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Project Title:

Comparative Study (Lesotho and SADC) on Inclusive and Non- Formal Education

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALE	Adult Learning and Education
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ECCE	Early Childhood Care Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IE	Inclusive Education
IECCD	Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development
LANFE	Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education
LCN	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organizations
LIEP	Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy
LNFOD	Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADC	Southern African Development Community

Geographic Location of Southern African Development Community Countries



Source: <https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview>

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to conduct a comparative analysis on the inclusive and non-formal education modalities and success in the SADC region, with the aim of guiding the current frameworks for implementation in Lesotho. One of the key concerns in the context of Lesotho has been the gap between policy and practice. Policies on Inclusive Education and Non-Formal Education exist in Lesotho. However, the gap between policy and practice which can be explained by inadequate training programs, inadequate collaboration, limited human and financial resources, disparities in access for learners in different geographic terrains and lack of implementation guidelines. These might have compromised the value associated with the implementation of quality Inclusive and Non-formal Education policies in Lesotho. In reviewing these policies and policy frameworks in five selected countries in the SADC region, this study drew on critical perspectives of Inclusive and Non-formal Education that are aimed at informing a trajectory for Lesotho policy implementation and practice. The key focus of this comparative review was to highlight and recognise education's potential to enhance or undermine processes of sustainable policy visions that are compromised by lack of implementation. A desktop review of policies and relevant documents and publications revealed that the five sampled SADC countries have similar implementation modalities. However, they have also shown differences which emanate from the environmental and economic challenges. The study concludes by recommending a more robust financing model which could inform formula-based policies to reallocate education resources to disadvantaged groups of the populations) and active governance structure to ensure effective implementation of Inclusive and Non-formal Education policies.

Background

The Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisation (LCN) is an umbrella body for civil society organizations in Lesotho. The organisation was established with the purpose of providing supportive services to Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) community through networking, leadership, information dissemination, capacity building, coordination, advocacy and lobbying, and representation when dealing with the international community and government. The council of NGOs operates through sectoral commissions to ease coordination of alike members. Of the six commissions it has, there is one that oversees issues related to education and other socio-economic indicators of the country.

The rationale to include education in LCN work emanates from the strong belief that human resource is the best asset any country can have. Educational attainment is the only surest way of ensuring that people who have been disadvantaged by ills of historical trajectories can advance their positions and achieve positive change in their lives.

It is on the basis of believing in change through educational attainment that LCN uses social accountability tools in its work as those are increasingly recognized as a means of improving service delivery and governance across the globe. Social accountability as an approach relies on civic engagement in that citizens participate directly or indirectly in demanding accountability from service providers and public officials. To that effect LCN conducts participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, citizen report cards, social audits, citizen charters, right to information acts, and community scorecards (CSCs), the focus of this concept note. In particular, LCN had previously analysed education

budget as Lesotho Education gets the highest share from the national coffers. Despite this huge economic boost in education the country still faces high unemployment rate, graduates that most potential employers reject hence a need to develop innovative funding model for Lesotho Education.

The end of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) gave birth to the current Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs). With the promulgation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2015, the Incheon Declaration, provided a framework of action to guide Education actors on how Education resources would need to be harnessed and directed to achieve the vision captured in SDG4. This was to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for All. This process was preceded by extensive multi-stakeholder, multi-sector consultations in various spaces around the world, spanning more than two years.

Education is a basic right of everyone. Governments as duty bearers, have the responsibility to provide free and compulsory inclusive quality basic Education for All. The government is also expected to deliver this through efficient, equitable and sustainable financing mechanism. In 2015, the world leaders pledged commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the Education-2030 Framework for Action (FFA) within the next fifteen years. This was perhaps the most ambitious global development agenda in history. For education, this includes the pledge to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030’—regardless of personal, social or political context. But all these commitments, pledges and declarations may have never been backed up by adequate resources (NORRAG, 2020) to ensure effective implementation and sustainability.

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2016- 2026) amongst others indicates that a substantial number of out of school children form a significant part of the school going age population in Lesotho. The plan also has a comparative analysis on levels of access and drop- out by District. This obtaining situation have dire consequences if not addressed.

Although, Lesotho has made some strides in inclusive and non-Formal Education, the existence of Non- Formal Education Policy and Inclusive Education Policy, perhaps communicates lack of overall vision of inclusive education and education for ALL. Lesotho Council of NGOs belief that the country can do better.

It is on the basis of the belief that inclusive and non-formal education can benefit and elevate the status of the would otherwise be left out of educational realm thus subjecting them into perpetual poverty and underdevelopment. That is why the Lesotho Council of NGOs under the auspicious support of OXFAM IBIS under the project “Education Out Loud” embarked on a comparative study (Lesotho -SADC) on the inclusive and non-formal education modalities and success.

Introduction

According to Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, 160 countries including all SADC member states reaffirmed the vision of the worldwide movement for Education for All. This was initiated in Jomtien in 1990 and reiterated in Dakar in 2000, and still remains one of the most important commitments to education to date which has helped to drive significant progress in education. During this meeting countries made the following commitment:

Motivated by our significant achievements in expanding access to education over the last 15 years, we will ensure the provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory, leading to relevant learning outcomes. We also encourage the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education and that all children have access to quality early childhood development, care and education. We also commit to providing meaningful education and training opportunities for the large population of out-of-school children and adolescents, who require immediate, targeted and sustained action ensuring that all children are in school and are learning.

Evidently, these countries appreciate public funding as important in ensuring access, to quality education at the formative stages of learners' development. It is suspected therefore that, some countries have made strides in this endeavor, while others might be trailing behind for various reasons. It was imperative for LCN to investigate into how the SADC countries, especially Lesotho have been implementing the aspiration of the Incheon Declaration and Dakar in 2000.

Lesotho has made commitments and efforts towards inclusive and non-formal education. It has introduced seven years of free and compulsory education, introduced reception classes attached to primary school and revised the design and drawings of the school buildings and facilities plans to include ramps and added a requirement to have bigger and accessible or additional toilet space for learners and teachers with disability.

The government of Lesotho through MoET has been providing literacy and post-literacy education to out-of-school children including herd boys, youth and adults, who were dropped by formal education system, for various reasons. It also provides continuing education at secondary and at tertiary levels through distance teaching mode. All these are done through Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre which is the Department of MoET. There are other players such as the Institute of Extra Mural Studies (IEMS) which is the Open and Distance Learning arm of the National University of Lesotho (NUL) offering adult education programmes. The Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education (LANFE) which provides literacy activities, as well as functional skills. The Lesotho National Council of Women, Lesotho Girl Guides Association, the Good Shepherd Centres, which provide continuing education, occupational and Biblical education. Itjareng Vocational Training Centre for people with disabilities, Lesotho

Opportunities Industrialisation Centre (LOIC) also continues to provide vocational skills training. NFE is also offered by communities, private individuals and some government ministries such as Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs.

Statement of the problem

Lesotho has made progress on achieving Inclusive and Non-Formal Education; with policies on Non-Formal and Inclusive Education in place. However, Lesotho Council of NGOs holds a strong view that the country is capable of doing better. Despite the progress made in the development of the policies above; there is still tension between policy and practice. The broad areas that form part of the problem include performance of learners with special educational needs, disparities in performance between urban and rural schools in Lesotho, exclusion of herd-boys and out-of-school children. If these are not addressed, they can negatively affect Lesotho Human development capita as a whole.

It is hoped that this desktop comparative study on SADC education systems will provide insights on how other member states have designed and are implementing their inclusive and non-formal education policies, their funding models and style of governance to inform a framework which can be adopted by Lesotho to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal number four (4).

Literature indicates that educational attainment of a country impacts on outcomes such as employment, wages, skills acquisition, health, happiness and civic engagement (Ma, Pender and Welch, 2016[3]; OECD, 2017[4]), hence investment in human capital development. COMSTAT believes that LCN will use the recommendations of the study to advocate for a smooth alignment between funding models of inclusive and non-formal education and the governance thereof. Therefore, it is important for Lesotho to implement inclusive and non- formal education for all citizens irrespective of their physical, economic and social needs.

The Aim of the Study

The purpose of the study was to conduct a comparative study on the Inclusive and non-formal education modalities and achievement by different SADC countries. The findings of the study would be used to inform the framework on Inclusive and Non-formal frameworks for the sustainable implementation in Lesotho. This could also determine appropriate funding model for Inclusive and Non-formal education in Lesotho. The Framework would be disseminated through advocacy campaigns and lobbying international community, government of Lesotho and society at large to invest in education for ALL.

Objectives

The above aims are translated into the following objectives:

- To conduct a Desktop study of a comparative study (Lesotho - SADC) on the inclusive and non-formal education modalities and success.
- To assess and exploring modalities utilized in SADC countries, identify gaps and recommend findings for policy advocacy in Lesotho context.

