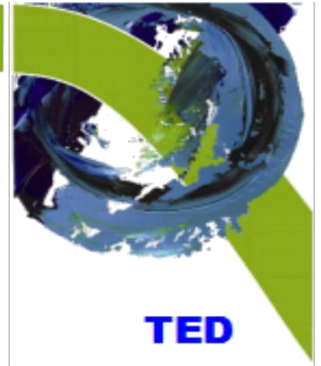


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Mountain Communities - Government Dialogues

03 – May - 2018

‘Manthabiseng Convention Centre, Maseru

(0900HRS-1700HRS)

Report by Technologies for Economic Development
Team



SGP The GEF
Small Grants
Programme



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

TED	Technologies for Economic Development
GEF	Global Environment Facility
SGP	Small Grants Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
LCN	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
GoL	Government of Lesotho
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
MTEC	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
MDTP	Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoGYSR	Ministry of Gender Youth Sports and Recreation
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
LHDA	Lesotho High Lands Development Authority
MoFLR	Ministry of Forestry, Land and Reclamation
SOLD	Survivors of Lesotho Dams

1. Introduction

This report presents the observations, conclusions, and recommendations of the Technologies for Economic Development (TED) Team that facilitated the Mountain Communities - Government Dialogue Workshop held on 3rd May 2018, at ‘Manthabiseng Convention Centre in Maseru, Lesotho.

Technologies for Economic Development (TED) was entrusted to facilitate this national dialogue by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme in Lesotho (GEF SGP), a corporate Programme of the GEF, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In its endeavor to satisfy this mandate, TED was supported by the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (LCN) and Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP); with participants of this dialogue including government officials and dignitaries, members of civil society organizations (CSOs), and patriots from the mountain communities. Present also were the SGP Secretariat, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other members of the Dialogue Coordinating Group. *The List of Participants is attached for ease of reference.*

2. The National Dialogue Agenda

Facilitated by the TED Team, the Dialogue was divided into three main sessions: the opening session which included opening remarks and a solidarity message – objective of the dialogue; Panel discussions focusing on the role of Civil Society in mountain communities and sustainable development, the role of mountain communities in engendering sustainable development and possible partnerships between government and civil society towards achieving sustainable and resilient communities and a keynote address; and group work to identify possible projects to support resilience of Mountain Communities in the wake of climate change. *The National Dialogue Programme is attached for ease of reference.*

2.1 Objective of the Mountain Communities – Government Dialogues

The objective of this national dialogue was laid out by *GEF SGP National Coordinator, Ms Nthabiseng Majara*, who highlighted that it was mainly aimed at promoting an inclusive and participatory culture of development where mountain communities and government officials work together to ensure sustainable development. It is also in the quest of furnishing government officials with a solid understanding of the roles and importance of these mountain communities in development, so that these officials are in a better position to echo the sentiments of these mountain communities and ensure that their sentiments are captured in the discussions of the High level Political Forum (HLPF), that is to be held in New York in July 2018. The HLPF was founded in 2012, and it came as an outcome of a UN conference (Rio +20). It has since become an annual event characterized with different themes: Its 2018 theme, has been dubbed Transformation towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies, which encompasses SDG 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15.

Implemented by UNDP, GEF SGP works with all locally registered CSOs to address challenges related to climate change; biodiversity conservation; agro ecology; and social inclusion in its host countries through Country Programme Strategies. The GEF SGP jointly and in collaboration with UNDP and FAO are supporting national dialogues in mountain countries as part of the mountain partnership programme. It is on this basis that TED, a local CSO, was awarded a grant, in preparation for the upcoming HLPF, to facilitate dialogues between mountain communities and government, drawing participation of government representatives, policy makers, mountain communities, and the society in general. Ms Majara conceded that GEF SGP had been invited to work in Lesotho by the government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) that host both the Operational and Political GEF National Focal Points.

The specific objectives of dialogues are: to ensure that government representatives and policy makers are aware of the impact that the mountain ecosystems have on mountain dependent people in Lesotho, and the contributions that these mountain people make in properly managing these mountain ecosystems in the realization of SDGs related to food security, agriculture, climate change mitigation, and adaptation; to ensure that the priorities and perspectives of the mountain communities are at the heart of discussion towards SDGs as well as later for post-HLPF implementation; Lastly, to ensure that trust and understanding is strengthened between mountain communities and their national governments.

Ms Majara urged all to forget about their political, religious and whatever inclinations and in unison deliberate on the issues at hand without pointing fingers as that will not only derail the discussions but will also result in the country failing to make the voices of the mountain communities to be heard at the HLPF.

