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Consideration of reports of States Parties

Replies of Lesotho to the list of issues in relation to its combined third to seventh periodic reports*

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Part I

Replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/LSO/Q/3-7)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 (a)

1. The Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill of 2023 (hereinafter referred to as "CPWA Bill") is currently being discussed before the Senate. The timeline for its enactment is uncertain because legislation is an intensive process involving different stakeholders. Delays shall be addressed by lobbying Parliament on the importance of accelerating the process. Further, consultations have been had with the Portfolio Committee on the Social Cluster which sped up the discussions before Senate. The next process to follow is to have the Bill returned to the National Assembly to validate the incorporation of all inputs. It will finally be transmitted to His Majesty for Royal Assent.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 (b)

2. The Government of Lesotho has a National Policy on Social Development 2014/2015–2024/25, Inclusive Education Policy (2018), Primary Health Care Policy ().

3. Under National Policy on Social Development, planned implementation was to protect children from abuse and meet their needs as this would remove barriers to their growth and development and create opportunities for them to realise their full potential. Interventions undertaken include:

- Violence Against Children Survey and Action plan to ensure continuous protection of children.
- Increasing social protection coverage through:
 - Expanding coverage (horizontal and vertical) of the Child Grants Program to cover more community councils, more children and increasing the amount. The grant is not provided per child and the strategy has proposed that the grant be provided per child.
 - Coverage of OVC Bursary has also been increased steadily over the years.
 - Children with disabilities were also provided with care dependency grant under disability grant that is provided for each child with disability. Children with disabilities are also provided with OVC Bursary for their boarding even when they are in primary school.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 (c)

4. Terms of Reference which outline the duties and functions of the child protection coordinating structures at different levels have been developed and are operational. Further, there is a consolidated Ministerial budget supporting functions of NOCC in particular. The CPWA Bill stipulates that the ministry responsible for Social Development is now assigned the child protection coordination mandate. The Secretariat has a designated coordination office with permanent government employees who oversee the functioning of NOCC.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 (a)

5. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho secured a loan as additional to the Government budget from the World Bank, to provide children with technological devices to ensure their enrolment and regular attendance in school in all the ten districts. In rural areas, there is a World Bank supported program named Economic Inclusion Project for Sustainable

Development which targets households that are ultra-poor and poor as per the NISSA categorisation. The project is specifically intended for social grants beneficiaries, inclusive of Child Grant Programs.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 (b)

6. There is an existing National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA), whose primary purpose is to establish and maintain a comprehensive national registry of households classified by wealth-ranking categories, ranging from ultra-poor to able. While the system is household-based, it captures detailed demographic and socio-economic information on all household members, including children. Targeting of social protection programmes, including child-focused interventions, is supported through a Proxy Means Test (PMT) combined with community-based categorisation mechanisms to enhance accuracy and inclusion.

7. The system is interoperable with the National Identity and Civil Registry (NICR) for verification of identification and enables longitudinal tracking of children across multiple social protection and social service interventions.

8. With support from UNICEF, the NISSA is currently undergoing a major upgrade. The upgraded system is designed to allow the configuration of any programme, whether child-oriented or not, without the need for Information Technology (IT) support. The upgrade also includes an interactive dashboard that enables the generation of disaggregated data by key variables. In addition, the system will feature a user portal through which institutions may register and submit requests for data access.

9. To safeguard household and individual information, structured approval and access-control protocols will be enforced. Data accessed for research purposes will be anonymised, while data used for programme implementation may remain identifiable, subject to programme-specific requirements. All data sharing will be governed by formal legal agreements and data-sharing protocols to prevent misuse and ensure compliance with data-protection standards.

10. In parallel, the Ministry has undertaken a Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment, which has informed the design and targeting of several social protection and social development interventions. The assessment also served as a key evidence base for the Child Marriage Assessment Report, which is currently under finalisation.

11. The Bureau of Statistics collects nationally representative data on children through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), conducted at five-year intervals. The Ministry of Health collects child-related data through a range of population-based surveys, including the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), which incorporates a comprehensive set of child-specific indicators, as well as periodic nutrition surveys conducted every five years. In addition, the Ministry of Health maintains adolescent health corners, which generate routine administrative data used for planning, monitoring, and service delivery purposes.

12. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Health conducts the Global School-based Health Survey (GSHS), which assesses behavioural health risks and protective factors among adolescents aged 13 to 17 years (initially 13 to 15 years). The Ministry of Education and Training also collects administrative data on education-related indicators and publishes annual statistical bulletins. Both the Ministries of Health and Education utilise open-source management information systems for data collection and management.

13. Furthermore, the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, through the Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU), collects administrative data on children in conflict with and in contact with the law. The Police Service disseminates selected information through weekly media reports and produces aggregated annual statistical reports. The data is accessible on government portals and websites.

14. Currently there is no national digitized system for collection of data on children, and child protection data is fragmented; different ministries and agencies have their own data collection systems. Examples include National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA).

15. Adoption and utilization of child protection management information system (CPMIS).

16. There are efforts towards addressing gaps on the fragmented data collection and planning through digitalization of child protection case management. The Child Helpline is equipped with a call tracking system which maintains a record of calls for easy data collection.

17. The Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) through Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU) collects administrative data on children in conflict and in contact with the law^{3c}.

Human Rights Commission

18. Lesotho's Constitution (Sixth Amendment) provided for a Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Commission Act 2016 was enacted to operationalize it and give it powers to promote and protect human rights, including investigating rights violations. This mandate theoretically covers children's rights as part of "all human rights."

19. Despite the legal framework existing on paper, Lesotho historically has not fully operationalized an independent Human Rights Commission whose members are in place and functioning in line with international norms.

