

Skillshare Africa's programme in southern Africa  
Lesotho Country Plan 1999-2004



*The LNCW (Lesotho National Council of Women) has worked in partnership with Skillshare Africa to help women achieve economic independence by supporting their efforts to become self-employed.*



**Statement of purpose:** Skillshare Africa works for sustainable development in partnership with the people and communities of southern Africa. We do this by sharing and developing skills, facilitating organisational effectiveness, and supporting organisational growth.

#### Values

We have identified overall values which will guide our work.

Skillshare Africa:

- recognises the right of people and communities to determine and develop their own future.
- is committed to organisational and individual development.
- believes working in partnership is central to effective economic and social development.

#### Strategic objectives

We have identified five key strategic objectives:

- to assist the reduction of poverty, improve living conditions and create long-term sustainable livelihoods through support for the development process both regionally and in each country where Skillshare Africa operates.
- to develop broad-based partnerships with organisations in southern Africa, working jointly with them to identify their needs in relation to skills and organisational development.
- to identify varied and innovative ways in which the needs of partner organisations can be met within the context of the evolving needs of the region, drawing on and learning from examples of good programme practice.
- to widen understanding and awareness of the importance of international development work through the building of a broader constituency.
- to develop and diversify our resource base, in terms of organisational, human and financial resources, leading to an enhancement of our activities.

Skillshare Africa has developed a new Corporate Strategy setting out our statement of purpose, values and strategic objectives for the five-year period 1999-2004.

At the same time, individual Country Plans are being developed for Skillshare Africa's programmes in each of the countries we work with in southern Africa.

These plans interpret our broader corporate objectives as more specific programme strategic objectives that identify the contribution we will be making in those countries.

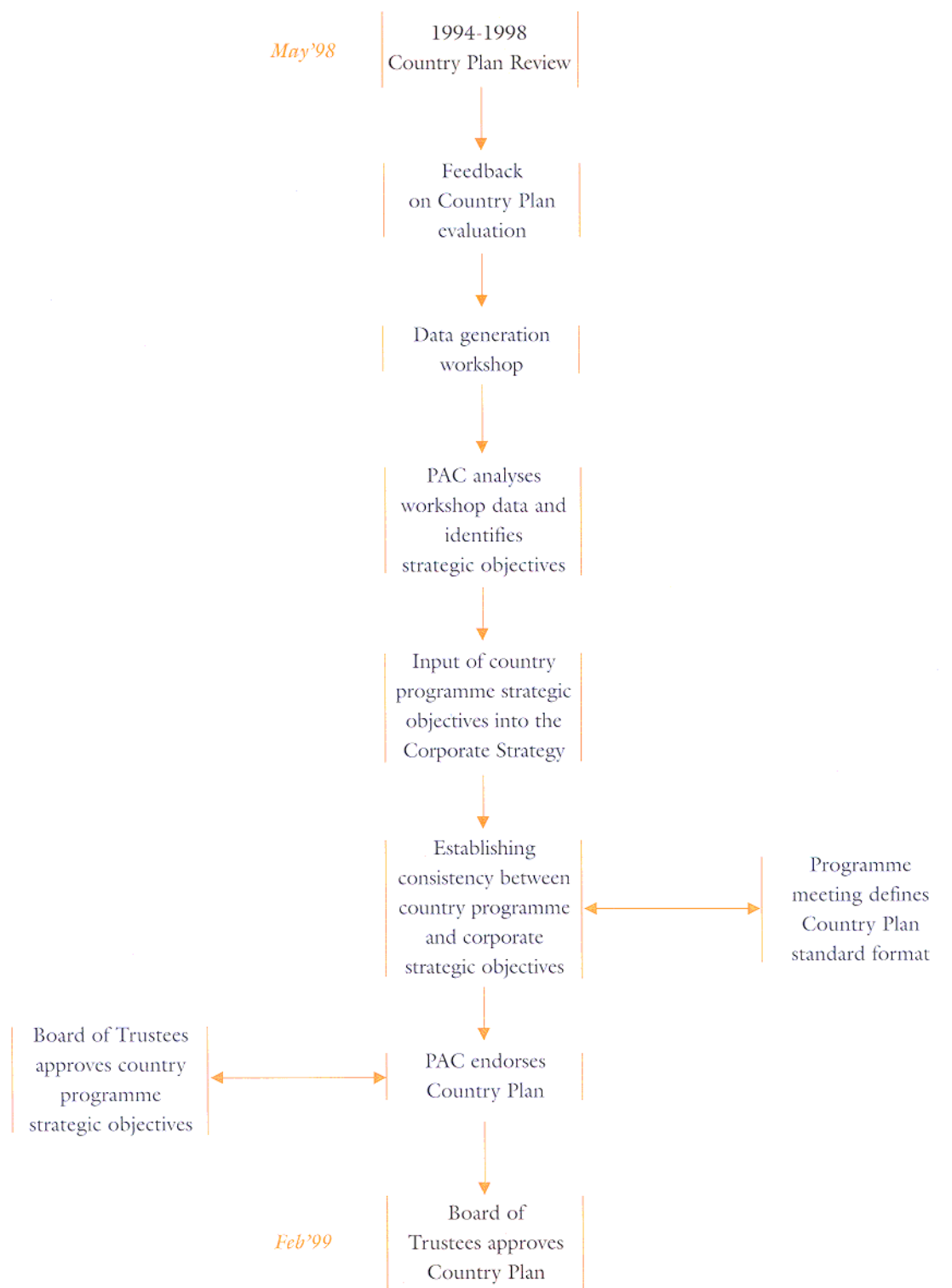
Each plan also puts the particular development needs of that country in context, as well as giving background information to Skillshare Africa's involvement.