2.2 Mountain Communities and Sustainable Development: The Role of Civil Society

On her part, the Director of TED, Ms ‘Mantopi Lebofa, drew heavily from the legal framework pertaining to the environment. She did this in an effort to inculcate the importance of mountains and their communities in sustainable development to participants of this dialogue. For this reason, much emphasis was put on Lesotho Constitution 1993-Section 36 which revolves around Protection of the Environment (Adoption of policies designed to protect and enhance the natural and Cultural Environment); The 1992: Agenda 21-Chapter 13; the MDTP; the 2012 Rio+ 20 (which recognizes the crucial role played by mountain ecosystems in providing water resources to a large portion of the world’s population); as well as the 2015 SDGs (of which target number 1 of Goal 15 explicitly mentions mountains among the ecosystems to be conserved, restored and sustainably used in line with international agreements) among others.

Ms Lebofa sought a participatory approach in the dialogue by asking the participants to mention some of Lesotho’s natural resources that constituted a major boost to the national economy, thereby its GDP. Among those that were identified were Water, Wool and Mohair, and Diamonds. It was at this juncture that Ms Lebofa indicated that the origins and the repositories of these resources were actually the mountains and the mountain communities, with the latter being responsible for preserving them. According to her, Lesotho’s economic activities like rearing of

animals and water sources stem from the mountains, let alone the mines, that bear our national treasures being situated here as well. It goes without saying that, the mountains are a hub of agricultural activities through the production of sorghum, beans, lentils, wheat and so forth, which transcend to providing food for urban communities. For this reason, the importance of preserving and nurturing the mountain regions was stressed as it bears an economic stimulus through its potential of attracting tourists as well.

With mountain communities being at the centre of national development, there is therefore a heightened need to support them on the resilience of the harsh conditions that they are subjected to due to Climate Change. Such support must also be channeled to caring for and protecting these important resources such as water. Wetlands pose as water-stores after it has rained but contrary to preserving these “white-gold” stores, they are grazed on and trampled upon on a daily basis thereby depleting the storage capacity for water. Moreover, roads are constructed and houses built on these wetlands; what is more alarming is that shopping malls are also built on wetlands.

More opportunities for Lesotho as a Mountain Kingdom are guaranteed; the country has a potential for renewable energy which can be generated in mountainous regions through Solar Renewable Energy. This is enabled by the fact that the sun shines best in such regions. The ensuing benefit of this will be the provision of clean energy in these regions through installation of Solar PV systems: More importantly, there is also a high potential for Hydropower generation through abundant sources of moving (kinetic) water, as well as in wind energy because high altitude areas (mountain regions) have the highest wind speed.

In the same vein, Ms Lebofa pressed upon the importance of eradicating ignorance on environmental issues by members of mountain communities and other communities, as is evidenced through traditional doctors and their counterparts who incessantly over-harvest herbs and plants to make traditional medicine that they sell around Maseru city. Ms Lebofa advocated for replanting of these plants where they are harvested from in order to achieve SDG 11, which speaks to attaining sustainable cities and communities. Sadly, it was noted that mountain communities are sidelined when it comes to access of resources, where, although they are storehouses of resources like water they are destitute of it whereas it is provided to the entire country and even abroad. This is a cause for concern, and it is imperative that it be addressed.

Through this dialogue TED aims at achieving SDG 17 which talks about Partnerships for the Goals.

2.3 Mountain Communities and Sustainable Development: The Role of Civil Society

The National Coordinator of the Survivors of Lesotho Dams (SOLD), Mr. Mabusela Lenka Thamae, pointed out that SOLD abides by the principles of environmental Impact assessment (EIA), which take into consideration the protection of both the environment and the people in undertakings that may affect them. With regard to protection of the people, his organization holds that the public must be consulted and given a fair chance to participate in what affects them, as provided for by the Public Participation Act. SOLD is also rooted in the belief that the

public must be fairly compensated for the loss they suffered due to mining and dam construction. It was at this juncture that he brought to the fore the case of Lesotho Highlands Development Authority in which he is adamant that the authority did not administer fair compensation to those affected by it. LHDA has seemingly not given full compensation to victims, and he decried this to be unfair. He argues, therefore, that these victims ought to be recompensed with money that will sustain them throughout their lifetime, and not just for fifty years as LHDA is currently doing. SOLD also advocates for accessibility of water and toilets as an indicator for healthy living and as a right for all Basotho.

According to him, development should be welcomed as thus only if it considers both the environment and the people; and it should only be accepted if the affected party is the one that authors it. This should be done in light of the fact that the affected party has knowledge of what they need and also know the environment better since they are the ones living in it. He postulates that the road leading to Mokhotlong is built on a wetland hence it is incessantly eroded. In conclusion, Mr. Thamae declared that as SOLD they are endowed with the technical know-how of engaging with the public, as a result the government must allow them to be mediators between government and the communities.