20. In a nutshell, the Commission legally exists, but it has not been fully established or made operational in practice in the way envisaged to receive and resolve human rights complaints, including for children. Its capacity to address children's rights violations is therefore limited or not yet realised.

Office of the Ombudsman

21. The Office of the Ombudsman in Lesotho is established under the Constitution and the Ombudsman Act No. 9 of 1996. Its mandate is to receive and investigate complaints from aggrieved persons regarding acts, omissions, maladministration, corruption, or violation of fundamental rights by government agencies and statutory corporations (or officials of such). It then recommends remedial action.

22. Any person or group who is aggrieved can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman. This would legally include children (directly or through a representative) because the mandate covers individuals aggrieved by public sector action or violation of fundamental rights.

23. There is no specific children's rights forum inside the Ombudsman created by law, but the Ombudsman's broad mandate does include fundamental rights and maladministration, which can encompass children's rights violations by public bodies.

24. There is an existing National Information System for Social Assistance, whose primary purpose is to establish a comprehensive registry of households classified by wealth-ranking categories ranging from ultra-poor to able. Although the system is household-based, it captures detailed information on all household members, including demographic and socio-economic variables. Targeting of social programmes, including child-focused interventions, is supported through a Proxy Means Test combined with community-based categorisation to ensure accuracy.

25. The system is currently being upgraded with support from UNICEF. The upgraded system is designed to allow any programme, whether child-oriented or not, will be configured without requiring Information Technology (IT) support. In addition, the upgrade includes an interactive dashboard that provides disaggregated data. The system will also feature a portal through which users may register and submit data-access requests. To safeguard household and individual information, approval protocols will be enforced. Data used for research purposes will be anonymised, while data accessed for social programme implementation may

remain identifiable, depending on programme requirements. All data sharing will be governed by legal agreements and data-sharing protocols to prevent misuse and ensure data protection. The ministry had an intentional effort of conducting a Lesotho Vulnerability assessment which was used as a bases of many interventions including the child marriage assessment report which is yet to be finalised. The National Bureau of Statistics collects data on children through the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey on intervals of 5 years. Ministry of health also collects data on children through numerous surveys such as; the demographic health survey where there are specific indicators on children, nutrition survey on intervals of five years as well. Global School Health Survey in-collaboration with the ministry of education to specifically assess the behavioural Assess health behaviors & protective factors among adolescents ages 13 to 17 years (originally 13 to 15 years).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 (a)

26. The State Party has deployed Social workers to the community councils to increase access to services. These Social Workers among other duties address issues of all forms of discrimination against all categories of children by conducting regular community dialogues and media campaigns to challenge harmful stereotypes, especially those targeting children with albinism and children of unmarried parents. Following the Lesotho Violence against Children and Youth report (2020); Lesotho developed the Costed National Prevention and Response Plan on Violence against Children which guides the implementation of child protection interventions including elimination of all forms of discrimination against children. For instance; the development of National Referral Pathways, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Package of Service and Positive Parenting booklet and their dissemination to the public.

27. The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2025; section 20A (1) stipulates that Lesotho shall take affirmative action in favour of marginalised groups. This means that Parliament shall make laws that eliminate discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, children with albinism, orphaned children, children of unmarried parents, pregnant girls and children with HIV. Even before the enactment of the Tenth Amendment, Lesotho had already taken affirmative action to protect marginalised groups. Examples of such laws are Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, the Persons with Disability Equity Act of 2021, the Counter Domestic Violence Act of 2022, the Harmonization of the Rights of Customary Widows with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2022, the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act of 2024, and of course, the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill of 2023.

28. The Education Act 2010 (Amended in 2021) considers education as a "Right" and therefore it should be open and be accessed by all including those with disabilities and without any discrimination against them.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 (b)

29. To ensure that the outcomes of Children's parliament and other platforms are taken into consideration in public decision making; the Children Parliament sessions are held in collaboration with the National Assembly guided by the Social Cluster Portfolio Committee and the Cabinet where children able to directly address the Members of Parliament on the issues that they aspire to see change. Further; the children hold members of parliament accountable for the decisions taken during Children's parliament sessions. For example, in the seating of 2023 Children's Parliament; children were adamant that the parliament must expedite the enactment of CPW Amendment Bill. In 2025 the Bill received second and third reading in the National Assembly and it is currently in the Senate. Another example; the children alluded that child, especially those living in the rural mountainous areas delay to start school therefore they requested the government to increase the age of eligibility for qualifying for OVC bursary and they adopted the request. Again, the state is developing the Cyber Act after 2025 Children's Parliament highlighted the need for it.

Other Platforms

30. Children's opinions were considered in the development of the national Prevention and Response Plan on violence against children and on Positive Parenting. To ensure that children engage in meaningful participation on issues affecting them, there are organized dialogues between children, administrators and Service providers where children are able to voice changes they aspire to see in their districts and hold the service providers accountable. Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) is a social accountability model used by CSOs to engage government service providers and consumers including children to influence policies and improve service delivery.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 (c)

31. The State Party in collaboration with UNICEF is undertaking a project called NTLAFATSA BANA PROJECT in the districts of Quthing, Mohale's Hoek, Leribe and Thaba Tseka. The project is on the pilot stage focusing on child protection teams, schools, teachers and local leaders (Councilors and Chiefs). This project is enhancing registration of children using tablets as means of collecting and data exchange to cut the issues of travels, efficiency and access to registration. The State Party through collaboration between National Identity and Civil Registration and Ministry of Education, though still in the early stages, focused on the registration of students and scholars in schools through the deployment of officials to community councils and use of tablets to register and transmit information. The State Party continues to deploy Local Registrars in Community Councils to register all births of all persons in those localities. NICR the Ministry of Health have signed a Memorandum of Understanding detailing collaboration in birth registration matters. This paves way to register all children born in health facilities and those who will be coming for vaccinations.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 (a)

