

# Lesotho Diaspora Engagement Project Wraps up Implementation Activities for Project Closure



Diaspora technical committee. ©IOM 2021/Tsepo Molefi

The 'Enhancing Coordination and Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Effectively Engage with Basotho Diaspora' project has completed its final milestone and the Technical Working Group met for its last meeting on 18 February 2021 to reflect on the achievements of the project and lessons learned to inform future programming and sustainability beyond the project. The meeting was attended by representative of Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations (MoFAIR), Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), Botho University and the Lesotho Council of Higher Education.

The project reinvigorated past unsuccessful attempts by the government to engage the diaspora. Amongst the major achievements of the project, worth to mention is the involvement of Basotho medical diaspora who reached out to support their country to respond to COVID-19 pandemic. At the onset COVID-19 pandemic, IOM in collaboration with medical professional diaspora facilitated access of in-country health professionals to a telemedicine application to enable them to get advice on diagnosis of patients through online consultations with Basotho medical specialists in South Africa.

Through this project, the Government of Lesotho was able to develop and adopt its first National Diaspora Policy. Three hundred copies of the policy have been printed to be distributed across the board, including Lesotho's missions abroad.

The policy was developed with contributions from all stakeholders including a segment of diaspora in the Republic of South Africa. At this meeting, the committee also deliberated on the transition from project guided activities to full ownership of all diaspora engagement activities to the Government of Lesotho.

Beyond the project life span, a fully furnished Diaspora Directorate equipped with Information Technology equipment that include internet modems, laptops and portable hard drives should be staffed to coordinate diaspora engagement. A Basotho Diaspora Network of dedicated diaspora is in the process of registering an association to enable them to engage with their country in an organized manner.

This group received a six days capacity building training supported by IOM to equip them with the skills and knowledge they require to run a successful association. Planning of handover ceremony of office furniture, laptops, printer and other equipment has been resumed.

During deliberations of the meeting, Technical Working Group (TWG) members identified steps to be taken to maintain the momentum of the committee's involvement in the project. One member applauded the commitment and dedication that the TWG showed throughout project implementation. In her words she said, "This is one of the few success stories I have been a part of, and I applaud the TWG for their efforts and commitment to this project".

A number of good suggestions for sustainability of what has been achieved came up and the most important was to encourage the Government of Lesotho to quickly deploy Attachés in Lesotho missions abroad who are capable of dealing with labour, trade and investment issues to support the Directorate.

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