



The Youth Power Hub is a collaborative initiative of the European Union (EU), UNICEF, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), aimed at creating an inclusive and participatory environment that empowers young people in Lesotho to actively engage in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and their engagement is sustained over time.

Running from 2024 to 2029, the Youth Power Hub targets youth aged between 10 to 25, with a special focus on adolescent girls and young women, youth living with disabilities, those in rural areas, migrants, and youth in the diaspora. The initiative seeks to amplify these young voices, promoting stronger and more inclusive communities across Lesotho.

The EU has committed EUR 2,457,000 (LSL 45,083,000) to this initiative, with additional contributions from UNICEF totaling EUR 117,719.618 (LSL 2,372,818). The Hub will operate across all ten districts of Lesotho – Berea, Butha Buthe, Leribe, Mafeteng, Maseru, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong, Quthing, Qacha's Nek, and Thaba Tseka – serving young people nationwide, including those in the diaspora, thorough in-person and online engagements.

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Youth Power Hub Successfully Launched

Following the official launch of the Youth Power Hub (YPH) in September 2024, a dynamic social media campaign was rolled out across Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. This campaign not only boosted visibility for the project but also empowered youth to voice key challenges they face. These insights culminated in the development of a YPH Policy Note, presented to policymakers at the Youth Networking Pitso held in January 2025.

Thanks to a widespread sensitization campaign, 262 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) registered to participate in the YPH, reflecting strong national engagement. These organizations span diverse sectors from community development and climate change to adolescent girls' rights and support for minority groups highlighting the inclusive reach of the initiative.

The success of the YPH launch and social media campaign demonstrates the power of youth engagement and the importance of providing platforms for young voices to be heard. The strong participation from CSOs across various sectors underscores the collective effort to address youth challenges and promote inclusive development.



32 Civil Society Organizations are selection for the Youth Power Hub Incubation Program

To ensure alignment with the YPH's mission, a stringent selection process was led by three capacitating partners: Skillshare Lesotho, Democracy Works Foundation, and Development for Peace Education. In 2025, the selected CSOs are undergoing incubation. The incubation programme primarily focuses on provision of ongoing guidance, resources, and networking opportunities needed to sustain their efforts and scale their impact. The programme further provides comprehensive, ongoing support to help CSOs strengthen and scale their initiatives. It offers individualized mentorship with experienced professionals, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and tailored skill-building workshops. CSOs receive guidance on development of policies and strategies which include monitoring and evaluation, leadership development, resource mobilization, advocacy and governance. The program fosters strategic partnerships, advocacy approach to enhance operational efficiency.

Selected CSOs

Audacious Leaders Network, Astrasapiens, Youth AIDS Free foundation, Makhala Thekiso Girls Foundation, Queer WorX, Lesobeng Youth Development Association, Bacha Re Bacha, The Revolution, Turning Adversity Into Youth Opportunity (TAIYO), Mosepele Foundation Development Foundation, Internet Society Lesotho, Rutanang Community Foundation, Plant One Tree, Youth Hub, Connect/ Bacha Pele Foundation, Endless Empowerment, Partners in Community Development, Lesotho Network of Development of the blind, Hlokomelo Banana, Network for Solidarity Empowerment and transformational for all, The Girls Hub, The Butterfly Sanctuary, African Children Development (ACD), Newtoro Books, Buthe Buthe Youth and Adults Organization, Transform Lesotho Initiative, Lesotho Girl Guides Association, Migrant Workers Association, Agrivision Lesotho, Barali Foundation, Mind of Steel, Thriving Youth Leaders Initiative, Young People's Voice and Support

Key components of the incubation programme



As the YPH continues to grow and evolve, it is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping policies and initiatives that support the youth including adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), people with disabilities (PWD), young diaspora/migrants and other disadvantaged youth.

The institutional capacity of 32 CSOs is assessed

In a groundbreaking initiative, selected CSOs have undergone a comprehensive capacity assessment in partnership with the 3 lead NGOs; Development for Peace Education, Democracy Works Foundation and Skillshare Lesotho . This collaborative effort utilized a jointly developed tool to evaluate key aspects of the CSOs' operations, including financial management, governance, technical skills, and community engagement.

