the World Bank initiatives in the pipeline is developing 15 incubators, for which there is a potential for UNDP collaboration.

Matekane Group of Companies and Lesotho Post Bank, which is owned by the Government of Lesotho, expressed willingness to mentor young entrepreneurs, this has not materialized. For wider replication, UNDP is yet to identify prototypes that can be incubated with the necessary financing.

Progress on the Lesotho Youth Connekt programme has been slow, with only an exchange visit to Rwanda. Institutionalization of training was not addressed, which is essential for follow-up training and the transfer of knowledge. However, collaboration with agencies such as the International Training Centre of the ILO would have had the potential to explore various tools for youth training. Tsa Mahlale (a science-based TV programme), other TV programmes and the Youth Diaries initiative had high viewership, but their purpose is not clear in the absence of efforts that can provide financing and market support. UNDP engaged the NUL to lead TV programmes on innovations, which can provide continuity if there are actors to support such efforts in the future. The partnership with The Entrepreneurs Network (TEN) for dialogue and platforms for youth engagement ensured timely deliverables and can be valuable in localizing Youth Connekt.

Challenges that are undermining youth entrepreneurship efforts include the lack of incubation support, financing instruments and the stringent collateral requirement. UNDP is yet to systematically explore the creation of incubation hubs; consultations point out that there is scope for partnerships in this area (e.g. the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lesotho Post Bank and the World Bank). Coordination between the Ministry for Small Businesses and the Ministry for Trade is essential for enabling incubation and a value chain ecosystem. A related issue is the need to strengthen central and local linkages. UNDP recognizes that an area-based approach is needed to address the multiple challenges of entrepreneurship development in Lesotho, but is yet to facilitate such an approach.

## 2.4 Climate resilience and natural resources management

**CPD Outcome 3:** By 2023, the people of Lesotho use natural resources more sustainably, and the marginalized and most vulnerable are increasingly resilient.

### Related outputs:

OUTPUT 3.1: Capacities of key institutions and sectors at the national and local levels enabled to scale up and enforce rangeland management initiatives for sustainable natural resources management

OUTPUT 3.2: Low-emission and climate-resilient objectives addressed in national, subnational and sectoral development plans and policies to promote economic diversification and green growth

OUTPUT 3.3: Capacities of national government and private sector strengthened to enable universal access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy

During this programme cycle, UNDP implemented six projects under this outcome, with a budget of \$12.3 million and an expenditure of \$8.9 million (72 percent delivery rate as of April 2023). The mobilized resource was in line with the estimated budget in the country programme results framework. The annual budget and expenditure for Outcome 3 showed a downward trend (Figure 9). The main sources of funding for this portfolio are the GEF (89 percent of portfolio expenditure), followed by UNDP (9 percent). Most of the projects were national implementation modality (NIM) (\$8.5 million, i.e. 96 percent of portfolio expenditure). The Small Grants Programme has been active in Lesotho since 2008, with 14 projects in 2019–2021 pertaining to capacity development, biodiversity, climate change and land degradation.

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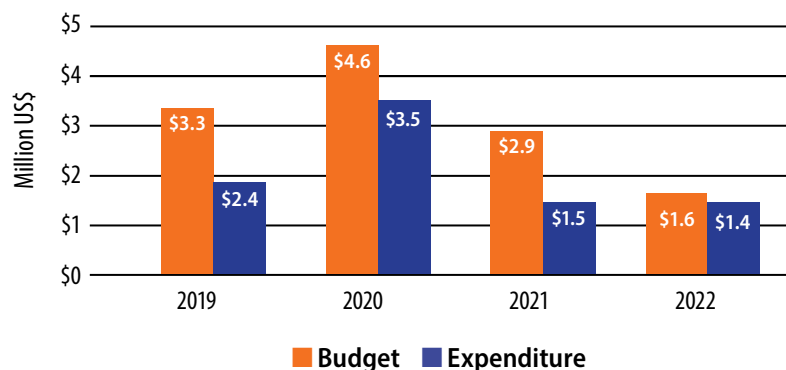
**BOX 4. Climate resilience and natural resources management (Outcome 3)**

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**FIGURE 9. Evolution of budget and expenditure: Outcome 3 (2019–2022)**

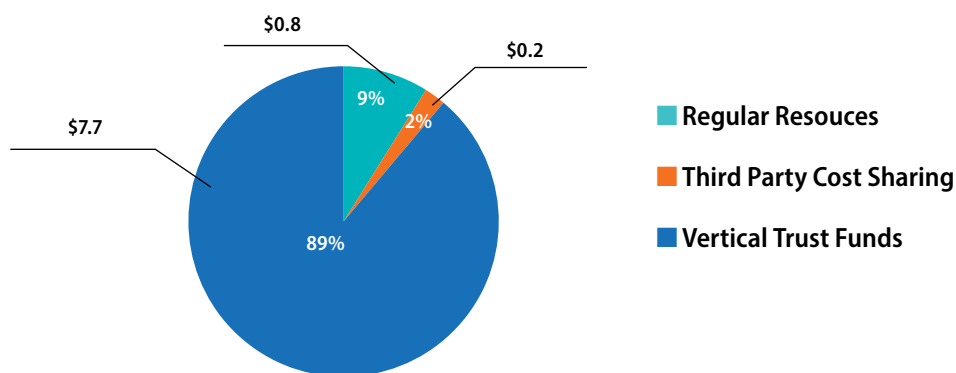
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**FIGURE 10. Expenditure by fund category: Outcome 3 (2019–2022) in million US\$**

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Source: UNDP Power BI/ATLAS. Data as of April 2023.

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The initiatives are also consistent with the aim of the NSDP II 2018/19–2022/23, which is explicit about environmental management and climate change requirements in Lesotho and is guided by the National Strategic Resilience Framework. The two GEF-funded projects, Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), a NIM project with the Ministry of Energy and Meteorology (2016 to 2022, with a no-cost extension to March 2023), and Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change (RVCC), a NIM project with the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (2015 to 2022), have accounted for 94 percent of all expenditures of Outcome 3 over the last four years. These projects target communities in rural areas, where the issues and service needs are most evident.

Many of the performance indicators associated with the outcome and outputs require spatial and temporal analysis (area and quality of land subject to interventions), which is apparently a challenge in Lesotho, and would therefore require assumptions to be made about actual changes on the ground due to UNDP support.

**Finding 10.** UNDP's contribution has been important in enabling GEF funding and associated partnerships, and in promoting simple approaches and technologies that can be used throughout Lesotho. UNDP initiatives are relevant to addressing key challenges in increasing renewable energy access and mobilizing communities to address land degradation issues.

Due to UNDP's wider development engagement than other United Nations agencies working on climate resilience issues, it is positioned for broader engagement in livelihood and institutional strengthening objectives, which were introduced into the natural resource management and climate change initiatives. However, this UNDP added value (knowledge and experience with various development themes and directions) would be more useful if UNDP could create functional linkages between initiatives in the three programme areas.

There is a convergence of various initiatives in terms of working with beneficiaries at the district level and collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, and the Ministry of Energy and Meteorology. Interventions focused on simplified pilots and demonstration initiatives: shops that sell solar technology; solar-based mini-grids; and simple mechanical approaches to rangeland management such as stone check dams, silt traps, gullies and permaculture gardens, which are low-cost and low-tech, in order to reduce the risk of technological overkill and failure. Greenhouses, seedlings and water tanks were appropriate and beneficial, providing the necessary impetus for community activities. However, there is always more scope for actual experimentation with different approaches in the beneficiary communities: for example, creating control and experimental plots, and observing the most effective approaches over time.<sup>10</sup>

UNDP recognizes that the capacity of ministries to plan and implement appropriate climate change adaptation interventions is hindered by the limited availability of technical skills, up-to-date climate information, a weak financial situation (nationally), low public awareness of climate-smart options, and weaknesses in the governance systems that control both government and community actions, especially the use of land. The initiatives supported under the GEF are therefore designed to address these challenges, particularly with a strong focus on capacity support to the implementing partners. Government regulations and financing are required to sustain the progress made and institutionalize successful practices. It was noted in both Terminal Evaluations for SE4ALL and the RVCC Projects that there is difficulty in monitoring progress at the outcome level for adaptive management and addressing institutional bottlenecks.

Policy and regulatory development in parallel with community-level efforts and institutional capacity development are not well established in both the SE4ALL and RVCC initiatives. SE4ALL could not adequately address policy and institutional barriers due to a central team with weak core expertise; the dominant private developer, OnePower, relied on the Government to guide several project aspects. The development of the concession agreement process for rural energy took at least a few years. Similarly, given the 4–5-year timeframe for pilot and demonstration activities at the community level, institutional capacity building and scaling up of pilot initiatives should have been carried out through policy and regulatory development. Notwithstanding contextual factors, implementation challenges in establishing policy and practice linkages reduced the outcomes of various initiatives. While there are examples of support to policy development, some are now awaiting government approval; UNDP can only advocate for the approval and uptake of policies, for example, the National Soil and Conservation Policy.

<sup>10</sup> Note that GEF projects elsewhere have experimented with this kind of "citizen science"; it is within the purview of GEF projects, if justified and practical.

Lack of consolidated government effort was a factor in the slow start to both SE4ALL and the RVCC projects. For example, with SE4ALL, despite a timely inception meeting in 2016, there were difficulties in setting up and maintaining the pace of sequential activities, especially those pertaining to the mini-grids. For example, work on the Financial Support Scheme was very slow and held up the work needed to get the village energy centres (VECs) and mini-grids operating, despite pre-feasibility studies and work on appropriate regulations. However, a significant achievement of the project was the eventual approval of regulations for the development of mini-grids, mostly those related to means of financing them.

**Finding 11.** Programme efficiency issues were not addressed in a timely manner, impacting the outcomes of both the SE4ALL and RVCC projects. Although there are exceptions, the lack of programme synergies and programmatic partnerships is undermining UNDP's contribution and its ability to enable financing in this area. Managing partnership expectations with the Government is critical for enabling project outcomes and success.

Delays in some stages of the projects have had serious domino effects, which have impacted programme outcomes. The SE4ALL project did not meet the suitable conditions for the development of mini-grids. Constraining factors were a lack of annual work planning in the first two years of the project, not revisiting multi-year work plans and the conditionality of project outcomes, since the completion of one component was required to support another.

With the RVCC project, there was a delay in the recruitment of staff at the beginning of the project, then a heavy staff turnover in the Project Management Unit, compounded by the pandemic constraints. This occurred despite the heavy layering of project planning and management: a Project Steering Committee (PSC), a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a District Project Coordinating Committee (DPCC) and a District Project Implementation Committee (DPIC), in addition to the Programme Management Unit (PMU), which could not specifically address staffing issues. There were also efficiency issues, and project management costs and other costs due to delays were substantial (49 percent over what was budgeted). Stakeholder consultations in the project design phase helped to define clear roles and responsibilities at that time, but that was 10 years ago, and circumstances likely changed for all project participants. It is unclear whether or not the roles and responsibilities were re-examined at any time. Changes in government staff, lack of institutional memory and poor documentation contributed to delays.