2.4 Engendering Sustainable Development: The Role of Mountain Communities

In her address, the Director of the Department of Gender, in the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, Mrs. Matau Futho-Letsatsi indicated that although gender inequality may traditionally be deemed to affect individual women, it however, had adverse impacts on the community and the national economy as it snowballs. Gender inequality in her view is embedded in the culture of Basotho and has been institutionalized. It is manifest where, for example, culturally in Lesotho a married woman is considered the “property” of her husband with men justifying such ethos with claims of having paid a bride price for her. Under this assumption, women need(ed) their husband's permission to do almost anything (such as own land) and, likewise, unmarried women need(ed) similar permission from their fathers or brothers. Such gender disparity renders a situation where not all groups are active in the development and the economy of their countries; hence to circumvent this, her call was for resources to benefit everyone equally and not to be allocated along gender-lines as this would constitute discrimination.

Mrs. Letsatsi, echoed the sentiments of the first speakers on the importance of the mountain communities in development. She purported that Basotho are hungry chiefly because they are ignoring mountain communities which are the custodians of Lesotho’s economy; she added that these communities are often characterized by a profound traditional and contemporary knowledge of the natural world around them. However, she reiterated that mountain communities must be cognizant of the inclusion of all social groups and on promoting gender equality so as to achieve the SDGs, citing that all gender forms and social classes play essential roles in the management of natural resources.

According to her, in the mountain communities, environmental issues have been confined to gender-specific roles where, for example, “only” girls and women fetch water from the

reservoirs thereby translating that women play an important role in water management. This role can be addressed through the gender mainstreaming strategy. It goes without saying, therefore, that the management of water and sanitation should be the sole duty of both men and women, and, more so government and society should endorse SDG 5 and 6.

In conclusion, she appealed to policy makers and government officials to instigate collaborative governance by working together to develop mountain communities, where they would be held accountable on their programmes and initiatives being implemented in these communities. The appeal was also on these policy makers and government officials to seek educational settings that are gender-centric for children in these communities, and to make use of curricula that directly teaches and challenges them about gender bias and inequality.

2.5 Possible Partnerships between Government and Civil Society Organizations towards Achieving Sustainable and Resilient Communities

A Representative from LHDA, Mr. Morake Rakhoba, asserted that LHDA's main task is water conservation and the production of electricity. He also highlighted some ancillary developments including trout fish farming at the Katse Dam that supplied Woolworths Food South Africa. LHDA also boasts Aqua culture at Ha Lejone which targets South Africa and Japan market; and conservation of biodiversity resources through botanical gardens, especially endangered and indigenous plants like spiral aloe, not only within the project area but also through replication of the initiative with interested communities countrywide.

2.6 Key Note Address

The Keynote address was delivered by the Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture, Honourable Motlohi Maliehe. As aforementioned, the GEF SGP is established in Lesotho at the request of the Government of Lesotho through the MoTEC, hence the operations of the Programme are under the watchful eye of the Ministry to ensure that national policies are adhered to and that implemented activities are aligned with national priorities. As a result, MoTEC is a key stakeholder in the dialogue representing the public sector.

In his key note address, Honourable Motlohi Maliehe acknowledged the magnitude of the dialogue and what it stood for. It was here where he assured the participants that the outcomes of this dialogue would inform what the government was to discuss at the upcoming HLPF in July. In his effort to inspire ownership of the environment and its concomitant issues, he called upon Basotho, specifically those in the mountain communities, to adhere to environmental laws. This request followed his realization that mountain communities, especially those in Qacha's Nek had a bad tendency of burning rangelands. He therefore saw a need to bring to light that such offences are punishable by law, and they carried a fifteen years jail sentence. Responding to this, the participants made Honourable Maliehe aware that the ignorance was advanced by the fact that the laws were written in English, an official language in Lesotho but that most people in the

mountain region cannot comprehend. This seemingly moved the Minister to vow to have the laws translated into Sesotho, the mother tongue of Basotho.

The Minister went on to emphasize that, while MoTEC may be answerable for issues revolving around the environment among others, protecting and nurturing it should not be left to MoTEC alone. Protecting and Nurturing the environment should be a joint venture; a collaborative effort among all ministries and government departments. He pointed out that the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MoFRSC) had already, invariably, chipped in by removing invasive shrubs in some areas. Moreover, Honourable Maliehe divulged that a policy that aimed at limiting the use of plastic bags was already in place. He noted that littering has become a way of life in Lesotho where, what does not belong to the environment like these plastics is put in the environment. Through this policy, grocery stores shall resort to selling plastic bags as opposed to the practice of giving them out freely.