32. To address the issue of positive discipline as a measure to address use of corporal punishment; the State Party has developed the Positive Parenting Guide which is used to train the school community, child protection community structures and leaders, parents and caregivers. The State Party also intensively engage in media and community sensitizations to promote positive discipline and parenting. The Education Act 2010 (Amended in 2021) prohibits corporal punishment so teachers should look for other means for modeling a positive behavior in schools. The guidelines for identification, prevention and response to school related gender-based violence (PRSGVB) based on the principles of creating safe and inclusive schools. The State Party through The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development has developed Guidelines and Standards of Care for Residential Facilities which outline measures to be put in place to ensure that corporal punishment, among other forms of violations is eliminated.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 (b)

33. CPWA 2023 Bill criminalizes child marriage as a form of violence against children. Also, the Bill no longer accepts any fines for perpetrators of violence against children. The State Party through the office of the Director Public Prosecutions (DPP), held criminal sessions for four districts; Botha Bothe where 20 cases of GBV were completed. In the district of Berea, 28 cases were completed while in the district of Mafeteng 19 cases were done and finally 39 cases in Mokhotlong. The sessions are ongoing in the district of Leribe. The community structures are often trained to identify, prevent and report cases of Violence against Children (VAC). Further the State Party has developed the National Referral Pathways. Additionally, the Child Helpline staff has been capacitated with several trainings; customer care, referral pathways, case management and the child helpline call tracking system is maintained regularly.

34. The State Party has established a child focused unit within the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, mandated to address, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, including sexual violence. The Unit is capacitated by staff which been trained on Play therapy and trauma informed therapy. The unit further provides child friendly spaces within the police stations; the unit is equipped with technology that facilitates in-camera interviews. State Party with technical support from Global Fund established more safe homes under the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development and safe spaces within the police setting. The State Party promotes anonymous reporting through the Child Helpline and the Nokaneng App for reporting of Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases. The State Party through the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture through the national sports safeguarding task team has developed code of conduct for coaches, sport boards, technical officials and athletes to promote discipline within sporting fraternity. The State Party through the Ministry of Tourism, Sports, Arts and Culture also developed a code of conduct and reporting pathway in order to respond to all forms of violence against children and vulnerable persons in sport.

35. The task team has developed referral pathway and developed educational material that shall be used to sensitize communities about issues of abuse in sports. This is to address cultural norms that normalize abuse within sports setting, and established reporting structures and strengthen investigations.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 (c)

36. Community Based Structures including Chiefs, Councilors, CCCPTs and Nutrition Clubs among others have been capacitated to identify victims of abuse and have been given referral pathways to help accelerate reporting of abuse.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 (d)

37. The State Party provided for the prohibition of child marriage in the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill of 2023 and it will be an offence punishable by law. This amendment extends to customary law because section 154(1) of the Constitution of Lesotho, 1993 as amended provides for the modification of customary law by any Act of Parliament. However, it is noteworthy that customary courts are not the correct forum, as matters involving children are dealt with in the Children's Court.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 (a)

38. The State Party has included regulatory clauses on foster and kinship care in the CPW Amendment Bill 2023. However, informal kinship care is customarily an acceptable and common practice in Lesotho and the village chiefs are mandated to record the children under kinship care in their villages. To formalize this and have evidence-based data; this variable will be included in the CPMIS. There are situations that warrant informal kinship care. For example, familial relations allow for relatives to take care of their orphaned and/or vulnerable children; or for a good Samaritan to take care of orphaned and/or vulnerable children in their communities. However, there is currently no regulatory framework aimed at recognizing, supporting or monitoring informal kinship care.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 (b)

39. The State Party has placed the Auxiliary Social Workers in the community councils who are periodically trained on Child Protection issues. The established child protection community structures (Community Council Child Protection Teams- CCCPTs) are also continually being capacitated on child protection issues including MHPSS and Positive Parenting. Qualified Social Workers are also deployed to the community councils to support and supervise the provision of services to children and families. Further, positive parenting is used to strengthen parent-child relationships with the establishment of parenting clubs as

the mode of support for parents These clubs provide parents and caregivers with skills on positive parenting, non-violent discipline and effective communication with children, supporting the creation of safe, nurturing and protective family environments.

40. The State Party in collaboration with SOS Children's Villages Lesotho, implemented a range of community-based interventions aimed at strengthening child protection and family support services at the local level. These interventions focused on prevention, capacity building and the promotion of child participation. As part of these measures, Child Rights and Responsibilities Clubs were established in some Primary Schools within the country. The clubs aim to promote meaningful child participation by equipping children with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, life skills and safe reporting mechanisms. Through structured age-appropriate sessions and peer engagement, the clubs contribute to the prevention and reduction of violence against children in schools and within the home.

41. To ensure effective implementation and sustainability of these initiatives, members of the Community Council Child Protection Team were trained on child protection principles, referral pathways, and their roles in supporting and monitoring the Child Rights and Responsibilities Clubs and Positive Parenting Clubs. The training enhanced the capacity of the community council to coordinate child protection responses, provide oversight and strengthen linkages between schools, families and community structures.

