



LESOTHO

Report of the Peer Review of the National Statistical System

AUGUST 25-29, 2025

The contents of this report constitute advice and recommendations provided by Directors General or Deputy Directors General (the “Peers”) of the African Statistical System (AfSS) to their counterparts from the National Statistical System (NSS) of an African Union Member State (the “Reviewed country”) in response to their request for an assessment.

“The reviewed countries committed themselves to publishing (or allowing the publication of) the Peer Review reports and to ensuring their discussion among the NSS partners” (see the Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, available at www.austat.org).

The African Union Commission (AUC) may disclose this report (in whole or in part), or summaries thereof, to all African Union structures and bodies, and to members of their staff. Upon request, the AUC may also disclose the report to the European Union, other technical assistance providers, and donors with a legitimate interest, unless the reviewed country objects to such disclosure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been made possible through the European Union-financed Pan African Statistics Programme II (PAS II). This programme, which was built on the first phase (PAS I, 2016–2021), was launched in January 2022, and its implementation phase runs until October 2025. The peer review programme under PAS II is led by the Institute for Statistics of the African Union Commission (STATAFRIC) and managed by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Union, based in Luxembourg. It is implemented by Expertise France, a French government organisation based in Paris.

The Pan African Statistics Programme II (PAS II) is designed to assist the African Union Commission in improving its statistical operations, as well as those of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs). One of the aims of PAS II is to improve statistical dissemination.

The Peer Reviewers and the Expert would like to thank **Ms Malehloa Celina Molato**, Director of Lesotho’s Bureau of Statistics, the Heads of Divisions, and the entire staff of the Bureau for their assistance and hospitality provided during the review mission. The team would also like to thank all the institutions and individuals who participated in the review sessions. Without their involvement, this report would not have been possible. The team would also like to thank **Ms Nthoateng Lebona**, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, for her interest in the presentation of the review mission’s preliminary findings and recommendations, and for her valuable comments.

Special thanks are due to AUC-STATAFRIC, EU-Eurostat, and Expertise France, the PAS II implementing agency, for their invaluable support before and during the mission.



LESOTHO’S PEER REVIEW TEAM

PEERS

Chair

Mr Alex Shimuafeni, Statistician-General and CEO, Namibia Statistics Agency

Deputy Chair

Dr Vincent Fred Ssennono, Deputy Executive Director, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS)

EXPERT

Mr Richard Laux, PAS II Service Contract expert

CONTACT PERSON FROM LESOTHO’S BUREAU OF STATISTICS (BOS)

Ms Malehloa Celina Molato, Director

Ms Nyefolo Seboka, Coordinator of Lesotho’s peer review

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS 6

FOREWORD 7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 8

RECOMMENDATIONS 10

1

INTRODUCTION

..... 13

2

ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL
STATISTICAL SYSTEM AND OFFICIAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES
IN THE COUNTRY

..... 15

2.1 THE LESOTHO NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM 16

2.2 THE BUREAU OF STATISTICS 16

2.3 INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT 17

2.4 QUALITY OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTS 18

2.5 STATISTICAL PROCESSES 19

2.6 DISSEMINATION OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION 20

3

STRENGTHS

..... 21

4

FINDINGS

..... 22

4.1. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM 23

4.2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT 24

4.3. QUALITY 25

4.4. STATISTICAL PROCESSES 26

4.5. DISSEMINATION 26

5

RECOMMENDATIONS

..... 27

5.1. ORGANISATION AND COORDINATION 28

5.2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT 29

5.3. QUALITY 30

5.4. STATISTICAL PROCESSES 31

5.5. DISSEMINATION 31

ANNEXES

..... 32

ANNEX 1: Agenda of the peer review of the National Statistical System of Lesotho 33

ANNEX 2: Lesotho Peer Review meeting attendance list 25-29 August 2025 34

ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	AAfrican Charter on Statistics
AfSS	African Statistical System
BOS	Bureau of Statistics
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NSC	National Statistical Council
NSS	National Statistical System
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
PAS	Pan African Statistics Programme
PAS II SC	Second Pan African Statistics Programme Service Contract
QA	Quality Assurance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TWG	Theme/technical Working Group

FOREWORD

In 2018, the European Union (EU) supported the implementation of peer reviews of the National Statistical Systems (NSSs) of sixteen African countries through the Pan-African Statistics Programme I (PAS I). The main aim was to help identify the main weaknesses of statistical production processes and their outputs to assist participating countries in strengthening their statistical systems and enhancing the overall performance of their NSSs. Based on the achievements of the first round of peer reviews, the EU has again offered to provide support to the African Statistical System (AfSS) for a second round of peer reviews under the Second Pan African Statistics Programme (PAS II), with technical assistance from the PAS II service contract. This second round of peer reviews covers up to 15 countries, with Lesotho as one of the beneficiary countries.

Lesotho’s Bureau of Statistics (BOS) is responsible for the development and management of official statistics in the country. The Vision of the Bureau is “to be a trusted National Statistical System in the production and dissemination of official statistics by responding to diverse user demands, with strong partnerships among stakeholders”, while its Mission is “To coordinate among the National Statistical System, and with users, effectively and efficiently that ensures the integration of the national data ecosystems and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the production and dissemination of official statistics to drive the development agenda”. However, BOS’s ability to coordinate the wider national statistical system is hampered by resource (staff) shortages and the relatively low hierarchical status of BOS in government.

The BOS requested this peer review to help assess the current state of the country’s statistical system and to address any existing weaknesses in a bid to improve the ability of the system to meet the data priorities for national development planning.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lesotho National Statistical System peer review is the first to be conducted in the country, and it is among the 15 peer reviews being carried out in African countries under the second phase of the Pan African Statistics Programme (PAS II), with funding support from the European Union and technical assistance from STATAFRIC and a consortium led by Expertise France. These peer reviews are to help assess the implementation of the principles and standards contained in the African Charter on Statistics by African National Statistics Institutes and National Statistics Systems

The peer reviews involve an objective assessment of the current situation of the NSS of the participating country, to assist the country in strengthening and improving the overall performance of the NSS. The review focused on the five themes of the African Charter on Statistics, and these are the organization and coordination of the NSS, institutional environment, assuring the quality of statistical products, management of statistical processes and dissemination and communication of statistics.

The methodology involved consultations with identified stakeholders within the NSS, mainly the Director of the Bureau of Statistics (an informal meeting before the week of meetings), Senior Management and key staff of the BOS; the main producers of official statistics, main users of statistics, including from the National University of Lesotho, and development partners. Peer reviews would normally involve meetings with representatives of civil society organisations and the media, but these were not available in Lesotho due to other commitments. Some strategic documentation and publications, including the legal framework and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2022/23–2026/27, were also reviewed to complement the information gathered from the group consultations.

The Statistics Act 2001 established the Bureau and the wider national statistical system, although both entities were in place previously on a non-statutory footing, with the mandate of official statistics production and the Bureau's coordination role specified. The statistical system is quite centralized: the Bureau is allocated over 80% of the total budget for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2022/23–2026/27. The Act also established a National Statistical Council to advise the Minister on statistical policies and programmes, and to advise the Bureau on statistical priorities, as well as to evaluate and monitor the Bureau's work. However, the Peer Review team was told that the Council is currently not operational. This is one factor in the relatively weak coordination role played by the Bureau.

The peer review team was informed that the new Statistics Act was being developed, and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel was drafting the 4th Statistics Bill, though no details were provided. This report reinforces the need to modernize the Act and identifies (as recommendations) a series of research/review activities intended to provide an evidence pack relating to those changes to the Act which seem most appropriate.

The official data sources for the NSS are surveys, censuses and administrative data.

The African Charter on Statistics, the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and other international standards serve as the guiding frameworks for data quality assurance. Statistical processes are also enhanced using the Bureau's published Concepts and Definitions document, the use of international classifications, and the application of appropriate methodologies.

Statistical planning and development are attained through the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The most recent statistical strategy, NSDS II, covers the period 2022/23–2026/27, and outlines five strategic goals (which resonate with the peer review team):

- I. Effective coordination of the national statistical system within a wide and robust data ecosystem
- II. Improve infrastructure and human resources to ensure the production of quality statistics in the NSS
- III. Generate quality statistics and close data gaps by producing more and better statistics that meet international quality standards
- IV. Ensure gender-mainstreaming in all data collection, analysis and dissemination to leave no one behind
- V. Strengthen the relationship with users of statistics and set collaborations to improve user-driven data collection, including national, regional and global partnerships.