Promotion of local tourism emerged to be close to the heart of the Minister: He vowed to halt his trips abroad and to start touring his own country. He urged Basotho to take this up too, and explained that his aim in this endeavor was to persuade cabinet ministers to follow suit. The rationale of local tourism according to Honourable Maliehe is for Basotho to have an appreciation of their own country and protection of the environment; it is also in an effort to appeal to one's patriotic spirit and to stimulate the economy by creating jobs for fellow countrymen. In his view, luring tourists from abroad is equally important for Lesotho's economy hence, he appealed to mountain communities to strive to protect endangered species like "Ntsu Kobo-kobo" (bearded vulture), and the natural and cultural heritage that embody the beauty and uniqueness of the country. His strategy was therefore to build information centres at every border gate to facilitate ease of travel by tourists while in Lesotho, and also to help them to access information pertaining to the country and tourist attraction centres.

2.7 Identification of Possible Projects to Support Resilience of Mountain Communities

Participants were divided into thematic groups that were characterized by their respective dwelling areas. These comprised Semonkong cum Maseru team; Qacha's Nek team; Leribe cum Botha-Botha team; Thaba-Tseka cum Mokhotlong team; and lastly Quthing team. The Teams were asked to identify key activities that sustain livelihoods of mountain communities, challenges/threats and possible solutions to the identified challenges.

Tables A to E below is a compilation of the discussions that transpired in the various team discussions.

TABLE A: SEMONKONG & MOHALE’S HOEK

Potential Project of this ecological zone	Challenges	Solutions
1. Crop Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of Water • No Machinery • No Green Houses for the changing climate • No market • Lack of knowledge • Delays in receiving seeds such as • Mushroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get support on Windmill and Solar Irrigation Systems • Support with greenhouses • Capacity Development through trainings • Provide training on production of seeds instead of having to wait for mush seeds from China
2. Livestock Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change • Shortage of water • Poor Management of Rangelands (burning) • Livestock diseases • Delays of payments after wool & mohair sale • No barns • Lack of Market for livestock and crops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to support establishment of barns • Workshops for capacity development of herd men to take good care of rangelands • Establish Market • Provide Greenhouses • Provide Stables for breeding • Provide storage for crops
3. Potable water bottling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been promises from donors that ever materialized • Dependence on donors and not finding one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Financial Support for capital
4. Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of follow-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement/participation of Chiefs and Community Councilors in workshops to be able to make follow-up
5. Maletsunyane Falls & the Braai Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities around the area do not benefit • Festival leaves pollution on the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish toll-gates for tourist to control access to the Falls and have fees that benefit the community
6. Burning of pastures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding of the damage caused by fires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Environmental Education • Introduce herders environmental protection projects for them to be motivated • Introduce incentives for herders for not burning pastures

TABLE B: QACHA'S NEK

Challenges	Solutions
1. Burning of Rangelands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitize herders through Environmental Education to build their capacity • Environment education to begin at household and the whole community at large • Build Capacity of Fire belts establishment • Increase fines for perpetrators • Seek protection of Military to control burning of rangelands
2. Land Degradation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Rotational Grazing • Regulate number of livestock • Introduce fodder crops for soil cover • Provide experts to work with communities for wetlands restoration • Identify and map the wetlands so they are known to be able to protect them
3. Overharvesting of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce licenses for harvesting natural resources Enforce laws • Introduce Environmental education and sensitization • Introduce and fence Botanical Gardens for endangered species
4. Indigenous knowledge neglected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain Communities must be engaged in planning and implementation of development initiatives
5. Extension workers are not useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension workers must collaboratively work with communities and know that they are experts to assist the communities • There must be Research done of crops suitable for community soils
6. No Electricity yet there is Mini Hydro Power Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitate Tsoelike Mini-Hydro Power Station for Clean energy for the district to increase coverage and stop unnecessary coal electricity from South Africa

TABLE C: LERIBE & BUTHA-BUTHE

Challenges	Solutions
1. Overgrazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish rotational grazing • Keep manageable livestock • Establish integrated Range management programs • Revise environmental laws
2. Lack of protection of Botanical Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce protection of botanical gardens
3. Increase in invasive species of shrubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove invasive shrub species • Plant grass for soil cover
4. Overharvesting of natural vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce licenses to traditional healers who harvest medicinal plants • Provide continuous environmental education programs and the importance of soil cover
5. Burning of Rangelands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce laws on culprits • Provide Environmental education and sensitizations at all levels of society
6. Building of houses and infrastructure on wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce laws • Provide continuous environmental education at all levels of society and raise awareness on the importance of wetlands
7. Lack of infrastructure: Water scarcity, roads & sustainable toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce sustainable and inclusive toilets • Build roads and drill boreholes
8. Nepotism in employment at the mines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce patriotism for those in power for the country Encourage employment of local communities who qualify for jobs before taking non-locals

