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Project Inception Workshop Report

JUNE 2015

*Reducing vulnerability from climate change in the Foothills,
Lowlands and the
Lower Senqu River Basin*

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Acronyms

AWP	Annual Work Plan
BOS	Bureau of Statistics
CSO	Civil society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DMA	Disaster Management Authority
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOL	Government of Lesotho
IW	Inception Workshop
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFRSC	Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation
MTAC	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture
NAPA	National Adaptation Plan of Action
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
PM	Project Manager
Prodoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The project “*Reducing vulnerability from climate change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin*” is a US\$8,34 million Ecosystem-Based Adaptation project funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project was conceptualized and submitted to GEF in August 2012. Its Project Identification Form (PIF) was approved in May 2013, which was followed by development of a fully-fledged project document (Prodoc). The prodoc was submitted for GEF approval in November 2014 and it was approved this year in March 2015. The approved project was further presented to Local Appraisal Committee (LPAC) on 17th April 2015 for approval, which was followed by an Inception workshop held on 18th June 2015, where the project was launched.

The project will be implemented in Mofale’s Hoek district covering three community councils namely: Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba Mokhele. It will integrate climate change adaptation into national and sub-national land use planning and enhance decision making processes within the government to develop appropriate policies, put in place sector specific strategies to adapt to the impacts of climate change and enhance the ability of Lesotho’s line ministries and various socio-economic sectors to plan and implement appropriate climate change adaptation interventions, to improve ecosystem services.

1.2 Project Components, Outcomes and Outputs

1.2.1 COMPONENT 1: Knowledge, skills and institutional capacity to support land rehabilitation programme to factor in additional risks from climate change, increase resilience and reduce vulnerability

Outcome 1: Increased technical capacity of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and relevant departments to apply up-to-date climate science for the management of evolving risks and uncertainty linked to climate change.

- **Output 1.1:** A geo-based climatic agro-ecological and hydrological information system to support better planning for climate change adaptation under the Land Rehabilitation Programme.
- **Output 1.2:** A socio-economics unit in the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation
- **Output 1.3:** Assessment of climate-driven vulnerability in the Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba-Mokhele Community Councils and cost-benefit analysis of specific adaptation interventions.
- **Output 1.4:** Technical guidelines for climate change adaptation interventions

Outcome 2: Communities empowered with skills, knowledge, partnerships and institutions for managing natural resources to reduce vulnerability to climate change and increase resilience of natural and social capital (over 7,000 households with potential for upscaling to cover over 20,000).

- **Output 2.1:** Training of technical staff of the District Technical Teams, Community Council staff and land managers on restoring and managing ecosystems and agro-ecological landscapes in a climate-smart manner.
- **Output 2.2:** Training of engineering, planning and monitoring sections of the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation on climate science.
- **Output 2.3:** Local community members (farmers, pastoralists and rural households) from the Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba-Mokhele Community Councils trained on the construction and maintenance of climate-smart ecosystem rehabilitation and management interventions
- **Output 2.4:** Inter-council land rehabilitation committees operational in the Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba-Mokhele Community Councils.
- **Output 2.5:** A strategy for maintaining technical capacity in the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and relevant departments.

Outcome 3: Over 50,000 ha of land across the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin rehabilitated through operationalization of the climate-smart Land Rehabilitation Programme.

- **Output 3.1:** Climate-smart ecosystem rehabilitation and management interventions in the Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba-Mokhele Community Councils, including: i) protection of critical fens and bogs; ii) adoption of conservation agriculture and agro-forestry practices; and iii) strategic interventions in sensitive areas, including construction of check dams, and rehabilitation of old gulleys and rills.
- **Output 3.2:** A long-term strategy for monitoring and evaluating climate-smart ecosystem restoration and management interventions for the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation and relevant departments, including an experimental design impact evaluation using grass cover as a proxy for rangeland productivity.

1.2.2 COMPONENT 2: Climate change adaptation mainstreamed into local and national development planning and finance.

Outcome 4: National strategies for rangelands and wetlands management strengthened by the integration of climate change/variability and ecosystems management.

- **Output 4.1:** Policy guidelines for incorporating climate science in the review/formulation processes of national sectoral strategies by the Departments of Rangelands Management and Water Affairs

Outcome 5: National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) mainstreamed into local development strategies to support the constituency-wide adoption of the climate-smart Land Rehabilitation Programme.

