



Kingdom of Lesotho

**National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy
2014/5 – 2018/9**

Maseru, Lesotho

June 2014

Foreword from the Minister of Social Development

Children make up more than half of Lesotho's population. Children are our country's greatest asset and every one of these children has the potential to make a positive contribution to the future of the Basotho nation. Yet, for children to be able to live their lives fully and give their all to their country, each boy and girl child must be protected from harm.

Sadly, currently there is anecdotal evidence that at least 10,000 thousand children in Lesotho annually face the risk of abuse – physical, emotional and sexual. Many more children face violence, neglect, abandonment and exploitation. Although most families work hard to care, protect and nurture their children, the reality is that the scourge of HIV, chronic poverty and other vulnerabilities make it difficult for many families and communities to provide such protection. It is with concern that I note, from many recent reports and assessments undertaken by my Ministry in collaboration with other ministries and civil society partners, that many cases of child abuse go unreported and that the few that are reported are not always effectively followed through.

Lesotho has already demonstrated its commitment to protecting vulnerable children and families. The Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011 sets out a commitment to protecting all children – those in need of care and protection and those who are in contact with the law, either in conflict or as victims – with a clear set of actions and commitments. A recent costing exercise of the CPWA estimates the cost for implementing in a phased manner the different services envisaged by the CPWA and is a tool to prioritise planning, decision-making and investment in child protection.

The country has already committed to a National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children 2012 – 2017, which seeks to strengthen local systems to respond to the vast majority of the needs of our vulnerable children using a family-centred approach. However, it has become clear that we must look at abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect directly – the causes of harm and the responses require more attention than has currently been placed on this component of vulnerability.

This Multisectoral National Strategy for Child Protection builds on a mapping and assessment of Lesotho's current child protection system, which drew together many stakeholders to consider how best to move forward on child protection in a coordinated and sustainable way. The mapping and assessment highlighted strengths in communities and in services already being provided. It also highlighted the need for us all to focus more on prevention of harm, on a coordinated response and on ensuring that we are all more accountable for identifying, reporting and taking comprehensive and appropriate action. Until now, there has not been one coherent strategic vision to address child protection in its entirety, although elements of child protection are addressed in a range of strategic plans.

The Strategy set out below, which is accompanied by a costed Plan of Action for the first three years, initially focuses on building up the foundational elements of the system, generating evidence and ensuring delivery and results in core priority areas. The fourth and fifth years focus on consolidation and delivering quality services at scale.

The time to act has come. I call for a joint effort from families, communities, children themselves, and all other actors to think and act 'child protection'. None of us can stand by and allow maltreatment of children to be unchallenged; all of us must act together if we are to effectively build a wall of protection for children.

Mrs Matebatso Doti
Honourable Minister of Social Development

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Mrs. Limakatso Chisepo
Principal Secretary
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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CGP	Child Grants Programme
CGPU	Child and Gender Protection Unit
CPWA	Children's Protection and Welfare Act
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCPT	District Child Protection Team
GoL	Government of Lesotho
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IECCD	Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development
JTC	Juvenile Training Centre
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOHLRCA	Ministry of Law, Human Rights and Constitutional Affairs
MOJCS	Ministry of Justice and Correctional Service
MOLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MOLGC	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship
MOP	Ministry of Police
MOPS	Ministry of Public Service
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
NOCC	National OVC Coordinating Committee
NPSD	National Policy on Social Development
NSPVC	National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children 2012-2017
OVC	Orphans and other Vulnerable Children
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1. Introduction and rationale

1.1 Introduction

Children comprise more than half of Lesotho's population. Every child in Lesotho has the potential to make a positive contribution to the future of the nation. For this to happen, children must be protected from harm so that they can grow to their full potential.

There is an urgent need to protect children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. The limited data available on child protection in Lesotho portrays an alarming situation. An estimated 10,000 boys and girls experience sexual abuse every year, one in seven face physical abuse¹ and of the more than one in three children who do not live with their biological parents, many risk disinheritance, discrimination or neglect.² The experience of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect reduces a child's emotional, intellectual and physical development. Conversely, when the cycle of harm is stopped and children and families receive support and rehabilitation, they can recover and thrive.

In order to achieve Lesotho's social and economic development vision for 2020, articulated through Lesotho's *Vision 2020* and the National Strategic Development Plan 2012/3 – 2016/7 (NSDP), it is imperative to reduce child neglect, abuse, exploitation and violence. Education, health and youth employment goals, in particular, depend on this. The introduction of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011 sets out a comprehensive legal framework for all children's right to protection and welfare.

Lesotho has not, until now, had a strategy to directly seek to reduce the scale and impact of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect perpetrated against children. Many policies and strategies in different sectors acknowledge the existence of and need to address abuse. The *National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children 2012-2017* (NSPVC) classifies violations related to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect as a driver for childhood vulnerability. The NSPVC focuses on legal and judicial support to children facing potential violence and exploitation, as well as broader support to strengthen families caring for children who are not living with their biological parents. The draft *National Social Protection Strategy* emphasises the need for social support services as a necessary component of building household resilience. The *National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2011/12-2015/16* recognises that coercion and violence in sexual relationships are a key barrier to successful HIV prevention and treatment. The *National Strategic Plan for Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development 2013/2014 – 2017/2018* emphasises the fact that a child's first six years are the point at which his or her long-term development is most likely to succeed or be significantly impaired and a strong child protection response is core to this.

However, these strategies do not provide detail on what must be done and how to prevent and respond to abuse. This is essential if children's rights to protection and their opportunity to benefit from education, health, economic development initiatives are fulfilled.

The *National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy 2014/5-2018/9* builds on these initiatives, placing child protection at centre-stage and establishing the protection components, which are a necessary complement to existing national strategies in social development, social protection, health and education.

¹ Ministry of Social Development (2012) *Situation Analysis of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Lesotho 2011*

² Lesotho 2009 Demographic and Health Survey

1.2 Development of the National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy 2014/5 – 2018/9

This Strategy was envisaged in 2013, as part of Lesotho's social development policy and to support implementation of the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011.

The Strategy builds on a mapping and assessment exercise of Lesotho's child protection system commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development, conducted in 2013/4 and overseen by a Task Force of key ministries and civil society. The mapping and assessment process first identified the current child protection status in Lesotho,³ then identified systems-building priorities to build on and improve the current situation. The findings and strategic priorities were reviewed and validated by stakeholders at two national workshops, in March and again in April 2014.

The mapping and assessment process found that there is a strong underlying framework to protect children, but the framework has not been translated into sufficiently meaningful results for children. The report noted insufficient data on how child abuse occurs, insufficient coordination of planning and service delivery, insufficient focus on prevention of child protection violations and an over-reliance on responding to problems that have already occurred. A key challenge noted at all levels was insufficient accountability to children who are at risk of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect, with limited mechanisms for promoting commitment and enforcing professional accountability.