Despite a long-standing relationship between UNDP and government implementing partners, challenges in project delivery were evident. Although the scope of training was limited, there were difficulties in engaging government staff in training, affecting both projects. Consultations point out that unless there was issuance of per diems, there was little interest and motivation in engaging with the project, making it difficult for UNDP to create working partnerships with the Government. Additional issues were project monitoring (i.e. the type of indicators and collection of relevant data), dealing with political aspects of policy approval, the difficulty in eliciting strong motivation and engagement of government staff, and the focus of PMUs on administrative matters rather than enabling project outcomes. GEF projects are implemented through NIM, with the Government deciding on budgets, staffing of projects and most implementation partnerships.

In terms of synergies, a successful effort was linking land management in the Small Grant Programme and the RVCC project (community management of rangelands). These in turn were integrated with the World Food Programme (WFP) efforts in southern Lesotho involving food security and land management, in which cash-for assets for work was used to encourage engagement by the beneficiary communities. In addition, the Senqu River Valley landscape has multiple initiatives from the GEF Least Developed Countries Fund, IFAD and WFP, and the mechanism to link activities together to create synergy is not

clearly developed.<sup>11</sup> There are similar initiatives in different districts by multiple agencies, and coordination can avoid duplication. UNDP partnerships with donors such as European Union (EU) or the World Bank or Implementing Partners are not clear: the EU invested US\$4.7 in SE4ALL, but associated World Bank activity (mostly focused on grid expansion and some promotion of mini-grids) is not clearly linked to SE4ALL. For example, the World Bank has an extensive portfolio of lending and technical grants in agriculture, the water sector and energy (US\$370 million); however, UNDP has not yet established full linkages with international donors, with the exception of the Energy Sector Coordinating Forum, in which both UNDP and the World Bank participate. There are opportunities for UNDP to draw on other countries' experiences with carbon markets for various aspects of the updated NDC, which might further engage UNDP with energy sector partners, and take advantage of its added value as a convenor in climate change and natural resource management.

Several government partners see UNDP's role mainly in the administration of funding, not in providing technical advice. UNDP is involved in some decision-making in the PSCs and tries to ensure proper GEF monitoring and reporting – this is the main role of UNDP in the PSCs; some Government partners are nevertheless reluctant to fully implement GEF project requirements. As such, UNDP has the responsibility for the GEF project achievements (accountable to the GEF) but is not in a position to fully influence how well a project is implemented (and at times cannot prevent constraints or failures). For example, SE4ALL faced some constraints with policy development and approvals, but UNDP could not resolve them on its own because it does not have the mandate to do so, and largely left them to government action. The SE4ALL is also considerably underspent. While government contributions to SE4ALL are higher than planned, there were delays in project delivery. From the Government's perspective, GEF projects allow a trial-and-error approach with initiatives that do not put government programmes at risk; they serve as experiments, and the effective aspects can then be integrated into government policies and operations over time. However, prolonged delays can be counterproductive, and consistent engagement of the Government and other actors is essential. The policy for setting mini-grid tariffs, for example, would not have been developed without the persistent engagement of the Government and OnePower, in this case, facilitated by UNDP.

Government partners had concerns about UNDP administrative processes and slow procurement, and the heavy requirements for reporting. Some of these challenges also reflect staff numbers, competencies and externalities such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which affects both the Government and UNDP. The PMUs for both projects were constrained in dealing with these challenges.

There are other agencies in the natural resource management and energy sectors in Lesotho, but there is limited collaboration with them; the National Resource Management Partners Forum does facilitate discussion, but project collaboration can be challenging. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), for instance, received World Bank funding for government programme implementation. It has also worked on the Land Cover Atlas, It has also worked on the Land Cover Atlas, which serves to inform the RVCC project, and is involved with integrated water management in the south. Although members of both organizations sit on each other's Project Steering Committees (PSCs), there is no programmatic collaboration with UNDP. UNDP is aware that there is a need for more engagement with the World Bank, which also considers that there is a need and opportunity to share information and

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<sup>11</sup> In the Senqu River Valley, the following projects are in operation: the GEF Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) project on early warning, "Improvement of an Early Warning System (EWS) Against Climate Induced Disasters and Hazards", which is to be piloted, with the involvement of WFP; the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP), which is facilitated by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and the WFP and Government of Lesotho project, "Improving Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable and Food Insecure Populations in Lesotho", which is funded by the Adaptation Fund and due to start operation in Quthing as one of three sites of implementation.



experiences regarding the private sector, agriculture and energy. The World Bank sees an opportunity to learn from UNDP's experiences and regards UNDP's main added value as a convenor of various actors in new climate change and natural resources management initiatives.

## Climate resilience and land management

**Finding 12 Targeted training, community organization and cash-for-work schemes encouraged communities to implement simple but effective land management techniques.** While livelihood development support enabled the diversification of income in some of these communities, the scope and scale of these initiatives have been limited.

UNDP climate change resilience initiatives have been underway since 2015, actively engaging rural communities impacted by rangeland management issues in Mochale District in the southwest of Lesotho, the foothills and the lowlands, and in the Lower Senqu River Basin). UNDP aimed to: (i) develop a geo-based climatic, agro-ecological and hydrological information system to inform the analysis of climate-driven vulnerabilities and the cost-effective planning of climate-smart ecosystem rehabilitation and management measures; (ii) strengthen institutional capacity for land use planning and decision-making by integrating climate risks into development plans and policies; and (iii) provide access to knowledge and training on adaptation to government staff and community members.

UNDP contributed to rehabilitating more than 4,000 hectares (ha) of degraded land, mostly rangelands, which have been put back to productive use and under sustainable management. There has been a notable decrease in incidents of wildfires, particularly in the Mochale and Mochale's Nek areas, with the water table and water retaining capacity of wetlands (covering more than 10 ha) improved using a community collective work system, and some of these achievements are due to longer-term engagement. Some of the initiatives, for example, the establishment of community botanical gardens and the adoption of renewable energy technologies such as biogas production, solar energy and energy-saving stoves, have had social impacts such as improving the capacity of non-governmental and community-based organizations in project development and management of conflict resolution. Following the declaration of the Mochale National Park as part of the transboundary Mochale Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, a transboundary Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation Project was established and is being implemented jointly by Lesotho and South Africa to empower and strengthen the involvement of local communities and ensure benefits to them.

The establishment of a Geographic Information System (GIS), with associated training, was instrumental in producing land degradation hotspot maps for land rehabilitation activities. These maps enabled site selection, climate change baseline assessments in three community councils, together with an integrated M&E framework to collect and analyse data. The installation of automatic weather stations has the potential to expand, currently at two locations with a third planned. Support to the development of a typology of climate-smart practices to inform the implementation of natural resource conservation and management, and policy development has informed the revision of soil and water conservation guidelines to include climate change issues yet to be approved.

There was considerable investment in community-level training, which contributed to improved climate change resilience practices and diversification of livelihoods. A Socio-Economic Unit was established at the local level, and training was provided on cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis in cereal crop production and beekeeping, orchard and rangeland management. Climate change adaptation and beekeeping manuals were also developed; the former was introduced to schools in Mochale Hoek.

Thirty-five technical staff were trained in climate change modelling and risk assessment, as well as on the use of AutoCAD for the design of earth dams and other structures. Climate change-related training has capitalized on an opportunity to also provide training on conflict management to the PMU and technical staff. Also, it contributed to the development of Village Disaster Management Teams with 200 members (76 percent women).

Altogether, UNDP reported that 3,404 individuals participated in awareness-raising meetings and workshops geared towards the promotion of sustainable land management. Of these, 2,380 participated directly in the land rehabilitation programme in various communities (including the cash/food assistance for assets programme with WFP). Similarly, 357 community members (218 female, 134 male) from farmer field schools and grazing associations were trained on agro-ecological measures, such as brush control, stone lines for soil conservation, restored rangelands, donga rehabilitation and gully head stabilization, for the protection of the landscapes. Permaculture was adopted at 20 sites as a food security and adaptation measure. In addition, 908 households adopted climate-smart methods in water harvesting (200 water harvesting tanks in 24 villages). Moreover, 30 local experts were certified as farm assurers to provide technical support to farmers on the application of green technologies.

While the evaluation did not ascertain the number of people trained, the consultation for this evaluation and project evaluations indicates that climate-resilient land management measures have been taken up in almost 20,000 ha. The impact of these measures on the quality of the land is still unclear – changes are not measured, which requires GIS and satellite imagery analysis compared to an appropriate baseline.<sup>12</sup> In addition, alternative livelihood development appears to have led to increased income generation (e.g. 67 people benefited from beekeeping and honey harvesting).

Participating communities are key to UNDP initiatives across the portfolio, and the success of the initiatives depended on their active engagement. The community members were expected to provide labour voluntarily, but often could only provide about four hours per day due to other household duties. Further, the work was labour-intensive, with the use of hand tools, and most of the work was carried out by older women on rugged terrain. This indicates the difficulty in managing 50,000 ha of land in Lesotho. UNDP engaged with 16 community-based organizations while facilitating engagement with rural communities and the uptake of climate-resilient land management. However, in order for these practices to be continued, a well-conceptualized exit strategy is required. Providing grants or assets for work (e.g. Cash-for-Work) helped to engage these communities, which required consistent collaboration with agencies such as WFP to provide short-term work. UNDP was not always successful in securing such collaborations, often slowing the pace of work. Also, some activities were not carried out as planned. Six planned policy briefs that would have integrated climate risk considerations into District and Community Councils Development Plans in the areas of agriculture, infrastructure and rural development were not produced. There is currently no template to integrate approaches to land management and livelihood diversification.

There has been a high level of engagement of women and youth in land rehabilitation planning and implementation, and alternative livelihoods initiatives. In all training sessions and livelihood improvement activities, female participation was higher than male participation. UNDP provided capacity building and

<sup>12</sup> Monitoring of the Country Office performance indicators (outcome level) indicates that there are no data on the reduction of degraded land (the monitoring exercise still to be performed); there is some unclear reporting of land under improved management (20,000 ha covered during the RVCC project, but there are different numbers in the outcome indicator reports); and 1,402 people received energy-efficient cooking stoves. These are the only outcomes noted in the performance indicator system up to December 2022. See Annex 1 for Outcome 3 performance indicators.

complementary teaching aids to 88 female farmers (out of 173 farmers)<sup>13</sup> to promote good agricultural practices and food safety standards, as well as livestock, horticulture, agribusiness and marketing guidelines. A Gender Action Plan for the Integrated Watershed Management initiatives was outlined to guide: the implementation and ensure the active participation of women and under-represented groups; the collection of gender-disaggregated data and information; and appropriate representation in decision-making bodies. For transformational changes in women's ability to engage in decision-making processes relevant to the governance and sustainable management of natural resources, longer-term investment would be needed.

