

SADC

SUCCESS STORIES



Lesotho | Volume 1, 2022



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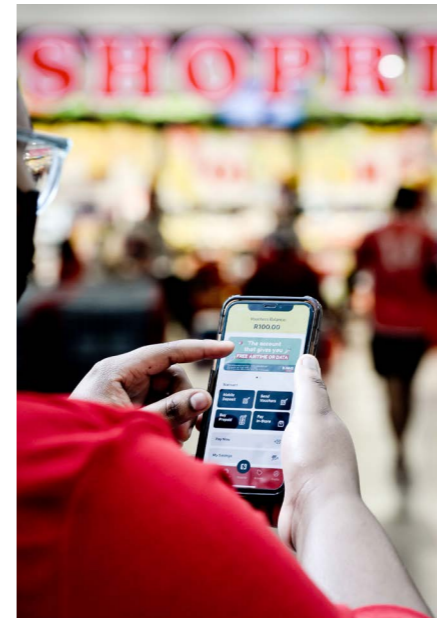
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Towards a COMMON FUTURE

A story of community...



“This shared vision is anchored on common values and principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist amongst the people of southern Africa.”



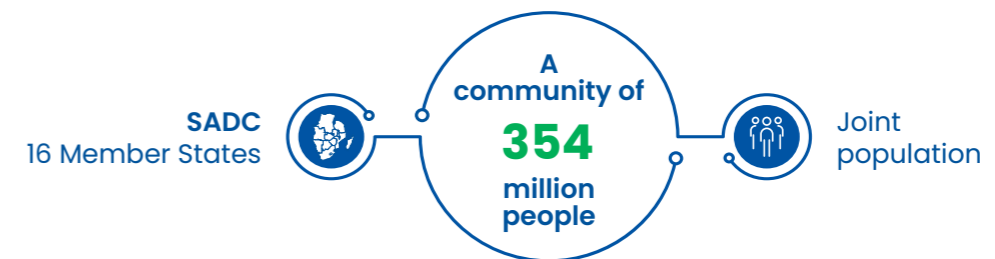
SADC

From the beginning of time, the principles of “botho” have guided African societies. As old as humanity itself, it is best described as an African philosophy of respect - calling on individuals to come together; to look out for each other. The spirit of “botho” resonates in every fibre of SADC’s existence - past and present.

It is this intrinsic force that calls upon the countries and people of Southern Africa to develop a vision of a shared future, a future within a regional community.

And so began the origin of the Southern African Development Community (SADC); founded as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980.

It was transformed into SADC on 17th August 1992, and is made up of 16 Member States: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All of them - working together for economic growth and peace on the African Continent.



Cooperation signals a process of working or acting together - often towards a common goal.

The SADC vision is one of a common future that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standard of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice, and peace and security for the people of southern Africa.

Inter-regional cooperation and integration efforts have been ongoing for several decades now. In this time, theory and experience have proved that such cooperation can positively contribute to capacity development, infrastructure and economic development across countries and regions.

SADC is a story of community.

The Kingdom of Lesotho's role in the birth of SADC

The year 2020 was significant in that it commemorated the 40th anniversary of SADC. It marked a journey of progress on the complex road to achieving peace and security, development and economic growth; a path mapped out to ease poverty and enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa.

As a founding Member State, the Kingdom of Lesotho has always attached enormous importance to SADC and its evolution.

MOMENTS IN TIME

By the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties, the Southern African region was characterised by significant historical and political events, including Mozambique and Angola's independence in 1975, Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, and South Africa's growing international isolation.

On 1 April 1980, the Heads of State of Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland as it was then known, and Zimbabwe, convened a meeting in Lusaka, Zambia to establish the Southern African Coordination Conference (SADCC), a precursor of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The focus of SADCC was to advance the agenda of political freedom from colonial powers in Southern Africa.

In addition to the original reason for the formation of SADCC having been rendered irrelevant, various factors contributed to the transformation from SADCC to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). These included the need to increase regional integration, and the expectation that, with the end of apartheid in sight, South Africa would join the rest of the region's independent countries.

In 1992, SADCC was transformed to become SADC, and a treaty was signed by Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland (now Eswatini), Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Regional economic integration became the body's focus. Issues around peace and security also constituted, and continue to be on SADC's main agenda.

MOUNTAIN KINGDOM TODAY

The Kingdom of Lesotho continues to make steady progress in the implementation of the SADC regional integration agenda and reaps benefits therefrom.

MILESTONES



Lesotho had the privilege of chairing SADC from 2006 - 2007 when Mr Pakalitha Mosisili was Prime Minister.



His Majesty King Letsie III and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho were commended for the peaceful, transparent, and credible National Assembly Elections held in June 2017, which demonstrated commitment to democratic practices within the SADC region.



Lesotho has to date signed or ratified more than 90% of the total number of SADC Legal Instruments.



Currently there are 11 Basotho on the establishment list of the SADC Secretariat; not counting those employed in projects.

A Lesotho national held the position of Deputy Executive Secretary between 1993 and 1998.

While reform and improvement continues to drive positive change, this is a story that continues on a road of cooperation through times of conflict and crisis, and times of opportunity and progress. SADC birthed itself with the vision to be a reputable, efficient and responsive enabler for regional integration.

There are many chapters yet to be written.

One region. 16 nations.
Towards a common future.

2022

A TIME FOR UNITY

Foreword by The Right Honourable Dr Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho



Our beloved Kingdom, Lesotho and the Basotho people have a history of resilience, steadfastness, and untold resourcefulness. In 2022 we carry these attributes forward as we find our region immersed in a situation unlike any the world has witnessed before. While ours was the last country on the continent to record a COVID-19 case, we have been adversely bruised by its effects, both socially and economically.

Following the celebration of its 40th anniversary in 2020, SADC's vision and principles have never been more relevant and integral to finding solutions and stability within the Southern African region in 2022. Our Member States are committed to working tirelessly together, united in the pursuit of long-lasting peace and economic recovery to improve the livelihoods of our people.

This SADC Success Stories series is an important reminder of how we have reached milestones, achieved success in progress, and overcome many adversities. In our Mountain Kingdom, we pride ourselves in the progress we have made in conserving water in our highlands – the most prized resource, and making sure our communities in the lowlands have the benefit of quality potable water. We have seen how the tarring of the iconic Sani Road has enhanced road safety and tourism to the advantage of our nation. We are realising the efficiencies of coordinated border management and how it can be seen as a potential solution for the challenges inherent to border management in the 21st Century.