The mapping and assessment builds on the commitment made in the *National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children 2012-2017* to take a systems approach to protecting children. A systems approach enhances sustainability and makes it more possible to optimise efficiency and effectiveness. A systems approach builds alliances and encourages multisectoral collaboration at all levels. Focusing on the 'system' within which children live – recognising how families and communities are at the key of the response – promotes longer-term benefits for children, by focusing on responses to the individual at-risk child at the same time as seeking to prevent further abuse for all children through a broader prevention approach and by meeting the specific needs of child victims, whilst promoting family and community resilience.

1.3 Rationale for a child protection system

Child protection is the protection of all children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional or related to stigma, including disability and HIV-related stigma.⁴

Child abuse can happen anywhere: within the home or community in public spaces, on the street or in venues where people gather; within institutions such as schools, churches or hostels, police stations or care institutions; in places of employment and virtually, through exploitation of children in the media or social networks. Therefore, protecting children requires working with those who are closest to children in all of these settings to maintain the strong caring and nurturing that most children receive and to give people closest to children the skills to act when harm is suspected, and to act swiftly and fairly when harm occurs.

Child protection requires a clear system that includes: a set of laws, policies and regulations that are coherent in the way that they protect children; policies and regulations to ensure that families, communities and front-line service providers have the skills, mandate and resources to prevent and respond to abuse when it occurs; coordination so that interventions reach across all actors that need to be involved – social welfare, justice, education, health, labour, faith-based groups, chiefs and other leaders; and mechanisms to ensure

³ Ministry of Social Development (March 2014) *Mapping and assessment of Lesotho's child protection system: report of key findings*

⁴ The Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011 defines child abuse as: Any form of harm or ill-treatment deliberately inflicted on a child, and includes, assaulting a child or inflicting any other form of deliberate injury or harm on a child; (b) sexually abusing a child; (c) committing an exploitative labour practice in relation to a child; (d) exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may socially, emotionally, physically or psychologically harm the child; (e) exposing a child to physical or mental neglect; (f) abandoning or leaving a child without visible means of support; and (g) subjecting a child to harmful substances such as alcohol and drugs.

accountability, so that all actors fulfil their responsibilities and that there are consequences when these responsibilities are not fulfilled and when children are harmed.

The diagram below illustrates how these different components are all necessary. The vision of the system below is not yet in place in Lesotho, although elements are in place. The proposed strategy seeks to work towards this system.

Figure 1: Key components of Lesotho's proposed child protection system



2. Context – child protection in Lesotho

2.1 Scale and scope of child protection issues facing children in Lesotho

An estimated 10,000 children experienced sexual abuse and in more than one in twenty surveyed households, children had experienced physical violence in the year before the 2011 *OVC Situation Analysis*.⁵ Of the approximately 125,000 children who were identified in 2011 as being vulnerable to specific, serious challenges, 30,000 are in urgent need of targeted assistance, much of which is child protection-specific. More than one third of children in Lesotho (34%) do not live with their biological families.⁶ Whilst many are doubtless in loving homes with extended family, there is no information about which of these children risk stigma, discrimination or neglect. There is insufficient data collection, reporting and analysis to be able to confidently prioritise key interventions or measure the impact of child abuse. Notable gaps include the scale, nature and scope of neglect and stigma, experiences of children living without appropriate care (those who are living with extended family but lacking legal protection, those in kinship care but facing abuse, discrimination or neglect, those in institutional care), the scale and scope of physical and sexual abuse against both girls and boys, disability-related child protection. Where data is collected, it is not easily shared across sectors, making it impossible to understand the multi-faceted nature of child protection. Without this data, decisions on human and financial resource allocation cannot be based on quantitative evidence.

2.2 Current response to child protection

Community groups are the front line of providing support to children at risk of or experiencing abuse. Some support groups undertake child protection activities, such as psychosocial support and legal assistance. In some communities, civil society organisations (CSOs) have established children's groups. There is limited information about the impact of this work. Gaps in coverage include sensitisation on abductions, witchcraft accusations and violence against children, including in the home. In general, there is limited coverage of services and there is a stronger focus on response interventions than on prevention or rehabilitation, although in the long-run, if more effort were placed on effective prevention interventions (likely to be implemented by community support groups or other informal mechanisms), there would be a greater impact.

There are around five social workers per district,⁷ all with a mandate to deal with children's issues, alongside all other social welfare issues. Children in contact with the law are first dealt with at a police station, with two officers representing the CGPU per district. Restorative justice programmes have been piloted and are to be scaled up. The national Child Helpline is open seven days a week but relies on volunteers to maintain the phone lines. Lack of reporting means that people within the community, who should be the lynchpin of the child protection system, are not able to follow cases through. Responses remain *ad hoc* and depend on individual decisions without guidance or accountability. Absence of a case management system and sufficient service coverage, and absence or non-compliance of reporting protocols makes it impossible to assess the extent to which children receive an effective response.

2.3 Child protection service delivery and coordination

Laws and policies are largely in place and supportive of child protection, although at community level there are conflicts, due to the application of a dual legal system. This is especially the case relating to issues of sexual violence or inheritance. Whilst the framework is strong, there are significant gaps in translation into action – there is a need to focus on translation of the CPWA from law into practical regulations, guidelines

⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2012) Situation Analysis of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2011. The figure identified in this survey is markedly lower than figures in other similar surveys, therefore the numbers are likely to be a conservative estimate.

⁶ Lesotho 2009 Demographic and Health Survey

⁷ The figure refers to statutory social workers employed by MOSD. In some districts, there are likely to be additional qualified social workers

and standards and a need for development of minimum standards for all those involved in child care and protection.

Coordination of vulnerable child responses is the responsibility of the National OVC Coordinating Committee, originally formed to implement Lesotho's Orphans and Vulnerable Children's policy. The NOCC Secretariat is hosted by the MOSD, although funding remains donor-dependent. The mandate of the NOCC includes elements of child protection, although not exclusively and the NOCC has a wider mandate for other children.

More must be done to harmonise and simplify different sectoral responsibilities for child protection. The District Child Protection Teams lack formal status within the district administrative mechanism and sectoral ministries. At community council level, there is no recognised child protection coordination mechanism. Overall, there is limited formal responsibility for child protection within each ministry that has a role in protecting children (such as health, education, etc.). The child protection workforce must be viewed as a whole, across social development, justice, police, education, health and civil society. These actors must work towards common results in preventing and responding to child protection violations. Staffing levels and capacities are weak across all sectors, with gaps in core child protection competencies.

2.4 Accountability for delivering on child protection

Children are protected when every person, adult and child, makes it his or her own responsibility to act if a child appears to be at risk of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. This responsibility is not fully reflected in the attitudes and practices of adults who should be – yet often are not – the first point of safety for children. Adults within the community should promote an environment of zero tolerance of abuse and professionals should fulfil their mandate to ensure that children are protected from abuse. There must be more information about the reasons for why abuse occurs and what best prevents it (with a focus on family and community protective mechanisms). There is need for a simpler, manageable monitoring and evaluation system that gathers key information in one place, but which can then be used by different role players to refine their own actions. Delivering on child protection requires resources – currently, the lack of child-specific budget data overall makes it hard to identify need and measure impact.

Whilst there are budget inputs within MTEFs for the ministries, these are largely indirect, with some exceptions. Greater clarity about what the core child protection expenses are should make it easier to monitor and track expenditure and, with a parallel improvement in monitoring child protection impact, to invest sufficient funds.

2.5 An integrated response to children

No individual sector can take responsibility for protecting children – the risks cover many sectors and therefore the response must cover all sectors, as Figure 2 on the following page illustrates.

The following policies and strategies offer significant synergies with this Strategy. In some cases, the National Child Protection Strategy seeks to work as a complementary or supporting component to the existing strategic plans. Key synergies are highlighted below:

National Social Development Policy 2013-22 (pending Cabinet approval)

Core focus of policy: To promote interventions that are preventive, protective, promotive and transformative in orientation in order to improve the welfare of the people, particularly vulnerable groups, with a focus on poverty and inequality reduction, empowerment for self-sufficiency, protection of vulnerable groups to ensure fulfilment of their rights and realisation of their full potential.

Child protection synergies: Policy priority area 3 focuses on protection of children from abuse. The *Policy* links social assistance (within a social protection framework) and the necessary social services to carry out this work; alongside strengthened community capacity to cope, through community development initiatives. Child protection is central to social services and strengthened community capacity to cope.

Figure 2: The multisectoral nature of child protection risks



National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children April 2012 - March 2017

Core focus of strategic plan: The core guiding document for Lesotho's response to vulnerable children, coordinated by the National OVC Coordinating Committee.

Child protection synergies: Child protection is a core area of the strategy, with two focus areas being legal and judicial protection and family and household strengthening for children without adequate care. Where the *National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy* will directly contribute to the NSPVC's operational strategies and outcomes results, this is clearly referenced in the Strategy.

Draft National Social Protection Strategy (action plan to 2018/9)

Core focus of strategy: To provide comprehensive inclusive social protection that reduces poverty, vulnerability and inequality, increases resilience to risks and shocks, promotes access to services and to the labour market, and stimulates economic growth and social stability.

Child protection synergies: Places primary focus on social assistance but refers to plans and policies in the area of 'social care services', including child protection. The Strategy notes that the social welfare workforce offers "significant frontline delivery potential, especially if such workers can be gradually relieved of their current burden of mundane administrative duties... so that they can concentrate on their areas of professional expertise," which includes child protection. The proposed universal infant grant is linked to attendance at maternal and family health care services, birth registration and nutrition services. These provide incentives on which to "hook" important interventions, such as early childhood care and development and birth registration. These are an important referral point into, for example, family-based abuse prevention programmes and parenting for vulnerable families. Expansion of the old age pension would increase coverage of the large number of elderly people who are caring for children (19.5% of children live with only one caregiver who is aged 65 years or more).

National Strategic Plan for Integrated Early Childhood Care and Development 2013/2014 – 2017/2018

Core focus of strategic plan: Emphasises the importance of supporting parents as the first line of defence in the protection of children.

Child protection synergies: The IECCD Strategy stresses the importance of linking with child protection services, whilst IECCD interventions depend on child protection expertise for both prevention programming for vulnerable families and early referral in cases of suspected abuse. Current operational plans within the Ministry of Education and Training include dedicated human resources focusing on child protection for IECCD.

National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS 2011/12 – 2015/16

Core focus of strategic plan: Sets targets for treatment, care and support, elimination of mother to child transmission and focused prevention interventions. The Strategic Plan is multisectoral.

Child protection synergies: Closely linked to child protection through its focus on addressing violence and gender-based violence and its primary prevention work with adolescents. Whilst the National Strategic Plan seeks to reduce the proportion of women aged 15-49 who experienced physical or sexual violence from a male intimate partner in the past 12 months by 30%, this is an opportunity to understand and address the drivers of adolescent sexual and gender-based violence. This also aligns with the Ministry of Health's Adolescent Health Policy.

The **Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011** sets out statutory responsibilities for family, community and state in relation to the protection and welfare of all children, including children in contact with the law.⁸

⁸ Children in contact with the law are all children who have some form of contact with police or judiciary – as alleged perpetrators of an offence, as witnesses of a crime, as victims of a crime and children in need of legal protection, such as when in need of placement in alternative care or receiving social work intervention.

3. Strategic framework

Vision

Children in Lesotho live in an environment free from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect, within supportive family settings, so that they have their rights fulfilled and their full potential realised.

Goal

By 2019, provide a comprehensive coordinated system that prevents and responds to abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect of children and protects children in contact with the law.

Guiding principles

The *National Multisectoral Strategy for Child Protection 2014/5–2018/9* is guided by the following principles:⁹

- 1.1.1 'Best interests' of the child: All actions taken for and on behalf of children will be done to ensure that their own safety and well-being is the prime consideration and over-rides all other considerations.
- 1.1.2 Combating discrimination and promoting gender equality: All children will be treated equally, regardless of their age, sex, family status, physical or mental health status, or other issue of difference. Child protection programmes will actively address social, cultural and economic factors that exacerbate disability and will put in place programmes that redress such inequalities.
- 1.1.3 Listening to children's voices: Families and community systems will be strengthened to ensure children's participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of child protection actions.
- 1.1.4 Empowerment of families and communities: Family and community are the first and most valuable source of protection and support for children; families and communities will be supported to provide this care and support, through investment in family and community mechanisms as a primary and central part of a child protection system and, where necessary, through providing technical support or delivering interventions that assist families and communities to better provide care and protection. At times, families undermine a child's safety and, in such cases, children should be supported to stay in settings that respect and promote family-centredness and cultural identity.
- 1.1.5 Leadership commitment to tackle child protection: The Strategy calls on leaders at all levels to lead from the front in protecting children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.
- 1.1.6 Partnerships: The Strategy promotes partnerships for collaboration and coordination, with all government ministries, civil society organisations, development partners and the private sector.
- 1.1.7 Sustainability and effectiveness: The systems building approach seeks to increase the impact of the limited resources available in the country at both formal and informal levels.
- 1.1.8 Developing an evidence base: The Strategy emphasises the importance of generating evidence about the scale and scope of child protection risks and ensuring that this evidence is used to inform future planning. It is especially important to ensure that actors report and share the data that they are collecting in their routine tasks.

⁹ These are aligned with NSPVC principles and the Ministry of Social Development Policy cherished values.

4. Strategic objectives, results and indicators

4.1 Strategic objectives

The Strategy focuses on three main areas, which together seek to achieve the goal set out at point 3.2. The diagram below illustrates how the guiding principles are essential for achieving the goal.

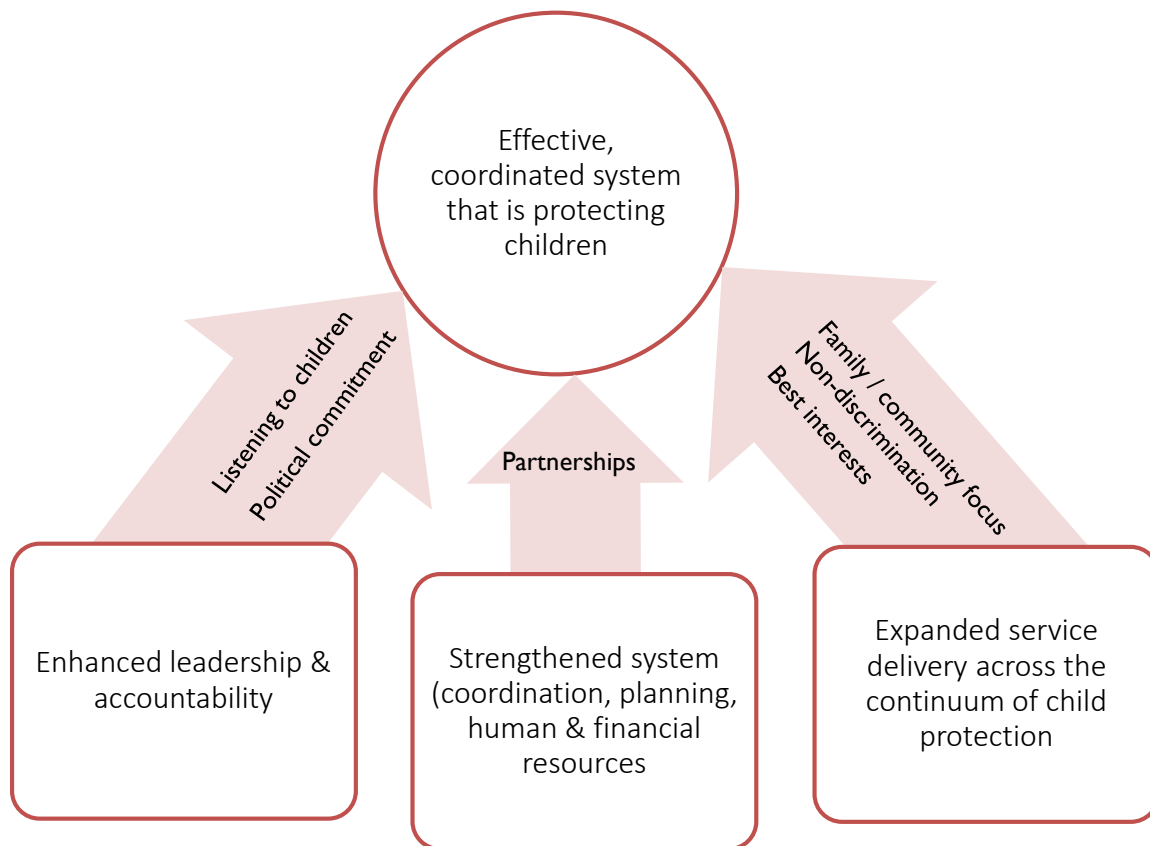


Figure 3: National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy goal and strategic objectives

Strategic objective 1: By 2019, all social sector strategies developed by government and civil society will include clear, accountable and measurable commitments, to protecting all children in Lesotho from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. The same commitments will be a central element of leadership demonstrations at different levels of society.

Rationale: Currently, child protection is not articulated in strategies or public statements as a professional or personal responsibility. The mapping and assessment process identified a culture of acceptance of child protection violations in general, and stakeholders noted impunity for both perpetrators and a lack of consequences for those professionals who do not fulfil their professional responsibilities. A general lack of knowledge and evidence about the causes and consequences of child protection results from this lack of engagement, and leads to the current lack of concerted action about child protection.

To address this, specific entities must be designated with specific responsibilities and the mandate to speak out about child protection, to gather and disseminate information on the issue, and to hold others to account. They will encompass a wide range of stakeholders from government, civil and traditional society and families; listening to children's voices and the voices of those who protect them will be key to the establishment of an appropriate and acceptable system to prevent and respond to child protection violations.

Strategic objective 2: By 2019, effective mechanisms at community council, district and national level will deliver coordinated planning, delivery and monitoring of child protection actions in Lesotho.

Rationale: Existing OVC coordination mechanisms are in place at national and district level, but focus on children who are exposed to the risk of particular protection violations or who are in contact with the law. Addressing the protection needs of all vulnerable children requires a different approach. Responding to child protection needs a strong referral and case management process involving coherent and coordinated responses from several different ministries, enabling care to be provided from different sectors. Those in charge of coordination must have the authority to call the necessary actors together and ensure that they are equipped to carry out their part of the task. In order to achieve this, capacity within the workforce needs to be expanded, especially those front line workers who now have new responsibilities under the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011.

As yet, few resources have been allocated specifically to child protection within the state budget (because many child protection activities fall within larger mandates, the Probation Unit and CGPU, for example), and only limited funds have been allocated to it by donors. Given these resource challenges, this Strategy focusses on strengthening the existing roles and responsibilities of the workforce, especially responsibilities resulting from the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2011. As additional resources become available, investments can be made in new areas of work.

Strategic objective 3: By 2019, there will be increased national coverage and quality of services that strengthen family and community capacity to protect children, prevent child abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect, and provide a timely and accountable response to child protection violations.

Rationale: Prevention of harm is as important, and will ultimately be more cost-effective, than responding to the needs of children who have already been harmed. Effective prevention of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect requires strengthening household capacity to care for and protect children, building on experience acquired in piloting new programmes that can demonstrate results. Particular concerns exist around the one in three children in Lesotho who do not live with their biological parents: they may lack legal protection and often face neglect or stigma. Families where children are at risk of physical and sexual abuse need support to improve their ability to provide protection and care. Children who lack appropriate family care have traditionally lived with their extended families: those families need support, and make alternative types of family-based support available. At present, institutional care is in effect the only form of alternative care in Lesotho, but in most forms does not provide effective care for children over the long term.

Reporting abuse is another essential element of harm prevention or minimisation: those who suspect abuse, or are victims of it must be able to report, confident that action will be taken. Care must be available to protect and support child victims (and witnesses) at all stages of the process of care – from reporting, through the justice process where needed, until the appropriate response is provided. The same considerations of protection from harm apply to children who are accused of wrongdoing as they go through the justice process. Follow-up care and support must continue after the immediate protection needs of children have been met.

4.2 Results

This first *National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy* focuses on realistic, achievable, and meaningful results for children, while recognising that results for children will take time to be demonstrated, given the current limited data on child protection in Lesotho and the strong focus on systems strengthening in this first Strategy.

The first three years of the Strategy focus on building up the foundational elements of the system, generating evidence and ensuring delivery and results in core priority areas. A costed action plan has been developed for these three years. The fourth and fifth years focus on consolidation and delivering quality services at scale.

Proposed outcome results are set out below, although these will need to be revised to be more specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely in some cases. Not all indicators can be made 'SMART' at present, given the absence of baseline data for much of the outcomes. Baselines and suitable targets must be gathered at inception of key activities when not already available.

A more detailed set of indicators and results is included in the three-year costed Plan of Action 2014/5 – 2016/7.

Objectives	Results by 2019	Baseline 2014	Target 2019 (those marked ** to be quantified when data becomes available at initiation of activity)
Strategic objective 1: Accountability and leadership	1. A national oversight and accountability mechanism is in place and actively ensuring compliance with child protection commitments.	0	1
	2. Children's perspectives on child protection are informing child protection programmes and sectoral strategies.	N/A	3 sectoral national strategies or ministerial plans include child protection results building on children's priorities
	3. Local and national leaders are pledging actions that respond to children's priority child protection concerns.	N/A	** # of pledges by national political figures & religious leaders; # of pledges by Community Council reps & local leaders
Strategic objective 2: Multisectoral coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring of child protection	4. All government and civil society actors with a role in child protection have a common understanding and application of core child protection principles, integrated into their mandates.	N/A	** % increase in staff who have received training; % increase in staff who have child protection responsibilities included in job descriptions and performance agreements
	5. There are regular coordination and planning meetings of all key actors at national and at every community council and district level, able to identify and respond to local child protection priorities, which are in turn informing national strategies and operational plans.	N/A	75% of CCPT and DCPTs have annual plan & annual report 12 months after formation & training
	6. Robust evidence on violence against children and on children in alternative care available and informing national & local strategies & plans.	0	Research complete & providing baseline; targets for prevention/response integrated into national plans
	7. Adults working with children on child protection issues – government, civil society and unpaid community actors – have sufficient core knowledge of how to address child protection concerns and are able to work together to address these issues.	N/A	Capacity building plan finalised; at least 25% of staff in core sectors have received basic CP training & demonstrate increased knowledge through pre- and post-training surveys
	8. % increase in state budget allocated to child protection activities by 2019	N/A	Children's budget allocation known (by 2017); ** 5% increase from baseline by 2019
Strategic objective 3:	9. At least 1,000 households in which children are at risk of child protection	N/A	At least 1,000 households reached

Increased scope, scale and quality of child protection services	violations receiving family strengthening interventions; interventions are measuring reduction of child protection risks.		
	10. Reduction in violence against children by x% (indicator to be quantified post-research)	N/A	** N/A Indicator to be measured through national case management system that is able to track trends in child victims of violence, disaggregated by age, gender & disability.
	11. A national formal foster care programme is in place, with at least 50 children in formal foster care by 2019.	N/A	At least 50 children in formal foster care; ** Reduction of children in institutional care by x%/#
	12. All children who are reported to the authorities as in need of protection and welfare have a case file that is being actively managed through a case management system.	N/A	All children who reported as needing care and protection under CPWA have an active case file by 2019.
	13. At least 25 community councils have Village Child Justice Committees who are active, with restorative justice recommendations that are in line with CPWA recommendations	14 committees trained	25 VCJCs providing regular reports & demonstrating restorative justice results

5. Activities

The activities outlined below are indicative. A more detailed set of activities is included in the Costed Plan of Action 2014/5-2016/7. In order to develop an ambitious, but achievable, strategy to strengthen Lesotho's child protection system, priority has been given to activities that are foundation-building (i.e. children cannot be protected in the long-term if these results are not achieved) or that are already prioritised by government ministries or existing civil society activities. These focus primarily on activities outlined in the key complementary strategies referred to above in section 2.5.

Strategic objective 1: By 2019, all social sector strategies developed by government and civil society will express clear, accountable and measurable commitments to protecting all children in Lesotho from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect. The same commitments will be a central element of leadership demonstrations at different levels of society.

Intermediate objective 1.1: By 2019, leaders at national and community level, will demonstrate child protection commitments through increased resource allocation to and inclusion of child protection in policies & programmes.

1.1.1 By 2016, develop & deliver a child-engaged advocacy programme to generate leadership action on child protection.

Indicative sub-activities:¹⁰

- Support to children to articulate how boys and girls of different ages see and describe child protection issues;
- Forum of Principle Secretaries and Directors to present children's perspectives and generate child protection commitments;
- Media roundtables to present children's perspectives & national dissemination;

¹⁰ Detailed activities are listed in the accompanying Costed Operational Plan for Child Protection 2014/5-16/7. Sub-activities not listed where the proposed sub-activities are self-explanatory.

- Child interaction with parliamentary representatives and subsequent leadership commitments;
- Child interaction with community and faith leaders and subsequent leadership commitments.

Intermediate objective 1.2: By 2015, there are established national mechanisms that provide oversight of government child protection actions and ensure accountability within key ministries.

- 1.2.1 By 2015, Include multisectoral child protection accountabilities within the Parliamentary Social Cluster Portfolio Committee oversight function.
- 1.2.2 By 2016, include core child protection responsibilities within job descriptions at Director and at service provision levels in all key child protection sectors.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Identify and include core child protection competencies in core ministry job descriptions at planning, policy and implementation level;
- Introduction of child safeguarding policies for core ministries with staff who have core contact with children in need of protection (MOSD, MOJCS, MOP, MOLHRCA) and for CSOs.

Strategic objective 2: By 2019, effective mechanisms at community council, district and national level will deliver coordinated planning, delivery and monitoring of child protection actions in Lesotho.

Intermediate objective 2.1: By 2019, establish an effective coordination mechanism that operates at community council, district and national level and that has the mandate to convene all key child protection actors from government and traditional institutions and civil society.

- 2.1.1 By 2015, establish a national child protection coordinating mechanism that has a statutory mandate, secretariat, terms of reference, budget and accountability for coordinating child protection actions in Lesotho.¹¹
- 2.1.2 By 2015, establish a civil society child protection coordinating mechanism that is accountable for coordination of CSO child protection actions and advocacy.
- 2.1.3 By 2019, support existing DCPTS and establish Community Council Child Protection Teams to implement their coordinating and oversight roles.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Support DCPT & CCPT biannual exchange and support meetings, including in-service training on child protection issues;
- Review of terms of reference, approved by all key ministries and CSOs; quarterly information updates by NCPCC for CCPTs and DCPTs.

Intermediate objective 2.2: By 2019, establish a functional child protection Information Management System within the Ministry of Social Development.

