



Government of Lesotho



United Nations Development Programme

Support to the implementation of a National Volunteer Corps for young graduates

Brief description

This programme provides a mechanism for young graduates from the university and those graduating at third-level technical training to access volunteer opportunities in various workspaces in the public and private sectors as well as NGOs and bi- and multi-lateral organizations. The volunteers will be young unemployed professionals who are interested in gaining hands-on-practical working experience by volunteering their services at various levels, including community development work. Specifically the project will accomplish the following:

- A. Support the Lesotho Government to set up a National Volunteer Corps Programme for young graduates
- B. Mobilize unemployed young professionals to support Lesotho's development efforts and to improve their job prospects by obtaining work experience and training
- C. Complement ongoing efforts by the Government, UNDP and other national institutions that are working towards implementing various development programmes including the MDGs in the country
- D. Promote coordination among Volunteer Involving Organizations in the management of volunteers and their contribution to defined development priorities.

UNDAF Outcomes

Outcome 2. Increased employment, household security and enhanced natural resources & environmental management.

CPAP outcomes/outputs:

Outcome 2.1 Strengthened national capacity to create employment opportunities for women, men and youth

Output 2.1.2. National policies for employment adopted and implemented for youth in viable sectors.

Outcome 3.3: Demand-driven and decentralized public service delivery based on claim-holder aspirations and participation strengthened.

Expected Output(s):

Output A: Establishment of the Lesotho National Volunteer Corps

Output B: Young unemployed Basotho professionals mobilised to support Lesotho's development efforts and to improve their job prospects by obtaining work experience and training

Output C: Complementarity with ongoing efforts by the Government, UNDP and other national institutions that are working towards implementing various development programmes, including the MDGs in the country

Output D: Improved coordination among Volunteer Involving Organisations in the management of volunteers and their contribution to defined development priorities.

Implementing partner:

Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation

Other partners:

NUL, NAC, NGOS, UNV and donors.

Responsible Agency:

UNDP

Programme Period:	2009-2012
Programme Component:	Achieving the MDGs and reducing poverty
Project Title:	Support to National Volunteer Corps
Atlas award ID:	tbd
Start date:	1 February 2009
End date:	31 December 2012
PAC meeting date:	22 December 2008

Total budget:	USD 882,444
Total resources required:	USD 882,444
Total allocated resources:	
Regular	USD 161,900
Other:	
• Government	USD 413,344
Proposed:	
• Bilateral donor	USD 84,000
• UNV	USD 223,200

October 2008. UNDP Lesotho exch. M8.12:1USD

Agreed by Ministry of Finance and Development Planning:

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Part I GENERAL INFORMATION

Part I a. SITUATION ANALYSIS

A. PROBLEM TO BE ADDRESSED

Lesotho has been in the process of consolidating democracy following successful general elections but the country still faces considerable development challenges, driven primarily by the effects of the high prevalence of HIV. With the third highest prevalence rate in the world, now estimated at approximately 23 percent of the adult population, the country is experiencing an unprecedented challenge. The pandemic, combined with deep-rooted poverty and food insecurity, is causing a new kind of vulnerability, which affects almost every household in the country.

The prevailing chronic poverty is the result of a number of factors including the drastic structural changes to the economy since the 1990s, which depended on mainly three sources. In the past, 46 percent of Lesotho's gross national income (GNP) came from the combination of remittances in foreign transfers (for investments in the Lesotho Highland Water Project and the booming garment industry). By the late 1990s, this massive contribution from outside sources fell by half. Besides, since the beginning of 2005, there have been some job losses in Lesotho's garment industry when the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) ended in December 2004.

About half of the population now lives below the poverty line. Reduced household incomes and reduced employment opportunities for the large number of returning migrant miners is perpetuating the situation of food insecurity and chronic poverty. In turn, chronic poverty and food insecurity have forced some segments of the population into desperation. This desperation has led some to engage in risky behaviour that predisposes them to further HIV infection. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, HIV and AIDS, which makes a gender sensitive CPAP imperative.

Lesotho's human development indicators have worsened rapidly over the last decade because of the increased mortality associated with HIV and resulting AIDS-related deaths since the 1990s. In 1997, the average new-born Mosotho had a life expectancy of 56 years (UNDP, HDR 1999), which was projected to rise steadily to 60 years in 2001. But, owing to the effects of high HIV prevalence, overall life expectancy has been reduced to 35.2 years in 2004 (UNDP, HDR 2006). Average incomes have also been falling during this period. As a result, Lesotho's overall position in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) ranking fell steadily from 127 out of 174 countries in 1998 to 137 in 2003, then to 149 out of 177 countries in 2006.