The development of our country is a journey, and over the last decade we have travelled the distance to map out our way forward to higher levels of performance and achievement. Despite the current challenges, we will continue to build our Kingdom in the Sky as a stable democracy within the SADC region, and we will strive towards a united and prosperous nation at peace with itself and its neighbours. The national reforms process we have embarked upon is intended to restore the critical confidence in our governance structures and to yield a legal and regulatory framework that will advance peace and prosperity for all Basotho. We will thus, harness our vision to improve the lives of our people and those of our children.

There is no greater time than now for Lesotho and its fellow SADC Member States to uphold the ideals of the Founders of SADC.



Sustainability in Unprecedented Times

Foreword by Honourable Thabo Sophonea, Minister of Finance



The months between 2020 and 2022 will be an extraordinary period in the annals of history – a time where regional integration has never been more important; and a time where the Kingdom of Lesotho stands together with our fellow Member States to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in our beloved SADC region.

In the face of great adversity, we have witnessed a heightened sense of community; and to support Member States, the SADC region has mobilised resources to help contain the pandemic. This also serves to assist in mitigating the enormous socio-economic impact as the virus sweeps through Southern Africa.

SADC commemorated its 40th anniversary two years ago in 2020 at the beginning of lockdowns, and despite the challenging times, the 40th SADC Heads of States and Government Summit had the opportunity to convene virtually using the technology of digital communication. Solidarity and cooperation framed the agenda among our Member States, as we continue to stand together in these unprecedented times. As the intensity of the pandemic abated a little, the 41st Summit of SADC Heads of States and Government was held in a hybrid fashion; combining digital and face to face meetings as will our 42nd Summit in the DRC.

I'd like to reflect on some of the many gains and benefits experienced by Lesotho's SADC membership:

- Positive relations between Member States, and the deliberate application of good neighbourly practices and mutual understanding, are the catalysts to making SADC countries feel a political and moral obligation to one another. Lesotho is strengthened by this regional integration as we all work towards peace and stability in the region.
- The common values taken on by SADC Member States result in other countries in the region knowing what to expect from Lesotho.
- Employment gains are key. Many Basotho emigrate to countries in the region. The number of citizens working in South Africa is considerable at both skilled and unskilled levels.
- Development of Lesotho's infrastructure is crucial to economic prosperity and there is great progress with regards border management and road upgrades, as detailed in the Success Stories within this publication. One of the stories describes how the development of the Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply Scheme – the Metolong Dam and its surrounding infrastructure provides a critical service to our people and supports Lesotho's economy.
- The second phase of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project was launched recently. This important project will benefit both Lesotho and neighbouring countries.

*It is when we come together
that we really make an impact.*

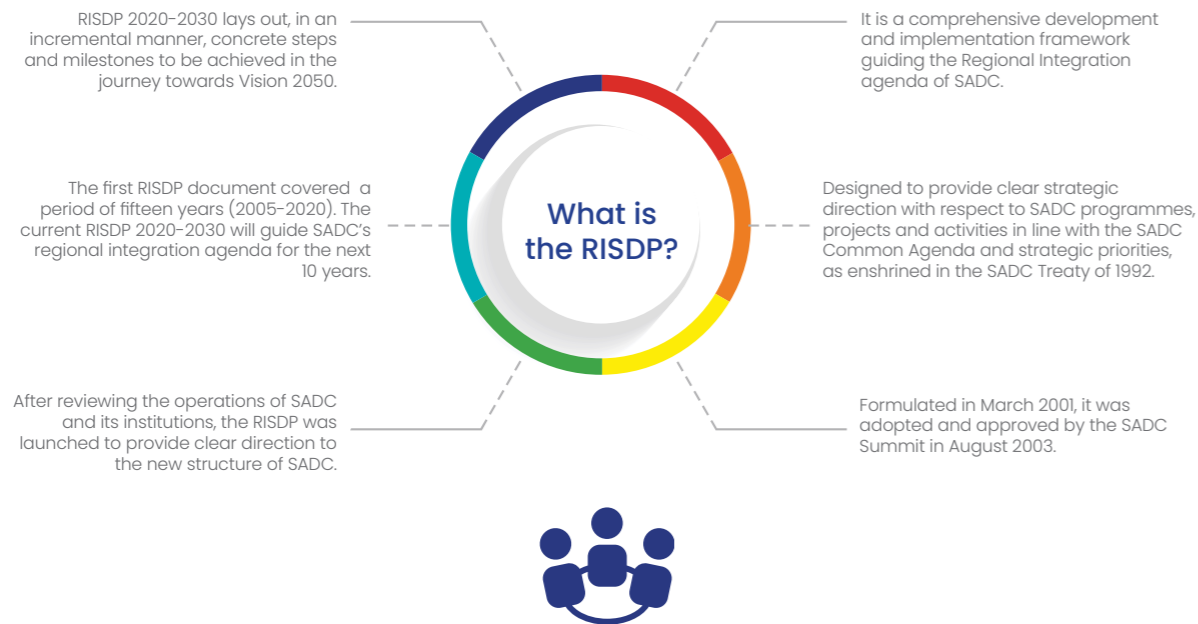
Promoting Regional Integration in SADC

On a national level, this is Lesotho's first version of its SADC Success Stories, published to highlight stories of regional integration. The publication was produced to raise awareness of SADC and its successes in Lesotho. It will also play an important role to equip relevant stakeholders in the media, academia and civil administration with information on SADC protocols, policies and programmes. It carried news from multiple sectors whose national implementations have improved the socio-economic situation of Lesotho.

It is possible to verify economic growth and the eradication of poverty in the SADC region. This can be achieved through Member States' efforts towards regional integration, leading to higher flows of trade, capital, energy, people and ideas.

Strengthening the National-Regional Linkages (SNRL) in SADC is a partnership programme

A noticeable effort in the common regional integration agenda is reflected in the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP).



The ultimate objective of the plan is to deepen integration in the region with a view to accelerate poverty eradication and to achieve other economic and non-economic development goals.



