

A Review of Past Experience in the Employment of Women in Road Construction and Maintenance in Lesotho

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1	The Plan to Address Issues of Role of Women in Road Construction
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Abbreviations

COSC	–	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
CWS	–	Civil Works Section
DS	–	District Secretary
DRR	–	Department of Rural Roads
FGDs	–	Focus Group Discussions
IDA	–	International Development Association
ILO	–	International Labour Office
LCU	–	Labour Construction Unit
LHDA	–	Lesotho Highlands Development Authority
LHRF	–	Lesotho Highlands Revenue
MP	–	Member of Parliament
NGOs	–	Non-Governmental Organisations
Ras	–	Research Assistants
RSA	–	Republic of South Africa
Std	–	Standard
UNDP	–	United Nations Development Project
VDC	–	Village Development Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to Labour Construction Unit (LCU)

Labour Construction Unit (LCU) is a branch of Ministry of Works within the Government of Lesotho. It was established in 1977 with the aim of providing cost effective labour-intensive jobs in Lesotho with special interest on retrenched mine workers. The following objectives were developed to realise this aim:

- To provide functional rural road communication in order to promote the socio-economic conditions of rural people.
- To promote and propagate the use of efficient labour-based construction and maintenance in Lesotho, thus creating both assets and employment. The emphasis was to use manpower for machinery where possible.

LCU was established as a pilot project and originally its responsibility was upgrading and maintenance of the 2,300km of feeder roads. In 1993, the Lesotho Government entered into agreement with International Development Association (IDA) and agreed on the development of small-scale contractors. Until then, all the construction and maintenance works were carried out by force account teams. In 1997 twenty years after its establishment, LCU was given two additional responsibilities, namely, the construction and maintenance of some of the Lesotho Highlands Revenue Funded (LHRF) road projects maintenance of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) feeder roads around the dams.

In 1999, the Department of Rural Roads (DRR) was set up by the merger of the LCU and Civil Works Section (CWS) which was established in 1968. The main objectives of the Civil Works Section were to build feeder roads, without gravel, to open up remote areas. This was originally on a food for work program but later changed to cash payments.

1.2 Study Objectives

The key task of this study is ***“to review past experience in the employment of women in road construction and maintenance in Lesotho in order to:***

- produce quantitative estimates of the numbers and proportion of women employed at different levels of road maintenance
- to evaluate the social and economic impacts from the perspective of the women, their families, the contractors and the involved government agencies
- to document and evaluate the factors contributing to the success of these initiatives and the major problems faced by the women and the contractors
- to provide guidelines and recommendations on how to improve implementation of labour based road construction and maintenance so as to increase the opportunities for women to participate and to open up opportunities for them to be promoted or to obtain permanent employment without sacrificing quality and quantity of work to be done

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- review experiences, if any, of the participation of women owned or managed subcontractors in road construction and maintenance
- to find out road maintenance activities which can easily and safely be carried out by women
- to find out whether road maintenance activities are culturally acceptable as one of the women's work."

The Terms of Reference as formulated by LCU state the consultants' responsibilities as follows:

1. To prepare a proposed study design which was to be discussed with the World Bank and responsible government agencies.
2. To obtain and review documentation on labour based road construction and maintenance organised by government, bilateral agencies and possibly NGOs.
3. To meet with representatives of the agencies responsible for these projects and to discuss their experiences, what were the positive and negative aspects from the economic and social perspective and how could the implementation be modified to increase the benefits to women.
4. Interview contractors involved in these projects to obtain their perspectives on the employment of women.
5. Meet with government agencies, NGOs, women's organisations, etc., to obtain their perspectives
6. Interview samples of women and men employed in these projects (either individually or in groups on the site) to obtain their perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of their experience. This will include a discussion of the attitudes of their families and communities (for example, were the husbands, mothers, etc., supportive or opposed, were the communities supportive or critical). The site male and female supervisors and contractors should be interviewed with the purpose of discussing women's productivity and attendance on site.
7. To evaluate the social and economic impact from the perspective of women, they would have to look at a road, which was completed four years ago, where the women are no longer employed. From this it could be determined whether short-term employment has long term effect.
8. To study recruitment procedures. Also how many women at work on the first day of the job and how many on the last day.
9. Prepare a report summarising the findings and presenting recommendations on the most effective ways to involve women. This should also include recommendations for employers on how to implement projects to facilitate the participation of women, and for donors and government agencies on how to ensure equitable treatment for women.

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1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Sampling

It was agreed in a preliminary meeting between LCU and Sechaba Consultants that fieldwork would be a blend of quantitative and qualitative data collection through structured questionnaires, question guides and focus group discussion guidelines.

Since its establishment LCU has upgraded, maintained and constructed many low volume roads throughout the country using labour based methods. In order to make a representative sample, two roads were selected from each of the three terrain types, **Mountains, Foothills** and **Lowlands** as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Study Roads by Ecozones

Terrain Types	Road
Mountains	1. MK10 – Mokhotlong to Phahameng
	2. QN - Ha Mosi to Seforong
Foothills	3. BB09 - Ha Selomo to Tsime
	4. QT10 - Ha Ntho to Manekoleng
Lowlands	5. BR02 - St Agnes to Senekane
	6. MF13 - Van Royen to Tšupane

After the research instruments were prepared, they were given to the client for scrutiny and to make input. The research tools consisted of the following:

- (a) structured questionnaire to be used with workers on roads
- (b) focus group guidelines to be used with groups of women and men
- (c) structured questionnaire to interview government agencies, contractors, NGOs and women's organisations.

Due to limited funds, it was decided that the work on this selected roads should only last for 44 days. It was agreed that this would provide a good picture of the role of women in LCU work.

Based on the available resources, the aim was to collect a total number of 150 questionnaires with workers, two focus group discussion notes from each road site, one for women and one for men, and as many questionnaires as possible in the area of the contractors, NGOs, government agencies and women's organisations. The distribution of data collected is as follows:

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Table 2: Number of Interviews and Discussions by Road Site

Road	Workers Questionnaires	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	Government Agencies, NGO and Women's Organisations
Mokhotlong	27	2	3
Butha-Buthe	30	2	3
Berea	28	2	4
Qacha's Nek	30	2	0
Quthing	30	2	4
Mafeteng	30	2	4
** (Maseru)			12
TOTAL	175	12	26

1.3.2 Research Assistant's Training

Once the tools were finalised, a team of nine Research Assistants (RAs) was recruited and training began. The initial plan was to recruit one team of four which would go to all the research roads, but time constraints led to recruitment of a number that could be divided into two teams to speed up the work. Training took three days and involved the following:

- introduction of the RAs to the study and its background
- familiarisation of RAs with research tools and clarification of issues and questions
- role playing by the RAs
- field notes taking
- pre-testing of research tools at the Matsieng to Ha Makoetje Road
- debriefing session characterised by review and alterations of research tools on the basis of pre-testing results

1.3.3 Fieldwork

Fieldwork started on the 4th June 2000 and ended on the 16th of the same month. One team worked on the roads in the north while the other team worked on the roads in the south. The field work schedule is shown below.

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Table 3: Work and Travel Schedule

Date	Activity	North Team	South Team
4 th June 2000	Travel from Maseru	Maseru to Mokhotlong	Maseru to Ha Mosi
5 th – 7 th June	Fieldwork	MK10	Ha Mosi
7 th June	Travel	Mokhotlong to Butha-Buthe	Ha Mosi to Quthing
8 th – 10 th June	Fieldwork	BB09	QT10
10 th June	Travel	Butha-Buthe to Berea	Still in Quthing
11 th June	Travel	Already in Berea	Quthing to Mafeteng
11 th – 13 th June	Fieldwork	BR02	(Different Dates)
12 th – 14 th June	Fieldwork	(Different Dates)	MF13
13 th – 15 th June	Fieldwork	Maseru	(Different Dates)
14 th – 15 th June	Fieldwork	(Different Dates)	Maseru
16 th June	Debriefing	Sechaba Consultants Offices	Sechaba Consultants Offices

The South Team was paid a supervisory visit on the 8th – 9th June at Quthing, QT10 Road. On the 10th - 11th June the supervisor was with the North Team on its last day on BB09 Road and its first day at BR02 Road. Fieldwork ended with a debriefing session at Sechaba Consultants' offices. This was the time when the teams sat together with the consultants to discuss, amongst others, the following:

- outstanding issues not captured through research tools
- observations
- interesting issues surrounding the study objectives, etc.