The Vision of the Bureau is “to be a trusted National Statistical System in the production and dissemination of official statistics by responding to diverse user demands, with strong partnerships among stakeholders”. And the Bureau's Mission is “to coordinate among the National Statistical System, and with users, effectively and efficiently, that ensures the integration of the national data ecosystems and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the production and dissemination of official statistics to drive the development agenda”.

The recommendations in this report that relate to the National Statistical Council, technical working groups, MOUs, the legal mandate to coordinate the statistical system, modernising the Statistics Act, user engagement, advocacy for statistics, a system-wide publication calendar and resources for coordination and to fill data gaps will directly support the Mission and Vision – indeed, their implementation seems critical to meeting the mission and vision and delivering on the NSDS II.

The dissemination of statistical outputs is primarily conducted via the Bureau's website, which clearly indicates statistical publications in PDF format, and the data portal, which enables users to select indicators, time periods (subject to data availability), and districts in Lesotho. The Bureau does not itself hold press conferences.

In conclusion, the findings from the peer review suggest that Lesotho's Bureau of Statistics requires considerable support from the Government to enable it to operate effectively. This includes legislative change, increased resources, and advocacy for statistics.



RECOMMENDATIONS

ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION

- 1. Review the National Statistical Council** BOS should review the effectiveness of the National Statistical Council and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act.
- 2. Rekindle the theme/technical Working Groups.** BOS should review the operation of Theme/technical Working Groups – to ensure that their Terms of Reference (TORs), membership, and frequency of meetings are aligned with the statistical activity in each domain. As part of this, ensure that discussion of unpublished statistics is controlled carefully to minimise the risk of leaks. Since the committee members' participation is on a non-remunerative basis, each MDA should be encouraged to place the active participation in these committees as performance indicators in the individual Performance Agreements of these committee members.
- 3. Review the effectiveness of all Memoranda of Understanding.** BOS should review the effectiveness of all MOUs with MDAs in supporting the production of high-quality statistics and develop new TORs as appropriate. All new MOUs should include a standard clause that states that it will be reviewed every 2 (or 3) years or when the need arises.
- 4. Improve statistical planning** Based on NSDS II, BOS should prepare and publish (i) a statistical work plan for 2026-27, that reflects activities scheduled for previous years but not completed; and (ii) a review of the success of the 2026-27 plan, including reviewing lessons learnt in planning for an annual period as part of a longer-term plan. This work will inform the modernisation of the Statistics Act.
- 5. Improve the mandate and ability to coordinate** BOS should obtain Legal Advice from the Attorney General's Office in terms of the hierarchical status challenge because of Sections 13 (2) and (4) which empower the Director to be the CEO of BOS as well as having the power to coordinate the NSS - but since the Director is appointed by the Public Service Commission, this could be limiting and/or weakening the powers of the Director of BOS.

- 6. Improve advocacy for data and statistics in monitoring and evaluation** in collaboration with the M&E Unit (in MFDP), BOS should advocate for the importance of data in monitoring and evaluation, making the most of its position in MFDP. Other MDAs should also collaborate with BOS for the same advocacy. This activity should focus on filling gaps, establishing a single source and methodology for each indicator, and developing a process to be used across the Government to assess the quality of the data source. As part of this BOS should oversee the development of a 5-year plan to ensure all data needed to populate national and international M&E frameworks are available and disaggregated (as appropriate) by variables such as age, sex and location, and BOS should explain the role of the NSS and the provisions and implications of the Statistics Act and the African Charter on Statistics for different groups of stakeholders.

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- 7. Publish more information about MOUs and TWGs.** BOS should publish more information about MOUs and TWGs (including TORs) on BOS's website, including a summary of activity and impact.
- 8. Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement strategy.** BOS should develop a stakeholder engagement strategy focused on improving the effectiveness of the work of the National Statistical System. This should include appropriate engagement with the political fraternity (to gain support while avoiding undue interference), the private sector (about access to data, and the possibility of attracting financial or practical support via Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives), academics and researchers at the National University and elsewhere (about methods, QA, new data sources, programmes of university work, and guest lectureships), and regional (African) statistical offices (to explore scope for closer partnership working on topics such as methodology).

- 9. Prepare a business case for an increase in BOS resources.** BOS should prepare a business case for an increase in BOS resources, setting out what the beneficial impact would be for the Government of Lesotho and for each element. This business case should include (but not be limited to) an enhanced coordination team, a strengthening of the methodological team, other recruitment to enable the most important increases in performance, quality and timeliness, new office space for BOS, and modern ICT (hardware, software, connectivity). At the same time, BOS should consider the scope to introduce a system of charging for the provision of ad hoc services.
- 10. Review the status of BOS.** BOS should review the status of leading National Statistical Institutes in Southern Africa, and the advantages and disadvantages of different organisational models for an NSI and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act.
- 11. Incorporate the ACS in Statistical Law.** BOS should review recent experiences of those countries that have ratified the ACS of incorporating the principles of the Charter in their statistical laws and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act.
- 12. Modernise the Statistics Act.** BOS should prepare an evidence pack relating to proposed changes to the 2001 Statistics Act, for implementation as part of the NSDS II period (i.e. before the end of 2026-27). This evidence pack should cover the following areas: a revamped National Statistics Council with appropriate membership and a role to challenge and support BOS and to advocate nationally for official statistics (recommendation 1); the need to publish an annual statistical work programme and review of the previous year's programme (recommendation 4); proposals to make BOS semi-autonomous (recommendation 10); alignment with the African Charter on Statistics (recommendation 11); the need for geographic information alongside statistical data (recommendation 16); and access to all MDA's data required for statistical purposes (recommendation 19).

RECOMMENDATIONS

QUALITY

- 13. Develop and implement a user-engagement strategy.** BOS should lead a project across the National Statistical System to develop a user engagement strategy – identifying which organisations and individuals use Lesotho's official statistics and for what purposes, and which organisations do not use official statistics – and whether this is because of data gaps, data quality, or inaccessibility.
- 14. Publish more information about statistical guidelines, policies and procedures.** BOS should publish more information about statistical guidelines, policies and procedures. This should include (but not be limited to): error correction; revision handling; data quality management (including quality assurance); user engagement; confidentiality protection; the processes that are involved and the length of time involved in converting raw data into publishable statistics, and archiving.
- 15. Publish provisional estimates.** BOS should engage with relevant stakeholders to explore their interest in BOS publishing provisional estimates of key indicators, noting the trade-off between accuracy and timeliness.
- 16. Improve the alignment of spatial and statistical data.** BOS should review how other countries are integrating spatial data with statistical data and the extent to which this requires a legal mandate; use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act. As part of this, BOS should review the current use of geographical indicators in different MDAs' administrative systems, to identify the extent of non-harmonisation.
- 17. Explore the potential of company registration data.** BOS should discuss potential areas of mutual interest with the company registration team in the Ministry of Trade.



RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Demonstrate leadership in the digitalisation and integration of data collection. In the short term, BOS should engage with the Ministry of Labour and Employment to offer advice on the statistical potential of the proposed Information System, and to ensure that it is well-placed to advocate for similar systems elsewhere in Lesotho. And BOS should share their civil registration data (vital statistics) validation checks with the National Identity and Civil Registration Department for integration in their own data validation system. As a longer-term strategic initiative on behalf of the Government, BOS should initiate discussion about the scope to integrate administrative data collections about individuals, such as health and education, in an integrated IT system, which would reduce the need for population censuses in future.

STATISTICAL PROCESSES

19. Improve access to data held by MDAs. BOS should conduct a systematic review of BOS's experience in recent years of obtaining the data it needs for statistical purposes from MDAs and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act.

DISSEMINATION

20. Extend the current publication calendar. BOS should extend the current publication calendar to include all official statistical publications by MDAs. Ensure that reviews of performance in meeting scheduled publication dates distinguish between different producer bodies and review the BOS Director's contract to ensure she is judged only on the performance of BOS.