TABLE D: THABA-TSEKA & MOKHOTLONG

Project	Challenges	Solutions
1. Stock Faming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wool & Mohair does not have value • Low production of milk • Overgrazing • Animal diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Veterinaries in communities • Support needed for production of fodder • Introduce Environmental Education to communities to care for the rangelands • Enforce laws and policies
2. Crop Farming and Tree Planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change • Shortage of machinery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of Greenhouses

TABLE E: QUTHING

Challenges	Solutions
1. Poverty & Hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of Greenhouses• Provision of Market Centres• Provide continuous education on Crop Farming
2. Lack of Water and Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishment of Dams
3. Lack of Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce Mini Hydro Power Stations along rivers

2.8 Additional Submissions by Dialogue Participants

A special request was sent, together with invitation letters, to all participants to bring written ideas on why mountain communities matter in sustainable development also suggesting projects that can be development to build resilience of mountain communities and the ecosystems that sustain them. These are captured below.

a) Mokhotlong District Council in Addressing Environmental Impact As A Result Of Climate Change 2017/2018

The Mokhotlong District has a project called Environmental Education and Waste Management for Sustainable Development. This project is implemented in partnership with Dossenheim Municipality in Germany under the programme of North-South ASA-Communal.

Local Partnerships with Mokhotlong District Council which is a coordinator are:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
- Ministry of Agriculture

The Implementing Communities are:

- JO1 – Seate Community Council
- JO2 – Mphokojoane Community Council
- Mokhotlong Urban Council
- Schools in all councils
- Herders

Challenges

- Lack of Transport to reach all areas.
- Lack of funds to cater for officers while on sensitization/awareness and education programmes.
- Lack of law enforcement measures to those who trespass (where law is enforced, punishment are usually minimal, for instance Range Management laws.

b) PROFILE OF THE LESOTHO DISTANCE TEACHING CENTRE (LDTC)

Introduction

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, guaranteeing the balance between economic growth, care for the environment and social well-being. With that being said, it is important that the mountain communities are informed on the impact that their daily routines and norms have on the environment and how best they can minimize, if not eradicate the damage. They do not only need to be informed on these matters, but also need to be involved in the planning process and decision making, especially if the decisions taken affect them

Role of Mountain Communities in Lesotho's Sustainable Development

The Mountain communities are holders of Lesotho's most valuable asset which is water so it is essential for them to be equipped with skills and information that will help in the caring and sustaining of this asset. They also possess arable land which is ideal for husbandry. Some families rely on subsistence farming to feed themselves while some produce crops and keep livestock to sell and earn an income. Diversified and well-adapted traditional land use system to protect the soil from erosion, preserve water and maintain a rich biodiversity.

Challenges Faced In Mountain Communities Concerning the Environment

It is common knowledge that the Mountain communities often burn graze lands in an attempt to speed up the re-growth of the grass but they are unaware of the effect that the process has in the environment. Biomass burning is the burning of living and dead vegetation. It includes the human-initiated burning of vegetation for land clearing and land use change. Burning vegetation releases large amounts of particulates (Solid Carbon Combustion) and gases, including greenhouse gases that help warm the Earth. Greenhouse gases may lead to an increased warming of the earth or human-initiated global climate change.

Overgrazing is also common in these parts of the country as many families own animals. Overgrazing results in negative consequences such as soil erosion which is caused by continued trampling if numerous animals in an average forage land which acts to accelerate the death of plants and vegetation cover, the soil is left bare and exposed to harsh weather such as heavy downpour and high temperatures which disintegrates the rocks and carried the top soil away.

The acts of compaction and erosion as a results of overgrazing can cause tremendous land degradation. In drier areas, the experience is even worse as a large percentage of pasture and land cover is destroyed, contributing to relentless progression of desertification.

Overgrazing is a primary contributor to desertification because it converts arable land or pasture land into unproductive land. The resultant soil is thus not suited for growing food, since it loses it essential nutrients. The loss of land productivity directly results in the loss of food available for consumption.