Reflecting on success

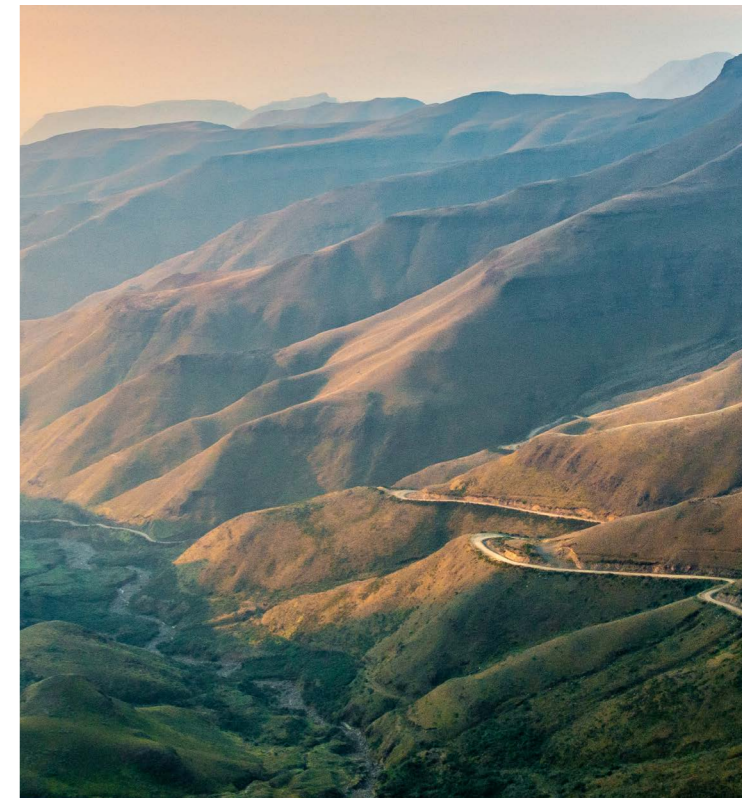
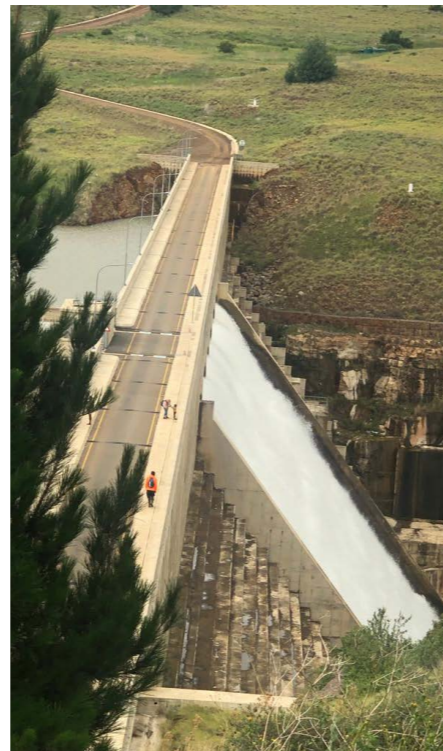
The SADC Success Stories series is one of the communication tools that reaches out to SADC citizens. It enhances awareness about the positive impacts achieved through regional integration in communities, and in the lives of the people of the SADC region. Other communication tools include media training, radio discussions on SADC topics, public lectures and summaries of the revised RISDP, among others.

In 2015, the first volume of the SADC Success Stories showcased a new way of making regional integration in SADC more accessible on a regional level. The brochure was published in the three SADC languages (English, French and Portuguese), and a social media campaign reached over 1,000,000 SADC citizens. In 2017, the second volume of the SADC Success Stories - published in all three SADC languages - was launched by the German Ambassador to Botswana and SADC's Executive Secretary at a press conference at the 37th SADC Summit. The brochure and accompanying social media campaign reached over 4,000,000 SADC citizens and generated media coverage in eleven Member States within only one month of being published.

Integration in partnership

The SADC Secretariat has a series of initiatives to build capacities in Member States, and at Secretariat level, one of these being the Strengthening the National-Regional Linkages (SNRL) in SADC Programme - a partnership programme between SADC, the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ), implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The SNRL Programme is supporting SADC Member States to build their capacities for implementation of the regional integration agenda. It supports Member States to integrate the regional agenda into national policy design processes. This includes support for better alignment of regional protocols and policies with national plans and policies; enhanced coordination, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SADC policies, protocols and legal instruments; and building awareness of the benefits of regional integration among key stakeholders.



SADC

Success Stories



One of the most unusual borderlines can be found looping its way around the Mountain Kingdom. As one of only three enclaved states in the world – Lesotho is completely surrounded by South Africa, sharing 12 border posts. Historically, traffic through these posts was slow – creating a ripple effect as the business community suffered delays in imports and exports.

Knowing that effective trade translates into economic growth, the Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA) implemented the Coordinated Border Management (CBM) project late in 2019. This is in line with the SADC Protocol on Trade, which encourages developments that enhance trade between Member States.

Daniel, a Pick ‘n Pay truck driver who crosses between Lesotho and South Africa regularly is impressed with the recent changes experienced at the border. “I like the new developments I’ve seen over the past few months. Now that pedestrians are separated from vehicles, traffic control is a lot better,” said the driver, with a broad grin. “I can also talk about the improved services. When you get to the entrance of the border, there is proper traffic marshalling, signage to guide drivers, and information boards to get us to our service points. The officers have also started to communicate with us in a much better way, which makes our borders a lot more user-friendly. I don’t know what has changed exactly, but whatever it is, border control staff are speedy in their inspections and release us on time,” he said, giving a thumbs up as he walked back to his truck.

Trade translates into growth

The CBM project aims to fast-track the processing and declaration of goods, facilitate travel through the border posts more smoothly, and control the traffic better as it moves between Lesotho and South Africa. It is also firmly focused on improving service delivery, and at its core, to finding solutions to contain the rivalry between border agencies, a situation that has proved to be detrimental to regional harmony in the past. Ultimately the goal is to create a united front which serves clients efficiently and smoothly.

Creating efficiencies

Coordinated Border Management is now recognised by the customs community under the World Trade Organisation’s Trade Facilitation Agreement as a potential solution for the challenges inherent to border management in the 21st Century.

By definition, CBM is a coordinated approach by Lesotho’s border agencies in the context of seeking greater efficiencies in managing trade


PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Efficient border crossings set to enhance trade – and growth




Coordinated Border Management = EFFICIENCY

- 

● Fast-track declaration of goods and travel
- 

● Better traffic control
- 

● Improved service delivery
- 

● Creates a united border agency to serve clients more efficiently



“We now offer an improved service. Time is gained, money is saved, and the border posts are more organised and effective.”

- Moeketsi Ranthake

and travel, while at the same time adhering to compliance requirements. Moeketsi Ranthake, CBM Project Manager at the LRA, says that coordinating border management successfully, will hinge on pulling all the border agencies together under a single lead, so that they can operate with a cross-functional team approach and deliver a cohesive service. This way, he says, agencies learn from and complement each other, and efforts aren’t duplicated.

