



Lesotho Council of NGOs

POLICY BRIEF

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THE MISSING LINK IN LESOTHO'S NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Key Messages

- *The purpose of NFE therefore is to ensure that no one is left behind.*
- *Lesotho's Non-formal Education Policy defines NFE as "any structured and organized learning activity which has identifiable objectives and which takes place outside the regular school system" (MoET, 2018: 3).*
- *The Education sector has consistently received the lion's share of Lesotho's national budget, receiving roughly 17% of the budget (World Bank, 2020). An investment in education is an investment in a nation's human capital.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of NFE therefore is to ensure that no one is left behind. Lesotho established the Long Distance and Training Centre (LDTC) in 1976. Couched within the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), this department is mandated with the provision of Non-Formal Education in the country. Policy development for NFE was only completed in 2018, however. Historically, the majority of NFE clientele in Lesotho have been male due to their higher dropout rates and lower participation in the formal education system. An analysis of the county's employment data disaggregated by sex reveals, however reveals that despite completing secondary school and university at much higher rates women remain less likely to get hired. This is therefore strong impetus for a course-correction. NFE service providers ought to aim for gender parity and consciously scale up female enrolment in NFE, as it imparts much needed vocational skills that can help women secure their livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

Lesotho is a mountainous landlocked country, completely encompassed by South Africa. It is a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Commonwealth of Nations (UNESCO Commission, 2008: 3). The Kingdom has a population of approximately 2.2 million people and a poverty rate of 49.7%, about half of its population (World Bank, 2019). Despite the fact that only about 11% of the country is arable, about 86% of the resident population engages in subsistence farming, with the agriculture sector employing about 56% of its population (Nations Encyclopaedia, 2020). It is however, a country prone to cycles of droughts which severely hampers food security. The United Nations estimated that about 700 000 Basotho were food insecure in 2019 as a result of poor rainfall that year and its resultant drought (UN News, 2019). As a result, "most farmers raise livestock

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- The NFE Inspectorate is mandated with the monitoring and evaluation of NFE in Lesotho and currently operates under and housed within the LDTC, the body charged with NFE provision and coordination. This arrangement compromises the inspectorate's ability to carry out its work as the inspectorate is also answerable to the same body it ought to police. The inspectorate ideally should be independent in order to be able to take the LDTC to task when necessary. The NFE Policy outlines that MoET will separate the Inspectorate from the LDTC and "rightfully place" and incorporate it in an envisaged MoET Central Inspectorate (MoET, 2018: 8). This process ought to be expedited.
- Through consultations with the Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education (LANFE) LCN has established that MoET (through LDTC) provides NFE services in 7 districts whilst NFE CSOs are allocated the remaining 3 districts, through an agreement between them and LDTC. This allows the organizations the room to deliver specialized NFE services and programming that they may have the comparative advantage over LDTC at providing, which is positive. These organizations however, receive no funding from MoET at all to conduct this work and depend on donor funding. The volatility in their funding can hamper the end-services received by their clientele. Ultimately, MoET is the duty bearer in terms of the provision of NFE in Lesotho and its quality assurance. It is recommended that MoET provide NFE service providers (those that are accredited and it has an agreement with) appropriate stipends for services they render to cover certain operational costs.
- NFE just like formal education requires dedicated teaching staff to provide it. NFE is largely provided informally in Lesotho by teaching staff referred to as "animators". Many work on a voluntary basis whilst others do not receive a salary but a stipend. This leads to the threat of high staff turnover of animators, and a lack of institutional memory. It is therefore recommended that MoET look into the universal remuneration of animators.

CONCLUSION

The provision of education ought to extend to all a nation's citizenry. Multiple international instruments that extol this from Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Education for All pledge and more- of which Lesotho is a signatory (United Nations, 1948). That access to education should be universal is also enshrined in Lesotho's constitution as "a directive principle of state policy," albeit not a justiciable one (Constitution of Lesotho, 1993). Despite the best efforts the Formal education is inaccessible for some, whilst for others it remains incongruent with their needs. Herein lies the necessity of Non- Formal Education. Adoption of the policy recommendations outlined in this Brief should see Lesotho overcome the bottlenecks it experiences in implementing its NFE. The Brief has also brought to the fore the gender-parity gap overlooked in the provision of NFE in Lesotho, its dangers and the urgency with which it must be addressed.