- To undertake a comprehensive and comparative analysis of the model/s and assess their merits and demerits.
- To make recommendations thereof on models, options that the government may adopt in order to improve the country level inclusive and non-formal education modalities while leaving no one behind.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on all learners at pre-school and of schooling going age and adults who could not complete the basic education (grade 1-12) for various reasons. Competencies such as speaking, reading and writing as well as the ability to use numerals in various ways are considered as formative skills. They equip learners with generic skills for application in various subjects. The study, therefore, focused on the achievement of learners in subjects related to these competencies. It also looked into access and completion of school by children of school going age. Since the interest of the study was also on non-formal education, it was also important to report on the achievement of Lesotho in ensuring access to school by herd-boys, adult learners and other disadvantaged children.

Literature Review

Inclusive Education has become a big challenge for many countries especially developing and economically challenged countries (Ainscow, 2005). The call for quality Education for All has highlighted some of the challenges relating to access quality education despite different learning capabilities of children (Florian, 2008). Florian further indicates that although the policy on inclusion is a ‘human right’ agenda; many countries have different interpretations regarding what constitutes Inclusive Education. This varied approach implies differences in appreciation and the degree of implementation and support for children with special educational needs. This may manifest in the exclusion of some learners from learning opportunities and therefore access to quality and equitable education.

Messiou (2017) argues that the implementation of inclusive education is a challenge, perhaps due to the fluidity of its definition. Without clear and agreed definition there seem to be no strategic direction regarding parameters of implementation. He continues to say that focusing on a certain group of learners in the implementation of quality education, defeats the spirit of inclusiveness. This argument suggests the definition of Inclusive Education to be particularly inclusive and leave ‘No child behind’. This is particularly interesting as learners come to school with different needs which need to be diagnosed and addressed through the use of multiple approaches to teaching and learning and other means. ‘Reimagining special education’ (Florian, 2007), argued that *the positioning of special needs education as both a problem for and a solution to injustice in education has highlighted the dilemmas of access and equity inherent in education systems that rely on different forms of provision for different types of learners. As many commentators have pointed out, special needs education is widely seen as one of the mechanisms by which students who experience difficulties in learning are both included in and excluded from the forms of schooling that are otherwise available to children of similar ages.*

The plight of learners with special needs is compounded by the positioning of special educational needs as both a problem and a solution to injustices inflicted on them regarding their education

(Florian, 2008). As teachers try to support learners with special educational needs, they are subjected to being marginalised because they are regarded as slowing down the learning progress of other learners in the mainstream classroom. Literature also established that teachers are ill equipped to cope with challenges of learners who have hearing impairment due to lack of training. While looking at inclusive education through the lens of children with special needs narrows its perspective and therefore value, it helps to highlight the complexities of education for ALL. In such a classroom, learners bring various cognitive, affective, social, mental and physical needs which, if unattended can compromise their access and equity to quality education. In an attempt to define inclusive education, Messiou (2017) suggest seven perspectives reflected in figure 1.

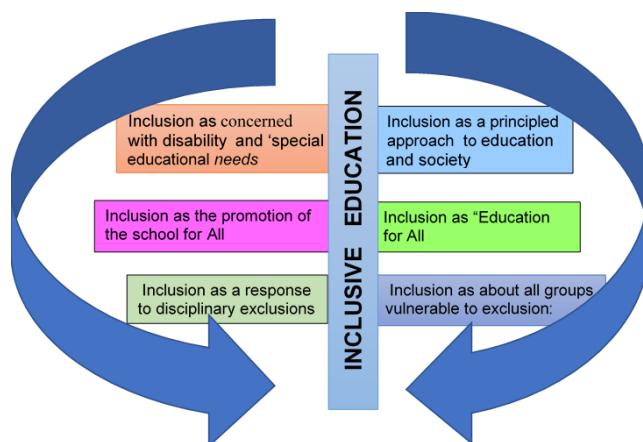


Figure 1 Inclusive Education as a multiple perspective approach: adopted from Messou, (2017)

The pictorial representation above concludes that inclusive education addresses social responsibility, learners' cognitive, economical and humanitarian needs. It can be expected therefore that the implementation of inclusive education as an equitable strategy towards quality education might depend on the interpretation and the degree to which countries can afford to implement its various elements. The next section looks into access to education at pre-primary and primary school education level as one of the indicators on achievements of SADC countries in the implementation of inclusive education as shown in Figure 2.

The Quality of Primary School Education

While there is a general agreement that defining quality education may differ from country to country and from organisation to organisation. UNESCO has provided broad guiding principles to consider when defining quality education. According to UNESCO framework, there are five key dimensions that summarise; quality education and these are;

1. Learner characteristics: including learner aptitude, perseverance, readiness for school, prior knowledge, barriers to learning, and demographic variables.
2. Context: including public resources for education, parental support, national standards, labour market demands, socio-cultural and religious factors, peer effects, and time available for schooling and homework.

3. Enabling Inputs: including teaching and learning materials, physical infrastructure and facilities, and human resources.
4. Teaching and Learning: including learning time, teaching methods, assessment, and class size.
5. Outcomes: including skills in literacy and numeracy, values, and life skills." (UNESCO, 2004: 36).

One of the measures of the quality of education is the achievement of learners in literacy and numeracy as learning areas that equip them with generic skills for overcoming educational challenges as they further their education. Lesotho participates in the SACMEQ studies. This is an international large-scale assessment which involves the SADC countries. Learner competences in numeracy and literacy are assessed and evaluated against pre-determined standards of achievement. Figure 4 shows the performance of member countries in the SACMEQ assessment in reading.

PERFORMANCE OF COUNTRIES ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF QUALITY EDUCATION

Lesotho's Performance on Target 4.2 in comparison to other SADC Member States.

Target 4.2: focuses on ensuring that by 2030, all boys and girls have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education to facilitate their readiness for primary school education. Figure 2 shows the achievement of SADC member states on the access to pre-primary education.

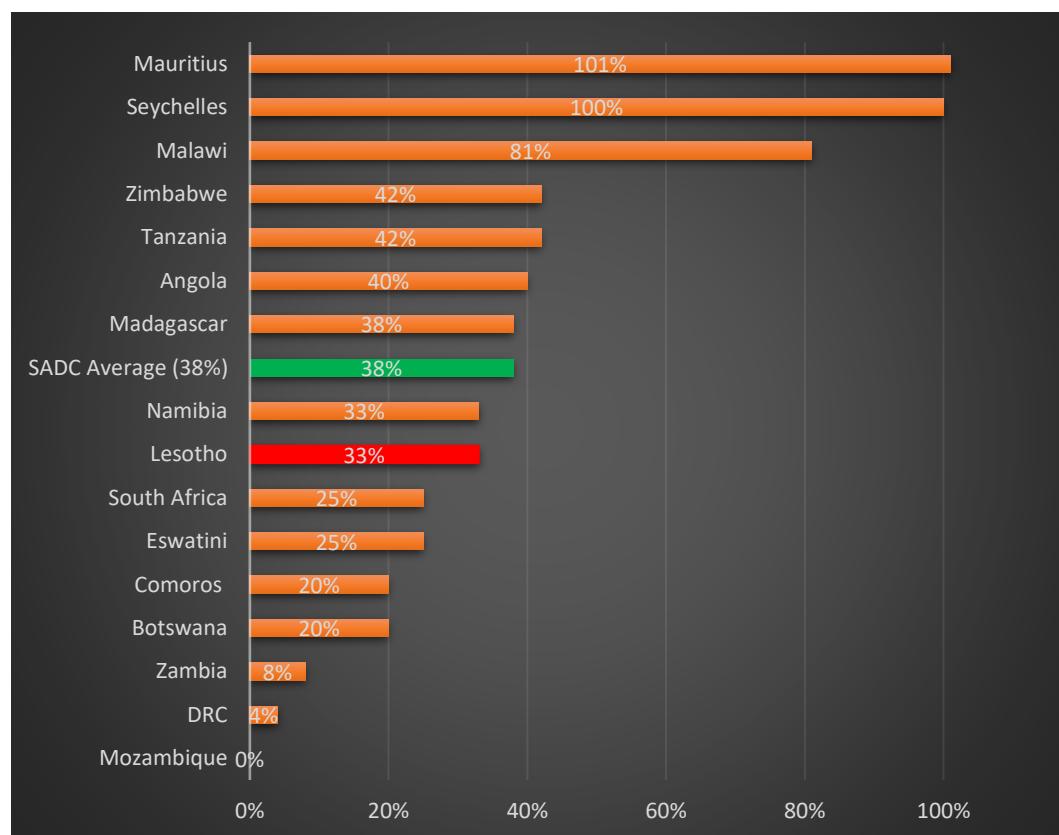


Figure 2 Access to Pre-Primary Education (GER)

Lesotho is amongst the SADC member states with the least gross enrolment ratios in pre-primary education with only 33% of its children enrolled in this level of education. It is also below the SADC

average (38%). This means that about 67 percent of Basotho children are not accessing pre-primary education hence get into primary school education level ill-prepared (readiness to primary education).

