

During the year under review, the country saw a relatively calm period, notwithstanding moderate political tension before and after the general elections held in February 2007. As in the past years, the election results were contested by the main opposition political parties, resulting in a series of lawsuits and protests against the government.

The UN system played the role of a neutral and honest broker, and promoted a cause for peace and security in the country. Led by the Office of the Resident Coordinator, and with assistance from DPA and BCPR, the Country Team responded to the Government's requests to facilitate dialogue among the parties. With our support, the SADC mediation missions to Lesotho were funded, and capacity building activities for the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), political parties and NGOs were also implemented. Our efforts have helped bring the government, the IEC and the opposition parties to the negotiating table to discuss their disagreements.

However, the issues have not yet been fully resolved, but the UN system remains on call for any further steps to maintain peace and security in the country.

Summary on progress towards UNDAF outcomes

Lesotho UNDAF will start in 2008 and end in 2012.

Summary on progress in UN Reform

i. Alignment with the National Development Process

The Country Team embraced the call to accelerate reform at country level. The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (2008-2012), Country Programme Documents (CPDs) and Country Programme Action Plans (CPAPs) were prepared and signed as essential elements of the Common Country Programming Process (CCPP). Efforts were made to engage the Government and development partners in strategic discussions to plan and prioritise UN Lesotho's support to the national development goals within the next five-year programme cycle. The UNDAF, CPDs and CPAPs will serve a useful purpose of enhancing greater impact of the UN system's operations on the lives of the people of Lesotho.

ii. Support to the Preparation of MDG-based National Development Strategies

The UN system made efforts to fulfil its mandate to support operational activities for development, and to support the country's progress towards the attainment of the MDGs. During the year under review, technical and financial resources were mobilised to help the Government formulate national policies, strategic plans and legislative frameworks in the areas of: AIDS, Child Protection, Food Security, Gender Equality, and Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVCs). The UN system rallied behind the enactment and/or operationalisation of key legislative frameworks, including: the "Child Protection and Welfare Bill", the "Legal Capacity of Married Persons" Act and the AIDS Bill.

We also took part in the education and health sector development and review processes. The UN system co-chaired the Education Partners' Forum, and, in the process, helped the Government mobilise funding in the amount of \$7.2 million from the Fast Track Initiative. The UN's contribution to the Free Primary Education policy was made through, inter alia, provision of primary school meals, take-home rations for OVCs and school gardens.

In addition, the UN proposed innovative options to accelerate progress towards the attainment of health-related MDGs, as well as implementation of various other health sector interventions. This included advocacy for resource mobilisation for the national health strategic plan. Worthy of note, Your Excellency, is the national "Know Your [HIV] Status" Campaign and the first national "Roadmap to Reduce Maternal and Neo-Natal Morbidity and Mortality".

Through these efforts, the UN system highlighted scenarios regarding the country's progress in various MDG areas. However, there is still need to encourage a more rigorous action by all relevant role players to urgently scale-up their collective actions, and by so doing, make a greater contribution to the country's development agenda.

iii. Other Major Highlights in UN Coordination

Increased Efforts against HIV

HIV and AIDS continue to be the number one cause of all illnesses and deaths in Lesotho, and the most serious threat to the country's socioeconomic development. At 23.2 percent infection rate, Lesotho is ranked third among the countries most

severely hit by the pandemic (UNAIDS 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic).

In light of this, and with a view to promoting a coherent and effective UN action in support to the national response to HIV, the Joint UN Team on AIDS was formed in July 2007. The structure and functioning of the Team was guided by the 2005 recommendations of the Global Task Team on AIDS. With support from the South Africa-based Regional Support Team (RST), the Team developed a unified work plan and prepared a management framework, drawing on the comparative strengths of the UN personnel available in the country.

Through this Team, the UN system was able to work with the Government and sections of national leadership to strengthen the national capacity to respond to the pandemic. Specific activities were implemented to strengthen governance mechanisms and scale up advocacy, prevention, and care and support to People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). Among other things, the Team supported: (1) joint review of the national response to HIV and AIDS; (2) development of the National AIDS Policy and Strategic Plan, and; (3) establishment of a unified HIV and AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation System.

It is worth noting that the Government demonstrated unparalleled determination to turn the tide against the pandemic. During the year 2007, the "Know Your [HIV] Status" (KYS) campaign was intensified. Through UN system's support to campaign, approximately 3,600 community health workers and people living with HIV & AIDS were trained on HIV Testing and Counselling. By the end of the year, 271,927 people, constituting 21% of the population, knew their HIV status. A study, piloted in two districts, resulted in over 100% of the targeted people testing for HIV.

A lesson learned from this initiative is that, when the UN pools its resources and works as one, the results are phenomenal. The challenge that remains, though, is mobilization of additional resources to make everybody in the population get an HIV test.

HIV and AIDS in the UN Workplace

In a bid to increase staff awareness on UN policy dimensions of HIV and AIDS in the workplace, the Country Team supported implementation of the UN HIV and AIDS Learning Strategy. The "HIV and AIDS Learning Team" was reconstituted to implement the workplace activities. Information, education and communication materials were prepared and shared with staff.

Response to the Drought and Food Crisis

Following the Government's "Declaration on the Drought Crisis", announced on 9th July 2007, the UN system launched an appeal for assistance to Lesotho for approximately US\$ 22.8 million. We were able to mobilise a total of \$21 million from CERF and the following donors: AfDB, Austria, DfID, ECHO, France, Germany, Japan, Turkey and USA.