Synergies between entrepreneurship development and natural resource management (cultivating private sector and community engagement with business approaches) is yet to be leveraged (see section 2.3, Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth). UNDP planned to integrate green and digital technologies, and engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in identifying those that may be piloted with smallholder farmers in order to enhance productivity and facilitate their access to finance and markets. During the early phase of the pandemic, the virtual platform referred to as "Marakeng e-Market" was developed to address market access for MSMEs. However, progress of the digital supply chains in the agriculture and food sector has been limited, both due to a lack of persistent efforts by UNDP and to senior staff turnover in the Government. Introducing innovative practices in Lesotho did not progress as intended, and there were also limitations in leveraging tried and proven practices by UNDP in other countries.

The sustainability of outputs accomplished to date is not evident, particularly in terms of scaling up, despite a high level of engagement with rural communities (more than 2,000 households in Mochale District). Training and awareness-raising in the communities and the formation of grazing associations was a good attempt at sustaining community structures for effective rangeland management. Community members from Ha-Makhabane village have started voluntary work for rangeland rehabilitation, while villagers from Maphutsaneng are keen to manage their natural resources (both villages are from Khoelenya Community Council). However, there are broader sustainability challenges, for example, a reasonable expectation for cash-for-work and livelihood assets, which can create disaffection for the project if not met. The long-term benefits of land rehabilitation may not be evident for years, and communities expect to be paid for work. For the broader sustainability of land rehabilitation efforts, it should be linked to social security measures in the country, similar to WFP's cash-for-work programme.

Efforts to develop cooperatives, which can be an instrument to link to other livelihood avenues, while considered, are yet to manifest. There are District Farmers' Forums, which contribute to the efficient marketing of produce within the districts, for example, by pooling produce for transport. These activities could be further expanded. Payments certainly helped keep up the momentum, which can produce intended benefits in the longer term. It is difficult for people to work voluntarily when it is not clear that their efforts will be successful, especially if they do not have secure land tenure.<sup>14</sup> The cost-benefit analysis, which was performed for new livelihoods and businesses (e.g. beekeeping and honey production), shows that it can also be an important step in the direction of sustainability in other initiatives, since there is a full accounting of time, effort and money invested into the venture and benefits are monetized.

<sup>13</sup> Representing 50 percent of the participants, it clearly shows a good outreach to women farmers, since they represent only 28 percent of percent of all those working in working in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. 2019 Labour Force Survey (LFS) Report, Bureau of Statistics, Government of Lesotho, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> The Terminal Evaluation of the RVCC project noted that community groups were not registered, and the land allocated to them was not legally registered; hence, the risk of losing hold on land remains. Social and political instability, weak institutional capacity at the national level, a weak governance structure and the weak legal status of the land holding by the community groups could undermine the project results.

## Renewable energy

**Finding 13.** Efforts to promote the uptake of renewable energy have not been successful since mini-grids are not yet operational, and the village energy centres operate on subsidies for the purchase of renewable energy devices.

The SE4ALL initiative, implemented in the five mountainous districts of Lesotho, was intended to catalyse investments in renewable-based mini-grids and VECs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the achievement of Lesotho's Vision 2020 and SE4All goals. There were four specific objectives: (i) develop cornerstone SE4All policies and strategies to facilitate investment in renewable energy-based mini-grids; (ii) improve the capacity of energy stakeholders and government officials for decentralized clean energy planning and decision-making on the basis of quality energy data; (iii) successfully establish a village-based energy service delivery model for replication nationally; and (iv) implement an outreach programme and disseminate project experiences, best practices and lessons learned for replication nationally and throughout the region. While the initiatives laid the foundation for the key objectives, the project could not consolidate the progress made to achieve them. The evaluation points out that it may be a challenge to achieve the objectives in the next few years because support under SE4ALL is winding down; nevertheless, the project was extended to March 2023. Overall, outcome-level results in access to energy are minimal. According to the Terminal Evaluation, even with a modest uptake of renewable energy by rural consumers, there may have been a greenhouse gas emissions reduction of 3,565 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. The mini-grids, at the time of evaluation, were not yet functional. Although there had been some job creation (59 full-time staff and 293 casual workers, during construction), and to date, private sector investment in renewable energy technologies has been modest, at US\$0.6 million.<sup>15</sup> There has been slow and not particularly effective action on rural renewable energy, although UNDP efforts have generated some momentum in this area.

A significant achievement was the Government's approval in 2021 of regulations for mini-grid development, including methods to determine electricity tariffs, since the provision and delivery of electricity by mini-grids in remote areas is more expensive than electricity from the existing grid. An Investment Prospectus was developed (not yet approved) for the promotion of renewable energy technologies, and pre-feasibility studies were conducted in 20 villages. Despite this boost, the arrangement with OnePower (a private energy developer) has only just been secured (as of 2022), and construction work for 8–10 mini-grids was evident only in the last few years of the project (2021–2023). Re-negotiations allowed OnePower to raise an additional US\$15 million in capital for mini-grid development. These are all positive results, but late in the project and at risk of incompleteness.

There was also a confident expectation that the construction and operation of mini-grids by the private sector – a new business model – would lead to sustainability and replication, but the focus on this model was diverted by financing issues, setting tariffs and associated risk aversion. As of 2022, there was no operating mini-grid supported by the SE4All project, and there had been limited efforts to sustain and replicate the process since functional operation and testing require at least a few years (a no-cost extension to March 2023 has certainly helped with these issues<sup>16</sup>). The Financial Support Scheme (FSS) has been put in place to support private sector investment in renewable energy. The project and this Scheme essentially assume all the risk of future mini-grid development; however, this does not support

<sup>15</sup> This refers to their own money, not leveraging of investors or project grants.

<sup>16</sup> The most recent positive information from UNDP, from March 2023, indicates that five mini-grids are now serving four schools, two health centres, one police station and one district council office.

sustainability. An FSS Investment Committee, which should be well-informed on locations and associated risks, will manage the disbursement of funds. With the unit cost of electricity production in off-grid areas being higher than that of grid expansion, some form of subsidy will be required to get renewable energy operational in remote areas.

The establishment by three private energy developers of seven VECs (i.e. shops that sell renewable energy technology, mostly solar lights) is a significant achievement. However, lack of affordability by consumers has been an issue, especially with the loss of jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The sustainability of the VECs is also an issue due to the affordability of renewable energy devices (solar lamps, phone chargers, etc.), which many people cannot afford. Subsidies to encourage the uptake of renewable energy technologies has been a factor in sustaining interest in renewable energy products. Currently, there is a 50 percent subsidy, with several operational challenges.<sup>17</sup> Once the subsidies are withdrawn, the sustainability of the VECs and renewable energy uptake may be at risk, unless alternative measures are taken.

A household-level energy survey was completed and published. Formal training for national and district level energy officials was undertaken, but just on statistical software. However, no energy modelling software was developed or procured, and there is no evidence to suggest the formulation of a national plan for outreach and promotional activities targeting domestic and international investors.

With SE4ALL, several innovations have been noted for consideration, but not yet tested and implemented. For example, one good suggestion was to consider a mobile model of the VEC, where vans travel to the more remote areas. It was also suggested that there should be variable tariffs, using smart meters, with cheaper daytime electricity to help develop cottage-level enterprises and micro-businesses. With the SE4ALL project coming to an end, the concern is that these simple innovations may not continue, without further project support. Hydro mini- and micro-grids, possibly less innovative, were not considered in the original design of SE4ALL, yet these technologies might have proved reliable and amenable to many remote watershed areas in Lesotho.

The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Energy Sector (2020–2024) was developed through UNDP technical and financial support. The Strategy will guide the implementation of energy projects and programmes outlined in the Lesotho National Electrification Master Plan. Following the development of the Strategy, key energy stakeholders were trained on gender mainstreaming for the energy sector.

**Finding 14. Cultivating private sector interest in renewable energy was difficult, partly reflecting a lack of clarity in the Government's commitment to private sector engagement.**

While there have been efforts in engaging the private sector to encourage investment, there has been limited progress on this front. Private shops operate the VEC (three companies), but they still need help with marketing of renewable energy products. In addition, the use of existing private sector premises is convenient, but they are bringing only their location and client base, and 50 percent discounts had to be offered to attract consumer interest in the renewable energy products, which came from the project and not the private sector. Contrary to what was originally envisaged, there were serious limitations in developing an enabling environment for the development of renewable energy systems and of a suitable business model and financial instruments for their viability and replication. There was only one private sector energy company (OnePower) that was interested in building and operating the mini-grids

<sup>17</sup> However, even this scheme had its own issues, with delays in payments to the shop owners, which constrained their purchase of new renewable energy supplies for the shops.

and that had the ability to do so. With other companies backing out, there have been no competitive operations in the renewable energy sector; there is a lack of momentum in setting tariffs that could attract consumers while still allowing private sector profits. The World Bank is also operating in the energy sector in Lesotho, mainly focused on grid expansion, but also with an interest in promoting off-grid energy development. UNDP and the World Bank have not partnered, although there is scope to jointly address tariffs and other policy bottlenecks.

Any future private sector investors would need to reconcile the suggestions in the investment prospectus with the reality of the OnePower experience, the struggle with setting tariffs, and the ability of consumers to pay (electricity production and distribution off-grid are obviously more expensive per unit electricity compared to grid electricity). One of the successes of the project was that, once the 10 grids become operational, OnePower was able to use the grid initiatives to leverage an additional US\$15 million for mini-grid development. UNDP played a significant role in negotiating the concession agreement between the Government and OnePower. Given that the energy sector is owned and run by the Government, there has apparently been some resistance to letting the private sector in. OnePower had to be persistent to continue, and its perseverance has paid off with successfully securing resources for ten mini-grids. In general, OnePower was driving the process, and the Government was reactive. The lack of clarity on the process is a risk to private sector developers. While some risks were addressed with OnePower funds (e.g. the building of a road and bridge to a project site), more sustained government engagement is needed to de-risk private sector engagement.

In general, private sector investment and development, whether companies or individual entrepreneurs, needs subsidies and financial guarantees. The Government did pass the mini-grid regulations, which define how subsidized tariffs can be determined for making it affordable for remote area consumers. The OnePower proposed tariffs for mini-grid electricity were considered too high, despite receiving a significant grant to establish and operationalize grids.<sup>18</sup> UNDP has a role in the future to help the Government develop processes and regulations to give clarity on and confidence in private sector engagement in the energy sector, and to provide capacity-building that will help the energy sector grow. There is also a need for standards that inform the installation and maintenance of renewable energy equipment in Lesotho, as well as codes and protocols for interconnection between the grid and off-grid systems, as well as household renewable energy systems.

