



LESOTHO



KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

United Nations Development Programme
Country: Lesotho
Project Document

UNDAF Outcome(s) Governance institutions strengthened, ensuring gender equality, public service delivery and human rights for all

Expected CP Outcome(s): A) *Governance institutions promoting a stable participatory democracy and effective economic governance.*
B) *Government institutions able to deliver public goods and services through a decentralised system of governance*

Expected Outputs : A) Strengthened and pro-active engagement of political parties to ensure progress for implementation of the MDGs.
B) Capacity building of and advocacy with the media and youth groups for more effective reporting on and direct promotion of the MDGs

Implementing partner: Transformation Resource Center (TRC)

Responsible parties: UNDP and TRC

Narrative

The proposed project aims to promote accelerated progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The project outputs are: 1) Strengthened and pro-active engagement of political parties to ensure progress for implementation of the MDGs. 2) Capacity building of and advocacy with the media and youth groups for more effective reporting on and direct promotion of the MDGs

Programme Period: 2010—2012
CPAP Component: Fostering Democratic Governance

Project Title : Engaging with Political Parties, Media and Youth for Achievement of the MDGs

ATLAS Award ID:

Duration: April 2010 – April 2012

PAC Meeting Date:

Estimated budget: \$450,000

Total resources required: \$450,000

Total allocated resources:

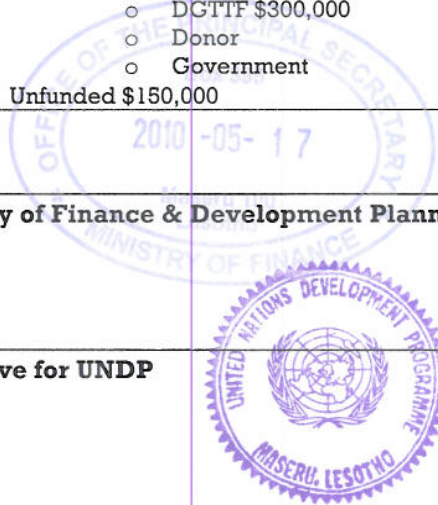
- Regular
- Other
 - DGTTF \$300,000
 - Donor
 - Government
- Unfunded \$150,000

Agreed by (Government):

Mr. Mosito Khethisa, Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Finance & Development Planning

Agreed by: (UNDP)

Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, Resident Representative for UNDP



Project Title: "Political Party engagement for Achievement of the MDGs"

Situation Analysis

With six years remaining until the Millennium Development Goals target date of 2015, and Lesotho's latest MDG status report of 2008 suggesting that only three of the eight goals enjoy a strong supportive environment for their achievement, it has become increasingly obvious that the country needs to employ innovative new ways towards improving its prospects at achieving the MDGs. This is especially urgent given Lesotho's classification as one of the fifty least developed countries in the world, evidence of a declining population due mainly to the rampant HIV & AIDS epidemic (in terms of which Lesotho is the world's third most severely affected country), chronic poverty and unemployment, environmental degradation and a reduction in average life expectancy at birth from 60.5 years in 1995 to 42.6 in 2008 according to UNDP's Human Development Reports for the respective years..

For Lesotho, the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its 56th session in 2001, define the country's priority development targets which, if attained, would ensure vastly improved livelihoods for all its people. The Goals' distinct quality is their universal appeal and relevance which transcend any parochial considerations and ought to be a rallying point for entire institutions, communities and individuals throughout the land. In this regard, it is noteworthy that while the government has come out openly to formulate policies and set up institutions that support attainment of some of the goals, and while certain sections of the private sector including business, NGOs, faith -based organizations and civil society entities have, likewise, added their discrete contribution to the national effort, there is scope for more innovative involvement of additional sections of the population. Attainment of the Goals would touch and positively affect the lives of virtually all of the people of Lesotho, pull the country out of its least developed status and enable it to become a more equal partner in the world community of nations. It is in this context that all sections of the Basotho nation must join in to pull their weight towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the globally designated target date of 2015.