21. Consider introducing new statistical publications to raise statistical awareness. BOS should engage with key stakeholders, including representatives of the media and a selection of Parliamentarians, about the potential value of publishing a high-level statistical yearbook or "on a page" summary on BOS's website.

22. Improve the dissemination of macro-economic statistics. BOS should engage with the Central Bank and the relevant Department in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to explore the potential to discuss the dissemination of macro-economic statistics regularly, either by establishing a new Committee or by extending the TORs of the existing technical working group on macroeconomic statistics.

23. Improve the accessibility of time series data. As part of the user-engagement strategy recommended earlier, BOS should engage with a selection of users to identify their preferences for the dissemination of statistical data and of statistical reports containing commentary and charts/tables.

1. INTRODUCTION

The peer review of the National Statistical System of the Kingdom of Lesotho is one of a series of statistical peer reviews being conducted in 15 African countries under the second phase of the Pan African Statistics Programme (PAS II), a programme of assistance for the development of African statistical systems financed by the European Union. The peer reviews are to help assess the implementation of the principles and standards outlined in the African Charter on Statistics by National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and National Statistical Systems (NSSs) of African Countries.

The objective of the peer reviews is to assist participating countries to strengthen and enhance the overall performance of their National Statistical Systems through an objective assessment of their current situation measured against five themes (Organization and Coordination; Institutional Environment; Quality; Statistical Processes and Dissemination) based on the principles of the African Charter on Statistics. Consequently, statistical peer reviews serve as an efficient means of identifying the main weaknesses in a country's statistical production processes and provide a useful basis for improvement. Countries subjected to peer reviews derive numerous benefits. Among others, peer reviews generally help to:

- i) Improve accountability and transparency by subjecting the statistical system to external scrutiny.
- ii) Encourage peer cooperation and collaboration among African countries.
- iii) Facilitate knowledge sharing by learning from each other's experiences and successes.
- iv) Build the capacity of statistical offices.
- v) Support the achievement of quality data.
- vi) Enhance data credibility.
- vii) Support the sustainability of data for the measurement and assessment of national, regional, and global development agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

The methodology for implementing peer reviews has been outlined in the Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, developed under the PAS Programme. The Peer Review of the Lesotho National Statistical System closely follows this prescribed peer review methodology, which is described below:

- The peer review is conducted through field visits of the peer review team to the participating country, during which discussions are held in meetings between the team, the National Statistics Office (NSO) and other NSS Stakeholders in the country's working language.
- The duration of the peer review visit to the participating country is five working days.
- The peer review is based on inputs from the field visit and documentation submitted by the country under review. This mainly consists of a completed snapshot-based self-assessment questionnaire, a short description of the NSI and the NSS, Legal, operational and policy documents including the Statistics Act and other relevant legal frameworks, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), the NSO organizational structure/chart, Staff Scheme of Service or the Conditions of Employment, Data Collection, Processing and Dissemination Policy, Information and Communication Technology Policy, Training Plan, Performance Management System Guidelines, among others. In practice, only the NSDS and organizational structure were available to inform the Lesotho peer review.
- The peer review discussions and meetings involve the main producers of official statistics, main data providers such as the holders of administrative registers or respondent organizations, and main users such as ministries, the central bank, academic and research institutions, business organizations, international organizations, the media and any other organizations considered relevant for the country.
- Under each of the five themes contained in the African Charter on Statistics (i.e., Organization and Coordination of the NSS, Institutional Environment, Quality, Statistical Processes and Dissemination), a list of issues is addressed as specified in the Manual.

- On the last day of the peer review, the review team presents its findings and recommendations to the Head and key staff of the NSI, as well as heads of statistics of the main producers within the NSS institutions (although the presentation in Lesotho was only to senior staff of the Bureau of Statistics).

- The Manual also defines an outline for reporting on the peer review.

The peer review of the National Statistical System of Lesotho took place at the Headquarters of the Bureau of Statistics in Maseru, Lesotho, from August 25-29, 2025. Before the visit of the Peer Review team, the documentation for the review was provided by the Bureau of Statistics (BOS), the coordinating agency of the country's NSS. BOS prepared the agenda for the meeting and identified a range of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), academic and research institutions, the private sector, local and international organisations, and media groups (although, in practice, no representatives from media or civil society organisations were available) to interact with the review team. These institutions were met in groups as indicated in Annex 2 of this report. All meetings were held at the BOS Headquarters.

The preliminary findings and recommendations of the peer review team were presented to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning before a presentation to the senior management of BOS.

2. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM AND OFFICIAL STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COUNTRY

2.1 THE LESOTHO NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

The Lesotho National Statistical System is established by Part 1(2) of the Statistics Act 2001 to include “all agencies in Lesotho, whether Governmental, non-governmental, whether under enactment or otherwise, for gathering statistical data directly through surveys or through administrative action”. Section 22(1) clarifies that it is the responsibility of the Director to promote and facilitate the development of an integrated national system.

In practice, the MDAs which constitute the National Statistical System are those with specific responsibilities (and budgets) within the NSDS II. The following 13 organisations are responsible for 18.4% of the total NSDS II budget for the years 2022-23 to 2026-27 (BOS's share is 81.6%): Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE), Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFS), Disaster Management Agency (DMA), Ministry of Water Affairs (MOWA), Ministry of Justice and Law (MJL), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), MIL, Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Public Service (MPS), Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTEC), Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development (MGYSR), Ministry of Forestry Range and Soil Conservation (MoFRSC), and Ministry of Social Development (MoSD).

As the NSDS II recognises, the main challenge for the national statistical system in Lesotho and for BOS is the coordination of the producers of statistics. The challenge arises because of (i) resource limitations within BOS – coordination is the responsibility of one person (who has additional calls upon her time); and (ii) the non-functioning of the (statutory) National Statistical Council (which has a function under section 11(1) of the Statistics Act 2001 “to ensure adequate coordination between producers and users of statistics”). The weak coordination role is exacerbated by the hierarchical status of BOS in Government, which reduces the Director's ability to enforce coordination, and low data and statistical literacy in the sectors which should be users and advocates for official statistics – including policy makers, MPs, and journalists.

The most effective tool for coordination across the statistical system is the NSDS II itself, and many of the relationships between BOS and the MDAs are underpinned by Memoranda of Understanding, which include information about data supply, although these MOUs are rarely reviewed or updated, and serve little practical value. Much depends on effective personal relationships, and the peer review team saw signs that these were positive – although personnel changes can be critical, pointing to an issue of resilience.

2.2 THE BUREAU OF STATISTICS

The Bureau of Statistics pre-dated the 2001 legislation – according to BOS' website, the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) grew out of a statistical unit of the ministry of agriculture around 1964 – but the Statistics Act 2001 formally established the Bureau – section 3 of the Act clarifying that “the existing Bureau of Statistics within the Government of Lesotho shall be deemed to be established under this Act, and it shall be responsible for all matters relating to official statistics, and shall also ensure that official statistics are produced in an objective, scientific and unbiased manner”.

Section 4 of the Act outlines the functions of the Bureau:

- the principal data collecting, processing, analysing and disseminating agency responsible for coordinating, monitoring and supervising the National Statistical System
- the formulation of policies, strategies and programme activities for the development and supervision of the National Statistical System, including:
 - establishing, harmonizing and standardizing definitions, classifications and statistical methods
 - promoting sub-national statistics
 - promoting training with the National University of Lesotho
 - conducting research in statistical methods and developing standards
 - review all initiatives to collect data at the national and local government levels and approve instruments developed for data collection, including census frames, registers, sample designs and questionnaires

- establish registers for households and undertakings
- collect, compile, analyse and publish economic, social, demographic and environmental statistics
- conduct decennial population, housing and agricultural census and surveys
- collect and publish routine administrative statistics.

The Vision of the Bureau is “to be a trusted National Statistical System in the production and dissemination of official statistics by responding to diverse user demands, with strong partnerships among stakeholders”.

The Bureau's Mission is “To coordinate among the National Statistical System, and with users, effectively and efficiently that ensuring the integration of the national data ecosystems and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the production and dissemination of official statistics to drive the development agenda”.

The recommendations in this report that relate to the National Statistical Council, technical working groups, MOUs, the legal mandate to coordinate the statistical system, modernising the Statistics Act, user engagement, advocacy for statistics, a system-wide publication calendar and resources for coordination and to fill data gaps will directly support the Mission and Vision.