Speedier clearance of vehicles, goods and people through the border posts will also have a direct effect on foreign direct investment, says Ranthake. “As a result of CBM, doing business in Lesotho has become easier for South Africans and other SADC Member States that rely on the road infrastructure to move cargo. In the long-term we expect to start seeing positive economic strides as a result of increased trade. Boosting our revenues will make Lesotho more competitive both regionally and internationally.

Ranthake says that compliance is an important factor: “Modern traders and travellers have great expectations. They want border crossings to be quick and efficient, and clearing times to be instant. But at the same time, border agencies must rigorously apply the law in order to protect government interests and safeguard the health and safety of the country’s people – theirs is a function of national security. In the past, striking the right balance between trade and travellers, and security, has been problematic, and an intervention was needed.”

Unprecedented times

The CBM’s coordinated approach means that agency resources are utilised more efficiently, and security and risk management have been significantly enhanced. The timing could not have been more apt. March 2020 marked the beginning of the fight against the spread of coronavirus into the SADC region and one of the first actions was to close border posts.

The challenge of the SADC region is its porous borders, which increases the risk of Covid-19 spreading undetected. As borders gradually reopen, the SADC region continues its active surveillance, early detection, isolation and prevention of the onward spread of infections. With the pandemic far from over in 2022, efficient border control is as relevant as ever. In fact, multi-sectoral partnership has never been more important to minimising the social and economic impact of the pandemic, and while CBM is aimed at boosting trade revenues, this focus on coordinated border management will shift gear to play an essential role during these unprecedented times.

MONEY TRANSFERS

Cross-border financial inclusion for the people

“Before Shoprite came, I used to receive money through a bank. I had an account there. But I changed because the bank was too costly. It felt more like sharing our money with them,” a Mosotho lady said while joining the queue at a Shoprite in Maseru to receive the money her husband had sent from South Africa.*

By ‘sharing’ she meant that prior to the money transfers service, bank charges would reduce the amount of money she’d receive. And for families on the breadline – where every cent counts – that meant less food on the table.

Supporting the unbanked

Remittances play a critical role in supporting the families of migrant workers, and Lesotho was the first country in the SADC region to implement the Shoprite Cross-border Money Transfer Project. The service has been progressing steadily ever since, experiencing a 2906% growth in the annual total amount received between 2015 and 2020. This growth translates to 30 times the size it was five years ago, bearing testimony to the fact that the Project has successfully responded to the needs of low income people throughout Lesotho.

Origins

In 2012, the Governor of the Central Bank of Lesotho (CBL) permitted FinMark Trust, a partner in financial inclusion in the region, to go ahead with Lesotho’s participation in a pilot project for the remittance of funds from South Africa to Lesotho using a proposed money transfer service. This decision followed a survey to assess how low income and unbanked SADC migrants working in South Africa were sending money home.

The findings indicated that most Basotho were using informal means to get money back to their families, a practice that was not only risky, but cumbersome and costly too.

Following CBL approval, engagements began to make this proposal a reality. Many consultations and technical system configurations culminated in the Reserve Bank of South Africa granting its approval of the pilot phase of the Shoprite / Capitec Money Transfer Service in 2014.

* Source: www.finmark.org.za

“The purpose of the Project was to assist Basotho working in South Africa with an affordable financial service that delivers real value,” says Mrs. Maseiso Lekholoane, Director – Private Sector Development, Ministry of Finance. “We can also attest to its success by the way it has reduced the challenges of money laundering through improving the quality of remittance statistics by becoming a formal channel where data is easy to obtain,” explains Lekholoane. “It is, by far, of greatest benefit to our migrant workers and their families in Lesotho.”

SADC – committed to the region

A strong and stable banking system is the backbone of an effective economy. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is committed to improving the economy in Southern Africa as a means toward greater Regional Integration and eradicating poverty for the region’s people. To support this economic growth, SADC established the Protocol on Finance and Investment in 1996. This money transfers project in particular, touches the lives of many people at grassroots level, and its outcomes and successes for Lesotho have been quite remarkable.

Impacting lives

Hailed as one of the cheapest cross-border products in the world, the Project has become a significant game-changer and a well-established formal channel of sending money from South Africa to Lesotho. The values have grown so big that, policy makers would like to see this service digitised and replicated to other Member States.

Milestones in money

- Women benefit mostly from the service as a safe and affordable way to receive money from relatives working in South Africa.
- Basotho can send money instantly, safely, and at minimal cost:
 - improved livelihood;
 - improved financial inclusion;
 - money saved by those using this service can be spent on other family needs.

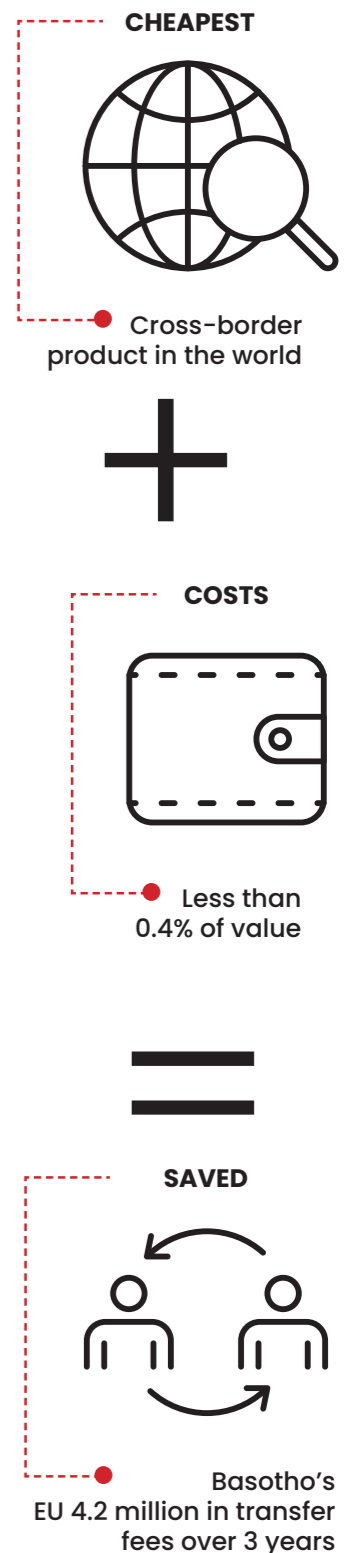
A REMITTANCE - Is when a person sends money, usually small amounts, across a border to friends and family living in another country.

