



Prioritising Youth and Women in Enterprise Support Services

FINAL REPORT

03 JULY 2022



DEMOCRACY
WORKS
FOUNDATION
1990-2010

PUTTING YOUTH AND WOMEN AT
THE CENTRE OF INCLUSIVE
ECONOMIC GROWTH.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
BBCD	Bethel Business and Community Development Center
BDS	Business Development Service
BDSP	Business Development Service Providers
BEDCO	Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation
BETA	Business Environment and Technical Assistance
BoS	Bureau of Statistics
BRB	Bacha Re Bacha Youth Forum
BSYF	Bacha Shutdown Youth Forum
BWA	Boiketlo Women Association
CBOS	Community-Based Organisation
CC	Community Council
CCJP	Catholic Commission Justice for Peace
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interview
CSOS	Civil Society Organisation
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CWC	Commonwealth Countries
DA	District Administrator
DPs	Development Partners
DWF	Democracy Works Foundation
ED	Electoral Division
EU	European Union
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
FLWE	Federation of Lesotho Women Entrepreneurs
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Germany Agency for International Cooperation
GL	Gender Links
GoL	Government of Lesotho
GS	Global Shapers
ICBT	Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
JCI	Junior Chamber International
LCCI	Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LCN	Lesotho Council of NGOs
LDHS	Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey
LEAP	Lesotho Enterprise Assistant Program

LMDA	Lesotho Millennium Development Agency
LNCW	Lesotho National Council of Women
LNDC	Lesotho National Development Corporation
LNFE	Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education
LNFOED	Lesotho National Federation of the Disabled
LRA	Lesotho Revenue Authority
LSDP	Life-Saving Drug Program
LWC	Lesotho Work Camps
MDIH	Market-Driven Irrigated Horticulture
MMB	Maluti Mountain Brewery
MSBDCM	Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Reform Authority
NSDP II	National Strategic Development Plan II
NVC	National Volunteer Corp
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PSFL	Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho
PYWEIG	Putting Youth Women at the Center of Inclusive Economic Growth
SADP	Smallholder Agriculture Development Project
SADC	Southern African Development Countries
SLB	Standard Lesotho Bank
SME	Small, Medium Enterprise
SMME	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprise
TRC	Transformation Resource Center
TOR	Terms of Reference
RCA	Root Cause Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VCL	Vodacom Lesotho
WBG	World Bank Group
WEF	World Economic Forum
WIB	Women In Business
WILSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa
YEF	Youth Entrepreneur Forum
YDI	Youth Development Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Democracy Works Foundation (DWF) and Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Lesotho commenced with the implementation of the 'Putting Youth and Women at the centre of Inclusive Economic Growth (PYWEIG)' Program by conducting a Participatory Action Research (PAR) during February to May 2022. The project is designed and benchmarked on the two priority areas; *Supporting Civil Society Organisations in initiatives that promote youth participation and empowerment at the district and national level* and *Strengthening Women CSOs' capacities and engagements for participation in decision-making processes*.

The study assessed the participation of women- and youth-led Community-based Organisations (CBOs) in community decision-making processes. Their participation was considered in processes such as local council meetings, meetings summoned by the local Chief (*lipitso*), other community forums involved in decision-making processes, and electoral division elections.

The core methodology adopted by the study, PAR, followed a four-step process comprising of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. To effectively conduct PAR, the Consultant actively engaged with the Project Team, comprising DWF and FIDA members, to define the scope and rationale, identify research problems, develop data collection tools, and collect data, clean, sort and analyse it. This was facilitated through training, workshops, and regular meetings, where all participants discussed and agreed on the study's proposed methodology, refined the data collection tools and discussed findings.

During fieldwork, the Project Team engaged and consulted extensively with women- and youth-led enterprises within target communities to guide them in identifying their needs and recommending mechanisms to address them. The collaboration has proved important as the Project Team, and the communities possess insider knowledge and lived expertise. Therefore, the research quality and rigour were improved by integrating the Consultant's theoretical and methodological knowledge and the real-world knowledge and experiences of the team and communities. This has been key to this study. The intent differed from mainstream research approaches, which emphasise looking in from outside an intervention to understand social and organisational arrangements.

Key Findings

The findings are based on a representative sample of 948 community members from the Maseru, Leribe and Butha-Buthe districts, represented by four Electoral Divisions (EDs) in each district. Sixty-three villages were represented, resulting in 38 focus groups, which were segregated into four, main groups; male adults, male youth, female adults and female youth. The study further corroborated focus group discussions with interviews

with key stakeholders from government ministries, departments and agencies, women- and youth-led Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and private sector representatives.

Participation in Community Council Meetings

Fifty-six percent of community members did not know about community council meetings. Of the 44 percent who knew of the community council meetings, the majority were male adults, with youth and women showing the slightest knowledge. Most of the community members (81 percent) had never attended council meetings. Of the 19 percent who had attended council meetings, 57 percent were male adults, followed by 14 percent of female adults, female youth, and male youth groups. These low levels of attendance in council meetings were attributable to limited knowledge of the meetings, poor dissemination of related information, and the groups at times not being invited to the meetings.

Seventy-three percent of the community members rated themselves not participative in the council meetings, the majority being female adults. Only the male groups rated very participative, with the male adults at 75 percent and male youth at 25 percent. The reasons for the low participation of women and youth included a lack of feedback from community leaders and the feeling that their contributions or voices were not heard.

Conclusion: The levels of knowledge of, and attendance and participation by, women and youth in community council meetings are low.

Participation in Meetings Summoned by the Chief (*Lipitso*)

Most community members (88 percent) reported attending meetings summoned by the Chief (*lipitso*). The attendance was higher for adult groups and lower for youth groups, with no gender difference. However, the communities claimed that high attendance in *Lipitso* was primarily experienced in cases where the agenda had to do with food, clothes or other donations. Of those that attend *Lipitso*, 74 percent claimed to attend regularly, with 26 percent attending now and then. Adult groups, male and female, constituted a slightly higher percentage of those attending every meeting (23 percent for males and 35 percent for females), with youth groups at 21 percent per gender group.

The youth groups pointed out that some reasons for their limited participation in these meetings include the fact that their voices are rarely heard in meetings convened by community leaders, their aspiration to drive youth development is not considered, and the bad relations between some communities and their leaders.

Conclusion: There is no gender disparity in attendance and participation in meetings summoned by the Chief, although attendance and participation are higher for adult groups and low for youth groups.

Participation in Decision-making Processes

Seventy-three percent of the community members reported being very participative in the decision-making process of their community or constituency matters. In the lead of those rated very participative were male adults at 37 percent, female adults at 26 percent, and female and male youth at 22 percent and 15 percent, respectively. Overall, 65 percent of the community members felt that their voices or participation in community council meetings, Chief meetings and other forums did not matter. This constituted female adults at 47 percent, male adults at 27 percent, female youth at 13 percent, and male youth at 12 percent. Interestingly, only male adult groups had a higher percentage of those who claimed their voices or participation mattered.

Conclusion: There is no gender disparity related to participation in decision-making processes. However, participation is higher in adult groups than in youth groups, although the male adults are the only ones who feel their voices are heard.

Participation in Elections

Of the 66 percent of those community members who contested for elections, the majority were male adults at 46 percent, followed by females at 31 percent, and male youth at 23 percent. From all the target EDs engaged, no female youth claimed to have ever contested elections. The numbers of those interested in contesting for elections were higher for male adults at 40 percent, male youth at 22 percent, and female adults and youth at 19 percent each. The data shows low interest in contesting for council or electoral division elections in females, particularly female youth.

The women's reasons for low interest included low self-esteem, fear of leadership consequences, fear of talking in front of their husbands, not wanting to be corrupt, and fear of embarrassment as other women who lost in previous elections were mocked by their communities. Interestingly, the women said they usually do not elect other women as they do not trust 'women in power'.

Outstanding views from youth were also observed, who claimed that they lacked knowledge and understanding of the election processes and underscored that politics were for older people. Youth highlighted limited incentives for engaging in such endeavours, as employment rather than politics remains their priority.

Conclusion: There are low levels of women's participation in contesting elections, and none of the female youth respondents had ever contested elections.

Income-Generating Activities and Business Development Support

Half of the community members engaged were involved in income-generating activities. This constituted 32 percent female adults, 27 percent male youth, 23 percent male adults, and 18 female youth. The majority (53 percent) were involved as individuals, while only 12 percent were in groups, and 35 percent were as individuals and in groups. The communities' dominating income-generating activities were in agricultural production: crop, poultry, livestock, wool and mohair, and piggery.

Forty-four percent of community members had received support from organizations that offer business development support, with female adults in the lead at 38 percent, followed by female youth at 31 percent, male youth at 19 percent and male adults at 13 percent. The business support mainly sought by women was seed funding/capital, business management training and technical training, seeds/raw materials, and access to markets and a storeroom. Similarly, youth groups prioritised technical and business management training, seed funding, seeds and raw materials, and market access.

Conclusion: Women and youth are in the lead of those that receive business support.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Participation in Decision-making processes

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents were members of respective CBOs within communities, with the majority indicating that their CBOs were participative and involved in community decision-making processes. Similarly, the women- and youth-led CSOs noted that they participated in national and/or sectoral decision-making processes. However, the women-led CSOs highlighted that the lack of resources hinders their participation sometimes, while the youth-led CSOs claimed to be short-staffed. The views of other interviewed stakeholders, including government officials, were that youth-led CSOs were polarised, and their conversation approach was poor, creating a barrier to successful engagement with stakeholders.

Conclusion: The women- and youth- CBOs and CSOs are participative in decision-making, although there are notable challenges.

Recommendations

To actively participate in District and Community Action Plans, women- and youth-led CSOs need to be capacitated on their role and the importance of their participation, and be informed of, and invited to, relevant forums. There is an imminent need for sensitization and education of community members around the roles and importance of women in leadership and governance so that communities can start to appreciate women as leaders, more so as political leaders. Although the youth are mainly interested in finding jobs and making a

living for themselves, there is a need to sensitize them to the importance of youth participation in the decision-making forums and platforms.

With the available business development interventions in the country that target to empower women and youth in agricultural business pursuit and other business sectors, efforts need to be made for women and youth not only to be informed of such, but to be assisted in meeting the requirements of such interventions. These interventions can also contextualize their needs according to the community context (mostly small-scale farming) and youth context (who mostly do not own agricultural land).

BACKGROUND

Through the European Union (EU) Delegation financial support, the Lesotho Democracy Works Foundation (DWF) has partnered with the Lesotho Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in implementing the "Putting Youth and Women at the centre of Inclusive Economic Growth (PYWEIG)" Programme. The programme is designed and benchmarked on the following two priority areas:

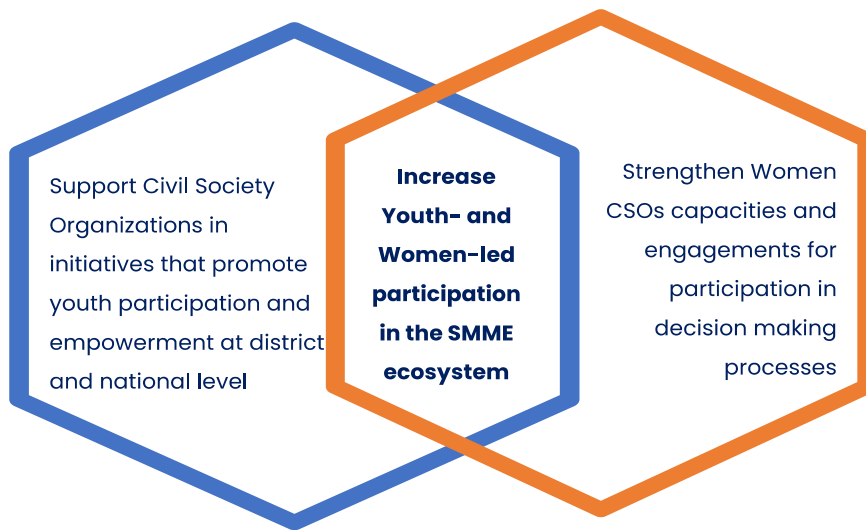


Figure 1: Priority Areas of the PYWEIG Programme

Due to the massive potential of the SMME sector to drive inclusive economic growth in Lesotho, the programme aims to facilitate youth's and women's inclusion into the country's economy. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) forms most of the work undertaken in the first year of implementing the PYWIEG Programme.

Participatory Action Research

As the Terms of Reference (ToR) stipulated, the study focuses on the PAR Approach. To effectively conduct PAR, the Consultant actively engaged with the project team, comprising DWF and FIDA members, and herein referred to as the "team", to define the scope and rationale, identify research problems, develop data collection tools, and collect, sort, and analyse data. This was facilitated through training, workshops (see Annexure A), and subsequent follow-up meetings, where all participants discussed and agreed on the study's proposed methodology, refined the data collection tools and discussed the study's findings.

During fieldwork, the team engaged and consulted extensively with women- and youth-led Community-based Organisations (CBOs) within target communities to identify their needs and recommend mechanisms to address them. The collaboration has proved important as the team, and the communities possess insider

knowledge and lived expertise. Therefore, the research quality and rigour were improved by integrating the Consultant's theoretical and methodological knowledge and the real-world knowledge and experiences of the team and communities. This has been key to this study. The intent differed from mainstream research approaches, which emphasise looking in from outside an intervention to understand social and organisational arrangements.

The planned activities of key next steps following fieldwork will be to further collaborate on collecting and analysing data, with the Consultant completing the drafting of the report for the team's incorporation of inputs.



Rationale

During the study, the Consultant had to constantly work with the team to guide them on effectively employing the PAR approach to empower and promote youth and women in enterprise support services in Lesotho. The *learning by doing* concept emphasised during the workshops was fundamental to this study. As underscored, the team had to learn mainly by actively adapting their existing knowledge in response to their experiences with communities and their daily work experiences.

ASSUMPTION

The successful Implementation of this Study has been dependent on the commitment and understanding of the Project Team and Target Communities



The following are, therefore, distinct features of the PAR Approach adopted by the Study:

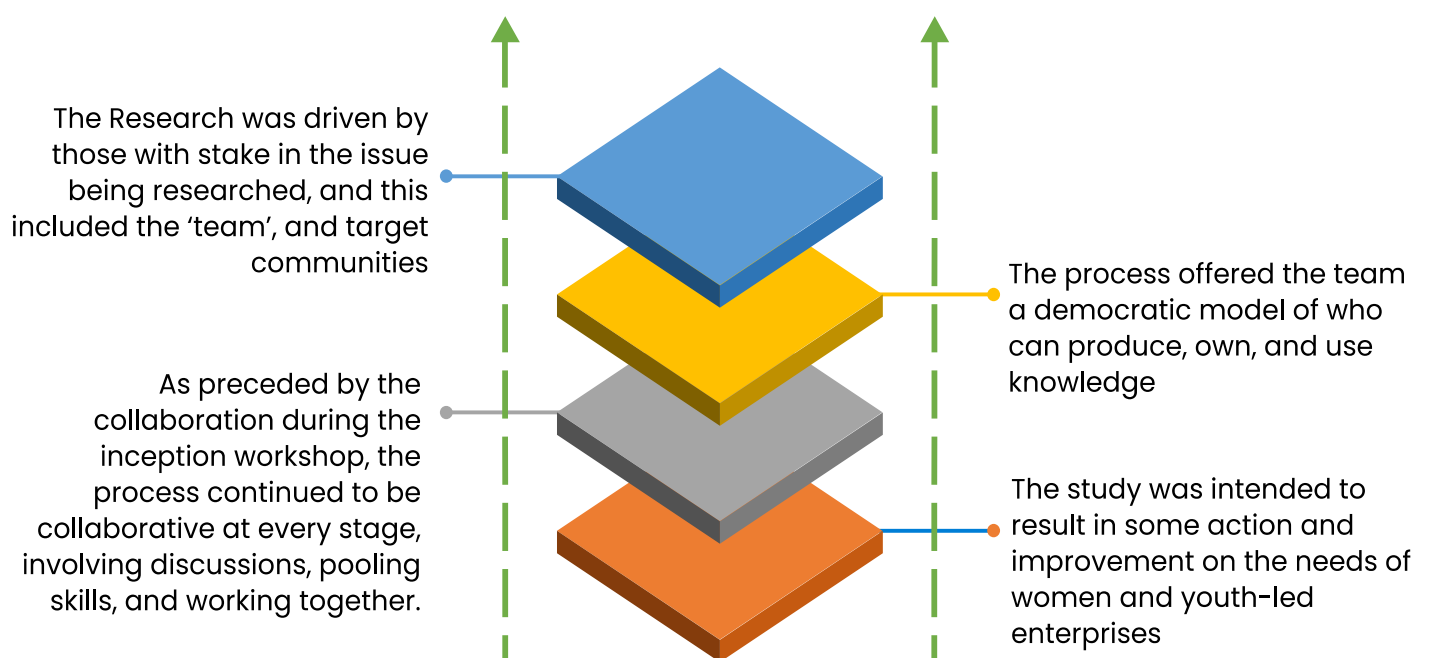


Figure 2: Distinct Features of PAR

Benefits, Limitations, and Delimitations

PAR has many benefits as an informed approach and is relevant to real-world contexts. However, there are also limitations to the process, and the Consultant employed the following delimitations, as highlighted in Table 1, as mitigation interventions:

Table 1: Benefits, Limitations, and Delimitations of PAR

Benefits of PAR	Limitations	Delimitations
Embraces active learning and promotes higher levels of engagement. This will increase the team's and communities' depth and understanding of identified needs and recommendations	It can be more time-consuming if the team is too involved in detail	The team agreed on specific roles and tasks for each group to minimise potential confusion
Encourages a collaborative approach to social change and amplifies the voices of marginalised groups (youth- and women-led enterprises)	Can be susceptible to researcher bias since the researcher is involved	The role of the Consultant (researcher) was specified in the ToR and agreed upon by the team, with emphasis put on conducting PAR to the last detail
Participants already possess the required knowledge and expertise to improve the quality of the research	Can produce large amounts of data that are difficult to manage	The team was divided into three groups that collected, cleaned, and sorted different sets of data
Increases the chance of participants, including communities, adopting practices and outcomes from research	The team and target communities may not fully represent the interests of all stakeholders	The team engaged all those with a stake in the project. However, for internal quality control, other key stakeholders were involved through direct interviews
Provides the ability to observe behaviour as it occurs, thus reducing logistical barriers to research, which can improve efficiency	Difficulty in ensuring the team and target communities stay committed to the study throughout the project.	The team emphasised the need for commitment during the inception workshop and follow-up meetings, and the employed method (root cause analysis) was designed not only to ensure community participation but to further intrigue the interest of the team during focus group discussions

Guiding Questions to PAR

The PAR approach encourages a simultaneous focus on collaboration through participation, knowledge development, social change, and empowerment of participants. The team discussed the following guide

questions in conducting PAR during the workshop. As agreed, the questions provided a standard for the team to benchmark their conduct during the study.



A. Who will be involved in conducting the research? What roles will they play?

B. What question(s) does the project seek to answer? What methods do we need to use to find the answers to our research questions? What can each person present contribute to the research process?

C. Are those facilitating and involved in the study representative of the wider group affected by this issue? Are there people who are not represented, who we need to involve at certain stages? If so, how?

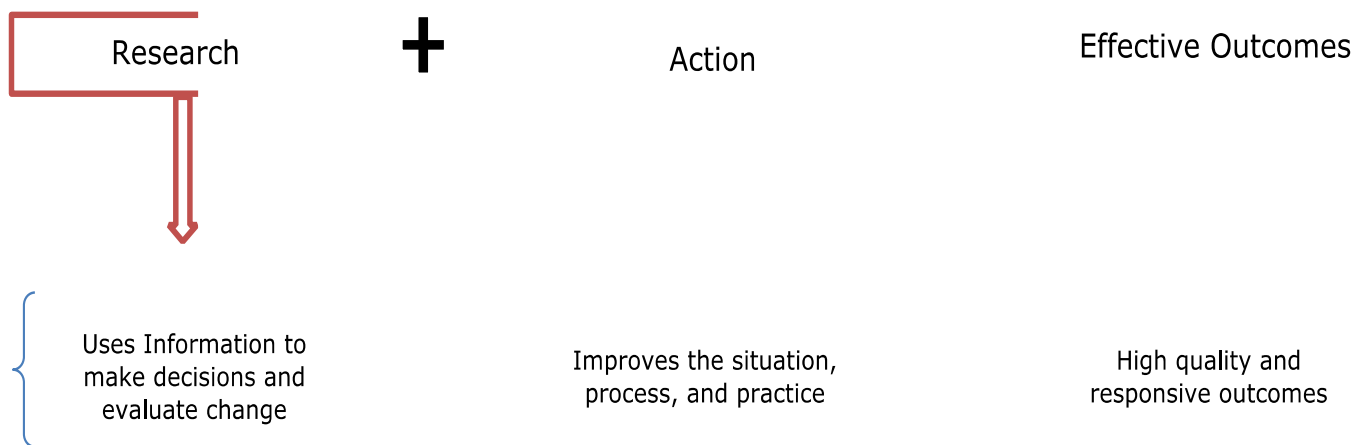
D. What are the potential benefits the research might lead to? How can we maximise these? What changes are needed? How are we going to be accountable?

D. How will we stand back from time to time to reflect on how the research is going and what has been achieved? Who will analyse the findings and understand how this was done?

E. What changes are needed according to the findings of the research? How do we want to share and promote the results of the study?

Expected Outcomes

As a research-to-action approach, the use of information from the team and communities to make decisions and evaluate change while conducting PAR, combined with activity interventions proposed by communities to improve their situation, yielded high-quality and responsive outcomes as illustrated below:



Generally, PAR outcomes include greater empowerment, participation, knowledge, collaborative development, and enhanced research processes. These are aligned with the expected outcomes of this study as outlined in the ToR. Therefore, the team has ensured that the final deliverable addresses and provides leeway for the following activities to be implemented:

- ❖ The findings allow for more profound and meaningful participation by the program partners,
- ❖ The findings allow for the design of capacity-building activities for all targeted beneficiaries,
- ❖ The findings potentially inform the development of policy briefs and shape the content of policy dialogues; and,
- ❖ The study informs further interventions in relation to capacity building for the beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Purpose of the Study and Scope

The study aims to facilitate enterprise support and an ecosystem that encourages and promotes the participation and empowerment of women and youth. Furthermore, the findings inform the enterprise support portal and ecosystem and capacity-building activities with relevant and sustainable information. This will later be done by developing curricula for capacity building and an online information portal / hub where information can easily be accessed. The information will be on participatory governance, gender-smart approaches, and / or practices.