- 2.2.1 By 2016, establish a National Child Protection Index of core indicators, agreed by all ministries with a core role in child protection; and, by 2019, ensure that the national, district and community council child protection teams/coordinating mechanisms are planning and reporting against this Index.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Inter-agency working group to identify existing sectoral child protection indicators & identify core child protection indicators;
- Inclusion into sectoral monitoring systems and next NSDP monitoring & evaluation plan;
- Development of district- and community council-level simple child protection reporting tools.

¹¹ Referred to as 'National Child Protection Coordinating Committee' (NCPCC) in this strategy, pending agreement on name; probably to be a revised mandate for the current National OVC Coordinating Committee.

- 2.2.2 By 2019, conduct two national studies on core child protection issues of abuse and violence and children without adequate care to expand the national evidence base on child protection.

Intermediate objective 2.3: By 2019, ensure that all key stakeholders involved in the child protection workforce have enhanced capacities, through establishment of core competencies and standard performance indicators.

- 2.3.1 By 2016, include pre-service and in-service training on CPWA and its application, especially referral mechanisms, for all key members of the social service workforce with a role in child protection.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Design core child protection curriculum content for social sector workforce with minimum key training components;
- Integration into current pre-service curricula [to specify which bodies];
- Accreditation of child protection components by Council of Higher Education.

- 2.3.2 By 2015, include core child protection competencies in job descriptions of MOSD social and auxiliary social workers, probation officers, CGPU officers and CSO staff with dedicated child protection mandates and those with supervision and oversight responsibilities.

Intermediate objective 2.4: By 2019, promoted increased investment in child protection activities within government budget and ensure that child protection is reflected in the next National Social Development Plan 2017/8 – 2021/22

- 2.3.3 Build an investment case for recognition of the social and economic impacts of child protection within the next National Social Development Plan 2017/8 – 2021/22 and implement an accompanying advocacy plan.

Strategic objective 3: By 2019, there will be increased national coverage and quality of services that strengthen family and community capacity to protect children and provide a timely and accountable response to child protection violations.

Intermediate objective 3.1: By 2019, strengthen family strengthening interventions to families where children are at risk of child protection violations in at least five districts.

- 3.1.1 By 2015, pilot and roll out three family-strengthening models of care with the objective of reducing specific child protection violations and support families providing kinship or informal foster care.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Conduct inventory of existing models to identify potential child protection outcomes & approaches;
- Develop criteria for family-strengthening activities with measurable child protection outcomes; develop common core indicators; support existing programmes to adapt & monitor.

- 3.1.2 By 2017, pilot and roll out three interventions with the objective to reduce violence against children.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Develop criteria for community-based programmes to address violence against children, building on research (activity under 2.2.2); develop common core indicators; support existing programmes to adapt & monitor.

Intermediate objective 3.2: By 2019, implement the alternative care components of the CPWA of 2011 to scale up support for children without adequate parental care.

- 3.2.1 By 2019, develop alternative care framework for Lesotho, based on CPWA and UN Guidelines on Alternative Care.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Technical consultancy to assist in design of alternative care programming;
- Ensure current emergency care options available and shared with referral network details to DCPTs, CCPTs and community development actors;
- Review and update current foster care, adoption and residential care guidelines, where required;
- Ongoing oversight of alternative care framework;
- Conduct regular institutional care oversight inspections;
- Establish Central Adoptions Authority for independent review of international adoptions;
- Mobilise for domestic adoption through foster care sensitisation campaign.

3.2.2 By 2017, pilot and roll out a national formal foster care programme.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Train statutory child protection staff (social workers, assistant social workers, police, magistrates) in foster care requirements;
- Train CSOs who are currently working with vulnerable children in foster care promotion;
- Deliver sensitisation campaign on foster care through DCPTs and CCPTs;
- Pilot and evaluate foster care guidelines; establish and train at least 30 foster care families by 2016.

Intermediate objective 3.3: By 2019, design, pilot and scale up a child protection reporting and case management process.

3.3.1 By 2016, develop and pilot a child protection referral and case management mechanism, through a multisectoral working group with national roll out by 2019.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Establish a multisectoral working group to review current case management requirements (as per CPWA), existing formal and informal referral processes for all children, current application and lessons learned on good practice;
- Draft case management protocol; pilot in selected districts;
- Revise; apply lessons learned into standard operating procedures for government workers and into CSO standards;
- Roll out nationally.

3.3.2 By 2016, ensure that Child Helpline is fully functional and operating nationally.

Intermediate objective 3.3: By 2019, establish a national restorative justice process with community-based diversion and rehabilitation implemented in at least half of all community councils.

3.3.3 By 2018, establish and support Village Child Justice Committees in 44 community councils.

3.3.4 By 2017, promote community-based diversion and rehabilitation programmes for children in conflict with the law and/or family reintegration from institutional care.

Indicative sub-activities:

- Provide basic legal rights and training to CSOs already providing, or planning to provide, community-based family strengthening activities;
- Support pilot programmes, overseen by MOJCS and MOSD staff with CSO implementation, in at least 3 districts to reintegrate / rehabilitate children, documenting and sharing lessons learned.

6. Institutional arrangements

6.1 Multisectoral considerations

Child protection is, by its nature, multisectoral. Figure 4 illustrates how many different actors are needed for children to be protected and, thus, how essential it is that there is a clear framework for coordinated and accountable action.