## 2.5 Cross-cutting areas

### COVID-19 response and preparedness

**Finding 15.** Despite several COVID-19 response activities, opportunities for institutional and community resilience are yet to be fully explored to better respond to future shocks.

UNDP worked under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office as a technical lead for socio-economic recovery from COVID-19. In collaboration with experts from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other United Nations agencies, UNDP developed the assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Lesotho in June 2020. It also brought together multiple national and international actors and collected their inputs to provide a balanced perspective of the multi-dimensional impact of COVID-19, in what has been described by

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<sup>18</sup> US\$480,000 for the eight mini-grids and the seven VECs.

stakeholders as a good example of its integrator role. UNDP collaborated with IOM to carry out a rapid assessment of the needs of informal cross-border traders arising from COVID-19. The assessment focused on women informal traders, cross-border mobility and trade development, enabling integration into the current discussions for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). ICT support to Parliament was also provided to overcome pandemic restrictions, as outlined in Finding 5.

During 2020, UNDP also collaborated with UNFPA, World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for the implementation of the United Nations joint project on COVID-19 response. The project supported public health facilities in implementing screening and triaging based on the national guidelines; also, 70 ground handwashing stations were installed in healthcare facilities, and 6,000 households were supported to install tippy taps for handwashing, all in an effort to reduce COVID-19 transmission. UNDP, in coordination with WHO, supported the strengthening of the Lesotho healthcare system by equipping two intensive care units at the designated COVID-19 isolation centres in Mafeteng and Berea, reaching over 5,000 beneficiaries, and by procuring two ambulances, for which WHO provided the specifications and advice on the suitable material for the country. Difficulties in international logistics at the time caused delays in receiving the equipment in the country.

Disease surveillance was strengthened through the creation of a new digital application, Bophelo-ka-Mosebeletsi (BKM), developed by the Accelerator Lab in partnership with the NUL and Econet Telecom Lesotho (ETL), which enabled village health workers (VHWs) to undertake community surveillance, monitoring and quarantining of suspected COVID-19 cases. The project provided VHWs in Quthing and Mokhotlong with 682 mobile gadgets, and partnered with ETL to enable free internet access while using the app. The app exposed a significant number of suspected patients whom the VHW monitored and referred, which reduced their travel costs by preventing the need to regularly provide paper-based reports to local health facilities. It directly benefitted 147,030 suspected COVID-19 patients within communities and 708 VHWs who were trained to use the app.

UNDP's COVID-19 response was an opportunity for exploring innovative solutions. In addition to the BKM mobile application, UNDP supported the establishment of a business register and database on MSMEs. UNDP promoted green value chains. The results achieved were mainly at the training level, with a significant participation of women and youth. The promotion and technical support provided benefited the Mphahle's Hoek district. This district also benefited from the provision of portable water systems to 24 communities and around 200 water harvesting tanks to schools, communities and farmers. This helped food production and sustain livelihoods that were threatened during the pandemic. UNDP also scaled up its incentive programme for land rehabilitation work by providing energy-efficient stoves for reducing the use of fuelwood, in line with the RVCC Project goals, and for reducing the amount of time that women spend looking for fuelwood.

The ownership of the initiatives and their continued development, however, have been limited. This has occurred mainly due to the emergency and short-term nature of the interventions, together with the constraints in terms of funding, which impacted several interventions. Regarding BKM, the number of devices i.e. (tablets) delivered and training sessions provided were affected by the lack of funds. In this case, the app was integrated into the health information system at the time of conducting this evaluation, and its sustainability will depend on the results of a new joint initiative funded by UNICEF to expand its functionality, aiming to become the backbone of the Ministry of Health (MoH) community health surveillance infrastructure.

## Innovation

**Finding 16.** The Accelerator Lab’s capabilities have been harnessed to drive digitalization and innovation in the inclusive growth and community security areas. While relevant, most initiatives are in their early stages and lack synergies.

In its programme design, UNDP acknowledges the need for catalytic innovations to accelerate and achieve results. Different intervention areas were highlighted, such as socio-economic and political inclusion, generation, access and use of data on youth empowerment, and behavioural change. The design was aligned with UNDP’s corporate Strategic Plan 2018–2021 as well as with the current Strategic Plan 2022–2025, promoting innovation as an enabler for development. The Accelerator Lab in Lesotho commenced in 2019, with the threefold objective to increase capacities for scanning, sensemaking and experimentation for sustainable development solutions, scale them up to the country level, and contribute to global knowledge.

Given the importance of youth economic empowerment for the country, UNDP placed its Accelerator Lab within the scope of its inclusive growth intervention. This led to a number of initiatives. The Her\_Empire experiment supported 18 women representing 16 enterprises through training on techniques and strategies for running profitable and resilient businesses, and accessing finance and market opportunities. Support for entrepreneurship was reflected in a 12-month mentoring strategy to help young entrepreneurs, and design thinking was integrated into business development management training. As a result of UNDP’s positioning in the innovation ecosystem, 54 Basotho-led innovations emerged. In collaboration with young innovators and NUL, 15 young male innovators were supported with mentoring and experimentation grants, and five solutions were piloted through the Government of Lesotho. One of the consequences of locating the Accelerator Lab within the inclusive growth portfolio was the disengagement with the other portfolios, which was a missed opportunity to be a driver of programme integration.

The plastic waste management initiative was one of the successful activities that received considerable attention. This involved a platform to jointly generate innovation, knowledge and a regulatory framework on plastic waste in Lesotho. It established technology-based waste management information systems (including mapping of landfill sites), and promoted advocacy and behaviour change at the local and national levels. The initiative led to a plastic management strategy (awaiting Government approval), a waste data management system, a stronger profile for community environmental policing (i.e. strong involvement of local councils and municipalities), an innovative use of plastic (e.g. for building and paving bricks, and artistic products) and the implementation of a ‘no plastic day’. Although the day could not be repeated, it has considerable potential to continue awareness on plastic waste management.<sup>19</sup>

The Accelerator Lab has been able to explore digital solutions, particularly to adapt to the new conditions and needs created by COVID-19. In the area of governance, introducing digital application – the Lehokela Crime Alert App – for community policing was promising. The app introduced a way of reporting by using cell phones, in real-time, and also has a panic button. However, its development and deployment were affected by COVID-19. Opportunities remain to increase innovative work in the sector, particularly to enhance accountability and transparency, and improve service delivery. The BKM platform and app is another example where UNDP supported the MoH in its response with an e-health solution to improve

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<sup>19</sup> A legal framework is required to establish this; however, the Government introduced a plastic levy in 2022.



health surveillance activities. The app, tested in two districts, assisted village healthcare workers in recording people who might have had infections and reporting in real-time to optimise testing and curb contagion. However, since the app only had a COVID-19 module, with the reduction of cases, its use was practically discontinued in 2022. Still, given its high potential and the good reception of the initiative by both users and the MoH, it is being enhanced, scaled-up and re-launched for the monitoring of other diseases through the collaboration and funding of UNICEF and partnering with ETL.

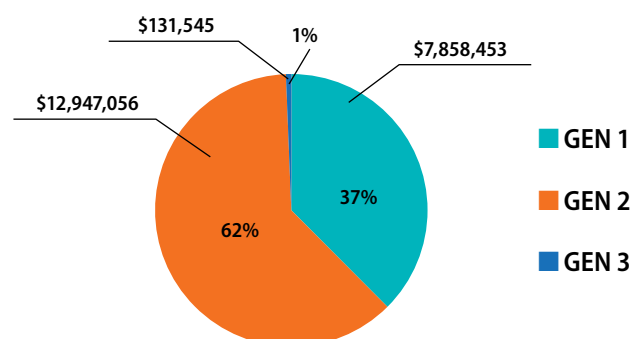
There is scope to better position Accelerator Lab initiatives as a collaborative effort to partner with other actors to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem by developing incubators that can produce jobs. UNDP's Accelerator Lab and other efforts in the country such as the World Bank's Entrepreneurship Hub and Seed Financing Facility have the collaboration potential for scaling up job creation. Recently, the Accelerator Lab has been relocated under the management team for enabling innovation that links all portfolios and for collaborations with United Nations and other development actors.

## Gender mainstreaming

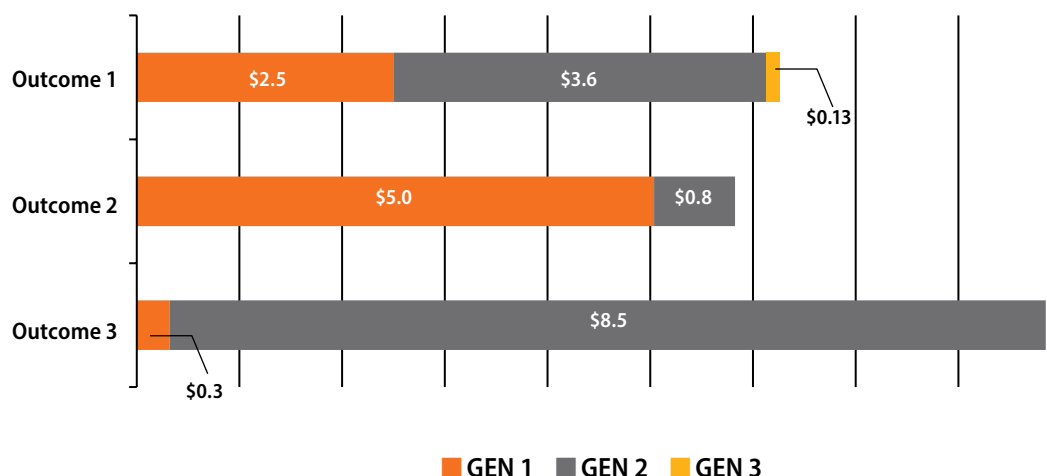
**Finding 17.** The UNDP programme has benefited from efforts to promote Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) objectives through project design. However, these efforts do not always translate into results and are at times reduced to women's participation in initiatives. Better inter-agency coordination between United Nations agencies would benefit the approach to tackling some of the root causes of inequality and its consequences, such as gender-based violence.

UNDP uses the gender marker, an indicator of gender mainstreaming within programmes, for tracking financial investments to advance or contribute to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. As of 2022, only one project was marked GEN 3 (gender equality as a principal objective), and most of the expenditure, \$12.9 million, was marked GEN 2 (gender equality as a significant objective), followed by GEN 1 (contributes to gender equality in a limited way) projects (Figure 11). The inclusive growth area has the largest GEN 1 spending (\$5.0 million), with a small expenditure related to GEN 2, despite the possibilities to mainstream GEWE employment and livelihood activities. The efforts to mainstream GEWE in GEF-funded projects focused on GEN 2 (US\$8.5 million). However, this did not translate automatically into results; the SE4ALL project, for instance, had limited results in terms of GEWE, and only one product, a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Energy Sector (2020–2024), was reported as a contribution.