The Bureau has nine divisions:

1. Agriculture and Food Security
2. Population Statistics
3. Environment and Energy Statistics
4. Socio-Economic Statistics
5. National Accounts and Enterprise Statistics
6. Foreign Trade and Price Statistics
7. Survey Methodology and Cartography
8. Field Organization
9. Information and Communication Technology.

These are complemented by two 'horizontal' Units attached to the Office of the Director, responsible for Production and Dissemination, and Corporate Services.

The Peer Review team gained the clear impression, confirmed by most stakeholders with whom the team engaged, that BOS is under-resourced to implement its mandate. This manifests itself in many different ways, including (a) an unattractive office environment with inadequate office space; (b) a detrimental effect on its work across the NSS (including to coordinate and support MDAs to deliver on their NSDS II commitments); (c) its own statistical production work and its ability to deliver on its own NSDS II commitments; (d) an inadequate ICT infrastructure; and (e) staff morale. Statistical training is a rarity, and BOS has a large proportion (25%) of unfilled posts.

The Bureau is headed by its Director. Section 13 (2) of the Act states that “the Director shall be the chief executive officer of BOS and shall be responsible for the day-to-day management of BOS ...”. But as the NSDS II explains, the Director is on a par with directors of Planning Departments, which means they do not have sufficient authority to enforce coordination activities.

2.3 INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS) is a Department of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. As a Government Department, the BOS is supposed to have good political buy-in and support. However, the BOS is not adequately funded as a result. The powers of the Director of Statistics, who is the Head of the BOS, are supported by the Statistics Act, the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics Act, Act No. 8 of 2001. In general, the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics Act is an enabling Act as it states, amongst other provisions, that the BOS shall be responsible for all matters relating to official statistics, and it is empowered to collect information and statistics. However, there exist conflicting Acts that hinder the BOS from obtaining and access certain data from some stakeholders. The Revenue Authority Services Act, as well as the Act that regulates the Ministry of Health in Lesotho whereby BOS has been unable to collect some administrative data due to the data owner's restrictions in their laws. It is indeed a welcoming piece of knowledge that the BOS is currently in the process of reviewing its Statistics Act.



Despite the powers of the BOS and the Director of the BOS, there are still some bureaucracies that have led to the call for semi-autonomy that could improve efficiency, since the current set-up creates another layer of the approval process after the Director, which is the Principal Secretary. This two-layer approval system is by design in a normal government Ministry structure, whereby the Administrative Head, the Principal Secretary in the case of Lesotho, is the head of administration, normally.

The National Statistical Council of the BOS is established via the Statistics Act, and it has the role, amongst others, to advise the Minister responsible for Statistics on statistical policies and programmes. The Council also advises the BOS on statistical priorities, evaluates and monitors the work of the BOS, and ensures that duplication of statistical work is avoided. This Council is supposed to provide support to the Director of Statistics; unfortunately, this body does not convene for meetings.

The other challenge of a National Statistics Office (NSO) embedded in a government Ministry is the fact that it does not have its own budget allocation but rather must depend on its mother Ministry. BOS complained of budget cuts by its Ministry, and these cuts have a negative influence on the number of data collection projects, adequate staffing, as well as working tools, such as working tools e.g. stable internet connection and office space.

Due to being a government Department, this also creates yet another challenge of the centralisation of the IT services. The Lesotho government centralised budget on IT matters goes mainly to the Ministry of Information Communications Technology (ICT). This arrangement poses a challenge when the BOS needs to procure computers because the procurement is done centrally on behalf of the Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). It is henceforth that these IT equipment specifications are also standardised with the same specifications for all MDAs since they are procured centrally by the Government of Lesotho. The disadvantage of centralisation of the IT Services for all MDAs also caused another setback to the BOS since some district offices did not have connections, as this non-connectivity is awaiting to be rectified by the centralised government IT service provider.

2.4 QUALITY OF STATISTICAL PRODUCTS

The statistical production within the National Statistical System to produce official statistics is in line with the African Charter on Statistics, the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics. The official data sources include censuses, household surveys, and establishment surveys, which form the backbone of national statistics. While administrative records are used to complement these core sources, BOS remains less dependent on administrative data due to capacity gaps in line Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and varying data quality.

To ensure consistency and comparability, BOS applies a Code of Practice and maintains a Compendium of statistical concepts, definitions, and classifications, which guide all producers of official statistics in the country.

The peer review team assessed the quality of data produced by the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS) using key dimensions of relevance, coherence, comparability, accuracy, reliability, and timeliness. Findings from the peer review indicate that, while the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS) has made progress in strengthening data accuracy and reliability through the use of modern tools such as CAPI, important challenges remain in ensuring the overall quality of statistics.

The stakeholders were concerned about the Timeliness of statistics produced by BOS, with delays noted in the release of labour force survey results and in the production of updated economic statistics such as Quarterly GDP figures and Government Finance statistics.

Also, the degree of data disaggregation is insufficient to fully meet user demand for detailed information at district and community levels. Furthermore, the shortage of staff, coupled with limited financial and technical resources, weakens quality assurance processes—particularly in data validation, and the consistent application of methodological standards across the National Statistical System

The review identified opportunities for further strengthening data quality and use. These include improving the timeliness of releases, expanding data disaggregation to meet growing user demand, and enhancing harmonization of administrative data across ministries. While BOS faces resource and capacity constraints, these challenges also present a chance to accelerate reforms such as increasing professional staff, investing in digital tools for data visualization, and exploring greater institutional autonomy. Development partners, academia, and line ministries expressed readiness to work with BOS in these areas, underscoring the strong foundation already in place for building a more modern, coordinated, and user-driven National Statistical System (NSS).

BOS has permanent field teams in districts that it leverages to collect key statistics, particularly in agriculture and education. By strengthening and promoting the use of this system, BOS will enhance collaboration with districts and improve the accuracy, timeliness, and credibility of official statistics.

The review observed that although a statistical release calendar exists, it is not consistently adhered to, and revisions are not systematically incorporated into it.

The peer review established that while the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS) occasionally revises its data—for example, during GDP rebasing or CPI updates—there is no formal data revision policy in place

Discussions with BOS revealed that most Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) are willing to collaborate and associate with BOS due to the credibility and acceptability of its data. However, many MDAs lack awareness of how to effectively engage with BOS, largely because of inadequate coordination mechanisms.

Finally, several stakeholders emphasized the need for training and sensitization on the guidelines for producing quality statistics to strengthen a culture of quality.

2.5 STATISTICAL PROCESSES

The National Statistical System applies international standards, classifications, concepts, and definitions across statistical domains to promote coherence and comparability. The Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS) has strengthened methodological soundness through capacity building and the recruitment of professional statisticians. Nonetheless, the number of qualified staff remains inadequate, and many statistical units within line ministries and agencies lack trained personnel, often depending on BOS for technical guidance. While BOS conducts surveys, it also relies heavily on administrative data from sectors such as education, health, and civil and vital registration.

The peer review team noted challenges in the practical application of the Statistics Act within the National Statistical System (NSS), particularly in accessing data from administrative sources. These challenges stem from contradictions between legal frameworks—where one law may grant access to data while another restricts its release. Such inconsistencies, compounded by hierarchies of legal instruments, organisational structures, and at times a culture of reluctance to share information, weaken the effective use of administrative data within the NSS. This undermines the smooth integration and validation of administrative data into official statistics, thereby constraining key statistical processes such as data compilation, analysis, and dissemination. As a result, the timeliness, completeness, and overall quality of national statistical outputs are negatively affected.

Data processing is technology-driven, and measures are in place to safeguard confidentiality and ensure effective data governance within the National Statistical System (NSS). Anonymization is applied to protect data providers in line with international best practices and the national Statistics law.



2.6 DISSEMINATION OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The main modes of dissemination for BOS are the Dissemination Workshops, the placement of the published reports in the BOS library, the BOS Website, as well as the celebration of the African Statistics Day. To supplement the above, Press conferences are also held, but they are conducted by the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning since BOS is still a Department under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. The BOS Website mainly contains Statistical reports, and the Website is being updated monthly.

