



## Lesotho

### *Country Context*

The current Constitution of Lesotho came into operation only in April 1993. At that time, Lesotho had already ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and signed the Jomtien Declaration, both of which recognise education as a fundamental right. Nevertheless, while the Lesotho Constitution “endeavours to make education available to all” and aims at providing compulsory primary education for all, this provision is a “Principle of State Policy” rather than a “Fundamental Right.” As a result, education is not a government obligation in Lesotho that is enforceable as a right. Lesotho is signatory to many international conventions and declarations including the Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by all 189 UN member states in September 2000.

Lesotho has identified “Combat HIV/AIDS” as the priority area for the nationalisation of MDG. It is estimated that in 2001, 31% of 15-49 year olds are HIV positive, 27,000 children are living with HIV/AIDS and 73,000 children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Education has developed a three-year HIV/AIDS impact assessment for the Education sector in light of the massive effect of the pandemic on educators and learners. The many international and regional commitments made by Lesotho have historically made little if any notable impact on national plans and programmes. Indeed there has been no real mechanism to operationalise such commitments. As a result of this gap, there have also been no clear ways to monitor national implementation. Recognising this lack of follow up to goals to which it has committed itself, Lesotho has identified a new policy planning and monitoring process in order to establish a long-term vision with realistic shorter-term goals. The envisioned course of action for national planning and monitoring will be guided by a long-term national vision for development, Vision 2020. Civil society raised concerns that the consultation process of Vision 2020 did not include wide representation of all stakeholders. The Public Sector Improvement and Reform Programme Policy Framework (PSIRP) is being put in place, linked to this public sector framework is the Education Sector Reform Programme, “which focuses at improving and increasing access, quality and efficiency of the educational system.

The Lesotho Education Sector Strategic Plan (2005 -2015) is based on both Vision 2020 and the PRSP. It has also taken into consideration MDGs and other international and regional conventions, treaties, protocols, declarations and agreements including EFA goals. The Government of Lesotho has developed and initiated a Free Basic Education Programme (FBEP) and a complementary Targeted Equity-Based Programme (TEBP). The FBEP is incrementally removing school fees for the first ten years of primary and secondary schooling. The TEBP is intended to waive school fees for vulnerable children not included in the FBEP. As a result the Ministry of Education’s budget has been substantially

increased in recent years. While applauding the Government's efforts to implement EFA through FBEP and TEBP, there are still challenges and implementation of these policies needs to be properly monitored.

### ***Key Achievements***

- ❑ Supported the establishment and strengthening of NGO Coalition on Rights of the Child (NGO) secretariat.
- ❑ Facilitated the building of links amongst Education NGOs both at the national, regional and international levels.
- ❑ Support to NGOs to input into the Education Sector Strategic plan 2005-2007.

### ***Breakdown by Criteria***

#### **CRITERION 1**

The formation of the Non-Governmental Organisations Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGOC), its registration, consolidation of its membership (35 active and 80 non-active members), and the development of an operational plan, represent a significant part of the programme in Lesotho. NGOC members have participated in several policy forums and debates. The NGOC has established several links with other local coalitions, regional and international organisations and funding agencies. As in many other programmes, the coalition suffers from inadequate resources, particularly staffing. The open door membership policy of the NGOC has led to a number of partners who are either not entirely devoted or do not have the necessary skills in financial management, lobbying, advocacy and project design and management. As noted, capacity building of individual CSOs has taken a back seat to the formation of the coalition. Perhaps because of these reasons, but also due to relationship difficulties with the Ministry of Education and Training, NGOC has found difficulty in participating in national policy debate.

#### **CRITERION 2**

This objective will be addressed once a strong basis for collaborative civil society work is established.

#### **CRITERION 3**

The organisation and operation of the Global Education Campaign Week represents a major achievement under this criterion. This campaign reached audiences as diverse as the Prime Minister, politicians, and members of the public, teachers and children. However capacity limitations did not allow the activities to be undertaken in all 10 districts in Lesotho.

### ***Case Study: Sharing research findings with key stakeholders***

A survey on "children missing out on education" was conducted in the districts of Maseru, Mokhotlong, and Mhale's Hoek in March/April 2004 in preparation for celebrating the GCE week. The week was later celebrated in the three districts reaching out to the following groups of people:

- The Prime Minister through messages written by children
- Politicians through inviting them to go back to school to see the education being offered to children
- Members of the public through disseminating the findings of the survey - radio; newspapers etc.
- Other children through essays, poems, and drawings reflecting on peers "missing out on education"
- Maseru resource teachers through debating how free Primary Education has improved the delivery of education to children

The report of the survey has been widely circulated to various organisations including the Ministry of Education and Training, the Speaker of Parliament, UNICEF, and several development partners that have offices in Lesotho such as Development Cooperation Ireland. Plans to implement the recommendations are currently being considered by Non-Governmental Organizations Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGOC).