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Lesotho

In October 2019, the Government of Lesotho declared a drought emergency, following poor rains and high temperatures in 2018–2019 and the El Niño drought in 2015–2016.¹ About one quarter of the population (508,125 people, including 213,360 children, with 433,000 in rural areas and 75,000 in urban areas) require humanitarian assistance.² In 2020, all 10 districts of Lesotho are expected to face crisis levels of food insecurity. High temperatures are rapidly drying water reservoirs, impacting access to safe water for populations in need and increasing the risk of waterborne diseases,³ with a reported increase in cases of diarrhoeal disease in recent months.⁴ Acute malnutrition is on the rise, particularly among vulnerable groups, including children under 5 years, pregnant and lactating women, people living with HIV and people with tuberculosis.⁵ Some 2,500 children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM).⁶ Rising food insecurity is undermining HIV treatment adherence, retention and success. Families impacted by the drought are resorting to negative coping mechanisms to survive, including transactional sex and early marriage, both of which significantly affect women and girls. Children and women are at heightened risk of abuse, violence and other protection issues.⁷

Humanitarian strategy

UNICEF will support the Government of Lesotho to respond to the humanitarian needs of 340,000 people affected by drought, including 213,400 children.⁸ This will include the implementation of life-saving interventions in nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), social and child protection, education and HIV and AIDS.⁹ UNICEF will provide technical support on therapeutic nutrition and the prevention of wasting and stunting to manage SAM and other co-morbidities. In WASH, UNICEF will provide life-saving access to drought-resilient water and hygiene services in communities, health care facilities and schools. Given the high HIV prevalence rates in Lesotho,¹⁰ UNICEF will support the immediate humanitarian needs of women and children at risk of or living with HIV, including through continuous access to information and critical services. Social safety nets will help the most affected children and their families cope with the drought; safe and secure learning environments for children will be enhanced; access to information about child protection services will be increased; and the capacities of child protection service providers will be strengthened.¹¹ UNICEF will also support the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team in the areas of disaster preparedness and contingency planning.

Results from 2019

In 2019, UNICEF mobilized a total of US\$868,485 to respond to droughts in Lesotho.¹² UNICEF supported the Government to develop the National Drought Response Plan strategies on nutrition, WASH and social and child protection. More than 2,000 severely malnourished children received treatment through the distribution of supplies and the provision of technical assistance and support for programmes to prevent wasting and stunting. Affected populations gained access to safe water through water trucking and the rehabilitation of water systems. Life-saving information on infant and young child feeding, hygiene and the prevention of violence against children and gender-based violence reached over 132,000 people. In child protection, 100 community-based committees were established, and 867 officers were trained on mainstreaming protection across interventions. Communication for development activities supported community response and resilience building. Local media outlets received training on emergency reporting and referral mechanisms. UNICEF supported the Government to develop a shock-responsive social protection system that included a scalability framework, early warning early action system and a methodology for routine data updates. While UNICEF made significant contributions to drought response in 2019, limited funding hindered the implementation of activities, especially in the social protection and education sectors.

Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

Total people in need

508,100¹³

Total children (<18) in need

213,400¹⁴

Total people to be reached

340,000¹⁵

Total children to be reached

213,400¹⁶

2020 programme targets

Nutrition

- 2,500 children aged 6 to 59 months with SAM admitted for therapeutic care
- 5,560 primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months reached with infant and young child feeding counselling

Health

- 1,500 children aged 0 to 59 months vaccinated against measles
- 2,780 children aged 0 to 59 months with acute watery diarrhoea treated

WASH

- 205,000 people accessing the agreed quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene
- 340,000 people reached with key messages on hygiene practices

Child protection

- 114,400 children and women exposed to violence received prevention, risk mitigation and response services, including access to mental health and psychosocial support

Education

- 10,000 children accessing quality formal or non-formal early learning, pre-primary, primary or secondary education
- 8,650 children in early childhood development centres provided with safe play areas and play materials

Social protection

- 85,800 children supported through social protection safety nets

HIV and AIDS

- 27,600 children, young people and women in affected districts are reached with information on HIV prevention, care and treatment