**FIGURE 11.** Share of gender marker expenditure (2019–2022)



**FIGURE 12. Expenditure by gender marker and outcomes s (2019–2022)**



Source: UNDP Power BI/ATLAS. Data as of April 2023.

In terms of UNDP’s own internal Gender Equality Seal, Lesotho’s Country Office took part in the programme in 2013–2014, obtaining the Silver Certification. The following year, however, the Country Office was downgraded to Bronze Seal status. Since then, the Office has remained in the Bronze category and has not considered another certification process. An internal gender balance among staff has not been an issue during this cycle, as well as among senior management positions.

The complex and multidimensional nature of the root causes affecting GEWE makes it a good entry point for portfolio-based initiatives, which the Country Office has not yet managed to explore. Programme areas have benefited from the Office’s efforts to promote GEWE, but with a more siloed approach. Together with UNFPA, UNDP’s support for the Gender and Development Policy 2018–2030 has been important in Lesotho’s efforts to institutionalize gender equity and equality as an integral component of social, economic and political development, and to fulfil the commitments to international and regional frameworks. A coordination forum on gender equality and women’s empowerment was established to develop a theory of change for gender equality in Lesotho, providing a basis for gender mainstreaming in sectoral plans. As part of the dialogues process, UNDP strengthened the capacity of women, youth and PwD to engage in national dialogue and thoroughly discuss their issues. In this regard, there was a fruitful collaboration with UN Women through Women in Law in Southern Africa, and the Lesotho Chapter (WLSA) facilitated women’s only consultation, in which 43 percent of the facilitators and supervisors were women.

Some highly relevant initiatives have faced challenges. The start of the gender audit undertaken as a baseline for the implementation of programmes for gender equality in the Government was delayed, which affected the subsequent capacity-building programmes and the initiation of the gender budgeting within the 2022/23 budgeting period. It lacked the necessary momentum and wider buy-in to establish mechanisms for implementing the Gender Equality Seal for the public sector. Advocacy for the Gender Seal for Public Service has not yet produced the desired outcome, nor have the efforts for the adoption of the Gender Seal for the private sector. The development of a security sector gender mainstreaming strategy was not fully achieved due to changes in the approach to the national security sector reform, although UNDP has continued promoting gender mainstreaming at the policy level. UNDP’s experience in conducting a hackathon with the NUL has shown the difficulties in promoting GEWE and innovation, in which only 2 girls out of 108 youth participated.

While inter-agency collaboration has produced tangible results, there are still problems of lack of clarity and coordination that have hindered results, particularly in relation to GBV. UNDP, in partnership with UNICEF and UN Women, implemented gender-focused and women's empowerment activities, including the national women's conference that brought over 250 Basotho women together, leading to the development of a National Women's Compact that guided the national gender agenda. By using UN Women's *Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming* in the INFF, 28 percent of the INFF recommendations were targeted at promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in mechanisms and decision-making for financing development. Addressing GBV, however, has been an area in which the lack of coordination was evident. Collaboration is ad hoc, and the United Nations agencies lack a mechanism or a forum to recognize, coordinate and maximize the complementarity of mandates regarding GBV for Basotho women and girls.

UNDP helped ensure the inclusiveness of the national dialogues. Women, PwD, youth and people living in rural areas have benefited from the participatory and inclusive approach adopted in identifying reform priorities and shaping the reform recommendations. In addition to the direct involvement of CSOs, the approach enabled the participation of ordinary citizens including those in rural areas to have their voices heard. It is not clear, however, to what extent all of these groups were empowered and are fully aware of the repercussions of the reforms. Gaps in communication have been noted by the Government and development partners in this regard. Churches have been identified as key players for communicating these messages locally.

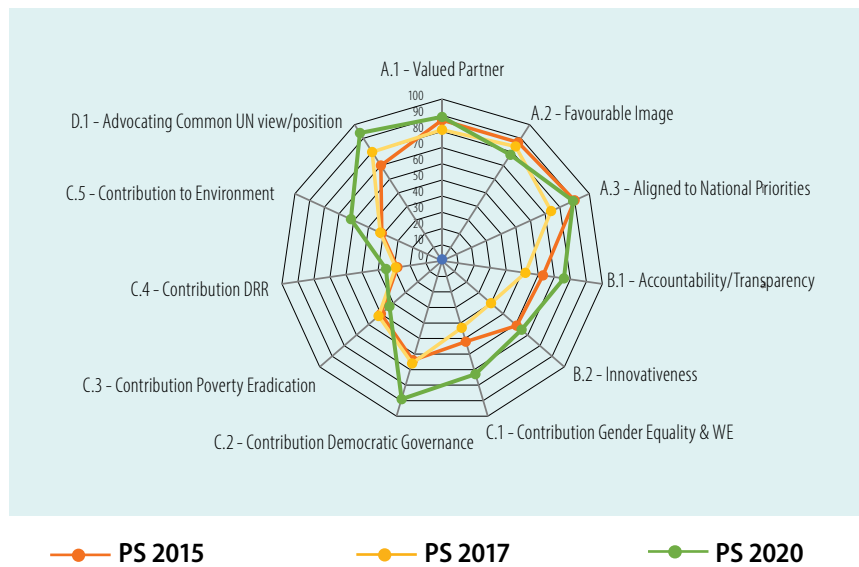
## Programme implementation

**Finding 18.** UNDP's operational support over the years has been important. While it is well regarded for enabling GEF and other financing, limited leverage of strategic partnerships and perceptions of low domain expertise reduced UNDP's contribution.

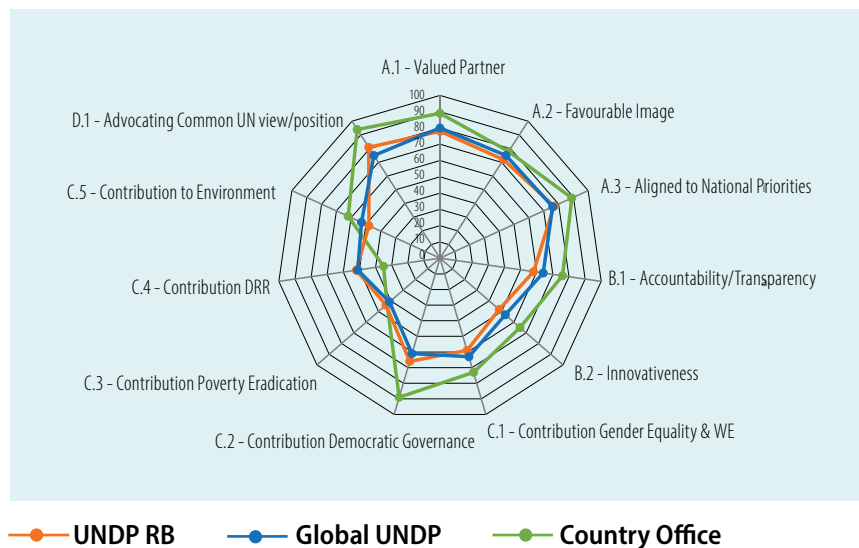
The need and relevance of coordinated and effective partnerships between development partners were highlighted in the NSDP II as a key factor in supporting economic growth and the country's ability to attract development finance. UNDP acknowledged this context in its CPD and designed an ambitious programme of partnerships for action in its different outcomes. Changes in the context, and UNDP's own challenges in leveraging its strategic value and comparative advantages, and adapt to the changing needs have limited the number and scope of partnerships.

UNDP's efforts to produce results at the policy level and its alignment to national priorities placed the organization in a good position regarding partnerships with government actors at the national level. Historical surveys have shown that partners give UNDP a high rating for its value as a partner over the years (Figure 13, A.1), and UNDP's performance in Lesotho is significantly better rated than the average ratings at the regional or global levels (see Figure 14). This led to strategic partnerships with the previous government and a well-positioned start with the new Government elected in October 2022. There were limitations in proactively seeking collaborations within and outside the United Nations system, which is critical for consolidated responses in Lesotho.

**FIGURE 13. Partnership Survey historical data**



**FIGURE 14. 2020 Partnership Survey comparative view**



Source: IEO with UNDP Partnership Survey Data.

UNDP's roles with respect to the reform agenda, the dialogues and the security sector reform have enabled it to interact with multiple government officials at different levels, CSOs and communities. These initiatives have boosted the perception of UNDP's contribution to the democratic governance of the country and its image as an accountable and transparent institution (Figure 13, C.2 and B.1). The ICPE conducted its own stakeholder survey in 2022, which also highlighted alignment with national priorities, innovativeness, contribution to GEWE and the environment as the most highly rated aspects, i.e. those whose perception by partners improved significantly since 2015 (Figure 13). These assets represent an opportunity for UNDP to cultivate new partnerships and to strengthen its position as an actor with convening power for inclusive and sustainable development.

Engagement with CSOs was extensive during the dialogue processes, enabling it to play a key role in contributing to the stabilization and development of the country. However, this approach has not been homogeneous across programme areas, particularly in terms of efforts to strengthen CSO capacities. Similarly, UNDP's capacity to coordinate partnerships at the local level, with the local governments, has been weak. UNDP did not implement the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) mechanism, contrary to UNICEF and WFP, and thereby failed to strengthen its partnerships with government counterparts.

UNDP was successful in enabling GEF financing in the area of the environment, and there were corresponding government contributions. The LDC context of Lesotho, combined with limited development cooperation required proactive efforts to enable development financing. While South-South and North-South cooperation facilitation by UNDP is important, it is not sufficient for strengthening Lesotho's strategies for accessing development financing. However, UNDP has not been able to capitalize on its added value to pursue partnerships with IFIs in areas such as inclusive growth and energy. Despite shared thematic interests with the United Nations and IFIs, such as private sector development, enterprise incubation and market access, value chain development and renewable energy, there was limited substantive collaboration. It was often raised that there were too many needs assessment studies conducted but UNDP was not able to facilitate financing to address the needs or gaps in institutional capacities.

Partnerships and joint work with other United Nations agencies have shown shortcomings related to overlapping mandates, failures in collaboration and competition for limited resources. The most contentious areas are addressing GBV, where greater collaboration from all agencies concerned (UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women) is required. However, UNDP could not take advantage of the full potential of the Humanitarian Development and Peace Nexus. There are opportunities for programmatic partnerships with WFP (food security, short-term employment for development activities), FAO (green economy/agro-sector responses), and OHCHR and IOM (peace, human rights, migration and security reforms).