The three major remittance corridors for cross-border transfers from South Africa are Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Lesotho.

The Shoprite Money Transfer is a cash-to-cash service, with the money being sent from any Shoprite Money Market counter in South Africa for collection at any Shoprite in Lesotho.

These transfers are economically significant to the countries that receive them.

With technical and financial support from Finmark Trust and led by the Financial Institution Unit of the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Central Bank of Lesotho, cross-border money transfers have changed people’s lives forever.



“We now get our money safely. It has changed our lives forever.”



METOLONG, December 2015 – Scores of young men lined up forming a human chain atop a hill in rural Lesotho, swaying in unison with sticks raised up in the air; their right elbows stacked side-by-side as they sang folk songs and performed the traditional mohobelo dance.

The festivities marked the unveiling of the Metolong Dam by King Letsie III of Lesotho. The dam will provide water to two-thirds of the country's population who have been facing acute water shortages until now. "It's good we are going to have water in our village," said Mamoroesi Seipobi, a 56-year old woman, who had walked for an hour and half to witness the ceremony.

As reported by World Bank <https://bit.ly/2VUizIZ>

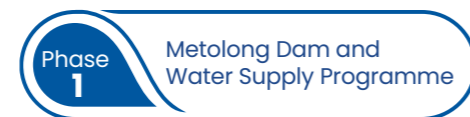
In Southern Africa – where the SADC Member States reside, water is a particularly scarce resource.

Lesotho is increasingly feeling the impact of climate change, especially when it comes to extended droughts, as water scarcity constitutes a major barrier to economic development and inclusive growth.

While large quantities of premium water from the country's highlands are exported to South Africa and generate revenues for Lesotho, many people and businesses residing in the urban and rural lowlands struggle to access safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Forward-thinking management of water resources is paramount, and is mandated in the SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses, which aims to foster closer cooperation among SADC Member States for protection, management, and use of shared watercourses in the region.

Since 2000, the Lesotho government has embarked on the development of the Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply Scheme to ensure adherence and compliance to the human right of reliable access to clean water and sanitation.



The Metolong Dam and Water Supply Programme (MDWSP) puts the protocol into action. The Programme is also a part of the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM) agreement, which promotes the equitable and sustainable development of the Orange-Senqu River. The geography of which, runs from the mountainous terrain of the Kingdom of Lesotho, through the semi-arid and arid landscapes of South Africa's Karoo and Richtersveld, to the deserts of southern Namibia. The agreement provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between the *riparian states to promote integrated water resources management and development within the river basin.

*Riparian means any country bordering a transboundary with inland water.

Metolong Dam and its surrounding infrastructure provides a critical service to the Basotho people and supports Lesotho's economy.

Water for good

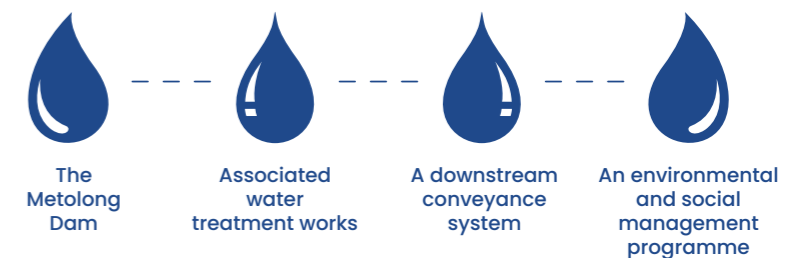
Started in 2012 and completed in 2015, MDWSP is aimed at increasing access to water and improving the reliability of the water supply to urban and peri-urban areas in Maseru and the neighbouring towns of Roma, Morija, Mazenod and Teyateyaneng.

Water Commissioner, Mr Mokake Mojakisane says that the project contributes to regional economic development and cooperation. It supports industrialisation, socioeconomic development and sustainability, builds resilience against the impacts of climate change, and improves regional water security. More specifically, the MDWSP has resulted in improved catchment management practices and water treatment and distribution facilities. It provides research opportunities, and it stimulates economic development and diversification.

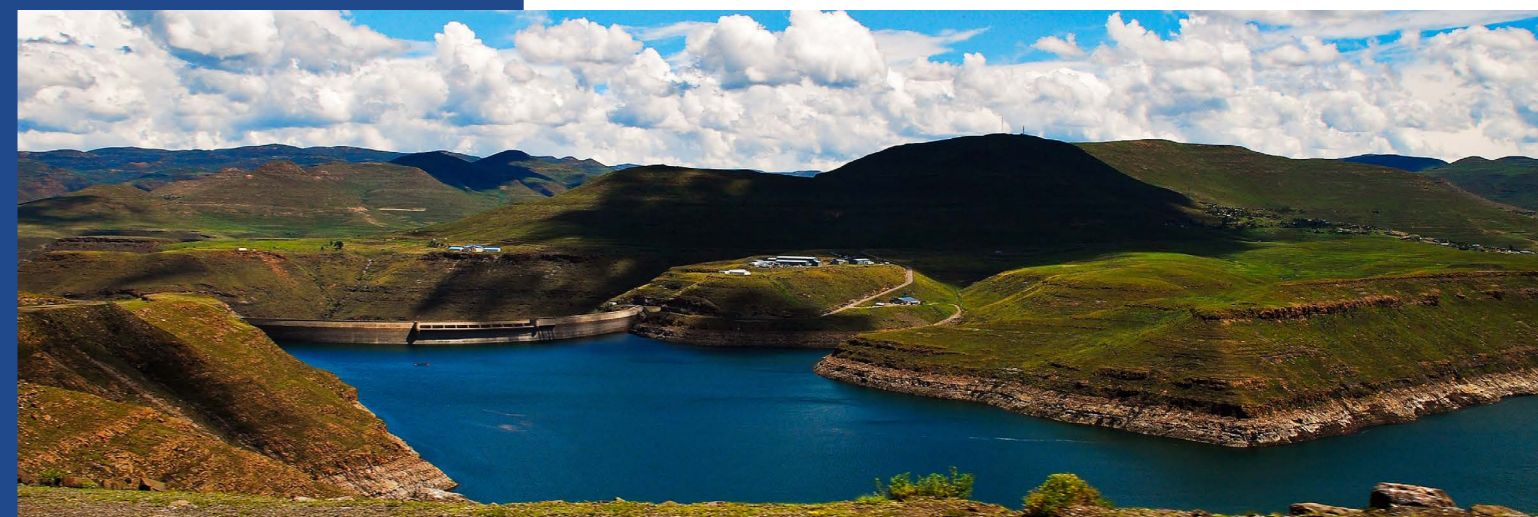
On a country level – The project ensures the provision of, or access to, potable water to two thirds of the population which has a positive knock-on effect on access to sanitation facilities. Provision of electricity has been enhanced, and road networks in the area surrounding the dam have been improved. Many Basotho also benefitted from being employed in the course of construction of the infrastructure.