BOS does not currently make use of social media for disseminating statistics. However, BOS is planning to engage a social media expert during the 2026 Census and for that expert to be disseminating other statistics, except for the Census. Another mode of dissemination is the on-site library at BOS, which is open to the public and operates from 08h00 to 16h30. This library, which is supposed to act as a statistical information centre for users who would like to obtain statistics or do research on statistics, is now unfortunately converted to a meeting boardroom by BOS (due to a lack of funds to come up with more office space).

BOS has a pre-release calendar, but for BoS Statistical reports only, and it does not include the Calendars of the other producers in the NSS. The government ministries and other producers of official statistics do not have a pre-release calendar for the publishing of their reports. It is good to note that these Statistical reports are released impartially as per the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

BOS has a Data Dissemination Policy, which includes the handling of granting access to microdata for research purposes. All the requests for microdata are made via an official letter, which needs to indicate the purpose of the information requested. The Director of BOS is the one to approve these requests. Requested microdata is made available to the requester in an anonymised format.

3. STRENGTHS

The peer review revealed some strengths in the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics. Chief amongst these are:

- **No pre-release access** to official statistics is provided. This is custom and practice, as the issue is not covered in the Statistics Act. The absence of a regime of privileged pre-release access is important in maintaining trust in the impartiality and professionalism of the Bureau.
- Commitment to **updating the Statistics Act**. The Act came into force in 2001, and initial review activity began in 2003 before being subsumed within NSDS I. As time has passed, the need to refresh the legislative basis for Lesotho's statistical system has confirmed several priority areas. Stakeholders with whom the peer review team discussed the issue were unanimous in support of updated legislation, which has the potential to improve Lesotho's statistical operation substantially.

- The **macroeconomic statistics working group** comprises representatives from BOS, other Departments within MFDP, and the Central Bank. It meets two or three times a quarter and provides an opportunity to discuss forthcoming data. All relevant stakeholders were pleased with the operation of this group, which is important in ensuring that all parties are aware of methodological issues and developments.
- The Bureau's **data portal** enables users to build their own time series and select geographies of interest, draw charts and download the data for a wide range of indicators. This complements the traditional statistical releases published by the Bureau. Some users appeared to the peer review team not to be aware of the functionality of the data portal, so the Bureau may wish to reflect on how to raise its profile (although it is accessed via a link from the BOS website's home page, which seems clear to the peer review team).

4. FINDINGS

4.1. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

The National Statistical Council is established under the Statistics Act 2001. Section 5 of the Act says:

(1) There is established a National Statistical Council of BOS which shall advise the Minister on statistical policies and programmes.

(2) The council shall also advise BOS on statistical priorities, evaluate and monitor the work of BOS, and ensure that duplication of statistical work is avoided.

However, the Peer Review team was told that the Council no longer meets, primarily because of disinterest among the members who did not see themselves as having a role in statistical governance. This might suggest that a review of the Council's membership and TORs would be useful, as well as reviewing whether levels of payment (allowances and expenses) are adequate.

BOS maintains a series of Theme/technical Working Groups, which are subject-matter specific committees related to each of BOS's sectors (such as Macroeconomic, Environmental, Agriculture, Migration, Trade, and Gender Statistics). Members are drawn from relevant MDAs. However, only the Group focusing on Macroeconomic statistics is currently active. Meetings of the Macroeconomic statistics group (which includes representation from MFDP and Central Bank) review forthcoming statistical data, such as quarterly National Accounts estimates, and they meet 2 to 3 times per quarter, reflecting the relatively fast-paced nature of macroeconomic statistics. The Migration Committee used to meet frequently, but since the project with IOM closed, the committee is not active anymore.

MOUs can be an effective tool to support a statistics office's coordination role. BOS operates a series of long-standing MOUs with some of the MDAs, which provide data for BOS's statistical work; once established, they are not reviewed – although regular reviews are important in ensuring that any new trend in the statistics environment is identified and can be included in the revision of the MOU. Despite the existence of the MOUs, a series of quality problems persists, including data gaps, data being supplied in formats that are not useful, and data being supplied later than agreed.

The NSDS covers 5 years, the current NSDS II covering 2022-23 to 2026-27. This plan breaks activities down by year – in effect, a series of annual plans. However, activity scheduled for any one year may not be implemented and so be carried forward to a later year. This is not transparent for users or other stakeholders until a review of the implementation of the entire 5-year plan is conducted. A system of 'live' annual planning and reviewing, within the 5-year framework, would provide clarity for users who would then be in a better position to provide feedback about relative priorities.

An effective legal mandate to coordinate a national statistical system is fundamental to delivering an effective NSS. Section 4 of the Statistics Act 2001 gives BOS the following function: "BOS shall be the principal data collecting, processing, analysing and disseminating agency responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and supervising the National Statistical System"

However, in practice, BOS has faced challenges in performing an effective coordination role, possibly because of its hierarchical status.

Section 13 (2) of the Act states:

The Director shall be the chief executive officer of BOS and shall be responsible for the day-to-day management of BOS, and he shall have the authority to collect statistical information in relation to the matters listed in the First Schedule.

Section 13 (4) says:

The Director shall liaise or coordinate with line Ministries in the production of official statistics to ensure that BOS fulfils the requirements of the provisions of this Act.



In addition, the fact that BOS does not have its own Budget vote but is funded via the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning further weakens the implementation of the Act in terms of the execution of BOS's mandate, as the Director does not have control of funds coming to BOS.

The peer review team understands that many indicators in the national and international development frameworks for which suitable quality data are unavailable, particularly those which would be sourced from surveys rather than administrative data sources. Furthermore, there are instances of the same indicator featuring in different MDAs' frameworks, but different data sources (including some external data taken from the internet) and methodologies are used, resulting in a lack of harmonisation. In some instances, data that would otherwise be considered valuable – such as data published by BOS – is out-of-date, so those responsible for populating the frameworks may choose instead to use a less robust, but timelier, source.

The Peer Review team noted that many stakeholders were unfamiliar with the National Statistical System, the Statistics Act, or the African Charter on Statistics, although these are the sorts of issues which work to raise the profile of BOS (through the 'Communication, Advocacy and Dissemination Strategy for BOS') might be expected to cover.

4.2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

BOS has MOUs with several providers of administrative data and operates a series of technical working groups (although most of these are currently dormant). Such mechanisms are the core of the national statistical system; in effect, they 'operationalise' the NSS.

User trust in statistics is enhanced by transparency in almost all aspects of statistical production; conversely there is a risk of a loss of trust if a perception of a lack of openness takes hold. Furthermore, transparency about different stakeholders' roles and responsibilities can help to incentivise them to play their full part as members of the National Statistical System in helping BOS produce statistics that meet users' needs.

As a small organization, BOS does not itself have access to everything it needs to perform its role, or to ensure the effectiveness of the NSS. Specifically, it needs others' data and expertise – and so it needs to work with a range of stakeholders in the spirit of partnership. One specific example of this is the National University of Lesotho, a representative of which expressed interest in ensuring syllabuses and programmes of work at the University reflect the needs of BOS's (current and future) staff, and in offering BOS staff the opportunity to give guest lectures in their specialisms.

The Peer Review team gained the clear impression that BOS is under-resourced to implement its mandate, with an unattractive office environment, and that this is having a detrimental effect on its work across the NSS (including to support MDAs to deliver on their NSDS II commitments), its own statistical production work and its ability to deliver on its own NSDS II commitments, and staff morale. However, the Peer Review team was unable to explore these issues fully in the time available and in the detail appropriate for the issue of resources in a lower-middle-income country.

BOS is a Government Department under the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFD), and it operates under the Statistics Act 2001. Its lower status in Government presents challenges in fulfilling its role – such as coordinating the activities of the National Statistical System – and because BOS is headed by a director, it is unable to enforce coordination. Other disadvantages associated with its status include that it receives insufficient resources to fully perform its statutory role effectively, and it is subject to Government-wide Human Resource practices (for example, which affect the ability to recruit staff). It is also noteworthy that several of the people we spoke to as part of the Peer Review, who were otherwise positive about BOS and its staff, argued that the current status of BOS was not compatible with its professional independence – that is, because its activities need to be ratified by the Ministry, users and other stakeholders cannot be assured that BOS is always operating in a non-political fashion. The PR team was also told that there was an international trend towards making National Statistical Institutes semi-autonomous – and that while such a status does not necessarily lead to different funding levels, it might provide the ability to generate and retain revenue.