The net result of the complex crisis (commonly referred to as the Triple Threat) is its negative impact on progress towards human development, especially, towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The high HIV prevalence drastically reduces household incomes, thereby worsening poverty. It also depletes household assets and exhausts social safety nets, eroding farming households' coping mechanisms, thereby increasing food insecurity. Furthermore, the pandemic is increasing drop-out rates for school children, thereby frustrating the MDG targets of achieving universal primary education and gender equality in access to education.

One aspect of the crisis is the high rate of unemployment, estimated at between 23 and 35 percent, according to different sources. Among youth, the unemployment rate is even higher, estimated at around 40 percent. The existing education, vocational and training systems have not been able, so far, to engage youth successfully in both the formal and informal labour markets. From the

estimate of 25,000 young girls and boys who enter the labour market each year, half of them do not find a job.

For the more than 800 young people who graduate annually from the university, the percentage is even higher. Few or no practical work or internships are organised during their education and the lack of experience and exposure to work makes it difficult for graduates to find a job. UN Joint Project on Youth employment has conducted a study on 'Research on barriers and incentives for enterprise start-ups for youth in Lesotho', which informs this project document. It is assumed that many of graduates at some stage migrate to neighbouring South Africa, which results in a brain-drain for the country that invested in them. In fact, the Economist¹ has Lesotho listed as the second to worst brain drain in the world categorized as talented people most likely leaving for other countries.

About 39 percent of the population of Lesotho is between the age of 10 and 24 years. Therefore, policies and programmes targeting youth are crucial as a national strategy to reduce poverty for the country. Lesotho has a national youth policy which was formulated and adopted in 2005 and housed under the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation. The national youth policy aims at promoting effective participation of youth in the economic and socio-political development of their country, through four areas of intervention, namely:

- employment creation
- increased participation of youth in national development programmes
- increased self-reliance among youth through education and provision of skills
- reduction of incidence of HIV/AIDS, drug and substance abuse among youth.

As part of the strategy, the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation has foreseen the establishment of a National Volunteer Corps programme whose broad objective is to promote volunteering among youth, as well as mobilising them towards supporting development related activities as community animators in development. Young Basotho volunteers could, especially, make substantive contributions in the youth employment project, enterprise development follow-ups, market linkages for enterprises; community development projects, decentralization, environmental activities and projects related to the attainment of the MDGs, including HIV/AIDS. Initially, the National Volunteer Corps will focus on young (unemployed) graduates from the university and third-level technical institutes. The experience gained during volunteer assignments will improve the opportunities of these young graduates in the labour market, as currently the lack of experience is a major constraint to finding a job.

B. PRS, UNDAF AND UNDP SUPPORT

In July 2006, the African Union adopted the African Youth Charter, committing member states to developing policies and programmes for youth volunteerism at local, regional and international levels. Also in 2006, the 5th African Development Forum on Youth and Leadership in the 21st Century called for the establishment of an "African Youth Corps".

In line with the African Youth Charter, the Lesotho Government and especially, the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation is committed to the implementation of a National Volunteer Corps programme to mobilise volunteers to contribute to the achievement of the goals set in Lesotho's Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals. Initially, the

¹ The Economist Pocket World in Figures 2008 (ISBN 978 1 86197 844 8)

National Volunteer Corps will recruit graduates from the university and third-level technical institutes to reinforce development activities implemented by government ministries and other institutions, such as, national and international NGOs.

The Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation is currently implementing the joint UN project on "Promotion of Youth Employment towards poverty reduction in Lesotho." The partners are UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and Commonwealth Youth programme for increased employment of young people in Lesotho. Its over-all objective is to contribute to poverty reduction, employment creation and thus contribute towards achieving the goals of the PRS, Vision 2020 and the MDGs.

The Government of Lesotho has requested UNDP to support the creation of the National Volunteer Corps in order to implement and fulfil the objectives of the African Youth Charter. The promotion of volunteerism and the mobilisation of unemployed graduates will, in the first instance, contribute to the achievement of the outcomes set in the UNDAF and the UNDP CPAP in relation to the strengthening of service delivery and human rights of all by 2012. Secondly, by exposing the volunteers to work, giving them the opportunity to gain experience and improve their opportunities to find permanent jobs later on, the project will contribute to UNDAF and CPAP outcomes related to the improvement of employment opportunities for women, men and youth and thus contribute to long-term national capacity development efforts. UNDP administrates the volunteer programme of the UN, UN Volunteers (UNV), which will be one of the partners in the support and implementation of the programme.