In terms of magnitude, the 83 metre-high Metolong Dam features a 280-metre-long crest, with a 75m spillway just below it. It has a reservoir capacity of 64 million cubic metres and its raw water pumping station's capacity is 1.2 cubic metres per second. Construction is complete on all aspects, and the predicted lifespan is around 60 years.

The Metolong Dam and Water Supply Programme comprises:



Mojakisane says that the achievement was made possible through collaboration. "Different professions and skills worked towards reaching one goal. Each made valuable contributions towards making this project a reality. The funding, planning and implementation was done by different agencies. And in addition, other countries were involved, especially in the planning and approval stages of the project."



COLLECTING EVERY DROP

Water for Lesotho's lowlands

Resurfacing the road to the ROOF OF AFRICA

Tarring the legendary 46.5 km Mokhotlong to Sani Road

Sani Pass is one of the most iconic scenic roads and the highest mountain pass on the African continent. Originally a mule track, and once an important trade route out of the landlocked Kingdom of Lesotho, the road zigzags its way in a series of hairpin twists between the Underberg in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa to the town of Mokhotlong in the mountainous north-eastern part of Lesotho. It is the first major town with an airport along this Sani Pass road, and the only road linking the border posts of both countries, leading travellers to the roof of Africa at a lofty summit altitude of 2873 metres.

The pass was built in the 1950's and more recently has become a magnet for tourists and 4x4 adventurers, eager to experience the challenging off-road gravel drive and magnificent views of the Drakensberg mountain range. It has all the drama, bad weather and treacherous conditions a precarious mountain pass has to offer combined with breathtaking natural scenery.

In 2005, the South African government started a process proposing to upgrade the Sani Pass with a hard surface. This was part of a joint project with Lesotho to upgrade the entire route.

The announcement that the road would be tarred was followed by an opposition campaign from tour operators and community members. Environmental groups were at loggerheads over the benefits of having it resurfaced. Yet from an environmental perspective it made economic sense to upgrade the road from gravel to tar as gravel roads require regular maintenance every two years. It was also mooted that retaining the road in its gravel state would negatively impact the surrounding environment.

The benefits were clear – surfacing the road would improve trade relations between South Africa and Lesotho, as well as enable the seamless and legal movement of people between the two countries. In 2012, the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho Ministry of Public Works and Transport Roads Directorate began the construction project, which was completed in 2015 – an investment of over R 800m.



- Socio-economic development
- Enhanced tourism
- Improved trade between SA and Lesotho
- Improves Lesotho's exposure to the South African Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SACCI)* in association with SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Project value for Lesotho



- Ease of trade
- Socio-economic development

Project value for SADC region

*SACCI is represented on regional bodies such as the Association of SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry and working groups linked to the SADC Protocols. SACCI has signed cooperation agreements with many national chambers of commerce and industry worldwide. This adds up to a formidable network of business contacts and widespread opportunities to share knowledge and experiences. Source: <http://www.sacci.org.za/membership>


Interesting facts...



Surfacing consisted of 2,54km of continuously reinforced concrete pavement and 43,72 km (349 760 m²) of asphalt surfacing.



The portion of road upgraded was an existing gravel road that runs from Mokhotlong to Sani Pass in a south-easterly direction. The road provides access to South Africa via the Sani Pass border post.



The upgrade comprised a portion of road A3 (3,26 km) and the entire length of road A31 (43,15 km). The total length of the road upgrade is 46,41 km.

Building this road was going to be difficult

Apart from the challenge of constructing a mountain road with a very steep altitude gain and in extreme weather conditions, the road had to remain open throughout the process, with the exception of occasional brief stoppages.

Upgrading to bitumen

The existing gravel road which was in a very poor condition was upgraded to a bitumen surface for a design speed of 60 km/h and 25 km/h and the drainage was upgraded to an A class standard.

The upgrade included:

- Construction of a new pavement structure with a bitumen surface and a concrete surface where extremely steep sections required it.
- New culverts along the route to address drainage problems.
- Construction of bridges across rivers and stream crossings.
- Drains, storm water chutes, cut-off banks and berms, and erosion protection.
- New guidance, regulatory and advance warning signs.
- Retro-reflective road markings along the entire route.
- Erection of guardrails.

The project will help strengthen economic ties, grow shared opportunities and ensure sustainable and mutually beneficial development for both countries in line with SADC Protocol on Transport Communications and Meteorology.

“The Sani pass road has been very helpful in increasing sales,” says Mr Khaketla Hlakacha from Afri Ski, one of two unique ski resorts in Southern Africa. The shorter route from KwaZulu-Natal to the resort means that tourists don't hesitate to visit Lesotho anymore, and numbers have increased.

The Maluti Mountains, the largest ecological area, covers an area of 18 047 km² of the Drakensberg Mountain Range.

RICHNESS OF EARTH

Soil quality for food security

Considering its role as the vital source of most of the food we put on the table, it has become crucial to nurture and protect Lesotho's soils. One farmer, Mr Motsau Khuele has been farming the rich earth of Lesotho for many years. He recalls that back in 2006, farmers were subsidised by a government block farming programme initiative. Unfortunately, this led to low yields because of poor quality soils. For too long there has been a widespread lack of knowledge amongst local farmers about which soils suit certain crops, and what types of fertilizers improve soil fertility in specific areas. This situation is set to change and farmers like Mr Khuele can look forward to great future potential for increased yields resulting from a project that will capture information and knowledge on soils.

Lesotho's soils are under severe pressure as a result of natural conditions and human activities, triggering soil erosion, land degradation and depletion of organic matter. One of the keys to farming successfully – which in turn addresses the bigger picture of national food security – is unearthing the quality and type of soil that is available to farm with, and then knowing what to plant in that soil, and how to plant to maximise production.