- **Output 5.1:** Strategy for improved coordination between regional and district development teams to reduce vulnerability to extreme climatic events in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin.
- **Output 5.2:** Revised local policies across productive sectors – particularly agriculture, infrastructure development and rural development – include identified best practices for climate-smart interventions.
- **Output 5.3:** Policy recommendations for the integration of climate risk considerations in the Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba-Mokhele Community Councils' development plans, as well as the Mohale's Hoek District development plan.
- **Output 5.4:** Training on climate-resilient construction, climate-smart land uses, climate-smart water resource planning, and climate risk management for relevant officials. Trained staff will include: structural engineers; urban and rural infrastructure planners; local authorities; district planning units; officers of the Ministry of Development Planning; and teaching staff from technical colleges and vocational training institutes.
- **Output 5.5:** Best practices and documentation on climate-smart land management in the Lithipeng, Khoelenya and Thaba-Mokhele Community Councils disseminated through existing national and international platforms.

2. Official Opening

Inception Workshop was held at Lehakoe Recreational Club in Maseru, Lesotho on 18th June 2015. Opening of the Inception workshop was officiated by UNDP Resident Representative, Mrs. Karla Hershey and Minister of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, Hon. Kabelo Mafura.

During her welcome remarks, the UNDP Resident Representative, commended the Government of Lesotho for developing an intervention that will simultaneously address climate change vulnerabilities and youth unemployment in Lesotho. “We are all happy that finally the Government of Lesotho in collaboration with UNDP managed to develop this intervention that will not only tackle youth unemployment but also protect and build resilience of both ecosystems and livelihoods of rural communities depending solely on some of already fragile and most vulnerable ecosystems.” The youth and people living with disabilities will be specifically targeted in all project activities.

In his opening remarks, the Hon. Minister emphasized the challenges that Lesotho is experiencing that include climate change shocks ranging from increasingly frequent droughts to unpredictable and heavy rainfall, resulting in an increased rate of soil erosion, desertification and reduced soil fertility which negatively affects agricultural production. He emphasized importance of improving the resilience of ecosystems to withstand climatic shocks and reduce the vulnerability of people’s livelihoods to sudden climatic events, such as, heavy snowfalls, strong winds and floods, hence importance of the project. The agenda of the workshop is attached (*annex 1*).

3. Workshop Proceedings and Discussions

3.1 Inception workshop Objectives and Expectations

A fundamental objective of this Inception Workshop (IW) was to assist the key stakeholders including project team to understand and take ownership of the project’s goals and objectives, as well as finalize preparation of the project's first annual work plan and budget on the basis of the project's Strategic Results Framework. This included reviewing the Strategic Results Framework (indicators, means of verification, assumptions), imparting additional details as needed, and on the basis of this exercise finalize the Annual Work Plan (AWP) with precise and measurable performance indicators, and in a manner consistent with the expected outcomes.

Additionally, the purpose and objective of the IW was to: (i) introduce the stakeholders to UNDP-GEF expanded team which will support the project; (ii) provide a detailed overview of UNDP-GEF reporting and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements, with particular emphasis on the Annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs) and related documentation, as well as mid-term and final evaluations.

Equally, the IW provided an opportunity to inform the stakeholders on UNDP project related budgetary planning, budget reviews, and mandatory budget rephasings. The IW also provided an opportunity for all parties to understand their roles, functions, and responsibilities within the project's decision-making structures, including reporting and communication lines. Based on the project results framework reviewed and agreed on the indicators, targets and their means of verification, and recheck assumptions and risks. Roles and responsibilities of all project organisation structures were clarified.

3.2 Introduction to the Project Strategy and Approach

Project strategy and approach were presented as follows below.

