

## **Women and Youth Development Programme**

*Lesotho is plagued by abject poverty, which is estimated at 49.7 percent of a total population of 2.2 million. This means almost half of the population of Lesotho lives below the poverty line of US\$1.90 (M28.5) per day. Moreover, the Kingdom is trapped in high unemployment rate, which is estimated at 23.6 percent. Youth constitute a greater proportion of this rate as they are the most hit category within society.*

Therefore, the GISD to unlock the untapped opportunities in front of women and youth for their current and future development. The opens the 'lock jam' so that women and youth are enabled to unleash their talents, gifts and capabilities, which are hidden within them. It helps women and youth to realise their capabilities and live be able to live a purposeful life. Therefore, the Women and Youth Programme is an eye-opener, a platform and a space which is given to women and youth to unleash that which they have been endowed with. It inspires their confidence, opens their eyes and changes their mind-sets as well as attitudes. Good attitudes lead to greater altitudes. It is intended to bring a new worldview to the one they have of darkness, gloom and bleakness of future.

Since the future is a not-yet-treaded terrain as of now, likelihood is that women and youth might create negative images of it, using today's lenses. Seeing what is happening today - politics of hunger for power, greed and corruption, perennial conflicts within political parties and churches as well with in societies where their parents participate, they may create images of doom and gloom in their minds.

The Project seeks to remove the lid, take out the lantern and open avenues for using new lenses to see life in a different manner. It seeks to instill a sense of hope, faith and adoration of life with tenacity and victory. Unlocking opportunities relates to making women and youth realise a myriad of greener pastures that lie ahead of them, but which, due to lack of skills, exposure and experience, they are unable to realise them. Being close to women and youth, guiding them, leading them and coaching them, will enlighten them to a positive future, which they did not see, because they have not treaded the journey.

To achieve its goal of bringing women and youth to the core of economic activity, the programme applies a variety of women and youth engagement

strategies with various groups of youth preparing them to be part of the Youth Incubation Programme. It organizes regular roundtable discussions with women and youth in business to find out their future prospects and gray areas that need to be looked at. The programme organizes regular breakfast meetings with women and youth who need technical assistance to start business. The programme organizes regular Women and Youth forums with youth in business, motivating, coaching and mentoring them.

**Promotion of youth entrepreneurship:** The programme intends to promote a spirit of entrepreneurship (risk-taking, surviving rigours in business, value-creation and value-addition, eagerness to succeed in a start-up, grow and graduate to large-scale business and business leadership in the private sector). Enterprise leadership has the potential of building economically and financially independent women and young people who are not prone to being used by political leaders.

**Youth capacity-building:** Building the capacity of women and young people through training, skills development, coaching, mentorship and women and youth exchange programmes are intended to equip young people. Women and young people who possess the skills obtained through, apprenticeship, coaching, mentorship, youth exchange programmes is major ammunition for remaining financial and economically independent and grow into responsible business leaders. This will ensure that women and youth avoid becoming political pawns for self-serving politicians who have the tendency to abuse unsuspecting, gullible and vulnerable women and youth for their narrow political interests.

**Ending youth unemployment:** The Kingdom is trapped in high unemployment rate, which is estimated at 23.6 percent. Women and youth constitute a greater proportion of this rate as they are the most hit category within society. Women and youth have constituted 30 percent of the unemployment rate. Everywhere in the world, high rates of unemployment have adverse implications for women and youth, who are an important demographic within society. Women and youth constitute an important part of the productive sector of every country (18-49 years). Attempts to curb unemployment among women and young people have been part of initiatives of every country, Lesotho included. However, efforts to curb the un-employment scourge in Lesotho have included absorption of women and youth into the civil service.

**Creating and promoting women and youth innovativeness:** By being in business with a vast wealth of skills obtained from avenues mentioned above, it behoves innovativeness and creativity. By imparting skills on women and youth to start businesses, which empowers them to be innovative in business, they are to be creative and initiate their own businesses and achieve financial and economic independence. They will be able to develop products and services which compete in the market. Modalities and approaches to be applied to implement the programme

**Awareness creation:** Using local media to canvass the programme Idea pitching by women and youth: Women and youth will pitch their business ideas in a hook-up dinner.

**Screening:** Selection of best ideas from those pitched by women and youth.

**Breakfast Meetings/Dinners:** Hook-up dinner to take the form of adjudication panels

**Mentorship Team:** A team of mentors to be selected to take women and youth whose ideas have been successful for advisory, coaching and mentorship

**Patron support soliciting:** The project will solicit patrons to support the selected ideas of women and youth with finances for start-up

**Training:** Women and youth will be trained in soft and technical skills to sharpen the saw

**Crowd funding:** Women and youth whose business ideas have been selected will be funded through a crowd,