The objective of the action research is two-pronged:

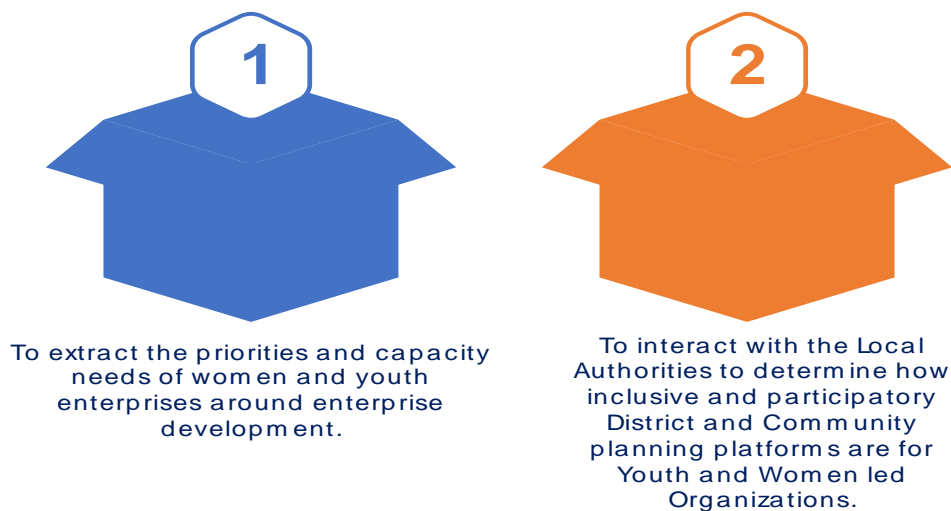


Figure 4: Objectives of the Project

In terms of scope, the project location is in Maseru, Leribe and Butha-Buthe districts, targeting 11 Community Councils (CCs), 12 Electoral Divisions (EDs) and 63 villages, as highlighted below:

Table 2: Target CCs and EDs in Maseru

Community Council	Electoral Division	Village
Likolobeng Community Council	Thaba Putsoa A03	Mok'huk'hung Ha Lelao Hleoheng Ts'ieng Ha Monyane Thotaneng Tsatsane Moeaneng.
Likolobeng Community Council	Likolobeng	Ha Nkesane Mokhoabong Ha Khosi Ha Penane Moreneng Aupolisi Litaleng
Makhoalipana Community Council	Likhameng	Mants'a Likhameng Ha Chadwick Ha Mankala HaRamosebo
Makhoarane Community Council	Makhoarane	Morija Thaba Chitja Letlapeng Ha Rantshala Mabenkeleng Likhoiting Moreneng Maloaleng

Table 3: Target CCs and EDs in Leribe

Community Council	Electoral Division	Village
Litjotjela	Lenyakoane Moreneng	Mankhololi Ha T'supane Lenyakoane
Tsoilitsoili	Ha Tlalinyane	Motse Mocha Ha Molelle Tlalinyane Nkhabu Kopano
Maoamafubelu	Seetsa Primary	Ha Chachole Mphoche Shebang Ha Nts'a
Limamarela	Ha Lejone Moreneng	Pont'seng Lucas Letsatseng Ha Nkheo

Table 4: Target CCs and EDs in Butha-Buthe

Community Council	Electoral Division	Village
Likila	Khukhune ACL	Khukhune, Boqele Phamotse Maletsunyane
Nqoe	'Moteng Community Primary	Maseru Moteng Qobella St Elena Ramohetsa Phelindaba Rapeane
T'salaT'sala Moleka	Serutle	Serutle Ha -Ntsoana Ha Tebe-tebe Kololong
Ngoajane	Ngoajane Primary School	Ha Maama Ha puso Masaleng Ha Thloeli

INTRODUCTION

Literature Review Design

The detailed literature review in this section provides a contextual overview of five critical pillars that form the basis for prioritising youth and women in enterprise support services in Lesotho. This includes the contextual overview of (i) Participatory Public Governance and Inclusion; (ii) Civil Society Organisations; (iii) Women Civic Engagement and Political Participation; (iv) State of Youth Development; and (v) MSMEs and Business Development Support Ecosystem.

These pillars are addressed in alignment with key elements of a PAR approach, which focus on inclusion and collaboration, emphasising 'learning by doing'. With the most recent impact of COVID-19 on several sectors in Lesotho's economy, the study further provides a brief outline of the impact on participatory governance and the country's economic productivity. Each Pillar, therefore, is designed to address standardised themes as demonstrated below:

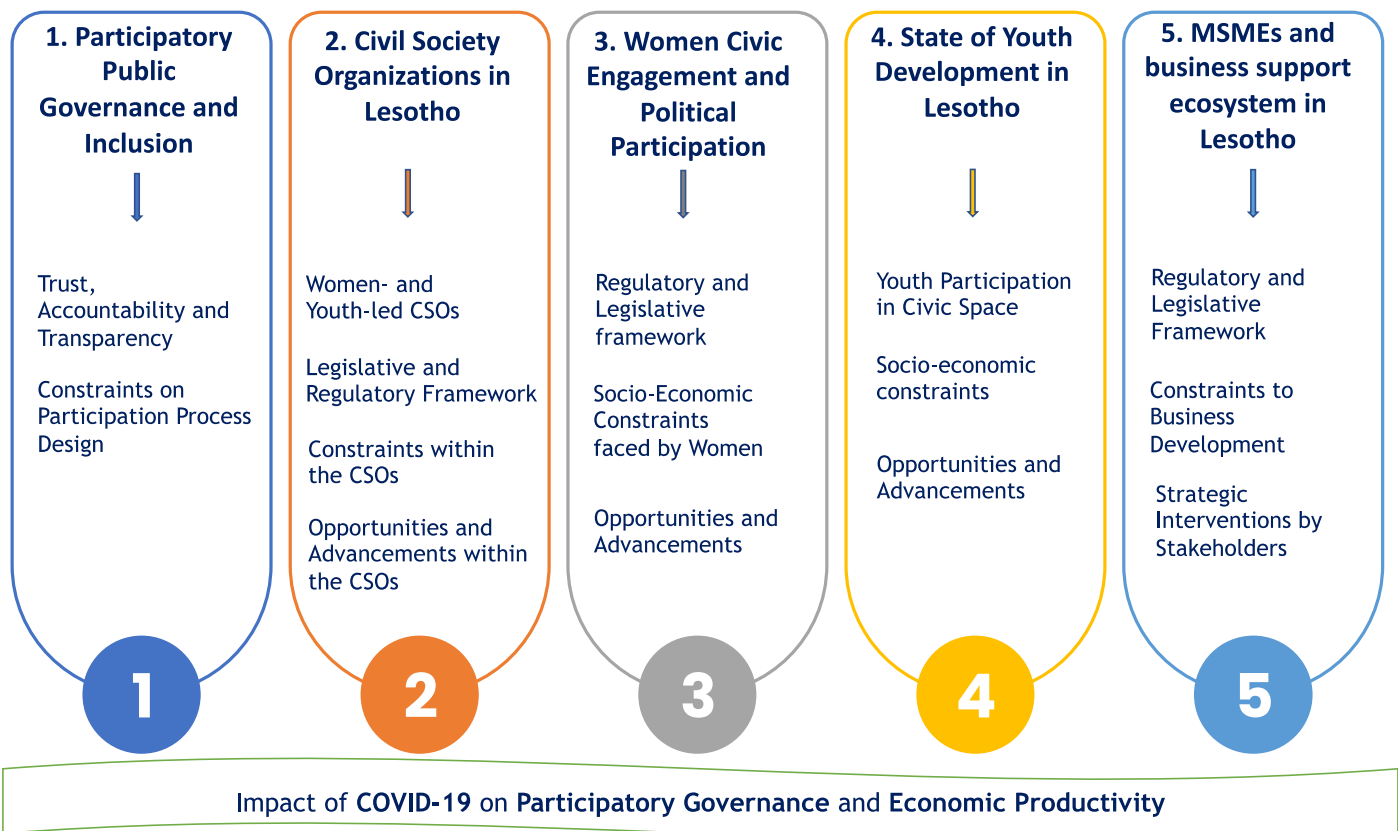


Figure 5: Illustration of the Literature Review Design

Contextual Overview - Participatory Public Governance and Inclusion

Participatory governance refers to the democratic mechanisms intended to involve citizens in public policy-making¹. It consists of state-sanctioned institutional processes that allow citizens to exercise their voice and vote, resulting in the implementation of public policies that change citizens' lives². Therefore, the inclusion of citizens in state-sanctioned venues implies that they are now in constant contact with government officials.

Key to participatory public governance is access to information. However, in a 2017 citizens' participation survey conducted by GIZ-PISA, the results showed that only a fraction of Basotho could access relevant information about democratic and developmental issues through mass media³. Although about 80 percent of Basotho listen to the radio, 60.6 percent claimed to have limited access to democracy and / or development information through national radio⁴. This implies that there remains an opportunity to enhance the use of mass media, including social media, as information sources.

In-depth knowledge of how democracy works is another prerequisite for citizens' public participation. From the GIZ-PISA survey findings, 72.2 percent of respondents indicated that they did not have sufficient knowledge related to participation in democratic processes. Poor households displayed significantly lower levels of knowledge, with no evident difference between males and females and urban and rural areas⁵. Likewise, most Basotho (80.4 percent) have limited knowledge of the Constitution, 72.3 percent of the existing electoral system, and 65.5 percent of community councils. In comparison, only 49.8 percent confirmed high knowledge of how the chieftainship system works⁶. Although 77 percent of Basotho confirmed attending *lipitso*, about 44 percent participated in a *pitso* (rural - 47.8 percent, urban - 36.1 percent), in which democratic and / or developmental issues were discussed⁷. Considering the critical role a *pitso* plays as a format for citizens' participation, especially in rural settings, the relatively low attendance undermines people's utility.

Some local government councillors' level of understanding and education is a significant challenge. Some councilors do not understand their roles and responsibilities pertaining to citizen participation and local

¹ Palumbo R. (2017) Participatory Governance. In: Farazmand A. (eds) Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5_1834-1

² Ibid

³ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

⁷ Ibid

government in general⁸. This is further complicated by English written documents circulated for capacity building, which some councilors cannot understand⁹. Therefore, the councillors need to be thoroughly trained, competent enough to manage and perform their work, and for documents to be published in both Sesotho and English for inclusion purposes.

Trust, Accountability, and Transparency

Citizens evaluate their trust in government, institutions, policies, and individual political leaders according to efficiency, effectiveness, promise-keeping, fairness, and honesty. In Lesotho, the King is the most trusted public figure, with more than two-thirds (69 percent) of Basotho saying that they trust him at least "somewhat," including 57 percent who trust him "a lot"¹⁰. Religious leaders (59 percent), the prime minister (57 percent), and traditional leaders (53 percent) rank near the top, while only 45 percent trust their community councils¹¹. A decline in political trust is partly driven by perceptions of government corruption, disrespect for the rule of law, and inadequate government performance¹².

The World Bank Group (WBG) ranks Lesotho's *transparency, accountability, and corruption* in the public sector on a scale of three, with one being *low* and six *high*¹³. This indicator assesses the extent to which the executive can be held accountable for its use of funds and the results of its actions by the electorate, the legislature, and the judiciary. It further assesses the extent to which public employees within the executive are required to account for administrative decisions, use of resources, and results obtained. The three main dimensions assessed here are the accountability of the executive to oversight institutions and public employees for their performance, civil society's access to public affairs information, and state capture by narrow vested interests.

Participation in decision-making processes at the community level

Community Action Plans are plans developed by communities following a community engagement exercise¹⁴. In Lesotho, public participation at the community level is organised through public gatherings convened by the village chief (*pitso*). This is also where information on issues of public interest is shared¹⁵. However, *lipitso* have become a general approach used by traditional leaders, government and development partners alike for

⁸ Citizen Participation in Policy and Planning Processes: The Case of Qacha's Nek, Lesotho, 2015

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 57, Basotho perceptions of government corruption and performance drive drop in popular trust, 2019

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ CPIA transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector rating – Lesotho (www.worldbank.org)

¹⁴ Check: <https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/your-area/formartine/community-planning-in-action/>

¹⁵ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

mobilising communities for various purposes, including distribution of food parcels and political campaigning¹⁶. On the other hand, local councils are mandated to implement participatory local governance by providing opportunities for citizens to participate in council affairs¹⁷.

Therefore, this study assesses participation in community and district action plans through *lipitso*, local council meetings, electoral division elections, and other community forums involved in decision-making processes.

Constraints - Participation Process Design

In Lesotho, a case study conducted in Qacha's Nek revealed that although citizen participation in governance is indeed taking place and is viewed as necessary, it is often plagued by challenges such as lack of knowledge of local government¹⁸. The study examined citizen participation in Lesotho's policy and planning processes. One of the questions asked was whether citizens were aware of the policies that promoted participation in Lesotho's policy and planning process and whether they viewed their participation in these processes as necessary. The findings showed that not all citizens were aware of the policies that promote citizen participation in the community council. Although they viewed their right to participation as necessary, some still did not fully understand this right or have much regard for it.

Another challenge the respondents highlighted was implementing the local government along political party lines in Lesotho. Respondents noted that this renders the local government amenable to political conflicts. Instead of addressing policies and development as expected, local governance's contention on political issues becomes rampant¹⁹. To mitigate this challenge, respondents recommended that government and the CSOs offer comprehensive political education where different segments of citizens and councilors could be educated and sensitised on the importance and role of citizen participation in the local government²⁰.

The other limiting factor lies in the perceptions of those who believe their opinions do not matter in decision-making. This is evidenced by the results of the GIZ-PISA survey, which showed that, of those that participated in *lipitso*, about 56.6 percent agreed with the statement that their participation does not matter as people like them do not have influence²¹. Nonetheless, 79.4 percent agree with the statement, "If politicians took people's views more seriously, people would be more actively involved".

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Citizen Participation in Policy and Planning Processes: The Case of Qacha's Nek, Lesotho, 2015

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Citizen Participation in Policy and Planning Processes: The Case of Qacha's Nek, Lesotho, 2015

²¹ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

Another view that came out from the Qacha's Nek case study is that even though citizens do participate and attend meetings for policy formulation when summoned by the local chief, they are more likely and interested to participate in policy implementation where they are employed in projects and know that they are going to be paid²². Therefore, citizens typically participate in land reclamation, forestry, road construction, and soil conservation projects.

Contextual Overview - Civil Society Organizations in Lesotho

The Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Lesotho refer to all organisations that fall under the NGO sector, including Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), CBOs and employee/employer organisations²³. In other words, CSO is a collective term to include all non-state and non-profit actors operating independently and accountable. The CSOs in Lesotho continue to engage in a wide range of activities, including advocacy and lobbying, human rights, democracy and governance, capacity building, gender, and development. They play a critical role in the consolidation of democracy, even though they have not often been the initiator of policies²⁴.

The role of CSOs can be grouped into four categories: public policy and decision making; enhancing state performance; transparency and information; and social justice and the rule of law²⁵. The CSOs try to influence policy reforms through dialogue, advocacy, and persuasion in the first category. Therefore, they can mobilise the public to participate more fully in decision-making processes and the management of public affairs²⁶.

In Lesotho, at a national level, CSOs have several opportunities to engage in policymaking by participating in different government-initiated mechanisms, including Thematic/Technical Working Groups. They have also been consulted on draft legislation. They have further made proposals such as the Amendment of the Children and Protection and Welfare Act to end child marriage, the National Reforms Bill, and the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2006²⁷.

As the role of CSOs is not often understood, there is a perception of organisations being deemed as *opposition in disguise* or *unwelcome watchdogs*²⁸. The role of CSOs as watchdogs, holding the government and other public and private actors to account, is widely acknowledged. However, when CSOs are perceived as "unwelcome" watchdogs, their involvement in policy discourse may be affected. Nevertheless, as *watchdogs*, CSOs play a

²² Citizen Participation in Policy and Planning Processes: The Case of Qacha's Nek, Lesotho, 2015

²³ Lesotho EU Country road map for engagement with civil society, 2014 - 2017

²⁴ EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Societies in Lesotho, 2018 - 2020

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Journal of Public Administration - The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Policy Making Process in Rwanda, 2005

²⁷ EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Societies in Lesotho, 2018 - 2020

²⁸ Ibid

crucial role in the political system and articulate and elevate the grassroots demands to the authorities and political elites²⁹.

Women- and Youth-led CSOs

Various women-led CSOs exist in Lesotho. Notable ones include Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), FIDA, Boiteko Women's Association and Federation on Lesotho Women Entrepreneurs (FLWE), and Lesotho National Council of Women (LNCW) and Gender Links (GL).

WLSA is an action-oriented research organisation active in seven countries of southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe³⁰. The Lesotho chapter was established to provide research and empirical evidence to influence policy and legal reforms to promote women's social, economic, and legal status. WLSA further operates through strategic groups that provide legal literacy, legal awareness, and assistance to women who want to assert their rights³¹.

The Lesotho FIDA was established in 1988 by a group of Basotho women lawyers who were concerned about the legal situation of women in the country³². The organisation's main objective is to improve the legal status of women and children and lobby for law reform to abolish discriminatory laws, most of which have been brought about by the existing legal dualism³³.

The Boiteko Women's Association was established in 1960³⁴. Its mandate is to help women improve their domestic lives through income-generating projects and contribute to developmental programmes aimed at poverty alleviation³⁵. The FLWE, on the other hand, empowers women entrepreneurs and capacitates them to run economically viable and sustainable business enterprises³⁶.

The LNCW was created in 1964. Its mandate promotes understanding and cooperation among women's voluntary organisations, the government, the community and other welfare and non-profit agencies. It is an umbrella body of 21 women's voluntary groups and associations, all working at the grassroots³⁷. The organisation has initiatives to ensure that local authorities and various women-based community groups engage further on gender, gender-based violence, elections, and the media and increase knowledge and awareness of

²⁹ EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Societies in Lesotho, 2018 - 2020

³⁰ Check: [UN FAO - Gender and Land Rights Database, Lesotho](#)

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Check: [UN FAO - Gender and Land Rights Database, Lesotho](#)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Check: <http://www.flwe.co.ls/>

³⁷ Check: <https://wiser.directory/organization/lesotho-national-council-of-women-lncw/>

the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development³⁸. Finally, GL works with local government councils to ensure that gender is mainstreamed from the grassroots levels.

On the other hand, notable youth CSOs in Lesotho include Youth Entrepreneurs Forum (YEF), Global Shapers (GS) Maseru hub, Junior Chamber International (JCI), Bacha Re Bacha Youth forum (BRB), Lesotho work camps (LWC), and Young Christian Students (YCS). The YEF is a forum for youth entrepreneurs in Lesotho, with the mandate to empower youth in entrepreneurial skills, opportunities, and networking. The JCI is a CSO of young people between 18 and 40 years old with members in about 124 countries; its mandate is to encourage young people to become active citizens and participate in social and economic development and international cooperation, goodwill and understanding³⁹. Global Shapers community is a World Economic Forum (WEF) initiative that was created to empower young people, amplify their voices around the world, and enable them to drive impactful change in their communities⁴⁰.

On the other hand, the BRB is an advocacy and youth rights CSO. It advocates for youth rights in governance and human rights in health⁴¹. The LWC, on the other hand, is an active association that mobilises youth to keep them busy and away from the streets by providing them with livelihood skills such as construction, tree planting, soil conservation, water supply, and home-based and school gardens⁴². Finally, the YCS is a student movement-led and administered by students to benefit all and corporates with youth-based national and international organisations working on education and developing Human Rights for the poor⁴³.

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The EU country road map for engagement with civil society states that the environment for civil society in Lesotho is conducive, both in law and in practice, for effective engagement⁴⁴. The CSOs commonly register under the Society's Act of 1966⁴⁵. Furthermore, civil society is governed by several laws, including the Cooperative Societies' Act of 2000, the Labour Code 1992, the Partnership Proclamation, and the Friendly Society's Act⁴⁶. The Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN), as an umbrella organisation, supports the organisational capacity of CSOs and is instrumental in mobilising CSOs for policy **dialogue purposes**⁴⁷.

³⁸ Check: <https://genderlinks.org.za/about-us/who-we-are/where-we-work/lesotho-office/>

³⁹ Check: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junior_Chamber_International

⁴⁰ Check: <https://www.globalshapers.org/>

⁴¹ Check: <https://vymaps.com/LS/Bacha-Re-Bacha-Youth-Forum-567757040051450/>

⁴² Check: https://trickleout.net/index.php/directory-pilot/Lesotho/_Lesotho-work-camps/

⁴³ Check: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Non-Governmental-Organization--NGO-/Young-Christian-Students-in-Lesotho-YCSL-486319681547600/>

⁴⁴ Lesotho EU Country road map for engagement with civil society, 2014 - 2017

⁴⁵ Lesotho EU Country road map for engagement with civil society, 2014 - 2017

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Societies in Lesotho, 2018 - 2020

Constraints - CSOs

The EU country road map indicates that CSO consultations in policy and strategy formulation lack a clear policy framework, which results in unstructured and fragmented civil society involvement⁴⁸. Moreover, since the government selects CSO organisations that it engages with, the selection is not always transparent, and specific CSOs sometimes feel excluded⁴⁹.

The major constraint to supporting third-party accountability is the lack of access to budget data⁵⁰. Despite access to information on matters of public interest being a constitutional right, CSOs find it challenging to obtain information relating to legislative bills, national budgets, and audits. The CSOs cannot continually monitor the effective implementation of domestic laws and compliance with international conventions to which Lesotho is a party. This limits CSOs' efficient participation in national decision-making agenda and policies.

Most local civil society organisations have a weak financial base, as they cannot generate resources locally and rely on donor funding or low membership fees⁵¹. The CSOs do not receive tax favours under the Income Tax Act 1993, and the government has not deliberately implemented mechanisms to support and sustain their operations⁵². This means all organisations have to seek donor funds to survive, resulting in most CSOs scaling down their operations and others having to close their operations completely⁵³. Donors, on the other hand, have their funding mandate. And since CSOs have to align their activities with funding opportunities, this sometimes hinders them from pursuing other areas of interest they would like to venture into as funds are allocated on pre-set priorities⁵⁴.

Opportunities and Advancements

Lesotho's state laws, regulations, and policies on civil society make it easy for civil society groups to form, operate free from interference, express their views, communicate, convene, cooperate, and seek resources as enshrined in the Constitution, 1993⁵⁵. Additionally, the registration process for a CSO is said to be quick, easy, and inexpensive, providing interest groups with a platform to be legally recognised⁵⁶. Therefore, civil society has grown quantitatively and qualitatively and gained recognition at all levels⁵⁷.

⁴⁸ Lesotho EU Country road map for engagement with civil society, 2014 - 2017

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Lesotho EU Country road map for engagement with civil society, 2014 - 2017

Governments and politicians recognise civil society as legitimate social and political actors that provide systematic opportunities for state and civil society institutions to work together⁵⁸. The CSOs have, therefore, ventured on with much success in initiating the process of the national reforms head-on by holding an LCN-led Post Elections and National Dialogue on National Reforms in 2017, which saw political parties, government and CSOs of various mandates united to find an amicable solution to the reforms debate⁵⁹.

The CSOs have several opportunities to engage in national policymaking by participating in government-initiated mechanisms, including Thematic/Technical Working Groups⁶⁰. At the community level, an evaluation conducted by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) proposes that CSO representation at council meetings must be pursued at the council level, thus engaging deeper with local government officials⁶¹.