Initially, under this project, the National Volunteer Corps will be established within the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation. This action is envisaged as a stepping-stone to a longer-term National Volunteer Corps, which will be established by statute and supported by the Government of Lesotho. It is the aim of this project to assist the Government of Lesotho in moving towards the institutionalisation of volunteerism, through the establishment of the National Volunteer Corps as a legal entity in its own right, supported through funds from the national budget, with an independent board under a line Ministry.

In line with this, the development achievements made by each National Volunteer Corps placement will become part of an overall development strategy, whereby gains made during the lifetime of this project will be concretised and inform future development actions by all parties: volunteers; host organisations; UNV-UNDP and the Government of Lesotho. In this way, the achievements of this project will continue to positively impact on sustainable development for all concerned, long after the project has ended.

UN, UNDP and Volunteering for Development

The General Assembly of the UN in its resolutions A/RES/56/38, A/RES/57/106 and A/RES/60/134 requested UNDP/UNV to advocate for and promote a better understanding of volunteerism as a powerful development resource.

The UNV volunteer programme is administrated by UNDP and works with governments and partners worldwide for increased recognition and understanding of volunteerism as a sustainable, culturally adapted development asset and promotes it as an integral part of international and national development agendas.

To support national development and peace objectives, UNDP/UNV seeks to enable a broader cross section of society to participate in their own development through locally adapted forms of

voluntary action. UNDP/UNV promotes effective support mechanisms for mobilising and managing volunteers at international, national and local levels.

The present project, which will support the establishment of a National Volunteer Corps in Lesotho, is in line with this objective and the general results framework of the UNV programme:

Project Alignment with the Results Framework of the UNV Programme		
The UNV Mission: The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) is the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers.		
BUSINESS MODEL AREAS OF INTERVENTION		
1. Global advocacy for Volunteerism and Development	2. Integrating Volunteerism in Development Programming	3. Mobilizing Volunteers for Development and Peace
	UNDP CPAP Outcome 2.1 Strengthened national capacity to create employment opportunities for women, men and youth Project output 2: Improved opportunities for young professionals in the labour market as a result of the experience obtained during their assignments in a National Volunteer Corps	UNDP CPAP Outcome 3.3.: Demand-driven and decentralized public service delivery based on claim-holder aspirations and participation strengthened Project output 1: Improved service delivery in development activities by mobilizing young (unemployed) professionals to contribute to the achievements of development goals
AREAS OF DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION		
1. Access to services and service delivery	2. Stakeholder inclusion and participation	3. Community mobilization through voluntary action
UNDP CPAP Output 3.3.2.: Strengthened capacity of selected government institutions and other public service providers to support delivery of public services Project Output 4: Improved capacity of national volunteer involving organizations in the management of volunteers and projects	Project Output 3: Improved coordination between development partners/government, civil society organizations and donors in relation to employment of volunteers and interns	

The UNV business model, introduced at the 2006 annual session of the Executive Board, foresees three areas of intervention and distinctive contribution. The table above shows how the present project fits within this framework in two areas of intervention. Volunteers are mobilised to contribute to development goals and volunteering is integrated in development programming as part of the national strategy to address the alarming rate of youth unemployment. In relation to the areas of distinctive contribution, the project will contribute to improved service delivery and stakeholder inclusion and participation.

Definition of volunteering

Volunteering can mean many things to many people. It may be highly visible, as in the worldwide celebration of International Volunteer Day held annually on 5 December. It may be hidden, as in the daily visit by a community member to a sick neighbour. It may be short-term or it may last a

lifetime. Volunteering is the unconditional giving of oneself in time and energy for the betterment of the life and living conditions of another, without expectation of reward. However, there are many benefits from volunteering, such as, personal growth, new skills, a broader social circle, and greater meaning and purpose in one's life. Volunteering may, in fact, lead to a new way of living and working in the future, for those who take part.

Youth and unemployment

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation, meeting in its 93rd session in 2005, concluded that "investment in youth reaps benefits for individuals, communities and societies. Decent work for young people unleashes multiplier effects throughout the economy and society, boosting investments and consumer demand and ensuring more stable and cohesive social ties across generations, including sharing institutional workplace knowledge. It shifts young people from social dependence to self-sufficiency and enables them to actively contribute to society". The conference further reiterated that youth unemployment and under-employment impose heavy social and economic costs, resulting in the loss of opportunities for economic growth, erosion of the tax base which undermines investments in infrastructure and public services, increased welfare costs and un-utilised investment in education and training, and may also be associated with social instability and conflict, increased levels of poverty, crime and substance abuse.