Fieldwork progressed fairly well without any complications. The only concern is that some women's focus group discussions were, sometimes, held with as few participants as three. In Ha Ntho, for instance, four women were registered but one was sick and only three were available for the focus group discussion. In an effort to gather more information, the team asked the chief to arrange a meeting with the village women, but that also failed. Although, there was no road selected for the study in Maseru, some of the NGOs and contractors operate from Maseru and were, therefore, interviewed in Maseru.

1.3.4 Data Management, Entry and Analysis

All data from the field were office checked by the responsible consultants. The data were entered using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which will also be used for analysis. NUD*IST was used for analysis of quantitative data from focus group discussions.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARECTERISTICS OF HOUSEHOLDS OF WORKERS

2.1 Household Characteristics

Demographic details of 960 people resulted from the 175 workers' households that were included in the survey. Looking at the data on household members, size and relation to head, it is clear that the households are 65 percent nuclear, that is, households with parents and children only. Of these households, 20 percent are female headed. Household children form the biggest proportion of the household members, followed by household heads and then spouses. Of the extended family members living in the households, only grandchildren form a statistically significant figure.

Table 4: Relation of Household Members to the Head

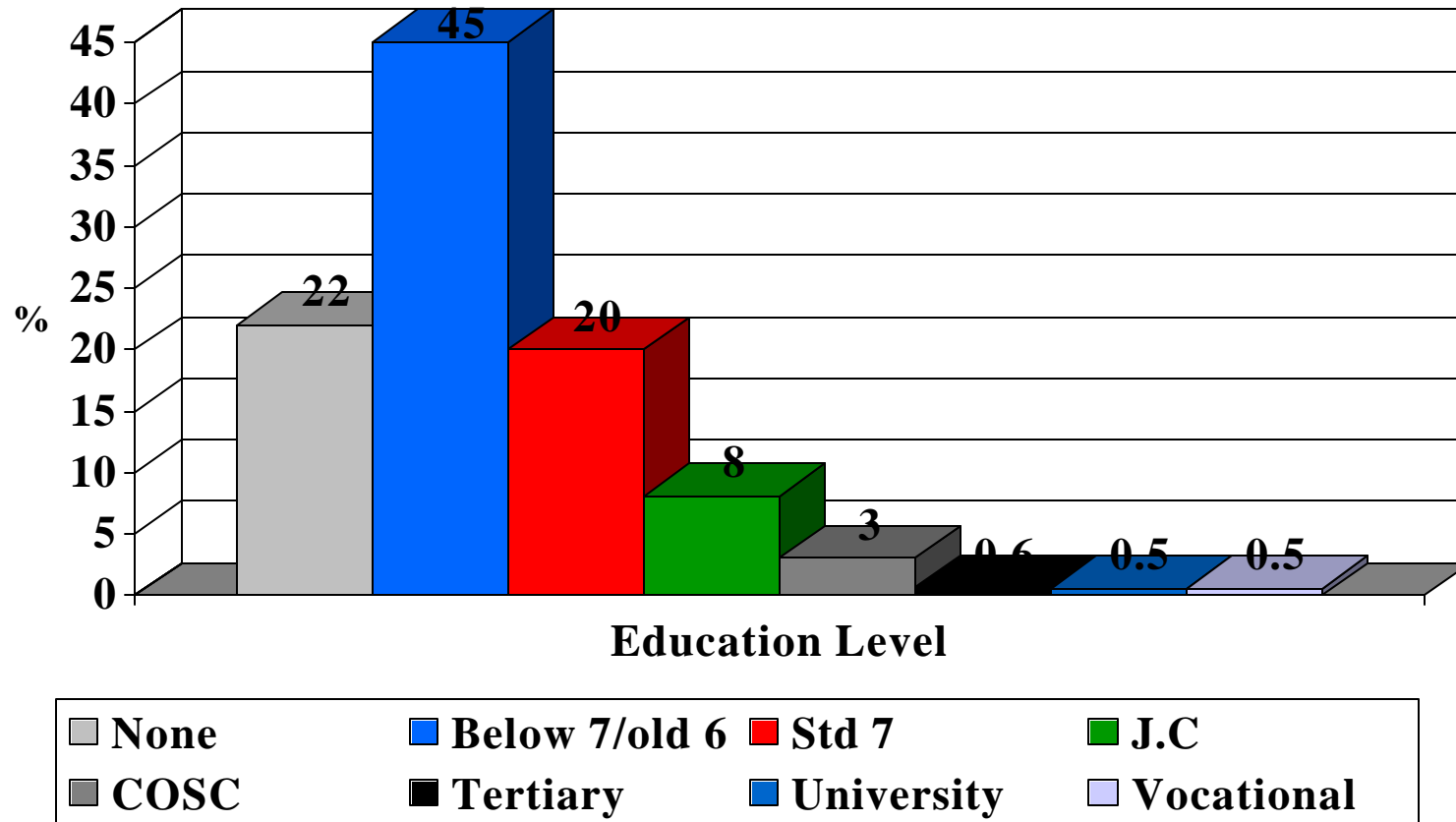
Member	Number of Members	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Head	175	18	18
Spouse	129	13	31
Child	514	54	85
Grandchild	85	9	94
Parent/Grandparent	14	2	96
None	3	.5	96.5
Other Relative	22	2	98.5
Child in Law	12	1	99.5
Sibling	5	.5	100
Total	960		

When the sizes of the households are considered, 54 percent have five members or less. The largest household has 14 members, with both parents, 8 children and 4 grandchildren.

The total female population is 48 percent, but for those above the age of 18 years is 47 percent. The mean age of men and women above the age of 18 years is 36. In terms of occupation, 57 percent are reported to have some sort of predominant occupation. A predominant occupation is one that can be classified as the main occupation. Of these, the highest percentage, 33 percent, do household work as their predominant occupation. Only 11 percent reported LCU Road as their pre-dominant occupation.

About half of the members in the households, 45 percent, have had below Std 7/Old Std 6 level of education, 3 percent has gone up to COSC and 2 percent has been to vocational school, tertiary level or even university. **Figure 1** on the next page shows the educational background of the covered population.

Figure 1: Educational Background of the Covered Population



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In order to fully appreciate and interpret the figures above, it is important to highlight the education system of Lesotho. First, there is primary school level which starts with standard one and ends with Standard Seven. Before the current system was put into practice, the primary level ended with standard six, which was actually the eighth year of school. At the end of Standard Seven pupils sit examinations and get certificates if they pass. According to the education policy, this is regarded as basic education, which provides skills and competencies, required for individual development and social interaction. As of the beginning of the year 2000, basic education is made free for the pupils who started school in January.

The second level is secondary. This level begins with Form A and ends with Form C. Likewise, Form C has examinations and certificate. The next level is high school which has two forms, D and E. Form E is also known as Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC). After COSC, one can proceed to tertiary level. However, there are vocational schools which require lesser qualifications.

2.2 Household Possessions

Household possessions depict household status and help in its understanding. In addition they portray the household's ability to work the land or generate income using household assets in order to improve household livelihood. These are presented in six different sections in **Table 5** below.

Table 5: Household Assets and Possessions

Assets/Possessions	% of Households Owning	Assets/Possessions	% of Households Owning
Land and Rooms		Animals/Poultry	
Fields	63%	Equines	32%
Rooms/Heisi/Optak	80%	Sheep	21%
Rondavels	51%	Goats	27%
Agricultural Equipment and Machinery		Pigs	23%
Tractors	0%	Chickens	63%
Planter	22%	Cattle	43%
Harrow	12%	Domestic Possessions	
Cultivator	21%	Television	10%
Sledge	21%	Radio	74%
Granary	3%	Coal Stove	21%
Scotchcart	10%	Gas Stove	16%
Plough	34%	Trees	
Other Possessions		Fruit Trees	76%
Vehicle	2%	Other Trees	27%
Sewing/Knitting Machine	19%		
Wheelbarrow	51%		

The table above shows that more than half of households (63%), own fields. 33.3 percent own two fields and one household has seven (7) fields. The plough is the most popularly owned farm equipment while none of the households covered owns a tractor. When considering animals, the popularly owned animals are cattle (43%), and the type that is

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owned by the least number of households are sheep. Also, looking closely at the data, no household is reported to own more than thirteen (13) cattle and the mean number of the cattle owned is four (4). There is one household which is reported to own as many as 241 sheep and the mean number of sheep owned is thirteen (13).