42. Furthermore, teachers from the participating schools were trained on child protection laws, including the Children's Protection and Welfare Act (CPWA) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The training enhanced teachers' knowledge and practical application of the child protection standards, enabling them to identify and respond appropriately to child protection concerns and to effectively teach children about their rights and responsibilities within the school-based clubs.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 (c)

43. The foster care initiative related to foster families in Motimposo and Thibella did not take off after Covid 19 era. However, the State Party has expanded its partnership with two other residential care facilities; SOS (Maseru, Quthing and Mokhotlong) and Trust for Africa (Mohale's Hoek). The care facilities have expanded their mandate to include community strengthening programs which include kinship and foster care.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 (d)

44. The Central Adoption Authority currently works as an administrative body within the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development. The Central Adoption Authority and Adoptions Unit are duly budgeted for, and provided with all necessary resources to carry out their mandate effectively. For example; The State Party has increased the staff in the Adoption Unit by two Social Workers equipped with desktop computers and laptops for easy service provision. The Social Workers who are responsible for alternative care case management have been capacitated in writing comprehensive reports for children identified as adoptable.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 7

45. To enforce The Persons with Disability Equity Act of 2021 there is a disability grant, and additionally for children, a care dependency grants to ensure that children with disabilities and their families receive support. The State Party established the Disability Advisory Council in 2022 as provided for in the Persons with Disability Equity Act 2021 Section 4, whose role among others is to advice Government and other service providers on the realisation and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

46. The State Party developed the national disability mainstreaming plan to ensure inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities in all sectors.

47. The State Party had the first commemoration of the International Day of Albinism on the 13th June 2024. Through the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, the State Party signed a memorandum of understanding with Albino Multipurpose Association of Lesotho.

48. The State Party through the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development established the multi-disciplinary teams at national and district levels which comprises of professionals from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education (special education unit). These teams ensure proper assessments prior to provision of appropriate assistive technological devices e.g., teaching and learning aids and mobility aids.

49. The State Party through the Ministry of Gender Youth and Social Development provides disability grant as provided for in the Persons with Disability Equity Act 2021 Section 46 to children with severe disabilities as a means of support to their families for their other needs.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 (a)

50. The Ministry of Health through Primary Health Care has a defined essential service package that is offered at different levels of care including Health centers', Health posts and outreaches (Static and mobile) for hard-to-reach areas:

- (a) Healthcare services are free for all;
- (b) Village health workers are trained on the Community Integrated Management of Childhood illnesses to identify early danger signs at community level and link children to the health facility for further management;
- (c) Birth and death registration in all hospitals also during the planned outreaches and campaign;
- (d) The child health program adopted the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) guidelines to reduce the perinatal mortality, promote growth and early discharge from facilities. KMC thus empowers mothers and increases their confidence in handling and feeding their Low Birth Weight (LBW) and preterm infants.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 (b)

51. Provision of intergraded outreach services for under 5 and older children for early detection of childhood illnesses and disability and their treatment:

- (a) The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative BFHI Policy focuses on creating a supportive environment for mothers and infants, ensuring that breastfeeding is the norm and that mothers receive the necessary information and assistance to successfully breastfeed their babies;
- (b) The Ministry launched a project community child friendly service mainly for improving the service provision for children in the community.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 (c)

52. The State Party is developing the Mental Health Bill to repeal the Mental Health Act of 1964.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 (d)

53. The Ministry of Health adapted the Minimum standards for Adolescents friendly health services:

- (a) All adolescents are free to access such services including family planning;

(b) Self-injectable commodity for pregnancy prevention is available for adolescents and general population to avoid long distance walk to the health facilities and frequent face to face contact with the service providers especially adolescents who might not feel comfortable to visit the centers;

(c) The feedback mechanism from the beneficiaries is in place to ensure that they are satisfied with the services offered by the facility;

(d) In Lesotho Abortion is not legal however it is performed under medical eligibility ground and for sexual assault incidents/incest – termination of pregnancy is mandatory when a child is pregnant due to sexual assault.

54. Comprehensive Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP for HIV, Pregnancy, STIs, Wound care and psychological support) is offered in health facilities. Follow up of clients is done, if one becomes HIV positive as a result of sexual assault, ongoing counselling is offered and the client is enrolled in ART program. For those who become pregnant termination of pregnancy is performed guided by the Standard operating procedures- guidelines and the law:

(a) Post abortion care services is offered for everyone at all levels of health care in line with Comprehensive Abortion Care guidelines;

(b) At community level the Ministry disseminate SRHR/GBV and HIV information and counselling, comprehensive sexuality education including Nutrition and distribution of family planning commodities- (Community based distributors), linkages to the health facilities through peer-to-peer program;

(c) The Ministry developed costed menstrual health and hygiene strategy which has 6 Strategic pillars and their desired outcomes including menstrual healthcare services to address unwanted pregnancies, access to sanitary pads, knowledge in menstrual health.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 (e)

55. Lesotho has rolled out multi-sectoral HIV prevention programs for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW), combining biomedical, behavioural, and structural interventions. These include access to HIV testing, PrEP, sexual and reproductive health education, school retention support, and community initiatives to shift harmful gender norms.

56. Lesotho Adolescent & Young People Program operates across 179 sites in 8 districts.

57. The State Party has an entity responsible for coordinating prevention and reduction of HIV/AIDS; (National AIDS Commission).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 (a)

58. There are several initiatives to strengthen social protection initiatives, and these are highlighted below:

(a) Implementing cash plus services in nine community councils with high poverty rates and stunting. The main purpose of the program is to improve access to basic services and also integrate services to provide more outcomes. Other services include birth registration, nutrition interventions, water and sanitation and green energy solutions;

(b) The State Party has also subsidized agricultural inputs (seeds and fertilisers) to ensure production of food. There is also the school feeding program in all public primary schools. The State Party further enhanced social protection, post Covid-19 through provision of grants top up to assist families to provide school supplies to children. The top up was provided to children in and out of schools.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 (b)

59. The State Party in collaboration with World Vision International Lesotho have implemented programmes and interventions that directly expand access to safe drinking

water, reduce open defecation, and improve hygiene practices in both households and schools:

- (a) Constructing and rehabilitating water systems, including gravity-fed schemes, boreholes, protected springs, and hand-washing stations;
- (b) Installing water storage tanks and tapping points within villages to ensure consistent household access, especially during drought periods;
- (c) Strengthening community water committees to support long-term operation and maintenance of water systems;
- (d) Through the Department of Rural Water Supply the State Party ensures that water systems meet national standards on water quality and safety.

