

## **GIZ-Gender Competition 2024 ReNOKA programme**

The ReNOKA programme which is the programme for Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) falls under the Organizational unit, Southern Africa 1300 which falls under the Africa department 1000 headed by Dr Petra Warnecke. Lesotho is not a bilateral cooperation country of the BMZ, and hence falls under the country structure of South Africa, Eswatini, and Lesotho. The GIZ Lesotho portfolio is a regional cluster composed of 4 projects / country packages. ReNOKA /ICM is a component /output under the Transboundary Water Management in the SADC region.

The ReNOKA program is a multi-stakeholder partnership with the participation of several line ministries, civil society, the private sector and a diverse set of international development partners. The focus of the programme is on the rehabilitation and improvement of watersheds across the country, in combination with policy development and legal reforms, institutional development, human capacity development, and coordination. The specific objective of the programme is institutionalization of the Integrated Catchment Management with gender equality principles. As such, one of the key partners of ReNOKA is the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development, specifically the two departments of gender and youth which provide policy direction for gender and youth mainstreaming in Lesotho.

Lesotho is a lower middle-income landlocked country with a population of 2.1 million people and a small economy. Lesotho is ranked 168<sup>th</sup> out of 191 countries in the 2022 UN Human Development Index. Lesotho faces serious social and macro-economic challenges and weak economic growth. This includes high rates of poverty, unemployment, significant food insecurity and low life expectancy, partly due to very high levels of HIV and AIDS which result in inequality and gender disparity. There do exist gender disparities in land and water resources management. For example, customary practices provide that land is allocated primarily to men through inheritance, requiring women to access land through their husbands. However there have been some progressive legal reforms that seek to improve these circumstances. In 2006, the government passed the *Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act* that seeks to eliminate the discrimination previously imposed upon married women through customary law, giving married women the right to own and register land and property in their own names. The Act also provides for the joint title to land for spouses married in community of property. However, there continues to be a disjuncture between the legal provisions and actual practice as political parties resist implementing affirmative action policies. Furthermore, the Constitution exempts customary law from the non-discriminatory principle. This is problematic as customary laws, including marriage, inheritance and land ownership discriminate against women and girls.

The government of Lesotho has adopted a new *National Gender and Development Policy* which guides all interventions on gender development. Institutionally, the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development has the mandate to promote gender equality, to coordinate and monitor gender mainstreaming in national development policies and programmes. Its work is guided by the 2018 adopted *National Gender Policy* which highlights 12 policy priority areas. Implementation of gender policies and commitments, however, is hampered by weak institutional capacities with insufficient resources and expertise in the area of human rights and gender mainstreaming within the Department of Gender.

Therefore, to strengthen the institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming, particularly in the land and water resources management sectors, ReNOKA continuously collaborates with these departments to as well institutionalize best practices and approaches. The idea is that the departments are equipped with the know-how to drive the process post project implementation. One of the missing links in Lesotho is information on the state of gender equality in the space of land and water resources. This hampers a gender responsive approach in planning and implementation of ICM interventions. To meet this need as well as compliment the knowledge that already exists, ReNOKA programme conducted a rapid gender assessment in August 2022 to deepen the understanding of gender dynamics within the project's implementation sites. The process began with designing tools and methodology together with the departments of youth and gender. The activity was conducted through the support of the Gender Focal points, a structure within the department of gender that supports, guides and coordinates gender related activities at district level. The goal was that they have full ownership of the process and are capacitated to lead it post the project. The output of the process is tested gender assessment tools tailored to land and water resources management and a gender assessment report which now informs the development of gender sensitive ICM measures. The report identifies gaps, constraints and

opportunities for the participation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups in the participation and beneficiation from land and water resources. The study report is a resource for ReNOKA and other stakeholders working on ICM. As a consequence, catchment planning units which are line ministries technical experts on land and water resources now understand the core issues of gender at the grassroots level and are informed to consider them in the planning processes. In the short term, there is now an increased understanding of the correlation of gender equality and natural resources management.

In addition, upon realising gaps in terms of capacities for gender mainstreaming, the ReNOKA programme co-designed the gender mainstreaming training manual for the catchment planning units, and the catchment managers. The manual offers sensitisation on gender equality frameworks, gender concepts and practical tools and methodologies for gender-sensitive community engagements as well as gender sensitive design of land and water management measures. The design of the training manual is such that the focal points from the Departments of Gender and Youth deliver the training. Therefore, the manual was developed with their involvement and contributions. The focal points later tested the manual through training of Catchment Planning Units in four sub-catchments where ReNOKA is implementing activities.

ReNOKA is a multi-stakeholder, multi-level programme that leaves no one behind. To demonstrate this, ReNOKA has created multiple platforms where engagement is done with stakeholders to share progress and best practices. Some examples of these platforms are the Inter-ministerial committee of ministers, the Project Steering Committee of principal secretaries of government, and Development Partners Forum to mention a few. It is in these platforms and others that the ReNOKA approach including its contribution to gender equality is shared. These stakeholders are now aware of our gender-sensitive approach and have shown a keen interest in further exchange. Recently, ReNOKA has received an invitation from the regional Women in Water Diplomacy network to share best practices and experiences in gender mainstreaming. The ReNOKA programme has established Institutional structures for ICM, such as the Catchment Planning Units and the National Technical Secretariat which now include the participation of gender and youth focal points. This has opened an opportunity for gender experts to be part of the institutional arrangement for land and water resources management. These structures have expressed appreciation for the Gender Mainstreaming trainings that they participated in. There have been requests to provide this training on a continuous basis, and plans are underway to integrate it in the broader catchment planning process.