SUSTAINABLE SOIL MANAGEMENT

Certain soil types are naturally less-than-perfect in terms of yield, and if they are constantly used, the soil simply degrades even further. Generally, it's the most marginalised farmers who are unaware of this cycle. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has worked with the government of Lesotho since 2017 to establish the Lesotho Soil Information System (LESIS) as part of efforts to achieve sustainable food production in the country. The system aims to bridge knowledge gaps by creating a database that details the country's soil types.

ON A REGIONAL LEVEL

LESIS supports the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy, a roadmap for the agriculture sector that focuses on improved food availability; access and improved nutritional value while minimising

food losses. Practically, LESIS will inform a fertiliser blending and irrigation master plan for Lesotho. Having mapped all the soil types, categories and profiles found in Lesotho, the datasets are then shared with the SADC Member States with a collective view of improving forecasting, prevention, mitigation and recovery from natural disasters; and improving institutional frameworks in the Southern African region.

Before: Soil information in Lesotho was patchy and scattered across different institutions and entities before the initiative consolidated all the pieces into one database.

After: The FAO has provided technical support training for officials in government institutions, academia and farming communities on digital soil mapping techniques and the production of soil property maps. Now trainees are able to identify threats and pressures on soil, develop and implement appropriate measures for combatting soil degradation and mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

Mr Khuele, who participated in the pilot project, points out that the introduction of the Lesotho Soil Information System is key to providing useful information on soil appropriateness for specific areas.

Dr Koetlisi, principal soil scientist at the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, says that LESIS renders detailed knowledge of soil characteristics that are important for soil resource usage and conservation. "Soil maps and related information systems constitute the basis for assessing soil quality over time. LESIS stores data and information about the physical, chemical and biological properties of soil when integrated with climate, vegetation, geology, relief conditions and hydrology."

Koetlisi says that soil information should be updated regularly in order to aid sustainable soil management, which has the benefit of positioning communities and countries as champions in terms of aiding food production and abetting food security from the available land. The strategy that LESIS supports focuses

on tackling these issues through increased knowledge of the soil resources that make up the basis for agricultural production.

WORKING ON THE GROUND

The community now has valuable information at their fingertips as the programme has taught soil resource users about the soil types within their jurisdiction. The focus of this knowledge is based on fertiliser coding and blending. A blend is a combination of different materials, often in varying quantities. Two or more of these components are blended together to produce a quality farming product. Ultimately, this is to ensure that fertilisers are used sustainably, efficiently and with minimal negative effect on the environment to protect soil biodiversity. In turn it helps to maintain healthy, fertile and productive soils in order to produce sufficient nutritious food to meet the future needs of the community at large.

Decision making in agriculture relies on accurate soil data to guide sustainable management

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LESOTHO SOIL INFORMATION SYSTEM



- Initiated in 2017



- Completed in 2019

THE LESIS PROJECT

The Lesotho Soil Information System was initiated in 2017 by a group of soil scientists from:

- Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
- National University of Lesotho

Skills in digital soil mapping and related processes will be greatly improved:

Selected trainees form an important part of the Lesotho soil science community and are instrumental in maintaining and updating the information system. Soil management at farm level is also expected to be enhanced because water and fertiliser use can be improved by designing appropriate irrigation systems.

The establishment of LESIS will go a long way to support Lesotho's efforts towards sustainable management of land and water resources.

FUTURE OF WORK

– Portal with the power to unleash job potential

Lisebo*, a single mother of four in Lesotho’s capital, Maseru found herself out of work when the apparel manufacturing company she worked for shut down. She is one of 11 500 textile industry workers affected by job losses since the start of the Covid pandemic. Being the breadwinner of the family, her retrenchment is a devastating blow. Up until recently Lisebo felt relatively safe working in a previously robust sector that used to be the second-largest formal employer after government.

She has tried to make ends meet by selling fruit as a street trader, but competition is becoming increasingly tough, and she needs to look elsewhere. Two decades after the sector opened up, women constitute about 80% of the textiles workforce, which means that many women-headed households like Lisebo’s will now be hard hit. The world is reeling due to the pandemic’s effect on jobs, and Lesotho is no different; the majority of households stopped working due to closure of businesses as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, a situation that will impact socioeconomic hardship. According to the Bureau of Statistics, nearly half the 2.1-million population lives in poverty, and unemployment is at 22.5%.

There is no doubt that a human-centred approach to the future of work will unleash the SADC region’s potential for inclusive growth and create a future of work with social justice.

Making decent work a reality for Lesotho’s marginalised women and youth, developing skills, creating technological pathways and productivity – these are all part of the greater plan for a brighter

*not her real name

future, not only in the Mountain Kingdom, but Africa at large.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in its Programme and Budget 2013-2015, called on Member States to ensure increased access to ‘productive employment, decent work and income opportunities’ for men and women.

This stems from generally low employment levels and labour productivity in the SADC region, a trend that is directly linked with social and human development challenges. Gender inequality, HIV and AIDS, a lack of social protection and vulnerable employment, all affect employment and labour progress.

Effecting change

Member States were asked by the ILO to ‘put in place or strengthen labour market information and analysis systems and disseminate information on national labour trends’. This directive supports the requirements of the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour.

Digital gateway

As part of the solution Lesotho is developing a Labour Market Information Management System (LMIMS), a web-based system that allows employers and job seekers to register their requirements and skills. This gateway to employment is a project of the Department of National Employment Services under the Ministry of Labour. It will sit on the government portal and will bring employers in touch with suitable candidates.

The web-based portal will be searchable by job seekers and employers to match the right skills with the right opportunities.



Job portal benefits

- A centralised, efficient database will open up easier access to employment opportunities and skills.
- The portal will speed up the search process – matching job opportunities with the right human resources at a significantly faster rate.



Country benefits

- On a country level, the most obvious advantage is that employment statistics will be positively impacted. Spin-offs will include:
- Ability to improve training in identified scarce skills among under-represented groups, including migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, women, and young people.
 - Potential to provide more effective interventions focused on reducing unemployment.
 - Timely and increased provision of employment and skills information.



Data benefits

Vast datasets will be collected for analysis and the outcomes will inform workforce stakeholders on future priorities:

- What skills are scarce?
- What skills are over-developed?
- What sort of jobs are most commonly available?
- What is an average salary within a specific sector?
- Which industries exhibit a high staff turnover?

The system will be networked and can be accessed anywhere anytime. Once it is fully functional – daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual information will be available.

Going forward, government and education institutions will be able to finetune their funding and offerings in order to fill identified gaps.