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to supplement crops and maintain food security” (Nations Encyclopaedia, 2020). It is however, a country prone to cycles of droughts which severely hampers food security. The United Nations estimated that about 700 000 Basotho were food insecure in 2019 as a result of poor rainfall that year and its resultant drought (UN News, 2019). As a result, “most farmers raise livestock to supplement crops and maintain food security” (Nations Encyclopaedia, 2020). This latter fact is particularly relevant to Lesotho and its Non-Formal Education. An analysis of enrolment from Lesotho secondary school all the way through to tertiary reveals that males both enrol at lower rates and dropout at far higher rates than their female counterparts (World Bank, 2017).

It is for this reason Non- formal Education (NFE) efforts in Lesotho tend to be targeted at males. “Empirical evidence and different theories suggest that boys at risk of dropping out is a complex issue functioning at various levels. This includes parental, community, social and politico-economic levels as well as in schools and learning environments” (The Commonwealth, 2017: 5). The reasons behind Lesotho’s high male dropout rates, however, has been traced to a cultural issue that is also socio-economic- the practice of cattle-herding (Lefoka, 2007: 212).

As aforementioned, typically farmers amass livestock to further strengthen their food security, it is also a status symbol amongst Basotho. Rearing the animals, however, is left to boys as per custom. It then follows that boys in regions that practise this custom are not in school because they have to tend to cattle and many of those that are, eventually dropout to fulfil this duty. This is evidenced by the rural/urban divide that is clear when analysing school participation data for Lesotho. School participation “is lower in rural and mountainous areas” and these are areas where cattle herding is most rife (UNICEF, 2005). Indeed, herders are mainly boys between 7-18 years of age of whom “only 2 out of 3 have ever been to school” (UNICEF, 2005). As a result of these startling statistics “the majority of” Non Formal Education “clienteles” in Lesotho are herd- boys (UNESCO Commission: 21). By extension other groups such as “out-of-school youth and adults are in the minority” as a result (21).

THE HISTORY OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

Lesotho’s Non- formal Education Policy defines NFE as “any structured and organized learning

activity which has identifiable objectives and which takes place outside the regular school system” (MoET, 2018: 3). It further sets out as pre-requisites that it ought to be “functional, learner- centred” and responsive to the “needs of the participants” (3). Education for All was declared a fundamental Human Right in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (United Nations, 1948). Following this, the importance of Education as a determinant for development was further reinforced by being accorded a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by the United Nations. SDG 4 has bound states to achieving “quality education” by 2030 (SDG Fund, 2020). Lesotho’s NFE recognises that NFE is “only way to achieve SDG3 and SDG4” (MoET: 6). Most states, including Lesotho, have eradicated significant barriers to access through the provision of universal free primary education (Lesotho employed this as of 2001) to achieve these objectives. The formal education system however, remains out of reach for some, is not valued, or remains incongruent with their needs (UNESCO Commission, 2008: 14).

Non- formal Education caters for exactly this group by equipping them with numeracy, literacy and other life and vocational skills necessary for them to thrive and “facilitate their ability to generate income” despite not having gone through the Formal Education system (MoDP: 14). The purpose of NFE therefore is to ensure that no one is left behind. Lesotho established the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) in 1976 (Lefoka, 1999: 1). This is a department in the Ministry of Education mandated with “providing basic and non- formal education programmes” (1). NFE, however, is not provided only by the Ministry but by NFE NGOs coordinated by the Lesotho Association of Non-formal Education (LANFE), their mother-body (UNESCO Commission: 8). These organizations include the Good Shepherd Sisters, Lesotho Girl Guides Association, Kick4Life and others (MoDP, 2019: 48) The National University of Lesotho’s Institute for Extra Mural Studies (IEMS) supplements NFE provision through offerings of open and distance learning in adult education (UNESCO Commission: 8). The development of a NFE Policy however, began in 1982 only to be completed almost four decades later in 2018 (MoET, 2018: iv). Previously, NFE provision had been coordinated but largely unregulated. The Policy finally outlines “how NFE programmes should be coordinated, registered and monitored” as well as the “governing organization responsible for NFE matters” (MoDP: 48). Encouragingly, the Policy also points