60. Moreover, the State Party in collaboration with European Union and UNICEF under ongoing Ntlafatsa Bana Project rehabilitated 26 rural water supply systems benefitting 9227 individuals including 767 children who are under 5. The Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey 2023/24, states that 91 percent of households have access to improved drinking water sources, with urban areas having the highest rate at 99 percent than rural areas at 86 percent. The Demographic Health Survey can access improved drinking with 30 minutes round trip walk.

61. As an initiative to end to open defecation the State Party in collaboration with World Vision International Lesotho have put strategies in place:

- (a) Triggering communities to identify and eliminate risky sanitation behaviours;
- (b) Supporting households to construct improved latrines using local affordable materials;
- (c) Facilitating village Open Defecation Free (ODF) verification and certification, working with the Ministry of Health and community leadership;
- (d) Promoting child-friendly latrines and disability-inclusive sanitation options. As a result, many villages have moved towards or achieved Open Defaecation Free (ODF) status, with continued monitoring to sustain gains.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 (c)

62. The State Party through the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with World Vision International Lesotho has:

- (a) Constructed and rehabilitated climate-resilient water supply systems, including solar-powered boreholes, protected springs and gravity systems that remain functional during drought periods;
- (b) Introduced water storage solutions to improve water retention and minimize the impact of dry spells;
- (c) Promoted water source protection and watershed management, working with the communities to reduce erosion, siltation and contamination. These interventions allow children, especially in remote areas, to enjoy consistent access to safe water even when climate conditions fluctuate.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 (a)

63. The State Party through the 10th amendment of the Constitution has officialised the Sign language, isiXhosa and Sephuthi, adding to Sesotho and English. The State Party provides assistive technology to children with disabilities in inclusive and special schools to increase enrolment of learners with disabilities and to ensure retention and regular attendance.

64. The Ministry of Education and training through the Special Education Unit is opening access for children with disabilities by:

- (a) Constructing accessible and accommodative school facilities;
- (b) Providing assistive technology;
- (c) Training teachers on early identification and assessment, inclusive education and disability issues;
- (d) Supporting teachers and learners with disabilities during teaching and learning;
- (e) Conducting referrals and appropriate placement of learners with disabilities;
- (f) Conducting public gatherings through the Special Education district officers;
- (g) Collaborating with other line ministries, organizations of persons with disabilities, private sector and development partners;
- (h) Providing curriculum and assessment adaptations.

65. Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy Policy (2024) has been developed and it states that pregnant girls should stay in schools. Although this policy has been endorsed, it has not yet been printed and disseminated.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 (b)

66. Section 11(4) of the CPWA 2011 prohibits the expulsion of a child from school on account of initiation or other cultural rites and rituals. Similarly, sub section 5 of the same section further prohibits children from being compelled to undergo cultural rites and practices which may negatively affect their right to education. The State Party has also put measures to shorten the period of initiation, to ensure that initiation does not interfere with school period.

67. After the state party observed that children in the rural areas delay enrolment in primary education, as of 2025 the state party has increased the maximum age of eligibility for OVC bursary intake from 18 to 24, especially for the boy child.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 (c)

68. The State Party through Ministry of Education and Training has the mandate to set, enforce and regulate rationalized secondary school fees structures for all public schools.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 (d)

69. To improve the vocational training; the State Party through Technical and Vocational Education and Training has expanded programs offered under vocational training.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 (e)

70. In an effort to expand early childhood education the state party has taken the following measures:

- (a) Reception classes – attached to primary schools, free of charge, aligned with the free primary education policy;
- (b) ECCD centers – privately owned facilities that charge fees but are mandated to register with the ministry of education and training;
- (c) Home-based centers that are community-driven and free of charge, with teaching and learning materials provided by the government.

Current status

71. Reception classes serve as a one-year preparatory program for Grade One.

72. In 2023, the State Party through Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) attached 68 new reception classes to 242 reception classes that were already attached to existing primary schools nationwide. The distribution per district was based on classroom availability.

73. In the year 2026, the State Party plans to establish 150 new reception classes in five districts:

- (a) Mokhotlong;
- (b) Thaba Tseka;
- (c) Qacha's Nek;
- (d) Maseru;
- (e) Berea.

74. There are now 463 primary schools with reception classes across the country.

75. There are 92 home-based centres in five districts, which are Leribe with 72, Mohale's Hoek with 17, Quthing with 1, Qacha's Nek with 1 and Maseru with 1.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 (a)

76. The State Party through the Ministry of labour and employment has taken concrete legislative, programmatic and institutional measures to prevent and eliminate economic exploitation of children, with particular attention to high-risk sectors such as cattle herding, domestic service, and commercial sexual exploitation.

Legislative measures

77. The State Party has strengthened its legislative framework for protection of children from economic exploitation through the enactment of the Labour Act No.3, 2024. The Act extends the scope of employment relations to all workers, irrespective of sector, and provides a comprehensive framework applicable to both the formal and informal economy. In terms of section 5, the definition of an employment relationship is sufficiently broad to include categories of work that have historically fallen outside the purview of labour protection, including domestic work and farming (cattle herding).

