



Lesotho Council of NGOs

Together In Development

Strategic Plan 2014 - 2019



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1.0 Introduction

This Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) Strategic Plan Document defines a framework for the organisation's efforts for the period 2014 -2019. Since its inception, founding documents such as its Constitution and Policies have enabled LCN to implement programmes and projects effectively to accomplish its mandate. Based on the facilitated work led by an external consultant, all the LCN structures commit themselves to this strategic focus with clear consideration of how issues surrounding its performance are going to be addressed or mitigated in line with its theory of change.

The organisation is mindful of implementing its mandate as clearly stated in the amended Constitution and organisational policies. The LCN Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 recognises the fact that there are both internal and external environments which the Council have to respond to and that a clear balance sheet of interventions should always be maintained.

While the Council is mindful of the challenges it has faced in the last 24 years of its establishment, the LCN Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 also recognises the achievements made by the organisation and that such accomplishment that formulate the pillars of the organisation should not go unnoticed by the generation of the civil society and the broader humankind. It is on this basis that the organisation applied different tools such as SWOT analysis to come this far. This LCN Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 is based on the Strategic Plan Process Report (2013/2014) produced by an external consultant and it should be read in that context.

Since the LCN's existence as an umbrella organisation, it has delivered programmes and projects aimed at building the capacity of civil society organisations in Lesotho and in the SADC region. We (as LCN) have effectively led and managed the organisation to make it a voice of the voiceless and the marginalised. We have delivered services that promote civic engagement

across the country, engaged the duty bearers to improve their accountability, transparency and responsiveness as a way of building a democratic nation.

Our work ranges from key thematic issues that include disaster and humanitarian relief, economic justice, agriculture, environment and natural resources, democracy and human rights, health and social development, women and children. Like any other organisation, we have made mistakes in our operations, and the Council takes full responsibility. Having noted our mistakes and potential threats that need mitigation the Council's commitment to developing a Strategic Plan will help the organisation maximise on the existing opportunities.

Our work was based on participatory and complementary approaches in which each structure of the Council was entrusted to deliver its own mandate in a way that contributes to the Council's Mission and compels all structures to move in a coordinated and defined direction. All the programmes and projects delivered by the Council were consolidated into implantable activities that continue to build the Council's identity and outlook in the contemporary governance and development agenda of Lesotho.

The Council had been mindful of public and member organisations' expectations, which were at times mapped by contradictions. This has proved to be a critical and challenging task to mitigate hence our commitment to remain a vibrant and democratic Council which is relevant to the needs of our members who serve the people through their programmes and projects.

In the next five (5) years, LCN commits to contributing towards transforming the governance and the development agenda of Lesotho and SADC region to respond to the needs of ordinary citizens. LCN commits itself to the improvement of its leadership and management capabilities hence our belief that we should remain a strong, credible, relevant and responsive organisation to societal needs through our programmatic focus.

LCN further commits to the strengthening of a vibrant and democratic civil society

movement in Lesotho and the SADC region that is able to serve its own needs and that of the people who benefit directly and indirectly from its programmatic interventions. These commitments facilitate the empowerment of civil society organisations and the creation of an enabling environment that allows LCN to appreciate and embrace the theory that people should remain central in any governance and development interventions geared towards bring transformation in their lives.

We aim to diversify our income base from credible development partners, government and the private sector in order to fulfil both member and public expectations. We further re-commit ourselves to a well-managed, transparent, accountable and democratic umbrella Council that fulfils our mandate and expectations of the Basotho nation, SADC region and development partners that support our work. LCN commits itself to the theory and practice of being a strong and reliable partner to the government of Lesotho that play a complementary role geared towards the development of Lesotho and the SADC region.

The LCN Board of Directors commits to the good ethics of the civil society leadership and management and will ensure that all the organisational structures of the Council are effective and efficient in the delivery of quality programmes and projects that are meant to support unique result-based and rights-based approach that aims at eradicating poverty, weak governance, corruption, social exclusion, environmental degradation, the spread of HIV and AIDS just to mention a few.

This Strategic Plan is meant to support LCN structures such as Board of Directors, Secretariat and Sectoral Commissions to align themselves with the overall Vision and Mission of the Council. It's worth noting that all programmes and projects to be developed from 2014 onwards should be in line with this Strategic Plan. The Board of Directors highlighted that this is not a funded Strategic Plan but a framework for the Council. All LCN organisational structures should be mindful of this framework when developing programmes and projects. It remains key that in the next five (5) years the Council be evaluated on the basis of its achievements.

2.0 Context

The world is in a transitional mode, evident from global political instability and insecurity within regions such as the Middle East, West Africa, Southern Africa, East Europe just to mention a few. All this limits the promotion of participatory governance, both at regional and international levels. Those involved in the conflicts such as political instability and terrorism are always justifying their reasons of causing disharmony around the world.

In most cases perpetrators of such instabilities rationalise their action as self-determination, fight against terrorism and corruption, seeking political participation, economic emancipation etc. Whatever the rationale, such acts have implications on global peace and economic development. The world is a global village, hence actions of individual groups and people have a negative impact on the peace and stability of this village as a whole.

Now, the political landscape around the world has become an arms-race instead of tackling challenging issues such as governance and development, HIV and AIDS, the negative effects of climate change, social exclusion and hardships. The consequence of this arms-race is democratic deficit in most states that leads to escalating poverty, under development, injustice and destruction of lives. Global leadership is challenged by the impact of corruption, political instability, increase in the cost of living and bilateral tensions between countries.

In Lesotho, there is a likelihood of continued political instability based on the country's history of not properly managing election-related tensions in a way that all actors in the governance spheres exercise maximum political tolerance and strive to provide sustainable peace. In the life span of this Strategic Plan, there will be national elections during the implementation of this Strategic Plan of which there is a likelihood that there might be tensions which are usually marked by protests, violation of human rights by state security forces, stay-ways etc. This view is based on the fact that the Coalition Government which was formed before the formulation of this Strategic Plan has continuously faced challenges and has struggled to rise above those challenges. Effectively, this instability has

a bearing on the government's agenda on development.

The global economy is reported to be in a dangerously new phase where activities such as trade have become more unevenly weakened. Confidence has fallen and as a result, there are high risks noted in every arrangement or agreement to be made. Though 2010 and 2011 were marked as global recovery years from the recession, but this has not yielded tangible results for small economies such as Lesotho. It is noted that the structural problems facing the crisis-hit advanced economies have proven even more intractable than expected, and the process of devising and implementing reforms are even more complicated. It is further noted that prospects for emerging market economies have become more uncertain, although growth is expected to remain fairly robust.

Social ills such as corruption, HIV and AIDS and weak governance will continue to be critical challenges for the government as they undermine its efforts to focus on key development activities. In Lesotho, the HIV and AIDS continues to be a serious threat due to the lack of coordinated efforts by the government and other international agencies to deeply reflect on the key drivers of the epidemic.

The limited focus on the impact of global climate change will be seen in the next five (5) years, thus affecting the ability of developing countries to produce enough and affordable food for their own citizens. Corruption is seen as a major challenge on the extractives that are endowed by developing countries. In Lesotho, the challenge in this regard would be the construction of Polihali Dam in Mokhotlong.

It was projected by the World Economic Outlook that global growth will moderate to about 4% in 2012, from over 5% in 2010. It was further projected that the real GDP in the advanced economies will expand at an advanced pace of 2% in 2012. This will surely affect Lesotho since it is one of the Least Developed Countries whose GNI per capita is estimated at M6, 858. The underdeveloped countries are always exposed to economic shocks and their ability to cope with such challenges remain critical.

Though Lesotho is a landlocked country, it has a large and skilled human resource base. Its economy is open and depends largely on the inflow of remittances from the Republic of South Africa from those working in the mines, construction industry, textile industry, farming, families (domestic workers) and professional services. The other economic revenue comes in the form of Southern African Custom Union (SACU) which contributes about 60% of Lesotho's national budget. In the event of any global economic shocks, Lesotho is likely to be hit hard and this will result in high levels of unemployment due to the decline in the textile industries which will translate into increased poverty.