Political parties, with their immense potential for social mobilization, can make a far more robust and effective contribution towards attainment of the MDGs than they have so far. Among other things, they can draft their individual and collective commitment to the Goals into their election manifestoes to make them a central part of their campaign platforms. In the exercise of their parliamentary oversight of the executive, opposition parties, for their part, can proactively hold the government to account for progress towards attainment of the MDGs. Furthermore, all party leaders can educate the electorate on the centrality of the MDGs to Lesotho's national development priorities and help them define what specific roles they, themselves, can play to accelerate progress towards achievement of the Goals. With organizational tentacles that extend to all corners of the country, political parties also wield strong influence over the nation's youth and can help harness the energies of young people on advocacy roles and other forms of direct action to strengthen the national effort towards better MDG performance.

But to effectively perform the envisaged advocacy and leadership role, political parties need to overcome the weaknesses that many have suffered since the country's return to democracy 17 years ago. Significant areas for development are capacity building for intra-party tolerance accompanied by an ability to amicably mediate differences that inevitably arise in the normal course of running the affairs of a party. Through the "Consolidation of Democracy and Good Governance" programme, this area will be supported by, amongst other activities, further conflict transformation workshops etc. There is a tendency in Lesotho to emphasize personality over issue-based politics to inform voters' choices, leading to widely held perceptions of unwillingness on the part of some party leaders to eschew partisan interests in favour of the broader national good. Lastly, the proliferation of party formations not only confuses the electorate but also compromises the parties' effectiveness in tackling issues of national importance. The proliferation of political parties, a primary consequence of intra-party disagreements, creates a vicious cycle of multiplied prospects for inter-party intolerance, hampers formation of consensus on national priorities, provokes voter apathy when electors can hardly tell one party from another, and points to the need for improved national capacities in conflict mediation. Disconcertingly, this phenomenon is one of the factors that detract from the all necessary consensual attention to the most pressing national challenges.

For its part, the media has not sufficiently distilled the defining differences among the leading parties; it has not offered consistent analysis of public policy or assumed its acknowledged leadership role to educate citizens on their civic responsibilities: and nor have the majority of political parties consistently and methodically sought, between elections, to clarify their policies on the pre-eminent development challenges of the day. For democracy to thrive, the people must play an active and effective part in the governance of the country that goes beyond voicing their demands for access to quality public services and includes citizens' proactive contribution to the national development effort.

While the Youth in Lesotho bear the brunt of the HIV& AIDS epidemic and a heavy burden of unemployment, their participation in politics, as borne out by their low voter registration and actual turn out on polling day for those who do register, limits their ability to voice their concerns and aspirations and to ultimately influence the direction of public policy towards these concerns. Interestingly enough, the youth have been very active in the destructive aftermaths of several elections in Lesotho where they have played a key role in the violence that erupted.

Lesotho's development challenges are deep and diverse and include the scourge of HIV & AIDS, abject poverty; environmental degradation, gender inequalities, as well as maternal health and child mortality - in short, most of the Millennium Development Goals. Traditionally, it is the state that has taken the lead in addressing national challenges of this magnitude with other sections of society playing only a complementary role. The project adopts a radically different route: it challenges all of the country's political parties, as well as the youth and the media, to become more proactive agents for social mobilization in favour of the Millennium Development Goals, to act consistently as watchdogs for compliance by the state with its obligations for achievement of the MDGs and to individually and collectively become a catalytic force for change in the national effort for improved MDG performance. There is evidence of political will to support this inclusiveness in the national effort at tackling Lesotho's development challenges. During the joint launch of the 2008 MDG Status Report and commemoration of UN Day in October 2009, the Prime Minister himself urged the UN to call Lesotho's political parties to action and urge them to move away

from petty politics in order to focus more closely on what they can, and must, do together to help the country achieve the MDGs.

II. Strategy

It is important to note as a starting point that this project is part of an overall UN programmatic approach to help Lesotho achieve the MDGs and, as such, should be seen as complementary to these efforts. The strategy of the project is, therefore, not intended to address a particular MDG or National Development Policy in specific terms. Rather, it advocates for increased political attention to the MDGs thereby hopefully increasing the country's ability to achieve progress in each of the eight MDGs.