The Government of Lesotho ratified the African Charter for Statistics in April 2014, a major step in publicly endorsing a commitment to best statistical practice (such as professional independence). Incorporating the principles of the Charter in Law would help to operationalise the principles and would raise the profile of Lesotho's statistical system.

The Statistics Act dates from 2001, since which time there have been substantial changes in the understanding of best practice in statistical governance, changes in the statistical ecosystem, and experience of the operation of the 2001 Act. The Peer Review team understands that the first efforts to review the Act started in 2003 and that proposals for a revised Statistical Bill have been developed recently, although the Peer Review team is not aware of the details. This recommendation is about ensuring that the revised Bill covers a series of issues that seem most salient to the Peer Reviewers and that are informed by evidence, in the form of a series of reviews and assessments which themselves form the basis of other recommendations in this report, which can be provided as evidence during Parliamentary debate and subsequently published.

4.3. QUALITY

Users are vital to the health of a statistical system, not least because they are natural and powerful advocates of the importance of statistics to those who make decisions about resources. But more than this, the understanding of users' needs is vital to ensuring that a statistical producer provides a relevant service – even though understanding users' needs inevitably leads to trades-offs, and the need to prioritise.

The Peer Review team gained the impression that BOS, and the wider National Statistical System, prioritises meeting the needs of users of its statistics in international agencies and national government, though we were told that while consultations used to take place to explore user needs in Government, this no longer happens. And the Team considers that BOS has not yet been able to prioritise engagement with users in other sectors – including business, and the research community. – while recognising that the (published) 'Communication, Advocacy and Dissemination Strategy for BOS' (which focuses on raising the profile of BOS and the wider NSS) is a valuable building block.

As noted above, user trust in statistics is enhanced by transparency in almost all aspects of statistical production; conversely, there is a risk of a loss of trust if a perception of a lack of openness takes hold. Publishing information about statistical processes helps to reinforce trust in the system/organisation generally – for example, to pre-empt criticism that publication schedules are being deliberately delayed to provide opportunities to change or suppress statistical results – and it supports users directly by ensuring that they understand how the statistics they use are produced.

Several users of BOS's statistics commented that while they were content with their accuracy, they felt the results were published too slowly – in some cases, a few years after the reference period. Even the unemployment rate is published 9 months after the reference year.

The process of amending the Statistics Act should provide an opportunity for BOS to decide how the National Spatial Data Infrastructure will be managed in Lesotho. At the UN level, the integration of geographic information with statistical data is highly recommended. There may be an opportunity to insert clauses in the Act to oblige BOS and the national office responsible for cartography to work together in this area of attaching a location marker to statistical data. In the first instance, a benchmarking exercise would help BOS understand how other countries are addressing this issue in law, and a review of the current use of geographical indicators in different MDAs' administrative systems – the PR team were told of differences in identifiers for the same district in different systems – would help identify the extent of need for harmonisation.

The Ministry of Trade publishes a register of new businesses; BOS takes a sample of new registrations to validate and improve the quality of its own statistical business register. There may be scope for other uses of the Ministry's register, or scope to increase its value for statistical purposes, for example, by publishing details of new registrations as an economic indicator.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment currently extracts statistical data from paper reports that are themselves the by-product of business/administrative processes, such as reporting occupational injuries or providing work permits. The Ministry is exploring the feasibility of an automated Labour Market Information System, supported by the ILO. The PR team considers this to be an excellent initiative.



Several Ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, collect administrative data at a local village level; these data are aggregated to the district level, and then to the national level at the Ministries' headquarters for data validation.

The National Identity and Civil Registration Department (NICR) in the Ministry for Home Affairs provides data on births, deaths and marriages to BOS, for subsequent publication of vital statistics. Although NICR undertake some checking of their data before supplying it, BOS find issues when they undertake their own validation. Incorporating BOS's validation checks into NICR's system would be consistent with speeding up the publication of the statistics – the data for 2023, for example, were published in early 2025, a delay that reduces the relevance of the statistics.

All these developments provide the opportunity for BOS to become engaged across Government, exploiting its natural skills in data handling and enhancing its reputation.

4.4. STATISTICAL PROCESSES

Section 4(3)(e) of the 2001 Statistics Act gives BOS the right to “collect and publish routine administrative statistics”. However, the Peer Review team understands that historically some difficulties were experienced in accessing data from Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), because there is a mismatch between the data sharing/access provisions of the statistical and RSL legislation. To address this issue, a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed upon, and RSL considered this sufficient to be able to share the (sample of individual businesses') data. However, while this is a good workaround, RSL might change their approach, which would harm BOS' statistical activity.

Subject to the outcome of the recommended review, BOS should consider enforcing section 23 (4) of the Act should certain people refuse to provide the requested data. Furthermore, conflicting laws about the provision of data could be submitted to the Attorney General and, if need be, to Cabinet, to find a solution.

4.5. DISSEMINATION

BOS's website includes a publication calendar for the forthcoming year. Other producers of official statistics do not follow a similar practice. To help strengthen the effectiveness of the NSS and to enhance BOS's coordination role, there would be value in extending the scope of BOS's calendar to cover the whole of the NSS. The Peer Review team was told that the performance of the Director of BOS was assessed, in part, against the extent to which the calendar is met. As the Director has no control over other MDAs' performance, it would be important to ensure that her performance is only assessed in terms of the extent to which BOS meets the calendar.

The PR team understands that in Lesotho, awareness of the importance of statistics and of the role of BOS and the NSS is relatively low, and that this may result in policymakers not making appropriate use of statistics.

Some years ago, BOS used to publish a (paper) annual statistical yearbook; this was discontinued for budgetary reasons. Modern ICT offers the potential to reintroduce something similar at very low cost; this would help to raise the profile of official statistics as well as BOS and the wider National Statistical System.

The Central Bank publishes a range of macroeconomic data and statistics on its website, in an accessible and helpful data portal. This includes data produced and published by BOS and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, and the portal indicates the data owner. The Peer Review team gained the impression that closer working between the relevant institutions would help to address issues such as delays in statistical production and each institution's responsibilities.

BOS' website presents a Data Portal - a well-regarded data repository – and a series of statistical reports in PDF format. Users expressed interest in greater flexibility in BOS's statistical dissemination, along the lines of 'open data' to support re-use and the use of HTML for reporting.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. ORGANISATION AND COORDINATION

1. **Review the National Statistical Council** and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act. An operational Council would be a powerful advocate for statistics and would be able to challenge and support the Bureau as appropriate and help coordinate the National Statistical System.
2. BOS should **rekindle the technical Working Groups** – to ensure that their Terms of Reference (TORs), membership, and frequency of meetings are aligned with the statistical activity in each domain. Fully-functional technical groups bringing together experts from across Government – national and regional, and appropriate – and key external users will help ensure transparency and informed prioritisation. As part of this activity, BOS should ensure that discussion of unpublished statistics is controlled carefully to minimise the risk of leaks. Since the committee members' participation is on a non-remunerative basis, each MDA should be encouraged to place active participation in these committees as performance indicators in the individual Performance Agreements of these committee members.
3. BOS should **review the effectiveness of all MOUs with MDAs** in supporting the production of high-quality statistics and develop new TORs as appropriate. This will ensure that MOUs remain relevant and enhance their role as tools of coordination. All new MOUs should include a standard clause that states that it will be reviewed every 2 (or 3) years or when the need arises.
4. **Improve statistical planning** Based on NSDS II, BOS should prepare and publish (i) a statistical work plan for 2026-27, that reflects activities scheduled for previous years but not completed; and (ii) a review of the success of the 2026-27 plan, including reviewing lessons learnt in planning for an annual period as part of a longer-term plan. Annual planning and reviewing, within the 5-year framework, would provide clarity for users who would then be in a better position to provide feedback about relative priorities, as well as help the Bureau plan work over the NSDS period. This work will inform the modernisation of the Statistics Act.