The development of the new Country Plans has been a process of review and consultation involving the participation of people connected to Skillshare Africa both internally and externally in each country.

Participants have included Skillshare Africa's Country Office staff, Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) members drawn from the local community, programme partners and serving development workers.



# Lesotho Country Plan Development Process



## Country context

### *The human development challenges facing Lesotho*

Lesotho has only recently experienced multi-party democracy. For many years following independence in 1966, political activity by opposition parties was forbidden, and only since the 1993 election has the country had a democratically-elected government. However, the democratic process in Lesotho is still in its early stages, as was shown by the social unrest which occurred in September 1998 and brought the country to a standstill.

The consolidation of democracy in Lesotho for the benefit of all people and communities has now become a prime development objective. This includes the empowerment of women, young people and other disadvantaged groups in order to enable them to participate fully in the development of society. Building the capacity of organisations that work to benefit the disadvantaged is therefore a priority, especially regarding the provision of training and employment opportunities.

The labour market in Lesotho is characterised by an inherent shortage of appropriate technical, vocational, administrative and managerial skills. This has been further compounded by a depressed

economy that is unable to meet the job needs of emerging skilled workers, as well as by the continuing exodus of skilled labour, especially with South Africa now awarding permanent residency to foreign workers.

The impact of the acute skills shortage is felt in all sectors of Lesotho's economy, and by the majority of employers, including the government. This problem represents one of the most difficult challenges facing policy-makers in the country today.

In his 1998 budget speech, Lesotho's Minister of Finance identified the country's major economic problems as: high unemployment, a rising labour force, low productivity in the key agricultural sector, poor public sector management, poor delivery of utility services, and the poor performance of financial/banking systems. Almost all of these problems are associated with the shortage of skilled labour.

The government now sees investment in human resources as fundamental in addressing the country's economic problems. The extent of Lesotho's economic development has been influenced, to a considerable degree, by the country's geography. Much of the land is rugged and mountainous which has, for example, restricted development of the transport network. Lesotho is also completely surrounded by South Africa and, as a result, the country's economic dependence on South Africa is considerable and manifests itself in almost all sectors of the economy.

In 1995, approximately half of Lesotho's exports went into the 'customs area' which is dominated by South Africa, while more than 80% of imports into Lesotho originated from South Africa.

However, Lesotho's most significant export to South Africa is labour. The majority of Lesotho's population lives in the rural areas where, with limited land suitable for farming (only 9% of the country's total land area is arable), there are few job opportunities. As a result, the rural population has had little choice but to go in search of work elsewhere and, for many years, the migration of labour from Lesotho to South Africa has been a chronic pattern.