The face-to-face assessments were conducted with CSO leadership, finance, and program staff, ensuring a 360-degree view of each organization's operations. This thorough approach provided valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within each organization.

One of the standout features of this assessment process was the participatory dialogue used to agree on scores. This method fostered shared ownership of the results, creating a sense of collective responsibility and commitment to future development. By involving all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation, the process laid a strong foundation for growth and improvement.

The collaboration between IOM, UNICEF, and the CSOs highlights the importance of working together to build capacity and enhance the effectiveness of organizations dedicated to community service. This initiative is expected to have a lasting impact, driving positive change and development within the assessed CSOs.

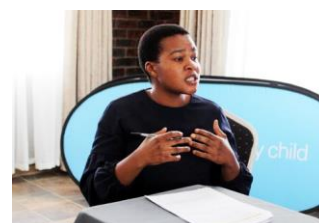


Empowering Youth Voices: Networking Pitso Sparks Dialogue

The Youth Networking Pitso held in Thaba Bosiu on January 29, 2025, was a significant event that brought together various stakeholders to discuss the role of youth in shaping the 2025/26 national budget. The event included representatives from CSOs, youth leaders, and key policymakers such as Hon. Lesaoana Pitso, Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development, European Union (EU) Ambassador H.E. Paola Amadei, and Hon. Mokhothu Makhalanyane, Chairs of Chairs and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio on Social Cluster.

Discussions at the event focused on youth participation in governance, local development, and legislative engagement. The emphasis was on the need for ongoing dialogue between young people and decision-makers to ensure that policies truly reflect youth perspectives. This approach aligns with the YPH's commitment to sustained engagement.

Notably, one-third of the CSOs involved have already presented at public hearings for the National Youth Development Bill and participated in high-level dialogues such as the Voluntary National Review (VNR), including interactions with the UN Deputy Secretary General during her 2024 visit to Lesotho. This demonstrates the active involvement and influence of youth in shaping national policies.





CSOs representatives trained in Advocacy and Leadership



From January 27–31, 2025, representatives from over 35 CSOs representatives participated in an intensive Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop.

This transformative event aimed to empower CSO leaders with essential skills and knowledge to drive positive change within their communities.

The workshop covered a range of crucial topics, including NGO governance and leadership, financial management, advocacy and social accountability, migration and inclusion, and project management, monitoring, and evaluation. These sessions were designed to equip participants with the tools needed to enhance their organizations' operational sustainability and effectiveness.

Following the workshop, participants have begun cascading this knowledge to over 200 CSO members in their respective districts. This grassroots approach ensures that the training's impact is felt widely, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the CSO network.



Over 80 Young Changemakers Push for Educational Reform in Lesotho



On 8 May 2025, in Maseru became a hub of dynamic discussions and visionary brainstorming as over 80 young changemakers, policymakers, and development partners gathered for the Youth Dialogue and Networking Pitso on the Future of Education in Lesotho. Co-hosted by UNICEF, IOM, Democracy Works Foundation, Skillshare Lesotho, Development for Peace Education, and the European Union, this event underscored the critical need for youth involvement in educational transformation.

The dialogue was attended by the representatives from 27 youth-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), senior government officials, including the Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development, Hon. Pitso Lesaoana. The EU was represented by the Ambassador, Her Excellency, Ms. Paola Amadei. The inclusion of youth with disabilities and media representatives further reinforced the inclusive, youth-centered vision for educational transformation in Lesotho.

Participants voiced critical concerns about Lesotho's education system, calling for urgent reforms to make learning more relevant and future-ready. Key issues raised included the curriculum and labour market mismatch, digital illiteracy, life and career skills gap, theoretical entrepreneurship education, limited technological proficiency, and shortage of experiential learning opportunities.

The youth acknowledged the progress made by the Government

of Lesotho, UNICEF and IOM initiatives, such as free secondary and high school education, bursary support for over 60,000 OVC beneficiaries, funding for youth business startups, the GiGA Project connecting schools to the internet, digital learning initiatives, life skills training platforms, and the skills assessment to inform curriculum reviews and skills gap challenge, as well as empowering youth with vocational skills suitable for the market.