78. The Act further prohibits sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the world of work, recognizing such conduct as an unfair labour practice and strengthening legal safeguards against abuse and exploitation. Consistent with the State's obligation under the UNCRC and relevant international labour standards, the Labour Act expressly defines and prohibits the worst forms of child labour for all persons below the age of 18. Prohibited forms include hazardous and exploitative work such as cattle herding at remote posts, domestic work that exposes children to unsafe and poor conditions of work, as well as prostitution and sex trafficking of minors. Any person found to be contravening this provision is liable to a sentence of ten years or a fine of M200,000 or both.

79. The State Party in partnership with World Vision Lesotho guarantees that the public is aware of children's rights and protection the law provides. The State Party has undertaken sustained community sensitisation and public awareness campaigns, particularly in rural areas where cattle herding and domestic work are common. These interventions target traditional leaders, parents, youth clubs, journalists, and community coordinating structures to challenge harmful social norms that normalize child labour and to promote reporting of violations. Public gatherings and media engagements have been held to disseminate information on child labour laws, reporting mechanisms, and child protection services.

Programmatic measures

80. A key programmatic measure is the development of the Integrated National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour (NAP II 2024-2029), which has been validated and approved at national level. NAP II establishes a comprehensive and coordinated framework to address all forms of child labour, including the worst forms, through integrated measures

focusing on prevention, protection, law enforcement, and rehabilitation. Over and above the international standards, the Plan reflects the commitment made under the Durban Call to Action adopted at the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour.

Institutional arrangements

81. The implementation of the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour (NAP II) is supported through structured multi-sectoral coordination under the Programme Advisory Committee on Child Labour (PACC), chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The PACC also comprises of relevant government ministries, employers and workers organizations, civil society organizations and development partners. It serves as the principal coordination and oversight mechanism, enabling joint planning, implementation, and monitoring of interventions related to prevention, public awareness, labour inspections, and the referral of identified cases to child protection services.

82. In addition, institutional capacity within the Ministry of Labour and Employment has been strengthened through the formal establishment of Child Labour Unit, following the approval by the Ministry of Public Service.

83. The State Party has also strengthened capacity and enforcement mechanisms. A Training of Trainers Manual for Labour Inspectors and Members of the Programme Advisory Committee on Child Labour is under development to guarantee uniform application of child labour laws and effective identification of violations, including hidden forms of labour such as domestic sector. Labour inspectors, District Child Protection Teams, social workers, and other frontline actors have received targeted training to improve detection, referral, and case management of child labour cases.

84. In addition, sector specific measures have been adopted in collaboration with social partners. Employers' organizations, particularly in the textile and apparel sector, have reinforced zero-tolerance policies on child labour. While trade unions and civil society organizations continue to conduct community level awareness campaigns and monitoring, including those targeted at domestic workers and migrant affected communities.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 (b)

85. The State Party has not conducted a specific study for children in street situations, as the majority of surveys and studies carried out are household based. Notwithstanding this limitation, the State Party through partnerships with civil society organizations and development partners, implements targeted interventions for children in street situations. One such initiative is the Sepheo Programme, which operates in Maseru. Sepheo identifies children living and begging in the streets, collects case level data to inform interventions, and facilitates their reintegration into families and communities. The programme provides access to education, psychosocial support, and life skills development, with a strong focus on addressing the underlying causes of street involvement, including poverty. These efforts are implemented in collaboration with the Ministries of Labour and Employment, Gender, Youth and Social Development and development partners, as part of broader community-based child protection and social reintegration initiatives. The programme aims to support vulnerable children to transition off the streets and develop their full potential in safe and supportive environments.

86. The State Party intends to use the CPMIS which will include variables targeting children in the streets. The State Party recognizes children in the streets as vulnerable children hence provides package of services for them.

87. Beneficiaries under SEPHEO Program:

- (a) Children on the streets (Under Rehabilitation) = 124;
- (b) Sepheo School and Graduation Transition = 67;
- (c) ECCD and Post-Graduation = 47;
- (d) Tutoring/Drop Out = 144;

- (e) High School = 29;
- (f) Total beneficiaries = 405.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 (a)

88. The minimum age of criminal responsibility remains the same as in the State Report.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 (b)

89. The status of efforts remains the same as stated under administration of Juvenile Justice (point 144) in the State Report.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 (c)

90. The 2026/2027 budget includes request for revamping and rehabilitation of Juvenile Training Centre to meet the International Standards. The allocation is expected in the financial year commencing in April 2026. The new facility is designed to accommodate girls therefore will no longer share space with adult females.

Part II

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 (a)

91. The Persons with Disability Equity Act of 2021 at section 46 provides that a child with disability is entitled to a care dependency grant, which shall be received by a parent, guardian, primary care giver or foster parent of the child. This offers support to cover the basic needs of the child.

92. Also, the Act protects and promotes the human rights of persons with disabilities. Human rights violations enshrined therein are offences that attract criminal liability. For example, section 23 stipulates that no head of a learning institution, whether private or public shall deny admission to a person with disability, if the disability does not hinder learning. In fact, they are obliged to take all necessary steps to recognize the special needs of the person with disability. Even parents of children with disabilities are prohibited from refusing to have the children enrolled in schools. Failure to comply with this provision is an offence that warrants a fine not exceeding five thousand Maloti or to imprisonment of five years or both.

93. In essence, the Act places a responsibility on everyone to not only not discriminate against persons with disabilities but to also reasonably accommodate them in all aspects.