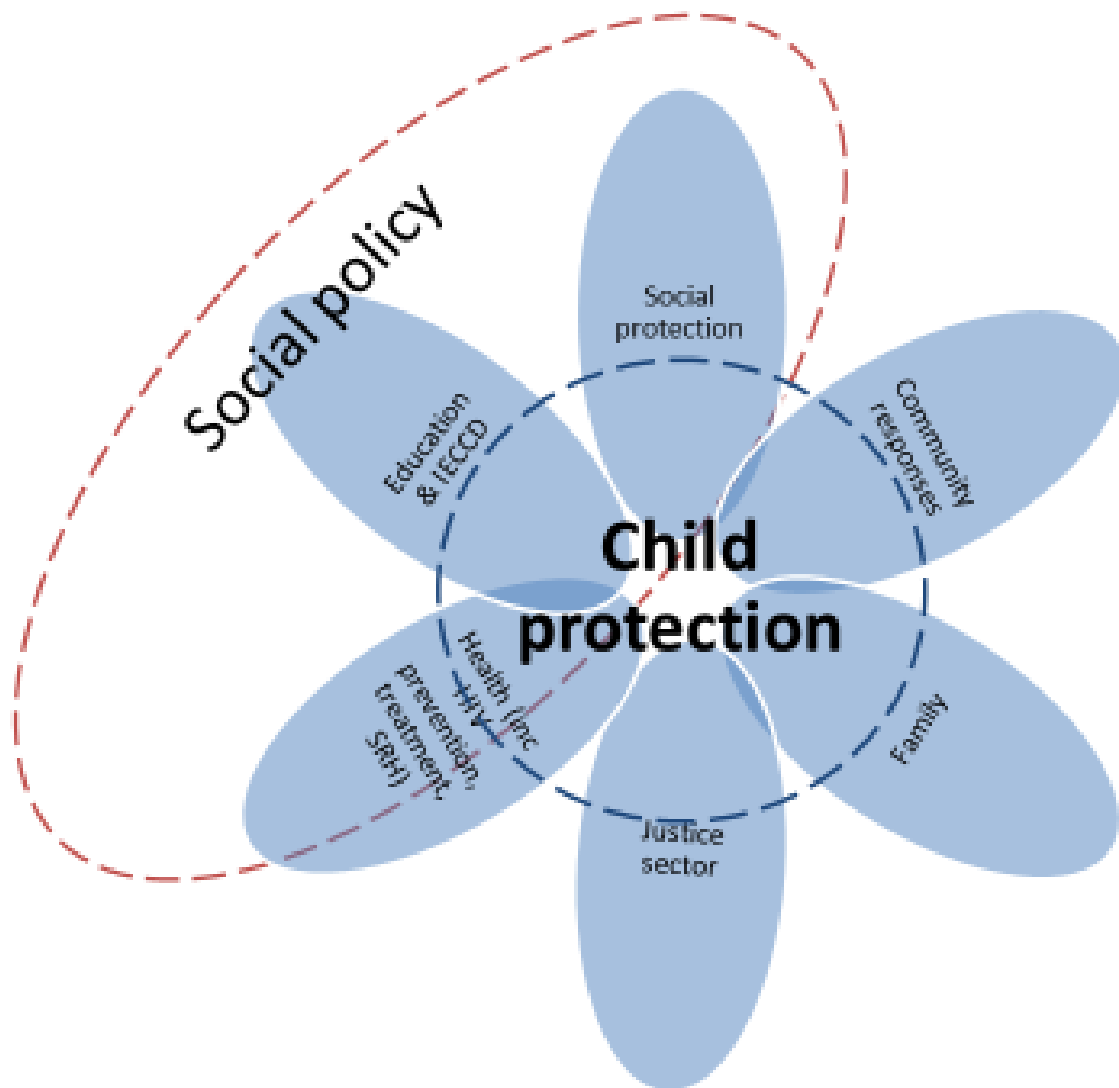


Figure 1: Key actors with a role in child protection¹²

This requires strong coordination and mutually supportive cooperation and collaboration between all actors.

6.2 Accountability and coordination

The proposed institutional framework builds on some core assumptions:

- Overall leadership for children in need of protection falls within the ministry that is responsible for child protection and who currently hosts the Secretariat for the National OVC Coordinating Committee (NOCC), currently responsible for coordination of the *National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children*.

¹² Diagram adapted from World Vision (2011) *A systems approach to child protection: A World Vision discussion paper*.

- There is a need for accountability over all government and civil society actors that deliver child protection. The priority is to identify a parliamentary oversight body for accountability and to develop mechanisms such that children themselves, and their families, are increasingly able to participate in child protection activities.
- In the context of decentralisation, there must be a strong and growing role of local government officials at community council and district levels, who are able to convene and oversee child protection responses at local level.
- The Strategy has been developed at the same time the country is developing a national Social Protection Strategy. Once a coordination framework for the *National Social Protection Strategy* has been agreed, with the full involvement of Department of Children's Services, MOSD, it may be appropriate to link coordination of child protection with social protection. This is reflected in the proposed framework. It will be important, however, to ensure that protection of children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect does not get overshadowed by focusing primarily or exclusively on addressing economic vulnerabilities.


The table below defines the key components required for the child protection system, the institutions involved and how they are regulated and coordinated, both horizontally and vertically.

Body	Role	Lead responsibility	Key responsibilities
Parliament's Portfolio Committee on the Social Cluster	National statutory oversight and accountability	Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for receiving annual reports on child protection activities and impact from all ministries with a child protection role. • Responsible for ensuring Lesotho government fulfils legal reporting & oversight requirements as per international conventions and treaties to which Lesotho is a signatory. • Demonstrate national commitment to protecting children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect through visible leadership. • Vote budget for child protection interventions.
National Child Protection Coordination Committee (Name to be agreed; hosted by MOSD; new TOR to be defined building on current NOCC; link with social protection coordination mechanism to be agreed).	Coordination of child protection strategy	MOSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisectoral - requires mandated attendance by civil society and government partners • Responsible for overall child protection system monitoring, monitoring of national strategy and reporting to parliament • Responsible for ensuring liaison with and alignment with key national strategies - Social Protection, IECCD, HIV
District Child Protection Team	Coordination & delivery of child protection strategy at district level	MOLGC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisectoral, including all key district ministerial representatives, Ministry of Local Government, civil society representatives and chieftainship representation • Responsible for regular (monthly or quarterly, to be agreed) coordination of child protection actors, development and

			oversight of district level coordinated child protection plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First point of accountability for non-delivery at local level • Raising priority concerns and engaging in national processes • Chaired by district administrator; technical inputs for coordination by lead district MOSD representative
Community Council Child Protection Team	Coordination & delivery of child protection strategy at community council level	MOLGC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multisectoral, chaired by Community Council Chair • Auxiliary social worker key actor; also school development committee, local CBO, community councillors, local traditional and religious leaders; Village Child Justice Committee members • Ensure linkages between community council and district • Raising priority concerns and engaging at DCPT level

6.3 Inter-sectoral responsibilities

Delivery of the Strategy requires clear lead roles and responsibilities across all sectors. The costed Child Protection Plan of Action states a lead plus supporting actors for all activities. The table below shows an overview of the inter-sectoral responsibilities, highlighting the necessity of investing in community and other non-formal responses as well as highlighting the crucial role of NGOs and CBOs, especially on the prevention and the rehabilitation components of child protection.

	Activity	MOSD	MOJCS	MOP / CGPU	MOET	Other Ministries	NGOs & CBOs & private	Community & other non-formal responses
PROMOTION  PREVENTION	Cash transfers – CGP and additional proposed social transfers	•						
	Birth registration					• (MOHA)	•	
	Public education and community mobilisation for social change	•	•	•		MOLGC	•	•
	Identification of at risk children and families	•	•		•	• (especially MOET for IECCD and schools; MOH through family health)	•	•
	Individual family support mediation, assist	•	•	•			•	•

<div>PREVENTION</div> <div>↓</div> <div>RESPONSE</div> <div>↓</div> <div>REHABILITATION</div>	with entitlements, service access, legal aid							
	Monitoring and accountability of services	•	•	•			•	•
	Best interests determination and gate-keeping procedures	•	•					•
	Alternative care: kinship and guardianship, adoption, foster care	•					•	•
	Diversion & restorative justice; safe labour practices	•	•	•		•	•	•
	Identification, reporting, verification of suspected abuse or exploitation	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Psychosocial support	•		•			•	•
	Sensitive health, police, judicial social work case management, shelter services	•	•	•		•	•	
	Tracing, reunification and reintegration	•		•	•			

Table 1: Inter-sectoral responsibilities for components of the child protection system

6.4 Management arrangements

The National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy is aligned to the Ministry of Social Development's strategic plan. Currently, the secretariat for coordination of vulnerable children's issues is located with the Department of Child Protection Services, with external funding for a post to coordinate this function. The MOSD does recognise the need for coordination of both NSPVC and the *National Multisectoral Child Protection Strategy*, therefore it is mainstreaming these duties into the core key competencies of MOSD staff.