Since restoration of democracy in 1993, following more than twenty years of authoritarian and military regimes, UNDP Lesotho's governance programme has worked closely with different institutions of the state in various areas of governance including civil service reform, support to the national economic planning effort and aid coordination, capacity building in electoral administration, parliamentary reform and introduction of more effective committee structures in the National Assembly and the Senate as well as support to the national decentralization programme for enhanced delivery of public services. The Country Office has assumed a leading role, working with Lesotho's other development partners including Irish Aid, DFID, the governments of Japan and the Netherlands and other organizations including the Southern African Development Community, the Commonwealth and various organs of the United Nations itself, to support programmes that sought to strengthen political stability and consolidate democracy. In the aftermath of the 1998 post electoral conflict and the inter-party disagreements on the allocation of parliamentary seats following the 2007 general election, UNDP-Lesotho has engaged closely with various agencies of the state to roll out programmes that sought to redress these challenges. The organization's support to the work of the Interim Political Authority (IPA), which, inter alia, restored political stability and brokered the inter-party agreement on the introduction of the Mixed Member Proportional Representation (electoral) model following the general election of 1998, still stands out as the high water mark of UNDP's support to the country's democratisation programme.

But only intermittently has the Country Office engaged directly with the country's political parties to direct their attention to areas of national development they could play a more proactive role in. Furthermore, under the National Execution Modality for implementation of UNDP programmes, implementing partners have largely been drawn from government departments. The one exception to this arrangement came with the 2008 DGTF- funded project on **Civic Engagement for Effective Governance** which opted for the services of an NGO, the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations, to implement the project.

Encouraged by that initial departure from the norm, the current project will designate another NGO, the Transformation Resource Centre, as implementing partner for the project while at the same time expanding outreach to other NGOs to become more active parties of a broader coalition for enhanced non governmental involvement in the national effort at improved MDG performance. *There are basically two major CSOs in Lesotho with considerable capacity to carry out this task. The Lesotho Council of Non Governmental Organizations (LCN) and the designated Transformation Resource Center (TRC). LCN is an umbrella body of CSOs and TRC is its affiliate. Currently LCN is administering a huge fund from*

the Global Fund, and would be overloaded beyond its capacity if it were to simultaneously take on another responsibility such as implementation of the DGTTF project TRC is a resource centre that advocates justice, peace and participatory development. It was established in 1979. It runs five key programs: Democracy and Human Rights, Information and Communication, Resource Centre, and Water for Justice. TRC has done extensive work with Lesotho Parliament and Parliamentarians, political parties and training in conflict prevention, management and resolution. On the basis of the foregoing, the TRC was chosen as a the implementing partner of the project.

Most importantly, the project will engage with the country's political parties in a strong mobilization campaign urging them to mainstream achievement of the MDGs into their election manifestoes in preparation for the next general election expected to be held during the first half of 2012. While, necessarily, different parties should have policies and programmes that set them apart from one another, the MDGs, given their universality, should become an integral part of the policies of all parties as the goals do, indeed, define the priority development targets of all developing countries.

Lesotho has a maximum of 22 political parties with more likely to be formed before the coming general election. Most of these parties exploit formal structures for their survival where members can derive some monetary benefit by virtue of their participation in these structures. A multi-party steering committee might exacerbate the proliferation of parties as more parties jostle for participation in the steering committee. It is not feasible to have a multi-party steering committee but communications channels, that will keep everybody abreast and updated on the programme, will be established.

The envisaged workshops will not be platforms on how and where political parties will be taught to write party manifestos. The workshops will be about advocacy on the MDGs. The MDGs themselves are comprehensive and will need to be imbedded in party manifestos as the proposal suggests.

It is perceived that adoption of the MDG platform by parties in their fight for election will act as a catalyst towards a more discernible shift to issue -based politics that should inform and influence voters' choices. This will be a welcome change in a country that returned to elective democracy only seventeen years ago and is yet to consolidate a distinct culture within which contestants for public office will compete. As analysts of successive elections have observed, politics in Lesotho has tended to be based on the personalities of party leaders and wrangling over party symbols in the campaign period leading to general elections. Related to advocacy for issue based-politics, the project will sponsor a series of public debates on the MDGs among party leaders, to be carried live on the national television and radio networks. These debates will be monitored by independent facilitators and be conducted in line with an agreed election code of conduct. To institutionalize the practice and ensure its continuance beyond 2012, the project will negotiate with the government and the Independent Electoral Commission to include a facilitative budget in all successive elections as a best practice for promotion not only of the debates themselves but also to ensure equitable access to national media for all political parties. This will be a direct response to opposition charges that sitting governments tend to monopolise coverage of their election campaign by public media.