The civil society organization (Catholic Relief Services) which is an implementing partner responsible for the mobilization of communities extended a request for guidance and tools for mainstreaming gender into mobilization of communities. This is received by ReNOKA as an indication of trust in our competence in the subject. ReNOKA has supported the formation of community structures (Community Watershed Teams) who lead land and water resources management from the community level. In a documented interview, women within these structures have expressed that due to ReNOKA, they are now involved in community structures where decisions on land and water resources are made. In the same interview, women appreciated the Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) model that has been brought by ReNOKA through (CRS). The model has improved women access to finance and helped them to be more economically empowered. To date there is an equitable representation of women in all community watershed Teams that have been established through ReNOKA, with even a greater participation of women. Within the SILC groups, there is about 80% participation of women. In a women's month commemorative activity held by ReNOKA in August 2023, the Food and Agricultural Organization in Lesotho expressed the need for collaboration on gender mainstreaming issues.

Our work under ReNOKA is guided by national and international frameworks for gender equality and human rights. These include the German Feminist Development Policy which we strive to integrate its principles into our programming. The rapid gender assessment tools mentioned above have been designed based on the 3R approach and the National Gender and Development Policy of Lesotho. Therefore, the gender assessment report which is an outcome of the application of this methodology contains information on status of representation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups in the land and water resources management, status on the extent to which women and youth rights are being afforded, and lastly the degree of resource allocation, particularly productive resources of land and livestock. Another tool we developed on social identities is based on the core principle of intersectionality. It collects data on social identities and how these interact with each other to give individuals an experience of privilege or discrimination. We have again developed and tested tools that

collect information on gender relations, community engagement dynamics as well as interactions with land and water resources. These tools seek to help collect gender disaggregated information that will bring an understanding of who participates where and why. Who has access to productive resources and why. Finally, whose rights are being afforded and why. Furthermore, we have developed a 3R-based tool to guide the selection and prioritization of land and water management measures. Alongside these, in collaboration with a local CSO (Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education) we have held a forum for the engagement of men to sensitize and involve them in the fight for women empowerment and gender equality. This was to create a platform to address unhealthy patriarchal norms that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls.

Collaboration is important to ReNOKA because the aim is to institutionalize processes so that beyond the project phase there is continuity of action. As such, we have been working very closely with the government structures driving the mandate of gender equality, i.e. the Department of Gender. Firstly, we have ensured that there is representation of the gender institutions in the ICM institutional framework from the national down to the subnational levels. An example is the National Technical Secretariat which is a national level ICM structure, and the Catchment Planning Unit which is a sub national ICM structure. This ensures that in all ICM processes there is inclusion of gender equality principles from the onset. We work with CRS who help to ensure that there is an equitable representation of women and men in the formation of community structures at the grassroots level. In addition to this, we have sub-granted community-based organizations who will implement livelihoods measures on which some will improve the participation of women in agribusinesses, hence their economic empowerment. We have partnered with other civil society organizations such as the Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education to hold men engage dialogue for the herders which are notorious for perpetration of Gender Based Violence in the rural areas. Upon the realization that GBV negatively affects the participation of women in project-related community processes, we are currently seeking alliance with the Partnerships for Prevention Program (PfPII) of GIZ for collaboration. What unites us is our common goal to align with national and international gender equality frameworks. Also, as different entities, gender equality is a common key feature of our work respectively. Furthermore, as partners under ReNOKA, we are bound by the project objectives which are gender sensitive, as well as targets which are elaborate on the socio-empowerment of women and youth. Our key challenge is that there are different levels of capacity and approaches for dealing with gender topics which can cause disharmony in our collective approach. We are overcoming this challenge by the development of ReNOKA gender mainstreaming guidelines that all partners subscribe to. We develop these guidelines in collaboration so that there is co-ownership. We have therefore been successful in reaching a common agreement on how we define the gender topic under ReNOKA.

The team takes the opportunity of gender commemorative activities such as the women's month to create internal space to reflect on gender equality. During these dialogues we discuss gender equality as the key feature of GIZ as well as how to operationalize it in our project implementation. Because we work very closely with the Department of Gender, the space is usually opened to their participation to contribute to an enhanced understanding of GIZ as a company dedicated to the promotion of gender equality. In a recent commemoration of the women's month, the project had extended an invitation to other implementing partners to similarly build a shared understanding. The programme also supports the participation of our internal gender focal point in internal gender training to build capacity for dealing with the topic internally. To operationalize the gender equality principles, the team has developed a code of cooperation along with specific gender equality principles which are monitored on a continual basis.

The challenge faced by the country component is that since gender is not a principal objective of the programme, it can be challenging to strike a balance in terms of the level of investment to place on the topic. As such in many cases, inclusion of gender related activities seems like an additional or even irrelevant task. However, we have been able to address this by continuous dialogues within technical teams where we as a team discuss the linkages and relevance between gender equality and natural resources management.

To understand roles and responsibilities of the GIZ gender focal point assigned to the project and the GIZ gender architecture, there has been cooperation with and guidance by the Gender Focal point from the Country Office. Collaboration has also been made with the GIZ project PfPII on the organization and planning of events around 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence. These are internal events where space for dialogue is created for gender topics. The key success factors have been an internal alignment with the GIZ gender strategy, collaboration to leverage on partner experiences and continuous learning through dialogues.