This began to change though in the early 1990s. Mining, and in particular gold mining, is the largest sector of the South African economy and has been the main employer of migrant labour from Lesotho. However, due to the steady decline of the gold industry over recent years, the number of retrenched mineworkers returning home to Lesotho has steadily increased. This has led to a dramatic increase in Lesotho's unemployment rate, which is now at about 40%. The number of unemployed has been further swelled by an estimated 25,000 young people each year who are unable to find work on entering the job market.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (1997), Lesotho ranks 137th out of 174 countries and, in terms of per capita gross domestic product, is rated as a 'low-income' country. In response, the government's vision is to develop a mixed economy characterised by government participation in essential services and minimum intervention in the productive sectors of the economy. This vision is guided by a strong commitment to achieve sustainable human development which will enable the people of Lesotho to enjoy longer, healthier and more productive lives.

In general terms, the government's strategy involves:

- maintaining macro-economic stability.
- creating domestic employment in all sectors of the economy.
- improving and expanding technical and vocational education.
- promoting early childhood development.

- integrating the disabled and other marginalised groups into the mainstream of the economy and society.
- encouraging private sector development.
- supporting Basotho entrepreneurs in all sectors of the economy.
- continuing with the privatisation drive of state-owned enterprises and the transfer of ownership to the private sector.

More specifically, according to Lesotho's Sixth National Development Plan (1996/97-1998/99), the main targets for achieving sustainable human development by the year 2000 included:

- increasing life expectancy for all Basotho people from 54 to 60 years.
- reducing infant mortality from 85 to 70 per 1,000 live births, and child mortality from 60 to 30 per 1,000 live births.
- reducing maternal mortality from 282 to 100 per 100,000 live births.
- increasing access to safe drinking water from 58% of all households to total coverage of the country (by 2002).
- increasing provision of sanitation from 35 to 52% of all rural households.

- increasing the cure rate for tuberculosis (TB) from 50 to 80%, reducing the incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) by 82% and the spread rate of HIV/AIDS by 30%, and reducing diarrhoeal diseases among children under five by 70%.
- improving adult literacy in order to benefit family health and nutrition, and to provide literacy and numeracy skills for disadvantaged groups.
- improving learning conditions in primary schools, so that 65% of all children complete a primary school education.

It is within this context that Skillshare Africa's country programme in Lesotho has developed.

## **Background to Skillshare Africa in Lesotho**

Skillshare Africa has been working in southern Africa in support of sustainable development since 1990, having grown from the overseas programme of International Voluntary Service (IVS), an organisation whose involvement in long-term development commenced in the 1960s.

Skillshare Africa currently works in six countries in southern Africa, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland.

In Lesotho, Skillshare Africa has been involved largely with skills development through the placement of development workers with both government and non-government institutions. There have been two main strands to the programme: technical and vocational education and training; and engineering - civil, water and sanitation. In the last five years, Skillshare Africa has placed a total of 68 development workers with partner organisations in Lesotho, half of them with vocational training institutions and 25% in the engineering sector.

During the last five years, we have supported technical and vocational training institutions in Leribe, Maseru, Quthing and Thaba-Tseka. In total, 34 development workers have been placed with these institutions, working alongside Basotho colleagues in areas such as plumbing, bricklaying and plastering, carpentry, metalwork, motor-mechanics, machine-fitting, home economics, textiles, sewing, weaving and dressmaking.

In 1998, Skillshare Africa formed a new partnership with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Division (TVETD), part of the Ministry of Education, in support of a major five-year programme aimed at developing technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills throughout the population. The goal is to contribute to poverty alleviation by improving people's self-employment prospects, and to help build the skilled workforce needed for economic growth.

As well as establishing new development partnerships, Skillshare Africa has looked to build on the strengths of long-term partnerships.

Another important aspect of Skillshare Africa's approach is the belief that working together with the people of Lesotho in the development process is vital if the long-term development goals of the country are to be achieved.

## **Skillshare Africa's country programme strategic objectives**

### *General*

Skillshare Africa is committed to making a meaningful contribution to the sustainable development of Lesotho's human resource base. We recognise the country's need for improved technical, vocational, administrative and managerial skills in all sectors of the economy in supporting the government's vision for economic development.

Skillshare Africa's programme will be geared towards improving living conditions for the poor and disadvantaged in society. We will work to strengthen our programme partners, and to assist in efforts to improve the domestic job market and create diverse employment opportunities.