There are also internal economic initiatives which the country is involved in that include the transfer of water to South Africa, agriculture, livestock farming, diamond mining, wool and mohair just to mention a few. The following are key external issues that are possible in the next five (5) years:-

- Shocks and crisis will inevitably occur as a result of the effects of global recession, climate change, political instability etc.
- Political and economic power will shift away from traditional superpowers to emerging economies.
- The traditional political parties (liberation parties and their extension) will go under transformation and this will cause splits and tensions.
- The multinational corporations that dominate the market and have political influence will be challenged by the locals and workers seeking for economic benefits and better living wages.
- Health hazards

2.1 Civil Society Context

Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) is registered under Societies Act 1966 As Amended and it belongs to a family of civil society organisations that work for economic, social and political empowerment of marginalised groups in the country. The civil society movement in the country encompasses a wide range of organisations including organised labour movements, church groups, NGOs, media organisations and business organisations. Though, this seems to be

broad, it is further segmented into thematic groups and transitional stages such as youth, children, shepherds and women and geographically based settings such as community based organisations and national organisations.

Most organisations are membership driven. However, they face challenges such as non-compliance to their founding documents e.g the constitution. The evidence on the ground is that most organisations do not hold annual general meetings as per the requirement of their constitutions and this sometimes leads to internal conflicts and power struggle. The other issue related to this problem is lack of engagement of external auditors for financial transactions of such organisations. In most cases the justification from the sector is that the development partners do not support the audit cost and their membership is low to cover such costs. These challenges lead to situations where self-regulation of the sector is in poor state and points to the fact that internal governance and organisational development remain a critical challenge for the sector.

There is also a noticeable disconnection between the national organisations and community-based organisations, in particular those operating at rural level. This fact limits the intervention of civil society movement in successfully engaging the government and in also complementing government efforts in development and the governance agenda. The disconnection may be attributed to the fact that most organisations operate from Maseru with limited resources and this hinders their capacity to cover the whole country.

Communities are not empowered enough to demand accountability, transparency and responsiveness from the duty bears and this limits the full enjoyment of their rights in a democratic state that should protect human rights, the environment and natural resources. A state that promotes social inclusion and participatory democracy and that wages war against HIV and AIDS should always do so with acceptance from the electorates.

Lesotho Council of NGOs as an umbrella organisation is ceased with these challenges ranging from limited capacity to demand government accountability

and influence change on various development and governance issues. Though this is a critical need, there is evidence that civil society organisations need to base their advocacy on the evidence generated from grassroots and public policy analysis, but such approaches are very rare in the sector and this hampers the ability of the civil society to engage effectively.

There is also realisation that there exists a fragmented approach in the sectors and this undermines the effectiveness of the civil society to speak with one big voice. This is seen in each and every formation of civil society organisation thus perpetuating a high staff turnover of skilled personnel in the sector. The government have realised this but there seems to be so little of policy response to meet civil society demands.

3.0 Our Vision

A vibrant and united civil society umbrella organisation that responds effectively and efficiently to members' needs and that contributes to the national development and governance challenges of Lesotho.

4.0 Mission

To promote, coordinate and support member organisations in their efforts to contribute to national development and governance agenda of Lesotho.

5.0 LCN Core Values

In LCN context, core values are guiding principles for the conduct of LCN business of which each structure should be aware of when operationalising the plans.

5.1 Leadership

We will be an umbrella body for all civil society organisations in Lesotho that value human dignity and respect the rights of freedom of association, expression and

movement. Our conduct and leadership will always be informed by the general theory of participatory democracy and human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Universal of Human Rights Declaration (1948) and the Constitution of Lesotho. Our leadership model will premise on the approaches of empowerment, coordination and results-based orientation to our members and Basotho needs.

5.2 Respect for Human Rights

We will continue to recognise human rights as foundation of our work and recognise the human rights as the innate dignity of an individual. Organisations and communities that benefit from our member-interventions will be supported to win justice, human rights and dignity that value humanity. The Council will continue to respond to human vulnerabilities that are caused by both natural and man-made disasters and will continue to fight for the freedom of the oppressed by different forms of oppression such as poverty, corruption, violation of human rights, poor governance, social exclusion, gender inequality, just to mention a few in a view of restoring human dignity and respect.