The respondents were also asked when the households acquired the possessions and many mentioned as far back as 1946. A considerable percentage (58%) acquired their fields in the recent years, between 1990 to 2000, despite the prevailing suspension of field land allocation in Lesotho. This could be due to inheritance or buying. The respondents were not asked as to how they acquired their possessions.

2.3 Household Income and Expenditure

Of the sampled households, for members above the age of 18 years, 48 percent bring income to the households. The remaining 52 percent claim being predominantly occupied with some activity, but do not bring income. There are also non-income generating predominant occupations mentioned by the respondents, i.e. schooling, invalid and actively seeking job.

There is also a wide range of income generating activities mentioned by the respondents as predominant occupations. The predominant occupations, which bring income, highlight the high percentage of the households, which do not make income out of such activity. As reflected in the table below few households have members engaged in a certain activity which brings income.

The analysis below indicates that a considerable number of households (42%), have participated in LCU road constructions, upgrading or maintenance. The data also reflects that of all the sources of income, LCU road construction is the most accessed followed by gifts and beer brewing (22%) and then **fato-fato** road constructions (17%). Income from road constructions, whether of LCU or **fato-fato**, ranks high in the livelihoods of sampled population. Dependency on gifts and beer brewing is also reported by a large number of households as a livelihood strategy. The remaining sources of income were mentioned by a small percentage.

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Table 6: Occupations that bring income to the households

Income Source	Bring Income %	Range of Amounts		Means For the HHDs Which Have This Source
		Lowest	Highest	
Road Construction	42	54.00	902.00	530
Joala ¹ sales	22	4.00	500.00	77
Gifts	22	10.00	6000.00	330
Fato-fato ²	17	90.00	4000.00	597
Wages Lesotho	14	50.00	4000.00	531
RSA Mines	14	100.00	2500.00	625
Vegetable sales	14	2.50	8000.00	495
Animal sales	14	100.00	2400.00	649
Other RSA income	13	20.00	4000.00	1189
Food aid	10	20.00	800.00	174
Wool and Mohair Sales	10	3.00	1380.00	252
RSA other	8	50.00	12000.00	95
Informal Business	7	10.00	400.00	127
Crop sales	7	100.00	1500.00	424
Other sales	6	2.00	250.00	109
Poultry sales	6	15.00	160.00	48
Fruit sales	5	20.00	500.00	152
Hawking	4	30.00	5800.00	1511
Rentals	3	75.00	3000.00	719
Pension/Disability	2	500.00	20000.00	6825
Dagga ³ sales	1	2500.00	2500.00	2500
Formal Business	1	100.00	100.00	100
Beer sales	.4	100.00	9000.00	1885
Assets sales	00	00	00	0

Respondents were asked how much income was received from the sources of income mentioned in the past year. The data is presented in with ranges and means in Table 6. For LCU road works in general, the range is between M54.00 and M902.00. The wider range of amounts received by the households in the past year is from the Republic of South Africa either as remittances or pension (terminal/disability grant included). The range of remittances is between M50.00 to M12,000.00 and that of pensions is between M500.00 and M20,000.00. The figures were also compared to the national picture presented in **Table 7:**

¹ *Joala* - Local home brew beer.

² *Fato-fato* – Public works for money, initially organised by the Members of Parliament

³ *Dagga* - Marijuana

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Table 7: Sources of income by amounts and household number receiving them.

Source of Income	Households having this source of income	% of households having this source of income	Mean annual income to households having this source of income
Wage work-Lesotho	83860	22.3%	M6683
Mine work	56159	14.9%	M7534
Formal business	10454	2.8%	M16490
Other work in RSA	27188	7.2%	M3895
Other sources in Lesotho	53959	14.3%	M1870
Pension/deferred pay	11272	3.0%	M7225
Gifts	76965	20.5%	M989
Informal business	21931	5.8%	M3340
Casual labour	55478	14.8%	M1263
Sale of joala	72734	19.3%	M876
Sale of animals	31413	8.4%	M1760
Rentals	9881	2.6%	M3373
Hawking	5648	1.5%	M4056
Sale of crops	25465	6.8%	M897
Other sales	15265	4.1%	M1139
Road Construction	4557	1.2%	M2773
Sale of own vegetables	13230	3.5%	M900
Other fato-fato work	14036	3.7%	M743
Sale of fruit/vegetables	4081	1.1%	M2268
Sale of animal products	5531	1.5%	M1649
Sale of dagga	5695	1.5%	M1395
Sale of beer	2718	0.7%	M2443
Sale of wool and mohair	10320	2.7%	M398
Sale of assets	1284	0.3%	M1649
Food aid	3215	0.9%	M526

Source: Poverty and Livelihood in Lesotho, 1999⁴

It is particularly striking that road constructions and fato-fato as sources income are lower in the rank with 1.2 percent and 3.7 percent respectively. Receiving gifts and sale of joala retain their position with 20.5 percent for the former and 19.3 percent for the latter. The difference between these national figures and the study figures is that the study figures are based on areas where there currently is work going on and people are getting money from road construction.

Respondents were also asked what the households spent money on in the past year. The data show that there are items which almost all the households spent money on last year, i.e. fuel 98 percent and housekeeping 79 percent. The table below presents, in ascending order, the items, percentage of households and cost range and means.

⁴ Sechaba Consultants. Poverty and Livelihoods in Lesotho, 1999. Maseru

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Table 8: Items Which Households Spent Money on in the Past Year

Item	No. of Households that spent money on the item	% of Households that spent money on the item	Expenditure range		Means For HHDs which Spent Money on This Item
			Lowest (M)	Highest (M)	
1. Fuel Purchase	98	56	15.00	1240.00	339
2. Food and Housekeeping	79	45	35.00	9600.00	1344
3. School Fees	54	31	12.00	2460.00	387
4. Transport	39	22	4.00	2400.00	471
5. Land Cultivation	34	19	50.00	1600.00	340
6. Uniform	32	18	15.00	12.00	177
7. Farm Inputs	29	16	8.00	10.50	203
8. Books	27	15	1.00	1800.00	300
9. Health	17	10	5.00	2000.00	168
10. Farm Implements (hiring)	9	5	10.00	370.00	470
11. Farm implements (purchasing)	3	2	100.00	1600.00	130

When considering the means, the food and housekeeping takes the first position with M1,344. Slightly more than half of the sampled households, 56 percent, spent some household income fuel. Only 31 percent spent money on fees, 18 percent on uniform and 15 percent on books. When considering agricultural expenditure, 19 percent spent money on land preparation or cultivation and 16 percent on farm inputs. A much smaller percentage spent money on farm implements hiring, 5 percent and purchasing respectively, 2 percent.

There was also a specific question on what the respondents will spend money they have earned on LCU road works on. They gave different responses but the dominating response was housekeeping (69%), education (11%), building (4%), capital/agriculture/housekeeping, education (3%) and other (3%).

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3. EMPLOYMENT ON LABOUR CONSTRUCTION UNIT (LCU) ROADS

3.1 Setting

Labour Construction Unit activities (road constructions, upgrading and maintenance) are meant to be part of the solution to some of the problems facing Lesotho. The objectives of LCU are formulated in the light of the economic status of Lesotho with special attention to poverty alleviation. Poverty in Lesotho is characterised by, among others, inaccessibility due to inadequate rural infrastructure in the form of roads, resulting in severe communication problems. The other characteristic is unemployment. The combination of the above problems creates a serious employment challenge for Lesotho.⁵ As a result, labour-intensive schemes form a strong tenet of LCU road constructions, upgrading and maintenance.

In the larger picture of Lesotho's strategies on poverty reduction, LCU is seen as one of the means of improving the employment and income opportunities of the poor. The Government's goal was to have LCU service 2,000 kilometres of rural roads per annum up to the year 2010, using cost effective labour-intensive methods, thus creating some 8000 jobs annually.⁶

Labour Construction Unit is, therefore, faced with the following challenges:

- Provision of large scale employment opportunities for rural people and therefore, improvement of income opportunities as well
- Improvement of rural road communication, thus improving facilities and infrastructure
- Development of small scale contractors in road construction, upgrading and maintenance, thus also developing construction industry

3.2 Recruitment Guidelines

Labour Construction Unit was established in 1977 with the objective of creating employment for retrenched mine workers from RSA.⁷

Retrenchment of Basotho mine workers from RSA has been going on for more than a decade now, intensifying the problem of unemployment in Lesotho. This development

⁵ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Public Works and Transport – Labour Construction Unit 1998/9 Annual Report.