Finally, amidst the funding challenges, CSOs, through the National Volunteer Corps (NVC) programme under the Ministry of Gender & Youth, Sport & Recreation (MGYSR), have maintained minimal staff required to run programmes from the volunteers registered under the programme⁶².

Contextual Overview – Women's Civic Engagement and Political Participation

Women's political participation in decision-making positions remains low in Lesotho⁶³. For example, out of 1,116 nominated candidates in the 2015 National Assembly elections, only 343 were females compared to 773 males, while in 2017, it was 786 males compared to 326 females of 1,112 nominated candidates⁶⁴. Women's representation in decision-making roles, such as in politics, is still lagging and stands at 23 percent of women in parliament after the 2017 National Assembly Elections⁶⁵. This is below the SADC and AU set standards of attaining 50 percent representation of women in parliament⁶⁶.

Despite increasing women's access to land in rural and urban areas, tenure is often contested. Women continue to have little decision-making power over the use of the land⁶⁷. For instance, the 2014 Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) indicates that about one-third of women own a house, while 28 percent own land, decision-making regarding land use as an economic resource remains primarily controlled by men⁶⁸.

⁵⁸ EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Societies in Lesotho, 2018 - 2020

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Lesotho EU Country road map for engagement with civil society, 2014 - 2017

⁶³ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

⁶⁴ Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) Lesotho, 2019

⁶⁵ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

The LCN policy brief report argues that personal empowerment does not seem to translate into political empowerment for women because society is not ready to accept women in political leadership roles⁶⁹. This is evidenced by the 2018 BOS gender statistical report, which indicates that women's participation in decision-making at the local government level and senior positions in political parties has been consistently low. In 2018, out of 1,427 members of the local councils, only 558 were women. Furthermore, 280 men held senior positions in political parties, while the number for women was only 151⁷⁰. The reason for low women's participation in decision-making is attributable to the deeply rooted cultural, traditional, and social norms that do not recognise equality and capabilities of women in political roles⁷¹

The report has further revealed the multifaceted nature of barriers to women's participation rooted in women's systems. These barriers are rooted in cultural ideologies, religion, social norms, and socialisation. The institutional barriers include the role of political parties' nomination of councilors, which appears to be mainly influenced by their affiliation; hence female councilors represent their parties, not communities, affecting their autonomy⁷². On the other hand, women councilors' educational background is perceived to be shallow, making it difficult to understand technical policy language used in project documents, procedures, and regulations⁷³. This, in turn, limits their participation.

Regulatory and Legislative Framework

There are various legal and policy frameworks in Lesotho that promote gender equality. These include the following:

- i. The Constitution of Lesotho 1993, which provides for a bill of rights and freedom of all forms of discrimination,
- ii. The Sexual offence Act 2003, which consolidates all offences of a sexual nature and criminalises rape within marriage,
- iii. The Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act 2006, which advocates for equal treatment of married persons,
- iv. The Land Act 2010 guarantees the right to hold title to land for all persons above the age of 18 and provides for joint titling for persons married in the community of property,

⁶⁹ LCN Policy Brief – The status of women in Lesotho with respect to participation in local governance process, 2015

⁷⁰ Bureau of Statistics – Gender Status Booklet, 2018

⁷¹ LCN Policy Brief – The status of women in Lesotho with respect to participation in local governance process, 2015

⁷² LCN Policy Brief – The status of women in Lesotho with respect to participation in local governance process, 2015

⁷³ Ibid

- v. The Domestic Violence bill 2018 conveys the state's commitment toward the elimination of domestic violence; and,
- vi. The National Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030 aligns with national, regional, and international obligations on gender equality, equity, and empowerment Agenda 2030 and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063⁷⁴.

The Penal Code Act of 2010 is also of interest. Section 30 (2) defines assault as when one spouse intentionally applies unlawful force to another. Section 51 (2) defines indecent assault as when one person touches another indecently, demonstrating sexual intention or motive. In like manner, Section 45 (2C) permits women to terminate a pregnancy because of rape.

Socio-Economic Constraints - Women

Women and girls continue to experience and face multiple discriminations in different spheres of their lives⁷⁵. This includes young women, differently-abled women, women living with HIV, economically marginalised rural and urban women, sex workers and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women. While closing gender gaps in education has progressed well, the gains are not translating into more secure, better-paying jobs for women⁷⁶.

The 2020 WBG Policy Notes on Lesotho highlight that while Basotho women have higher literacy rates (85 percent compared to men at 68 percent), they are more likely to be unemployed, working without pay, earning less or being in low productivity and more vulnerable sectors⁷⁷. This is evidenced by the high unemployment rate in females, 39.7 percent, and youth, 32.3 percent, compared to males, at 26.2 percent⁷⁸. This situation includes social norms reinforcing women's economic dependence on men, traditional views of gender roles where women are seen as housewives and caregivers at the cost of educational/professional advancement, and low recruitment into technical fields and jobs⁷⁹.

Many working women, approximately 50,000, are employed in the garments sector and remain highly vulnerable, as evidenced by the exceptionally high HIV prevalence of 42.7 percent amongst workers in 2012⁸⁰. Their working conditions and remuneration packages remain poor, as is evident from the significantly low

⁷⁴ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Lesotho Policy Notes, World Bank, 2020

⁷⁸ Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS) report, 2017

⁷⁹ Lesotho Policy Notes, World Bank, 2020

⁸⁰ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

salaries of female garment workers and the limited amounts they can remit⁸¹.

In addition, while women own 59 percent of MSMEs, they tend to own the smallest businesses and operate in the informal sector (82 percent)⁸². Women tend to rely more on informal savings and credit and have fewer assets to use as collateral for the credit they would need to scale up their businesses, even though Lesotho is claimed to have reached parity in financial inclusion⁸³. Furthermore, regardless of favourable laws being in place, such as the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, 2006, which gives married women equal say in matrimonial matters, and the Land Act, 2010, which permits joint titling of the lease by married couples, negative attitudes seem to lag statutory developments that brought about the advancement of women through the law, which means the challenge of women's marginalisation in accessing financial resources remains⁸⁴. This is perhaps attributable to slow progress in attitudinal change⁸⁵.

Opportunities and Advancements

The 2018 Global Gender Gap Index Report indicates that there are significant shifts in the status and conditions of women and that, to some degree, there is a narrowing of the gender gap, while there is the widening of the inequality gap in general between the rich and the poor⁸⁶. In 2018, Lesotho was ranked 81 on the Global Gender Gap Index, having closed about 69 percent of its overall gender gap and ranked 14 in Sub-Saharan Africa⁸⁷.

Significant progress has been made, but much is still to be done, especially with the full and effective implementation of laws, policies, and strategies⁸⁸. For instance, the Land Act of 2010 and Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, 2006 allow women to participate in economic resources such as agricultural activities and use the land as collateral in accessing credit from financial institutions⁸⁹. Significant change is noted in legal status, attitudes, and women's involvement in decision-making, especially at the political level, employment, education, ownership of homes and businesses, the justice system, and economic participation⁹⁰. However, the pace of change appears to be relatively slow, and trends indicate a gradual achievement toward real non-sexism and substantive gender equality⁹¹.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Lesotho MSME survey, Finscope 2016

⁸³ Lesotho Policy Notes, World Bank, 2020

⁸⁴ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ The Global Gender Gap Index Report, 2018

⁸⁷ The Global Gender Gap Index Report, 2018

⁸⁸ Lesotho government Beijing +25 Review report, 2020

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

Gender Smart Practices

Gender smart approaches should inform the above-highlighted advancements in gender in terms of the regulatory framework. The guidelines advocate for men's and women's needs, priorities, and realities to be recognised and adequately addressed in the design and application of programs so that both men and women can equally benefit⁹². The UN Global Compact and UN Women established the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which offer guidance on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and the community⁹³. The below guidelines provide practical advice, general reporting approaches, and specific examples of disclosures and performance indicators for operationalising the seven WEPs⁹⁴.

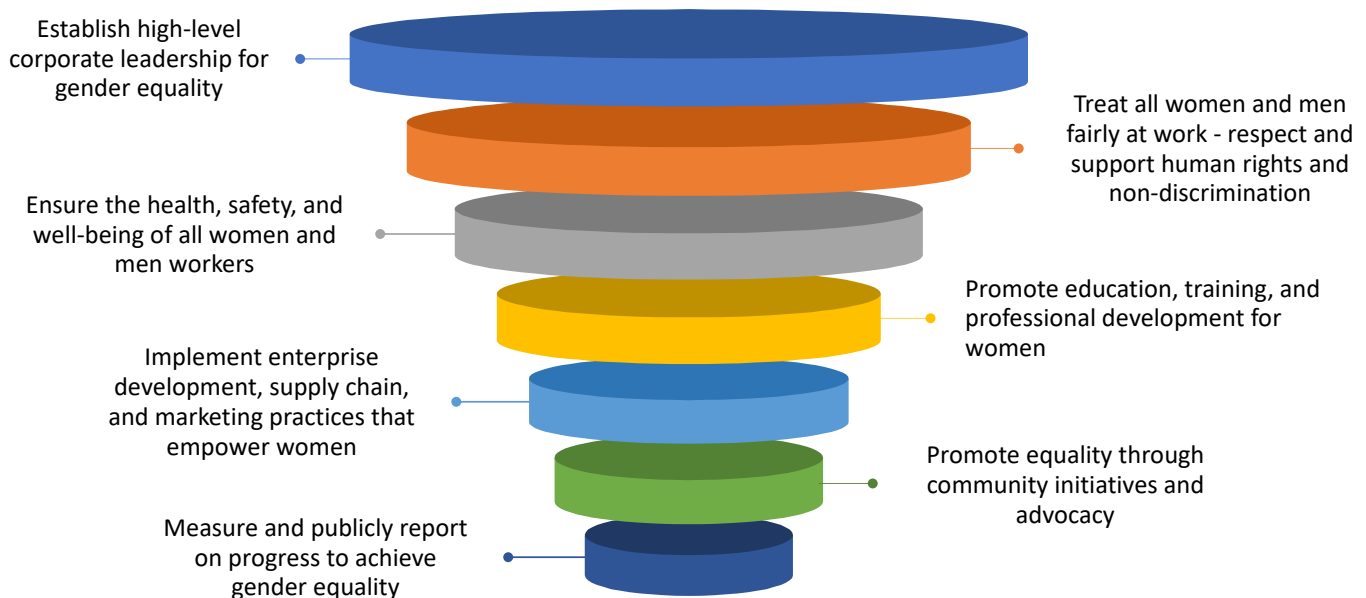


Figure 6: The Seven WEPs

Contextual Overview - The State of Youth Development in Lesotho

The Lesotho National Youth Policy (NYP) 2017-2030 defines *youth* as people between 15 and 35 years⁹⁵. The country is experiencing a demographic shift; 70.0 percent of the population is below 34⁹⁶. However, the fertility rate has also slowed, falling to 0.8 percent in 2019⁹⁷. The combination of a large young population amidst a falling fertility rate has created a youth bulge slowly ageing and will soon be entering the labour force. This

⁹² Practice Brief - A Gender-responsive Approach to Climate-Smart Agriculture, 2016

⁹³ Check: <https://www.weps.org>

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation (2019), Lesotho National Youth Policy (NYP) 2017-2030, Lesotho

⁹⁶ Lesotho Voluntary National Review on the Implementations of Agenda 2030 Report 2019

⁹⁷ World Bank, 2020, World Development Indicators

poses an opportunity for Lesotho to develop under a large labour force quickly and low dependency ratio and requires that the youth be engaged in the labour force and not be disenfranchised, which would risk heightened political and social instability.

In pursuit of effective youth development in Lesotho, the country launched its National Youth Policy (2017 – 2030) in 2019, aligned with the African Youth Charter (AYC) recommendations. The adopted NYP provides a framework for enabling youth to develop social, economic, cultural, and political skills to enhance their participation in improving their quality of life. Through proper coordination of youth interventions and initiatives in Lesotho, the NYP plans to attain the following policy outcomes⁹⁸: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Financial Literacy are integrated into the education system at appropriate levels by 2021; The percentage of youth with access to savings and credit services in Lesotho is a minimum of 40% by 2026 and 60% by 2030; By 2030, there is an operationalised, equitable and gender-sensitive youth representation in all structures and levels of public decision-making by 2030.

Youth Participation in Civic Space

Lesotho's youth civic participation has deteriorated from 21 in 2016 to 47 in 2020 out of 49 Commonwealth countries (CWC)⁹⁹. As determined by the Youth Development Index (YDI), the key dimensions for assessing participation are youth policies and level of representation in political structures, voter education, and opportunities to express political views¹⁰⁰. Lesotho's poor scoring is attributed to limited programmes and interventions by the political parties targeting the youth to effectively participate in the country's politics, leadership, and decision-making processes¹⁰¹.

Limited information on Youth Civic Participation initiatives implemented by civil society organisations in Lesotho is available. However, lately, there have been cases of uprising and protests from the youth. On 02 July 2019, the youth marched to the streets to have their voice heard for the first time in the country, demanding answers from the then Prime Minister, Thomas Thabane¹⁰². They peacefully protested all their socio-economic challenges, including the high unemployment youth rate.

Socio-Economic Constraints - Youth

According to the World Bank, Lesotho's unemployment rate declined from 27.0 percent in 2010 to 23.0 percent

⁹⁸ Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation (2019), Lesotho National Youth Policy (NYP) 2017-2030, Lesotho

⁹⁹ [Global Youth Development Index \(YDI\) - The Health Hub \(thehealthhub.net\)](https://thehealthhub.net/)

¹⁰⁰ Survey Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents and Youth in Lesotho, 2021

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Lesotho times July,2,2019 ‘Thabane faces angry youth’(www.lestimes.com)

in 2019¹⁰³. Likewise, although youth unemployment has consistently declined since 1999 (49.8 percent), it remains a persistent challenge in 2020 (32.8 percent)¹⁰⁴. This is further perpetuated by a general mismatch between skills and labour market demands and a limited investment environment that adversely affects employment opportunities, threatening the realisation of poverty alleviation and decent work for all¹⁰⁵. High youth unemployment is further associated with high poverty levels and income inequality. When young people are left with no alternative but unemployment and poverty, they are more likely to join a rebellion as an alternative way of generating an income¹⁰⁶. As such, unemployment among the youth is associated with increased crimes such as robbery, drug-related offences, and murder¹⁰⁷.

Opportunities and Advancements

The government, CSOs, Development Partners (DPs) and the private sector have created platforms where youth representatives can voice their views and participate in decision-making. These platforms include the Children's parliament by the World Vision, the National Reforms Authority (NRA) and others.

In 2017, a CSO called Sentebale formed a partnership called *Let Youth Lead* with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)¹⁰⁸. Likewise, the programme provides a platform for young people to regularly engage leadership on socio-economic problems they face in their communities and youth-related solutions thereof¹⁰⁹.

On the other hand, the Lesotho Millennium Development Agency (LMDA) has projects targeted at youth, such as the Market-Driven Irrigated Horticulture (MDIH) and the Business Environment and Technical Assistance (BETA). The MDIH project empowers women and youth, communities, landholders, and farmers in the irrigated horticulture sector. In contrast, the BETA project aims to promote women- and youth-owned SMEs and strengthen the business ecosystem to address horticulture sector-specific challenges¹¹⁰.

Further opportunities for youth in Lesotho include the Vodacom Foundation Bursary, which provides young indigenous Basotho with scholarships to study degrees in digitalisation, and the Vodacom Innovation Park, a technology-based business incubator for young entrepreneurs in Lesotho¹¹¹. This study will identify more existing and potential opportunities during interviews with key stakeholders.

¹⁰³ World Bank, Sustainable Development Goals, 2020

¹⁰⁴ [Lesotho - youth unemployment rate 1999-2020 | Statista](#)

¹⁰⁵ [Lesotho Common Country Analysis | United Nations in Lesotho](#)

¹⁰⁶ Survey Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents and Youth in Lesotho, 2021

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Let Youth Lead, Building Responsible Youth, Youth Dialogue Forums 2018

¹⁰⁹ Survey Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents and Youth in Lesotho, 2021

¹¹⁰ Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact II Development Approaches in Lesotho. Check: <https://ls.usembassy.gov>

¹¹¹ Check: <https://www.vodacom.co.ls>

Contextual Overview - MSMEs and Business Support Ecosystem in Lesotho

The MSME sector in Lesotho comprises mainly the micro-enterprises at 97 percent, with only 2.7 percent small enterprises and only 0.3 percent medium enterprises¹¹². The majority, 30 percent of these, are in wholesale and retail, followed by 22 percent in agriculture, fishing and forestry, 18 percent offer services such as car wash and saloon, and 9 percent for both accommodation and manufacturing¹¹³. The least sectors are arts and recreation, transportation and storage at 3 percent, and construction at 2 percent¹¹⁴. MSMEs in Lesotho are relatively established; the majority (64 percent) are more than three years in operation, with 6 percent operational for less than three years¹¹⁵.

The last comprehensive survey of the MSMEs in Lesotho by Finscope designates that most MSME owners (59 percent) are female, and only 29 percent of the MSME owners are youth, with 71 percent of MSME owners over 35 years of age¹¹⁶. The majority of MSME owners (34 percent) have obtained a primary level of education, followed by secondary, high school and some tertiary education at 24 percent, 23 percent, and 14 percent, respectively. Only 5 percent do not have any formal education¹¹⁷. This indicates that most MSMEs owners can at least read and write.

Regulatory and Legislative Framework

The BDS ecosystem in Lesotho is led by public sector institutions that provide the policy and regulatory framework¹¹⁸. The Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing (MSBDCM) is the primary ministry responsible for the development and oversight of policies to promote and facilitate the establishment, operation, and growth of MSMEs, including BDS¹¹⁹. At the policy implementation level, Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation (BEDCO) is the primary institution responsible for implementing policies related to local enterprise development. It is the leading implementer of entrepreneurship development in Lesotho¹²⁰.

BEDCO's mandate is to establish and develop Basotho-owned business enterprises with particular emphasis on promoting entrepreneurial skills¹²¹. In pursuit of its mandate, BEDCO provides the following services to

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Finscope MSME Lesotho, 2015

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Lesotho BDS Institutional Assessment Report, Economic Diversification Support Project, 2019

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Assessment of the BDS Ecosystem in Lesotho, Economic Diversification Support Project, 2019

MSMEs; business training, business advisory services, business incubation, market access facilitation, finance access facilitation, product-market facilitation, preparation of business plans, and provision of rental space for MSMEs¹²².

The Lesotho National Corporation (LNDC), on the other hand, is a parastatal that reports to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), and its mandate is to initiate, promote and facilitate the development of manufacturing and processing industries, mining, and commerce, many of which are MSMEs¹²³. The mandate is to promote further and encourage the industrialisation of Lesotho in general, which entails attracting foreign direct investment and supporting local enterprises¹²⁴. Notably, the types of BDS that LNDC provides include preparation of business plans, coaching and mentoring, aftercare services, and MSME financing through the Partial Credit Guarantee Facility¹²⁵.

The institutions that provide direct delivery of BDS to MSMEs in Lesotho are spread across the private sector, business associations & networks, tertiary institutions, NGOs and development partners¹²⁶. The business associations play an active role in providing BDS to capacitate their MSME members¹²⁷. The three leading business associations active in this space are the Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and the Private Sector Foundation of Lesotho (PSFL), and SMME Support Network-Lesotho (SMME Network)¹²⁸.

Other active service providers offering BDS services to the MSMEs are private consultants, referred to as Business Development Service Providers (BDSPs)¹²⁹. These BDSPs primarily provide BDS part-time as part of many other activities they pursue to remain afloat¹³⁰. Most BDSPs (88 percent) are one-person-only consulting businesses, meaning most BDSPs in Lesotho are microenterprises and operate in urban and rural areas¹³¹. About 90 percent of the BDS providers offer various training types, the most common being business management, financial management, marketing, and record keeping¹³². The remaining 10 percent is shared between ICT and specialised training (mainly agricultural training)¹³³. Few BDSPs provide general information, mentoring and consulting, and business incubation¹³⁴.

¹²² **Ibid**

¹²³ **Assessment of the BDS Ecosystem in Lesotho, Economic Diversification Support Project, 2019**

¹²⁴ **Lesotho BDS Institutional Assessment Report, Economic Diversification Support Project, 2019**

¹²⁵ **Ibid**

¹²⁶ **Ibid**

¹²⁷ **Ibid**

¹²⁸ **Ibid**

¹²⁹ **Assessment of the BDS Ecosystem in Lesotho, Economic Diversification Support Project, 2019**

¹³⁰ **Ibid**

¹³¹ **Ibid**

¹³² **Ibid**

¹³³ **Ibid**

¹³⁴ **Ibid**

Constraints - Business Development

According to the Second National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II), the six most binding constraints to private sector investment across Lesotho's four most productive sectors are access to finance; access to land; access to infrastructure, including access to utilities and energy; access to skills; poor health; and regulatory environment¹³⁵. Specific key challenges as cited by the MSME owners in the Finscope survey include sourcing money, equipment / raw material, not enough customers, transport (e.g., moving stock), finding business premises or operational space, too many competitors, being owed money / debtors and problems identifying prospect products / services to sell¹³⁶.

Other challenges MSMEs face include the lack of the necessary government support, such as a dedicated custom regime, and economic zones operating under tailored regulations and fiscal rules¹³⁷. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for short-term training on new technologies (plus exposure to use technology) for different sub-industries, such as cottage/crafts, food preparation, processing and safety, wood, and other artisanal areas¹³⁸.

In addition, the main challenge in developing policies that support MSME and BDS growth in Lesotho is the poor coordination across state institutions, which has resulted in a lack of defined roles and responsibilities, duplication of efforts and the exhaustion of already scarce resources¹³⁹. Furthermore, there is a lack of capacity and resources within the institutions to support small businesses to start up and develop effectively¹⁴⁰. Other challenges faced by the BDS institutions include difficulty accessing funding, lack of qualified BDS expertise, and lack of support from the government¹⁴¹. Likewise, the performance of business associations and networks has been significantly constrained by a lack of funding, shortage of qualified staff to deliver services, poor relationships with key stakeholders, and a lack of buy-in from the BDS market¹⁴².

The Lesotho BDS Institutional Assessment Report indicates that financial assistance in subsidies and grants for BDS, common in Lesotho, can distort BDS product pricing¹⁴³. As a result, BDS is regarded as a free good mainly provided by public institutions and donor agencies, affecting willingness to pay for such services at

¹³⁵ Lesotho National Strategic Development Plan II, 2018/19 to 2022/23

¹³⁶ Finscope MSME Lesotho, 2015

¹³⁷ Financial Sector Analysis, Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2018

¹³⁸ Lesotho country analysis working document final draft, 2017

¹³⁹ Lesotho BDS Institutional Assessment Report, Economic Diversification Support Project, 2019

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Ibid

commercial rates¹⁴⁴. This practice adversely affects the growth of the BDS market not only in numbers but in terms of capacity and capabilities. A fragile and incapacitated BDS sector¹⁴⁵ ultimately negatively affects MSMEs' performance.