Skillshare Africa will also assist in the development of infrastructure, which we recognise as an essential 'building block' for accelerated national economic development. We will also subscribe to the upholding of people's basic right to proper health care and education, especially children and the disadvantaged.



### *Empowerment of disadvantaged groups*

Disadvantaged groups form a large part of Lesotho's population, and include women, young people, the disabled, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The situation is more acute in rural areas where limited access to education and health facilities and a lack of equal opportunities discriminate against the already disadvantaged sections of society.

Legally, women are considered minors in Lesotho. They therefore lack the social and economic power they need to create a better life for themselves and their children, especially if they are also poor and uneducated.

Many women are forced by circumstances to become solely responsible for the upkeep of their household. For example, many husbands are always away working in South Africa under the migrant labour system. However, in their husband's absence, they are left without the necessary decision-making powers to run their own lives. At the same time, many women do not receive the expected financial support from husbands who are away working in South Africa, and are unable to pay for their children's education. These children then grow up as marginalised youth, with no prospects for a productive future, in a society that lacks comprehensive development programmes that cater for young people.

Furthermore, children with a disability, be it mental or physical, face discrimination and possible abandonment by their families. There is still a stigma in Lesotho attached to disabled children, and a woman is likely to be rejected by her husband and his family if she bears a disabled child. In addition, Lesotho society does not yet have well-developed support systems to help people with disabilities and their families.

A number of non-government organisations (NGOs) have now been established to address the needs of people with disabilities. These organisations are still in the early stages of development and lack adequate funding but, with appropriate support, can play a pivotal role in advancing basic human rights and living conditions for the disabled. In recent years, Skillshare Africa has begun looking at ways of assisting organisations and supporting programmes which work for the empowerment of the disabled.

During the next five years we will:

- *promote the successful integration of disabled and marginalised children and young people into mainstream society by helping improve their access to basic care and education.*
- *support the empowerment of disadvantaged groups by assisting NGOs involved in education and awareness-raising programmes concerning the rights of the disadvantaged.*
- *help build the capacity of NGOs working with disadvantaged groups in respect to advocacy issues.*
- *assist in the development and delivery of civic education, skills development, and gender and HIV/AIDS awareness programmes for young people.*

### *Education, training and employment*

Lesotho is a country with few natural resources, depending mostly on livestock, textiles, construction (i.e. the Highlands Water Project, involving the export of water to South Africa), food and drink production, and remittances paid by South African mining companies. There is little industrial development and employment opportunities in the formal sectors of the economy are few.



To help improve people's prospects for self-employment, the government's Technical and Vocational Education and Training Division (TVETD) has established a programme for poverty alleviation through skills development and promotion of small business 'micro-enterprises'.

This programme is fully supported by Skillshare Africa and will:

- strengthen capacity for supporting micro-enterprise development.
- increase the capacity of technical teacher-training and business-training programmes to help provide students with the skills needed to develop new micro-enterprise activities.
- establish funding mechanisms to support the starting up of new business activities and to provide ongoing support for these mechanisms.
- enhance vocational training activities by supporting pre-vocational training in districts where illiteracy and poverty rates are higher than elsewhere in the country.

Skillshare Africa is supporting the TVETD initiative by assisting with skills development and capacity building at three levels: within TVETD itself, at the National Teacher Training College, and at technical and vocational training institutions across the country.

During the next five years we will:

- *support the government's Technical and Vocational Education and Training Division (TVETD) and technical and vocational training institutions in improving the delivery of skills development to trainees.*
- *assist the TVETD in improving the delivery of business skills training in order to enhance self-employment prospects for trainees.*
- *increase self-employment opportunities for women and for retrenched mineworkers and their families by assisting the TVETD and other organisations in providing technical and vocational skills training to these groups.*
- *improve the economic viability of small to medium business enterprises by assisting in the delivery of business and entrepreneurial skills training programmes by government institutions and NGOs.*
- *expand the market for small to medium business enterprises by assisting in the delivery of marketing skills training programmes by government institutions and NGOs.*

#### *Rural development*

Sustainable human development is the cornerstone of the Lesotho government's economic and social development strategy for the new millennium, particularly in rural

areas. This is based on seeing the principal aim of development as to create an enabling environment in which all people have access to adequate health care, education and employment opportunities, and the resources and services needed to accommodate an acceptable standard of living.