⁶ Mokotjo. L.J., Principal Secretary for Trade and Industry, (1997), *Improving the Employment and Income Opportunities of the Poor*, Eighth Round Table conference from Lesotho, Geneva, November, 1997.

⁷ Kingdom of Lesotho, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Labour Construction Unit 1997 Annual Report, pg.2.

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impacted negatively both on households of the returning miners and the country's economy as a whole. The decline in the number of Basotho miners also means the decline in the remittances sent home and, therefore, decline in the remittance value of the country at large which means serious implications on the economy of the country. In an effort to redress this, LCU was established. However, the problem persists as Central Bank figures from 1993 to 1998 highlight a reduction in the average number of mineworkers employed from 116,129 in 1993 to 68,827 in 1999. This marks a fall of 47,302 of which 20,000 was between 1997 and 1998.

The expansion of LCU brought with it efforts to use local contractors in construction. As such, recruitment guidelines followed by LCU have two levels (i) contractors and (ii) labourers. In regard to the former, the contractors are invited to bid for road construction projects at LCU and the contractor who meets the requirements in terms of skills, experience and cost is given the project job. For the latter, recruitment guidelines are as follows:

1. LCU writes to DS about the road works to be carried out by contractors in his/her district.
2. After the contract has been signed between the Ministry of Works and Transport and contractor, the contractor will agree with DS and SRE about the recruitment. The contractor will write a formal letter to DS requesting for his assistance during recruitment as per sample letter.
3. The contractor should write a letter to the District Secretary requesting his/her office to inform the local chiefs of all villages in the vicinity (within 5km of the influence area of the road) of the road through formal procedures to assemble at contractor's site/camp. The letter will specifically state the recruitment day, number of workers needed and the wage rate.
4. The recruitment will only be carried on if the following people are present: DS, MPs and LCU representatives, chiefs and the contractor. LCU representative will make sure that the recruitment adheres to government policy.
5. The representatives and the villagers should be informed about the recruitment procedures and they should understand them clearly.
6. A roster list should then be prepared as per every village and this must comprise only people that are fit for the nature of work that they will be undertaking.
7. From the above list, whenever there is a need for recruitment, a proportion of villagers at a particular point of construction should be recruited. The same procedure should be followed for any recruitment.
8. Since the recruitment would be a roster manner, people that were recruited before, should not be engaged again at work before all the listed people have had their chances.
9. There has to be a one month rotation for the labourers
10. Before preparation of the roster list and commencement of the newly recruited villagers, the wage rate of M27.00 has to be mentioned and task rate system.
11. After the roster list has been prepared, it has to be submitted to the regional Engineer and the first copy to be displayed at the site office, the second copy is then to be submitted to the DS and the third copy to the regional engineer.

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12. If one worker is absent on the rotational-recruitment day his/her name should be put at the bottom of the roster list.
13. A few workers (about 5) who have special skills may be exempted from the rotation procedure so they can assist in the supervision and training of new recruits.⁸

It is evident from the recruitment guidelines that while the LCU, in its initial stage, focused on the retrenched miners, men, the recruitment guidelines are silent about this gender issue.

3.2.1 Recruitment Procedures by Study Site

Workers, supervisors and contractors were asked to explain recruitment procedures. Although respondents were workers, some of them could not explain anything beyond that they registered with the chief and were hired. For those who were able to explain the procedure step by step, six different figures or bodies were mentioned as being responsible for hiring. These are the chief, the chief and VDC, LCU, both local authorities and LCU, MP and contractors, LCU and local authorities. It is evident from the different responses of workers at the same site that very few workers understand the recruitment procedure. The responses, in summary, portrayed the following:

1. Mokhotlong and Butha-Bothe employ the same procedure, which is as follows:
 - The local authorities, chiefs and VDC are informed by LCU representatives that there will be recruitment taking place in their area. They are informed about the number of workers needed, when and duration of the project/s.
 - The local authorities then inform the villagers and register people who come forward.
 - On a set date, they go with the people to the agreed meeting place where LCU then takes the needed number balancing it amongst involved villages. The selection at this point is based on the lists provided and the presence of those who registered.
 - Then those selected are told about the work conditions and when to start.
2. Berea and Qacha's Nek employ the same recruitment procedure as Mokhotlong, but only the chiefs are mentioned not the VDC.
3. In Quthing the sole responsibility mentioned is the Member of the Parliament (MP) in the constituency. The workers are registered with the MP who then passes them on to LCU representatives.

⁸ Extract from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport Department of the Rural Roads, *guidelines for Recruitment of workers on contractor's sites*

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3.3 Labourers Payment

The labourers are all paid in cash on daily basis. Each group works for 20 days and is then supposed to be replaced by a new crew. Asked whether men and women are paid equally, 98 percent replied in the affirmative while 2 percent claimed they did not know. There was no direct question regarding the rate paid but information received from LCU indicated that the figure is M27.00 per day. The labourers pointed out that full day's pay is determined by whether one finishes the task assigned for the day. The supervisor registers day's work on the basis of task completion. At the end of the group's working time, the register is used to prepare the wages sheets. In the focus group discussions the labourers raised the following points of concern:

- The labourers are paid late, sometimes as late as two weeks
- There is some confusion concerning rainy days when part of the day's work has been done.
- Labourers seldom finish tasks assigned although they work hard to try and finish them. This has a negative impact on their wages.

4. WOMEN IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE IN LESOTHO

4.1 Employment Opportunities For Women on LCU Roads

Gradually, LCU expanded as lack of employment opportunities and infrastructural challenges intensified in Lesotho. For instance, the retrenchment of mine workers resulted in more women seeking employment as a coping strategy in the face of lost mine remittances which was the main source of income for some households. With time, LCU realised the need to recruit women on road constructions, maintenance and upgrading. In 1986, about ten years after its establishment, with the advice from International Development Association (IDA), LCU started recruiting women.⁹

In some focus group discussions, women were quick to point out that they should be given a chance to participate in road construction works. They reasoned that their

Mokhotlong Women's FGD

In one focus group discussion in Mokhotlong, women mentioned that they properly earned themselves the name, "**khofu tse matsoele**", translated breasted caterpillars, because they can work on roads and used to in the past years. They also said that men have come back from the mines and are frustrated with having to stay at home and many have resorted to heavy drinking, laziness and irresponsibility. Therefore, they said women should be given more opportunities to work as they use their earnings to provide for their families while men spend their earnings outside households.

participation dates back some years ago with what they used to call "**mine papa**".¹⁰ They claimed that, then road construction works were meant for women rather than men, who mostly worked in the mines in South Africa.

Asked whether men and women have equal employment opportunities, 47 percent of the labourers replied in the affirmative while 2 percent did not answer the question. Of those who said *yes*, 14 percent reasoned that whoever is registered is recruited irrespective of gender. 10 percent argued that selection process is not gender discriminatory. Of the 51 percent who indicated that women and men do not have

equal opportunities, 43 percent supported their answers by pointing out that evidently more men are employed than women. Other reasons were given for both responses but were mentioned by a few people.

⁹ Set'sabi. A. M. Dr. Et.al., Gender Issues in the Labour Construction Unit of the Lesotho Ministry of Works, 1991 (pg.17)

¹⁰ Literally translated 'mine for soft porridge. The term given to the food for work schemes which women viewed as their mine while men worked in the RSA mines.

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Foremen, technical assistants, supervisors and contractors were also asked whether men and women are given equal employment opportunities and only 28 percent replied in the affirmative.

The road construction activities in LCU roads are dominated by men. Out of the six study roads, only one had a female contractor making it 83 percent masculine. In the interviews held with the contractors, it is apparent that they are all aware of gender imbalances going on in their work. While they all admit that they are also aware of the need to involve women more, they seem to be caught in the triangle of conflict of interests. **Table 8** shows some of the interests of the three parties.