Strategic Interventions by Stakeholders

Several measures and plans to mitigate against the challenges faced by the MSMEs in Lesotho are implemented by the Government, Development Partners, Civil Society, and Private Sector. Below are some measures and plans to support and promote the MSMEs in Lesotho.

Table 5: Strategic Interventions for Business Development Support

<p>Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation BEDCO</p> <p>BEDCO provides; business training, business advisory services, business incubation, market access facilitation, finance access facilitation, product market facilitation, preparation of business plans, & provision of rental space for MSMEs</p>	<p>Lesotho Enterprise Assistance Program (LEAP)</p> <p>Assistance provided includes grants for technical capacity building to improve market readiness, development of marketing tools such as websites & other branding & promotional material, & the development of business systems such as point of sales (POS) systems</p>
<p>Small holder Agriculture Development Project (SADP)</p> <p>SADP offering matching grants for farmers who want to expand or diversify agricultural production for commercial purposes</p>	<p>Lesotho National Development Corporation LNDC</p> <p>LNDC provides preparation of business plans, coaching and mentoring, aftercare services, and MSME financing through the Partial Credit Guarantee Facility</p>
<p>Lesotho Post Bank</p> <p>Supports farmers for purchase of agricultural equipment such as tractors and its accessories by giving 30% subsidy towards the purchase of equipment</p>	<p>Lesotho Supplier Development Programme (LSDP)</p> <p>Enhance local competitiveness and introduction to quality standards for farmers – facilitating access to markets to farmers - capacity building and optimizing access to finance</p>
<p>Bacha Entrepreneurship Program (BEP)</p> <p>This is an annual project, which was initiated by the BEDCO, Standard Lesotho Bank (SLB) and LRA to tackle youth unemployment by capacitating them with entrepreneurship skills, and financial support to increase capacity and efficiency in their businesses</p>	<p>Enhancing Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development (EYES) Project</p> <p>This project by UNDP has components that include identification & capacity building of youth entrepreneurs; Innovation grants and mentorship support; and knowledge and partnerships for youth development</p>
<p>Standard Lesotho Bank</p> <p>The bank has various programs that support entrepreneurs in Lesotho, including the Entrepreneurship Support Competition, which is a competition for capital grants to help Basotho businesses to survive the Covid-19 pandemic, and the enterprises hub</p>	<p>Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports & Recreation</p> <p>The Ministry has various entrepreneurship programs for youth, & currently they are implementing a nation-wide mentorship program aimed at matching youth entrepreneurs with suitable mentors to support with business advisory</p>

Identified Gaps

- A. SADP and LEAP work with formally registered MSMEs. With most MSMEs being informal micro-enterprises, they cannot benefit from these initiatives.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

- B. Most unregistered traders do not see a need to register as their businesses are still small, and those who want to register do not meet the registration requirements, which are not user-friendly for small-scale traders. This means more businesses will continue being excluded from many support initiatives to support MSMEs to grow.
- C. The offices for the above programs are mainly located in Maseru, making it harder for those MSMEs in other districts and remote areas to access them easily.
- D. For those activities where LEAP works on a reimbursement basis, some entrepreneurs do not have enough money to cover the full costs of completing the activities and therefore fail to get the assistance.
- E. Sometimes, the requirements are for the communities to be in groups for community projects. When the groups fail to work together (which happens more often), it impacts the project's success.

Covid-19 Impact

Impact on Employment

The impact of the pandemic on the economy is further evident in rising unemployment¹⁴⁶. In 2019, the overall unemployment rate was estimated at 28 percent and 43 percent among youths aged 15 to 24¹⁴⁷. Due to the supply and demand shocks realised within the productive sector, there have been significant knock-on effects on employment. The unemployment rates within productive sectors increased as most firms laid-off workers to reduce operational costs amid the production cuts and shutdown¹⁴⁸.

In its study on the impact of COVID-19 in Lesotho, the BoS claims that about 22.8 percent of all households interviewed had jobs before the pandemic but lost them after. And 59.3 percent of households had a respondent who had stopped working due to government-imposed COVID-19 legal restrictions and measures. Further data from the LNDC depicts that between March and June, the labour market was adversely affected, with significant declines in employment observed in LNDC-assisted companies, with some firms under total shut down¹⁴⁹. The BOS Socio-Economic Impact on Households Survey report shows that 23 percent of the employed population and 30 percent of those in wage employment lost their jobs during COVID-19, and 59 percent cited the closure of office as the main reason¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ International Labor Union 2020 ILOSTAT explorer

¹⁴⁸ Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Unemployment and Economic Productivity in Lesotho, 2020

¹⁴⁹ Central Bank, June 2020, Quarterly Economic review

¹⁵⁰ BOS, Socio-Economic Impact on Households Survey, October 2020

Impact on Participatory Governance

Restrictions on movement hamper the ability of leaders and organisations to mobilise and support their communities. Due to physical distancing and lockdowns, individuals and organisations could not hold protests. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are often uniquely placed to understand their communities' specific challenges and coping mechanisms that may help communities mitigate the effects of the pandemic¹⁵¹.

In the Survey Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents and Youth in Lesotho, most respondents felt that their human rights and freedom had been violated since COVID-19, the violation of; freedom of movement, right to participate in economic and social activities and the right to education¹⁵². As per findings, civic space has contracted in Lesotho since COVID-19, and freedoms of assembly, privacy, and expression have been negatively affected, silencing people's calls for change¹⁵³. Youth leaders and organisations now have limited access to power and decision-makers. The current crisis will likely affect the critical work that youth organisations undertake. Such organisations rely on volunteer work and face significant challenges in accessing reliable, sustained, and flexible funding.

METHODOLOGY

The Proposed Four-Step Process - PAR

The Consultant utilised an iterative learning cycle comprising planning, acting, observing, and reflecting phases to guide the team. The adoption of PAR followed a four-step process further aligned with the methodological approach.

¹⁵¹ Survey Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents and Youth in Lesotho, 2020

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Ibid

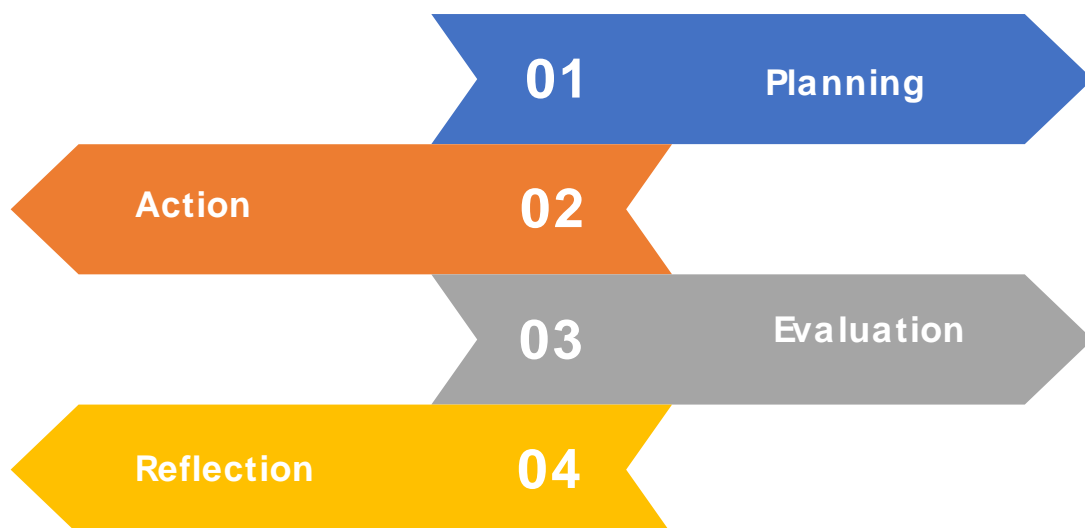


Figure 7: Four-Step PAR Process

1. **Planning.** This initial phase involved a desktop review in understanding the study's context, framing questions, designing data collection tools, establishing the working team, and reflecting on the processes followed. During the kickoff workshop, the Consultant involved the team and planned the key next steps. The Consultant further deepened the PAR process during engagement with the project's direct beneficiaries, communities, and youth- and women-led CBOs, through a Root Cause Analysis process. Therefore, the respondents were instrumental in providing input and taking the lead in identifying their needs and providing effective and efficient solutions.
2. **Action.** The 'action' phase involved putting the plans and designs from the first phase into practice. It covered extensive data collection processes aligned to specifically designed tools per category of stakeholders.
3. **Evaluation.** Phase three was all about communicating the findings through detailed data analysis. Through analysis, the project team brought an understanding and a visualisation of an interpretation of the diverse experiences of respondents. This helped ensure that the study avoided common assumptions and questioned dominant values.
4. **Reflection.** In the last phase, the team will validate the findings with respondents and agree on a way forward for further collaboration.

Methodological Process

The following four-pronged methodological process guided the approach:

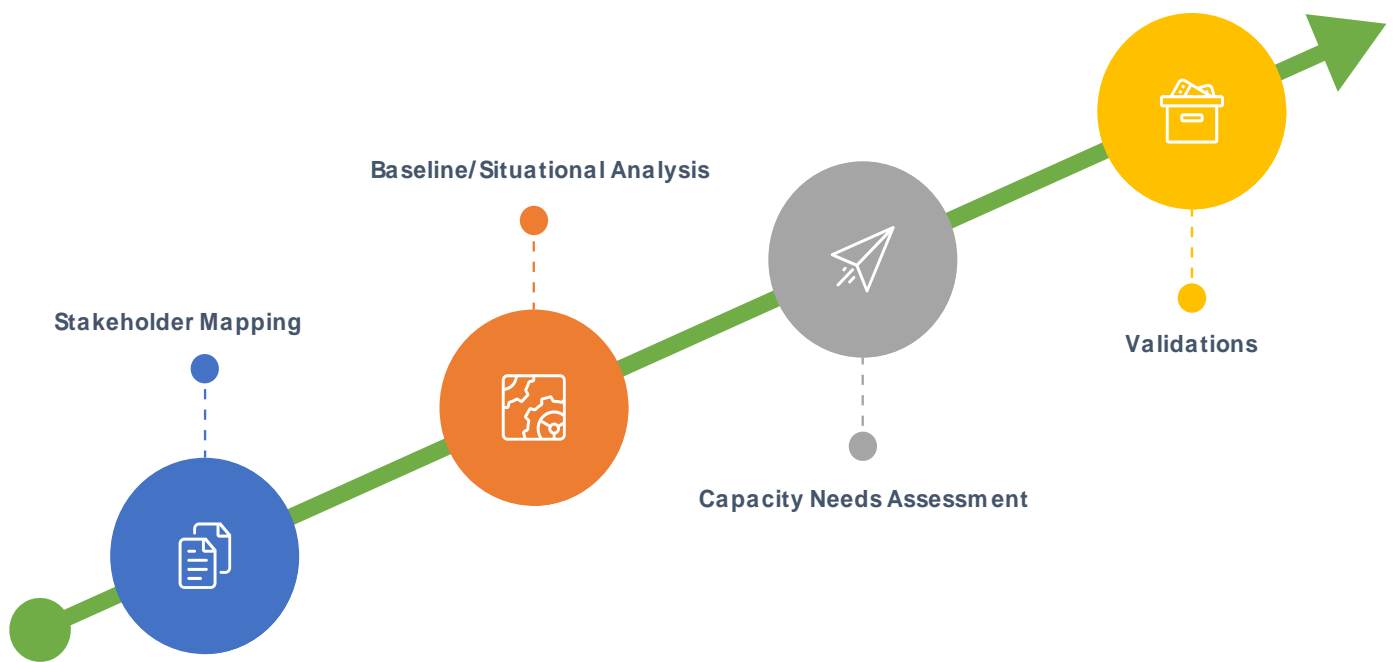


Figure 8: Four-Pronged Methodological Process

The methodological process was multi (four)-pronged and included stakeholder mapping, baseline/situational analysis, capacity needs assessment, and validation of findings with the different Stakeholders. As highlighted in figure 5, the team mapped stakeholders and undertook a baseline study to inform beneficiaries' capacity building. Through stakeholder mapping, the team plotted the project stakeholders in the three project districts, determined the available information (data) against the project indicators by conducting a baseline study, and gauged the stakeholders' knowledge of Participatory Governance and Enterprise Development through a capacity needs assessment. The process helped determine the bottlenecks and barriers hindering youth and women's participation in governance and enterprise sectors.

Considering the scope of the assessment, the approach adopted was characterised by both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data and information were derived from a review of secondary sources and a broad range of primary ones through community focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews.

Stakeholder Mapping

The mapping of stakeholders is the visual process of laying out all the relevant project stakeholders; impacted and affected directly and indirectly by the project. As achieved by the stakeholder mapping exercise, a visual representation of the targeted stakeholders can influence the project and help determine how the targeted groups are connected to the project's overall aim.

Stakeholder Identification

It is imperative to identify key project stakeholders and ensure that clear and concise data collection tools with relevant content are effectively designed. The following identified stakeholders in Table 1 were the primary sources for subsequent review of qualitative and quantitative data and information:

Table 6: Identified Stakeholders Per Category

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	MAPPING
Communities	MASERU, LERIBE AND BUTHA-BUTHE
CSOs/CBOs	village-level Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) Development for Peace Education (DPE), Khathang Tema Baits'ukuli (KTB), Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN), Transform Resource Centre (TRC), Lesotho Association for Non-Formal Education (LANFE), Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD), Lesotho National Council of Women (LNCW), Bethel business and community development centre BBCDC, Young Christian Students (YCS), Women in Law Southern Africa (WILSA), Bacha Shutdown Youth Forum (BSYF), Bacha re Bacha Youth Forum (BRB), Women In Business (WIB), Gender Links, Youth Entrepreneurs Forum (YEF), Global Shapers (GS) Maseru hub, Junior Chamber International (JCI), Lesotho work camps (LWC)
Public Sector and Parastatals	Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports Recreation (MGYSR), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), Ministry of Small Business Development, Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO), Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA), District Administrator (DA), Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Local Government, Parliament, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Development
Private Sector and Business Development Service Providers	Lesotho Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Private Sector Foundation (PSF), Maluti Mountain Brewery (MMB), Standard Lesotho Bank (SLB), United Nations Development Partners (UNDP), European Union (EU), Lesotho Enterprise Assistance Programme (LEAP), World Vision Lesotho, SMME Support Network

Stakeholder Analysis

The stakeholder identification process helps determine the stakeholders and their key groupings. However, to define the importance of and influence the Project, the team further mapped the identified stakeholder to set priorities while deciding on specific data collection tools' techniques.

Influence/Interest Matrix

The Stakeholder Influence/Interest Matrix in Figure 6 plots the above-identified stakeholder groups based on whether they have a high/low interest in, and high/low influence on, the project. Each of the four boxes in the matrix further represents a "level" of engagement, ranging from the lowest level ("monitor and respond")

through the middle levels ("inform" and "maintain confidence") to the highest level ("collaborate").

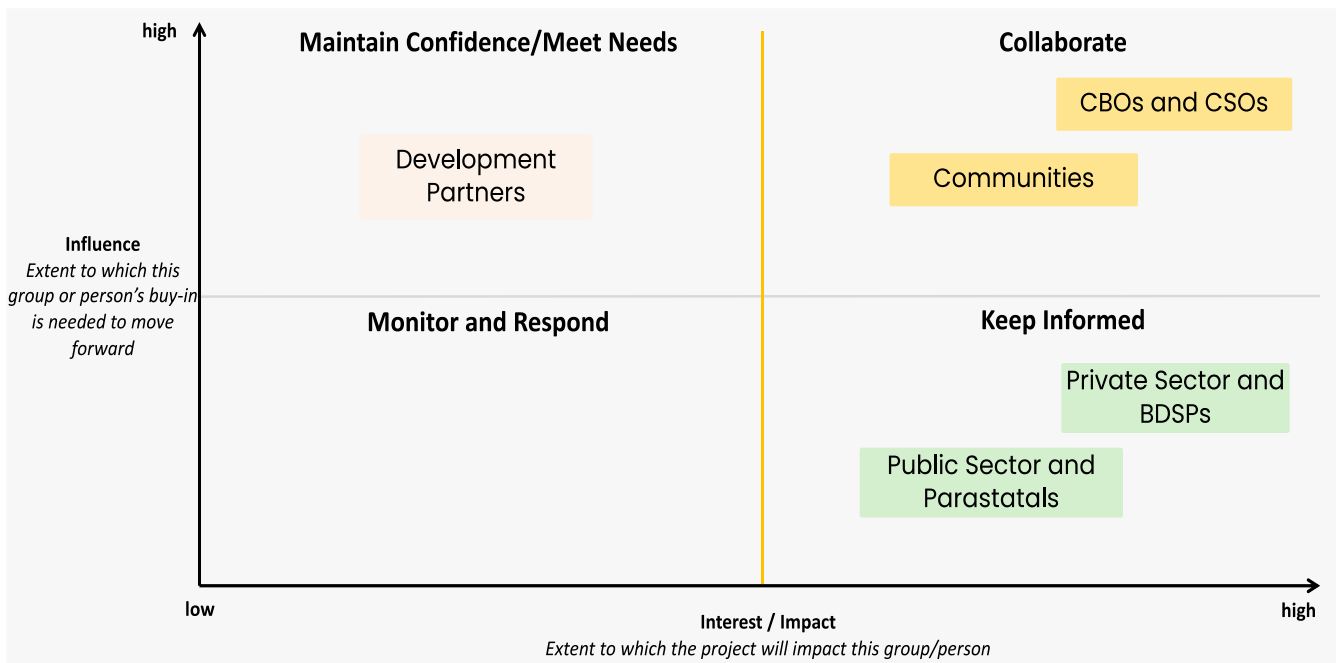


Figure 9: Stakeholder Influence/Interest Matrix

Therefore, the above Stakeholder Influence/Interest matrix shows the interest of the stakeholders (low to high) and their influence (low to high). The brief analysis helped the team identify and design the most effective way and mechanisms to employ for data collection per stakeholder.

Sampling

The study employed a "purposeful sampling approach" to select a maximum variation framework. Selecting participants and villages purposefully meant choosing those that could effectively contribute to the study's purpose. Likewise, purposeful sampling of participants with wide-reaching information, such as key stakeholders, further deepened the study's understanding.

Methodological Approach - Baseline Study and Capacity Needs Assessment

Conducting the baseline study and the capacity needs assessment helped determine the needs, gaps, legal barriers, and challenges that, in turn, can help inform the thematic and capacity interventions the program intends to achieve. This further helped inform the baseline for monitoring and evaluating the intended programme goals.

Needs Assessment- Evidence-Informed Approach

For a compelling needs assessment, the study adopted a three-pronged evidence-informed approach as illustrated below:



Figure 10: Evidence-Informed Approach

A. Research – Current Situation/Baseline and Best Practice

The desk-based research methodology mainly addressed the context briefly outlined in the Introduction Section. This involved an extensive review of secondary data sources for background research, including a review of studies from Lesotho and other countries to identify best practices and/or possible areas for alignment. The review was conducted for national information and data to form a baseline or provide situational analysis on participatory governance-related issues and youth- and women-led CBOs and enterprises. The aim was to map out the institutional landscape in which these groups are included in Lesotho's participatory governance and economic development. Furthermore, the baseline analysed the current mandates and the relationships between players in the broad fields of participatory governance, business development services and more comprehensive socio-economic development.

B. Lived Experience – Views of Research Respondents

Two broad categories of stakeholders were identified: Communities and Organised groups and key stakeholders. For each category of stakeholders, the study used specifically designed semi-structured tools for data collection, as attached in Annexure B. The questions were designed to capture the specific perspectives of women and men, with the expected outcome of disaggregation of gender and age.

For communities and organised groups, the team engaged community leaders (chiefs and community councils) and community members with a specific interest in youth- and women-led CBOs to reflect on unequal norms that discriminate against such groups in all decision-making processes and enterprise development. The team facilitated this by conducting focus group discussions and performing a Root Cause Analysis (RCA).

On the other hand, consultative meetings with relevant key stakeholders were held to get more linear data. These stakeholders were interviewed face-to-face and/or through Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI). The team then followed up with calls where possible. The designed tool to be



Figure 11: Synopsis of Stakeholders

completed by key stakeholders from various organisations and institutions was accessed from the following link: <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/ZJcDApIy>

Community Gatherings and Focus Group Discussions

Communities from all targeted villages within each community council were invited to public gatherings. The team first explained the purpose of the consultations and detailed the research process and approach. After the question-and-answer session, they were divided into focus groups to ensure that community members understood their expectations. Based on age and gender, participants were segregated into four groups, namely men above 35 years of age (*male adults*), men 35 years and below (*male youth*), women above 35 years of age (*female adults*), and women 35 years and below (*female youth*).

The focus groups were then asked to brainstorm their needs and bottlenecks and propose solutions and interventions. In agreement and consensus with the community, each group's commonly identified needs and solutions were recorded as a priority.

Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

During the focus group discussions, the team employed the RCA tools to assess the specific needs of targeted communities. The first step in determining the needs involved identifying general challenges, broadly grouped into social, economic, and/or governance-related challenges. The second step was to engage communities in a "5 Whys" process, where participants were asked at least five times why they think they faced challenges raised. This process allowed the communities to reveal the root cause of the problem and further guided the team in

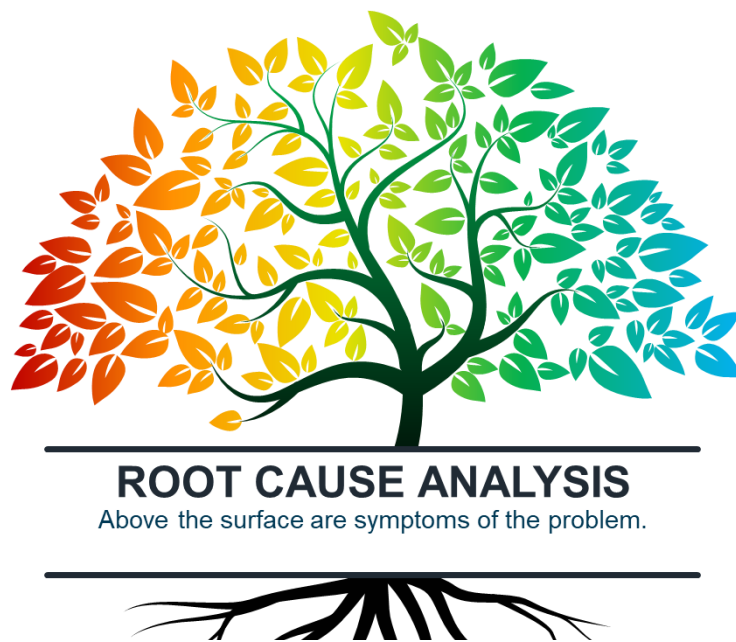


Figure 12: Root Cause Analysis



developing relevant mechanisms to address the needs.