94. Moving on, section 3(i) (i), (iv), (v) of the Counter Domestic Violence Act of 2022 qualifies child marriages, sexual intercourse between parent and child, and exploitative child labour, respectively, as domestic violence and punishable according to section 28. Part III of the Act allows a child to apply for a protection order against his perpetrator through an adult who may be a chief, parent or guardian, probation officer, teacher or social worker, to mention but a few. Section 4(4) goes further to explicitly allow a child to apply for a protection order without the assistance of an adult where the court is satisfied that the child has sufficient understanding to make the application. These provisions seek to protect children from all forms of violence and exploitation. This Act has no Regulations because most of the sections therein are unimplementable. The State Party is currently in the process of amending the law.

95. According to section 3(3)(d) of the Harmonization of the Rights of Customary Widows with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2022, a customary widow has the right to the guardianship of her and her deceased husband's minor children. In terms of section 3(4), she shall take into consideration the rights and welfare of the minor children of the joint estate. Further, section 3(5) stipulates that if a surviving parent abuses their powers

in the control of the joint estate, the family may intervene to protect the interests of the minor children. Finally, section 3(6) stipulates that where a surviving spouse has minor children and remarries, the joint estate shall not form part of the community of property of the subsequent marriage. The above provisions protect the interests of children in the unfortunate event of their parent's death.

96. Similar to the Harmonization of the Rights of Customary Widows with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2022 is the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act of 2024, which has removed the first-born male child as sole heir. Instead, an estate is shared equally among siblings, regardless of gender and seniority. This Act has done away with discrimination against children, especially the girl child.

97. Finally, is the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill of 2023. The Bill in its entirety protects the rights and welfare of children. This Bill does not have Regulations because they are pending finalization and enactment of the Bill.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 (b)

98. The State Party has established safe spaces within the police stations where children affected by abuse are accommodated for the period of 48 hours while waiting for the ultimate placement in the appropriate places of safety or reintegration. Further, the State Party has established child-friendly police stations to allow police officers to conduct interviews in a child-friendly environment and in camera. Furthermore, the State Party has erected Children's Courts structures in four more districts which are fully equipped with technological advancements to ensure that a child is able to testify without any contact with the perpetrator or the accused.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 (c)

99. The State Party has developed a Costed Violence against Children Prevention and Response Plan. Further, the State Party has developed the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Package of Services; Positive Parenting Guide, a Safeguarding Policy in Sports and the promulgation of the Disability Equity (Procedure) Rules of 2023 to accommodate persons with disabilities in courts. The State Party has reviewed the Civil Registry and Vital Statistics Strategic Plan of 2020-2024 to the Civil Registry and Vital Statistics Strategic Plan Review of 2025-2029. The State Party also developed the Lesotho National Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan (2023-2027).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 (d)

Regional (African Union)

100. African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration, ratified in 2023.

ILO Human Rights-Related Conventions

101. ILO C151 (Public Service labour relations) ratified in 2023.

102. ILO C187 (OSH framework) ratified in 2023.

103. ILO C190 (Violence & harassment) ratified in 2023.

Part III

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14

Table 1

The National information for the past three years on the budget lines regarding children and social sectors

<i>National Budget for financial</i>	<i>Children's national budget as a proportion of the total nation Budget</i>	<i>Social Sector (Maloti) budget as a proportion of the total nation Budget</i>
2025/26 (33.6 billion)	Amount (230 057 402)	Amount (1 471 923 65)
	Prop (0.0684695)	Prop (0.4380725)
2024/25 (30.9 billion)	Amount (222 944 668)	Amount (1 479 874 47)
	Prop (0.0721504)	Prop (0.4404388)
2023/24bds (24.1 billion)	Amount (193 397 498)	Amount (1 362 575 844)
	Prop (0.0802479)	Prop (0.5653842)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (a)

Table 2

Cases reported through Child Helpline for the period of 2025/2026

<i>Case type</i>	<i>Number of Cases</i>
Child Neglect	156
Physical Abuse	78
Sexual Violence	42
Information Seeking	7
Concealment of birth	2
Bursary	1
Poisoning	1

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (b)

104. Since the CPW Bill has not yet been enacted into the law, issues relating to child marriage are prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act of 2003 and the Penal Code Act of 2010 as abduction as the case might be.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (c)

105. For statistics on children living in residential care facilities, refer to annex 1, Table 1.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (d)

106. As of 2018, more than 2 in 5 Basotho children (45.5 percent) of the child population are multidimensionally poor, meaning that they suffer deprivation in three or more dimensions, according to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2018).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (e)

107. According to the LDHS 2023-24, 17 percent of teenage pregnancies of girls aged 15-19 years were observed. The table below also shows administrative records of the health facilities in the country for the past three years.

Table 2

Adolescent pregnancies in health facilities from 2023 to 2025

<i>Year</i>	<i>Less than 15 years</i>	<i>15-19 years</i>
2023	135	6 486
2024	148	6 664
2025	127	6 315

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (f)

108. Findings from the Global School-based Health Survey (GSHS) 2025 indicates concerning levels of substance use among learners. Overall, 27.7 per cent of learners reported consuming at least one alcoholic drink in the 30 days preceding the survey, while 27.1 per cent reported having been really drunk at least once in their lifetime, with prevalence higher among males.

109. A critical finding of the survey is the early initiation of substance use, with 44.7 per cent of learners who reported substance use indicating that initiation occurred before the age of 14. In addition, 12.1 per cent of learners reported lifetime cannabis use, while 7.3 per cent reported having used amphetamines or methamphetamines at least once in their lifetime.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (g)

110. There are no statistics for asylum-seeking, refugee, migrant and unaccompanied children.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (h)

111. The data on children in the streets is limited to Maseru district and the State Party has not yet made efforts to collect the data but the development of the CPMIS will enable such data.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 (i)

112. There is no data on children regarding trafficking since there are no reported cases.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 (a)

113. Unaccompanied and separated migrant children from Lesotho are in South Africa as the receiving state. The statistics are therefore not available. The State Party has to develop methods to create data for children who are internally displaced. The State Party currently has 60 reported cases of unaccompanied and separated migrant children referred from the Republic South Africa pending repatriation.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 (b)

114. For data on children placed in institutions, refer to annex, Table 1.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 (c)

115. There is no data on children in kinship care because kinship care is currently not formally regulated.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 (a)

116. There is no data on children with disabilities living with their families.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 (b)

117. It should be noted that these institutions are boarding facilities housing children while at school; the children go to their respective homes during school term breaks. Only Phelisanong Centre for the Disabled provides alternative care for children with disabilities in need of alternative care and protection.

