



Sectoral Integration of Biodiversity in Lesotho

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Introduction

Lesotho reported¹ that all sectors of the economy in Lesotho derive their mandate on environment from the Constitution of Lesotho, section 36, which states that:

Lesotho shall adopt policies designed to protect and enhance the natural and cultural environment of Lesotho for the benefit of both present and future generations and shall endeavour to ensure to all citizens a sound and safe environment adequate for their health and well-being.

The constitution is derived from a premise that all life forms within a given environmental space are fundamentally supported by the diversity of the biological components. Our existence as people today depends on the well being of the individuals as well as collective existence(health, food, education) and the ability to develop into the future, supported by the diversity, should not be constraint by our current interactions with the environment on which the diversity exists. Therefore all sectoral policies' development ought to take cognizance of this fact to facilitate sustainable development.

In the year 2000, Lesotho took a policy decision to formulate a vision to provide for a long-term perspective within which short to medium term plans could be formulated. To eco this aspiration, so well encapsulated by the commitment in Constitution, the 2020 Vision, in its guiding principle on environmental conservation advocates for empowerment of Basotho to design and manage biodiversity conservation projects relevant to their own communities. It goes on to state that: *Environmental Education will be integrated at all levels of learning. There will be Institutional and Legal frameworks to promote and protect healthy and sustainable environment. Every development in the country will be subjected to an intensive environmental impact assessment to gauge its environmental friendliness.*

The quest for alignment to sound environmental management, in the design of sectoral policy developments, has resulted in the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, as a key document from which to bounce all initiatives, in order to assess compliance to the achievement of the desired state. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2004 -2007) identified eight priority areas and two critical cross-cutting issues, and environment features amongst these priority areas, a clear indication of the desire to systematically address environmental challenges. The underlying notion in support of the poverty reduction strategy is to engage in multi-sectoral approaches in all production activities to minimize danger to biodiversity, as environmental issues cut across various sectors. Commitment to specific strategies targeted at pro-poor, during implementation of the PRS period to ensure improved environmental management include: a) *Promotion of environmental conservation for improved productivity, by targeting committed families to be taught to harness water resources, increase ground cover and incorporate conservation and agro-forestry techniques into production;* b) *Strengthen management of water, solid waste and pollution;* c) *Strengthen curriculum and media*

¹ Lesotho (2009). Fourth National Report on Implementation of Convention on Biological Diversity, December 2009, 122 pp.

programs on environmental education; d) Reduce biodiversity loss by implementing the Maloti-Drakensberg Trans-Frontier Park, maintaining existing reserves and moving towards the establishment of nature reserves and protected areas; e) Address range management issues by establishing and/or revitalizing grazing associations in collaboration with new local government authorities; and f) Improve the legal, policy and institutional framework, giving particular attention to the capacity of the National Environment Secretariat and implementation of the Environment Act 2001, which has now been revised to Environment Act 2008.

The demonstration of achievement on the objectives of the Convention is made through the sector policies selected according to their relative significance on environment.

The National Forestry Policy, 2008

Its opening statement is rooted in the national policies and goals to reduce poverty, secure livelihoods, protect the environment of Lesotho and enhance participation of marginalized groups through inter alia:

- *Increase tree cover on land area (indigenous & exotic) through engagement with individual, groups and private holdings.*
- *Sensitization and education of the public on the values, purpose and benefits of forestry.*
- *Promote the use of trees in support of conservation and production of both arable agriculture and rangelands*

This is a far reaching document of national importance, relating to all sectors of the economy where trees and forestry could play a part. Forestry has for a long period been an integral component of the Ministry of Agriculture. It was upgraded to the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation in the year 2003. This step has facilitated diversification of strategies to advance the forestry concept. Under the Forestry Policy, the Ministry implements a number of programs such as the Social Forestry Program, which encourages establishment of individual tree nurseries, from which government in turn procures seedlings for wider application of the Community Woodlots. To facilitate implementation of the Community Woodlot program, the local authorities (Community Councils) through technical assistance of the Land use planning function, identify areas appropriate for woodlots establishment. In order to establish a woodlot, community members are mobilized in rosters and provided necessary skills to undertake various steps of tree planting and management. Management of woodlots (regulates grazing and harvesting of tree and other economically important plants) provides tremendous opportunity by arresting erosion and ensuring adequate soil cover, (subject to appropriate species as well as right spacing), providing canopy for re-establishment of biodiversity, as seen in figure 8 below.

