



Empowering Transformation:
Harnessing Child And Youth Narratives To Propel Meaningful And
Sustainable Health And Well-being In Lesotho

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High-Altitude and Landlocked:

- Lesotho's geographic location, surrounded by South Africa, influences its economic and social landscape.

Vulnerability to Economic Shocks:

- Lesotho's economy is susceptible to external shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted growth and increased poverty rates.

Dependence on Agriculture:

- Approximately 75% of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihood, making them vulnerable to climate shocks and environmental stresses.

High Levels of Poverty and Inequality:

- A significant proportion of the population lives below the poverty line, with children being the most affected by deprivation of basic social services.



Lowlands (Maseru)

- Urban sprawl and high population density.
- Suboptimal sanitation infrastructure and growth of peri-urban settlements.
- High rates of transmission of communicable diseases and limited opportunities for child development.

Mountains (Mokhotlong)

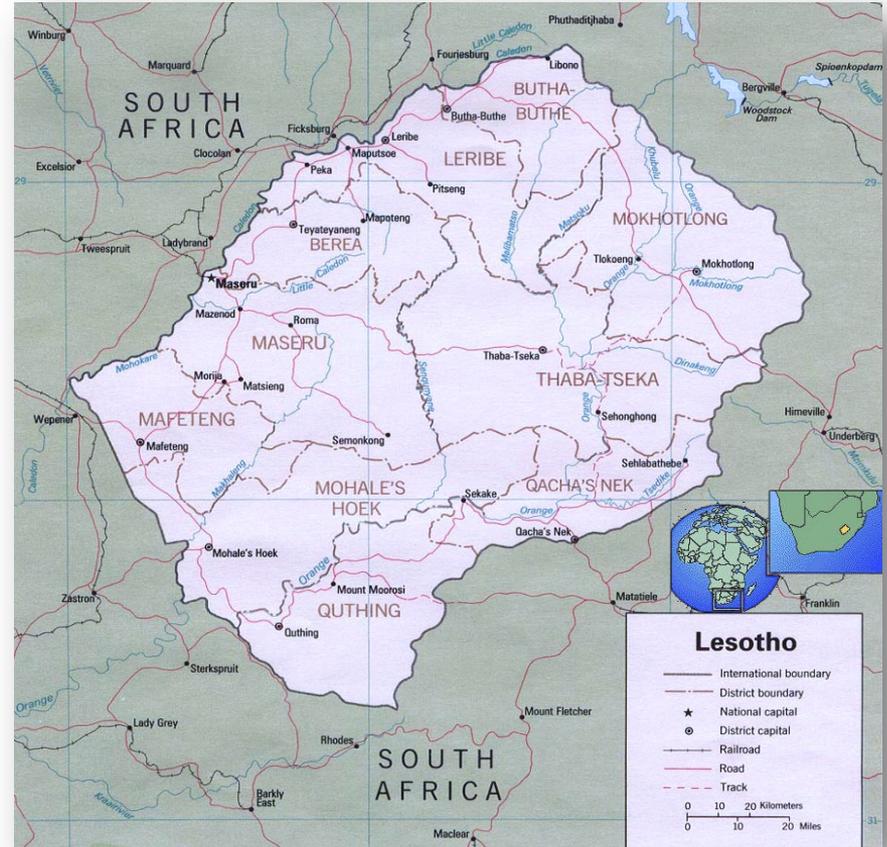
- Natural barriers hinder the delivery of essential services.
- Increase in chronic respiratory diseases and nutritional deficiencies in children.
- Vulnerability to climate variability and extreme weather events.

Foothills

- Weather unpredictability affects agricultural productivity.
- Common child labor due to subsistence farming and livestock.
- Access to education is compromised, perpetuating cycles of deprivation.

River Valley Senqu

- Hydrological dynamics sustain agriculture but present flood risks.
- Children exposed to illness and disruption in the educational pathway.
- Potential family displacement due to flooding.



Methodology





Sample

- Intentional selection of districts from Lesotho's four ecological zones: Inclusion of all child demographic groups.
- Participants: boys and girls aged 6 to 19, including specific groups such as school-aged children, out-of-school children, herd children, children with disabilities, young people and members of minority groups. - 200 children





Instruments

- PLA/PRA tools used for data collection promoting active engagement and dialogue between participants.
- Social & Resource Maps, Institutional Maps/Venn Diagrams, Body Maps, Cause & Effect Analysis, Peer Classification, Daily Time Use Analysis, FGD.



Procedures

- Ethical approval by the competent authorities.
- Informed consent of parents or guardians and assent of children.
- Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.
- Qualitative data analysis - thematic analysis.