The RCA assisted the team in discovering the underlying rather than the generalised or immediate causes of challenges faced by communities and CBOs. The approach assumes that it is more effective to systematically prevent and solve underlying issues (roots) rather than just treating *ad hoc* symptoms and *putting out fires*. Looking beyond superficial cause and effect, during fieldwork, the RCA showed where processes or systems failed or caused an issue in the first place.

C. Experience – Skills and Knowledge from Practice

The team's skills and knowledge through daily engagement with respondents came in handy during the PAR process. The team was instrumental in identifying stakeholders, defining the peripheries of the project scope,

such as specific villages for consultation and providing contact points for key stakeholder engagements.

Participant Observation

The study employed the participant observation method for optimal data collection and more on individuals' perspectives and experiences. Interactions with respondents and knowledge sharing during participant observation were identified as distinguishing features of the adopted method.

Validation of the findings

District and ED validations: The team held validation meetings with participants to verify the data's validity, credibility, and accuracy. The validations have been done in each district by the DWF and FIDA, as the process falls outside the scope of this assignment. Therefore, the target communities and the two organisations implementing the project ultimately own the study.

Data Cleaning, Merging and Analysis

The team conducted data cleaning, merging, and analysis using Microsoft Excel. Before merging the raw data, the datasets were re-coded and labelled to create identical variables. Descriptive statistical analysis using frequency analysis was conducted after data was captured into an excel spreadsheet. Findings from the qualitative methods were further triangulated based on available grey and white literature, with most quantitative data analysed through Excel spreadsheets. Data analysis includes basic summary statistics, disaggregated by age group, gender, and district.

FINDINGS

The findings are analysed according to the evidence derived from the information collected and organised into various dimensions that shape the Section. The first part analyses the characteristics/demographics of respondents, followed by assessing the level of participation of women and youth in decision-making processes, including in community council meetings, meetings summoned by village chiefs and other forums. The third part analyses women and youth-led CBOs' participation in business and income-generating activities and decision-making processes and explores key stakeholders' involvement in national and sectoral decision-making processes.

A. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Community Consultations – Focus Group Discussions

The study held 38 focus group discussions with 948 community members in Maseru, Leribe and Butha-Buthe districts. In each district, four Electoral Divisions represented by 63 villages were consulted. During the focus

group discussions, the participants were segregated into four main groups male adults (males above the age of 35), male youth (male below the age of 35), female adults (females above the age of 35) and female youth (female below the age of 35). As illustrated below, 32 percent of the groups consulted were male adults, 32 percent female adults, 18 percent male youth and 18 percent female youth.

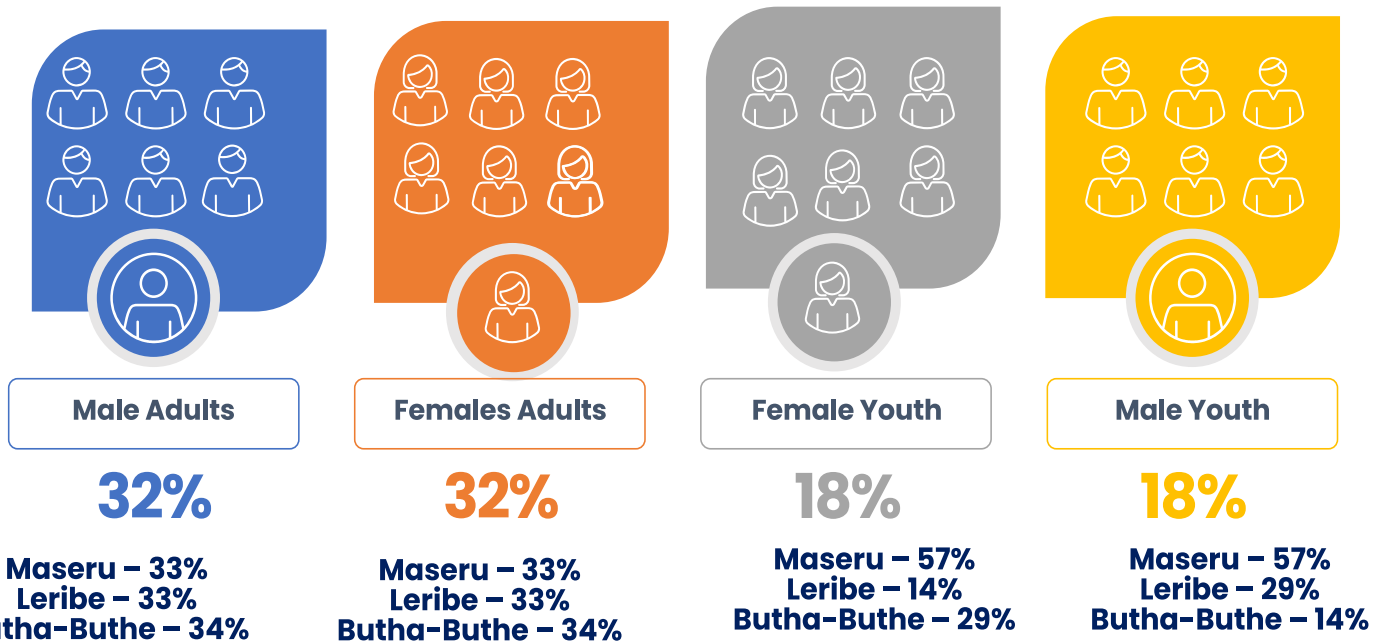


Figure 13: Demographic Representation of the Community Members

Maseru had 45 percent community representation within the 16 groups consulted. Leribe had 27 percent representation in 11 focus groups, while Butha-Buthe had 28 percent representation in 11 focus groups.

Community members during the group discussions



Key Stakeholder Engagements

The study further corroborated focus group discussions with interviews with key stakeholders from government ministries, departments and agencies, women- and youth-led CSOs, and private sector representatives. Of the respondents, 14 percent were Government Ministries, 14 percent were private sector associations, and 72 percent CSOs (43 percent were youth CSOs, 27 percent women CSOs, and 30 percent generic CSOs).

Fifty-three percent of key stakeholders interviewed have a national presence in terms of the operational areas of the organisations, while the rest operate in selected districts. For the latter, the majority operate in Maseru and Leribe, at 12 percent each, followed by Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong, Butha-Buthe at 11 percent each, Berea at 10 percent, and Thaba-Tseka, Quthing and Qacha's Nek with the least amount at 9 percent, 7 percent, and 6 percent respectively.

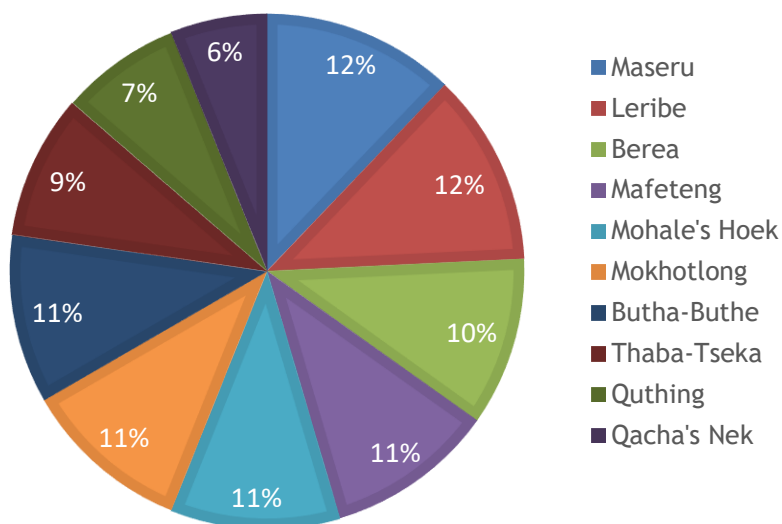


Figure 14: District Coverage of Stakeholders' Operations

B. Participation in Decision Making

Participation in Community Council Meetings

With community councils being one of the community institutions where plans and decisions that affect communities are made, the community members were asked to discuss their understanding of a community council and its roles. The general knowledge of the council amongst the community members was that it is the decentralisation of power (governance at the community level). Women defined a council as a linkage between the community and the local and national government structures for community development. A prominent response among the youth was that they had no idea of a community council.

Communities perceived the roles of the community council to include land allocation and administration,

registration of small businesses, and mediator for conflict resolution amongst community members. The youth groups mainly perceived the council's role as an information disseminator on job opportunities. On the other hand, the male adult group extrapolated that as much as community councils are meant for power decentralisation, the community councils' roles have not yet been fully decentralised as they perform their duties concerning the higher authorities and not for communities in the grassroots level. On the other hand, most women groups perceived the council's role to include infrastructure development, including roads in villages, water, electricity, and fixing of water taps. Figures 3 and 4 below depict the perceptions of women and youth representation within the community councils.

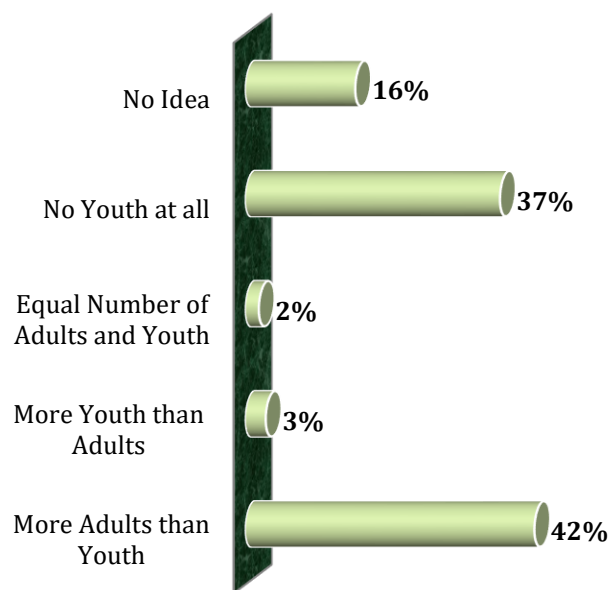
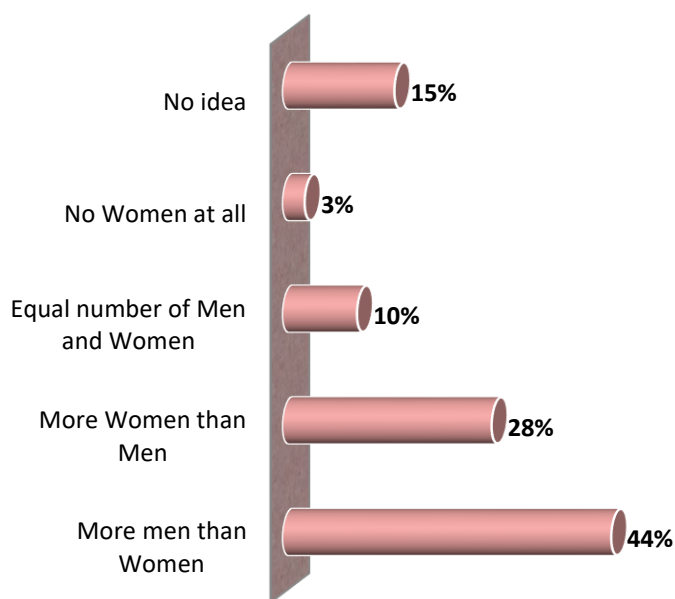


Figure 15: Perceptions of Women Representation within Councils

Figure 16: Perceptions of Youth Representation within Councils

Forty-four percent of the community members said that there are more men in community councils than women, while 28 percent perceive that there are more women than men in the community councils; this is followed by 15 percent who had no idea, 10 percent who said there is an equal number of women and men, and only 3 percent who said there no women at all. Furthermore, 42 percent of the respondents said there are more adults than youth in the councils, followed by 37 percent that indicated that there is no youth at all within the community councils; 16 percent had no idea, and only 3 percent said there is more youth than adults and there is an equal number of youth and adults.

Only 44 percent of community members know council meetings within their communities, while 56 percent claimed they were unaware of any. Of the 44 percent who know of the community council meetings, 31 percent were male adults, 25 percent female adults, 25 percent female youth, and 19 percent male youth. On the contrary, of 56 percent not aware of council meetings, 40 percent were female adults, 30 percent were male

adults, and male and female youth both at 15 percent.

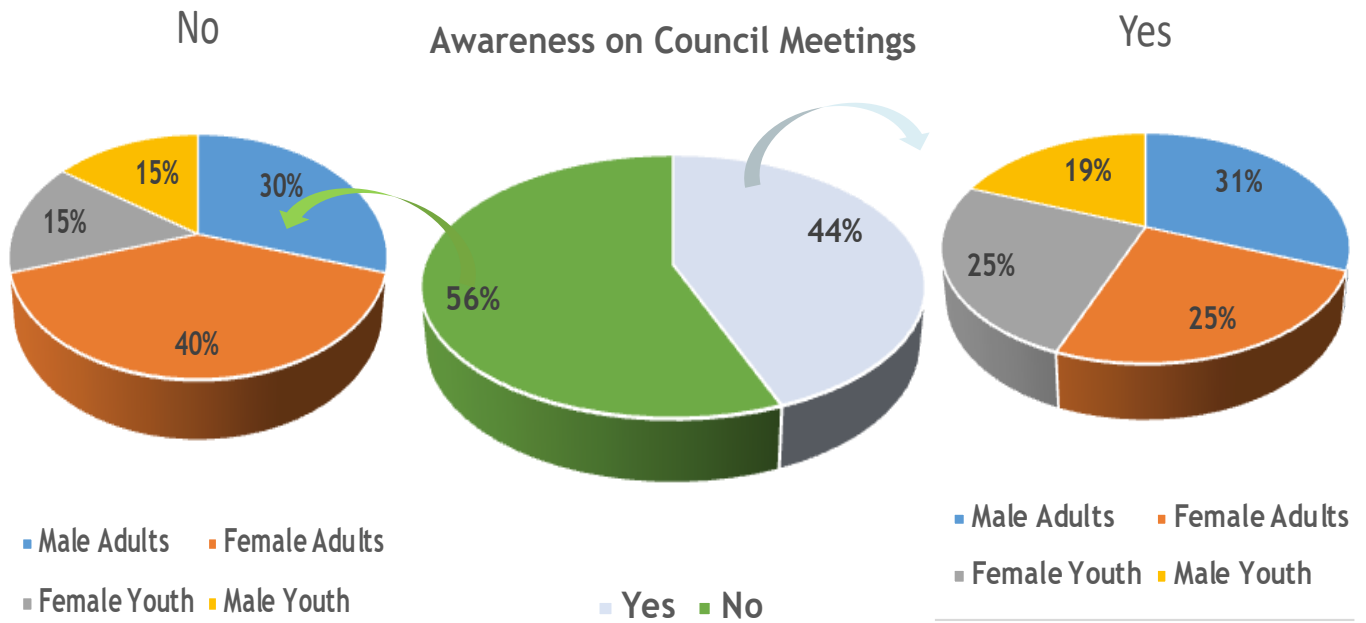


Figure 17: Awareness of Community Council Meetings

The analysis is further disaggregated per gender to depict the responses within each group.

Awareness on council meetings in Communities

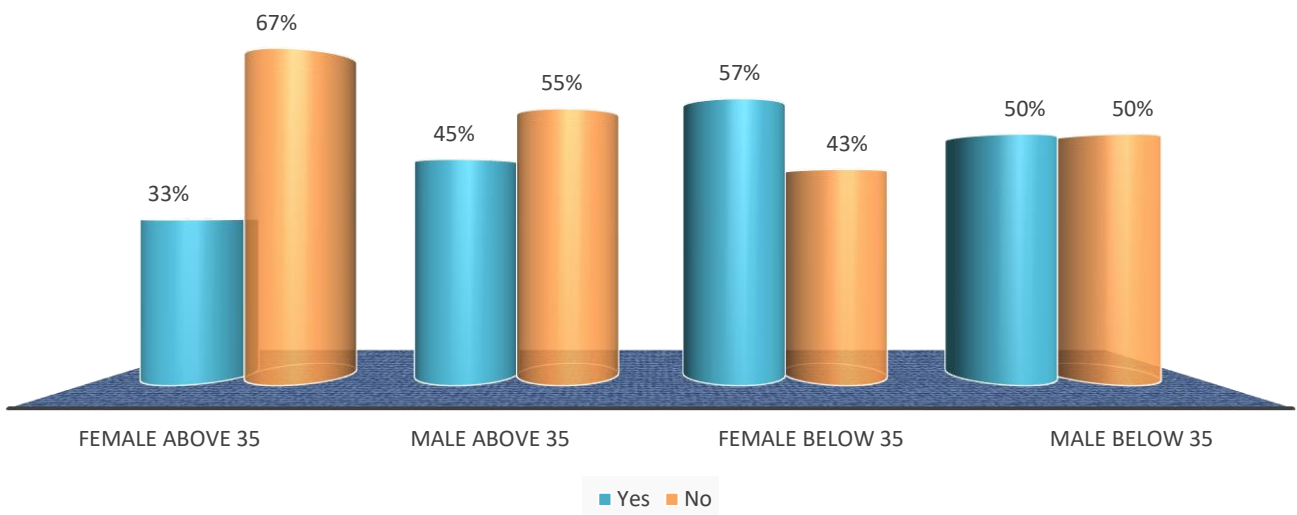


Figure 18: Gender Disaggregation - Do Respondents know of Council Meetings in their Communities?

Eighty-one percent of community members have never attended council meetings, while only 19 percent have attended some meetings. Of the 19 percent who have attended council meetings, 57 percent are male adults, followed by 14 percent of female adults, female youth, and male youth groups.

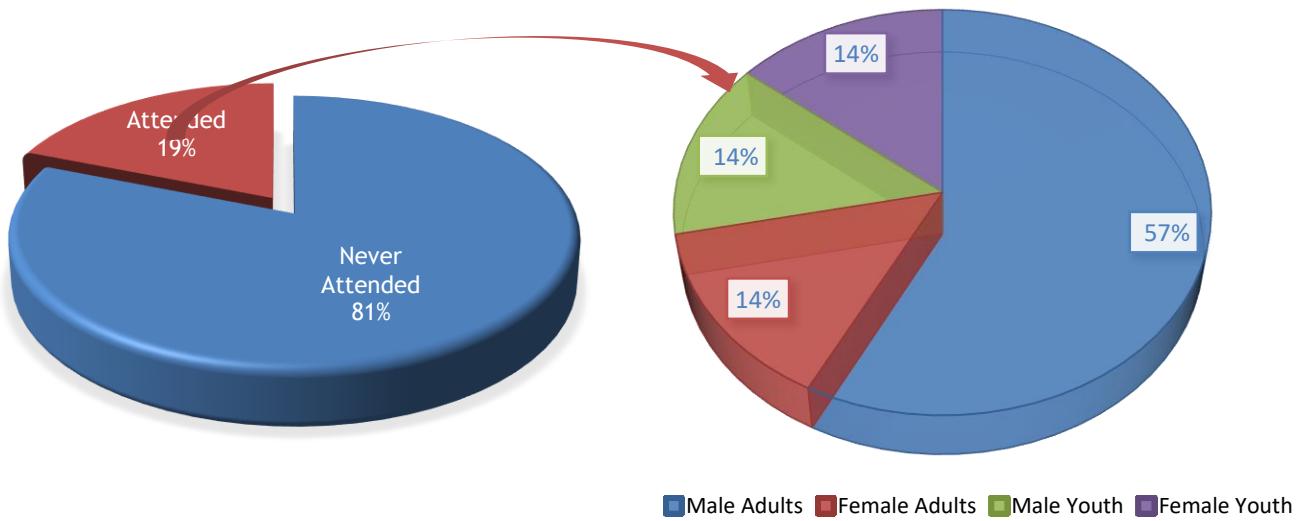


Figure 18: Council Meeting Attendance

Figure 19: Responses per Gender Disaggregation

Most of the community members that have never attended the council meetings attributed the non-attendance to a lack of information dissemination from the council to the community members and the perception that the meetings are meant to be attended by only the council members, the Chief. The male adult group further expounded that they do not see a need to attend and that they do not have collaboration with leaders, as the leaders typically do not provide feedback after their meetings. Therefore, they feel that they are only observers and not contributors. Most women attributed their limited attendance to the fact that they are never invited to the meetings, while youth highlighted that they are never aware of these meetings. The community members were further asked how they knew about the council meetings. The responses are depicted below.

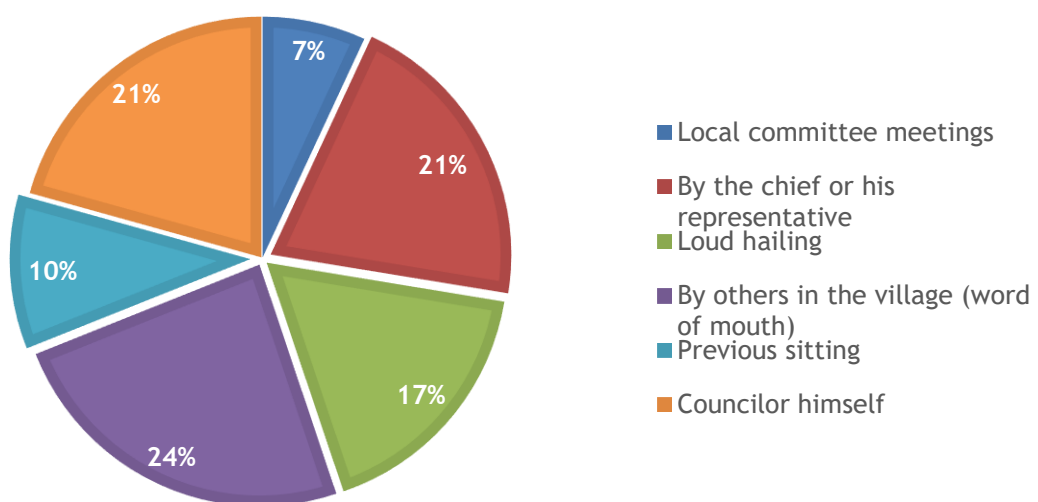


Figure 20: How Community Members are Informed about the Council Meetings

Twenty-four percent of respondents highlighted that they get to know of meetings through word of mouth, and most of these were surprisingly women and youth groups. Twenty-one percent highlighted that they hear from the councilor, 21 percent from the Chief or his representatives, 17 percent through loud hailing in the villages, 10 percent from previous sittings and 7 percent from the local committee meetings. The study further sought to understand the level of participation by the community members in the council meetings.