It should be noted that while the debates will focus on MDGs, the facilitators will be prepared so as to link the particular MDG under debate to existing or planned National

Development Policies to ensure a lively debate on topics related to Lesotho. Furthermore, through sensitisation of the political parties, it is expected that they themselves will be able to make the necessary linkages from the MDGs to the National Development Policies and take measures to support a particular position of their party on these policies.

In Parliament, the project will work with the presiding officers of the National Assembly and the Senate to advocate for an expansion of the existing parliamentary committee structures by establishing an inter-party oversight committee on the MDGs. Much as there are already select committees on certain of the MDGs such as the Select Committee on HIV & AIDS, the envisaged oversight committee would serve as an additional mechanism to monitor performance at the public departmental level as well as other extra-governmental bodies on their contribution to the wider national effort at attainment of the Goals. The oversight committee will act as a conduit, among other things, for NGO appeals for governmental support in their MDG programmes and serve to ascertain that departmental submissions for budgetary appropriations pay attention to programmes that are supportive to attainment of the Goals. Public visibility of the work of the committee will be ensured so as to further strengthen the accountability structures e.g. every 6-12 months the committee can host a reporting and accountability session with live media coverage. In such a session, the committee would report on what is happening, followed by a conversation/debate with others about it – e.g. people from local areas or regions commenting on whether they are seeing any results, or like what is proposed etc.

To address the proliferation of political parties which is seen as a factor not only in complicating consensus on issues of national priority but also in promoting voter apathy on the electoral process, the project will sponsor a study by acknowledged political party experts on the phenomenon. The results of this study will be tabled before a national forum comprising a cross section of Basotho society including political parties themselves, non – governmental and faith -based organizations, academia, members of the chieftaincy institution, youth, women's groups and business with a view to reaching agreement to a way forward which may include recommendations that will be submitted to parliament for enactment into law. Among other things, the study will focus on qualification criteria and standards for registration of political parties.

For the media, the project will promote proactive, quality reporting on the national effort towards attainment of the MDGs including MDG3 on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women the parameters of unbiased professional reporting. To ensure this, the project will sponsor two media training programmes during its life and, in addition, establish an annual incentive award for the best radio and print media reporting on Lesotho's progress towards achievement of the MDGs. A panel of independent experts, including faculty of the National University of Lesotho, will be engaged, on a voluntary, non-remunerative basis, to act as judges for the awards. The event itself will act as a further publicity strategy to promote wider awareness of the Goals and how well the country is positioning itself for credible performance on the Goals by the target date of 2015. Furthermore, the project will contract with 2-3 respected external journalists from, for example, South Africa or another country, who would have a brief to follow political coverage of events here, and provide running commentary on the quality of journalistic coverage. Another option to achieve the same would be to contract one of the well-regarded schools of journalism in the US and UK. It is possible that one of these institutions would happily undertake this at a modest charge as a project that they involve their Masters students in.

Lastly, the project will advocate for aggressive mobilization of the youth in an effort to think out and design programmes that youth can engage in to contribute towards achievement of the MDGs. Such programmes could include measures towards better conservation of the environment and innovative new ways to combat the spread of the HIV & AIDS epidemic especially given the acknowledged and well documented vulnerability of this section of the population to the scourge. The programme will also mobilise the youth through organisation of MDG debates in tertiary and other institutions where representatives of the youth can direct policy questions on their concerns to the leaders of political parties. These debates will be part of the media component of the programme and will be aired nation-wide. In any country, as in Lesotho, it is difficult to discuss Youth participation without defining youth. This group is very large and diverse and for the purpose of this project the focus will be on first-time- or young- voters in tertiary institutions. This is for various reasons, most importantly 1) their potential future influence on politics, 2) readiness to discuss and interpret different views on development topics, 3) reachability through the institutions and 4) potential contribution to destructive behaviour after elections. A broader group of youth would potentially need to benefit from additional capacity development before they could meaningfully participate.