Coordination of child protection should continue to fall within the operational requirement of this department, but there must be ongoing linkages between the Department of Child Protection Services and other key departments – Community Development, Elderly, Disability, Social Protection and Planning.¹³

Once the draft *National Social Protection Strategy* is finalised and institutional and coordination arrangements have been agreed, it may be considered more suitable for child protection coordination to fall within the vulnerable child thematic group, within the draft proposed Social Protection coordinating mechanism.

6.5 Sustainability

Ultimately, protecting children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect requires that all people in Lesotho – adult and child – takes on a personal responsibility for ensuring an environment that does not tolerate abuse of children. This is at the core of a sustainable system - family members, neighbours, teachers,

¹³ The Community Development Department is not yet established.

chiefs – all of us – stand up and take action to promote a positive environment. The strategy places strong emphasis on promoting these actions.

The strategy also seeks to achieve sustainability through strengthening the existing state and civil society sector in their capacity to respond by focusing on strengthening the capacities of the social services workforce and clarifying a system of coordinated action.

Investing in strengthening the evidence base will enable Lesotho to measure results for children in a way that is currently not possible, due to a lack of basic data on the risks that boys and girls face and a lack of evidence about which interventions are most cost-effective. Investing in generating a simple but robust evidence base will enable subsequent child protection strategies to focus on tangible results to deliver value for investment.

Protecting children requires investment in resources. The Strategy seeks to strengthen existing resources and invest in the family and community. There is also a need for incremental growth in financial resources. The priority is to identify which resources deliver the most effective long-term return on investment, through focusing on activities that promote a positive environment and prevent abuse.

6.6 Monitoring and evaluation

As noted in the *National Social Protection Strategy*,¹⁴ monitoring is the process of identifying and tracking performance indicators and reviewing implementation over the life of the programme, and can be defined as a continuing process of collecting and reviewing data on performance indicators in order to inform managers (and other stakeholders) about the progress and achievement of objectives of the programme. Evaluation goes one step further, by linking causes to outcomes, assessing impacts after components of the Strategy (or distinct programmes within them) have been completed. Evaluation of the *National Child Protection Strategy* will involve objective and systematic assessment of the design, implementation and results of the Strategy.

This Strategy has, in part, been developed in recognition of the current lack of robust data and of robust reporting. As such, there must be a significant attention paid to ensuring that the Strategy is well monitored. This requires a robust framework but also needs realistic expectations. The emphasis is on building up basic capacity for reporting and acting on child protection risks and generating a strong evidence base.

Child protection management information systems are complex, because they require active involvement of many different sectoral ministries. Therefore, to the greatest extent possible, the proposed mechanism relies on individual existing ministerial functions continuing with an emphasis on collaboration and sharing existing information, rather than generating new information.

There will be three main approaches to monitoring and evaluation, indicated below. The Costed Child Protection Plan of Action 2014/5 – 2016/7 provides more detailed indicators and outputs.

6.6.1 Monitoring individual activities

Three main tools are to be used:

6.6.1.1 National Child Protection Index

Establishment of a core set of child protection indicators, against which all key actors report. Steps for establishment of this index are spelled out under Intermediate objective 2.2, Activity 2.2.1.

Responsibility for coordinating the development of this index must be conducted by the Secretariat for the National Child Protection Coordinating Committee, currently undertaken by the Department of Child Protection Services, MOSD. This must be done jointly with the MOSD Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

¹⁴ National Social Protection Strategy, Draft version 5, 10 March 2014.

Once agreed, there must be a clear process for all core actors to feed their sectoral data into this national index.

6.6.1.2 Child protection case management system

A child protection case management information system tracks and monitors progress of an individual child or family that has been identified as requiring support – a child at risk of abuse within the home, a child who is already in some form of alternative care, a child in contact with the law. In this case, the child protection case management system is a *confidential* means to ensure that the child or family gets the appropriate referrals made, action is taken and outcomes are measured. The system is more than merely making a referral – it tracks the outcome of that child and requires accountability by all actors who have a role to play.

Currently the CPWA and accompanying guidelines spell out responsibilities, but do not provide a single means to follow children through the system.

This monitoring tool is spelled out in detail in Intermediate objective 3.2, Activity 3.2.1.

6.6.1.3 Monitoring individual programmes

Monitoring of individual programmes, those falling under Strategic Objective 3, will aim to collect and aggregate information on performance indicators such as number of children and families reached, type of input, cost of delivering services, and will track immediate effects of the programme, according to programme objective. Attention will be paid to measuring both intended results (children being placed in long-term foster care, for example) as well as unintended protection or other social and economic results. The NCPCC will be responsible for supporting the development of programme-specific indicators by ensuring technical monitoring support.

6.6.2 Monitoring the National Child Protection Strategy

Monitoring in this area will focus on questions such as:

- Does the strategy articulate the required child protection results for children?
- Does the strategy reach the intended beneficiaries, ensuring that boys and girls of all ages, including children with disabilities, have their protection risks recognised and addressed?
- Does the strategy generate the desired outcomes?
- Does the strategy reinforce and complement existing key interconnected strategies?
- Are there better ways to design the components of the strategy?
- Can the strategy be managed more efficiently?
- Are the allocated resources being spent efficiently?

The Costed Plan of Action must be reviewed, and refined where necessary, by the MOSD Monitoring and Evaluation Unit with input from M&E representatives from key ministries such as the MOET, MOH, MOP and MOJCS. There should be a mid-term review of the strategy in 2016, to revise and refine the next phase of the *Multisectoral National Child Protection Strategy* from 2016/17 onwards.

6.6.3 Evaluating impact

Given the limited available data on child protection in Lesotho, it is unlikely that it will be possible to evaluate the impact on children by the end of the first five-year period. However, it will be imperative to improve the evidence base by 2018/9 so that impacts can be measured from this time onwards.

The strategy includes a series of activities that focus on generating evidence (notably Activity 2.2.2). In addition, a number of forthcoming actions offer the opportunity for enhancing the evidence base, especially the forthcoming Demographic Household Survey that is being developed. The NCPCC and MOSD must ensure that child protection considerations are taken into account as it is being developed.



Ministry of Social Development