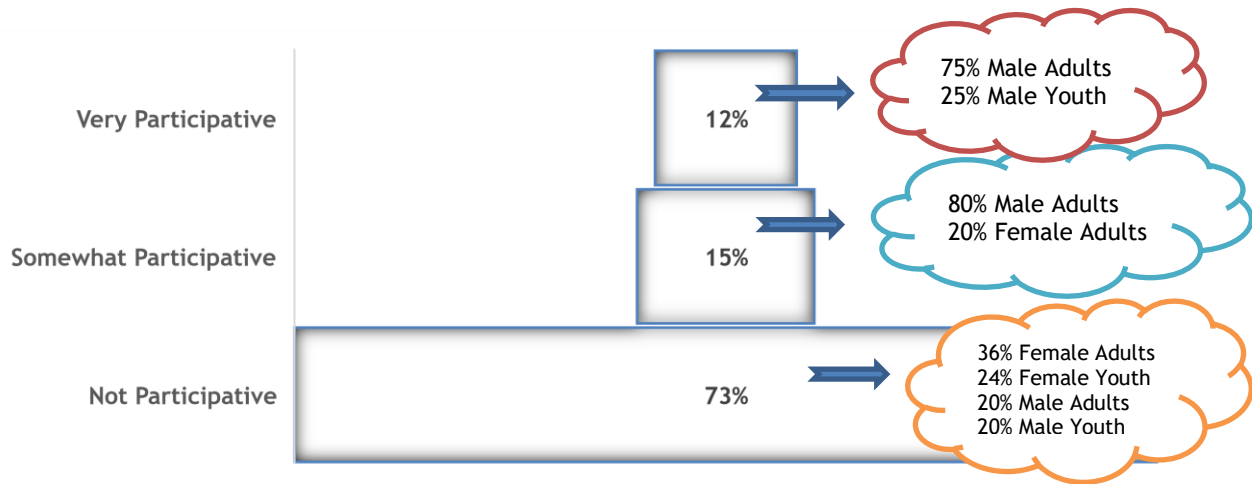


Figure 21: Level of Participation in Community Council Meetings

Seventy-three percent of the respondents rated themselves not participative, 15 percent somewhat participative, and only 12 percent very participative. As illustrated below, most of those not participative are female adults at 36 percent, followed by male adults at 24 percent, and adult and male youth groups at 20 percent. Only male groups rated very participative, with the male adults at 75 percent and male youth at 25 percent. Women’s and youth’s reasons for low levels of participation include lack of feedback from community leaders and the feeling that one’s contribution or voice is not being heard. Figure 23 further illustrates the responses as per gender-disaggregated within each group.

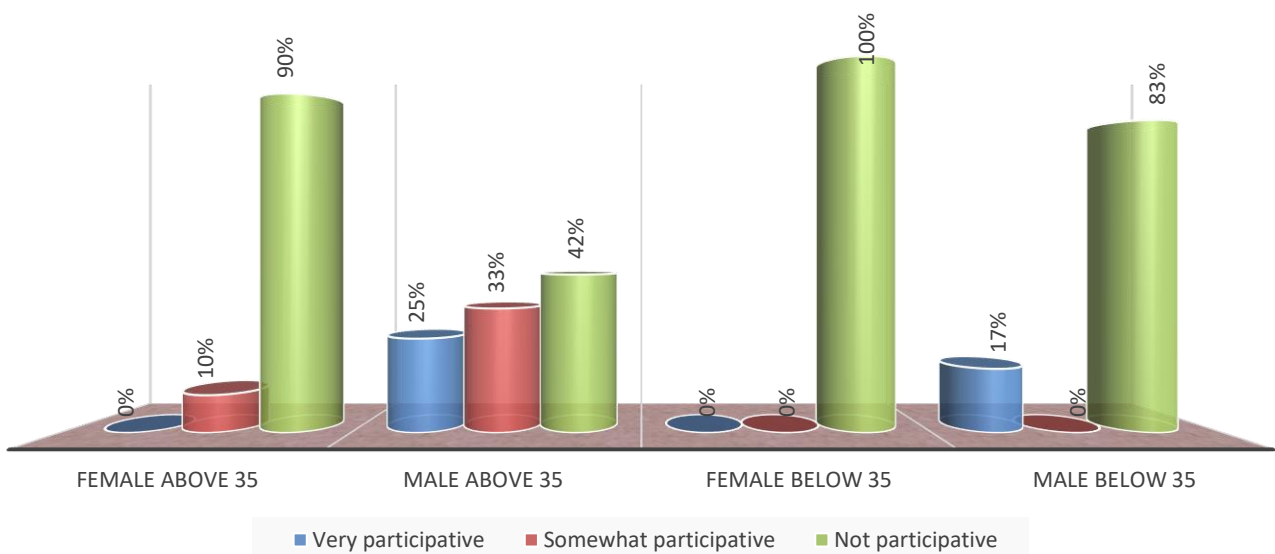


Figure 22: Gender Disaggregation - Level of Participation in Council Meetings

Participation in Meetings Summoned by the Chief

Unlike the low attendance levels at council meetings, many community members (88 percent) reported attending meetings summoned by the Chief, with the male adults at 37 percent, female adults at 33 percent, and only 15 percent for both youth groups.

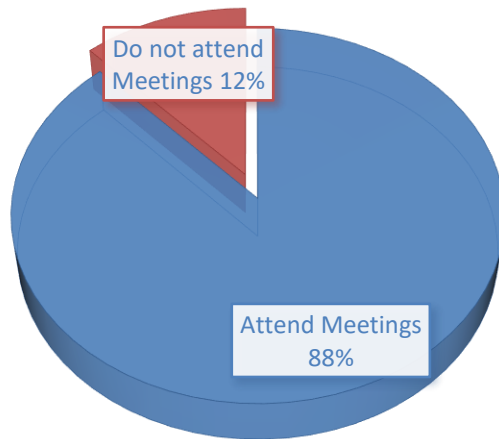
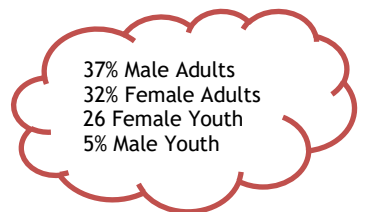


Figure 23: Attendance of Meetings Summoned by the Chief

For most women who do not attend these meetings, the reasons highlighted were that they do not know when they are being summoned and that high attendance meetings are those that give out donations. Youth groups further pointed out that they cannot attend meetings due to unemployment as they must hunt for jobs. Of those attending these meetings, 74 percent claimed that they attend every meeting, with 26 percent saying they attend now and then. Adult groups, both male and female, constitute a higher percentage of attending every meeting (23 percent for male groups and 35 percent for female groups). In comparison, youth groups lag at 21 percent for each gender group.

Regarding participation in the meetings summoned by the Chief, 66 percent of the respondents claimed to be very participative, with 24 percent reporting being somewhat participative and only 10 percent not participative.



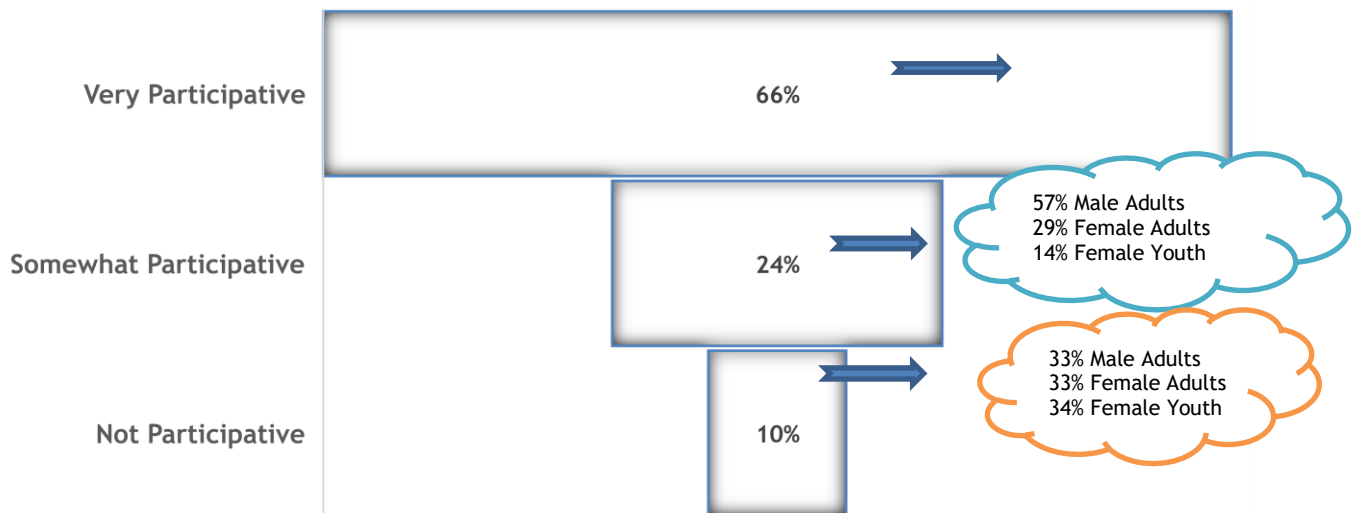


Figure 24: Participation in Meetings Summoned by the Chief

Other previous surveys indicated that although 77 percent of Basotho confirmed attending *lipitso* (public gatherings convened by the village Chief), about 44 percent participated in a *pitso*, where democratic and / or developmental issues were discussed¹⁵⁴. Of those very participative, the majority were adult groups at 37 percent for male adults and 32 percent for female adults, followed by female youth at 26 percent and only 5 percent for male youth.

Below is a summary of levels of participation in meetings summoned by the Chief per age and gender category.

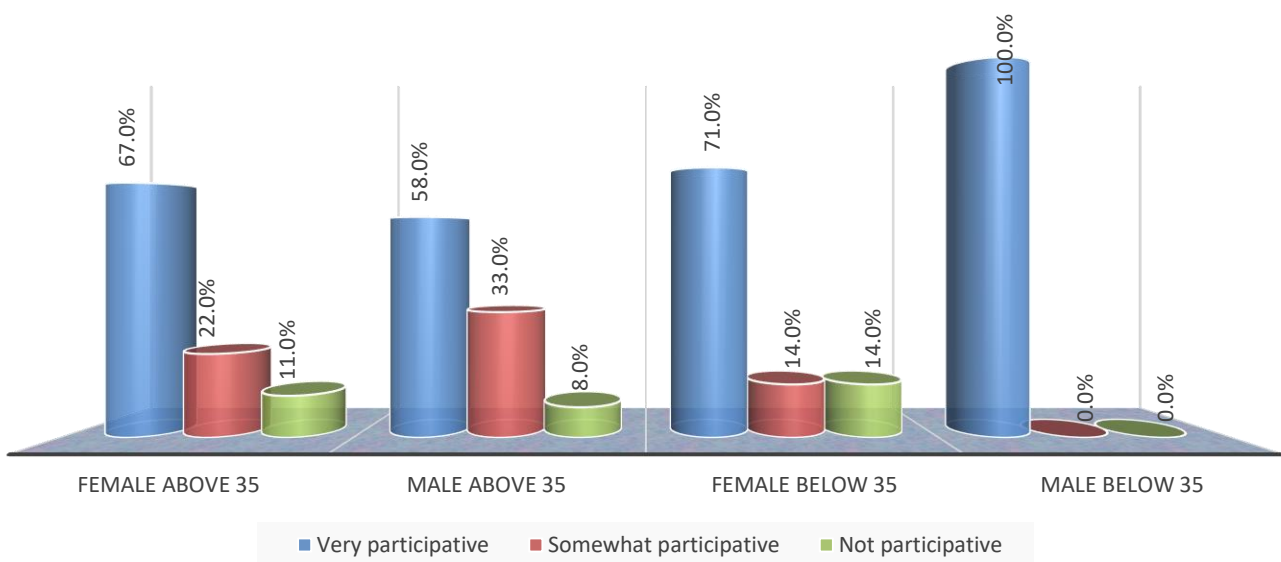


Figure 25: Level of Participation in Meetings Summoned by the Chief

The youth groups pointed out that some of the reasons for low levels of participation in these meetings include being afraid of being pointed fingers at on account that they talk too much, feeling that voices are not heard, lack of aspiration to drive youth development, and lack of good relationship between the community and its representatives.

¹⁵⁴ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

These findings align with the results of the 2017 GIZ-PISA survey, which showed that, of those that participated in *lipitso*, about 57 percent agreed with the statement that their participation does not matter as people like them do not have influence¹⁵⁵. For the adult groups, the common reason for low levels of participation is that sometimes decisions are taken without prior consultations with them, and some matters come as orders from the authorities and are not open for discussions. The female adult groups further related their low participation to being afraid to be made fun of or saying something stupid that may result in people gossiping about them. They further mentioned that they are scared to raise concerns as they usually do not get responses to their concerns. From the GIZ-PISA survey, a striking 79 percent agreed with the statement, "If politicians took people's views more seriously, people would be more actively involved"¹⁵⁶.

Participation in other forums

The survey explored other forums or meetings to discuss governance and/or community development issues within the community areas besides those held at Council or Chief place. Only 38 percent of the respondents claimed to have such forums. In comparison, 62 percent do not have any. The table below summarises the forums as identified by communities.

Table 7: Forums for Engaging in Governance and/or Community Development

	Leribe	Maseru	Butha-Buthe
Female above 35	- Community Meetings	Burial Societies	-Farmers Associations - Community Health Workers meetings.
Female below 35	- Farming project	- Disciplining Women.	- HIV & Nutrition (Caritas Lesotho)
Male above 35	- Whatsapp group	- Political party rallies - PISA	- Political party rallies - Community Policing Forums - Crime Prevention Forums
Male below 35		- Youth dialogue forum (Initiation Schools) - Youth development and recreational forum	- Community Developer

Half (50 percent) of the respondents reported being very participative in these forums, with 27 percent indicating not participative and 23 percent somewhat participative.

¹⁵⁵ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

¹⁵⁶ Lesotho Citizens' Participation survey report, 2017

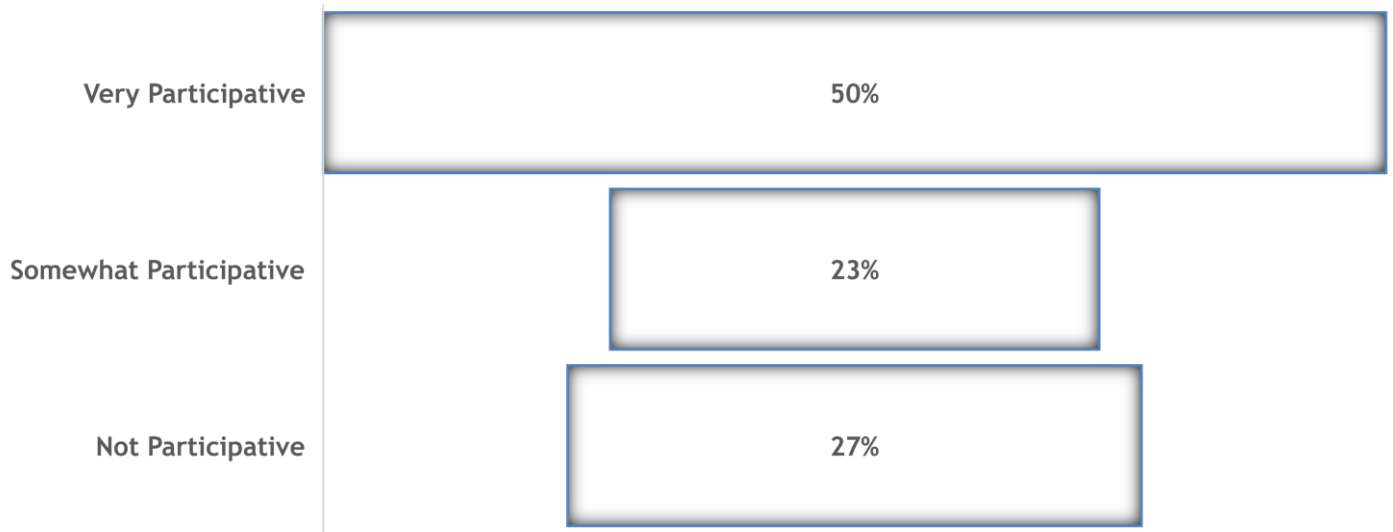


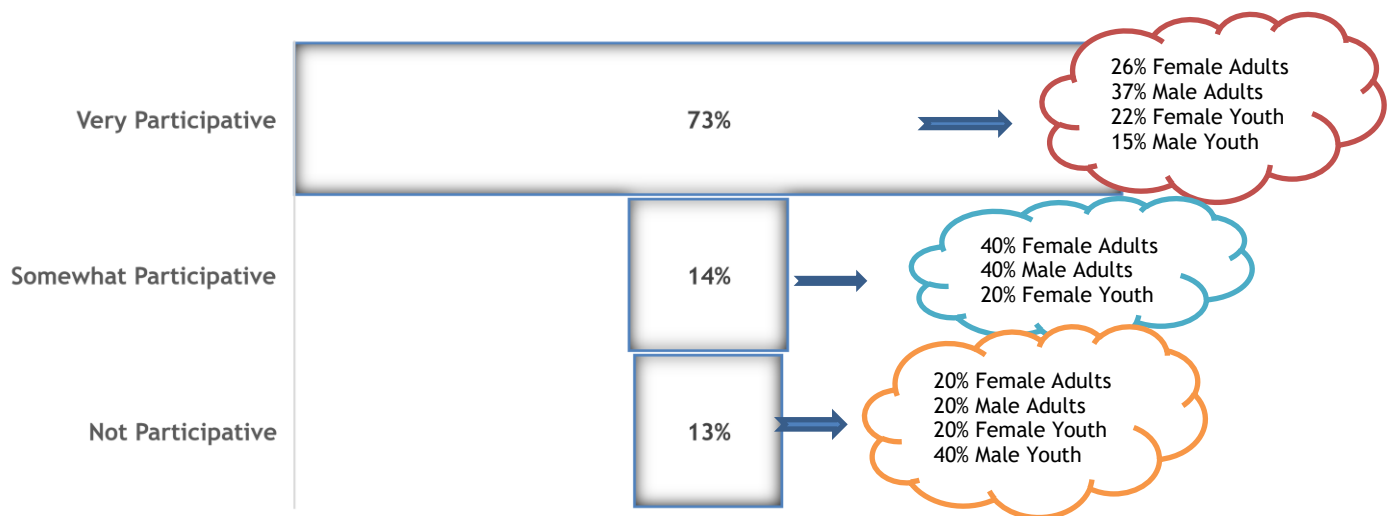
Figure 26: Level of Participation in Forums for Engaging in Governance and/or Community Development

The level of participation by age and gender groups in these forums closely resembles the level of participation in community and Chief-summoned meetings, which has a high participation rate by male adults, followed by female adults, and youth lagging with low levels of participation.

C. Participation in Decision-making Processes

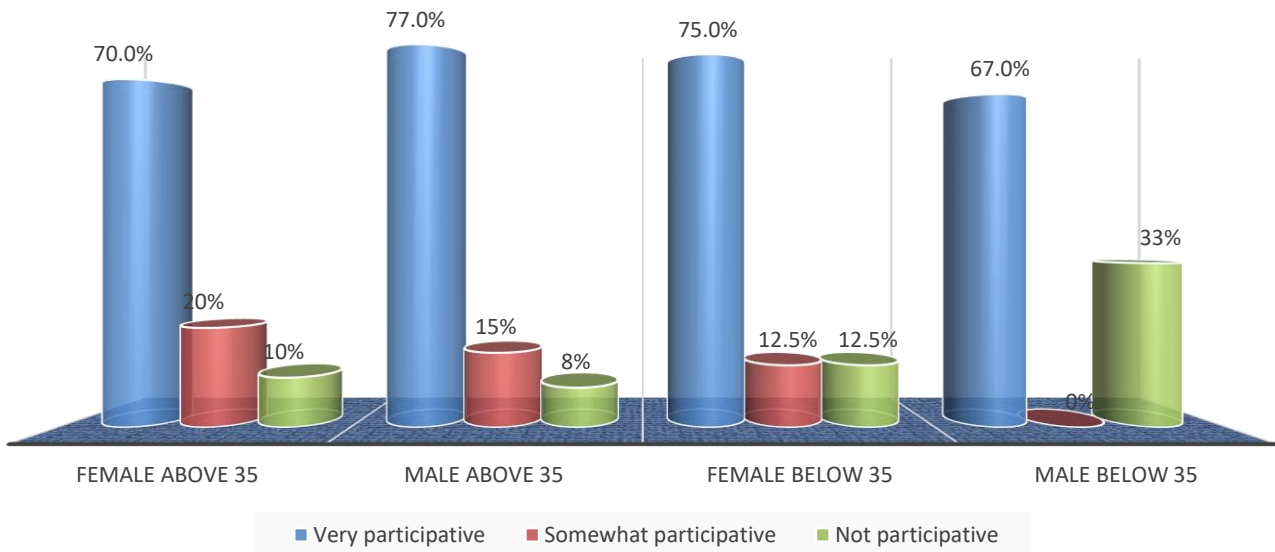
The community members were further asked how they would rate their participation in the decision-making process of matters pertaining to their community or constituency, and 73 percent indicated very participative.

Figure 27: Level of Participation in Decision-Making Processes



In the lead of those rated very participative are male adults at 37 percent, their female adult counterparts at 26 percent, and youth at the minority at 22 percent for female youth and 15 percent for male youth. Only 14 percent rated somewhat participative, and 13 percent not participative.

Figure 28: Gender Disaggregation - Level of Participation in Decision-Making Processes



The reasons for low or no participation encompass the perception of not being heard as inputs are not taken into consideration, favouritism due to politics, and young people being undermined in the communities. Overall, 65 percent of the community members feel that their voices or participation in community council meetings, Chief meetings and other forums do not matter, with female adults at 47 percent, male adults at 27 percent, female youth at 13 percent, and male youth at 12 percent. Interestingly, only male adult groups had a higher percentage who claimed their voices or participation matters, versus those who said their voices or participation do not matter.