**Finding 19. UNDP increased the size of its programme portfolio but has faced multiple challenges affecting its delivery and efficiency.**

UNDP managed to mobilize more funding in this cycle than in previous ones, but it has faced difficulties executing it. The annual budget and expenditure over the last two county programme cycles indicate that the current programme size is slightly larger than the previous county programme cycle, given the increase in budget and expenditure in 2020–2022 (Chapter 1, Figures 2 and 3). The budget for 2022 covers the period up to early April 2023.<sup>20</sup> The execution rates remained around 77 percent over the two CPD cycles. However, the current cycle shows a decreasing trend in the annual execution rates, together with an increase in the management efficiency ratio<sup>21</sup> in 2021 (30 percent) and 2022 (24 percent) versus the previous two years, which remained consistent, at around 21 percent.

Programme implementation delays impacted UNDP's contribution. In the area of the environment, despite a long-standing relationship between UNDP and government implementing partners, challenges in programme delivery were evident. The most evident ones are those related to delays in the launching and during the execution of projects. For example, SE4ALL and RVCC suffered delays in the initial two years after implementation. Consultations point out that some of the issues may be related to the planning process, particularly, the weak engagement of implementing partners. In addition, delivery was impacted by staff

<sup>20</sup> UNDP Atlas Power BI, consulted on 4 April 2023.

<sup>21</sup> A management efficiency ratio compares the programme cost against the management cost.

turnover in the Government, issues with project monitoring (i.e. the nature of indicators and collecting relevant data), the way that programme risks were addressed, and the approach of some PMUs, which was predominantly administrative-driven rather than results-based-oriented.

UNDP had difficulties implementing some of its own programme management recommendations and good practices. Across all outcomes, a little more than half of the projects used the direct implementation modality (DIM), representing 41 percent of the expenditure, despite UNDP's commitment to using DIM only "in exceptional circumstances". Likewise, the CPD requirement to use the HACT in a coordinated manner with other agencies to manage risks has not been fully implemented, with reluctance to hand over some of the activities to partners. As a result, UNDP staff has become involved in activities that are time-consuming but with a low return in terms of delivery. Other United Nations agencies are already using HACT to avoid these situations while enhancing partners' national capacities and ownership. Only in the case of GEF-funded projects, the largest donors for this programme representing 38 percent of the expenditure, is UNDP using HACT.

While efforts are underway, restructuring and streamlining of programme teams and a strategic programming focus are yet to take place comprehensively. UNDP recognizes the need to break down silos and move towards a portfolio approach in the implementation of initiatives, but it is still too early to assess initiatives in this direction. Due to a siloed project implementation mode rather than structuring the team as a provider of development solutions, the collective achievements of the programme teams have been undermined. Staff capacities to respond to areas such as trade and PFM, and the enabling of development financing are limited. Short-term contracts are a challenge in ensuring an adequate level of expertise needed in areas such as employment and inclusive growth.

In terms of M&E, UNDP has faced challenges monitoring progress at the outcome level that can be attributed to project actions. For instance, with regard to the RVCC project, there was clear monitoring of the participants' project area (19,906 ha); however, without knowing the starting conditions (no synoptic baseline) and what exactly changed (needing remote sensing data and GIS), the only manifestation of project influence is the number of people participating, their interventions, the area that they cover, as well as anecdotal references to benefits. This is inadequate for determining the benefits of the RVCC Project, and therefore cannot well serve future project design. In addition, in other areas, monitoring for outcomes had limitations.

## 2.6 Country Programme performance ratings

Table 1 provides an overview of the performance of the country programme, using the five internationally agreed evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and a set of parameters for each. A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest.<sup>22</sup> These ratings summarize the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed justification for the ratings.

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<sup>22</sup> 4 = Fully achieved/exceeds expectations, 3 = Mostly achieved, 2 = Partially achieved, 1 = Not achieved.

**TABLE 1. Overview of Country Programme performance**

Evaluation criteria and sub-criteria	Score	Explanation
<b>RELEVANCE</b>	3	
1. A. Adherence to national development priorities	3	Overall, UNDP programme initiatives were responsive to the evolving needs of national development priorities and the reform agenda. UNDP programmes are well aligned with United Nations and corporate goals and priorities. Although UNDP is well-positioned for establishing stronger partnerships with development stakeholders in Lesotho, the programme approach of short-term initiatives reduced the overall relevance of the country programme.
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/ UNDP goals	3	
1.C. Relevance of programme logic	2	
<b>COHERENCE</b>	2	
2.A. Internal programme coherence	1	There were significant limitations in internal programme coherence between different outcome areas as well as within the outcome initiatives initiatives, which undermined UNDP's contribution. UNDP programmes were largely project-driven, with a limited overarching framework that would bring together complementary initiatives for a consolidated response.
2.B. External programme coherence	2	UNDP established strong partnerships with the Government, across ministries. A few joint projects with the United Nations agencies notwithstanding, there were limitations in forging strategic partnerships within and outside the United Nations system that would enhance UNDP's contribution in Lesotho.
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>	2	
3.A. Timeliness	2	There were delays in programme implementation that impacted UNDP's effectiveness. Some of these delays were not related to COVID-19.
3.B. Management efficiency	2	The siloed approach to programme implementation undermined overall efficiency. The lack of a strategy for programme partnerships was a key factor in UNDP's inability to respond comprehensively to the challenges Lesotho is facing. Limited international cooperation in Lesotho requires strong programmatic partnerships.



◀ Table 1 (following)

Evaluation criteria and sub-criteria	Score	Explanation
EFFECTIVENESS	3	
4. A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes	3	<p>In an evolving political context with significant resource challenges, the UNDP programme outputs maintained the momentum of the reform agenda. The evaluation acknowledges that some of the outcomes could not be achieved due to contextual factors. However, the extent to which the various outputs contributed to strengthening development processes across the three outcome areas is limited also because of the programmatic factors. The limited scope of UNDP activities and lack of partnerships were a constraint in achieving the outcomes. Poor sustainability of the progress achieved also impacted on achieving the outcomes outlined in the country programme. In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are significant governance challenges in Lesotho, which require sustained engagement. UNDP response falls short in terms of a longer-term perspective in responding to such challenges, particularly with regard to supporting reform processes. Community-level successes in the security sector are not adequately leveraged for scaling up and replication.</li> <li>• UNDP's entrepreneurship development efforts have yet to demonstrate comprehensive programme options for inclusive employment generation, livelihoods and productivity, suitable for Lesotho's nascent market conditions.</li> <li>• In the early stages, UNDP support sought to address key challenges in rural communities in Lesotho in order to further renewable energy access and mobilize communities in curbing land degradation with simple approaches and the potential to scale up. Challenges remain in government staff engagement and cultivating private sector interest in renewable energy.</li> <li>• Cultivating private sector interest in renewable energy was difficult, partly reflecting a lack of clarity in the Government's strategy with private sector engagement.</li> </ul>



◀ Table 1 (following)

Evaluation criteria and sub-criteria	Score	Explanation
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	3	UNDP programmes were implemented at the national and local levels, although there was scope for better strategizing local development. UNDP made efforts to reach those who were at risk of being left behind, for example, people impacted by conflict, rural populations, women and youth. UNDP programmes were effective in including youth and women in various initiatives. Youth and women's engagement in Lesotho needed a broader framework that would address structural challenges (e.g. financing for enterprise development, incubation support and market linkages), in the absence of which only micro-level success could be achieved.
4.C. Prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment	3	UNDP was successful in mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment priorities in its programmes. UNDP's policy and advocacy efforts were also critical in ensuring the focus on gender agenda. Further joint efforts will strengthen UNDP's response and contribution.
4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles	2	There were limited efforts to ensure integrated approaches that would accelerate sustainable development. Improving productive capacities in Lesotho needs a multi-pronged approach, which UNDP could not enable. Efforts such as enabling South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation, while important, are in the early stages and should be anchored in a programmatic framework for enabling development outcomes. There is considerable scope for strengthening digitalization and innovation efforts.
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>	2	
5.A. Sustainable capacity	1	UNDP contributed to keeping the momentum of the reform agenda. However, the short-term and limited scope of support in the areas of governance and inclusive growth had a limited potential to enable institutional capacities or to support efforts that would address structural constraints for enterprise development. Lack of partnerships also reduced the possibility of continuation of successful initiatives or scaling up (e.g. green economy, addressing land degradation, renewable energy). Some initiatives, such as the one related to climate change, have shown the beneficiaries' willingness to continue working on project initiatives beyond UNDP support.  UNDP can be credited for enabling GEF financing. There is scope for greater engagement in enabling development financing.
5.B. Financing for development	2	



# CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the evaluation's conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Lesotho, and the recommendations and management response. The evaluation assessed UNDP's contribution to the three programme outcome areas. Building on the key findings set out in the previous chapter, the conclusions and recommendations presented here focus on strategic issues pertaining to the programme approach, UNDP positioning, institutional capacity strengthening and the accelerating enablers of development. The evaluation was conducted at a time when Lesotho concluded its national elections and there was a new government. This period also coincides with the preparation of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and UNDP country programme document.

### 3.1. Conclusions

**Conclusion 1.** Given the limitation in international assistance to Lesotho, UNDP's contribution to reform processes and short-term institutional capacity has been important. The evolving political context reduced the pace of the reforms and efforts to strengthen institutional capacities.

The environment within which UNDP implemented the governance programme was a challenging one, characterized by low growth and social and political instability, exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP has played a significant role in enabling Lesotho's reform process and is widely considered a key actor in the country's development trajectory. UNDP's contribution to keeping up the momentum of reform processes has been important given the limited international assistance to Lesotho and constraints in mobilizing development financing. With three decades of development support to Lesotho, UNDP is well-positioned for establishing stronger partnerships with national institutions. Political instability notwithstanding, UNDP has been consistent in its support of the reform efforts including the national reform agenda. Assistance to bolster the technical capacities of the ministries contributed to the momentum of the reform process.

UNDP contributed to creating an environment conducive to taking forward the fundamental reforms recommended by SADC. UNDPs South-South and South-North facilitation of development exchange has considerable potential to enable development solutions appropriate for Lesotho. Catalytic efforts in the area of energy have significant relevance for Lesotho. UNDP is yet to leverage its comparative advantage of a long-term partnership to engage more substantively in key reform areas.

**Conclusion 2.** In responding to the urgent institutional capacity needs for pursuing the reform agenda, UNDP interventions tended to be short-term. While UNDP demonstrated timeliness and responsiveness to the reform agenda, not adequately leveraging such engagement for longer-term engagement limited its contribution. Programme response in small least developed countries such as Lesotho with limited international assistance begs the question about the appropriateness of the United Nations and UNDP country assistance strategy.