5.3 Integrity and Credibility

We will always strive to maintain highest ethical standards and compliance to the foundations of good governance. We will strive to be more relevant to the national and international context and be strategic in our programmes and projects design and their implementation as a means of attaining credibility and legitimacy to our constituency and the nation at large. We will take full organisational responsibility for our actions and omissions in our operations, and remain truthful to democratic practices and the development of the Basotho nation.

5.4 Empowering Organisation

We will always value the professional knowledge of our team, their skills, strengths, and different perspectives when conducting the business of the Council of our diverse and capable team. We will continue to be an organisation that

believes in culture and value it as a means of achieving social change and our team will always be sensitive of this fact. We will foster a team-work approach at workplace that enables people to get involved in the decision-making processes that advance our common organisational Vision and Mission.

5.5 Development and Sustainability

We will strive towards being a development and financially sound Council as a way of attaining our long term goal of having developed, a hunger free, stable, peaceful and democratic country. We will be knowledge-based power house that generates a healthy dividend for social justice work and plough it back to member organisations and networking partners for future growth that aim to bring social justice agenda and people centred development.

6.0 LCN Today

The Lesotho Council of NGO's was established in May 1990 as an umbrella body for Lesotho NGOs. The main objective for which LCN was established was to provide supportive services to the NGO community in Lesotho through networking, leadership, information dissemination, capacity building, coordination, advocacy and lobbying, and representation when dealing with the international community and the government. The Council's previous Mission was to stimulate, promote and build capacity within Lesotho NGO's so that they are stable, democratic, transparent, skilled, empowered, sustainable and responsive to their beneficiaries' needs and those of the voiceless and marginalised.

LCN is organised into six (6) Sectoral Commissions for effective coordination and leadership. The main objective of establishing the Commissions is to group NGOs with similar programmes or objectives together in order to facilitate the work of coordination by LCN Secretariat and networking among member organisations. The following are the current Commissions:-

1. Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources
2. Democracy and Human Rights

3. Disaster and Humanitarian Relief
4. Economic Justice and
5. Health and Social Development
6. Women and Children

6.1 Leadership and Management

LCN Board of Directors controls and directs the Council, and it is made up of the Executive Committee and six (6) Commissioners of Sectoral Commissions. The Executive Committee of the Council is made up of the President, Vice-President and Treasurer.

6.2 Daily Operations of the Council

The Council operates through its Secretariat headed by the Executive Director and is based in Maseru, Lesotho. The Secretariat of the Council is responsible for the implementation of programmes and below are the current programmes which were running during the formulation of this Strategic Plan 2014-2019:-

- HIV and AIDS Technical Assistance Project
- Capacity Building Project
- Public Participation and Non-State-Actors Capacity Building for Development Project
- Deepening Decentralisation and Non-State-Actors Project

7.0 Key Conditions for Successful Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019

The Strategic Plan Process Report points to the fact that LCN is an organisation that has a poor resource base due to lack of funding, high staff turnover, poor relationship management with donors (Global Fund) just to mention a few. It has been proved in the past that the Council developed a Strategic Plan which assumed that the resource flow would match the ambitions outlined in the plans

while in reality, this was not the case. This approach makes or classified the Council as non-performer when evaluating that Strategic Plan.

The approach to LCN Strategic Plan 2014-2019 is that it serves as a framework that guides all the efforts geared towards the design and implementation of the programmes and projects of the Council as well as its leadership and management on how to go about LCN business. It also reminds LCN of its constitutional mandate to remain relevant to the new development and governance agenda while at the same time remain a strategic actor at both regional and international level. It has further positioned LCN to the hot seat of mediating public expectations of a vibrant civil society formation while at the same time remaining loyal to the diverse membership expectations.