5. **Improve the mandate and ability to coordinate** BOS should obtain Legal Advice from the Attorney General's Office in terms of the hierarchical status challenge because of Sections 13 (2) and (4) which empower the Director to be the CEO of BOS as well as having the power to coordinate the NSS - but since the Director is appointed by the Public Service Commission, this could be limiting and/or weakening the powers of the Director of BOS. This would help strengthen the position of the Director as an important precursor for better statistical coordination.
6. BOS should **advocate for the importance of data in monitoring and evaluation**, in collaboration with the M&E Unit (in MFDP), making the most of its own position in MFDP. Other MDAs should also collaborate with BOS for the same advocacy. This activity should focus on filling gaps, establishing a single source and methodology for each indicator, and developing a process to be used across the Government to assess the quality of the data source. As part of this BOS should oversee the development of a 5-year plan to ensure all data needed to populate national and international M&E frameworks are available and disaggregated (as appropriate) by variables such as age, sex and location, and BOS should explain the role of the NSS and the provisions and implications of the Statistics Act and the African Charter on Statistics for different groups of stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation are central to development, and official statistics are central to monitoring and evaluation. The activity proposed in this recommendation is key to sustained development.

5.2. INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

7. BOS should **publish more information about MOUs and TWGs** (including TORs) on BOS's website, including a summary of activity and impact. This will provide transparency to external stakeholders and will encourage other actors in the statistical system to engage effectively with the Bureau.
8. BOS should develop and implement a **stakeholder engagement strategy** focused on improving the effectiveness of the work of the National Statistical System. This should include appropriate engagement with the political fraternity (to gain support while avoiding undue interference), the private sector (about access to data, and the possibility of attracting financial or practical support via Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives), academics and researchers at the National University and elsewhere (about methods, QA, new data sources, programmes of university work, and guest lectureships), and regional (African) statistical offices (to explore scope for closer partnership working on topics such as methodology). Doing so will enable the Bureau to tap into others' expertise and resources, supplementing its own, and will help to raise its profile and influence.
9. BOS should **prepare a business case for an increase in BOS resources**, setting out what the beneficial impact would be for the Government and for Lesotho of each element. This business case should include (but not be limited to) an enhanced coordination team, a strengthening of the methodological team, other recruitment to enable the most important increases in performance, quality and timeliness, new office space for BOS, and modern ICT (hardware, software, connectivity). At the same time, BOS should consider the scope to introduce a system of charging for the provision of ad hoc services. Each of these activities is necessary to put the Bureau on a firm financial footing, to enable it to perform its mandate and to provide statistics to inform the work of the Government and key stakeholders.

10. **Review the status of BOS.** BOS should review the status of leading National Statistical Institutes in Southern Africa, and the advantages and disadvantages of different organisational models for an NSI and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act. This, in turn, would enable BOS to perform its coordination role more effectively and would support the principle of professional independence inherent in the African Charter for Statistics.
11. **Incorporate the ACS in Statistical Law.** BOS should review recent experiences of those countries that have ratified the ACS of incorporating the principles of the Charter in their statistical laws and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act. Learning from others' experiences would help BOS to consider the most appropriate approach given its specific legal and parliamentary systems. BOS has told the peer review team that this work is in hand as part of the current review of the Statistics Act; this recommendation is included simply for completeness.
12. **Modernise the Statistics Act.** BOS should prepare an evidence pack relating to proposed changes to the 2001 Statistics Act, for implementation as part of the NSDS II period (i.e. before the end of 2026-27). This evidence pack should cover the following areas: a revamped National Statistics Council with appropriate membership and a role to challenge and support BOS and to advocate nationally for official statistics (recommendation 1); the need to publish an annual statistical work programme and review of the previous year's programme (recommendation 4); proposals to make BOS semi-autonomous (recommendation 10); alignment with the African Charter on Statistics (recommendation 11); the need for geographic information alongside statistical data (recommendation 16); and access to all MDA's data required for statistical purposes (recommendation 19). BOS has told the peer review team that some of his work is in hand as part of the current review of the Statistics Act.

5.3. QUALITY

- 13. Develop and implement a user-engagement strategy.** BOS should lead a project across the National Statistical System to develop a user engagement strategy – identifying which organisations and individuals use Lesotho's official statistics and for what purposes, and which organisations do not use official statistics – and whether this is because of data gaps, data quality, or inaccessibility. Armed with this information, BOS and the wider NSS should be able to decide which stakeholders to engage with on what topics and issues, how frequently, and using what approaches.
- 14. BOS should publish more information about statistical guidelines, policies and procedures.** This should include (but not be limited to): error correction; revision handling; data quality management (including quality assurance); user engagement; confidentiality protection; the processes that are involved and the length of time involved in converting raw data into publishable statistics, and archiving. This will help to both mitigate against criticism arising from publication delays and build trust and confidence in BOS and its statistics.
- 15. Publish provisional estimates.** BOS should engage with relevant stakeholders to explore their interest in BOS publishing provisional estimates of key indicators, noting the trade-off between accuracy and timeliness. There is no single 'right' answer to this question but offering key users the opportunity to express their needs and then to publish provisional estimates that meet those needs will build confidence in BOS and improve its reputation and the value of its statistics.

- 16. Improve the alignment of spatial and statistical data.** BOS should review how other countries are integrating spatial data with statistical data and the extent to which this requires a legal mandate; use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act. As part of this, BOS should review the current use of geographical indicators in different MDAs' administrative systems to identify the extent of non-harmonisation. This activity will add considerable value to BOS's statistical data, allowing estimates for different indicators to be produced for different geographies. BOS has told the peer review team that this work is in hand as part of the current review of the Statistics Act; this recommendation is included simply for completeness.

- 17. Explore the potential of company registration data.** BOS should discuss potential areas of mutual interest with the company registration team in the Ministry of Trade. This might stimulate the production of useful indicators – such as new registrations by industry and region – at little cost.

- 18. Demonstrate leadership in the digitalisation and integration of data collection.** In the short term, BOS should engage with the Ministry of Labour and Employment to offer advice on the statistical potential of the proposed Information System, and to ensure that it is well-placed to advocate for similar systems elsewhere in Lesotho. And BOS should share their civil registration data (vital statistics) validation checks with the National Identity and Civil Registration Department for integration in their own data validation system. As a longer-term strategic initiative on behalf of the Government, BOS should initiate discussion about the scope to integrate administrative data collections about individuals, such as health and education, in an integrated IT system, which would reduce the need for population censuses in future. The short-term activities are straightforward and low-cost means to stimulate systems improvements that will benefit the administrative owners of the systems while also providing for better quality statistics. The recommended longer-term activity has significant potential to reduce costs and to produce high quality statistics – and by taking this work forward the Bureau would have the opportunity to significantly enhance its reputation in Government and with external stakeholders.

5.4. STATISTICAL PROCESSES

- 19. Improve access to data held by MDAs.** BOS should conduct a systematic review of BOS's experience in recent years of obtaining the data it needs for statistical purposes from MDAs and use this review to inform work to modernise the Statistics Act. This would guarantee the future supply of data that BOS needs to produce its statistics. BOS has told the peer review team that this work is in hand as part of the current review of the Statistics Act; this recommendation is included simply for completeness.

5.5. DISSEMINATION

- 20. BOS should extend the current publication calendar** to include all official statistical publications by MDAs. Ensure that reviews of performance in meeting scheduled publication dates distinguish between different producer bodies and review the BOS Director's contract to ensure she is judged only on the performance of BOS. This activity would help strengthen the effectiveness of the NSS and enhance the BOS's coordination role.
- 21. Consider introducing new statistical publications to raise statistical awareness.** BOS should engage with key stakeholders, including representatives of the media and a selection of Parliamentarians, about the potential value of publishing a high-level statistical yearbook or "on a page" summary on BOS's website. This presents a low-cost opportunity to raise the profile and reputation of BOS, while at the same time meeting the needs of some users.
- 22. Improve the dissemination of macro-economic statistics.** BOS should engage with the Central Bank and the relevant Department in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to explore the potential to discuss the dissemination of macro-economic statistics regularly, either by establishing a new Committee or by extending the TORs of the existing technical working group on macroeconomic statistics. This would help to provide clarity about roles and responsibilities for the production and dissemination of macroeconomic statistics.