Financing for development remains a huge challenge in Lesotho. With constrained international cooperation assistance, Lesotho as an LDC faces significant challenges in mobilizing development financing. A related issue is limitations in Lesotho's readiness to benefit from the trade concessions. While UNDP programme engagement is highly relevant, there is scope for improving the nature of support with an emphasis on addressing structural challenges critical for Lesotho to accelerate SDG progress and mobilize development financing. Too many institutional needs assessments studies have merely raised expectations without attracting development financing. The UNDP development approach in Lesotho is yet to add value to

the country's efforts to leverage LDC trade concessions. UNDP has yet to explore alternative ways of programming, combining policy engagement and promoting programme models underpinned by connecting relevant actors who can support Lesotho's development trajectory.

Development innovation received priority with the establishment of the Accelerator Lab. Innovative solutions are evolving and need concerted integration. There was too much emphasis on App development without adequate governance processes, which has reduced the contribution.

Despite several COVID-19 response activities, opportunities for institutional and community resilience are yet to be fully explored to better respond to future shocks. UNDP support to the socio-economic assessment of COVID-19 impact has been important. The assessment provided a balanced perspective of the multi-dimensional impact of COVID-19. While constrained by the lack of resources for the COVID-19 response, UNDP's short-term support had limitations in strengthening institutional processes necessary for building sustainable capacities that Lesotho needed for accelerating development and better responding to shocks. Improving services through Apps (digitalization) in agro- and security sectors, while important, lacked institutional anchoring for sustainability and traction. Also, too many competing Apps in Lesotho point to a lack of coordination among agencies, particularly among United Nations agencies. Initiatives such as water supply needed for hygiene purposes and energy-efficient stoves that were provided have potential and need collaboration for scaling up.

Responses in small countries such as Lesotho with significant development challenges but limited international cooperation begs the question of the nature of United Nations response, whether the commonly used UNSDCF is suitable. While there have been efforts to accelerate SDG mainstreaming, United Nations collaboration is yet to gain momentum to provide a consolidated response. Nexus focus in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) have yet to manifest into well-conceived inter-agency joint efforts, despite a few successful examples (UNDP and WFP linking short-term employment for addressing land degradation efforts). There is limited attention to explicit area-based development solutions. A competing United Nations response has further impacted leveraging the comparative advantage of United Nations in supporting the reform agenda. The UNDAF/UNSDCF and current joint projects are not enabling nexus collaborations. There is a considerable divide between short-term humanitarian assistance and development support. UNDP has been less proactive in strategically pursuing humanitarian and development linkages. UNDP is yet to position itself as an enabler of the humanitarian and development nexus within the UNCT.

**Conclusion 3.** UNDP support to the National Reforms Authority and its interim successor, as well as its short-term assistance to bolster the technical capacities of the relevant ministries, contributed to maintaining the momentum of the reform process. UNDP had outlined an ambitious programme with limited human and financial resources or adequate efforts to enable development financing, resulting in a limited contribution to addressing structural challenges.

There are significant governance challenges, which require sustained engagement. Institutions with overlapping mandates remain a challenge in Lesotho, and implementation of the national reform agenda and the Omnibus Bill is critical to governance reforms. UNDP's consistent support to strengthen the security sector areas has been important in ensuring the continuation of policy and capacity efforts. While such support was important, UNDP is yet to select areas for longer-term engagement. A missed opportunity is the lack of engagement in strengthening local government capacities. An inadequate focus on local governments' capacities undermines UNDP's positioning as well as the sustainability of its programme outcomes.

**Conclusion 4.** A prolonged phase of short-term and one-off engagement has reduced strategic engagement in inclusive growth (employment generation and livelihood development) and local area development. Practical development solutions that address the bottlenecks in livelihood development have not been implemented at an adequate pace.

A dearth of consistent engagement and short-term support to complex areas of employment and livelihoods has reduced UNDP's contribution. UNDP's entrepreneurship development efforts are yet to demonstrate comprehensive programme options for inclusive employment generation/livelihoods development and productivity change processes suitable for Lesotho's nascent market conditions.

UNDP showed a strong commitment to Lesotho's reform efforts, but has yet to demonstrate a concrete engagement to support policy processes necessary for enterprise and market development. There were limited efforts by UNDP to address the structural dimensions of enhancing productive capacities (e.g. access to financing, an enabling environment for private sector development, and market, trade regulations). Lack of cross-sectoral linkages, combined with parallel and overlapping institutional mechanisms and mandates is slowing Lesotho's progress in enhancing productivity. Structural challenges are yet to be addressed, due to the contextual challenges and poor application of programming approaches. A reactive and inconsistent engagement in policy processes reduced UNDP's role and positioning as an expert organization.

The small scope and scale of MSME interventions, constrained by a lack of institutional anchoring and financial mechanisms, had limited dividends for enterprise development or enhancing livelihoods. UNDP support was important in providing youth opportunities to improve productive capacities and innovation, but such efforts require better strategizing, providing incubation support for business establishment. Green economy initiatives enabled the diversification of livelihoods, but their scale and scope are limited. In the absence of partnerships that can scale up such efforts, change processes are confined to limited communities.

Slow progress in programme partnerships and lack of diverse funding arrangements undermined consistent engagement and scale. Acceleration and innovation efforts have had limited success in enabling options for enterprise development and enhanced value chain. UNDP made efforts to address gender disparity in enterprise development, but given the enormous challenges that women faced, they were not sufficient in enabling viable options.

**Conclusion 5.** UNDP support to developing national environmental protocols is important. UNDP support sought to address key challenges in rural communities in Lesotho to further renewable energy access and mobilize communities in curbing land degradation with simple approaches and potential to scale. These important efforts are in the early stages. UNDP is yet to demonstrate viable solutions in renewable energy, climate change resilience, and natural resources management areas.

UNDP should be credited for enabling the GEF funding that accelerated efforts to address land degradation. It has yet to address the bottlenecks in the renewable energy ecosystem, including financial mechanisms, that would induce the purchase of renewable energy services. The uptake of renewable energy has not been successful since mini-grids are not yet operational (but some may be imminent).

Efforts to address climate change vulnerability enabled simple but effective land management techniques and diversification of livelihoods at the community level. Challenges remain in engagement government staff, cultivating private sector interest in renewable energy, and in inducing community groups to engage in projects (e.g. cash for work).

**Conclusion 6.** UNDP's contribution to gender policy and advocacy has been important for promoting gender-sensitive development in Lesotho; however, systematic United Nations-level collaboration is still critical.

UNDP support for women's enterprise development and security is important. Policy support and advocacy efforts, although not consistently pursued, continue to be relevant. UNDP has yet, however, to prioritize gender-specific development and peace concerns that require longer-term solutions. Small-scale efforts in the absence of sector solutions and policy linkages undermined the UNDP contribution. UNDP is yet to consolidate its work in the areas of inclusive growth and security for forging programmatic partnerships that would enable a more comprehensive gender-specific response. Current joint United Nations efforts to address gender-related development challenges are inadequate to address the complex constraints women face in Lesotho.

**Conclusion 7.** A longer-term programmatic thrust is hampered by an ad hoc programme approach. The siloed approach across the country programme has reduced UNDP's consolidated engagement and positioning. Lack of strategic partnerships undermined contributions to strengthening institutional processes and building sustainable capacities.

UNDP is yet to streamline its interventions into coherent programmatic offers, which is undermining its overall contribution. Lack of a programmatic approach to employment, governance and environmental management impacted UNDP's positioning and contribution. UNDP's siloed approach and its limited resources for its ambitious efforts have reduced its positioning and contribution in Lesotho. The organization of the programme portfolios is yet to enable UNDP to position itself more strategically to respond to the fast pace of development that Lesotho needs. Short-term funding in the absence of programme partnerships reduced the scope of UNDP engagement and contribution.

There are missed opportunities in translating UNDP's catalytic initiatives (in energy and security areas) into sustainable programme options for Lesotho. There is a need for calibrating its key areas of engagement to provide a coherent programmatic direction. Programme efficiency issues are undermining UNDP's coherent and strategic response. Due to a siloed project implementation mode rather than structuring the team as a provider of development solutions, the collective achievements of the programme teams have been undermined. While efforts are underway, restructuring and streamlining of programme teams and a strategic programming focus are yet to comprehensively take place.

UNDP support in disbursing funds (i.e. its fiduciary role) and enabling financing are important and widely recognized, but there is scope for improving national ownership. There are high expectations for more support from UNDP across areas, and managing them with clarity in programme support has been a challenge in some programme areas (e.g. inclusive growth and governance). There are limited efforts to operationalize HACT, which has been an area of contention for some of the partner ministries. This is also likely to impact the potential role of UNDP as a development support services provider, which is a support that Lesotho needs in its efforts to accelerate development.

## 3.2 Recommendations and management response

### RECOMMENDATION 1



**For a meaningful contribution to sustainable development approaches in Lesotho, UNDP should position itself as an expert organization and policy actor, leveraging the organization's comparative advantage in addressing issues of institutional capacities, enabling workable solutions for employment, and addressing land degradation and energy issues. The UNDP programme should be strategic in its engagements and partnerships in order to enable sustainable development outcomes in select priority areas.**

UNDP's positioning and contribution to the reform agenda depend on the technical depth it brings. UNDP should refrain from one-off engagement in its support of reforms. For sustainable change processes, UNDP should be selective in identifying reform areas for longer-term engagement. Considering that there are domain actors in the area of PFM and trade (including trading across borders), UNDP should be strategic in its engagement in reform areas.

Over the years, UNDP has facilitated several South-South and North-South development exchanges. As an enabler of development solutions, areas should be identified where UNDP should position itself as a liaison of relevant actors for comprehensive solutions through bilateral engagement.

UNDP should balance central and local-level engagement. With strategic partnerships, UNDP could develop areas-based solutions with policy linkages in the areas of energy efficiency, green economy and rural enterprise development, as well as community security.

UNDP experience has shown partnerships with WFP-facilitated humanitarian development linkages, further addressing land degradation issues by providing temporary employment. Similar partnerships within the United Nations and other agencies are critical to promote nexus solutions (e.g. food security and livelihoods, strengthening development data, GEWE policy and advocacy in livelihoods and security areas). While the coordination role rests with United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP should define areas where it can bring value to joint United Nations efforts.

**Management response (Indicate "Fully Accepted," "Partially Accepted," or "Rejected," and provide an explanation): Fully Accepted.** The new Country Programme Strategy recognizes the need for the Country Office to leverage its capacities as a thought leader and connector of partners for development solutions. A focused prioritization on select transformative, socio-economic reform areas for in-depth policy and institutional support is needed.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking <sup>1</sup>	
			Comments	Status
1.1 In consultation with the Cabinet sub-committee on national reforms, identify priority reform sectors and define a comprehensive offer for policy and institutional support	January 2024	Resident Representative (RR)		Initiated

<sup>1</sup> Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).



◀ Recommendation (cont.)