Table 9: The interests of LCU, Contractors and Women Labourers

LCU's Interests	Contractors Interests	Women's Interests
Job to be finished on set dates according to schedule	Finish the job on the set dates according to schedule	To be given chance to participate even though may not be able to meet the targets
The quality of work should be maintained	Maintain quality of work as expected and to be considered again for future work/projects	Try and meet the expected requirement
Use cost-effective methods in construction	Do the job using cost-effective methods in order to make healthy profit margin	To earn money through fair work
Constructions should be labour intensive	Construction works should be labour intensive as well as productive	Expect maternal protection and security
Recruiting bodies should be gender sensitive and involve women	Involve more men than women for productivity's sake	

In the face of the interests as tabulated above, the contractors tend to bend to the party that will best serve their purpose with the least hassle and maximum profit. As a result the interests of women are considered last and are entertained to a minimal extent.

4.2 Gender Proportions of LCU roads Labourers

Foremen, technical assistants, supervisors and contractors were asked to give the ratios of employed women to men. Although this resulted in different ratios given in the same road site, the results reflect the same conclusion: **Far more men than women are hired** in LCU road projects (see the text box, first numbers are for females). The labourers were asked to estimate the proportions of men and women, their responses emphasise the high imbalance in proportions as shown in **Table 9**. The data reveal that few women, as the proportions reflect, participate in the LCU road constructions at all levels of the staff structure.

<u>Ratio List</u>
1:10
1:18
1:30
1:50
1:60
1:70
3:70
4:60

Labourers were asked whether other than themselves, any member of their households had been involved in LCU road work. Results show that 28 percent of respondents had

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members who had worked on LCU roads. That data show that in 137 cases at least two members have been involved, in seven households, up to three members have been involved while in one household as many as four members have been involved. Asked what sexes were those members, the reflection is as follows:

Table 10: Number of times household members have been involved in road works and their sexes

Times household was involved	Sex of household member involved	
	% Female	% Male
1	41	59
2	58	42
3	57	43
4	0	100
Total	156	244
Ratio		
1:2		

The contractors, supervisors, managers and technical assistants were asked how many people they hire per working group. The responses were different and as a result, the data in **Table 10** is presented in averages.

Table 11: Women vs. Men Proportions on Study Roads

Terrain	Road	Male	Female
Mountains	1. MK10	110	30
	2. QN	45	30
Foothills	3. BB09	100	32
	4. QT10	61	4
Lowlands	5. BR02	100	25
	6. MF13	90	60

The figures were also compared to the national gender proportions in the special employment schemes in 1995. The proportions still show that the construction public works are predominantly masculine. **Table 11** shows the breakdown of jobs created under public works programmes and the estimations of women's participation based on the 2:1 ratio from this study's calculations.

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Table 12: Lesotho Direct Employment Generated Under special Employment Schemes in 1995

Employment Scheme	Number	Percentage	LCU study participation Estimations (%)	
			Male	Female
Food for Work (CWS, FU, SCO)	3,327	27	19	8
LCU	1,756	14	10	4
LHRF	7,222	59	42	17
TOTAL	12,305	100	71	29

Source: UNDP, ILO & Ministry of employment, Review and Analysis of special Employment schemes in Lesotho, Maseru, 1998.

The schemes were meant to alleviate the problem of unemployment and it is reported that they have gone some way. However, gender analysis of these schemes, as shown in **Table 11** indicates that the main beneficiaries of these schemes have been mainly men.¹¹

In an effort to follow up the trend, after the circulation of the first draft of the report, the consultants were invited to visit the Civil Works Section (CWS) road projects. Due to time constraints only one project, Roma to Khobeng road, was visited by the team of Department of Rural Roads staff and the consultants. The gender proportions on this project differ significantly from the national proportions and the Department of Rural Roads projects as **Figure 2** shows, with women dominating in this case. It should be noted though, that one site is quite limited to make adequate representation and comparison. A factor that is worth noting at this point is the fact that CWS projects have a component of food-for-work, which may influence the nature of people who are interested in working on the projects. Any future work has to take this issue into account and make a thorough analysis of the implication of having food as part of the payment package. It should be noted that review of the country's food-for-work programmes is not part of the terms of reference of the present study but as noted, any future work should address the role that food make in deciding the type of person who works on projects. Traditionally food-for-work projects were dominated by women, but again this was at a time when retrenchment was not so high. It is thus necessary to look at whether there is a change in this trend and measure the magnitude of the change. This can be done through analysis of databases over the years.

The contract¹² that DRR signs with contractors does not address the issue of equal pay for equal work. Most of the issues covered in the contract relate mostly to performance of the contractor. Issues relating to labour only address the issue of payment of wages. It should also be noted that the current labour code¹³ only address issues of fair pay and not equal-work equal-pay. The implication of this is that there is a need to address the issue of equal pay not only at the level of the DRR but also at the national level.

¹¹ Sechaba Consultants. Grdnicki Jasmina and David Hall, 1999. Situation Update of Children and Women in Lesotho.

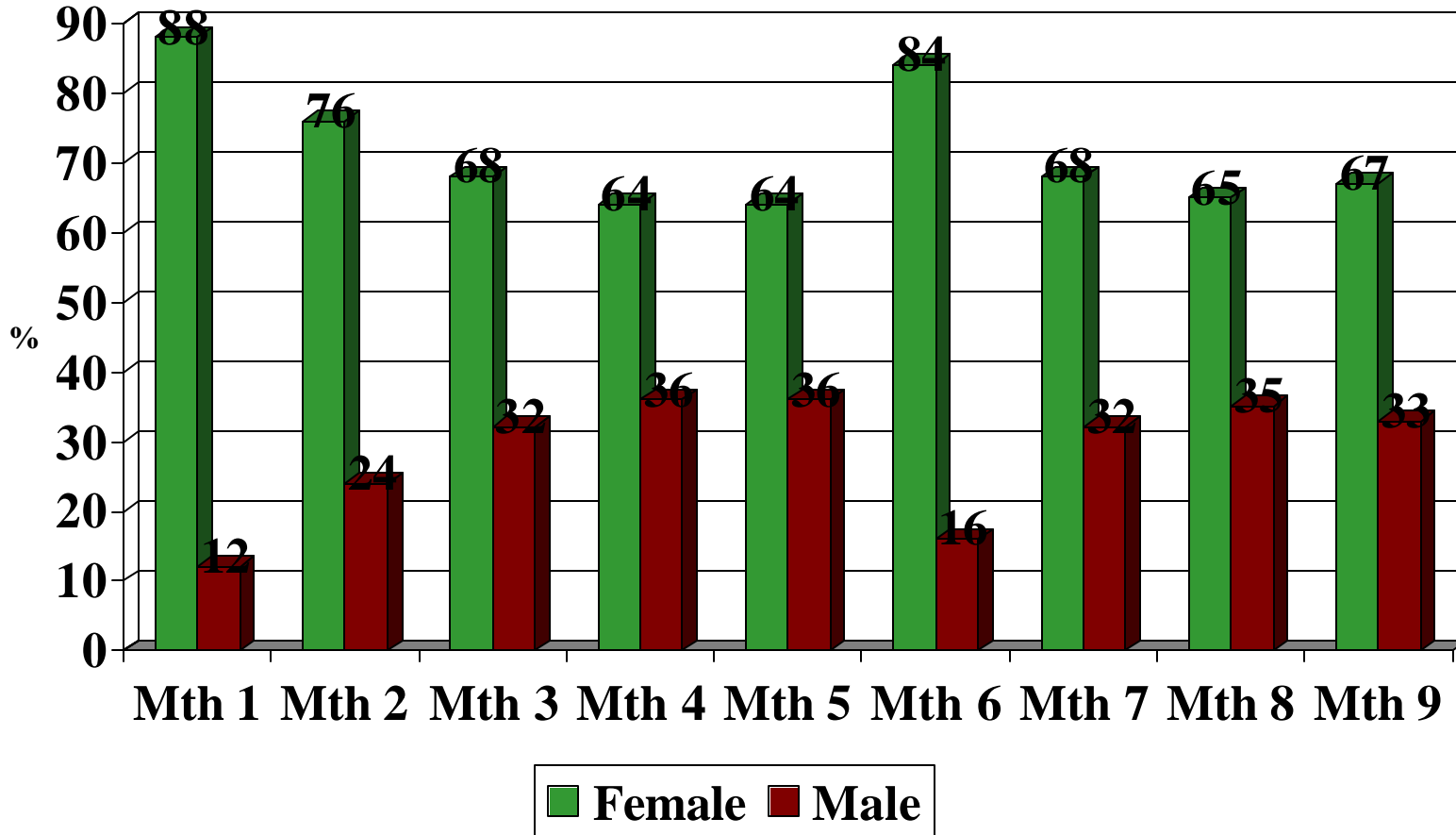
¹² E.g. Department of Rural Roads, Contract Documents for Routine Road Maintenance.