Table 3

Children with disabilities living in institutions

<i>Name of Institution</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Type of disability</i>	<i>Geographic location</i>
St. Paul School for the Deaf	10 years and below	Males 28 Females 23	Speech and Hearing Impairment.	Leribe – Urban
	11 years to 15 years	Males 21 Females 18	Speech and Hearing Impairment.	Leribe – Urban
	16 years to 17 years	Males 18 Females 16	Intellectual Disability	Butha- Buthe Urban
Thuso-E-Tla-Tsoa-Kae	10 years and below	Males 8 Females 10	Intellectual Disability	Butha- Buthe Urban
	11 years to 15 years	Males 21 Females 17	Intellectual Disability	Butha- Buthe Urban
	16 years to 17 years	Males 7 Females 4	Intellectual Disability	Butha- Buthe Urban
St. Angela Chashire Home for Disabled Children	10 years and below	Males 5 Females 2	Physical Disability	Maseru- Urban
	11 years to 15 years	Males 8 Females 6	Physical Disability	Maseru- Urban
	16 years to 17 years	Males 2 Females 2	Physical Disability	Maseru- Urban
Morapeli Disabled Centre	10 years and below	Males 11 Females 4	Physical Disability	Mafeteng- Urban
	11 years to 15 years	Males 31 Females 17	Physical Disability	Mafeteng- Urban
	16 years to 17 years	Males 11 Females 10	Physical Disability	Mafeteng- Urban

<i>Name of Institution</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Type of disability</i>	<i>Geographic location</i>
Resource Centre for the Blind	10 years and below	Males 5	Visual Impairment	Maseru- Urban
		Females 5		
	11 years to 15 years	Males 11	Visual Impairment	Maseru- Urban
		Females 19		
	16 years to 17 years	Males 3	Visual Impairment	Maseru- Urban
		Females 4		
Kananelo Centre for the Deaf	10 years and below	Males 11	Speech and Hearing Impairment	Berea- Semi Urban
		Females 11		
	11 years to 15 years	Males 16	Speech and Hearing Impairment	Berea- Semi Urban
		Females 14		
	16 years to 17 years	Males 5	Speech and Hearing Impairment	Berea- Semi Urban
		Females 0		
Phelisanong Centre for Disabled	10 years and below	Males 6	Multiple Disabilities	Leribe- Rural
		Females 6		
	11 years to 15 years	Males 5	Multiple Disabilities	Leribe- Rural
		Females 4		
	16 years to 17 years	Males 0	Multiple Disabilities	Leribe- Rural
		Females 1		

118. The State Party wishes to note that the above data comprises 17b and 17e. For information on 17c and 17d, please refer to annex, tables 2 and 3 for the years 2022,2023 and 2024 disaggregated by geographical location and level.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 (f)

119. There is no data on children with disabilities who are out of school.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 (g)

120. There is no data on children with disabilities who are abandoned by their families.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 (a)

Table 4

Partial Administrative data of arrested children from DPP from 2023 to 2025

<i>Year</i>	<i>Type of Offence</i>			
	<i>Sexual Offence</i>	<i>Housebreaking</i>	<i>Assault</i>	<i>Murder and culpable homicide</i>
2023	34	13	14	3
2024	34	10	15	6
2025	82	8	5	7

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 (b)

121. The data on children referred to diversion programs will be presented during the tabling of the report.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 (c)

122. There are 24 boys under 18 years who are in pretrial detention as of 2026 by JTC administrative data.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 (d)

123. For the past 3 years, out of 180 boys detained 65% of the boys were detained for sexual offences, 30% housebreaking and theft. 3% abusive language and assault and 1% culpable homicide. The maximum detention period is 3 years for all cases.

124. For the past 3 years, out of 25 girls, 90% were detained for theft, 5% for concealment of birth and 5% for assault:

- (a) Boys aged: 11 to 15 years: 65% 15 to 17 30% 18–21 years 5 %;
- (b) Boys by district Maseru 55% , Leribe 22% , Mhale's Hoek Mafeteng 13% Berea 6 % Botha Buthe 2% , Mokhotlong 1%, Qutha's Nek 1 %;
- (c) Girls by District; 90 % Maseru, 5% Mhale's Hoek, 5% Leribe;
- (d) Detainees by socio-economic status; 90 % poor and dysfunctional families, 5% come from functional families but are truant. 5% are either orphaned or raised by a single parent.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19

125. The State Party through the office of Child protection Coordination incorporates child participation activities; (Children's Parliament and Dialogues) in the annual planning, budgeting and reporting. Through the child protection participation platforms, the State Party allows children to contribute to the development of legal and policy frameworks aligned with the SDGs and Human Rights approach.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20

126. Please refer to annex table.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 21

127. Priority Areas for the implementation of the Convention:

- (a) Addressing VAC particularly Sexual abuse cases;
- (b) Development of programs to promote of positive parenting and discipline;
- (c) Promotion of MHPSS initiatives;
- (d) Protection of Children in cyber space;
- (e) Addressing poverty caused by climate change and other factors;
- (f) Development of programmes targeting children in the streets.