3.2.1 Project rationale

- Poverty levels - Households in poor communities are the most vulnerable to climate change as they are the most dependent upon natural resources-based livelihoods and have the least capacity to adapt to climate change.
- Land degradation - Decades of inappropriate environmental management and unsustainable resource use in Lesotho – particularly through overstocking, overgrazing, and harvesting of trees for fuel wood – have resulted in widespread ecosystem degradation. This degradation has been identified as a major barrier to effective climate change adaptation in Lesotho’s National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) on climate change.
- Dependence on rainfed agriculture - The widespread dependence on rainfed agriculture and the lack of appropriate irrigation technologies limits agricultural productivity in Lesotho and increases the vulnerability of rural communities to reduced or erratic rainfall.
- Limited institutional and local capacity to adapt to climate change. Lesotho has an inadequate capacity to plan and implement climate change adaptation interventions at the national and local level. This is as a result of limited technical knowledge on climate change.
- Limited financial resources - The GoL is restricted in its capacity to finance climate change adaptation. This is a result of: i) limited national budget allocated to climate change adaptation; ii) limited capacity of technical government staff to identify and develop proposals to acquire funds for climate change adaptation; and iii) limited capacity of government staff to manage the distribution of funds for climate change adaptation.

3.2.2 Project proposed long-term solution

- It is against this background that the project is proposing the following solution: Strengthen the resilience of climate vulnerable communities and ecosystems, by
- Enhancing the capacity of government institutions and local communities to mainstream climate change risks into policies, plans and programmes;
- Implementing climate-smart ecosystem rehabilitation and management measures using a community/household based approach; and
- Establishing a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of various approaches to climate change adaptation to inform a process of adaptive management.

3.2.3 Barriers to achieving the solution

However, the following barriers were identified and have to be taken into consideration when implementing above-mentioned strategy:

- Limited technical capacity and information base for the analysis of climate risks;
- Limited application of cutting-edge technology in the planning and implementation of climate-smart ecosystem rehabilitation and management measures;
- Limited institutional and community awareness and knowledge regarding climate risks and adaptation measures; and
- Weak governance systems for the mainstreaming of climate risk into land use planning and decision-making.

3.2.4 Project Activities

The project activities were presented as per their respective project component mentioned above in section 1.2 and in the same way as in the Project Document in order to preserve consistency of the project document and allow for direct comparison. Presentation of activities was followed by a lengthy but useful discussion summarized below:

- The project is coming at an opportune time when roads construction is at its peak in the project sites and this calls for a high level participation of local communities in project implementation including a need for inter-council coordination mechanisms which are appropriate as all activities will be taking place at the local level.

- Participants sought the details regarding kind of training envisaged under Output 2.2. and it was also noted that there will be a lot of training during development of the Third National Communication on Climate Change report as there is no expertise on running of various models to look at impacts of climate change on various sectors, with the exception of the Water Sector. Therefore, there is potential for a lot of duplication in the training for local communities, need for intensive consultation to synergize activities. Again, it was noted that Baseline assessments will include training needs assessment which will inform development of training programmes, with focus on empowerment of local communities. Technocrats will however be catered for under component 1.
- In order to achieve effective and successful implementation of the project in the face of decentralization, training at the local level is critical and institutions with comparative advantage will be identified for intensive training of the cadres.
- Outcome 1 - Output 1: it was noted that the envisaged detailed baseline assessment and information system to be established at Bureau of Statistics (BOS) could be a duplication of an initiative by Disaster Management Authority (DMA) through its early warning project hence a need to consult and establish if it is necessary to establish a separate system or to incorporate project specific attributes to the DMA system and have one comprehensive system to serve all. If the DMA system serves the purpose, there is no need to develop another system, rather identify limitations, address them and have one comprehensive system
- UNDP has invested in development of climate-smart community development plans in the project area covering Lithipeng and Khoelenya community councils, and each involved community council developed its development plan. However, it was noted that an inter-community council Unit is envisaged to avert adverse impacts of council activities on one another (upstream actions and downstream impacts). In the wake of decentralization councils are migrating from the approach of single handed development to multidisciplinary action and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are included.
- It was noted that the main thrust for project development was to address climate change through youth but this does not feature prominently in the Prodoc. Therefore, it was agreed that project implementation must be inclusive and take into account engagement of youth and issues of gender equality and people living with disability. Again, it was brought to the attention of the meeting that the main implementation modality is based on land rehabilitation, with preference to youth in climate smart land rehabilitation. Engagement of youth and people living with disability, and gender issues is already driving the MFRSC programme. It was

observed though that the MFRSC programme only engaged youth during school holidays which does not necessarily address youth unemployment as school going pupils are in essence employed.