In addition, the UN is providing life-saving emergency assistance to about 260,000 affected households (65% of households requiring food aid) until the next harvest in April/May 2008. Livelihood support was also provided to the drought-affected farming households, in the form of relief food assistance, supplementary feeding to pregnant and nursing mothers, undernourished children under the age of five (including other vulnerable groups), and therapeutic and school feeding. In a bid to facilitate more sustained food security, the UN ensured that over 35,000 vulnerable farming households received quality seeds, fertiliser, agricultural tools and tillage services worth over \$3.6 million through input trade fairs.

The UN system response to the health aspects of the crisis, focused on: prevention and treatment of malnutrition, clinical management of water related diseases, provision of primary health care services, and; provision of delivery kits and training in Emergency Obstetric Care.

In our response, we noted the crucial interplay between malnutrition and disease, and between malnutrition and infant/child mortality in Lesotho. Emergency health kits were procured and distributed in respect of approximately 400,000 people in the southern districts of the country. Countrywide training of health workers was also conducted in several areas, including: Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response, Management of Severe Malnutrition, Provision of Primary Health Care Package and on Severe, Moderate and Mild Malnutrition. Lastly, Emergency Obstetric Care equipment was provided to facilitate safe and clean delivery in 26 health facilities.

UN's Preparedness and Response to Emergencies and Disasters

During the year 2007, the UN system embraced the significance of preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters. Support was, therefore, provided to the Government to build national capacity for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and for Avian and Human Influenza (AHI). The Office of the Resident Coordinator used the Disaster Management Authority as a conduit to facilitate preparation of a Capacity Needs Assessment and a National Action Plan for DRR.

In tandem with this, support was provided to the strengthening of the Government's capacity to plan and prepare for an AHI outbreak. With UN system's support, the first National Contingency Plan on AHI was prepared. Financial resources were provided through the UN's own funds and the Government of Japan to intensify information, education and communication activities. Materials and supplies were also provided to survey and diagnose infection with the H5N1 virus.

In August 2007, the UN system conducted a simulation to test the UN's preparedness for an AHI outbreak. The UN's Contingency Plan was updated in order to prioritise measures to be taken using the current staffing resources, to minimise the impact of the emergency on the UN's day-to-day operations.

Joint Programming and the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers

The Resident Coordinator system promoted the notion of "One UN" and made every effort to discourage individual and disjointed agency-based programme operations. I am delighted to inform you that several joint programmes and projects were developed between and among the various UN agencies. These include:

- A joint FAO-UNICEF-WFP Programme on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children; •A joint UNDP-ILO Programme on Youth

Employment; •A joint FAO-WFP Programme to Implement the Food Security Policy & Action Plan; •A joint UN Programme on Greater Involvement and empowerment of PLWHA; and, •A joint UNDP-GEF-World Bank-Government of Lesotho Renewable Energy Programme;

Advocacy and training on "Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers" (HACT) was conducted for the UN's operations managers and staff alongside the UNDAF orientation sessions. As part of advocacy for the implementation of HACT, the in-house training team (led by UNDP and UNICEF) is planning joint training sessions for UN and Government staff which will be conducted during the first quarter of 2008.

Involvement of Non-Resident UN Agencies

In all UN system's undertakings, the Resident Coordinator system promoted the notion of "One UN" and made an effort to discourage individual and disjointed programme operations. Several joint programmes and projects were developed between and among the agencies. Strategic partnerships were formed with non-resident UN Agencies (NRAs), including: ILO, OCHA, UNAIDS, UNESCO and UNODC, to identify areas for joint programming, and explore more opportunities for resource mobilisation. Some Agencies collaborated with ILO and UNESCO on programmes and projects on: Youth and Employment, and AIDS and Education, respectively. Currently, the Country Team is exploring ways to collaborate more strongly with the UNESCO Regional Office in other key areas, including: Communication, Culture Education, HIV and AIDS, and Tourism.

Key aspects of the proposed 2008 workplan

The Country Team looks to the year 2008 with a reinvigorated sense to help the country take aim at its main development challenges. The Team will, thus, work through its interagency coordination mechanisms to make even greater progress in 2008.

The Office of the Resident Coordinator will engage the Government and development partners in dialogue to explore ways of strengthening the Government's institutional capacity for aid coordination. Plans will be made to encourage the Government live up to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Alongside this, the UN will rally behind implementation of (and reporting on) other treaties and conventions that Lesotho is party to, including those on AIDS and Human Rights.

The UN's role in the fight against the triple threat (of HIV, food insecurity and weak capacity for governance) remains relevant in 2008. The Country Team will, therefore, continue to rally behind multi-sector efforts towards HIV Testing and Counselling within the context of the Know Your Status campaign. Coordination mechanisms and policy dimensions of the response to the pandemic will also be considered. Furthermore, support will be provided to other thematic areas, including: Gender Equality, Maternal and Neo-natal Morbidity and Mortality, Conflict Prevention and Food Security.

In a bid to facilitate new and improved management of cash transfers, and, in the process, enhance greater accountability in the use of funds, the Country Team will accelerate implementation of the Work Plan on "Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers" (HACT) in 2008. Among other things, macro and micro assessments will be conducted, and advocacy and training sessions will be held for UN staff, Government and NGO partners. In the process, efforts will be made to ensure increased ownership and utilisation of the new approach by the Government and other partners.

The Country Team will continue to strengthen the country's capacity to coordinate and manage disasters, based on the principles of the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action. Plans are underway to mobilise support to finalise the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Recommendations

In order for the UN Country Team to realise the principles enshrined in the Delivering as One Report, plans ought to be made at headquarter level to harmonise operations and systems used by the ExCom and Specialised Agencies. This will facilitate full implementation of the joint office initiative, as well as the HACT processes.