

MCC, Lesotho and Gender

The Government of Lesotho passed the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act of 2006 to eliminate inequality between married persons. Before the law passed, married women were regarded as legal minors, which limited their access to productive resources, credit and land titling and their rights to start businesses, hold directorship positions or pursue other legal and contractual obligations.

MCC's \$1.2 million Gender Equality Activity supports training and public awareness to promote increased understanding and acceptance of gender equality and to ensure equal access to economic resources and opportunities for meaningful participation in the economy, particularly among women in Lesotho.

MCA-Lesotho, the entity implementing the compact, developed a comprehensive strategy to target key institutions in order to educate the population about the changes. These institutions include the police, financial sector, the judiciary staff, religious leaders, NGOs, government staff, local authorities, and the general public through gatherings, radio broadcasts and television programs.

In their words, hear what the people of Lesotho are saying about gender equality:

"The gender laws that have been introduced now let married women file a case in their own name without their husbands' consent. This has improved accessibility of justice for women and has been instrumental in empowering women by giving them access to legal services. They are now able to make their own decisions and fight their own legal battles."

Palesa Phenethi
Mediation Administrator, High Court of Lesotho

"The changes that have been introduced by both the gender and land laws are positive and commendable. The fact that we no longer need to wait for a minister's consent before we can process bond mortgage applications has really improved turnaround time for loan applications. Even the fact that married women now no longer require their husbands' consent when applying for loans has also made it easier for women to participate positively in the economy."

Michael M. Edgcumbe
Head of personal and business banking,
local bank

"Lately, I have seen a trend where women who had leases issued in their husbands' names are coming to the authority to demand that their names be included. Women come in huge numbers to initiate land transactions, and they are more active because the law now recognizes them as adults who can make economic decisions."

Ntšebo Putsoa
Customer Service Manager,
Land Administration Authority

"A lot of people were very much resistant to gender issues in the beginning, but they are now beginning to understand more. Given that the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act is still fairly new, we understand that there is still a lot of work to be done, but so far the outcomes of the law are encouraging."

'Mamosa Mohlabula-Nokana
Programs Manager,
Women in Law in Southern Africa