Figure 29: Perception of Whether Participation Matters

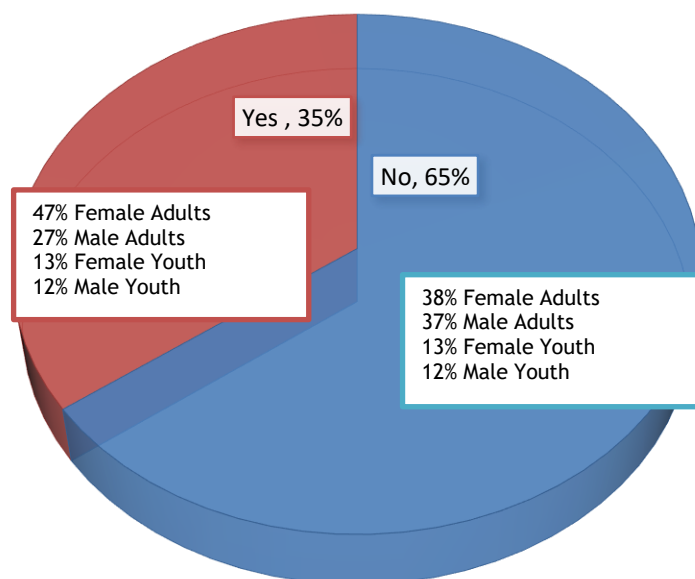
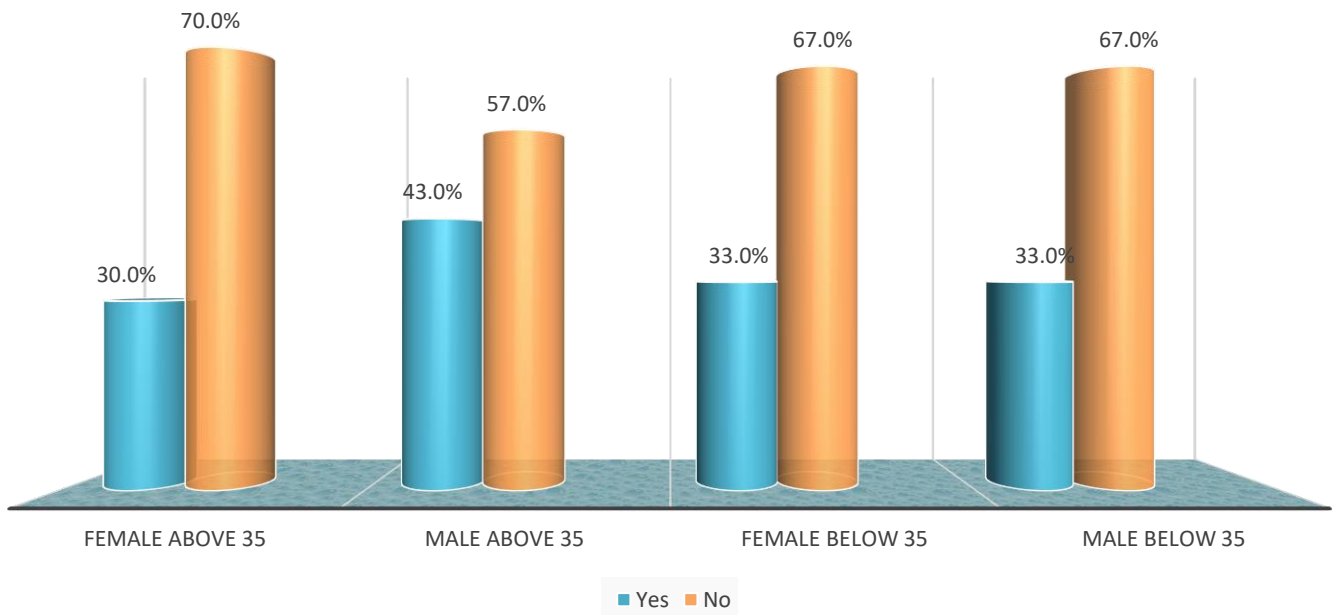


Figure 30: Gender Disaggregation - Perception of Whether Participation or Voices Matter



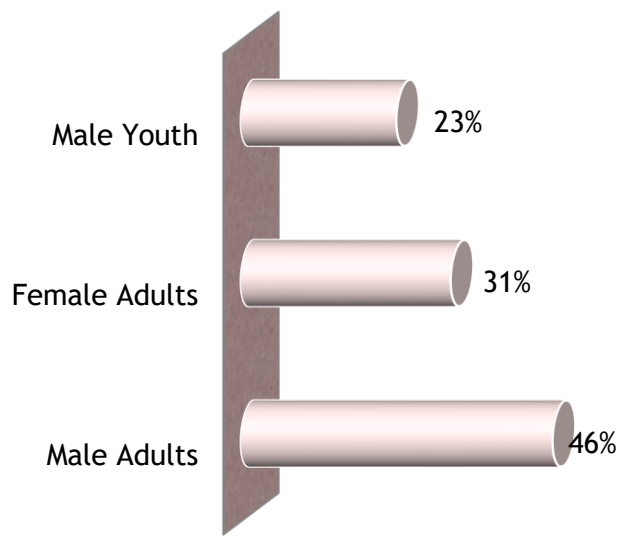
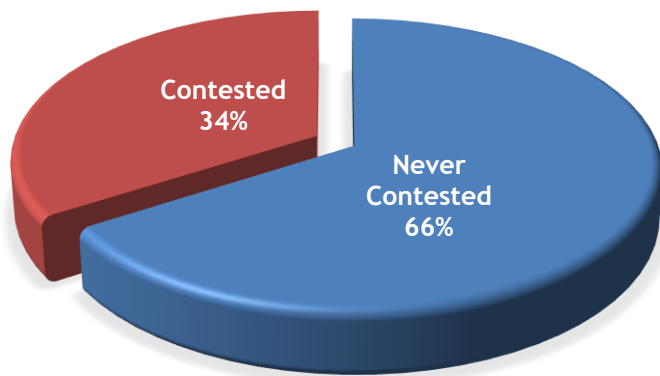
Youth feel that their voices or participation do not matter mainly due to a lack of change and implementation of the recommendations they provide. Female adult groups further highlighted that they never say a word in the meetings, as they fear being hated. Some further said they only participate in funeral group meetings and entertainment groups (*litolobonya*).

Participation in Elections

Sixty-six percent of the respondents have never contested council or ED elections, while only 34 have ever contested.

Figure 31: Had Contested Council or ED Election Before

Figure 32: Gender Disaggregation - Had Contested Council or ED Election Before



Of those that have contested for elections, the majority are male adults at 46 percent, followed by females at 31 percent, and male youth at 23 percent. From all the districts, no female youth has ever contested elections before. Equally, the number of those interested in contesting for elections is higher for male adults at 40 percent, male youth at 22 percent, and female adults and youth at only 19 percent each. The data shows low interest in contesting for council or electoral division elections in females, particularly female youth.

This is further evidenced by the 2018 BOS gender statistical report, which showed that women's participation in decision-making at the local government level and senior positions in political parties has been consistently low. The report highlights that in 2018, out of 1,427 members of the local councils, only 558 were women¹⁵⁷. The reason for low women's participation in decision-making is attributable to the deeply rooted cultural, traditional, and social norms that do not recognise equality and capabilities of women in political roles¹⁵⁸

Overall, the perception amongst community members is that politics or contesting for elections is for wealthy people, as they have resources for campaigning, and the community members usually do not prefer to elect a poor person into power. The adult groups further described another barrier as education since those that stand for elections for either council or constituencies should be people of a certain level of education. Some views included a lack of awareness that one can stand for council or electoral division elections.

“Only those who have experiences and skills are needed and we judge each other, when we see that you are poor, we do not elect you”

¹⁵⁷ Bureau of Statistics, 2018– Gender Status Booklet

¹⁵⁸ LCN Policy Brief, 2015 – The status of women in Lesotho with respect to participation in local governance process

Interestingly, the women group said that women usually do not elect other women as they do not trust other women to be in power. The women group further expounded their reasons, including low self-esteem, fear of leadership consequences, fear of talking in front of their husbands, not wanting to be corrupt, and fear of embarrassment as other women who lost in previous elections were mocked in the community. Outstanding views from youth were also observed, who said they lack knowledge and understanding about the elections and that “politics” are for old people. They lack incentives for engaging in such endeavours as their priority is getting jobs, not politics.

Enabling Factors

The general views and recommendations from the community members regarding what could enable them to participate better in decision-making forums and meetings were that the community needs to be informed about such meetings, and the use of loud hailing was outlined as one of the tools that can be utilised for information dissemination. Communities also asked to get feedback from the community leaders, that there should be follow-up and implementation of agreed-on activities, and that the councillors should be accountable to the community. Youth groups advocated for having a quota for youth representatives within the councils. The meetings should not only focus on the usual matters such as land and pastures only, but also on other youth developmental issues.

Summary - Participation in Decision-Making Processes at Community Level

Overall, there are high levels of participation in meetings summoned by the Chief (*lipitso*), compared to the council meetings, which have lower participation, generally because most of the community members are not aware that they can attend such meetings and because they do not get informed or invited to such. This is supported by the literature, which shows that while three-quarters (77 percent) of Basotho confirmed attending *lipitso*, around two-thirds of respondents (62.1 percent) stated that they had “very low” or “no” opportunity to attend and participate in council sittings, which are supposed to be open to the public¹⁵⁹. Male adult groups are in the lead on high levels of participation in community meetings and forums.

They are the only groups with a higher percentage that feel their voices are heard, or contributions are considered in these meetings or forums. Adult females have also shown some level of participation in the meetings, even though their participation is constrained by some limiting beliefs and norms within the communities (such as being afraid to talk in front of husbands, being afraid to be mocked in the communities, and perception that women are not supposed to be in politics or leadership positions within the communities). There is a low level of participation by youth in community meetings and forums. They feel that their voices and contribution do not matter, and their primary interest is finding employment.

¹⁵⁹ Lesotho Citizens’ Participation survey report, 2017

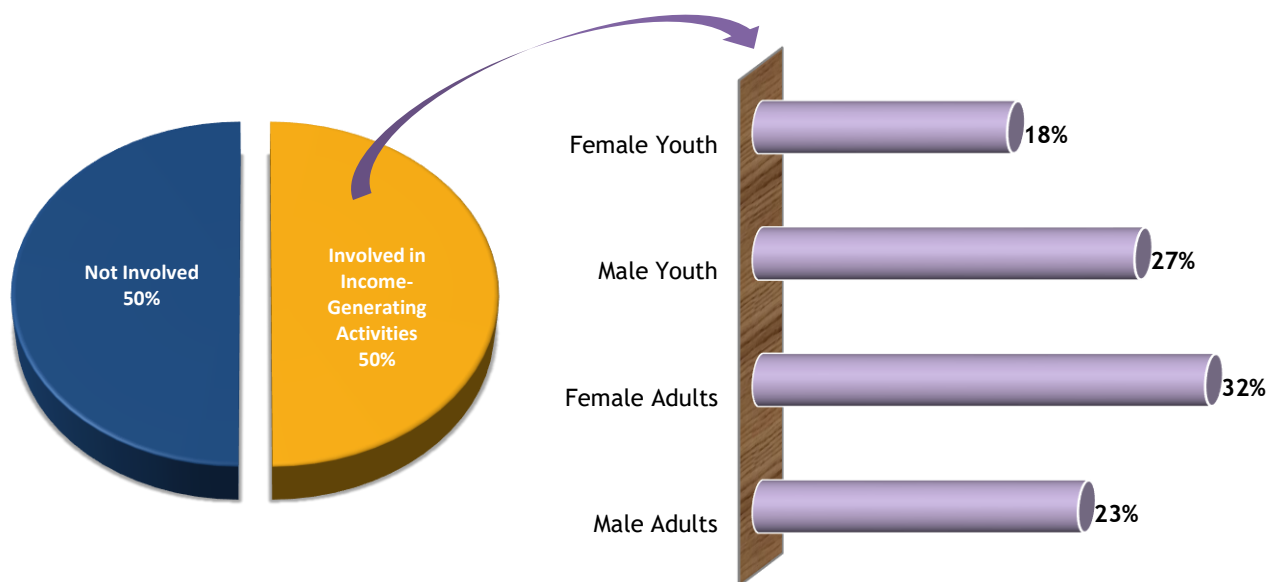
To increase levels of participation in community decision-making processes, the communities need to be informed and invited to such forums and meetings. Those in authority should provide feedback and follow-ups to the community on matters discussed and agreed on. There is a need to educate and sensitise communities about the role and importance of women in leadership positions, especially leadership in governance, intending to challenge and change some of the beliefs and norms around women's leadership. Women must also be capacitated to build their confidence to take on leadership roles.

D. Income-Generating Activities

Half of the community members were involved in income-generating activities; 32 percent were female adults, male youth at 27 percent, male adults at 23 percent, and female youth at 18 percent.

Figure 33: Communities Involved in Income-Generating Activities

Figure 34: Gender Disaggregation - Involvement in Income Generating Activities



The majority (53 percent) were involved as individuals, while only 12 percent were in groups, and 35 percent were both individuals and groups. The communities' dominating income-generating activities were agricultural (crop production, poultry, livestock, wool and mohair, and piggery).

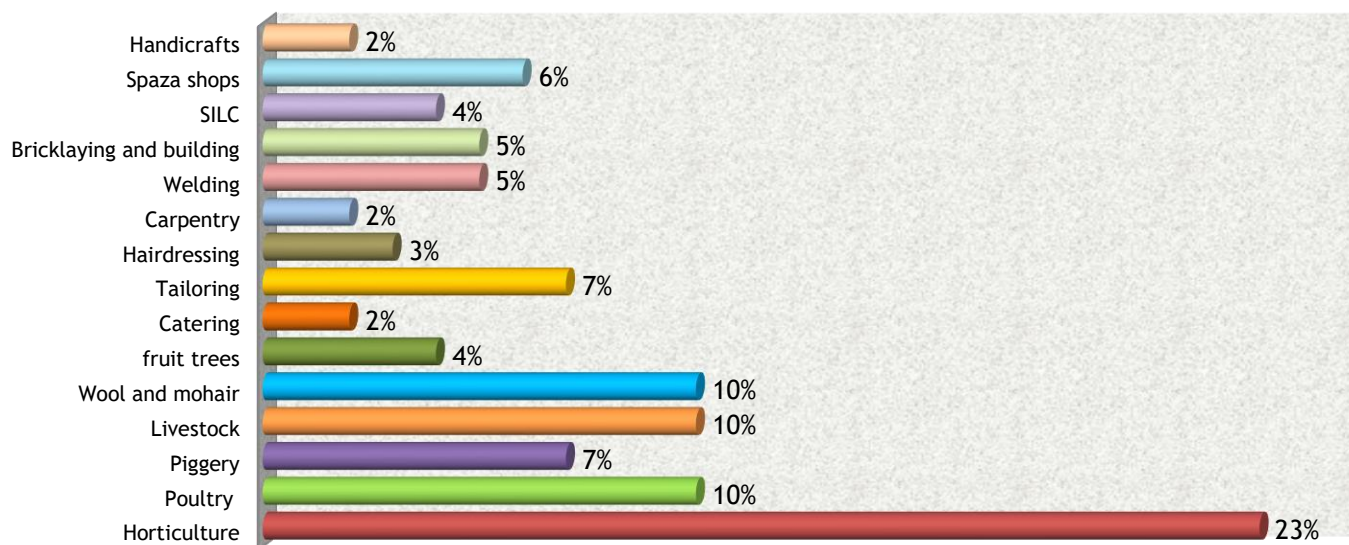


Figure 35: Income-Generating Activities at the Community level

Female adults were mainly concentrated in agriculture activities (poultry, horticulture - crop production, piggery, wool & mohair, livestock, and fruit trees) at 23 percent, 19 percent, 13 percent, 10 percent, and 3 percent (for both livestock and fruit trees) respectively, followed by Internal Savings and Lending Communities (SILC) groups at 9 percent, tailoring and hairdressing at 6 percent each, and handicrafts and street vendor at 3 percent each. Female youth were similarly primarily involved in agriculture (crop production and fruit trees at 50 percent and 20 percent, respectively), followed by tailoring, SILC groups and street vendor at 10 percent each. Their male youth counterparts were seen mainly in crop production and animal farming at 25 percent each, followed by wool & mohair, bricklaying & building, and street vendor at 10 percent each, welding, hairdressing, tailoring, and forestry at 5 percent each.

Half of the income-generating activities were registered, 35 percent were registered at the Ministry of Small Businesses, Co-operatives, and Marketing (MSBCM) under the Department of Cooperatives, 29 percent at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), and 18 percent by the Chief and at the Law office, respectively. Fifty percent of female adult businesses were registered as Co-operatives, with 16.7 percent each registered under MTI, by the Chief and the Law office. Female youth businesses were registered under Co-operatives, MTI, and Law office at 33.3 percent each. Male youth businesses were registered at the MTI and Law office (at 50 percent each).

All age and gender groups of the community members who were not engaged in income-generating activities attributed that to a lack of capital. Low education level was also brought to the fore as one of the reasons, due to schools being in remote areas. Furthermore, Climate change was also identified as a deterring factor in farming.

For those who were already running their businesses or engaged in income-generation activities, the challenges

that they face in running these income-generating activities include lack of access to finance, lack of adequate stock or inputs, lack of business management skills, lack of equipment, low production capacity, failure to work well in groups, delay of payments by credit customers, and lack of water.

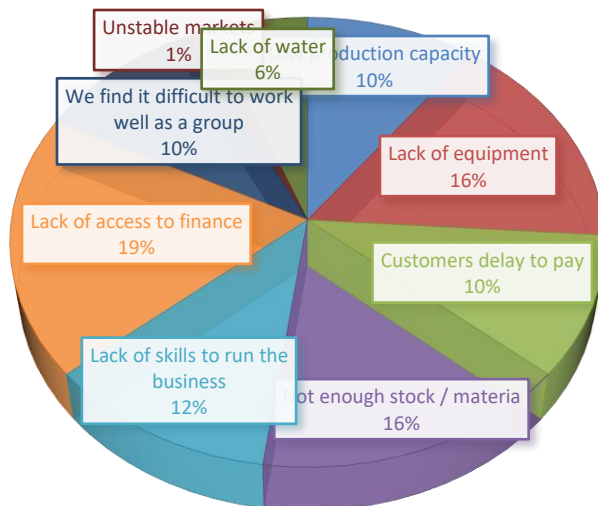


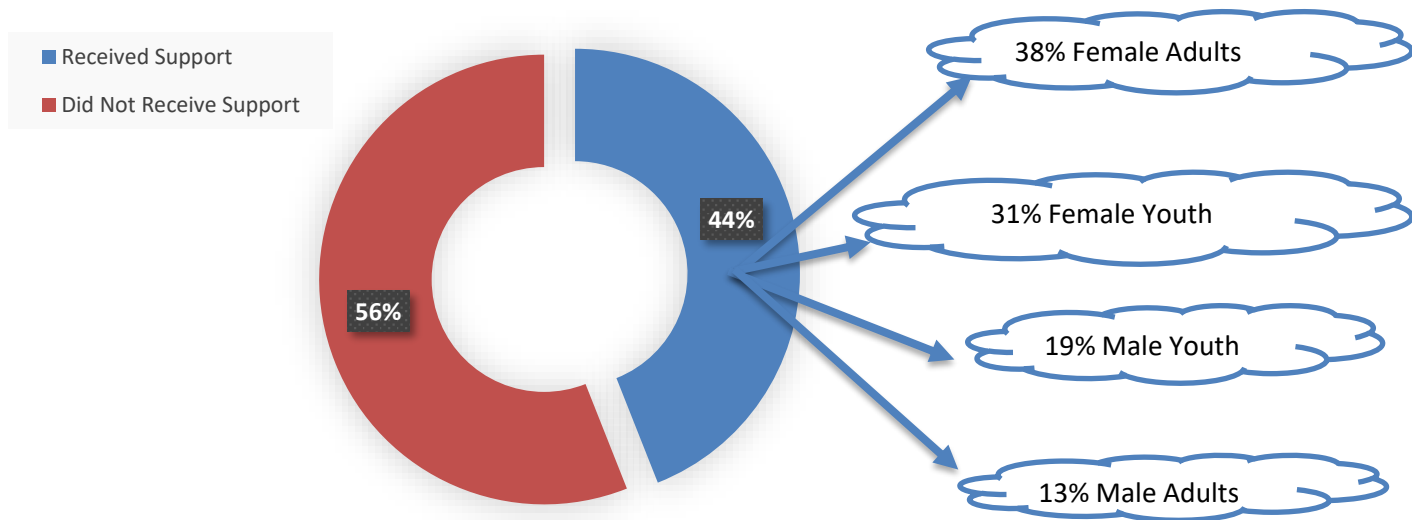
Figure 36: Challenges Experienced in Running Income-Generating Activities

Female groups outlined their constraints in engaging in income-generating activities like lack of resources, including start-up capital, lack of infrastructure development such as electricity, and lack of land ownership. Youth also underlined lack of land ownership as a barrier, lack of knowledge on registering one's business, and access to markets. Furthermore, the male youth also pointed out that boys usually are forced to look after animals at a young age, depriving them of the opportunity and right to attend school.

E. Business and Livelihoods Support Organizations

Various governmental and non-governmental organizations offer business support at community levels, such as seed funding, agricultural inputs, and skills training to enhance livelihoods through support for income-generating activities within the communities. From the surveyed EDs, 44 percent of community members had received support from such organizations.

Figure 37: Support Received from Business and Livelihoods Support Organisations



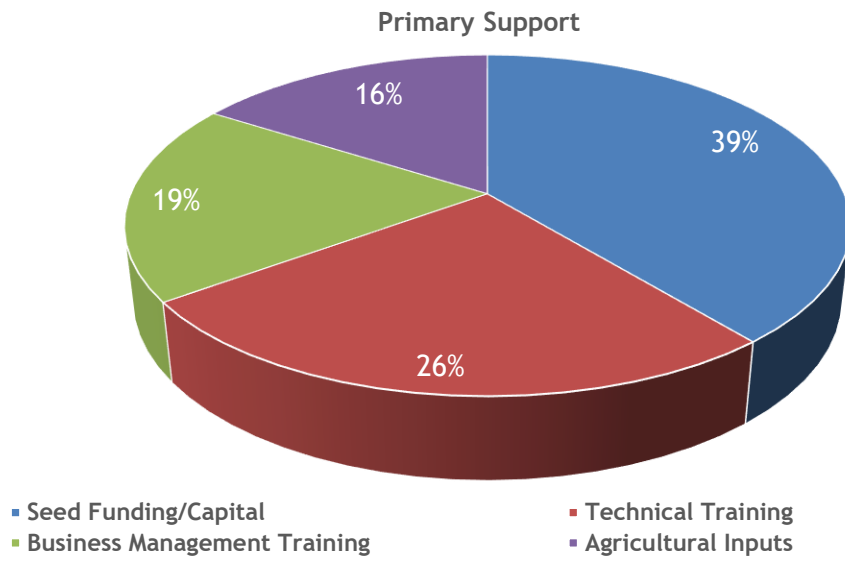
In the lead of those who had received support were female adults at 38 percent, female youth at 31 percent, male youth at 19 percent and male adults at 13 percent.

It can be inferred from the data that business support at community levels is mainly targeted at women, both adults and youth. The literature also shows that there are various strategic business development interventions targeted at women and youth; for instance, the Lesotho Millennium Development Agency (LMDA) has projects targeted at women and youth, such as the Market-Driven Irrigated Horticulture (MDIH), whose focus is to empower women and youth, in the irrigated horticulture sector¹⁶⁰.

The primary support received is seed funding or capital at 39 percent, technical training at 26 percent, business management training at 19 percent, and agricultural inputs at 16 percent.

¹⁶⁰ Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact II Development Approaches in Lesotho. Check: <https://ls.usembassy.gov>

Figure 38: Business Support Received



Equally so, this closely mirrors the most sought-after business support as defined by the community members, being business management training, technical training, and seed funding, all three at 24 percent each, and raw materials or agricultural inputs at 10 percent and market access and storeroom facility at 10 percent.

