

TACKLING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN LESOTHO: ADVANCING YOUTH-LED SOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Youth Power Hub Policy Brief | April 2026



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8 KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE:

- Strengthen and scale up youth-led platforms such as the Youth Power Hub and Sebatatso to enhance skills development, networking, and access to funding opportunities
- Promote self-employment and entrepreneurship by equipping youth with practical business, financial management, and governance skills
- Address the skills mismatch by aligning education and training systems with evolving labor market demands
- Decentralize opportunities and resources to ensure inclusion of rural youth and marginalized groups
- Reform financial systems and policies to be more youth-friendly and accessible
- Strengthen and expand youth resource centres to provide integrated services, digital access, and livelihood support
- Promote the use of digital platforms and social media for entrepreneurship, branding, and market access
- Establish a legally recognized and inclusive national youth representative body to coordinate youth development and policy engagement

1. Introduction

This policy brief presents key messages from young people in Lesotho on addressing youth unemployment through youth-led, inclusive, and sustainable solutions. The recommendations are directed primarily at the Government of Lesotho, development partners, and other stakeholders to strengthen youth empowerment and economic participation.

These messages are drawn from contributions made during the Youth Networking Pitso held in Botha-Bothe on 2 December 2025, convened with support from UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the European Union under the Youth Power Hub initiative.

The Pitso brought together youth representatives, government officials, development partners, and civil society organizations to explore pathways for tackling youth unemployment. Discussions emphasized the importance of youth agency, decentralization of opportunities, and strengthening systems that support youth entrepreneurship and employability.



2. KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Message 1

Strengthen Youth-Led Platforms and Networks

Youth emphasized the importance of platforms such as the Youth Power Hub and Sebatatso in building their capacity, confidence, and access to opportunities. These platforms enable young people to share ideas, engage with policymakers, and develop innovative solutions.

However, concerns were raised that some platforms prioritize visibility over impact. There is a need to refocus efforts on **sustainable outcomes and meaningful youth empowerment**.

Recommendation:

- ♦ Scale up and strengthen youth-led platforms to ensure sustainability, inclusivity, and real impact, while expanding access to youth across all districts.

Message 2

Promote Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

With limited formal employment opportunities, entrepreneurship is a critical pathway for youth empowerment. However, many young people lack the necessary skills in governance, financial management, and business development.

Youth highlighted that **passion alone is not sufficient**; sustainable enterprises require structured knowledge and systems.

Recommendation:

- ♦ Invest in entrepreneurship development programs that integrate business skills, mentorship, and access to finance to support sustainable youth-led enterprises.



Message 3

Address Skills Mismatch

Young people raised concerns about the disconnect between education and labor market needs. Industries are evolving rapidly, requiring skills that are not taught in schools.

This mismatch contributes significantly to youth unemployment despite increasing education levels.

Recommendation:

- ♦ Align education and training systems with market demands by integrating practical skills, vocational training, and industry partnerships.

Message 4

Decentralize Opportunities and Promote Inclusion

Youth from rural areas face disproportionate challenges in accessing opportunities, resources, and networks. There is a need to ensure equitable distribution of services and programs.

Additionally, inclusivity must extend to marginalized groups, including youth with disabilities and those with limited formal education.

Recommendation:

- ♦ Decentralize youth programs and services to community level and ensure inclusive policies that accommodate diverse youth needs.

Message 5

Reform Financial Systems to Support Youth

Access to finance remains a major barrier for young entrepreneurs. Existing financial systems are often not designed to accommodate youth realities.

Recommendation:

- ♦ Develop youth-friendly financial products, reduce barriers to access, and support innovative financing models tailored to young entrepreneurs.



Message 6

Strengthen Youth Resource Centres

Youth resource centres have the potential to serve as hubs for skills development, innovation, and service delivery. However, many centres lack basic infrastructure, visibility, and functionality.

Youth called for:

- Fully equipped computer labs with internet access
- Improved infrastructure and accessibility
- Increased awareness and outreach
- Availability of mentorship and professional support

Recommendation:

- Invest in upgrading and expanding youth resource centres to provide integrated services, including digital access, training, and business support.

Message 7

Leverage Digital Platforms for Economic Empowerment

Young people emphasized the importance of using social media and digital tools for entrepreneurship, branding, and market access.

However, there is a need for greater awareness and skills on how to use these platforms effectively and responsibly.

Recommendation:

- Promote digital entrepreneurship by equipping youth with digital skills and supporting access to online markets and mobile financial services.



Message 8

Establish a National Youth Representative Body

Youth highlighted the absence of a coordinated and legally recognized structure to represent their interests at national level.

Such a body would enhance youth participation in governance, improve coordination, and ensure accountability in youth development initiatives.

Recommendation:

- ♦ Establish a legally recognized, inclusive, and well-resourced national youth representative body to coordinate youth engagement and policy advocacy.

3. CONCLUSION

The Youth Networking Pitso underscored the urgent need to address youth unemployment through inclusive, coordinated, and youth-driven approaches. While progress has been made through initiatives such as the Youth Power Hub, significant gaps remain in access, implementation, and systemic support.

Empowering young people requires not only investment in programs but also transformative changes in systems, policies, and institutions. By prioritizing youth-led solutions, decentralizing opportunities, and strengthening support structures, Lesotho can unlock the full potential of its youth as drivers of economic growth and sustainable development.



About the Youth Power Hub

The Lesotho Youth Power Hub, a joint initiative of the European Union, UNICEF, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is designed to promote an inclusive, participatory, and accountable environment that empowers young people in Lesotho to actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and their engagement is sustained over time. Running from 2024 to 2029, the Youth Power Hub targets young people aged between 10 to 35, with a special focus on adolescent girls and young women, youth living with disabilities, those living in rural areas, migrants, and youth in the diaspora. By actively involving these groups in decision-making processes, the initiative aims to broaden citizen engagement, ultimately fostering stronger and more inclusive communities across Lesotho. The overall goal of the initiative is to enhance the voice and agency of young people as critical actors in governance and development at the local and national levels.

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The policy briefs are intended to encourage policy dialogue to address social, economic, and other developed challenges faced by young people in Lesotho. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this brief do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF, IOM or the European Union Delegation to the Kingdom of Lesotho. The text has not been edited to official publications standards and UNICEF and IOM accepts no responsibility for errors.



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