Water and Sanitation Policy, 2007

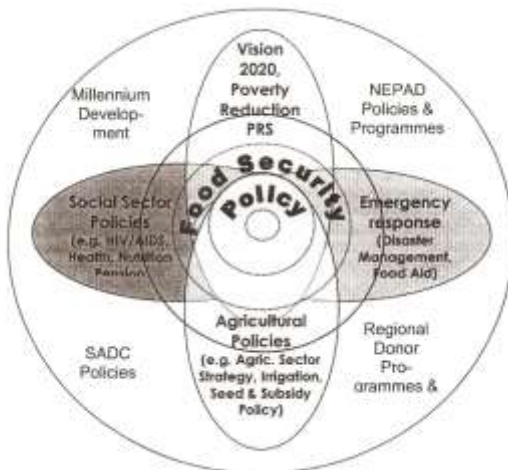
The document development approach integrates the National Vision 2020, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Millennium Development Goals and other related policies such as Decentralization, Energy, Environment, Food Security, Gender, Forestry and Land Reclamation, HIV/AIDS, Industrialization and Science and Technology. It recognizes control of land degradation, sound rangeland management practices, wetlands conservation, pollution and invasive alien species control as its key pillars in the

adoption of an integrated catchment management strategy, in order to protect water resources for satisfaction of present needs as well as those of future generations. As a starting point, the Department of Water Affairs has embarked on “the Orange-Senqu Water Sources ‘Sponges’ Project” the main objectives of which are to 1) Establish an accurate information on the extent and state of Wetlands for decision making on wetlands management. This will result in development of an appropriate Action Plan for the sustainable management of wetlands.

Lesotho Food Security Policy, 2005

The policy document is derived from policies and programs aligned to national and International targets and goals to which Lesotho is committed. The core of many of the strategies, policies and programs are portrayed in the lens in figure 1 below, both at the local and international level, is environmental conservation and management.

Figure 1: Relationship between the Food Security Policy and other policies, strategies and programs using a 'food security lens'.



Sourced from Lesotho Food Security Policy and Strategic Guidelines, April 2005.

The document recognizes inextricable cause and effect linkages of poverty to a number of issues of interest to Lesotho Government, including *'inherently fragile natural environment and climatic variability and the effect of this on livelihoods'* and therefore a need to adopt measures in food security that will prevent further marginalization of the natural environment.

Agriculture and Food Security as a sector implements various strategies including the 'Seeds and Field Inputs ('Neheletse - refers to a system where initial group is given inputs and they are supposed to pass some to next group until everybody has had some start up inducements) Program. The program is based on traditional '*Mafisa*' principle (loan of livestock) for short cycle items (sheep, goats, ducks, fish, seedlings, crop seeds, medicinal plants, fodder) with modest capital outlay. The first batch recipients are identified by community members, as well as subsequent beneficiaries to whom the progeny is passed. The program promotes self-reliance and sharing. Targeting the whole community profile of

individuals and groups including women, youth, vulnerable groups and also aims to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The impact on biodiversity in the implementation of the above is indirect, as it aims to provide, through affordable means, the basic elements for sustaining livelihoods, which could have otherwise been sourced from the natural environment. By reducing pressure in the wild, there is opportunity for recuperation of the natural environment.

Energy Policy for the Kingdom of Lesotho (Draft)

The document has incorporated the statement of intent *“The Energy resources will be used in such a way that international, regional and local environmental agreements and protocols are observed”*. The policy statement requires further elaboration into strategies to be adopted to facilitate realization of the intent.

Transport Sector Policy, 2006

The document development is anchored in the National Vision 2020, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Millennium Development Goals and other related policies. Its commitment is reflected in the Transport Sector Environmental Policy and Action Plan – EPAP, as the statement of intent for:

- *Improvement of planning and decision-making processes regarding environmental and social dimensions of the transport sector activities and services.*
- *Provision of guidance in promoting ecologically sustainable transport.*
- *Management and mitigation of key biophysical and socio-economic impacts of the transport sector activities.*
- *Raising awareness by training and otherwise towards mainstreaming environmental and social safeguards.*
- *Building functional relationships with Transport Sector Partners, the community and the allied transport industries.*

The statement principles is given effect through development of a well staffed and equipped Environmental and Social Monitoring section under the Planning Unit, to ensure efficient implementation and updating of the Environmental Policy and Action Plan. The core of the Transport sector activities is infrastructure development, for which environmental compliance is attained through Environmental Impact Assessment – EIA and implementation of mitigation through Environmental Management Plans – EMP under all infrastructure developments. The Planning Section, which is now reinforced with the Environment Unit, ensures this compliance.