It should be noted that as much as, Lesotho is among countries that enrol the least number of learners in pre-primary education, it has recorded the higher gross enrolment ratio compared to its neighbours, such as South Africa (25%), Eswatini (25%) and Botswana (20%). This has been achieved by the introduction of reception classes in public schools, among others. However, the Ministry of Education and Training has not achieved its target of rolling out this initiative to all schools.

Lesotho's Performance on Target 4.1 in comparison to other SADC Member States

This target focuses on ensuring that by 2030, all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Access to Primary Education (Gross Enrolment Ratio)

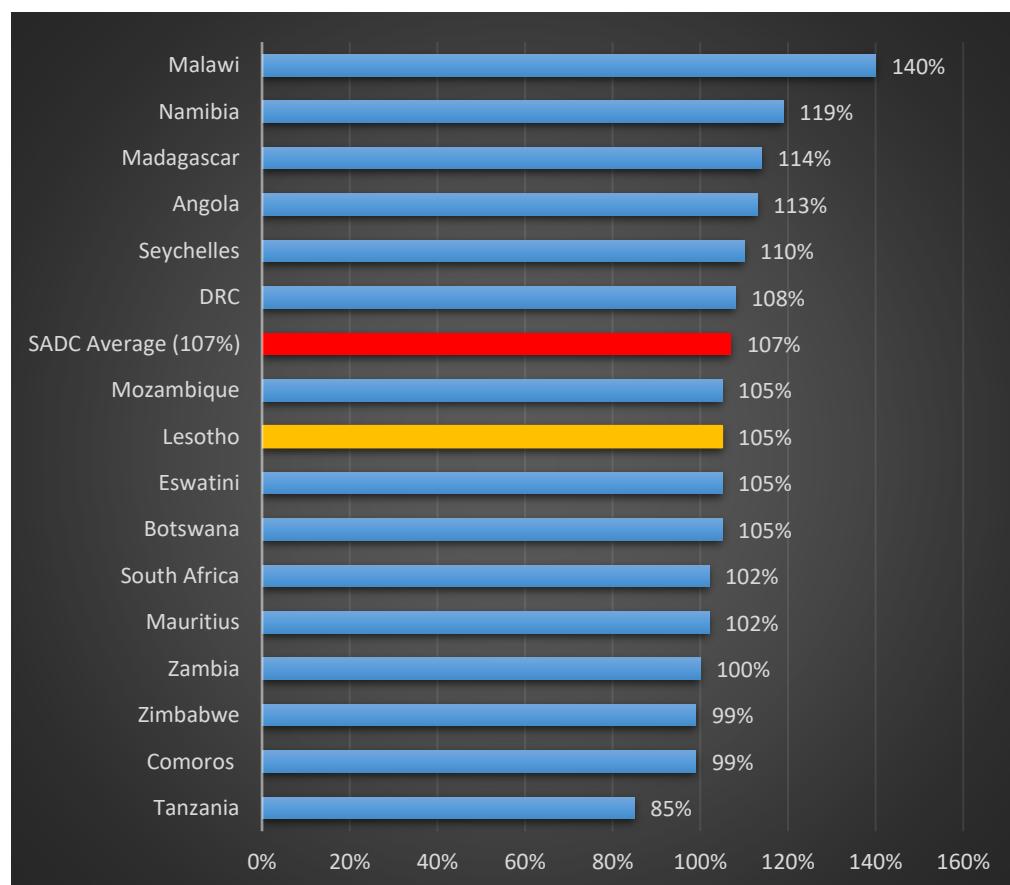


Figure 3: Access to Primary Education (GER) across SADC Member States

Figures 3 shows that average SADC member states Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) are generally high (107%) with Malawi being the highest with 140%. while Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Mozambique fall below the SADC average by two percent with 105% GER. Tanzania is the lowest with 85% GER. This may mean that for Malawi a substantial number of learners enrolled in primary schools are either over-aged, under-aged or grade repeaters. In Lesotho, most boys and girls have access to primary schools with an enrolment of 105%. Even though it is below SADC average which is 107%, Lesotho still has the highest gross enrolment ratio of boys and girls accessing primary education compared to other

SADC members such as Zimbabwe (99%) and Tanzania (85%), showing that Lesotho manages to accommodate all its school-age population at primary levels. The level of access to primary schools in both Lesotho, Botswana, Eswatini and Mozambique is the same. This could be due to the introduction of inclusive education policy (policy on Inclusive education was only developed in 2018) There could be other reasons., it is difficult to make an input when the year is not indicated) introduced in these countries, aiming to provide free education for every child, irrespective of disability, age, and gender disparities.

Access to Secondary Education (Gross Enrolment Ratio)

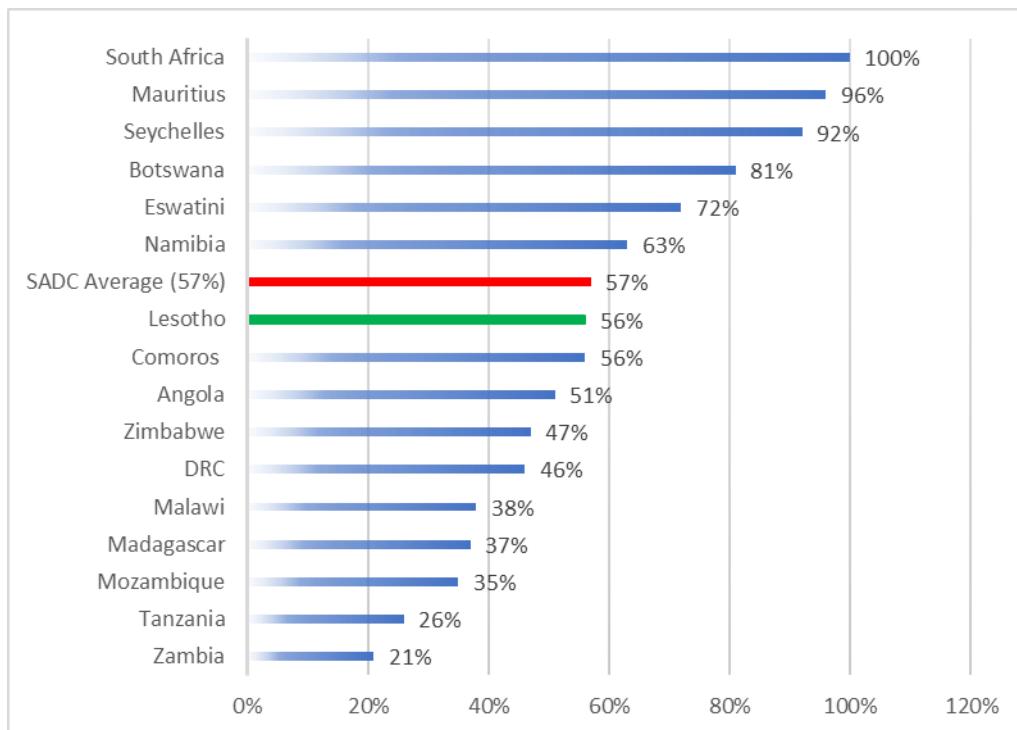


Figure 4 Access to Secondary Education (GER)

Amongst SADC members, Lesotho has recorded the least gross enrolment ratio in secondary schools with only 56% of its children enrolled in this level of education. The enrolment is also below SADC average (57%). This means 44% of Basotho children are excluded from secondary education because they cannot afford school therefore cannot proceed with their studies to higher institutions. Though Lesotho has recorded least enrolment ratio in secondary schools, it has the higher enrolment ratio compared to other SADC members, Mozambique (35%) and Zambia (21%). In at least 10 countries, in SADC region, majority of poor rural boys and girls fail to access and complete secondary school. This implies the need to look closer into the education policies and their implementation modalities to identify challenges which might be inhibiting access to quality education by the identified group of learners and how best to remedy them.