	UNICEF targets	UNICEF total results
NUTRITION		
Children and women with acute malnutrition who have access to appropriate acute malnutrition management	10,200	2,028
Children and women who have access micronutrients from fortified foods, etc.	10,200	20,454
HEALTH		
Children under 5 years vaccinated against measles	38,000	36,208
Children and women who have access to life-saving interventions through population- and community-based activities	5,000	27,392
WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE		
Children and women who have access to sufficient water of appropriate quality and quantity for drinking, cooking, etc.	5,000	295,486 ⁱ
Children who have access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in their learning environment and child-friendly spaces	3,000	2,485
Children and women who received critical WASH-related information to prevent child illness	5,000	70,618
SOCIAL AND CHILD PROTECTION		
Children provided with social safety nets	21,000	0 ⁱⁱ
Children referred to child protection referral mechanisms in emergency-affected areas	3,500	3,252
Child protection-in-emergencies materials distributed to affected communities	0	105,524
Children and women exposed to violence receive prevention, risk mitigation and response services, including access to mental health and psychosocial support	3,500	34,163
EDUCATIONⁱⁱⁱ		
Children targeted with safe and secure learning environments that promote the protection and well-being of learners	89,993	6,822
Children in early child care and development centres provided with safe play area and play materials	8,654	0
HIV AND AIDS		
Children, young people and women have access to information on prevention, care and treatment	100,000	5,159 ^{iv}

* Results are as of 30 December 2019, unless otherwise noted.

ⁱ Significantly higher achievement against the planned targets is due to the deteriorating drought situation at the end of the year. These results were supported by the Central Emergency Response Fund, which was mainly for life-saving water supplies.

ⁱⁱ No funding received for this component of the response.

ⁱⁱⁱ Underfunding led to low/no achievements against planned education targets.

^{iv} Underfunding led to low/no achievements against planned HIV and AIDS targets.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is requesting US\$7.4 million to meet the humanitarian needs of children affected by and at risk due to drought in Lesotho in 2020. Without additional funding, UNICEF will be unable to continue to respond to the ongoing drought with critical health, nutrition, WASH, education, social and child protection services. Interventions will focus on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged women and children to withstand, adapt to and recover from the drought emergency.

Sector	2020 requirements (US\$)
Nutrition	500,000
Health	85,000
Water, sanitation and hygiene	1,450,000
Social protection	4,200,000
Child protection	400,000
Education	700,000
HIV and AIDS	65,000
Total	7,400,000

¹ Declaration of drought emergency in Lesotho by the Right Honorable, the Prime Minister, Dr. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, MP, Government of Lesotho, 2019.

² Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee, Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis, 2019 and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Lesotho: 2019–2020 Flash Appeal', OCHA, 2019.

³ Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis.

⁴ 'Lesotho: 2019–2020 Flash Appeal'.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ UNICEF will target two thirds of the total population in need and all the children in need as indicated in Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis and 'Lesotho: 2019–2020 Flash Appeal'.

⁹ UNICEF's main focus will be on WASH and social policy.

¹⁰ HIV prevalence for the population aged 15 to 49 years is 23.6 per cent, the second highest HIV prevalence in the world. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 'Lesotho', UNAIDS, <www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/lesotho>.

¹¹ Communication for development strategies will be applied to enhance participation and access to life-saving information, and contribute to the achievement of sectoral results. Beyond these life-saving efforts, UNICEF will continue to support medium- to long-term efforts such as systems strengthening and building resilience in communities and institutions.

¹² Funds received in 2019 to support the drought response were channeled through the regional Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.

¹³ Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis and 'Lesotho: 2019–2020 Flash Appeal'.

¹⁴ According to the national census, 42 per cent of the population in Lesotho are children under 18 years.

¹⁵ UNICEF will target two thirds of the total number of people in need (340,000 people, including 176,800 women/girls and 163,200 men/boys). This is the total number of people to be reached through WASH communication for development/hygiene promotion activities.

¹⁶ UNICEF will target all children in need (213,400 children, including 106,700 boys and 106,700 girls). This is the total number of children reached through WASH communication for development activities, as well as children not in this group to be reached through social protection, education, HIV and AIDS, health, nutrition and child protection activities.

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