Youth leaders emphasized the importance of empowering young people as active participants in decision-making and called for formal mechanisms to integrate youth voices in education governance. They highlighted the potential of youth-led innovations and civil society networks to drive change and called for investment in research, mentorship, and access to emerging technologies.

The Pitso concluded with a unifying message: 'Education is a right, not a privilege. All children and youth, regardless of gender, ability, background, or location, deserve access to quality education that prepares them for life, work, and citizenship. The youth representatives thanked the Government of Lesotho, the EU, UNICEF, and IOM for their ongoing support and issued a rallying cry to fellow Basotho youth.' This event marks a significant step towards a more inclusive, future-ready educational system in Lesotho, driven by the passionate and innovative minds of its young people.

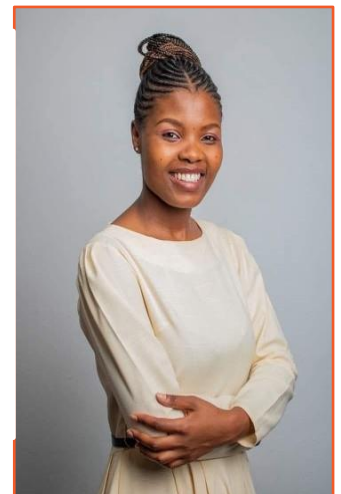


In the words of Change Makers



“NewSETA-Lesotho (Network for Solidarity, Empowerment and Transformation for All) is an NGO based in Maputsoe, Leribe. Its main focus is to empower disadvantaged youth and communities for a better future through social and political advocacy. Having attended the TOT, we gained insights into strengthening our governance and operational frameworks which as a result we established a board of trustees, developed organogram and formalised guiding documents for finance, human resource and program departments. We further assigned new signatories to finance as to enhance transparency and accountability in our organisation. Going forward, we planned to increase efforts in capacitating our staff”. By Matseliso Mpetla

Plant One Tree (POT) is a youth empowered environmental non-profit organization that was established in August 2016. POT aims to rehabilitate and restore the greenery of Lesotho, by planting forest, fruit and indigenous trees in schools and communities. Since 2016, we have planted over 6800 trees in 6 schools and 4 communities. Being part of youth policy-making platforms such as Youth Connekt Africa, Youth Power Hub has sharpened our craft and broadened our networks. In the near future, we look forward to having POT club orchards in all 10 Districts of Lesotho with 10 processing facilities enabling jobs for the youth by owning and steering all 10 plants. We hope the Youth Power Hub will advance our skills, workshops and training clubs to educate and advocate for environmental awareness. Even more so, we hope to contribute to the decision-making platforms verbally and in-writing. By Mpho Lebesa

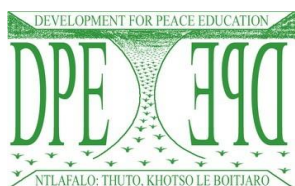


Rutanang Community foundation is dedicated to empowering children and youth through leadership and life skills development through provision a safe and supportive environment that includes recreational activities, a library, and structured training sessions. The most important aspect of being in the Youth Power Hub incubation program has been to gain a deeper understanding and realisation of the power we have as civil society organisations. We need to use our power to be the voice of the voiceless and mobilise resources that are needed for young people. Young people should not only be involved as beneficiaries of our programmes but should participate in the process of their empowerment. After our TOT training, we were excited to recruit a new group of girls from local school during our Dignity Campaign. The aim of the campaign is to give hope and dignity to teenage girls by teaching them various life skills such as leadership and entrepreneurship skills. We believe that the results will be different as we are using the Youth Power Hub approach of seeing young people as leaders of their lives and that they should voluntarily engage and participate in interventions that are aimed to empower them. By Matseliso Lemaoana

The Youth Power Hub Team is composed of the following organizations:



Co-funded by
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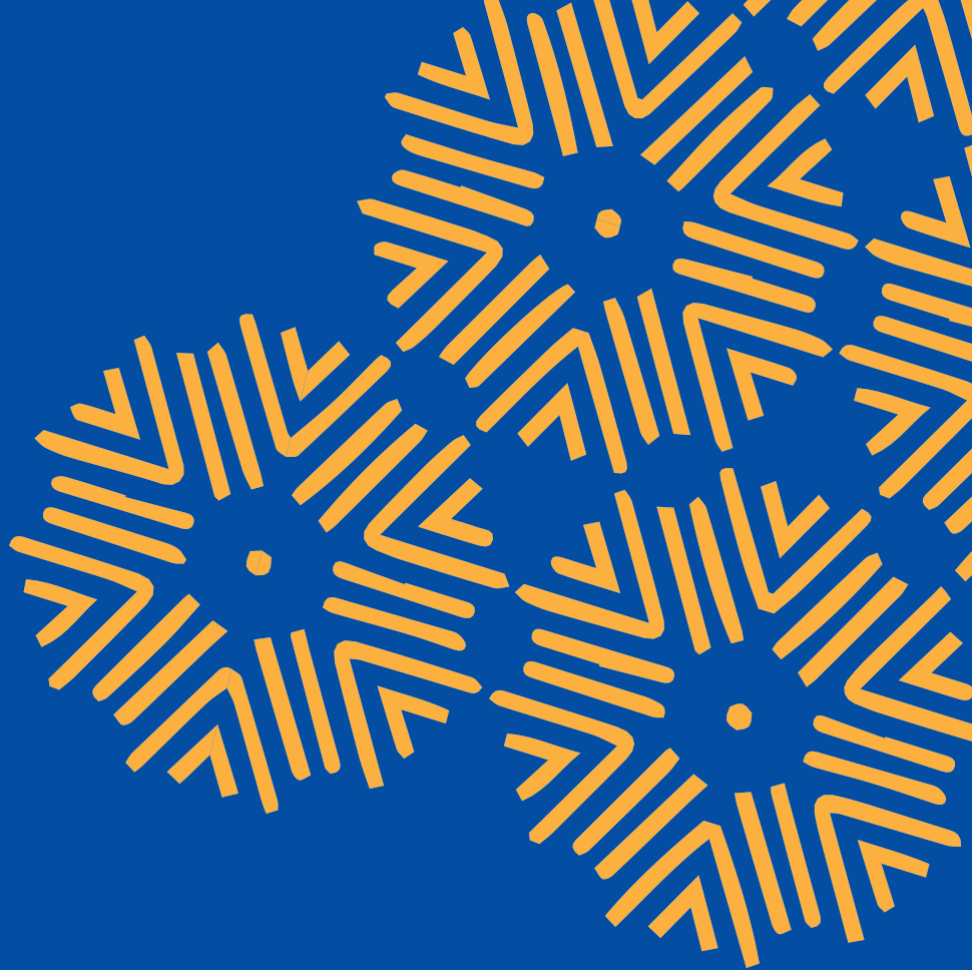
The Road Ahead: What's Next?

The ripple effect of capacity-building initiatives is already being felt across various sectors. With improved governance and strengthened advocacy, youth-led CSOs are increasingly recognized as crucial partners in development. This recognition marks a significant milestone in the journey towards inclusive and sustainable development. As the YPH program progresses, policy notes will continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining youth involvement in national discourse and reform. These policy notes serve as essential tools for ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and considered in the decision-making processes that shape their futures.

The impact of the YPH program extends beyond immediate outcomes. The continuous involvement of youth in governance and advocacy efforts creates a cascade effect, inspiring more young people to engage in civic activities and contribute to their communities. This ongoing engagement promotes a culture of active citizenship and empowers the next generation of leaders.

The next few months, the program will continue to implement the following:

- Incubation program with strong emphasis on NGO Corporate Governance, Financial Management training including Individual mentoring for CSOs
- Cascade trainings in 10 districts with aim to reach 200 members of CSOs, private sector members, Youth outside of selected CSOs, and Youth development Officers
- Theme focus Youth dialogues and Networking Pitsos



This bi-annual newsletter is intended to inform, engage and inspire youth by highlighting the impactful work of youth-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Lesotho. It documents key milestones, amplifies youth voices, promotes transparency, and promotes knowledge sharing on the youth led and youth focused CSOs work.

Do you have a story to share for our next feature? Reach out to us through the email below:

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