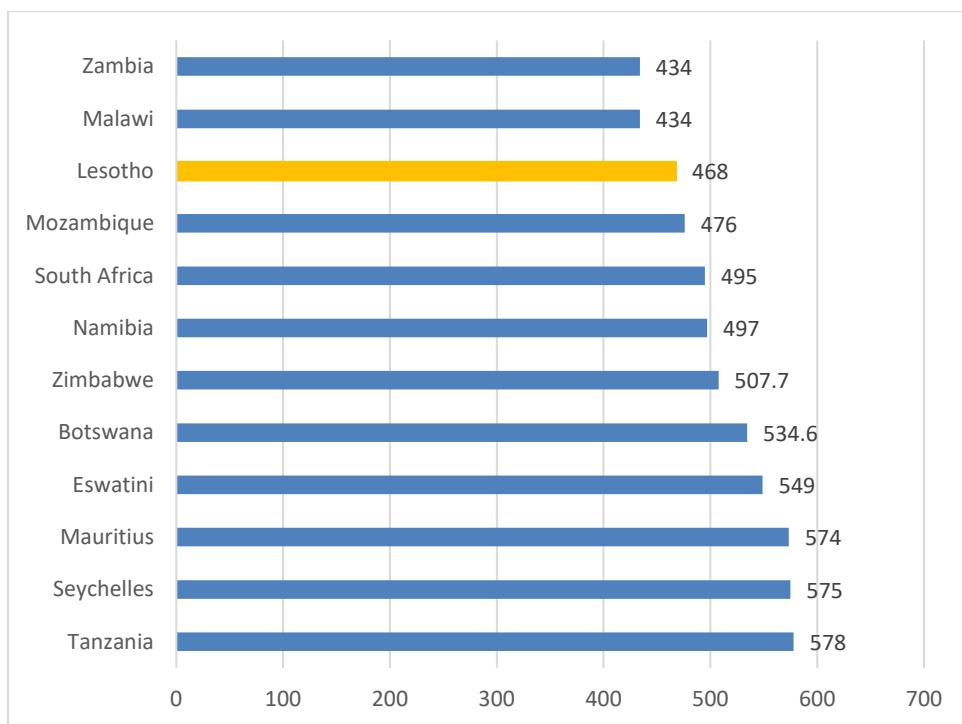


Figure 5 SACMEQ III Reading Scores

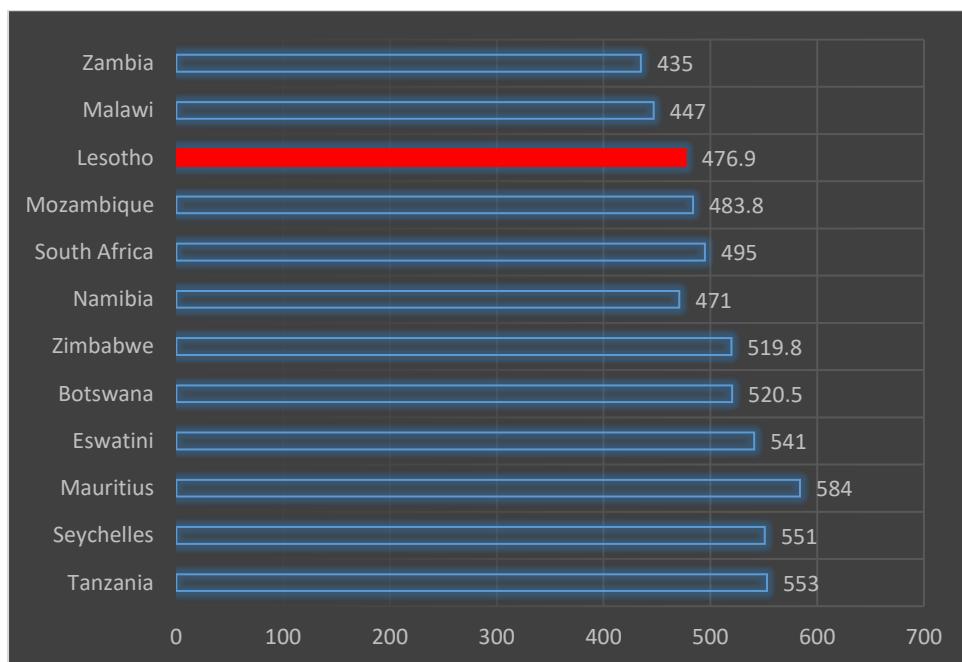


Figure 6 SACMEQ III Mathematics Score

The data presented in figure 5 and 6 shows that children in Lesotho score average in reading and in numeracy compared to other SADC member states who participate in Southern and Eastern African Consortium on Monitoring Educational Quality. This may suggest poor quality of Primary School Education if the reading competencies and achievement in numeracy are considered as levers of quality education. Lesotho is the third lowest in reading and fourth lowest in mathematics scores.

However, it shows an improvement of performance in secondary education as described in the next section.

Based on the information presented in the previous section, it is observed that there is a very good progress on access and participation in primary school education there is still need to address factors which might be influencing the quality of instruction especially in Mathematics and reading. Performance of learners in rural areas compared to those in urban schools has also been observed to be lower (www.sacmeq.org). This talk to the importance of addressing the disparity between resources and other factors which might be responsible for the observed performance.

Education Financing Mechanism against the International Benchmarks

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda encourages countries to set nationally appropriate spending targets for education. National contexts are diverse, but the following international and regional benchmarks are crucial reference points:

- allocating at least 4% to 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) to education;
- and/or
- allocating at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education.

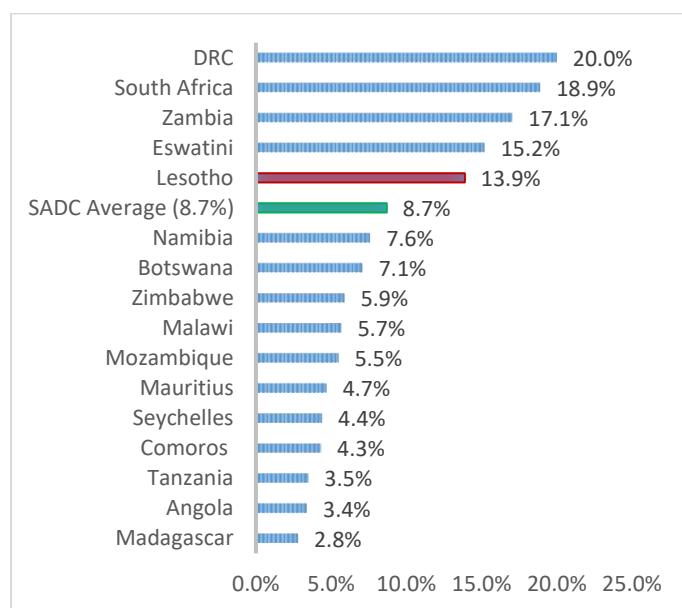


Figure 7 Total Expenditure as a Share of GDP

Lesotho amongst other SADC countries has recorded only 13.9% of its education expenditure as a share of its GDP, which is also higher than SADC average (8.7%). This shows that the government has prioritised education compared to the governments of Botswana (7.1%) and Madagascar (2.8%) despite the mounting pressure on governments to reallocate scarce resources to health and social safety nets which might result in cutting education budgets further. However, despite this relatively good investment in education Lesotho keeps scoring at the bottom in most aspects of quality education compared to its peers in SACMEQ studies (see figure 5 and 6).

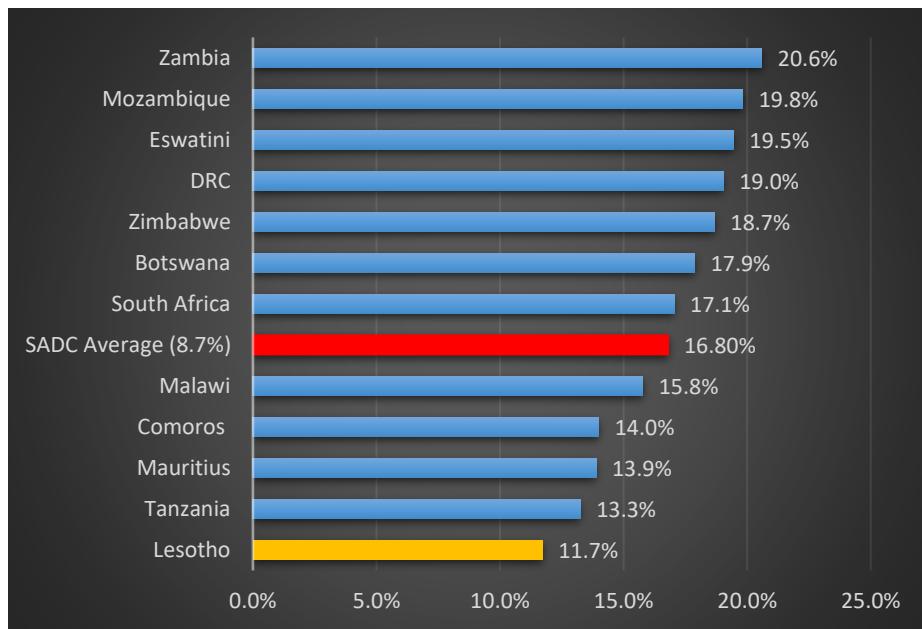


Figure 8 Government Expenditure on Education as Percent of Total Government Expenditure

In all SADC countries, Lesotho has recorded the lowest percentage of 11.7% budget allocation to the education sector compared to its peers in the SADC region. This shows that the government has lower priority for education relative to its other public investments. This might be due to the fact that the revenue source is very low because of an increased focus in other sectors such as health.

The initial focus by education stakeholders on domestic financing has almost invariably been on getting a fair share of tax revenues allocated to education (GCE, 2016). The benchmark of 20% as an indicator of good practice which originated with the Fast-Track Initiative (Birmingham, 2011) is now used by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The Incheon Framework for Action suggests “at least 15-20%” of national budgets should be spent on education, with the provision that low-income countries will need to invest at a higher level or above. This is a good start – and countries that fall short of this should be pressured into increasing the share of government revenues spent on education. However, there are many countries that achieve or exceed this percentage but still have a shortfall in meeting their citizens’ education needs and rights. The reason is simple: a 20% share of a small pie is a small amount. The real challenge is to talk about increasing the size of the pie – and that is determined more than anything by the overall tax revenue collected by governments (NORRAG, 2020).