- 23. Improve the accessibility of time series data.** As part of the user-engagement strategy recommended earlier, BOS should engage with a selection of users to identify their preferences for the dissemination of statistical data and of statistical reports containing commentary and charts/tables. The process of engaging with users will help to build trust and enhance BOS's reputation as an organisation seeking to meet user needs, and will tend to add value to the data and statistics that BOS produces.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Agenda of the peer review of the National Statistical System of Lesotho

Date	Timing	Venue	Activity
24 August		Hotel	Initial meeting of the peer review team
25 August	09:00-15:00	Bureau of Statistics	Meetings with the Head and key staff of the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the programme of the peer review visit • Discussion of the methodology and focus of the peer review • Description of the statistical system of the country • Theme 1 – Organisation and coordination of the NSS • Theme 2 – Institutional environment • Theme 3 – Quality • Theme 4 – Statistical processes • Theme 5 – Dissemination
26 August	09:30-11:00	Bureau of Statistics	Initial meeting of the peer review team
			• 1-2 hours follow-up meeting with the Bureau of Statistics as required
	11:30-12:30		Meetings with producers of official statistics, such as:
	14:00-14:45		• Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
27 August	15:00-16:00	Bureau of Statistics	• Ministry of Agriculture
			• Ministry of Employment and Labour
	09:00-10:00		• Central Bank
	10:30-11:30		• Ministry of Health and/or Education, etc.
	12:00-13:00		Meetings with the main providers of administrative data
28 August	14:30-15:30	Bureau of Statistics	• Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL)
			• Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Social Development
	09:00-10:00		• Civil registration authority
			Meetings with selected users and stakeholders
	11:00-11:45		• Users of statistics for research and education
	12:00-13:00		• Representatives of the media
	TBC		• Chamber of commerce, national association of entrepreneurs
29 August	TBC	Bureau of Statistics	• Representatives of international development agencies (e.g. World Bank, AfDB, UNICEF, UNDP, USAID, EU, etc.)
			Further meetings with stakeholders, if necessary Peer review team
	TBC		• Drafting of preliminary findings and recommendations
			Peer review team
	09:00-10:30		• Final drafting of preliminary findings and recommendations
	11:00-11:45		Meeting with NSI Head and key staff
29 August		Bureau of Statistics	• Presentation and discussion of main findings & recommendations
	12:00-12:45		Meeting with the Minister for statistics (or a high-level representative of the Minister/ministry (could also be held during meeting Day 4, where appropriate)
			• Presentation and discussion of main findings & recommendations



ANNEX 2:

Lesotho Peer Review meeting attendance list

25-29 August 2025

#	Name	MDA	Designation	Email address
01	Ms. Nthoateng Lebona	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning	Principal Secretary	nthoateng.lebona@gov.ls
02	Ms. Matlokotsi Makoa	Bureau of Statistics	Chief Statistician – Population Statistics Division	matlokotsi.makoa@gov.ls
03	Mr. Tseliso Phafoli	Bureau of Statistics	Chief Statistician – Foreign Trade and Price Statistics Division	tseliso.phafoli@gov.ls
04	Mr. Potsane Matsoso	Bureau of Statistics	Senior Statistician – National Accounts and Enterprise Statistics Division	potsane.matsoso@gov.ls
05	Mr. Tseliso Mosoaboli	Bureau of Statistics	Senior Statistician – Agriculture and Food Security Statistics Division	tseliso.mosoaboli@gov.ls
06	Ms. Tsepiso Thabane	Bureau of Statistics	Chief Statistician – Environment and Energy Statistics Division	tsepiso.thabane@gov.ls
07	Mr. Moseli Khoeli	Bureau of Statistics	Chief Statistician – Socioeconomic Statistics Division	moseli.khoeli@gov.ls
08	Mr. Emisang Tsosane	Bureau of Statistics	Data Processing Manager	emisang.tsosane@gov.ls
09	Mr. Pauline Makopela-Bello	Bureau of Statistics	Chief Statistician – Field Organisation Division	pauline.makopela@gov.ls
10	Ms. Mathato Paki	Bureau of Statistics	Administration Assistant	mathato.paki@gov.ls
11	Ms. Ntsoaki Leisanyane	Bureau of Statistics	Human Resource Manager	ntsoaki.leisanyane@gov.ls
12	Ms. Tsoanelo Seiboko	Bureau of Statistics	Finance Manager	tsoanelo.seiboko@gov.ls
13	Ms. Nyefolo Seboka	Bureau of Statistics	Senior Statistician – Production and Dissemination Unit	nyefolo.seboka@gov.ls
14	Ms. Malefu Khanyapa	MFDP – M&E	Director	malefu.khanyapa@gov.ls
15	Ms. Mamotseoa Makhetha	MFDP – M&E	Senior Economic Planner	mamotseoa.makhetha@gov.ls
16	Mr. Thabiso Kompi	MFDP – M&E	Chief Economic Planner	thabiso.kompi@gov.ls
17	Ms. Liako Mokoana	National Identity Civil Registration	Acting District Manager	liako.mokoana@gov.ls
18	Ms. Maleshoane Rapholo	Ministry of Education	Chief Statistician	mrshoani@gmail.com
19	Mr. Matona Mafeka	Ministry of Labour and Employment	Chief Statistician	mafekam@ymail.com
20	Ms. Mamotsoane Mofolo	Ministry of Labour and Employment	Principal Employment Officer	mmofolontsonyana@yahoo.com
21	Ms. Monaheng Monaheng	Ministry of Trade	Director OBFC	monahengmaichu@gmail.com
22	Mr. Seriti Keta Mohobela	MFDP – Macroeconomic	Chief Economist	kseriti@gmail.com
23	Mr. Molefi Mokhethi	MFDP – Macroeconomic	Senior Economist	molefi.mokhethi@gov.ls
24	Ms. Senate Mokobocho	MFDP – Macroeconomic	Economist	senate.mokobocho@gov.ls



#	Name	MDA	Designation	Email address
25	Mr. Abiel Lekulo	National University of Lesotho	Head of Statistics and Demography Department	mrlekulo@gmail.com
26	Ms. Tebello Mahase	Revenue Services Lesotho	Manager of Research and Development	te.mahase@rsl.org.ls
27	Ms. Ntlhonamo Bokaako	Ministry of Agriculture	Chief Economic Planner	ntlhonamo.bokaako@gov.ls
28	Ms. Nteboheling Motjamela	Central Bank of Lesotho	Senior Economist	nmotjamela@centralbank.org.ls
29	Mr. Retselisitsoe Mabote	Central Bank of Lesotho	Principal Economist	rmabote@centralbank.org.ls
30	Ms. Lydia Libete	Central Bank of Lesotho	Knowledge Management Specialist	llibete@centralbank.org.ls
31	Mr. Tsepo Mahloane	Central Bank of Lesotho	Economist	tmahloane@centralbank.org.ls
32	Mr. Thabo Qhesi	Private Sector Foundation	Chief Executive Officer	qhesit@gmail.com
33	Mr. Potso Sofonea	UNRCO	Development Coordination Officer	potso.sofonia@un.org
34	Ms. Sophie Shawa	UNICEF	Social Policy Specialist	sshawa@unicef.org
35	Ms. Motulu Molapo	UNDP	Project Officer for the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)	motulu.molapo@undp.org
36	Ms. Neo Matsoso	UNDP	Programme Specialist/ National Economist	neo.matsoso@undp.org
37	Mr. Ram Manohar Mishra	UNICEF	Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist	rrmmishra@unicef.org
38	Mr. Neo Ramonyatsi	Ministry of Gender, Youth, and Social Development	Assistant Statistician	neo.ramonyatsi@gov.ls
39	Ms. Masebeo Koto	Ministry of Health	Chief Statistician	masebeo.koto@gov.ls



Further information about African Statistics and statistical publications
by the African Union Statistics Division may be obtained from the:

STATAFRIC

Al Karama Holding Building,
2nd floor Rue du lac d'Annecy, Les Berges du Lac 1,
1053, Tunis -Tunisia

Contact:

statafric@africa-union.org
Website: <https://statafric.au.int> or www.au.int

*This publication was produced with the financial and technical support of the European Union.
Its contents are the sole responsibility of the AUC's Statistics Division and do not necessarily reflect the views
of the European Union.*





PAN - AFRICAN STATISTICS PROGRAMME