LDTC Project to Support Resilience of Mountain Communities to Climate Change

Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre promotes a non-formal education in Lesotho by applying distance education methods. It offers opportunities for out of school youth and adults to develop functional literacy and numeracy skills. In accordance with this mandate, LDTC can assist in disseminating awareness to climate change at the learning posts already in place in the outskirts of Lesotho. This project will not only equip students with the skills and knowledge regarding climate change, but also provide supervision to ensure that students vividly understand the importance of caring for the environment.

c) LNFOD'S OPINION ON THE ROLE OF MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES IN LESOTHO'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Most of Lesotho's commercially valuable resources are found in the highlands. Some of these resources are produced by local people living in the highlands while others are brought either by government or investors. Often when the government or investors bring development projects to the mountains, local people are not involved in the planning of those projects; in that way they are denied their role to ensure sustainability of the development in their areas.

It is the role of the people living in the highlands to ensure that implementation of development projects is sustainable however if they are denied this opportunity they cannot be able to carry out their role. In the long run, the resources in the highlands will deteriorate so much that it will be impossible for future generation to access those resources. Therefore, it is vital to involve the mountain community in planning of development projects as they will be looking from the sustainability perspective while the investors will be looking from profit perspective, in that way implementation will be sustainably carried out.

Climate change is raising an issue that threatens the globe. Mountain communities have to be taught on climate change, how their practices such as uprooting of vegetation and cutting down of trees can adversely affect the climate. This awareness raising on climate change and sustainable development can enlighten the mountain communities to ensure that they protect their communities. Moreover, the mountain communities should be empowered to seek their involvement in planning of projects that can affect their environment.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the overall ambience of the participants and a collective effort of forging a way to achieving the seventeen SDGs, SDG 17 that is specific to forming partnerships with stakeholders at all levels was satisfied. Since government on its own cannot achieve these goals, partnering for these goals is underscored and it is here that Lesotho witnessed a dialogue where participants that comprised, among other groups, mountain communities, making contributions towards the country's development in a manner that was tolerant of each other and their views and opinions being recognized and prioritized.

Through TED's work, and in a country characterized by people from different social, political and economic ranks it became feasible to have them engaging in a national dialogue that promises to bear fruits for the country, and mountain communities as well. Participation from these representatives created a platform for brainstorming on dynamic ideas, thoughts and suggestions on contributions mountain communities make towards the proper management of mountain ecosystems in the realization of SDGs related to Food Security, Agriculture, Climate Change mitigation and adaptation, as well as ways in which to accommodate these communities in the country's developmental plans. In closing, it will be noted that the minister re-assured that all ideas communicated in this exchange of ideas initiative will be implemented and they shall inform the HLPF discussion of Lesotho.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The table below captures a compilation of the outcome of the Dialogue synthesized from groups' discussions and individual submissions by participants.

Opportunities and livelihood support activities	Identified challenges	Recommended Solutions
1. Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable weather conditions (prolonged drought spells, snowfall, hails storms etc.) that disrupt planting seasons, increase crop failure and livestock deaths because of extreme temperatures and frequent disease outbreaks, and water shortages • Lack of infrastructure and limited information on adaptation strategies to guard against imminent weather events that are disruptive to agriculture as a major source of livelihood for mountain communities and through wool and mohair, a major contributor to the GDP • Unsustainable land and livestock husbandry practices (uncontrolled veld fires, overstocking coupled with reduced resting periods) resulting in overexploitation of rangeland resources manifesting itself in loss of vegetative cover, encroachment of invasive shrubs, excessive runoff and soil loss. The overall effect is loss of quality and quantity products such as wool and mohair which is the mainstay of the mountain region economy • Outdated laws that are non-prohibitive and unfavorable for sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. e.g. trespassing in protected areas, illegal grazing; veld burning, stocking rates • Under resourced resource centres that are not useful as they do not have adequate and up-to-date information and are in most cases manned by unskilled personnel that are not responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of earth dams/reservoirs, at strategic areas, for water harvesting/storage for irrigation and as watering points for livestock • Promotion and support for adoption of climate smart agriculture and modern technologies to guard against calamities brought about by climate change – such as tunnel farming, construction of barns to protect livestock against harsh weather conditions. Launch a programme for construction of barns through provision of non-locally available materials. Farmers will contribute to this programme by collecting locally available materials and doing all the construction work • Training and access to information and knowledge to better adapt to the emerging challenges in crop and livestock production, • Sustainable awareness and education programmes on sustainable rangeland management, with targeted educational and capacity development programmes for key stakeholders, herders in particular, to harness their knowledge and energy for sustainable range and wetlands resources management and livestock improvement. • Selected members of local communities, particularly unemployed youth should be trained as para-verts to provide basic veterinary services • Timely availing of appropriate machinery and agricultural equipment through outsourcing to local suppliers with strict adherence to government procurement procedures that favor efficiency in delivery of services and growth of local business • Continuous engagement with government institutions responsible for agricultural products and their marketing to inform development of farmer responsive programmes • Review of relevant laws, development of by-laws with prohibitive fines for wrong doers (<i>veld fires, grazing in prohibited areas such as wetlands, illegal harvesting of plants</i>) and strong law enforcement