It is in this context, LCN will have to improve its funding base that will support the three strategic pillars as outlined below. LCN commits to building strategic partnerships that will assist in resource mobilisation, building credibility, legitimacy and be respect as a voice of the voiceless. LCN is committed to effective communication and intends to educate and inform different stakeholders not only in development but also to be viewed as a relevant and responsive Council that remains non-partisan politically while at the same time remains a serious influencer for the cause of poverty eradication and weak governance. In addition to this, LCN should strive to build strong leadership and management teams that are supported by the necessary tools such as board charter, staff policies and organisational policies aimed at promoting a conducive working environment for all.

8.0 LCN Strategic Framework for 2014-2019

LCN's Strategic Framework sets out the guiding principles or pillars for LCN's efforts over the next five (5) years. In order to continue building the capacity of Lesotho's civil society and hold the Government of Lesotho accountable and remain relevant actor at regional and international levels, LCN will integrate the following Strategic Framework when designing, implementing and evaluating

projects and programmes for the period of this Strategic Plan 2014-2019:-

- Capacity Building
- Research and Public Policy Advocacy
- Governance and Organisational Development

8.1 Capacity Building

LCN believes building the capacity of Lesotho's civil society will contribute towards achieving sustainable development, and the knowledge gained through capacity building will further strengthen the sector and demonstrate that it is a reliable sector that adds value in efforts geared towards governance and development discourse. LCN views capacity building as the sharing and transferring of knowledge with the aim of empowering organisations that may be in need. Skills and knowledge gained during this process empower individuals and organisations to effectively and efficiently be agents of change and transformation. Civil society organisations that benefit from LCN capacity building efforts will be grounded in both theory and practice that will assist them to fulfil their mandate and serve their constituencies effectively and efficiently.

In the next five (5) years, LCN will continue to deliver capacity building programmes and projects aimed at empowering Lesotho's civil society as it is considered as a key enabler in achieving public policy coherence and development goals. The six (6) Sectoral Commissions remain primary beneficiaries of the capacity building strategic intervention, since they form part of point entrance for the promotion of a well coordinated and vibrant civil society that contributes to national development agenda. Member organisations will be empowered through the Commissions and they will also be exposed to certain debates, training, teachings and experiences sharing at national, regional and international levels. The members are expected in turn to empower their beneficiaries to be able to respond adequately to development and governance challenges.

In order to create critical mass and buy-in of the sector work, key government institutions will also be supported with the knowledge and skills gained through

capacity building initiatives as a way of fulfil the Council's motto, "Together in Development". An empowered civil society is critical to achieving social justice and a transformative society that is active and demands accountability, transparency and responsiveness from duty bears.

8.2 Research and Public Policy Advocacy

LCN will adopt a research based approach to generate evidence for any issue that help member organisations to engage without emotions and prejudices. This research will be translated into public policy advocacy by the Council and its members. This approach is consistent with LCN's theory of change that requires that the Council's work should be based on the needs of the organisations and that of the people they are serving. Civil society organisations know better about the aspirations and problems faced by rural and urban societies, and they remain key mediators between the government and electorate. Since civil society organisations are key pressure groups in this case, it is important that their engagement originate from the realities faced by the people on the ground. LCN will strive to harness this knowledge through more robust research and analysis activities.

LCN will develop programmes and projects based on research and the local knowledge and experience of member organisations so as to better serve the people. This will help LCN fulfil its role of complementing government efforts towards development. Through public policy, the views of the civil society and its constituents will cultivate improved accountability, transparency and responsiveness from the Government.

LCN will engage the private sector and the development partners to act responsibly in conducting their business and to become better partners in development and governance of Lesotho. This approach resonates well with our commitment to participatory democracy and people-centred development.

In the next five (5) years, LCN will engage in research and public policy advocacy

as a way of generating evidence of what they represent and the skills and knowledge gained from capacity building initiatives will be rolled-out under this approach. The strategy is to bring the research in the work of the Council and member organisations for building credibility, legitimacy and relevance. Key research findings will provide robust evidence for public policy advocacy and will remain relevant for lobbying different stakeholders.