¹³ Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary. No. 118 of 12 November 1993.

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The DRR should be able to monitor that the contractors are applying the concept of equal-pay for equal-work through the review of pay sheets that are submitted as required by the contract. This implies that a wages sheet which also has a column of sex of employee and the work done should be included in the contract as an annex. It will be necessary for DRR to computerise the wage sheets to be able to pick up cases where women are paid less than men. It also means that DRR will have to make regular checks and interview workers working with contractors. It will be necessary for DRR to include a clause in the contract that will allow them to do this.

Figure 2: Gender Proportions on the CWS Road Site



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Three staff members of CWS in supervisory positions on site were interviewed. All three said men and women are given equal employment opportunities in the project. Community members register their names with Civil Works in the area at a place arranged by the chiefs and they are recruited according to the list not gender. There are no preferences at all for any gender.

In this site, division of labour is not gender based. The respondents also pointed out that men and women are given equal weight of work. Excavation and loading of quarry is done by both sexes. Men are sometimes allocated the task of water drawing. Asked to comment on the performance of women on the project these are some of the responses of the three staff members interviewed:

- ‘Women are effective and efficient just like men.’
- ‘Women are able to do road works; well, not all of them are strong but they still cope.’
- ‘Women are fine, except when they are pregnant or nursing, then their productivity slows down.’

However, one foreman pointed out that towards the end of the group’s working time, women tend to be slower in excavating the quarry since by then their muscles are strained, then men excavate the quarry by themselves for the last few days.

Women in this CWS project enjoy a certain degree of maternal protection. Pregnant women and nursing women are hired if they have registered. The supervisors are responsible to see that such women are given tasks they can perform effectively and safely and they all said that has never given them problems. Men do complain about this arrangement and that of being responsible for quarry mining towards the end of the shift but not seriously because they still accept it as the natural order of things for men to do more heavy-duty work than women.

4.3 Women and Heavy Duty Tasks on LCU Road Works

The data reflects that the involvement of women in road constructions, which are considered predominantly ‘heavy-duty’ is controversial. The advance of this development is constrained by various reasons, i.e. cultural beliefs, pressure to meet deadlines, experience of some contractors with the pace of women.

When the labourers were asked whether men and women are assigned the same type of work, 28 percent indicated that this was not the case. Men are assigned tougher jobs while women are given less strenuous jobs. The table below shows the kind of jobs mentioned for both sexes.

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Table 13: Tasks done by women and men

Women's tasks	Men's tasks
Drawing water where there is need	Digging and excavating quarry
Watering the road	Loading quarry into the trucks
Levelling the road	Levelling the road also using rollers
Digging stones	Building where needed
Carting stone to the road using wheel barrows	Remove grass
Taking care of the store (store woman)	Operate machines
Supervising	
Discard soil	
Reshaping	

Basically, women and men are assigned different tasks despite the fact that they are paid equally. The imbalance does not cause dissatisfactions but there seems to be a mutual understanding between the two sexes. For instance, in some of the men's focus group discussions, there were suggestions that men's wages should at least be increased, but they did not suggest that those of women to be reduced. It appears, to them it is the natural order of things to have men handle tough tasks while women handle lighter ones.

5. PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN ROAD WORKS

The are various factors underlying the low level of women’s participation in road works, some of which are cross cutting throughout discussed topics as can be seen from the previous sections. This section seeks to explore perceptions and constraints in involving women more on LCU road activities. The following issues will be examined:

- All labourer’s views
- Women’s views
- Men’s views
- NGO and agencies and contractors’ views
- Cultural constraints

5.1 Interviewed Labourers’ Views

Labourers were asked what sex they would have preferred to be involved in road works. The majority of respondents, 63 percent said they would have preferred males. Only 8 percent said they would have preferred females while 29 percent were neutral about it.

The respondents gave various reasons to support their responses as listed in **Table 13**, and the responses given are the same given to the question: *Do you think road constructions should be left as only men’s work?*

Table 14: Reasons of Respondents’ Sex Preferences on Road Works

Why females	Why males	Why both
They also have important role to play on road works	Women are not fit to do heavy duties	Both sexes need money
Women can do some tasks better than men	Tasks are suitable for men	They can both do the work
Some women are widowed and need to work	Women do not have much to do on road works	Both sexes as long as they can do the work effectively and efficiently
Wages are too small for men	Men are physically stronger than women	To ensure equality
Women should be given suitable tasks	Women should look after families	
Women use wages for the good of households	To ensure equality	
To ensure equality		

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5.2 Women's Views

Admittedly women are not well represented in this study as the labourers' ratio is highly biased towards men. Women make only 29 percent of the labourers' population. Much of the women's views have been captured through focus group discussions.

In all the discussions with women, there is a general feeling that women have a role to play in road works. There are many tasks which women do but also there are many more

Ha Mosi Women's FGD

The work we do here is not anything we cannot handle, we are able to do the tasks assigned to us...we try to block our husbands from getting these jobs because they do not bring income to the households, so we make sure we register before them.

which women do not participate in (**ref. Table 12**). In Mafeteng, women pointed out that they would not like to excavate gravel (which involves the use of pickaxes), load trucks and operate machines. They indicated that they regard such tasks as suitable for men not women. However, women in Botha-Bothe have mixed feelings about the 'heavy duty tasks'. According to them, with time women will be able to do all tasks done on road construction. Presently though, there are tasks they cannot handle at all, such as using pickaxes to excavate gravel, load trucks and operate machines. Even for those tasks they presently handle, they need strong people.

They said that their experience from working on road is such that they might not even think of registering again because the work is tough. The women at Ha Mosi have a different view as shown in the **Text box**. Women in Botha-Bothe claim that they deserve the opportunity more than men as they have responsibilities of seeing to it that there is food in their households. They noted that this is the reason why women are involved in many income-generating activities.

When considering female supervisors or managers, the women generally stated that it is necessary to have them, as male supervisors and managers do not understand some of the problems women encounter. In Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek, Quthing and Berea women indicated that because men do not understand issues surrounding pregnancy, menstruation and nursing mothers, they tend to overlook the need for maternal protection and as a result women feel they are being discriminated against. They would like pregnancy and menstrual problems to be treated as natural things not as disabilities. The attitude of male management towards pregnancy has led to women hiding their pregnancies just so they can secure positions on road works.

Women do not view themselves as assistants of men in road works but they also initiate road works at community levels. In Quthing, about 15km from the study site road, there is an association, which was initiated by women and is involved in road constructions. A focus group discussion was held with members of committee.

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Masitise Khobola Setho

Masitise Khobola Setho is an association, which was established in 1998 by village women. The initial objectives of the association were soil, water and environmental conservation. It is mainly a volunteer service association. With time the association expanded and it now has three substructures within it, Khobola 1, Khobola 2 and Khobola 3. Each has an area it handles as follows:

- Khobola 1 is responsible for road constructions and maintenance
- Khobola 2 is responsible for reclamation and rehabilitation of dongas and prevention of soil erosion in general
- Khobola 3 is responsible for building dams and planting trees

The initiators were impatient with the slow pace at which the VDC handled developmental issues within the community. The roads were not maintained and dongas were not rehabilitated. The association, although women's innovation, is not gender biased; however it has a fairly large number of women than men. Also its executive committee has more women than men with the ratio of 6:3. The committee members reasoned that this is because women are the ones who are always at home and also seem to understand the concept of voluntary service better than men.

The association is said to have managed to construct a road called Tšoeneng to Hamoko in 1998 and is hoping to construct a road from Alywaal Skop to Mokalabetso.

5.3 Men's Views

Men are the majority (71%) workers on LCU roads. It can, therefore be concluded that 71 percent of the labourers' responses are from males. For instance, the data shows that 8 percent of labourers would have preferred females to participate in road works, 63 percent would have preferred males while 29 percent would have preferred both. Therefore, 71 percent of each percentage is from males. That means 6 percent of the labourers said they would have preferred females to have been involved, 45 percent would have preferred males and then 21 percent said they would have preferred both. The remaining 28 percent are from women.