Table 1: Availability of Education Strategic Plan and Policies in SADC Countries

No.	Name SADC Member State	Availability of Education Strategic Plan	Start Date	End Date	Availability of Inclusive Education Policy	definition of inclusive education	Availability of Non-Formal Education Policy for Youths and Adolescents
1	Angola	Yes	2009	2014	No	na	Non formal education is

							greatly needed in Angola
2	Botswana	Yes	2016	2030	Yes	The right of a student to have equal access to education, including those with disabilities.	Yes
3	Comoros	Yes	2017	2020	No	na	No
4	DRC	Yes	2016	2025	Yes but with some barriers	Educational processes that include all learners including the disabled and meet the need of their involvement through a growing participation in learning, cultural and community life.	Yes
5	Eswatini	Yes to be extended from 2022 to 2034	2010	2022	Yes	Granting of all learners access to high-quality, free and compulsory basic, as well as senior secondary education, considers needs of all learners regardless of gender, financial state, and disability.	Yes
6	Lesotho	Yes	2016	2026	Yes	provision of education for learners with special educational needs including those with disabilities	Yes
7	Madagascar	Yes	2019	2024	Yes	Education for all including those with physical disabilities	Yes
8	Malawi	Yes	2008	2017	Yes	Education system that includes and marginalises disabled children, vulnerable girls and those from child headed households.	Yes
9	Mauritius	Yes	2008	2020	Yes	A right to education for learners with Special Educational Needs or disability	
10	Mozambique	Yes	2020	2029	Yes	A policy that aims to combat exclusion and promote schooling for all children	Yes
11	Namibia	Yes	2017	2022	Yes	the right of all children to quality education, irrespective of their circumstances	Yes
12	Seychelles	Yes	2018	2022 and beyond	Yes	Sets out the Government's vision for giving all children the opportunity to develop and succeed, with particular attention given to those with special educational needs. It is about helping every child to	Yes

						develop his or her full potential, regardless of race, gender or any disability that he or she might have	
13	South Africa	Yes	2020	2025	Yes	System where learners with disability have access to the school of their choice, and allows learners to remain in a mainstream school after they have been diagnosed with a learning disability. Changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners	Yes
14	Tanzania	Yes	2016	2021	Yes	Policy concept means to broaden educational opportunities for children with disabilities and marginalized groups so as to realize their full potential.	Yes
15	Zambia				Yes	continuous process of increasing access, participation, and achievement for all learners in general education settings, with emphasis on those at risk of marginalization and exclusion	Yes
16	Zimbabwe	Yes	2016	2020	Yes	Variety of educational provisions for children with special needs. A structure whereby all the different types of learners learn together. The learners can be identified as slow learners, gifted and those who are physically challenged that's visually impaired, hearing impaired and so on	Yes

As presented in table 1 above while almost all SADC countries have a definition of inclusive education, only 3 countries have definitions that cover multiple marginalized groups. The majority mainly refer to disability when talking about inclusive education. However, overtime; The struggle of people with disabilities has shaped perspectives on inclusion in education. According to the Global Education Report 2019, inclusion permeates the 2030 Agenda, with its call to leave no one behind. Several Sustainable Development Goals and targets refer directly to equity, inclusion, diversity, equal opportunity or non-discrimination, including SDG 4 on education. The 2006 UN Convention on the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) guaranteed the right to inclusive education but stopped short of precisely defining inclusion in education.

Methodology

The study relied on secondary qualitative and quantitative data by collecting relevant documents such as Education Strategic plans, availability of inclusive and non-formal education policies for all SADC member states. Then a purposive sampling was made to select the five countries namely Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The rationale for selection of these countries is that 16 SADC member state are not comparable because, they are not homogeneous. That is to say they are a community of a combination of Anglophones, Francophones and Portuguese with different education systems and at different development stages. Therefore, selecting countries located in the Southern hemisphere partly satisfy the homogeneity condition which makes the study much more comparable. It also allows for generalisation of observations and benchmarking or peer review

Areas of focus, what tenets were used for comparison, why?

A desktop comparative analysis of the design and lifecycles of education policies, strategies and funding models being implemented or already in place, across SADC member states' education systems, and combining qualitative and quantitative evidence was used to support this peer-learning process. Thus, official documents such as education sector strategic plans for all SADC member states, education expenditure, inclusive education and non-formal education policies, and Curriculum and Assessment policies were collected and analysed to establish the perspectives of different countries on inclusive and non-formal education. The definitions of inclusive and non-formal education were analysed to establish how the SADC countries understood and perceived inclusive and non-formal education. This was important as COMSTAT believed that the way a country implement a phenomenon is influenced by the way it had originally conceptualized it.

The following distinct component to the evaluation research strategy was undertaken:

- a) A comprehensive analysis from the review of relevant education documents and policies was made using a search strategy on SADC education ministries websites. This covered terms such as "education policy", "education strategic plans", "and education budget" "Census report" "Human Development Report" "education at a glance" and "education statistics". Based on these initial search results, a large quantity of abstracts of member states policy statement and policy documents were reviewed and reduced to the most relevant for further analysis of the subjects of interest as illustrated in the Table 1.

Data collection

A desktop review of documents and related publications was carried out through searching the publications of five major international bodies: Index Mundi website, UN Human Development Database, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report and individual SADC Member states' websites. Policy documents and relevant publications were analysed to establish key success areas and advocated modalities for the implementation of inclusive and non-formal education in sampled SADC countries. The themes that were generated from the data were used to compare the modalities, successes and challenges of the implementation of CASS.

Data Analysis

A comparative analysis pack comprised of key education policy components such as inclusive and non-formal education policy definitions, regulation, funding and guidance for each member state was developed to support the review and provide richness to the analysis. The themes that were generated from literature review were used to analyse data to reveal implementation modalities, successes, challenges and gaps.

Table 2: Definition of Inclusive and Non-Formal Education in SADC Member States

No.	Name SADC Member State	Material used		Definitions	
		Inclusive Education	Non Formal Education	Inclusive Education	Non-Formal Education
1	Botswana	Policy document	Policy Document	the right of a student to have equal access to education, including those with disabilities.	aimed at creating a cohort of educated people with skills to meet the demands of a developing, rapidly changing society and economy as well as to empower previously disadvantaged and marginalised communities in order to enable them to be self-reliant and to improve their standard of life.
2	Eswatini	Policy document	Policy Statement	granting of all learners access to high-quality, free and compulsory basic, as well as senior secondary education, considers needs of all learners regardless of gender, financial state, and disability.	Granting educational access to children who could not access primary education due to socio-economic challenges at the required age.
3	Lesotho	Policy document	Policy document (draft)	provision of education for learners with special educational needs including those with disabilities	A vehicle towards improving literacy in Lesotho. It has its primary focus on herders who were denied access to basic education in Lesotho but also focuses on other entities of NFE
4	Malawi	Policy document	Policy Document	Education system that includes and marginalises disabled children, vulnerable girls and those from child headed households.	Programme aimed at providing literacy education and continuing adult education with the intention of improving the lives of the most vulnerable population that was missed through formal education system.
5	South Africa	Policy document	Policy Document	system where learners with disability have access to the school of their choice, and allows learners to remain in a mainstream school after they have been diagnosed with a learning disability. Changing	An outcomes-based programme that aims to provide basic learning tools, knowledge and skills, and equip learners with nationally-recognised qualifications. It caters for anyone who did not complete mainstream schooling, and want to

				attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners	attain qualifications in a flexible environment.
6	Zimbabwe	Policy document	Policy Document	variety of educational provisions for children with special needs. A structure whereby all the different types of learners learn together. The learners can be identified as slow learners gifted and those who are physically challenged that's visually impaired, hearing impaired and so on	It refers to planned educational programmes for adults, learners, youths and out-of-school-children that aim at improving skills and competencies, outside but supplementary to the formal education curriculum

Limitations of the Study

Since this was a desktop review, it relied heavily on publications sourced from the internet. Some of these documents could only be accessed through membership subscription. Consequently, some of the recent documents and policies could not be accessed. These were not even found on the databases of the international bodies. Most countries do not measure public and household expenditure in education and the study was limited to aggregated indicators such as education expenditure as percentage of GDP and the share of education budget over the total budget as proxy for public spending on education. This clearly does not give a full picture of who pays for what in education across the member states since this measure excludes the expenses incurred by parents or guardians. The study did not cover the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and its likely effects on regressing the gains made towards achieving SDG goal number four.

PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

All the five selected SADC countries, including Lesotho, seem to understand inclusive education as more than special education. All appreciate inclusive education for its role to maximise learning opportunities for all learners irrespective of their cognitive, mental and physical challenges, to provide them with a chance to participate meaningfully in their communities.

All the six countries also appreciate the need for a conducive environment that would best support the learning needs of all learners. Although the perspectives of these countries look similar, there are some differences which may emanate from their economic and political status. In their definition, Botswana and Zimbabwe have expanded perception of inclusive education to encompass young people and adults who for some reason have failed to complete their Basic education. It would seem therefore that Botswana and Zimbabwe, use access and completion of Basic education as the lens for evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusive education, among others. It must be noted that although Lesotho is a geographically challenging country because of its topology, its perspective of inclusive education seems to be silent about bridging the gap between the rural and urban needs of learners.

Except for Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe seem to understand inclusive education to include children at risk, such as albinos, orphans, children with chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS,

children headed families. In this perspective, these countries perceive inclusive education as maximising learning opportunities for vulnerable and children at risks through formal and non-formal out-reach strategies.

Policy advocated implementation modalities

All the four countries including Lesotho, seem to have implemented inclusive education systems in response to various international protocols and conventions such as;

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
- Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (1990)
- Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994)
- Dakar Education For All Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015)

As a result; one would expect the policies and implementation modalities of these countries on inclusive and non-formal education to be very similar, with only contextual variations. The next section focuses on the ways these countries made sense of these protocols and conventions in their local policies and implementation modalities.

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

All the six countries including Lesotho seem to have conceptualised inclusive education in similar way, as reflected in their different documentations and publications. They all seem to have three main types of schools that cater for educational needs of learners; regular schools, inclusive schools, and specialised schools. However, their implementation modalities seem to differ slightly because of budget constraints (school fee free basic education vs cost sharing school fees between parents and government) and contextual challenges (outlined later in the section).

The analysis of different policy documents and publications has revealed several key Strategic Areas for the effective implementation of inclusive education. These areas; stipulated here will form the basis of the review: **the scope of inclusive education, curriculum and assessment, school infrastructure, training and support of teachers and caretakers, governance, mobilisation of learners with special needs and implementation plan and dissemination, and support for learning.** To understand the similarities and differences in the implementation modalities of each country, each key strategic area will be looked into separately, for the five sampled SADC countries and Lesotho. It was found important to include Lesotho in the analysis to enable the identification of gaps in its envisaged modalities, which would inform the improved framework for advocacy for the implementation of inclusive education.

SCOPE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The policies of all the six countries including Lesotho focus on access and completion of Basic Education by All children of school going age. Lesotho has recently received funding to roll-out grade R in all public schools from Roger Federer Foundation, and South Africa has expanded inclusive

education by introducing Grade R in all schools. Zimbabwe also deviates slightly in supporting inclusive education only at primary school (grade 1-7). It has also been noted that many SADC countries are beginning to include grade R as part of their inclusive education approach. However, because this is a relatively new concept in developing countries, this might not be reflected in the policy documents. It is however, noted that due to time constraint, and advancement in the education system, some of the countries achievements might not be reflected in the policy documents.

Botswana and Malawi recognise the following group of children as vulnerable and therefore constitute inclusive education; children who have never enrolled in schools, drop-outs, enrolled but not benefitting from curriculum design and content/ pedagogy, risk of failing to reach optimal learning potential, young and adult who did not complete basic, Children with disabilities, children from poor families and streets; children who head households, child labourers, the girl-child, Orphaned children suffering from chronic diseases, malnourished children, gifted children, talented children with albinism; children in gender biased communities; children from geographically disadvantaged areas, abused & neglected; living with and affected by HIV/AIDS; displaced or affected by natural calamities ; parents with disabilities; working children; in conflict with the law; teenage or adolescent mothers. It can be seen that in this perspective, inclusive education aligns with the notion of ensuring access and completion of basic education for all citizens regardless of their cognitive, social, economic, mental or physical status.

Malawi identifies factors responsible for exclusion of learners as inaccessible school infrastructure, including classrooms, sanitation facilities, water points, playgrounds, and fences around the schools. Negative attitudes and cultural beliefs. Lack of counselling and psychosocial support services at school and community. These factors suggest the provision of an out-reach campaign for sensitise parents and the public on the need of children to attend schools and the provision of enabling environment that would facilitate access to quality education by all children.

It appears that although the understanding of inclusive education by these countries is similar, the scope of inclusion is different. Perhaps this is because policies of Lesotho, Eswatini and South Africa are not explicit on the scope of their inclusive education. It is worth noting at this stage that because of the challenging geographical terrain, Lesotho needs to consider including learners in the mountainous and rural areas of the country as part of the inclusive education scope. These differences in the expression of the parameters of inclusive education might also suggest differences in the implementation models or modalities.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

All **six countries** appreciate the need to develop a differentiated curricula and pedagogical and assessment strategies, including instructional materials that would cater for diverse needs of learners. This world view may communicate an appreciation of the differences in cognitive and learning styles as well as needs of learners by these countries. The implication of this is that learners with disabilities might be able to participate in the international assessments such as SACMEQ. Currently, they are excluded due to the design and competences which the assessment require. Studies indicate that children with disabilities are excluded by design from the sample and this same trend is happening at national assessment except for end of cycle and term examinations despite the policy advocating for inclusive education challenge.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

All countries, especially South Africa and Lesotho note the need to rehabilitate existing school facilities to accommodate learners with special educational needs (LSEN). They both go further to express the desire to convert public primary schools into full-service inclusive schools and establish resource centres which would support a cluster of schools. This means schools would be accessible to ALL learners, thus enabling them to grow and be socialised with their peers.

To achieve this goal, Lesotho highlights the need for guidelines for construction of new schools. This would ensure that all school infrastructure conforms to standard. His would also enable monitoring and evaluation of the implementation. Once again, there are similarities in the envisaged implementation modalities of inclusive education by SADC countries as exemplified by Lesotho and South Africa. However, there might be tensions between policy intentions and practice, due to the financial constraints, geographical challenges and political will (discussed in detail later under challenges of implementation sections).

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) mandates the protection of ALL children.

The Lesotho Inclusive education policy advocates for the development of guidelines to ensure that all learners are protected against violence and other forms of abuse in schools. It also highlight monitoring of implementation' establishing laws that protect learners with disabilities from exploitation and abuse. This policy aspiration underscores the appreciation by Lesotho to create and maintain a free and safe environment for ALL learners, including those with special needs. Lesotho must be commended for appreciating the importance of creating a conducive learning environment for all learners.

While all countries highlight the importance of differentiated lesson plans and additional support to monitor learning progress and ensure that learners achieve their optimal learning potentials, the models of support for Botswana and Zimbabwe seem to be extensive. Noteworthy in this is the encouragement for learners to attend schools near their homes and the provision of home-base care for learners who may not be able to attend regular schools because of the severity of their disabilities. Although this may sound very expensive, especially for countries which are economically disadvantaged like Lesotho, this approach encourages the support of the community in the welfare of the school and of learners. This may well help in changing the attitude of the community towards education and of learners with special needs.

Department of Out-of School Education and Training (DOSET) will provide these opportunities through specially designed programmes and specifically trained staff to enable learners to complete their education. Transport will be provided for children who would otherwise attend school successfully but are unable to walk the same distance as their peers or to use public transport because of their disability. The support of transport might be a challenge for Lesotho, especially given its geographical challenges. Lesotho may have to devise means by which it can mediate transport challenges for learners who are physically challenged. Perhaps encouraging learners to attend schools close to their homes may alleviate some of these challenges. Perhaps halfway homes may have to be constructed where such learners would be taken care of.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT OF TEACHERS AND CARETAKERS

ALL countries of interest seem to appreciate the need for pre- and in-service teacher training programmes to be modified to in line with the needs of inclusive education classroom practices. Additionally, South Africa and Malawi advocate for training of caretakers and the administration officers in mainstream schools on the tenets and philosophies of inclusive education, as well as how to make early identifications of children who may have disabilities. However, the policies of these countries seem to be silent on educating the public on inclusive education. To align with the model of home-base care and feeder-catchment system advocated by Botswana, where learners attend schools close to home. It might be important to also educate the public on the philosophy and principles of inclusive education.

GOVERNANCE

Lesotho has assumed an integrated perspective to the implementation of inclusive education. In its governance modalities among others, it suggests the development of quality assurance protocol to ensure compliance and continuous quality improvement in the implementation of inclusive education. It recognises the presence of the governance structure which is comprised of the following among others;

- a research monitoring and evaluation agenda to continuously inform a continuous quality improvement endeavour
- different ministries and stakeholders to ensure enrolment of school going children with special educational needs who are out of school and diagnosis and support of learners with special needs
- Develop a framework which integrates different policy aspirations related to inclusive education

Malawi and South Africa have developed the strategic plan to guide the implementation of inclusive education; capacity for Inclusive Education, governance, and management of inclusive education, learner identification and assessment, inclusive Education Management Information System. Teacher Education and Motivation, Partnerships for inclusive education, Enabling environment for teaching and learning. This is very importance as it points the strategic direction for the implementation of inclusive education. However, although Lesotho does not call it the strategic pan, it has also identified strategic areas of focus for the effective implementation of inclusive education.