3.3 Project Results framework

Results framework was presented as per project document and the following issues were deliberated:

- Lack of data collection was raised as a key barrier for monitoring projects` implementation. However it was noted that the project provides an opportunity for addressing data gaps through baselines assessments to be undertaken and measurement of productivity post intervention and Output 5.5 provides for documentation of best practices
- It was encouraged that developed indicators to be context specific.
- A question was raised on how a new decentralization process will affect the project but it was observed that this project was conceptualized inside local government institutions hence no interference or any interference is anticipated as a result of the decentralization process. Again, some lessons also to be learned from the Deepening Decentralization Project implemented by UNDP Governance Unit.
- It was recommended that landscape approach, direct effort, and benefit linkage, and client demand – to be followed as much as possible to enhance project results and their sustainability over the long-term.
- It was noted that vulnerability mapping is a good tool requiring expansion to increase coverage and it was recommended that the project make use of all available opportunities to increase coverage. However, it was observed that there is a need for simplification of developed vulnerability maps and presentation to community councils, so that they can apply them for determination of vulnerability and qualification for interventions.

3.4 Project Implementation and Reporting

3.4.1 Budget and Workplan

Both multi-year (2015-2020) and a six months (July- December 2015) budgets were presented. It was agreed that the Project Manager will present a six months project budget during the first Project Steering Committee meeting for approval and 2016

budget will have to be approved before end 2015 in order to expedite implementation in 2016. Again, it was recommended that procurement of necessary items that will be required by PMU to start functioning be initiated while awaiting establishment of PSC and these include vehicles and furniture.

3.4.2 Project Management

The core of Project Management Unit (PMU) will be based in the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC). Project Manager (PM) will oversee PMU, which will provide the day-to-day management and coordination function for project activities. The PM will report to MFRSC through its focalpoint for this project and UNDP through head of Energy and Environment Unit. The meeting noted and discussed the following:

- While the project document proposes recruitment of 3 facilitators, there was a strong feeling that this project is huge and PM will require support of a project officer –Project Steering Committee to decide whether a project officer will be recruited.
- The project document recommends recruitment of Chief Technical Advisory, which requires international consultant. However, the meeting had a feeling that this preclude engagement of local experts hence recommending establishment of Technical Advisory Panel. However, it was made clear that the role of TA does not preclude use of local expertise. However, the role of CTA is to bring in international experience, to ensure alignment with the global discourse. The bulk of consultancy work to be done will be done by local experts to the extent possible.
- There was a discussion regarding Location of the Project Management Unit (PMU) with a suggestion that it must be located close to project site which is in Mohale's Hoek district. However, it was noted that the project will involve a lot of ministerial level coordination hence the need for the PMU to be located at the ministry's HQ.

3.4.3 Project Implementation Modality

The project is going to be implemented through National Implementing Modality (NIM) as with previous projects such as Sustainable Land Management (SLM) implemented with MFRSC as leading ministry. The PMU will be located at the ministry of MFRSC HQ.

3.4.4 Stakeholder Involvement and Participation

Roles and responsibilities of different project stakeholders were presented as per stakeholder involvement plan in the project document. It was noted that there is a need to review stakeholders engagement plan as roles of some stakeholders were not clearly articulated e.g. Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

3.4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Stakeholders were provided with a detailed overview of reporting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of UNDP-GEF requirements and below is a summary of requirements at different stages:

- At project start (Inception phase)- project inception workshop will be held, aimed at the following:
 - ✓ Get partners to fully understand and take ownership of the project
 - ✓ Detail the roles, support services and complimentary responsibilities of the project team
 - ✓ Discuss roles, functions, and responsibilities within the project's decision- making structures, including reporting and communication lines, and conflict resolution mechanism
 - ✓ Inform the development of the 1 year annual work-plan
 - ✓ Provide a detailed overview of reporting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements

- During project implementation (quarterly)
 - ✓ Quarterly Progress Reports
 - ✓ Annual Project Report/Project Implementation Report
 - ✓ Combined Delivery Report (financial)
 - ✓ Issues Log
 - ✓ Risks Log
 - ✓ Lessons Learned Log

- At mid-term, which will be around June/July 2015, a Mid-term Evaluation/Review will be carried out and it will include the following:
 - ✓ Review the performance of the project and progress made towards achievement of outcomes
 - ✓ Identification of course for correction if needed
 - ✓ Highlight issues requiring decisions and actions
 - ✓ Present initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management

- On annual basis an Annual Project Report/Project Implementation Report will be prepared and it will include the following:
 - ✓ Progress made toward project objectives and outcomes
 - ✓ Project outputs delivered per project outcome (annual)
 - ✓ Lessons learned and good practice
 - ✓ Expenditure reports
 - ✓ Risks and adaptive management