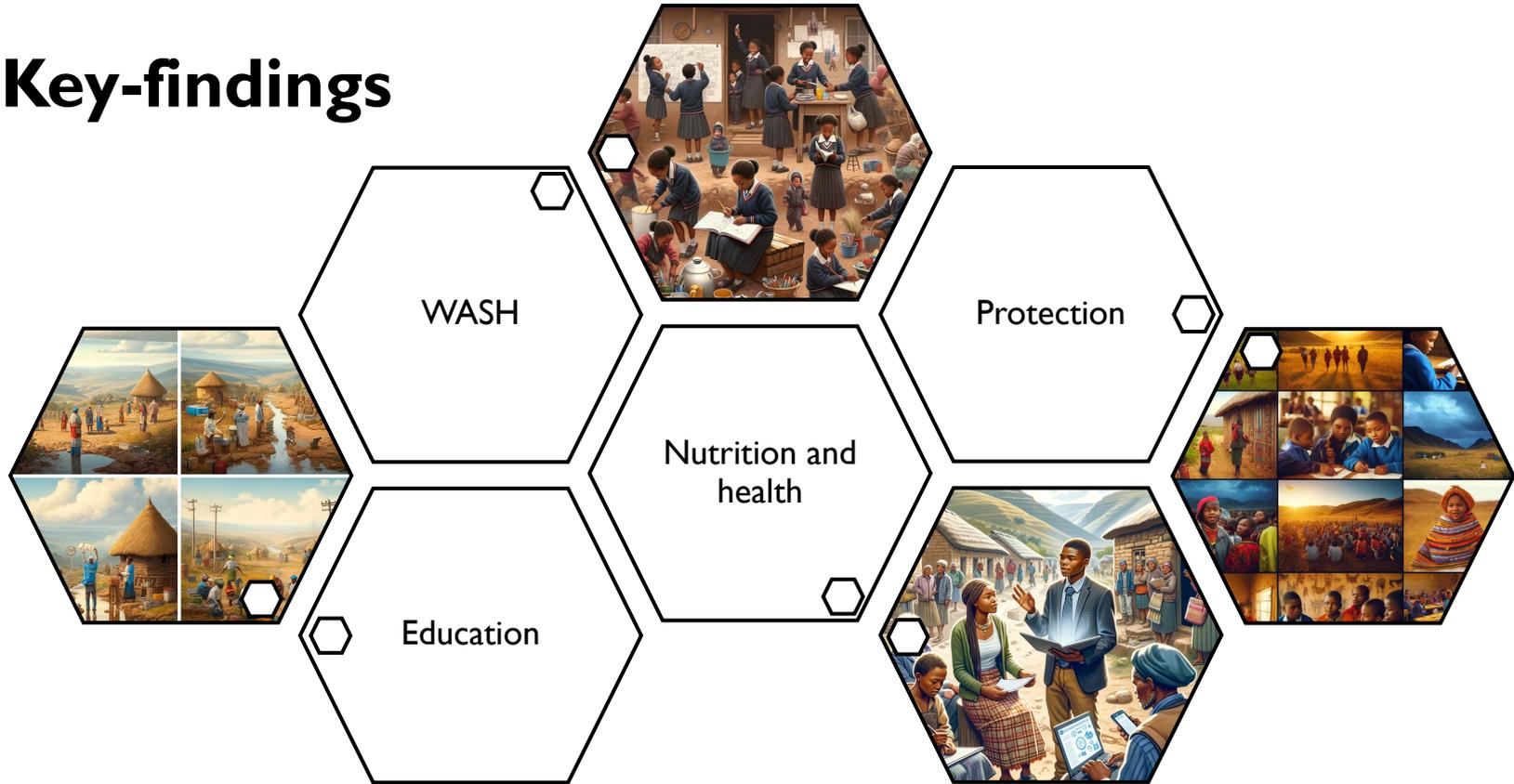




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Key findings

Key-findings



"Lesotho... is embattled by a gamut of socioeconomic challenges... Infrastructural limitations, particularly in rural areas, are a significant hurdle, stymieing the delivery of essential services and exacerbating the vulnerability of remote communities."





“Girls have borne the brunt of increased domestic burdens, facing elevated risks of gender-based violence and encountering significant obstacles in accessing education and pursuing their life goals”



“Boys, especially those in traditional roles like herd boys, have also confronted unique challenges such as economic instability, heightened isolation, and disruptions to their educational journeys”



"Parents often have a difficult time accepting a child with disabilities given the stigmatization of having a child with disabilities. Thus children with disabilities are often 'hidden and locked inside the house while parents go on with their lives.'"

"It is so sad we have had incidents of children who we literally fight for to come out of the households where they are not loved and cared for." (Centre staff)

"They [parents] are happier when their children are away from them and they care less about their safety and wellbeing." (Centre staff)

"Lack of access to mobility aides is also a challenge for persons with disabilities." (Centre staff)



"It is heartbreaking to see children with wheelchairs struggling to move around because the roads to and from school are not accommodating." (Centre staff)



Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Children's resilience, adaptation, and optimism in the face of adversity are remarkable.
- Children's reported experiences are crucial to shaping effective and empowering interventions.
- Significant challenges in education, nutrition, and access to basic services due to inadequate/insufficient infrastructure and weak mechanisms and coordination.
- There is an urgent need for holistic and inclusive strategies that reflect children's voices and needs.

Recommendations

- Policy-making, using child-friendly tools and methods.
- Allocate resources and training to support child-led initiatives, enhancing their active participation in advocacy for change.
- Increased focus on children's rights education and the avenues of participation available through awareness-raising campaigns and curriculum integration.



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