Men consider road works too tough for women to handle but they also appreciate that apart from gender issues surrounding road works, the road works provide employment opportunities which women have as much right to access as men.

In all the focus group discussions men pointed out that road works are tough for women but since women need money they should not be left out. In Berea, men even pointed out that women need money more because they are responsible for housekeeping. But they also said it is not 'culturally correct' for women to work while men are unemployed, therefore, they are faced with the pressure to seek employment.

Some of the things men said during discussions

'If we are not working women will punish us.'

'Money we earn here is enough for women not us.'

'Women are not strong enough.'

'This work is not for women.'

'We do not want to see a female supervisor where we work.'

'They are not as strong as us.'

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The issue of payment kept coming into the discussions as a means of comparing the weight of work and roles. Men feel they are getting less for more *vis a vis* women getting more for less. The weight of work done by women is not an issue at all with men. According to men, women are doing far less than men but at the same time the work that women do is too much for them. They feel road works are men's domain because of their strength. In Mokhotlong men said they think road works are suitable for men and boys not women and girls.

Asked to air their views about women in supervisory positions in LCU road works, the men in Berea noted that supervisory roles are not a gender issue as whoever is skilled can take on those roles. But men in Mokhotlong said they would not like to have a female supervisor because women are biased, but one out of the ten participating pointed out that it is necessary if the needs of women are to be catered for.

5.4 The Views of Contractors, Agencies and NGOs

The data used in this section is from interviews with the following:

- 5 Contractors involved in LCU roads
- 5 Government Agencies Employees
- 7 Non Governmental Organisations
- 1 Owner of rollers hired out to LCU

5.5 Contractors' On LCU Roads' Views

The interviewed contractors were asked why they employ few women and more men. Their responses were that the bulk of work needs physically strong people. They noted that women do have a role to play that the tasks they can do effectively and efficiently are limited hence they hire few women. They also said that while women can learn to do all the tasks men do, they do not have the physical strength to do those activities. Therefore, with the pressure to finish work on schedule, contractors claim that they couldn't afford to hire more women.

It is apparent from the analysis that, in spite of women saying they should be given more opportunities, there is still a long way to go before the realisation of this aspiration. One male contractor had this to say during the interview:

“No I wouldn't like to see more women involved in road construction because they affect productivity, deadlines and task quality. I also learnt as I grew up that girls are given light jobs while boys handle the heavy duties. So to expect women to handle heavy duties is also unrealistic taking into consideration how they have been brought up.”

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Another male contractor said that this kind of work is mainly made for men, as it requires physical strength. He continued to say,

“Initially I employed 15 women and 40 men but I realised that the progress was slow because of a larger number of women and I decided to cut the number of women down the following month. I do not in anyway underestimate the intelligence or capabilities of women but its just that I feel it is not right and healthy for women to do such jobs...I allocate women I have hired lighter jobs, but in road construction lighter jobs are very few except to fetch water, level road and to water the road. Therefore, this kind of job does not require a large numbers of women.”

Evidently, there are cultural constraints in the employment of women on road construction. It is also nine years since it was recommended that the number of women in the LCU management, supervisory positions and even labourers should be increased.¹⁴

Ironically, one of the roads is being upgraded by a woman contractor. This is the site where there were only three women. Asked whether men and women are given equal employment opportunities she said, ‘no’. She pointed out that this is because work done is more of heavy duty for women to handle efficiently and effectively. From both observation and an interview with her, one gets the impression that she is more delicate with women than she is with men because of the lack of strength required for road constructions. Women, for instance, are allowed to bring a relative or a friend to help them with their daily tasks, whereas, men are not given that privilege. Also it was observed that women had time to eat their lunch and were working away from men except for a few very old men who were doing light duty work with them. Asked whether she would like to see more women employed on road construction as labourers, she said, ‘No’, so did all the male contractors.

These are some of the sentences that punctuated the woman contractor’s views.

- “Women have no strength at all”
- “Men boss women around when they want to go on strike”
- “Loading quarry is too tough for women”

5.6 Views of the Government Agencies Employees

Employees from the following five Government Agencies were interviewed:

- (i) Local Government in Maseru

¹⁴ Set’sabi. A. M. Dr. Et.al., Gender Issues in the Labour Construction Unit of the Lesotho Ministry of Works, 1991

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- (ii) Rural Water Supply in Quthing
- (iii) Ministry of Environment, Gender and Youth (x4)
- (iv) Civil Works in Maseru

The respondents were asked whether the agencies they work for are aware that women are involved in road constructions, 80 percent replied in the affirmative. All the respondents said women's involvement is regarded as a positive development and would like to see more women getting involved. The following are some of the reasons that they gave to support their responses:

- It promotes employment of women
- It provides a chance for women to earn money
- There must be gender equality; therefore, as long as the women are productive they can be involved in road constructions
- It puts unnecessary burdens on breadwinners who are mainly men
- Many women are members of development committees involved in planning and implementation of works. So they should be involved in road works as labourers as well
- Helps solve financial constraints at household level
- Economic empowerment of women

In considering what role the respondents think they can play, both at individual level and agency level, to promote more involvement of women on road constructions, the majority mentioned conscientisation of women. One respondent from the Ministry of Environment, Gender and Youth indicated that the Government should said,

'...Advocate for the increase of women employed in road construction and maintenance. Policies and programmes must be formulated to achieve gender equality in employment. Institutional policies and resource allocations should adopt a gender perspective approach.'

In an interview held with the Director of Gender and Chief Gender Officer of Ministry of Gender and Youth Affairs, they pointed out with concern that traditionally '**lipitso**' are men's domain. As such, even though women are expected to participate in them, their level of participation is still low. Therefore, because '**lipitso**' are used to communicate possible projects and arrange recruitments, women still lag behind. According to them, the starting point should be workshops to sensitise communities about gender, i.e. appreciation of differences in physique. The respondents expressed the ministry's willingness to participate and take the leading role in sensitising the communities, contractors and all involved in road construction projects.

They also pointed out that although women earned themselves the name, '**khofu tse matsoele**', they are now being pushed to the margins of road construction activities. In their view, this is discrimination against women. Deliberate efforts should be made to recruit more women on road constructions. Labour divisions on road constructions

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should be judged by capacity not sex and words like heavy duties should not be used as they are threatening by themselves.

Efforts are being made by the ministry to address gender issues. According to these respondents, Lesotho does not have gender policy yet but there is a framework already. The policy will, amongst others, seek to eliminate cultural and traditional practices that perpetuate discrimination and gender stereotyping of women. Discrimination in this context, is any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women.¹⁵

5.7 The views of Non Governmental Organisations

Of the interviewed seven representatives of NGOs, six said they are aware that women are involved in road works and all regard this as a positive development. Asked whether they think they have a role to play towards involving women more on road constructions, the same number thought they have and these are some of the ideas they put forward:

- Provide women with some training
- Encourage women to participate in all activities even those that are thought to be for men
- Influence policy makers
- Dissemination of information
- Break male dominated duties

Only one had mixed feelings about women's involvement. She pointed out that women's involvement is positive only in as far as it is a source of income, however small, but she would not encourage women to do more road works as there are many activities women can be involved in such as tree plantings and developing orchards. Some respondents pointed out that it is also viewed as women's contribution towards development of their own country.

5.8 The Views Of LCU Staff On the Sites

Interviews were held with some of the LCU staff members on the sites as listed below:

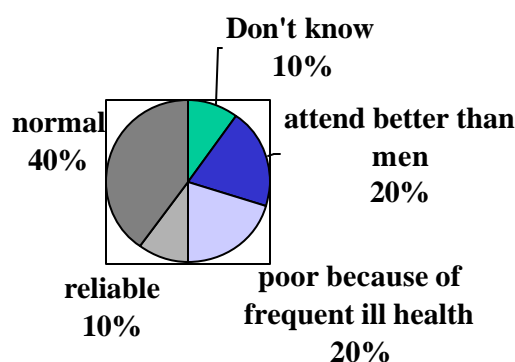
- 6 Technical assistants
- 1 Store assistant
- 2 Supervisors
- 1 Foreman

¹⁵ Newsletter, Women Moving Human Rights Centre Stage, May 1999

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Of these staff members, 70 percent said LCU is involved in recruitment of labour and 50 percent said women are given equal working opportunities as men. 90 percent know the number of workers recruited per working group but only 70 percent stated the gender proportions. Asked to comment on the attendance of women the responses were as shown in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Women's Attendance According to LCU Staff on the Sites



From the pie chart, it is clear that 70 percent of respondents were positive about women's work attendance and 70 percent still, said they have not experienced gender specific problems. The respondents were asked whether women are given equal weight of tasks as men and 40 percent replied in the affirmative. Asked to explain their responses, the following were said to support the responses:

- Women do not load the truck or level the quarry
- Women are unable to load the truck and can't dig the quarry
- Women are as strong as men
- Women are given lighter tasks
- Women are weak so they are given light duties
- Don't know

However, with the tasks women are allocated, 80 percent of the LCU staff members said women perform satisfactorily. 60 percent would like to see more women involved in road construction.