Malawi and south Africa are thus unique in their approach in that they have outlined the strategy for the implementation of inclusive education, although the degree of details might be different. Maybe this is because this is still to be translated into strategies activities to inform the actual implementation. It must be noted that the strategic plan is particularly important as it enables the development of the implementation budget and the appreciation of the practically of the envisaged plan.

FINANCING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

All the SADC countries have signed the Protocol on Universal Education for ALL. As such Basic education in these countries is free and compulsory. Lesotho has eleven year of Basic education, but

it is only free during the first seven year of schooling. At the post primary level, fees are moderated to a standard to increase access and completion to Basic education Zimbabwe also has free primary education only for the first even years of primary education. South African has twelve years of free education. However, parents are free to send their children for private tuition where they pay school fees which is not moderated.

Challenges of implementation

All the five countries including Lesotho have experienced similar challenges with the implementation of inclusive education, although there are some areas of variation. These seem to emanate from the economic, governance issues or and political challenges. Experience.

BOTSWANA

Botswana cite poverty; disability; poor health, **lack of belief in the value of education**, living in an isolated rural area, homelessness, abuse or neglect, employment or family responsibilities that limit school attendance, being an orphan, **inadequate fluency in the language of instruction**, emotional, difficulties, including grieving, stress and isolation, psychological or behavioural disorders, being in prison or detention, an inflexible school system, an in appropriate curriculum, in-effective teaching methods as reasons for failure in effective implementation of inclusive education. Factors such as **lack of belief in the value of education and inadequate fluency in the language of instruction**, imply the need for an out-reach programme to heighten the appreciation of the importance of education and the provision of additional support for areas of the country or schools where learners have been observed to have a challenge in language structure and use.

LESOTHO

Although Lesotho has a policy which points the strategic implementation of inclusive education, it still experiences many challenges of effective implementation. This ranges from human capacity, expertise economy and political will. Some these are: limited capacity of professionals with expertise on special education. Due to its challenging terrain some of the learners walk long distances to school. In some cases the schools are inaccessible. The curriculum which is not differentiated also excludes learners from access to quality education. Infrastructure in schools not conducive for physically challenged learners also complicates matters. The concept of pre-primary education, is relatively new in the public education system of Lesotho. As such, this sector has insufficient resources to support the curriculum to meet needs of all learners at this stage of learning

Most blind learners are still excluded from the mainstream classrooms. There is still limited expertise for monitoring the learning progress of learners with special needs in both the mainstream and special education. The fact that inclusive education training is not mandatory for all teachers, implies that in schools, most teachers do not have the necessary aptitude to support the inclusive learning environment. Contrary to policy intentions and aspirations, the curriculum, and pedagogy are not differentiated to accommodate learners with special needs. The management of instruction is left to the vies of individual teachers. Only visually challenged learners and those with hearing impairment are supported during examinations.

As can be seen, Lesotho has a myriad of challenges with the implementation of special education. Perhaps this emanates from the low budget allocation for education, which was alluded to earlier.

The absence of a clearly defined governance structure for the management of all issues on inclusive education (T. J. Khoaeane and M. N. Naong, 2015; Mosia, 2014). Perhaps another limitation is perceiving inclusive education as being different from non-formal education.

Malawi has identified the following factors as some of the barriers to effective implementation of inclusive education: inaccessible school infrastructure, inappropriate sanitation facilities, water infrastructure, negative attitudes, and cultural beliefs. Lack of psychosocial support services at school and community levels; disparity in the provision of social support such as cash transfer and bursaries. Lack of expertise (use of sign language) in facilitation and monitoring of learning progress for learners with diverse cognitive, social, and emotional needs. Curriculum not differentiated to meet a wide range of learning needs. Stigmatisation and discrimination. These challenges range from cognitive to social, cultural, and economic barriers.

ESWATINI

Teachers' competency, material and financial resources, teachers' friendliness, efficacy of administration, classroom environment, human resources, collaboration, productive responses to classroom challenges, fairness to all students, playing materials and spacious classrooms. Lack of clear or precise knowledge or understanding of what constitutes Inclusive Education, lack of clear or precise knowledge or understanding of what constitutes inclusive education, lack of training in Inclusive Education, lack of exposure and training in Inclusive Education (Maseko, 2014).

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa also experiences challenges which are similar to their neighbours; cultural barriers to inclusion, school-level barriers to inclusion, policy level implementation. Some teachers believe that learners with special needs should be taught separately, in separate specialised schools/environment. This is due mainly to the fact that teachers are trained for mainstream schools and lack specialised skills to support learners with special needs. This attitude remains despite efforts being made to train a large pool of teachers on strategies on accommodating various needs of learners. The situation is particularly not easy for teachers who have been in the service for a long time, and aged more than 50 years old, to change their pedagogical ways and perception of education of learners with disability. This argument communicates a narrowed view of inclusive education, as it says nothing about other groups of learners who may need specialised support to be able to learn effectively. No appropriate service support for learners with disabilities in schools with seldom in private schools.

Traditional and cultural beliefs, leading to parents hiding their children from the public. The traditional perspective attributes disability to family sin, witchcraft and angered ancestors. These perspectives sometimes lead to the mothers of children with disabilities being shunned and blamed for their child's disability by their families and communities.

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe prioritise back education and reading and numeracy. The degree to which learners are expected to master skills in these competences differ depending on their cognitive and abilities. However, this country still experiences challenges of implementation because of lack of commitment by policymakers towards learners with disabilities. Financial constraints, lack of policy and institutional coordination, and corruption

Gaps in the Lesotho Inclusive Education

The policy seems to be silent on child marriages, sex/gender roles, rural and urban needs/ disparity, gifted learners, Silence on curriculum and assessment equity measures, what should constitute the governance of issues related to inclusive and non-formal education, poor learners, plight of boy child education and children headed families and children with skin conditions such as albinism, psychologists/specialists for diagnosis of learning needs and disabilities, dyslexia, autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome.

PERSPECTIVES ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

For purposes of this study, five countries; Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa were selected to assess different perspectives on Non-Formal Education Policies. First, it is important to understand the scope of Non-formal Education so that the review can be focused on a generic understanding of the Non-formal Education. Non-formal education refers to education that takes place outside the realms of formal education. Non-formal education is often used interchangeably with terms such as community education, adult education and lifelong education.

In the context of Lesotho, LANFE has been recognised as the coordinating body for Non-formal Education and the scope within which LANFE and organisations that work within its umbrella have limited Non formal Education as providing basic literacy and vocational skills for vulnerable groups. This definition is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 which stipulates that; “by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.” SDG 4 further affirms that; these targets can be reached through two primary modalities; access and skills acquisition. What this implies is that; “Equitable **access** to TVET needs to be expanded while quality is ensured. Learning opportunities should be increased and diversified, using a wide range of education and training modalities.” Equally important under this goal is that, “beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution.” It is against this backdrop, that when the review of policies for Non-Formal Education will be reviewed recommendations informed by gaps will be made.

The section below will outline models that exist in each of the 5 countries and then provide recommendations on what could potentially be adopted in Lesotho to improve the Non-Formal Education Sector.

IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The selected countries above recognise the value of non-formal education as a means for making the 'lifelong learning for all' agenda a reality for all and, subsequently, for reshaping learning to better match the needs of the 21st century knowledge economies and open societies. This appreciation aligns very smoothly with closing the gaps identified in not accessing formal education.

Similar to the Inclusive Education section above, the analysis of the different policy documents will follow a similar format and include the following key strategic areas; the **scope of Non Formal Education, curriculum and assessment, school infrastructure, training and support of teachers and**

caretakers, governance, and support for learning. By looking critically at each of the strategic areas, this will help bring insights into what could potentially be adopted in Lesotho as best practices based on models that are working in other countries of similar contexts.

SCOPE FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The five countries have simultaneously identified Non-Formal Education Sector to encompass several programmes such as:

- Adult Education
- Continuing Education
- On-the-Job Training
- Accelerated Learning
- Extension Services
- Second Chance Education
- Life-Long Education

It refers to planned educational programmes for adults, youths and out-of-school children that aim at improving skills and competencies, outside but supplementary to the formal education curriculum. South Africa for example focuses its energy towards adult education specifically on basic literacy for those adults that missed out on accessing formal education; while Malawi and Zimbabwe targets all age groups including school going children that may have dropped out of school. The Non formal education policy in Malawi specifically points to the following as their target group; Out of School Youth and ensures that services for these group are promoted in accordance with the National Youth Policy and Adults particularly on accessing basic literacy education.

Similarly, in Swaziland and Botswana, there are programmes that target the most marginalised groups particularly in the rural and peri-urban parts of the countries and provide Basic Literacy Programme through professionally trained personnel who are dedicated to the course, armed with necessary resources and a broad inclusive curriculum.