The beneficiaries of the member organisations and public in general are strategic partners in this regard and will always be engaged in the Council's efforts to move towards being a vibrant and united civil organisation that responds effectively and efficiently to members' needs and that contributes towards national development and fighting governance challenges.

In order for research and public advocacy to be relevant to the lives of the poor, different approaches will be developed that would promote inclusive views and knowledge. This will include the promotion of public dialogues to document public views, knowledge and experience of member organisations and communities aimed at transforming government policies to improve how they respond to challenges such as economic injustice, poverty, hunger, weak governance, environmental degradation, HIV and AIDS, social exclusion as evidenced by the marginalisation of women and children. This will be supported by improved communication strategy in the form of development of policy briefs to provide input on relevant local and national topics.

8.3 Governance and Organisational Development

Governance is defined in the context of LCN as a process of linking the leadership and management roles of different structures of the organisation when handling its business. LCN strives to be a leading and innovative organisation where its members, government, development partners and the public have trust and confidence in the efficient and effective management of the organisation, as well as LCN's ability to coordinate and lead Lesotho's civil society. To improve its ability to fulfil this role, LCN will put its leadership, staff and members first when

developing their human capabilities.

The Board of Directors will continue to play leadership and oversight roles from an empowered point of view while the secretariat competency will continue to be enhanced based on their professional gaps. The member organisations will be supported to govern and manage their affairs appropriately and ethically as per their different constitutional provisions. LCN will not impose itself on its members but will aim to model best practices and continue to encourage member organisations to comply with good practices of running an organisation and to be accountable, transparent and responsive to the constituencies they serve.

Different approaches will be adopted that are aimed at promoting effective leadership and management of civil society organisations. Leadership and management structures will be supported to adapt to the global trends of effective running of civil society organisations, including the development of board charters, board committees and evaluations.

The Council remains committed to the notion of separation of powers and this means that the Board of Directors or equivalent structures in the context of member organisations will mainly focus on policy development and oversight while secretariat will focus on the implementation. The smooth interface to all LCN structures will be improved to enable the organisation to learn, grow and share its best approaches as a way of building active participation of all involved in the affairs of the Council. Competent and professional staff are essential to ensure LCN can deliver its programmes and projects, as well as to support member organisations. This component of the strategic framework will ensure that LCN continues to focus on its organisational development.

9.0 Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy intends to direct the LCN programmes and projects to be in line with the strategic focus of this Strategic Plan. Annual plans for all Commissions and other structures of the Council will be developed in such way

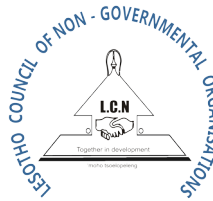
that they respond to the key strategic focus. Each Programme and project will incorporate monitoring and evaluation with clear targets as way to gauge our performance towards achieving the main strategic focus of the Strategic Plan. By this approach, LCN will move towards employing results-based management systems into all its operations including adopting mid-term reviews.

The Secretariat will subject both new and existing programmes and projects to this approach as from 1st October 2014. It is LCN's commitment that each and every year, there will be annual plans and budgets of the funded programmes and projects and the Board of Directors will be ceased with the responsibility of approving them.

As it has committed itself to diversify its resource base, LCN will develop effective strategies to mobilise financial resources from traditional and new funders such foundations, the government, private sector just to mention a few. This will be guided by necessary policy reforms with regard to funding and its management. All finances of the Council will adhere to good practices of financial management that will be geared towards producing a clean audit.

10.0 Conclusion

The Strategic Plan 2014-2019 articulates LCN's commitment, ambition and approach to strengthening civil society movement in Lesotho and to contribute to the development and the government initiative in Lesotho and abroad. We will measure and collectively hold ourselves to account against our promises through frequent reporting to all our governance structures, development partners and the public in general. We will strive to improve programmes and projects interventions to the best of our ability and put the members' interests and the people they serve at the centre of our work.



Lesotho Council of NGOs

***House No.544
Hoohlo Extension
Private Bag A445
Maseru 100, Lesotho***

***Tel: (+266) 22317205/22325798
email: admin@lcn.org.ls
website: www.lcn.org.ls***