



Inclusive Lesotho

Strengthening democracy through enhanced political participation and electoral integrity.



Advancing political stability and inclusiveness in Lesotho's democratic processes.

The European Union (EU) is committed to fostering a more stable, inclusive, and participatory democracy in Lesotho. Financed under the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)**, the **Inclusive Lesotho** initiative supports key electoral reforms and political participation efforts to address long-standing structural barriers and build trust in democratic institutions for a more resilient democratic system.

By implementing priority recommendations from the **2022 EU Election Observation Mission (EOM)**, the project aims to enhance electoral integrity, promote inclusive governance, and restore citizen confidence in the political process.

WHY INCLUSIVE LESOTHO?

- Declining voter turnout and civic disengagement:** The 2022 general elections saw a voter turnout of just 38%, reflecting growing public disengagement with political processes and limited public trust.
- Outdated voter registry:** In August 2024, the IEC began a re-registration process to renew the voter register, requiring eligible citizens to re-register with their identity cards either in person or through an online platform. The IEC verifies that applicants' identity details exactly match the civil registry before approval.
- Gender inequality in political representation:** Although women make up more than half of Lesotho's population, they hold only 26% of seats in the National Assembly and just 21.2% in the Senate. Structural barriers and limited party support continue to hinder women and youth full political participation.
- Limited inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs):** Despite the adoption of the Persons with Disability Equity Act (2021), which aimed to promote inclusion, electoral participation remains low among PwDs due to physical, informational, and institutional accessibility gaps across the electoral cycle and beyond.
- Lack of transparency in campaign financing:** A lack of transparency and oversight in campaign financing and spending creates an uneven political playing field, increasing the risk of corruption and undue political influence.



HOW?

***Inclusive Lesotho** initiative adopts a comprehensive approach that combines institutional strengthening, civic engagement, and inclusive policy reform to promote credible elections and democratic participation:*



Strengthening civic education and engagement:

- Support to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to lead nationwide civic and voter education campaigns.
- Integration of civic education into school curricula to promote early democratic values and participation.
- Targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, including rural communities, LGBTQI, youth, and persons with disabilities.



Promoting inclusive and representative political participation:

- Capacity-building for political parties on internal democracy, inclusive leadership, and gender-sensitive governance.
- Support to women-led organisations and coalitions to advocate for equitable representation and leadership roles.
- Technical and policy support to promote the participation of persons with disabilities.



Enhancing electoral administration and voter registry integrity:

- Technical assistance to the IEC to modernise and secure voter registration systems, ensuring accuracy and accessibility.
- Accessibility audits and ICT upgrades to improve data integrity and build public confidence in the electoral process.
- Support for transparent and efficient electoral operations.



Improving political finance transparency and oversight:

- Facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogue to strengthen campaign finance regulations and enforcement mechanisms.
- Support to civil society organisations and oversight institutions to monitor, report, and advocate for greater transparency and accountability in political financing.

The initiative is implemented by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), UNDP, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police, the Ministry of Education and Training, Directorate of Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO) and Civil society organizations (working in the areas of civic education, media advocacy, disability and inclusion issues and election observation).

BACKGROUND

The European Union (EU) is playing a pivotal role in strengthening Lesotho's democratic institutions through the **Inclusive Lesotho** initiative, which forms part of the EU's broader support under its **Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021–2027**. The initiative contributes to **Priority Area 2: Good Governance, Peaceful and Just Society**.

It advances **global** and **national development priorities**, contributing directly to **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**: **SDG 16** (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) **SDG 4** (Quality Education) **SDG 5** (Gender Equality) and **SDG 10** (Reduced Inequalities).

It also aligns with **Lesotho's National Strategic Development Plan II (2023/24–2027/28)**, which emphasizes **inclusive governance** and **institutional accountability**. The EU support is a grant amount of € 4,000,000 (LSL 85 million) working on national coverage, with targeted outreach in rural and underserved districts over a period of 48 months spanning from 2025 to 2028.



Resources & Contact: EU Election Observation Mission Report 2022 (Lesotho)

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