- At the end of project implementation duration an Independent Terminal evaluation will be carried out 3 months prior to final PSC meeting.)
 - ✓ Assess delivery of project results as initially planned
 - ✓ Impact and sustainability
 - ✓ Tracking Tools to assess contribution of project to Focal Area results

- Again by end of the project the project team must prepare a Project Terminal Report that will include the following:
 - ✓ Results
 - ✓ Lessons learned
 - ✓ Problems
 - ✓ Recommendations
 - ✓ Sustainability and replicability

4 Next steps to Kick-start the Project Implementation

The meeting noted that there is a need to expedite a recruitment of key project staff, establishment of Project Steering Committee (PSC) and procurement of equipment for PMU in order to able project implementation to start.

5 Recommendations/Conclusions

- Data gaps and review of indicators to be dealt with at the very early stages of project implementation particularly during baseline assessments and project activities to be informed as much as possible by research and scientific information.
- Training at community level is very critical for successful implementation and sustainability of project activities hence a need for intensive training for local communities.
- There is a need for a functional inter-community council Unit in order to ensure that adverse impacts of activities by one council will not affect other neighbouring councils i.e. to ensure that upstream actions will not result in downstream impacts.
- Project implementation must be inclusive and take into account engagement of youth and issues of gender equality and vulnerable groups.

- It was recommended that landscape approach, direct effort, and benefit linkage, and client demand – to be followed as much as possible to enhance project results and their sustainability over the long-term.
- Vulnerability maps to be developed by the project will have to be simplified and presented to community councils to inform their development plans.
- Recruitment of project manager and project finance and administration assistant, and procurement of equipment including vehicles to be fast-tracked.
- Under challenges and threats, the word “harvesting” to be used with caution – rather use the word “exploitation”.
- Under Outcome 5: Project should be cognizant of good practises already implemented by some stakeholders and try to build synergies.
- Lessons learnt from other previous projects particularly GEF projects such as Sustainable Land Management (SLM) project must inform current project implementation. Therefore, it was further recommended that a summary of lessons learnt be presented to PSC during its first meeting.

6 Workshop Closure

The IW was official closed by the acting Principal Secretary Mr. Seetsa Mabaso, who thanked participants the fruitful discussion and also emphasized commitment of his ministry to the project.

7 Annexes
Annex 1



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Inception Workshop of an Ecosystem-Based Adaptation project titled: “Reducing vulnerability from climate change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the lower Senqu River Basin”

18th June 2015, Lehakoe Recreational Club

DAY PROGRAM

Time	Activity	Responsibility
SESSION 1: OPENING		
08:30 - 09:00	Arrival and Registration	UNDP/DoE
09:00 - 09:10	Welcome Remarks	UNDP, RR
09:10 - 09:20	Opening Remarks	GOL, Hon. Minister
09:20 - 09:35	Objectives and Expectations of Inception workshop	UNDP, RTA
09:35 – 10:00	Proposed interventions to address risk and vulnerability to climate change in the lower Senqu River Basin: <i>Project Objectives and Outcomes</i>	UNDP RTA
10:00 – 10:10	TEA/COFFEE BREAK	
SESSION 2: DISCUSSION OF THE PROJECT STRATEGY		
10:10 – 11:00	Component 1: Outcomes, Outputs and activities	UNDP RTA
11.00 – 11.30	Discussion on Component 1	ALL
11.30 – 12.10	Component 2: Outcomes, Outputs and activities	UNDP RTA
12.10 – 12.45	Discussion on Component 2	ALL
12.45 -14.00	LUNCH	
14.00 – 14.45	Project Results Framework: Indicators, Baseline, Targets, Risks and Assumptions	UNDP RTA

14:45 – 15:30	Project Work-plan and Budget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of proposed project work-plan and budget • Proposed 6-month activity work-plan (July-December 2014) 	UNDP LP
15.30 – 15.45	TEA/COFFEE BREAK	
SESSION 3: IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS		
15:45 – 16:00	Project Management and Implementation Modality	UNDP LP
16.00 - 16.15	Stakeholder involvement and participation	UNDP LP
16:15 – 16.30	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Budget	UNDP LP
16.30	WRAP-UP AND CLOSURE	PS/DPS