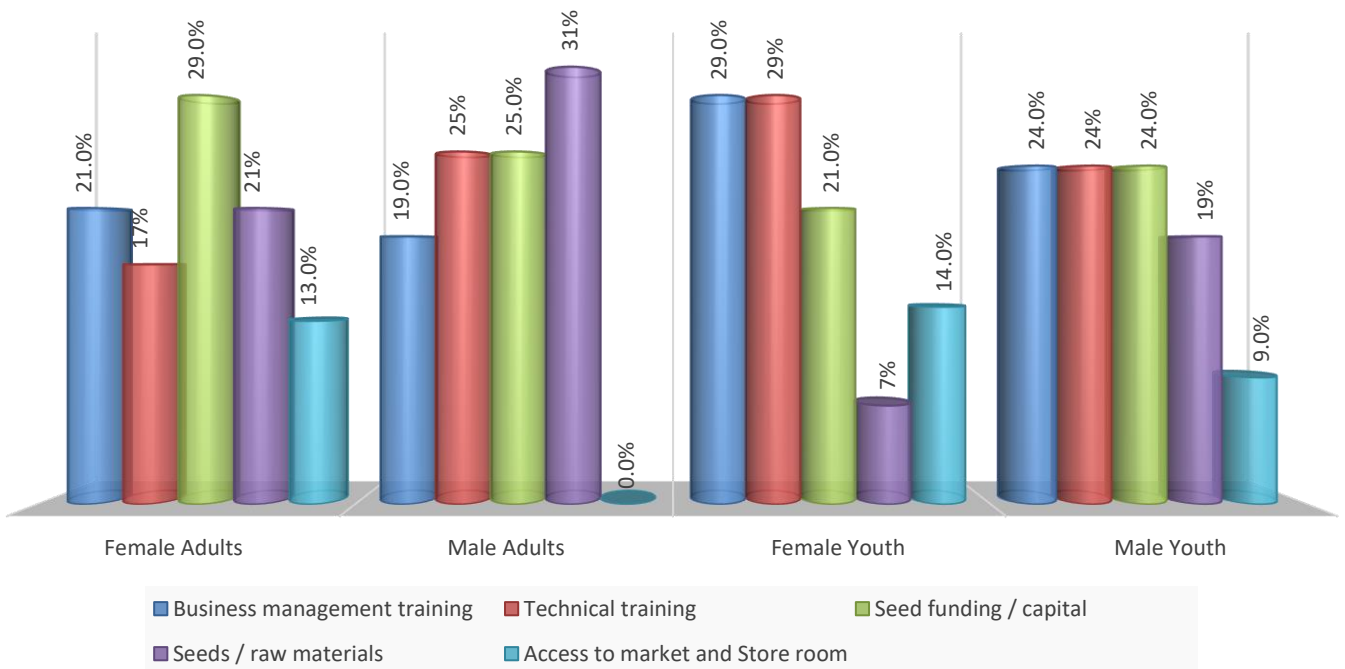


Figure 39: Business Support Needed

In order of priority and as depicted in the above chart, business support mainly sought by women is seed funding/capital, business management training and technical training, seeds/raw materials, and access to markets and a storeroom. Similarly, youth groups prioritised technical and business management training, seed funding, seeds and raw materials, and market access.

The different age and gender groups of those who had never received any support had differing opinions on why they had never received such support. While female adults attributed it to lack of farming land and corruption, their male counterparts had different views. They explained that this is because of the low literacy levels of the community members, communities being in remote areas, rural areas not getting as much priority as those in urban areas, and that support is only given to wealthy people neglecting the poor.

Female youth claimed to have never received support due to nepotism and because some interventions are only targeted at the ultra-poor. On the other hand, Male youth do not know of organizations that offer support. They have never heard of such organizations coming to their communities to provide developmental support to youth.

Engaging in income-generating activities

To understand the potential income-generating options available in each district, the community members were asked to list some of the abundant resources in their respective districts and what income-generating activities can result from those.

Leribe

The abundant resources recorded in Leribe were water, sand, *morobei*, *moli*, *moseha*, *lengana* agricultural land, clay, and aloe. Income-generating activities that can emanate from these resources include bottling of water, selling sand for building construction, making clay products, selling *morobei* to those that process it, using *moseha* for making handicrafts such as brooms and traditional hats, and using traditional plants such as *lengana*, *moli* and aloe for making medicinal herbs.

Maseru

The identified resources in Maseru include rosehip and prickly pear, aloe, *lihalahala*, waste, and historical places. Rosehip and prickly pear can be used to produce jam and cosmetics. Aloe can be used to make juice and cosmetics, waste can be recycled and upcycled, and historic places can be used for tourism.

Butha-Buthe

In the Butha-Buthe district, the identified resources were aloe, rosehip, prickly pear, sand, and water. Rosehip and prickly pear can be used to produce oils and juice, sand for building construction, and water can be bottled.

To start and run successful income generation activities, the community members reiterated that they need support with start-up capital in the form of equipment, cash, inputs or materials, business management and technical skills, access to markets, access to information, electricity and water, and access to farming land.

Summary – Business and Livelihood Support Organisations

The dominant livelihood initiative for women in the communities is agriculture (crop farming, poultry, and piggery) and savings and lending groups. Youth are also predominantly engaged in agricultural activities and represented in other sectors such as tailoring, hairdressing, welding, and small-scale retail (street vendors). The women-led CBOs engage in poultry, crop farming, piggery, beekeeping, SILC, stokvel, health support groups, and burial societies. Similarly, youth-led CBOs engage in crop farming, poultry, livestock, SILC, and burial societies.

To launch and scale successful livelihood projects, women and youth need support with technical and business management training, seed funding, seeds and raw materials, and market access. Providentially, as evidenced by the findings and the literature, most enterprise interventions within the communities are targeted toward women and youth.

F. Community-Based Organizations

When asked whether they are a part of any community-based organization, 57 percent of the respondents said yes, with female adults at 30 percent, male adults at 18 percent, and both youth groups at 26 percent each.

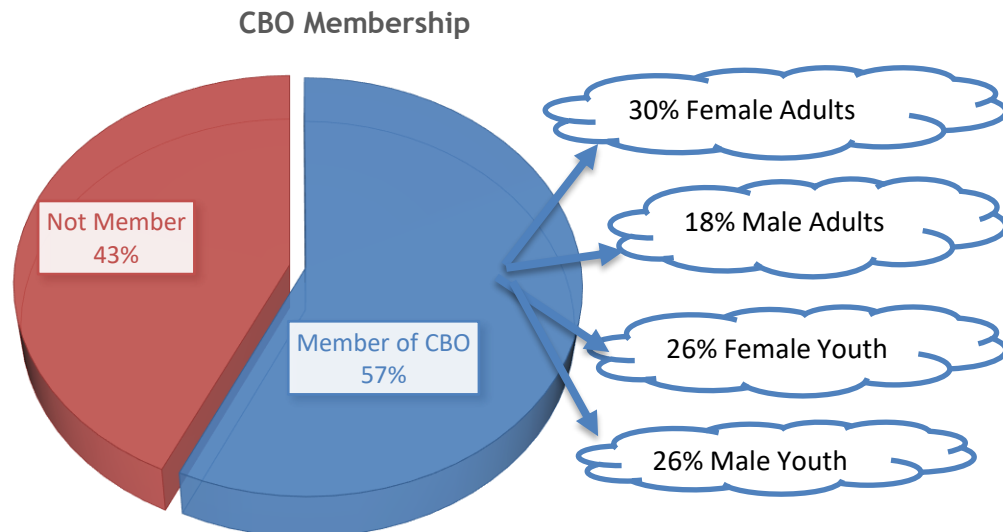


Figure 40: CBO Membership

In the Leribe district, most of these organizations are for poultry and crop farming and Saving and Internal Lending Communities (SILC), and most are women-led. In the Butha-Buthe district, the community groups or organizations offer health support, funeral and stokvel groups. The groups in Butha-Buthe are also mainly women and youth-led groups. Many funeral groups were recorded in the Maseru district, followed by farming groups (potatoes, dairy, poultry and piggery, and beekeeping), stokvel and SILC groups. The funeral support

groups are mainly women-led, stokvel groups mixed both genders, and men-led groups were only for funeral burial (*ho chekela mofu*). A list of these organizations is attached in Annexure C.

The respondents who were not part of any community-based organizations highlighted that this is due to members lacking the same vision, entrepreneurial spirit, and internal conflict between members. Interesting views from the male adults, who pointed out their reason for not being part of CBOs, is that CBOs are for women only. It is unusual for men to be part of such groups and that their families are being represented in the CBOs by their spouses. Male youth also clearly indicated that they are not interested in being part of the CBOs and that they do not have money to pay the subscription fee required in the organizations.

Some of the challenges within the CBOs include a high turnover of members due to the volunteering nature of the CBOs, internal disputes and fights, delay of payments by customers, and lack of store-room facility, failure of members to pay subscription fees, low levels of participation by other members, and lack of capital and access to markets.

Involvement of CBOs in decision-making processes

Many respondents (83 percent) indicated that their CBOs or groups are involved in community decision-making processes; 60 percent indicated very participative, 30 percent not participative, and 10 percent somewhat participative.

Figure 41: CBO Involvement in Decision-Making

Figure 42: Level of Participation in Decision Making

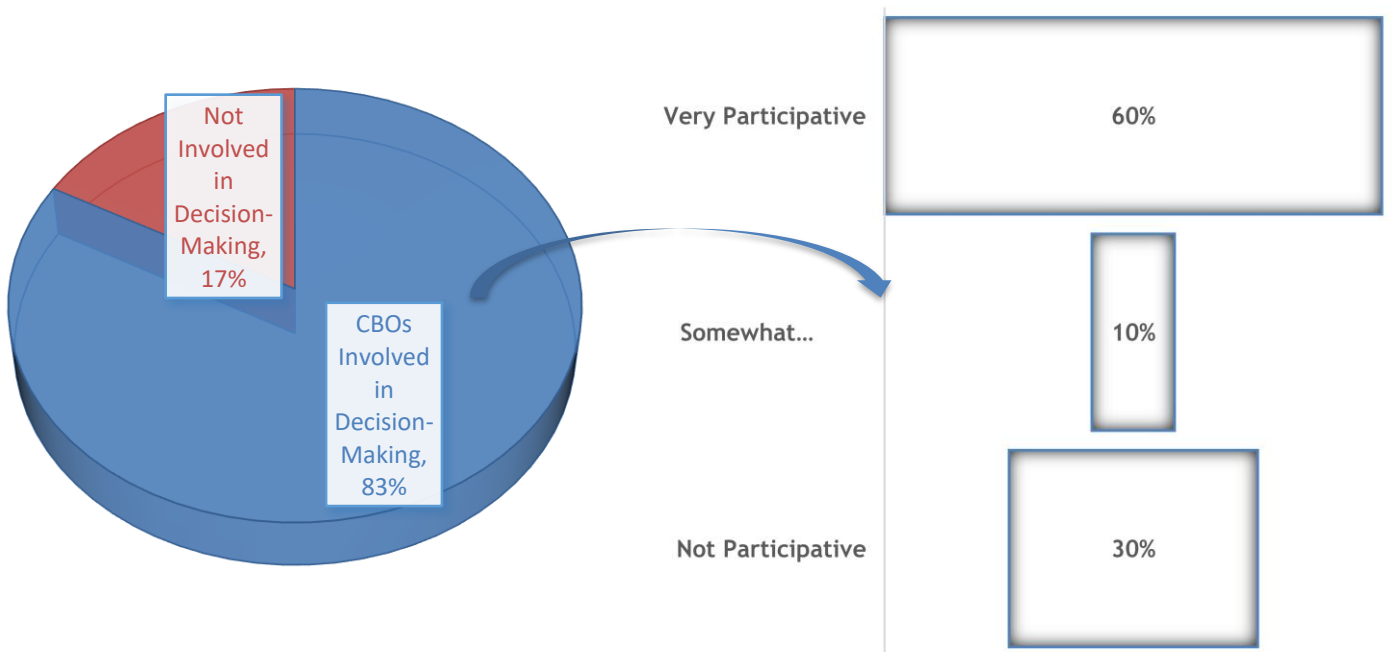
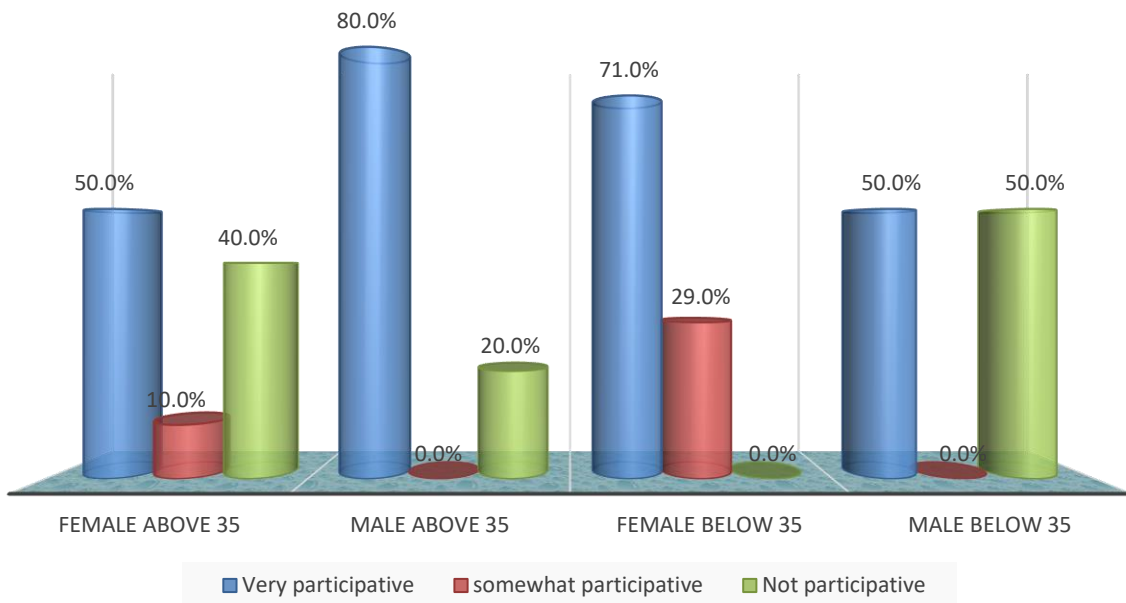


Figure 43: Gender Disaggregation - Level of CBO Participation in Decision-Making Meetings or Forums



The female adult groups explained that their organizations or groups get involved in decision-making through public gatherings, school dialogue forums, support of child-headed households forums, and the leadership role they take in health care matters within the communities. On the other hand, the male adult organizations usually send representatives to the meetings summoned by the Chief. These male organizations regularly discuss community safety and security with the Chief.

To participate in community decision-making processes, the overall view from all groups was that their CBOs need to be informed and invited about the meetings and forums for community decision-making processes and that the CBOs need to be trained to participate in these meetings and forums effectively.

To achieve the mandate and objectives of the CBOs, the respondents explained that they need to learn to work together and put aside their differences within the groups. The groups involved in income-generating activities showed that they need financial support in equipment and resources, technical, business management training, and training on running co-operatives or working in groups to achieve the objectives effectively.

G. Stakeholder Participation in the national/sectoral decision-making processes

Half of the organizations confirmed that their staff members are trained in participatory governance. The Government Ministries and the youth- and women-led CSOs that have not introduced their members to participatory governance attributed this situation to a lack of funding. At the same time, the private sector associations indicated that it is because the activity is not in their scope of work.

All organizations claimed to participate in national and/or sectoral decision-making processes. On participation in national and/or sectoral decision-making processes, 69 percent rated themselves very participative, while 31 percent on somewhat participative.

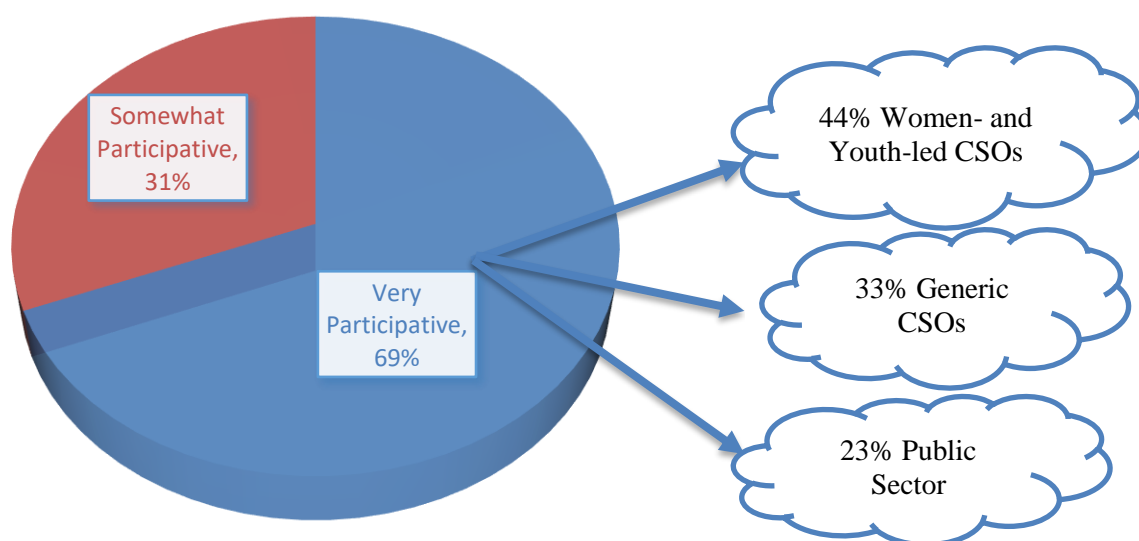


Figure 44: Key Stakeholders' Level of Participation in National and/or Sectoral Decision-Making Processes

Of those very participative, 44 percent are the youth-led CSOs, 33 percent are generic CSOs, and only 23 percent are in the public sector.

Challenges faced in fully participating in the national/sectoral decision-making processes are that sometimes the government views the CSOs negatively and is reluctant to engage them, poor management within the CSOs, and lack of funding. Women-led CSOs affirmed that their constraint in participation is due to a lack of resources. At the same time, the public institutions said their limitations are due to a shortage of trained staff, budget, and bureaucratic processes.

For the youth-led CSOs, the challenge they face is that sometimes they do not get invited to the meetings or forums. Even when they are invited, sometimes they cannot attend due to being short-staffed and lacking the resources to make it to such meetings. Another barrier is the perception that those in authority undermine their voices, and contributions are not considered. Furthermore, the views from other stakeholders were that youth-led CSOs are disorganized groups; sometimes, the young people's approach in conversations comes across as rude, which may be a barrier to successfully engaging well with others. Sometimes, the youth groups get discouraged due to a lack of feedback and follow-ups, and information takes longer to reach them.

Some unequal norms discriminate against women and youth within the communities, limiting these groups from effectively participating in decision-making processes and enterprise development. For instance, the youth-led CSOs pointed out that youth are sometimes considered too young to make decisions. Therefore their opinions or suggestions are sometimes taken for granted as they are believed to be immature and still have a lot to learn. On the other hand, women do not get elected to leadership roles as they are not perceived as leaders. They are burdened with domestic chores that limit their ability to participate in economic activities.

Enabling factors for women- and youth-led CSOs to participate better in decision-making processes and MSME Ecosystem

The stakeholders stated a high need for political will in the public and private sectors. There is also a need for affirmative action and progressive realization of women and youth leading the MSMEs. The women and youth-led CSOs further need training in business and better opportunities to explore their enterprise-oriented endeavours. There is a need for information dissemination, networking infrastructure, access to finance and mentorship.

Women should be exposed to opportunities and build capacity to boost their confidence that they are capable and can take part in any roles they want. There need to be awareness campaigns in the communities to educate women to support other women and sensitize the community that they should base their votes on merits and not on gender.

Further views highlighted that women- and youth-led CSOs could participate better in decision-making by being invited to the meetings to validate what has been decided and instead to be part of the conceptualization and initial planning of the activities. Women- and youth-led CSOs need strong leadership and financial resources to operate and function well.

Summary - CBOs' Participation in Decision-making Processes

The CBOs participate in community decision-making by attending public gatherings and sector-specific forums such as health care support, school dialogues, and child support forums. Managing group dynamics and working well in co-operatives is an eminent need for these CBOs and other capacity-building programs, including participating well in community decision-making processes. Likewise, the CBOs also need to be informed and invited to the meetings and forums that involve planning and decision-making concerning the community. Equally important, the women and youth-led CBOs also need to develop solid internal leadership to part-take and benefit from the available platforms.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to understand women- and youth-led CBOs' and CSOs' priorities and capacity needs around enterprise development and to determine their participation in District and Community Action Plans. To encourage and promote the participation and empowerment of women and youth, the findings from the study will inform the enterprise support portal and ecosystem and capacity-building activities with relevant and sustainable information. In this regard, the Consultant has further produced an independent Stakeholder Mapping Report (Annexure D) to later assist in identifying the beneficiaries during the development of curricula for capacity building and an online information portal / hub.

Based on the findings, women and youth need to be supported with technical and business management capacity-building programs, seed funding, and start-up resources such as agricultural inputs and linkages to the market to launch and run sustainable enterprises successfully. Given the significant interest and involvement in agricultural income-generating activities, reforms and policy can be looked at regarding ownership and/or use of agricultural land so that youth and women can have more access to farming land. Furthermore, climate-smart farming practices need to be adopted.

With the available business development interventions in the country that target to empower women and youth in agricultural business pursuit and other business sectors, efforts need to be made for women and youth not only to be informed of such but also to meet the requirements of such interventions. Such interventions can also contextualize their level of requirements according to the community context (which mostly is small-scale farming) and youth context (who mostly do not own agricultural land).

To take part and participate in district and community planning platforms, women- and youth-led CSOs need to be capacitated on their role and the importance of their participation in such and be informed and invited to the forums. There is an imminent need for sensitization and education of community members around the roles and importance of women in leadership and governance so that communities can start to appreciate women as leaders, more so as political leaders. Although the youth are mainly interested in finding jobs and making a living for themselves, there is a need to sensitize them to the importance of youth participation in the decision-making forums and platforms to be more interested and take action to participate more.

With this study being a Participatory Action Research (PAR) that aimed for greater empowerment, participation, knowledge, and collaborative development by the project Team, more was achieved by working together. The Consultant and the Team worked together during training, workshops and regular meetings. This was executed from the planning to reflection stages per the four-step PAR process highlighted in Methodology. Therefore, the

study's process allowed for more profound and meaningful participation by the program partners. It is with confidence that the team confirms that the study's findings will inform the design of capacity-building activities for the targeted beneficiaries, potentially inform the development of policy briefs and shape the content of policy dialogues.

ANNEXURE A – Kickoff Workshop



Workshop Report -
DWF.docx



Final
Programme.docx

Workshop Report

Workshop Agenda

ANNEXURE B – Data Collection Tools



Community
Tool.docx



Key Stakeholder
Tool.docx

Community Consultation Tool Key Stakeholder Tool

ANNEXURE C – List of CBOs in Target Districts



Annexure C.docx

List of CBOs in Target Districts

ANNEXURE D – Stakeholder Mapping Report



Annexure
D_Stakeholder