	<p>to critical farmers’ needs such as veterinary services and rapid response to livestock disease out breaks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of agricultural machinery and inputs which delays ploughing and harvesting activities • No organized local market outlets and agricultural storage facilities with the result that farmers incur great losses and delayed and deflated returns for their produce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-seeding of bare lands, brush control and development of viable rotational grazing schemes managed, supported by strong local institutions (local authorities, grazing associations) and local communities and up to date laws; and complemented with intensive fodder production initiatives, particularly on marginal lands, for supplementary feeding • Joint action and collaboration between local fire rangers and security forces for fire patrols and rapid response to veld fires • Continuous awareness and sensitization campaigns complemented with establishment of herders clubs/associations and their empowerment as ambassadors for natural resources protection among mountain communities • Fencing off of critical hotspots with involvement of local communities and only as a means of keeping out stray livestock • Continuous engagement and involvement of local communities in planning and development of district development initiatives and programmes so their knowledge and aspirations are integrated • Functional information and research centres with services for soil testing, crop suitability advice, veterinary services and early warning information for various calamities
<p>2. Fresh water resources and natural heritage sites and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited opportunities for engagement in economic activities such as natural spring water bottling, fish farming and ecotourism due to lack of capital and general information on financing • Unsustainable harvesting of medicinal and other plants with economic value by big companies, with no meaningful involvement of local communities and no clear access and benefit sharing mechanisms in place. • Infrastructure developments that are destructive to wetlands and other biodiversity hotspots – e.g. road construction on wetlands, with poor and destructive water drainage structures that exacerbated land degradation, destroy wetlands with detrimental impacts on water resources. • Poor and or lack of infrastructure such as access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable and accessible financing for viable community development projects to safeguard the natural resources and livelihoods • Involvement and of local communities in management and sharing of benefits accruing from the country’s natural heritage resources through among other things, establishment of a licensing system for harvesting of plant species of economic/medicinal value for access and benefit sharing and sustainability of the resources • Installation of toll gates to control access to tourist attraction sites for their sustainable management and beneficiation of local communities, in alignment with the sustainable tourism strategy • Mapping of wetlands, determination of their status and joint action for their restoration, complemented with continuous education and awareness on the importance of wetland ecosystems among key stakeholders across sectors at all levels • Review of law, development of by-laws with prohibitive fines for

	<p>roads, clean water supply and sanitation facilities leading to contamination of the environment and spread of water-borne diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecotourism ventures that are non-inclusive of local communities, degrading to the environment and that do not generate sustainable livelihood support benefits. These include national heritage and tourist attraction sites like Maletsunyane Falls. 	<p>defaulters and strong law enforcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough environmental impact assessment for infrastructural developments and strict compliance to agreed environmental management and protection plans; and full operationalization of the polluter-pays-principle • Expansion, rehabilitation and or development of appropriate rural water supply and sustainable toilets infrastructure to cover even the remotest and hard to reach mountain communities and with provision of requisite skills for sustenance of the infrastructure.
3. Renewable energy resources (water, solar and wind)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High dependence on biomass for energy due to lack of access to affordable and appropriate clean energy technologies for cooking and heating. • Income generating and livelihood support initiatives limited by lack of reliable clean energy – electricity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment/rehabilitation of mini-hydroelectricity stations (<i>e.g. Tsoelike</i>) and availability of other appropriate and affordable clean energy technologies to take advantage of the abundant renewable energy resources
4. On-going local Environment and Climate Change initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources (<i>transport and to reach rural and remote areas; funds for sensitization/awareness and education programmes</i>) to sustain initiated programmes – <i>e.g. the Mokhotlong District Environmental Education and Waste Management for Sustainable Development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment for sustainability of results of initiated projects and programmes, public and donor funded alike, over the long term should be a key component of development initiatives
5. Abundant minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of the environment (biodiversity resources, wetland resources, settlements etc.) by extractive and exploratory mining activities, that offer limited employment opportunities for local communities resulting in disharmony and hostility between mining companies and local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upholding of national policies and legal instruments on extractive and exploratory mining activities. • Equal opportunities for employment in mines with special and targeted programmes for skills development for local communities • Non-discriminatory, transparent, unbiased and sustainable <i>corporate social responsibility programmes</i> that benefit local communities
6. Government – Mountain Communities Dialogues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and dialogues between communities and government are conducted as events as opposed to processes without requisite follow ups, resulting in: hopelessness, loss of rapport between government and communities, and development of non-responsive development programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Councilors should be supported take an active role in making necessary follow ups and mediating between the community, district and the national government levels.