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6. CONCLUSION

The Terms of Reference required Sechaba Consultants 'to review the experiences of the employment of women in road construction and maintenance in Lesotho'. Conclusions have been drawn based on the findings on seven supplementary questions in the Terms of Reference.

- The level of women's employment at different levels of road maintenance is only 29 percent. The road construction is still highly dominated by men despite efforts to have a gender perspective.
- Cultural constraints play an important role in the employment of women on road works
- Women and men do not have equal employment opportunities; as a result men are the main beneficiaries of LCU public works schemes
- There is a general division of labour based on gender characterised by the allocation of heavy duties to men and light duties to women
- Recruitment procedures are gender biased in favour of men
- LCU road work activities are the highest accessed source of income in the study areas by rural communities, however it should be noted that random sampling was not employed
- Women want to be given more opportunities on road works as they are the only available employment opportunities in their areas
- There is a dominating conflict of interest with a triangular relationship amongst LCU, contractors and women resulting in contractors hiring more men and few women
- Women use money earned from the road and other sources of income, on family up-keeping but most men spend their earnings outside the households
- Based on the contractor's experiences, women impact negatively on productivity in road works
- Government agencies have a gender perspective approach which tends to favour more involvement of women on road works
- Women are not maternally protected and secure, i.e. pregnant women are not accepted and nursing mothers are not given time to breastfeed their children

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- Contractors claim it is not on the basis of gender that they do not involve more women but it is more to do with productivity
- Contractors have not encountered gender specific problems
- Women's performance with the light duties they are assigned on road works is fairly satisfactory.
- Women have a positive attitude towards work, only their strength betrays them as the majority still feel they cannot handle duties handled by men.

An action plan to help DRR address the issues of gender equality and sensitivity is attached to the report as Appendix 1.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Information Dissemination

The plight of Basotho women has been articulated through many communication channels: radio, TV, newspapers, theatre, posters, pamphlets, workshops, seminars and even conventions. The evidence is that very little of this has reached the rural communities and as a result there is a gap of awareness to bridge between rural and urban communities. The rural women are the least informed about their rights, so are women labourers on road constructions. There is still a long way to go for them if they are to be liberated from cultural and traditional practices that discriminate against them. The lack of information on their rights means that rural women are not able to be assertive and this has an impact on government initiatives. In this way rural communities will become gender sensitive which will improve their approach to road works in relation to women

7.2 Sensitise contractors

The contractors should be sensitised about the need to pay attention to government's gender policies. It is necessary that all the parties involved should come together and discuss how best to address the problem and to ensure compliance with set policies. Once agreement is reached, the new policies should be incorporated into the recruitment procedures and guidelines.

7.3 Empowerment Women Through Training

In the face of cultural and traditional practices that still seem to dominate the construction industry, it is important to empower women through training. Women can be encouraged to form small groups in their areas and then get special training on construction labour skills. The trained few should be used to show other women that women can participate effectively in road constructions.

7.4 Contractors vs. Women's Unproductiveness

There should be a policy that encourages contractors to give men and women equal employment opportunities. The deadlines should be set such that the contractors will be able to meet them taking into consideration the available resources. The contract between LCU and contractors should be based on clearly defined work force with known work norms.

7.5 Increase Women on Road Upgrading and Maintenance

Involve women more on road upgrading and maintenance as they are both less physically demanding compared to construction. This will motivate women, as their contribution will be notable. They will then be willing to take up challenges of doing the bulk of work alongside men in road construction.

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7.6 Updating of DRR guidelines to take cognisance of gender dynamics

The DRR guidelines need to be reviewed to make them gender sensitive in the light of changing economic situations. The guidelines were developed at time when the major aim was to address retrenchment from the mines. Thus the guidelines were directed at males from the mines largely. Although retrenchment continues to be major concern, the role of DRR is now seen as poverty focused and as such the guidelines have to reduce exclusion of certain social groups.

7.7 Including the issue of equal pay for equal work in contracts

The contracts of DRR should specifically include a clause that requires contractors to adhere to the principle of equal-pay for equal-work. The aim of this should be to protect women from being exploited by being paid lower wages for the same work as men. The contract should emphasis productivity of an individual and not the gender of the individual.

7.8 Employment of women if road maintenance work near villages

It is recommended that as a policy, women should be hired to do road maintenance near villages, which would allow them to fulfil their domestic chores such as looking after children etc. This implies that the men would have to work much further from their villages. This should not be seen as gender discrimination but gender sensitivity based on the cultural norms of Basotho where there is a division of labour between men and women.

APPENDIX 1

THE PLAN TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

INTRODUCTION

The plan is based on the findings of the review of past experience in the employment of women in road construction and maintenance. The aim of the plan is to ensure that women working on road works are treated fairly and that a culture of equal pay for equal work is inculcated in road works in Lesotho. The plan is also based on the understanding that women have different responsibilities in the home as well as maternal requirements that have to be taken into account when they are employed. The plan's aspiration is to ensure that women are not discriminated on the basis of their sex and household obligations.

The plan seeks to internalise the improvement of conditions of work of women within the Labour Construction Unit (LCU). The plan will be implemented through the Field Operations section. This section is already tasked with monitoring operations and compliance of the conditions of work in road works in LCU.

ACTIVITIES

1. Workshop to sensitise LCU staff and contractors

This should include the presentation of the report and extensive discussion of the issues. The aim will be to sensitise all and make sure there is universal understanding of the objectives of LCU regarding the role of women in LCU road works. A plan of what LCU intends to do to improve the condition of women will also be presented and discussed. Issues such as equal pay for equal work will have to be discussed. One of the issues to be discussed is strategic employment of women. As noted in the report, it may be strategic for women to be employed in maintenance than in construction due to the light nature of the work compared to construction. Also, it is necessary to look at the jobs within construction that can be dedicated to women based on their abilities. The issue of employing women on road maintenance near villages should also be discussed as discussed in the report.

Review of contracts

It is necessary to review the contracts that LCU enters into with the contractors for the construction and maintenance of roads. The aim should be to ensure that the contracts are explicit in terms of how labourers should be treated. The contractor should be

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obliged to have a clear plan of labour employment and utilisation. The contract should also have clear work rates by sex.

This means that LCU has to review the DRR guidelines to ensure that they take into account the gender dynamics that are brought out by the report.

Review of pay sheet forms

The pay sheet forms are used to record daily employment of labour. It is necessary to revise these forms to make sure that two critical variables are recorded, namely sex of the workers and the type of job done that day. Once revised, the revision has to be introduced to the contractors and staff of LCU. These forms should then be useful in monitoring the employment of labour, especially women.

Sensitisation and training of women in LCU sites

It is necessary to develop a strategy whereby LCU provides communities with information regarding its policies and practices in road works. This should be done at the start of road works and should be aimed at making sure that the people in the sites are clear about what LCU expects to be done and how contractors will treat labour. This can be done through public gatherings but backed up by distribution of broadsheets which are left with the public. The broadsheets should contain critical information on the issues of labour employment and conditions that should prevail.

It is necessary for LCU to offer training at sites for specialised work to ensure that women have equal chances to participate in road works. The skills that people are to be trained in should have been decided in the initial workshop.

Cross-sectoral harmonisation of policies on the employment of women in road works

It is clear from the report that there are disparities in the ratios of male and female between different agencies. The Civil Works Section seem to employ more women than LCU and though the fact that its work is based on a combination of food and money, it is necessary to address differences and seek parity between the different institutions.

Monitoring compliance by contractors

LCU has to put into place a monitoring system by the operations section to ensure compliance of contractors with the new policies and regulations that are meant to improve the conditions of work of women. The monitoring should be based on direct observations and the examination of records, especially the pay sheets.