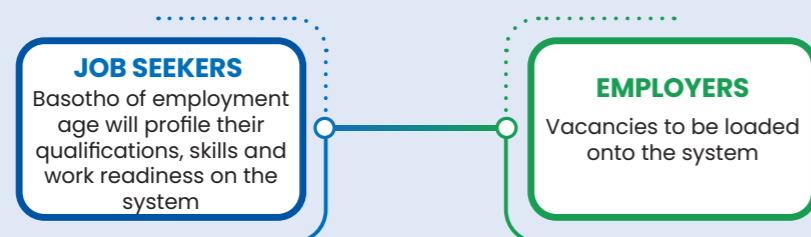
Mrs Maqenehelo Mahlo, Director National Employment Service, says the LMIMS will provide Lesotho with informed design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of employment and labour policies.

Lesotho’s LMIMS, while still in its early development phase, supports the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goal SDG 8, which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. In the context of the SADC Protocol, sharing the data with other Member States will empower the region to focus and target policies and legal frameworks.



In future, women such as Lisebo will have more scope to look for formal work to support their families by using technology to connect and network for opportunities that match their skills.

THE JOB PORTAL IS A GATEWAY TO POTENTIAL



With Africa’s largely young and energetic population, the need to invest in strengthening the capacities of people inclusively and sustainably will accelerate the transformative process and the potential for further growth.



The Khubelu Sponges Project (KSP)



WATER ACROSS BORDERS

Preserving 'white gold', the treasure of Lesotho's mountains

"As an area Chief it was becoming difficult to govern because neighbouring communities were fighting over access to better rangelands. One challenge was random burning of rangelands by herders, which is now slowly ending because we are closely working with government officials in raising awareness about management of our resources. Now that we participate in quarterly community-leader meetings and capacity building opportunities, we work closely with livestock owners and herders and encourage our communities to practice rotational grazing and other sustainable land management practices." - Chief Shoaepane.

REF: UN Development Programme: "Drought, rising, temperatures and extreme weather pose risks to Lesotho."

Lesotho has the unique accolade of having the "highest lowest point" of any country in the world. Perched among the Drakensburg and Maloti mountains at a starting point of 1,400 metres above sea level, Africa's "Kingdom in the sky" rises up from this lofty height in a swell of majestic highlands and hillsides, canyons and rolling grasslands.

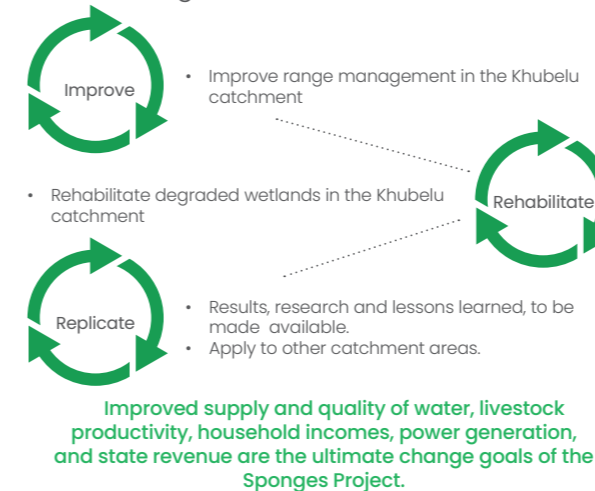
This tiny Kingdom – no bigger than Belgium – is the keeper of one of the SADC region's most valuable treasures: water. Known as 'white gold', the headwaters that start their downward journey to lower grounds are a critical watershed that feeds two of the major river systems of Southern Africa, the Senqu (Orange) and uThukela.

Liquid treasure

One of the most significant environmental issues is overgrazing, resulting in severe soil erosion and desertification. The Khubelu Sponges Project (KSP) has trained local leaders such as Chief Shoaepane on how to sustainably manage rangelands and wetlands, which are now seen as a very valuable asset of Lesotho. The protection of the Orange–Senqu water sources contributes to the SADC Regional Strategic Action Plan on Integrated Water Resources Development and Management. Mokhotlong, due to its strategic location in the headwaters of Senqu, is the epicentre for development activities that are focused on the management of the environment and the rangelands. Wetlands such as Khubelu are even more crucial now that the Polihali Dam is under construction, making it necessary to establish a framework where all current and future stakeholders work together, be they in government, private sector, NGOs and most importantly the communities.

An achievable goal

Financed through Transboundary Water Management, the project is a SADC Programme. Through piloting a holistic approach to conserving the sponges in the Khubelu catchment, this project is focussed on the long-term protection and sustainability of healthy wetlands. Applying appropriate land management and water conservation principles and techniques makes this an achievable goal.



The Sponges Project addresses the challenges associated with range management and wetland rehabilitation

The socio-economic benefits for the people of Lesotho, the Basotho – are paramount to this project, and education around the best use of wetlands and grasslands is key to optimising the terrain. This aligns with the SADC Revised Protocol on Shared Watercourses.

Rotating for results

Traditional grazing patterns in the Lesotho Highlands allow stock to graze grasses in an uncontrolled way leading to loss of soil nutrition and the inability of nutritious grasses to re-establish themselves. Stock is now being grazed in herds that are moved in patterns through a series of 'paddocks', pre-determined by a grazing regime agreed to by farmers' groups.

- The KSP has effectively demonstrated that communities can adopt sustainable practices in ensuring their livelihoods.
- The Project also shows the benefit of building synergies between the private and public sector to rehabilitate land, improve local livelihoods and safeguard water resources.
- Other efforts have demonstrated methods that improve water efficiency in Lesotho's biggest water-user sector: irrigation.

Who benefits?

- The stock farming community.
- Tourists – rehabilitation of the wetlands restores the natural beauty of the land (the ecosystem).

How does the Project create value for the community?

- Improves rangeland.
- Develops the quality of livestock.
- Enhances livelihoods.

How does the Project create value for Lesotho?

- Upgrades water storage and efficiency.
- Preserves biodiversity.
- Develops provision of water services.
- Ensures reliable water supply of good quality throughout the year.

How does the Project create value for the region?

- It improves regional hydrology (ORASECOM catchment).
- Protects one of the SADC region's most valuable assets – water.
- Minimises drought by increased water supply.
- Minimises the risk of flooding and associated costs.

According to Chief Shoaepane, improved ranging practices have seen a return of wildlife to the area, and are sowing the seeds for a more peaceful and productive society.



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- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Water
- Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship
- Ministry of Public Works and Transport
- Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
- Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation
- Ministry of Labour and Employment