towards the future of the expansion of NFE provision in Lesotho. It details the Ministry’s objective to establish “an NFE department or office or Open College or University with full complement of staff and upgrading of NFE position” (48). This is commendable, although the fact that the mere development of the NFE Policy itself took an untenable 36 years is not a reassuring gauge of the pace implementation in Lesotho.

THE MISSING LINK IN LESOTHO’S NFE PROVISION

The Education sector has consistently received the lion’s share of Lesotho’s national budget, receiving roughly 17% of the budget (World Bank, 2020). An investment in education is an investment in a nation’s human capital. Lesotho has enjoyed the status of being having one of the highest literacy rates on the continent (Lefoka: 1). The United Nations Development Programme placed Lesotho’s literacy rate at 82.2% in 2010 (MoET: xiv). A thorough analysis however, reveals that the country’s literacy rate is on the decline: it stood at 75.8% in 2013 and is presently at 61% (xiv). Although studies have not been conducted to analyse this worrying deterioration the Education Ministry does cite “cultural practises such as herding animal”, gender inequity, “poverty”, dropouts, being orphaned and others as a sources of illiteracy in the country (MoET: x). Strengthening the coverage of NFE is undoubtedly possible solution to fill in the gaps in this dilemma.

The Statistics Bulletin of 2016/17 placed the participation rate in NFE at 11 000 (MoDP, 2019: 48). As aforementioned, NFE service providers mainly largely target their offerings at herders and by extension males (offerings are also provided to Correctional Services inmates, the majority of whom are males) as this is where the greatest need is perceived to be (48). Indeed, the literacy rate of Basotho women stands at 84.9% whilst that of their male counterparts is 65.52%, according to UNESCO data (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2015). They even enrol for tertiary education at a higher rates than men and account for 61.4% of graduates (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2015). What targeting NFE offerings primarily at males misses, is that despite all this the unemployment rate remains higher for women than men. The unemployment rate for women stood at 43.3% in 2000 and 27.1% in 2018, whilst that of men was 27.5% in 2000 and 20.3% 2018 (World Bank, 2020). This reflects that although the unemployment rate for women is declining women are at poorer socioeconomic status than men. That despite completing

secondary and tertiary schooling at far higher rates than men, men are more likely to be hired. Women therefore do not always experience the expected outcomes of their education. This suggests that there are ingrained structural barriers that prevent women from participating in the economy in Lesotho. Indeed, the International Labour Organization (ILO) concedes that in certain countries “even where girls and women are able to acquire skills for work, they often face social, cultural, economic and practical constraints that pose barriers to their making full use of those skills through obtaining appropriate work” (ILO, 2020: 6)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Lesotho has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world at 32.8% (World Bank, 2020). Efforts should made to align education with the needs of the economy so that its products are absorbed into the country’s workforce. This includes both Formal and Non-Formal Education.
- NFE uptake is heavily skewed towards males. It is recommended that NFE service providers consciously create programming and offerings tailored specifically towards women, entrepreneurship as well as how they can create sustainable livelihoods for themselves.
- NFE service providers ought to consider employing quotas for female participation in NFE.
- Some NFE service providers already offer flexible hours in order to accommodate the schedules of their clientele. These are usually tailored around the working hours of herd boys and low and semi-skilled workers seeking to be upskilled. The same flexibility should be consciously extended for women. NFE programming targeted at women have to be scheduled in a manner that accommodates the homemaker and child-rearing roles they often have to assume in Lesotho society.
- The NFE Policy calls for the establishment of a NFE Department with full complement of staff that will strictly oversee NFE programmes (MoET, 2018: 7). It also envisages the creation of an NFE Board or Council that will be able to report to and advise the MoET Principal Secretary on NFE matters (8). It is recommended that MoET swiftly establish both the Department and Board/ Council as envisaged.