The Government of Lesotho has placed employment as a top priority in its Poverty Reduction Strategy. Creating employment opportunities, especially for young people, has been identified as one of the six major challenges that Lesotho has been trying to address since 2005 and was emphasised in the budget speech to Parliament for the 2005/6 fiscal year by the Minister of Finance and Development Planning. Through the experience they will gain in volunteering for development, unemployed graduates will enjoy better employment prospects. They will have greater exposure to the work environment, a better understanding of the difference between academic learning and practical implementation, a sound work habit and an appreciation of their own capacities and how these can be brought to bear in their contribution to society. Through membership of the National Volunteer Corps, unemployed Basotho graduates will progress to work.

Increased employment is also a priority within the UNDAF, which contains as an expected outcome: "Increased employment, household security and enhanced natural resources & environmental management". A joint programme for the creation of youth employment toward poverty reduction in Lesotho, started under the previous UNDAF has been continued under the present one. The project aims to create an enabling environment for the promotion of youth employment with a national Action Plan, policy framework, an entrepreneurship development programme and the promotion of strategic partnerships and resource mobilisation for promoting youth employment.

The first objective for the proposed National Volunteer Corps is to establish the mechanism and operational arrangements that will enable young graduates leaving universities and third-level technical training to access workspaces as volunteers. At present, graduates are not sufficiently equipped for the demands of the work environment. There is some suggestion that, on graduation, their skills and experience do not reflect what is required in the marketplace. Participation in the National Volunteer Corps by graduates will provide them with relevant pre-employment skills and training. Participation in the Steering Committee by representatives of the National University of Lesotho and the Ministry of Education and Training will enable greater links cross-sectorally, thereby, it is hoped, identifying possible skill gaps in student preparation for the workplace and influencing curriculum development to enhance graduate capacity in the future.

Furthermore, the latent resource power that is present in each volunteer will, through participation in the National Volunteer Corps, be translated into concrete support for the achievement of the country's development goals. A further overarching objective is to improve the opportunities of unemployed young graduates in the labour market by gaining work experience, as a specific effort to address the alarming level of youth unemployment. This project specifically focuses on unemployed Basotho graduates not only because of the level of unemployment in this group post-graduation but also because of the investment made in this cohort, by themselves in their pursuit of academic advancement, by their families and by the Government of Lesotho, which supports them through bursaries. Furthermore, as a discrete group, it will be easier to target unemployed Basotho graduates through existing data on graduates held by the National University of Lesotho and data in hand at the Ministry of the Public Service on Basotho graduates seeking positions with the Government.

C. PRE-PROJECT SITUATION ON VOLUNTEERISM

Lesotho has experience with different forms and practices of volunteering:

- At community level, mutual help has been practiced for generations and many Basotho persons interviewed indicated that volunteering has deep roots in Lesotho and is part of the culture. Many communities rely on local volunteer associations which have been organised to address specific issues, varying from security (the stealing of cattle is a major problem) to environmental aspects. To cope with the actual HIV/AIDS crisis, many support groups have been organised to provide care for those affected and living with the virus
- From colonial times, volunteer charity organisations and activities have been promoted by the different churches. Care and compassion are also promoted by organisations like the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts
- After independence, Lesotho has experienced international volunteering organisations which support local activities with expatriate volunteers. Peace Corps with more than 80 volunteers, Skillshare International and UNV are all well known. Skillshare International also mobilises national volunteers, known as 'supporters'
- The Lesotho Red Cross and recently, the National Aids Commission, mobilise an important number of volunteers in support of their programmes. Many smaller NGOs depend on the support of volunteers, both as part of their staff and in support of their programmes
- Unlike other countries in the region, Lesotho has little experience with government led volunteer programmes. From 1993 to 1999, hundreds of volunteers were mobilised in support of environmental activities in the framework of a UNDP supported project, however the volunteer programme did not continue after the end of the project.

In support of the International Year of Volunteering in 2001, the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation set up the National Volunteer Commission, providing office space and a coordinator post. Several activities were organised and promoted, such as the yearly celebration of International Volunteer Day. The Commission does not engage volunteers at present. However, it is envisaged that Lesotho National Volunteer Commission, under the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation could be a contributor to the success of the National Volunteer Corps programme.

Under the Lesotho Volunteer Forum, UNV Lesotho has succeeded in bringing together a broad base of representatives from government, education, business and civil society organisations,