Specifically, rural development priorities in Lesotho include poverty alleviation, road development, and water and sanitation.

*Poverty alleviation* - According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (1997), nearly half of all households in Lesotho are classified as poor, and more than a quarter are classified as living in extreme poverty. Strikingly, it is estimated that 90% of the poor live in the rural districts of Thaba-Tseka, Mokhotlong and Qachas Nek.

As a result, the government is focusing on the alleviation of rural poverty, and therefore unemployment in rural areas, as a major development priority. A prime objective is seen as improving people's prospects for employment, especially self-employment, through skills training and support for income-generation enterprises. In this way, the aim is to give people a real chance to work towards an improved standard of living for themselves and their families.

*Road development* - The government's overall policy is to have a road network that is capable of supporting national economic activities, connects all district towns, and provides better access for isolated rural communities.

One of the major problems Lesotho has faced with regards to developing the road network has been a lack of a structured approach to upgrading and maintenance. To resolve this, the government has set up a National Roads Programme which aims to preserve the national road network from further deterioration by putting in place a vigorous maintenance programme. In particular, a commitment has been made to maintaining all rural roads to acceptable standards, including upgrading roads that are not 'all-weather' standard and rehabilitating as a priority those roads that are in the poorest condition.

*Water and sanitation* - Almost 80% of Lesotho's population lives in rural areas. Therefore, the provision of safe drinking water and proper sanitation in rural communities is a priority for the government, contributing to a healthier and generally improved standard of living for the rural population.

The government has set itself the target of accelerating the construction of rural water collection points to serve an additional 60,000 to 80,000 people per year. It is also aiming to increase access to proper sanitation among rural communities from 35 to 52% of households, and to reduce the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases by 50%.

**During the next five years we will:**

- *help implement programmes for sustainable human development, with emphasis on alleviating poverty by increasing opportunities for employment, including self-employment.*
- *improve access for rural communities to goods and services by supporting the development of road-building in rural areas.*
- *enhance the standard of living in rural communities by assisting with the provision of clean water and the development of sanitation infrastructure.*

**Environment**

The preservation of the environment and the country's natural resources are among the priorities for sustainable development in Lesotho.

Lesotho has a small natural resource base. The country's most important and abundant natural resource is water, which is exported on a major scale to South Africa as part of the Highlands Water Project. Lesotho also has some diamond deposits although, to date, the mining of these deposits has not been considered commercially viable.

As a mountainous country, Lesotho suffers from a high level of soil erosion which is diminishing already scarce areas of woodland and arable farmland. The cutting of trees for firewood also increases pressure on remaining woodland and shrubland.

In the 1970s, the government set up a Renewable Energy Technology Project. This was superseded in the mid-1980s by the Appropriate Technology Section (ATS). The ATS focuses on producing and promoting energy-saving devices which help decrease environmental degradation by relying on alternative sources of fuel, such as biogas, windpower and solar energy.

Skillshare Africa first assisted the ATS in the late 1980s and early 1990s by supporting skills development within the organisation. The ATS is now working towards promoting commercial entrepreneurship in the production of energy-saving devices and so, at the same time, promoting self-employment and income-generation opportunities. Skillshare Africa has been asked to assist in this transformation process.

**During the next five years we will:**

- *assist the government's Appropriate Technology Section (ATS) in the research and development of environment-friendly and energy-saving applications.*
- *support the ATS in promoting the entrepreneurial commercial manufacture of new environment-friendly products.*
- *change public attitudes towards environmental degradation by supporting NGOs and government institutions involved in environmental awareness-raising programmes.*
- *help build the capacity of government institutions to implement natural resource management programmes for the future sustainability of the environment.*

**Monitoring and evaluation**

The implementation of the Country Plan will, throughout the five-year period, be regularly monitored against the strategic objectives defined, as well as at the level of specific programme activities with partner organisations. This will be done using the appropriate systems already in place or creating the necessary systems for this purpose.

The Country Plan will also be evaluated at the mid-term point, after two and a half years, and at the end of the five-year period. These evaluations will look at the impact of the programme at the level of the beneficiaries, in relation to the strategic objectives and long-term partnerships with programme partners.

The strategic objectives will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated, if necessary, according to changes in the country's needs.



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