5. Way Forward

Remarks by the FAO Representative

On behalf of the *Food and Agriculture Organization in Lesotho*, Mr. *Lekhologoane Lekhologoane* expressed his profound gratitude to the participants for the commitment they have shown throughout the dialogue. He made an observation that the dialogue was conducted in the local language so no one is left behind or outside the deliberations; that the dialogue is facilitated by a local civil society, an entity operating closest to the mountain communities; and that the mountain communities who are the true stewards of the natural resources that sustain the Basotho are given the platform to chart the way for building the resilience of the mountain people and ecosystems. He shared with participants that he is living testimony that mountain people can take the country forward to achieve sustainable development. He indicated that he is who he is today because of the wool and mohair and vegetables produced in the mountains of Lesotho; and that the best table and seed potatoes are produced in the mountains of Lesotho, indicating that the mountain communities have the potential and capability of sustaining themselves if only the great ideas like the one tabled at the dialogue would be put into action. He urged all to focus on more action than words. He further urged all to be proactive in initiating dialogues like this one instead of waiting for others from outside the country to create such opportunities. He concluded by urging all to make the outcome of the dialogue a reality and to keep it alive.

Remarks by the Mountain Communities – Government Dialogues Coordinating Group

On behalf of the Group, the *Chairperson of the GEF SGP National Steering Committee*, Mrs. *Masenate Moremoholo*, thanked the TED Team for a job well done and within very short notice. She also acknowledged that it is because of the guidance of the Dialogues Coordinating Group that the TED Team put together such a dynamic team of participants and a good programme. She acknowledged that a lot has been said and most notably by those who dwell in the mountain districts of Lesotho and who know the ins and outs – the ups and downs of the lives of mountain communities firsthand. She pointed out that the fact that those who are Christians like most Basotho are, may recall that when Jesus wanted to communicate with the Almighty God he would go to the top of a mountain which is testimony that mountains are treasures that should be respected and protected as they are our life support system. She concluded by thanking all for their active participation and contributions towards putting together a message of the mountain people to the world.

Remarks by the SGP Secretariat

The National Coordinator informed participants that the Dialogue message will be delivered to the Lesotho Delegation to the HLPF through the Office of the GEF National Focal Point as already affirmed by the Key Note Speaker, Hon Motlohi Maliehe in his address. She further indicated that TED will hold similar dialogues in Qacha's Nek and Mokhotlong to provide an opportunity for a wider audience for mountain communities to thrash the issues further. She explained that the dates and venues for the sub-national dialogues will be communicated by the TED Team as the facilitator of the Dialogues. She concluded by thanking all for, in various ways, making a success of the Mountain Communities – Government Dialogues a success and urged all to keep the momentum going and wished them safe travel back to their respective homes.



The GEF
Small Grants
Programme



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Mountain Communities - Government Dialogue 03 May, 2018

Special Request to ALL Participants

Please Bring written Ideas of your Organization on Why Mountain Communities matter in Sustainable Development and suggest a Project that can be implemented for resilience of Mountain Communities

Time	Activity	Facilitation
08:30-09:00	Registration	TED
09:00-09:20	Opening Remarks & Request for Prayer	LCN-CCL
09:20-09:35	Solidarity Message – Objective of the Dialogue	UNDP GEF-SGP
09:35-10:00	Key Note Address	DPS MTEC
10:00-10:30	Tea Break	ALL
10:30-13:00 Presentations by Panellists		
Theme1: Mountain Communities and Sustainable Development –The Role of Civil Society Theme2: Engendering Sustainable Development—The Role of Mountain Communities Theme3Possible Partnerships between Government and Civil Society Organizations towards achieving Sustainable and Resilient Communities		
10:30-11:00	Mountain Communities and Sustainable Development –The Role of Civil Society	TED
11:00-11:30	Mountain Communities and Sustainable Development –The Role of Civil Society	SOLD
11:30-12:00	Engendering Sustainable Development—The Role of Mountain Communities	MoGYSR
12:00-12:30	Possible Partnerships between Government and Civil Society Organizations towards achieving Sustainable and Resilient Communities	LHDA
	Key Note Address	Minister MTEC
12:30-13:00	Discussions	ALL
13:00-14:00	LUNCH	ALL
14:00-14:30	Discussions and allocation of thematic groups	ALL
14:30-15:15	Thematic Groups formulate possible projects to support resilience of Mountain Communities in the Changing Climate Range : Livestock : Agriculture	ALL divided into Districts with similar Ecological Zone
15:15-16:00	Report back from Groups - Way forward	Facilitator & TED
16:00	Tea Break & Departure	ALL

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