This is similar to the Lesotho context, where vulnerable groups such as herd boys, young adults and out of school youth are targeted to obtain basic literacy skills through structured, flexible curriculum within the Non-Formal Education Sector. The rationale for this provision is that given that the country is underdeveloped and maybe disempowered in part because of illiteracy, and this may hinder progress in development that may otherwise be attained through ensuring a literate population regardless of all educational opportunities lost and the geographical background. The country as with other countries highlighted above believe that the ability to communicate, read, write and speak with confidence is the key to the upliftment of the society.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The concept of non-formal learning includes various structured learning situations which falls outside the level of curriculum, syllabus, accreditation and certification normally associated with 'formal learning'. With non-formal learning, however structure and pacing of the curriculum is still critical as it informs skills and knowledge acquired within a certain period, emphasises on the emotional rewards associated with increased love for a subject or increased passion for learning a particular skill.

For all the five countries; special emphasis is placed on provision of either one or a combination of the following as outcomes:

- functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have not had a formal education or did not complete their primary education.
- functional and remedial education for the young people who did not complete their formal education (primary or secondary education).
- education to different categories of population to improve the basic knowledge and skills.
- in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training to different categories of population to improve their skills.
- Aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Different groups in Lesotho benefit from these interventions through structured curricula and assessment in their non-formal or distance education institutions in different parts of the country.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

The issue of infrastructure continues to be one of the biggest gaps in provisioning of Non formal education. This is most prevalent in the parts of the countries that have the majority of vulnerable groups who need the most support in accessing non-formal Education. The objectives of many NFE programmes are seen to be restrictive and ill-considered and provision is not adapted to the real needs of target groups, therefore posing an insurmountable gap to achieve the objectives set out for Non-Formal education. For most developing countries; this has proven to be a continuing trend and Lesotho is not an exception.

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

In Zimbabwe, the policy reaffirms Government's commitment to increasing access to education for all Zimbabweans and facilitating the fulfilment of the learning needs and basic rights of all learners in line with the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Ultimately, this will contribute to human capital development, and will enhance the participation of citizens in the socioeconomic development of the country in line with the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio- Economic Transformation (ZIM-ASSET).

The Kingdom of Eswatini similarly calls for support in lifelong learning which takes place both formally and informally. Through the Ministry of Education and Training in Eswatini, the following initiatives in put in place to support learning in the Non-Formal education Sector:

- All the Adult and Life-long Education initiatives in the country.
- Adult Education with a special focus on provision of numeracy, literacy and life skills
- Distance Learning shall be used as one of the means to provide life-long learning (this is used as a mode of interaction in Sebenta).
- Adult education and Life-long programmes shall be designed to meet the demands of target groups.
- Through all these initiatives, the Ministry of Education perform its co-coordinating function while relevant Ministries and/or institutions directly implement such programmes.

South Africa also conforms to the principles adopted by the other five countries in supporting learning in the NFE sector; specifically South Africa highlights adult basic education and training (ABET) as a

channel to harness a culture of learning and provide the foundations for acquiring knowledge and skills required for social and economic development, justice and equality. ABET provides access to further and higher education and training and employment. All of these structures are critical in ensuring that learning in the NFE sector is continuous and support within the sector is prioritised. While Lesotho also has similar structures; it is important to increase the level of support so that learning can be meaningful and benefit the economy of the country.

FINANCING OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Within the SADC region; Non-Formal Education Sector collaborates with various donors, development partners, UN Agencies such as UNICEF and other stakeholders to mobilize resources for the implementation of the National Non-Formal Education Policy. Donors may also contribute to different components of the Policy directly to implementing partners, schools and communities, guided by the national priorities established by government.

In all the five countries; the Ministry/department of education is the custodian of Non-Formal Education Policy and implementation. As such there is a certain budget set aside by the department/ministry to support policy design, implementation and review. However, it must be acknowledged that this is substantively low across the five countries and similarly in Lesotho. Support from institutions external to government remains the key anchor if implementation of the Non formal Education in country states. Where necessary, financial support from fees, levies and proceeds from income generating projects by local authorities and School Development Committees usually augment funding from the main sources of funding (donors and development partners) for the implementation of programmes at school level.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Some of the challenges identified in the implementation of Non-formal education include; lack of diversity and centralisation of programming; lack of collaboration between the state and NGOs in non-formal education sector; and lack of integration in the provision of formal and nonformal education in some countries.

There is a very low number of teacher graduates in the Inclusive Education and Non Formal Education sector to ensure that these teachers are properly trained and have a well-defined career structure that encourages them to climb up the mainstream education structure ladder. While the policies are very clear on supporting teachers in the NFE and IE fraternity; what is on the ground is quite the opposite. Often ‘graduates’ in the Non-formal sector are excluded in mainstream employment sector – while they would have graduated; the employment sector doesn’t recognise their certificates. It usually takes a really dedicated individual to forge their way into the sector and succeed while a majority of graduates hold on their qualifications with no real promise of securing them a job or capital to start up own successful project.

Physical barriers such as inaccessible school infrastructure and transportation continue to be a huge barrier in effective implementation of Inclusive Education. While budgets started at increasing resources and infrastructure in the education, very little of this budget goes towards inclusive education, as it is silently placed at the lower ranks of priorities of the Ministries of Education and Social Development Budgets leaving NGO’s in the sector to manage the mammoth task of ensuring

that their funding is directed towards inclusive education as part of their mandate. This without a doubt demotivates policy actor and implementers equally and subsequently the needs of inclusive education are not addressed.

Attitudinal barriers also pose massive barriers in implementation. This cuts across different levels of the education system and include insensitivity and discrimination by teachers, principals, peers, parents, and society at large; deficient resources and learning materials for students with special education needs.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Access and Participation in pre-primary and basic education

1. Lesotho is performing fairly well as it has enrolled 33% (which is slightly below the SADC average of 38%) compared to Botswana (20%), Eswatini and South Africa both with 25% in pre-primary education. It should however roll out its Reception classes to at least all the public schools in order for it to reach the levels of Malawi (81%) and Zimbabwe (42%) access in the foundational level of education.
2. Participation in primary education is commendable in Lesotho since it has recorded high gross enrolment ratio (105%) showing the benefits of investing in free and compulsory primary education.
3. Lesotho achieved the second lowest score in both SACMEQ III Reading Score (461) and Mathematics (477) compared to the selected five SADC countries under review.
4. Amongst SADC members, Lesotho has recorded the least gross enrolment ratio in secondary schools with only 56% of its overall enrolment in this level of education.

Education Financing Mechanism

5. Lesotho's investment in education is measured by share of education expenses as share of GDP is relatively high (13.9%) although slightly below South Africa (18.9%) and Eswatini (15.2%) and is also below the international benchmark of 15% - 20%.
6. Compared to the selected five countries and all SADC countries; Lesotho's allocation on education is the lowest (11.7%).

Inclusive Education and Non-Formal Education policies

7. All six countries including Lesotho have key policy documents such as long-term education strategic plan, Inclusive Education policy and Non-Formal Education policy. It should however be noted that Eswatini is unlike other countries as it only has a policy statement.
8. All countries have defined and designed their inclusive education towards addressing the needs of children with disability.
9. Lesotho Non-Formal Education is geared towards improving literacy not necessarily to provide basic learning tools, knowledge and skills. It does not merely cater for anyone who did not complete mainstream schooling and want to attain qualifications in a flexible environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. There is need to advocate for roll out reception classes (grade R) in all public schools to increase access and participation in this level of education for Lesotho be at par with its peers in the region.
- b. Advocacy initiatives for free and compulsory basic education focusing on expanding free education to at least 10 years basic education with no financial barriers attached to secondary education which is one of the primary causes for high drop-out rates during transition to secondary level.
- c. There is need to increase government spending on education to conform with the international benchmarks (15% -20%) on education expenditure as the share of GDP in order to achieve the SDGs.
- d. There is a need to strengthen the Lesotho's education policy to be specific on areas of Non formal education and inclusive education. There is need to improve the Non-Formal education to go beyond improving basic literacy to providing basic learning tools, knowledge and skills. While there are efforts to address all aspects of Non-formal Education, some gaps have also been identified and currently NFE in Lesotho does not fully cater for anyone who did not complete mainstream schooling and want to attain qualifications in a flexible environment as is the case in South Africa.
- e. Stronger collaboration between government and non-governmental organisations is highly recommended to close the coordination gap between these different entities in implementation of NFE strategies. Formation of special "working group on non-formal education" with representation from LANFE, LCN, Donors, development partners, NGOs and government is essential to ensure that the interests of NFE are prioritised.
- f. To conclude, Lesotho needs to expand world view of inclusive education to encompass vulnerable and children at risk. Perhaps this implies the development of an integrated model of Inclusive and non-formal education This can serve as a good monitoring tool towards the achievement of quality and equitable education for ALL.

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