Specific Outputs and activities

1. Engagement with political parties for affirmative action to promote improved progress towards achievement of the MDGs through:
 - Workshop(s) for political parties on relevance of MDGs to national development priorities and mainstreaming MDGs in their election manifestoes
 - Launch of advocacy strategy on issue- based politics through seminar on the subject organized with professional facilitation by an international consultant and participation of the media for publicity and their own training
 - Organization of public debates on selected MDGs through the medium of TV and radio networks
2. Advocacy for establishment of an inter-party parliamentary oversight committee
 - Hold consultations with presiding officers of the Senate and the National Assembly on establishment of an inter- party parliamentary oversight committee on the MDGs
 - Organise a parliamentary workshop to define ways in which the oversight committee can carry out its mandate
 - Have one or two open sessions of the work of the committee covered by national media and to include conversations with key stakeholders
3. Proliferation of political parties
 - Recruitment of one international consultant and national counterpart to conduct a consultancy study on the phenomenon of proliferation of political parties
 - Organization of a national forum with the participation of local constituents on the consultancy report on proliferation of political parties.
 - Preparation of report and agreement by the forum for submission of the recommendations of the report to Parliament
4. Media involvement in the MDGs

- Organize media training workshop on the MDGs and coaching clinics for the media on more professional reporting both to assess national performance and inform the public on the Goals
- Linking into professional media houses or individual journalists to follow political coverage of events and provide running commentary on the quality of journalistic coverage
- Set up criteria for media awards on MDG reporting and recruit a panel of judges including the media themselves and faculty of the NUL
- Recruit consultant to devise selection criteria for the media award

5. Youth mobilization through political parties

- Hold consultations with political parties on ways they can employ to mobilize the youth for more proactive participation in the national effort at improved MDG performance
- Hold consultations with the Ministry of Education and Training on annual debates by tertiary institutions on the MDGs
- Organize the debates and agree accompanying incentive scheme

RESULTS AND RESOURCES FRAMEWORK

<p>Intended Outcome as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resources Framework :</p> <p>Agency outcome: Governance institutions promoting a stable participatory democracy and effective economic governance Agency output: Collaborative capacity for consensus based solutions strengthened to address national challenges</p>				
<p>Outcome Indicators as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resources Framework including baseline and targets</p> <p><i>No. of collaborative programmes in place</i></p> <p>Baseline - 0 (conflict mediation, faith-based institution, peace building networks all independently) Target - 1 by 2012</p>				
<p>Partnership Strategy: Close partnership with the TRC, political parties and the media. Leveraging existing partnership with Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)</p>				
<p>Project Title and ID (ATLAS Award ID): Political Party Engagement for Achievement of the MDGs</p>				
Intended Outputs	Output Targets FOR (Years)	Indicative Activities	Responsible Parties	Inputs
Output 1 Strengthened and pro-active engagement with political parties to ensure progress for implementation of the MDGs.	2010 1 workshop 2011 1 workshop 2010 2 MDC debates 2011 4 MDC debates 2010 Study done 2011 Study discussion 2010 Advocacy campaign 2011 Workshop 2011 1 or 2 open sessions	1.1 Workshop with political parties to promote progress towards achievement of the MDGs held 1.2 Public debates by political parties on selected MDGs organized 1.3 Consultant engaged to study and report on phenomenon of political party proliferation 1.4 National Forum on proliferation of political parties for cross section of Basotho society 1.5 Advocacy on establishment of a parliamentary oversight committee on the MDGs undertaken 1.6 Workshop on the operation of the parliamentary Oversight Committee on the MDGs 1.7 Open sessions of the Committee covered by national media	TRC/UNDP TRC TRC?UNDP TRC/UNDP UNDP UNDP UNDP	Consultant National Consultant Consultant Contracts Consultant Consultant
Output 2 B) Capacity building of and advocacy	2010 1 Workshop 2011 1 Workshop	Total costs output 1 2.1 Two media training workshops on the MDGs organized	\$255,000 TRC/UNDP	Contracts

with the media and youth groups for more effective reporting on and direct promotion of the MDGs	2011 Contracted media support	2.2 Linking international media to build local media capacity	UNDP	International consultant
	2011 Media incentive award launched	2.3 Annual Media Incentive Award on MDG reporting launched, panel of judges appointed	TRC	National Consultant
	2010 1 consultative forum 2011 consultative forum	2.4 Political party engagement for youth mobilization on the MDGs	TRC/UNDP	
	2010 consultation session 2010 1 MDG debate by university students 2011 2 MDG debates	2.5 Advocacy consultations held with the Ministry of Education and selected schools on MDG debates by students of tertiary institutions	UNDP	
		Total Cost output 2	\$195,000	
	Total Cost Project	\$450,000		