Environmental Education Strategy towards 2014: A Strategic Plan for Education for Sustainable Development in Lesotho (2009)

This document is informed by the national policy frameworks such as the National Environmental Policy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, National Vision 2020 as well as international environmental protocols and intergovernmental agreement including Agenda 21. Its approach is establishment of baseline on environmental education initiatives, analysis of that and proposal of Environmental Education and Strategy Implementation Plan that sets the vision attainment to the minimum of 2014. The

understanding is that its roll out in production of awareness and education materials will include re-orientation of school curricula to embrace sound environmental conservation across all social cadres.

Lesotho Electricity Company: Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality (SHEQ) Management System

The Company is committed to conducting business in compliance with safety and health of workers, public and the environment. The commitment is manifested in the establishment of a Risk Management Department with full-time environment officer and allocation of resources for surveillance, control and management of risks to ensure compliance to environmental requirements. Implementation is undertaken through Risk Committees which under environment focus on the following:

- Incidences of spillage;
- Incidents of leaking transformers;
- Quantities of different types of waste;
- Ratio of EIAs/EMPs to projects;
- EMP compliance levels by projects.
- Rehabilitation of dongas.
- Tree planting programme.

Gender and Development Policy

The Policy advocates for gender sensitive environmental strategies, through designs and implementation of environmentally sound and sustainable resource management mechanisms, in order to re-orientate the traditional perspective that marginalized other groups.

Mechanisms for Integration of Biodiversity into Sectoral Strategies

The key government documents (National Constitution, Vision 2020, and Poverty Reduction Strategy) make it abundantly clear that biodiversity conservation is central, or integral to development of sectoral policies. It is further indicated in many of the sector policies that environmental conservation is cross-cutting and has to be integrated as far as possible in programs. To ensure integration into sectoral strategies, one process has been the passing of legislation (the Environment Act 2008), which ensures that all programs and projects whose activities have a notable bearing on environment have to be cleared through the 'Environmental Impact Assessment' process. This step ensures uniformity in approaching environment in the least. But it is a sharp reminder to all stakeholders to be vigilant on environmental concerns in their activities. The second step has been incorporation of environmental functions within the government ministries, through establishment of Environmental Units. The Units' staff skills were enhanced and sharpened through a menu of course (Danced, Capacity building in Environmental Management in Lesotho Project Document June 1998) in order to prepare them for the onerous challenge of re-orientation of sector strategies, programs and projects, to integrate environmental compliance in line with EIA guidelines. The National Capacity Self-Assessment Project (2006) was specifically undertaken to identify (per Convention) priority issues, cross-cutting issues,

opportunities and synergies across the sectors including the NGOs, then assessment of capacity to deal with all identified issues was made, and an appropriate action plan was developed.

Mainstreaming Biodiversity through Ecosystem Approach

Ecosystem Approach as a concept is marginally applied. It is a concept that is underpinned by the need to understand the importance of a component and its functional relationships with the other ecosystem components. This approach advocates for application of measures in a holistic manner, with an understanding that a component functioning is inextricably linked to, works to support and is supported by smooth functioning of other components. The approach is appreciated and endorsed at sectoral level. Its application however, still remains a challenge. The initial inroads on its application are at project level and have not as yet penetrated, or adapted into sectoral strategies. The Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Project – MDTP pioneered this approach by undertaking ‘Spatial Assessment of Biodiversity Priorities’ in the Lesotho highlands, as an input into a more comprehensive integrated conservation and development bioregional zoning plan, that would integrate socioeconomic, tourism, cultural/archaeological, and infrastructure constraints and opportunities. Citation of the establishment of the Joint Management Plan and implementing committee for the Sehlabathebe National Park – SNP and Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park – UDP, to manage otherwise one ecosystem with a political boundary in the middle is a closer example to ecosystem approach.