1.2 To support improved access to quality basic services, economic opportunities and natural resource management, especially in the hardest-to-reach districts, programmes in the new country programme document (CPD) will adopt area-based approaches in selected regions (hard-to-reach and marginalized areas), building on ongoing projects such as renewable energy access and/or natural resource management in which all three CPD programme priorities would be implemented for greater impact and policy feedback.	September 2024	Programmes		Initiated
1.3 Building of the defined areas of prioritization for reforms, UNDP will identify and engage countries of good practice in prioritized areas of support and forge formal South-South development exchanges and peer mentorship in support of development solutions	December 2023	RR and Deputy Resident Representative (DRR)		Initiated
1.4 As part of its partnership strategy, UNDP will adopt an integrated approach, working with other United Nations entities and development partners on selected thematic areas such as food systems and livelihoods; countering GBV), and public service reform and optimized service delivery through the joint programme and broader partnership with clearly defined roles.	December 2026	DRR Programme		

## RECOMMENDATION 2



**UNDP should prioritize support to strengthening local government capacities with a particular emphasis on local development and community security. UNDP should aim to promote programme models that would enable local area-based solutions that strengthen central and local linkages.**

The governance agenda in Lesotho is vast. Given the size of UNDP's financial and human resources, the Country Office should focus its work in-depth on specific areas rather than aim to cover the breadth of the governance agenda.

UNDP's work in security sector reforms at the national level, and in strengthening the local peace and conflict prevention architecture are areas that it should strongly consider for continued support in the next country programme. The security sector reforms are critical for creating a stable environment based on the rule of law, which provides an enabling environment for the much-needed inclusive economic growth of Lesotho.

The Ribaneng peace initiative and community policing have demonstrated their potential to foster and sustain peace in conflict-ridden communities. UNDP should commission an independent documentation of the results and lessons learned, with the view to support the security sector and CSOs to roll out the approach to other communities.

UNDP should develop a strategy for local development support with a specific emphasis on support to e-governance and digital solutions to promote accountability and transparency. Local area-based solutions should be used to galvanize United Nations and other agencies for consolidated governance solutions.

**Management response (Indicate "Fully Accepted," "Partially Accepted," or "Rejected," and provide an explanation): Fully Accepted.** Increasing inequality requires a more deliberate move towards area-based programming, both as a means of piloting development solutions for scaling and leveraging an integrated approach to the programme.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Formulation of a project responding to CPD (2024-2028) Output 1.1: Institutions at the national and local government levels strengthened to deliver inclusive quality services to all	January 2024	Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		Initiated
2.2 Formulation of Lesotho National Security Sector Reforms for Peacebuilding focusing on infrastructure for sustainable peace, national unity and reconciliation at the national and community levels.	September 2025	Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		Initiated

2.3 Formulation and implementation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Improved Governance for Optimized Public Service Delivery focusing on the promotion of effective leadership and management of the public sector; efficient and informed resource allocation and utilization; institutionalization of an accountability framework; and strengthening of an e-governance for improved accessibility to government services.	September 2026	Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		Initiated
2.4 Initiate pilot e-centres at the local level as part of decentralized public service delivery approach in rural and peri-urban areas in concert with collaborating ministries.	December 2024	Accelerator Lab and Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		Initiated
2.5 Support the review and implementation of the Decentralization Policy and Act	December 2025	Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		

### RECOMMENDATION 3



**UNDP should refocus its support to Lesotho productive capacities and livelihoods, establishing a more comprehensive approach to inclusive economic development (linked to private sector development and renewable energy solutions). UNDP should aim to develop the enabling environment and customized solutions that can provide models for micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) development and employment, at a scale that is tailored to local circumstances.**

Support to productive capacities and value-chain initiatives needs a well-planned strategy and strong programmatic partnerships to enable a full range of responses and address policy and enabling environment constraints. These responses can include: building on the potential of renewable energy for sustainable livelihood solutions; prioritizing enterprise incubation in select sectors; and building on the green economy initiatives, including consolidating agro-livelihood solutions.

Nascent markets in Lesotho present challenges for private sector development and youth economic empowerment; a conducive policy environment and institutional arrangements for private sector development are critical to address them. UNDP should develop a strategy and comprehensively support efforts to address binding policy constraints and develop practical ways for private sector development in the areas of employment and enterprise development.

◀ Recommendation (cont.)

The scale and complexity of the inclusive growth agenda in Lesotho require wider collaborations. In order to support integrated employment and livelihood solutions, UNDP should strengthen and formalize its programmatic partnerships with other United Nations and international agencies.

**Management response (Indicate “Fully Accepted,” “Partially Accepted,” or “Rejected” and provide an explanation): Fully Accepted.** In alignment with the Government of Lesotho’s prioritization of private sector-led growth and its aspiration for energy self-sufficiency and enhanced energy export capability, UNDP’s thought leadership and an integrated approach to defining a private sector development model utilizing renewable energy will be valued contributions.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1. Scale up the green value chains project to enhance productivity, competitiveness, and innovations of the private sector and micro- small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and integrate renewable energy opportunities	December 2025	Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth		
3.2. Initiate, working with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, a collaborative programme to strengthen national readiness and participation in the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)	December 2025	Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth		
3.3. Roll out the SDG Investor Map process to mobilize private sector partnerships and capacities for investment, highlighting sector opportunities for renewable energy utilization	December 2025	Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth		
3.4. Support the establishment of multi-sectoral platforms for coordination and collaboration with United Nations and development partners	December 2025	Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth		

#### RECOMMENDATION 4



**UNDP should accelerate the pace of efforts in the areas of energy and climate change resilience. It should also address barriers in the uptake of renewable energy solutions.**

UNDP should address finance and other policy bottlenecks for smoother implementation and scaling up of renewable energy initiatives.

UNDP should better leverage its experience and network for the application of innovative solutions for climate change resilience in Lesotho.

UNDP should assist the Government in examining revenue generation options to support the implementation of the updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) strategy.

**Management response: Fully Accepted.** Supporting the structuring of an enabling environment through instruments such as mini-grid regulations and facilitating investment mobilization, the Country Office will continue to establish funded partnerships for scaling up renewable energy initiatives and to mobilize additional resources for the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and scaling up of existing climate resilience initiatives.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Facilitate consultation with the Department of Energy and key energy stakeholders to review existing regulatory and policy frameworks, and identify bottlenecks and opportunities for access to finance for scaling up renewable energy initiatives.	December 2023	Energy and Environment (E&E) (UNDP Programme Specialist)		Not Initiated
4.2 Engage with regional programmes to leverage existing applications of innovative solutions for climate change resilience.	December 2023	E&E (UNDP Programme Specialist)		Initiated
4.3 Ensure national engagements to initiate implementation of the NDC finance strategy	December 2023	E&E (UNDP Programme Specialist)		Initiated
4.3 Build on lesson learned from UNDP support to Sustainable Energy for All in rural mountainous communities, and leverage private sector partnerships with international financial institutions (IFIs) such as World Bank and other development partners for enhanced renewable energy access for household and productive consumption.	December 2024	E&E (UNDP Programme Specialist)		

## RECOMMENDATION 5



### **UNDP should continue its emphasis to promote women's security and economic development to enable gender-sensitive solutions and processes.**

UNDP should strengthen gender mainstreaming in programme strategies, planning and implementation, by developing a workable gender strategy for the country programme. Invest in gender expertise.

Since partnerships are critical with all United Nations agencies in promoting the gender agenda in Lesotho, UNDP should prioritize areas and establish partnerships for in-depth engagement.

By building on complementary mandates, UNDP is well-positioned to take the lead in enabling joint United Nations gender policy support and addressing GBV issues. To this end, it should proactively collaborate with United Nations agencies.

**Management response (Indicate "Fully Accepted," "Partially Accepted," or "Rejected" and provide an explanation): Fully Accepted.** Across all portfolios, UNDP will ensure continued emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment as part of overall sustainable and integrated development solution.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Ensure full implementation of the 2022 gender assessment of programmes for strengthened gender mainstreaming	January 2024	DRR and programmes		Initiated
5.2 Support the Government in implementing gender-responsive budgeting for inclusive fiscal distribution	December 2024	Gender Officer and Programme Specialist Inclusive Growth		Initiated
5.3 Continue work as part of ongoing United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNDP collaboration on gender policy support and gender-based violence (GBV) through the development of the Joint GBV programme	January 2024	DRR and Gender Officer		Initiated
5.4. Support the rolling out and/or adoption of the Gender Seal for the public and private sectors, including the key criteria of establishing the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) guidelines and mechanisms	December 2024	Gender Officer and Programme Specialist Inclusive Growth		

## RECOMMENDATION 6



### **UNDP should strengthen programme coherence and address efficiency issues that have reduced its programme contribution. Breaking programmes and project silos is fundamental to enhancing UNDP's contribution**

A portfolio approach should aim to address current programme fragmentation and be oriented to outlining sustainable development solutions in select areas. To ensure adequate staff capacities, UNDP should address staff contract issues. Also, adequate expertise in the area of enterprise development should be ensured.

UNDP should take concrete measures to position itself as a service provider (working with government systems, improving programme efficiency). It should also take concrete measures to implement the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), which is critical for national ownership, allaying concerns of government partners that UNDP is not enabling efforts to strengthen institutional capacities.

Strengthening programmatic partnerships within and outside the United Nations is critical for comprehensive engagement and sustainable development outcomes. UNDP should systematically forge partnerships and collaborations.

UNDP's interventions are overly focused on Maseru, and there is little sustained presence in the territories. UNDP should consider the possibility of identifying and planning for a more intense and continuous presence on the ground to promote area-based interventions and position itself as a service provider capable of delivering integrated results at the local level in line with the corporate policy of promoting portfolio approaches.

**Management response (Indicate "Fully Accepted," "Partially Accepted," or "Rejected" and provide an explanation):** **Partially Accepted.** The need to deliver integrated results at the national and local levels efficiently and coherently is noted. However, issues related to staff contracts are subject to Human Resources policy and project financing. Expanding field presence is similarly constrained given financial limitations, since such a partnership with United Nations agencies and other partners with field presence is a more cost-effective means of ensuring local presence as required.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Under the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) 2023 micro-assessment, define the implementing partner's capacity development plans and ensure full implementation for the HACT roll-out	January 2024	Programme Finance and DRR		
6.2 Review established partnerships and identify lessons learned for widening strategic partnerships and collaborations, including for enhanced field presence	December 2023	Programme		
6.3 As part of the inception of the new Country Programme Document (CPD), define the Country Office portfolio approach and resource needs	January 2024	Programme		

\* The status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

# ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at:

<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/22458>

**Annex 1.** Evaluation terms of reference and evaluation framework

**Annex 2.** Country at a glance

**Annex 3.** Country Office at a glance

**Annex 4.** Projects reviewed

**Annex 5.** People consulted

**Annex 6.** Documents consulted

**Annex 7.** Status of CPD outcome and output indicators matrix

**Annex 8.** Performance rating







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