

Lesotho: Flash Update 01 – Hailstorms and flash floods (as of 4 April 2018)

Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Lesotho



This update is produced by the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Lesotho in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It is issued by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). It covers the period from 1 March 2018 up to 31 March 2018.

Highlights

- Heavy rains, hailstorms and flash floods affected Quthing, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Thaba-Tseka districts
- At least 1,418 people (314 households) impacted, including 12 people killed and many children injured
- A total damage of LSL 4.07 million (around US\$ 346,000) estimated to livelihoods and public infrastructures

Situation Overview

In March 2018, Lesotho experienced heavy rains, hailstorms and flash floods which severely affected many areas of Quthing, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Thaba-Tseka districts.

On 14 March, a hailstorm hit 23 villages in Mount Moorosi, Ha Robi (near Sebakala River) and Sixondo, in Quthing district. According to the rapid assessment undertaken by the Disaster Management Authority (DMA), at least 1,418 people (314 households) were impacted by the disaster, including one person killed and dozens of children and adults injured by the golf-ball-sized hailstones. Many animals were also reportedly killed.

Furthermore, the hailstorm damaged hundreds of houses, vehicles, roads along with 5 schools and one health centre. Various summer crops (maize, beans, sorghum, etc.) from a total of 258 acres (equivalent to 110 metric tonnes of expected yields) were also destroyed.

The rapid assessment estimated a total damage of LSL 4.07 million (around US\$ 346,000) following the hailstorm which comprises of LSL 2.8 million (around US\$ 238,000) related to damage on property and LSL 1.27 million (around US\$ 108,000) of damage on crops.

Heavy rains also led to a series of significant flash floods in the four mentioned districts. On 14 March, a truck was washed away by an overflowing river near Mount Moorosi in Quthing district, killing 4 people. Similarly, on 22 March, a minibus was swept away while crossing Linakeng River in Thaba-Tseka district, killing 7 people. In addition, many houses and public infrastructures were destroyed by heavy rains in Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek districts.

According to FEWS NET, these climatic anomalies followed a 55-70% below normal cumulative rainfall performance recorded in the period September 2017-January 2018 which had already led to significant moisture deficits in key cropping areas of the country.

Furthermore, the latest crop assessment undertaken by the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) in February-March 2018 confirmed that a below-average crop production is expected for the upcoming harvest compared to the previous year, due to the delayed rains and unexpected snow, frost, extreme temperatures (high and low) and a dry spell recorded in



Aftermath of the hailstorm in Mount Moorosi, Quthing district.

the considered period. This could result in a subsequent food insecurity to most of the households in the country in the coming months.

According to Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), all the districts in the country recorded and exceeded their monthly average rainfall in February and March 2018. In the period April-May 2018, normal to below normal rainfall as well as normal to below normal temperatures are expected.



Crop damaged by hailstorm in Quthing district.

Coordination & Response

In the aftermath of the disasters, DMA conducted a rapid assessment in Quthing district which resulted to be the most affected. The assessment was aimed at evaluating the damages and the related humanitarian needs of the affected communities. It was coordinated by DMA and supported by the national Disaster Response Team (NDRT) and the District Disaster Management Officers based in the affected districts. Due to the contained scale of the mentioned disasters compared to previous climatic shocks, national authorities decided not to declare a state of emergency.

As first responders, Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) deployed its Action Teams to Quthing district to work along with DMA on the rapid assessment. In response to the disaster, LRCS intends to provide emergency shelter kits and NFIs to the most vulnerable affected families amounting to 200 people (40 households). Food parcels and winter cropping are also planned to be distributed to the affected populations. Further interventions will also include psychosocial support.

On 21 March, a delegation of national and international authorities including Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso visited the communities affected by the hailstorm in Mount Moorosi. On that occasion, a series of pledges were made by the delegation, to assist the families of the deceased people and to support the rehabilitation of the damaged houses and public infrastructures, including the five schools and the health centre.

The UN Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) under the leadership of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator liaised closely with the national authorities and DMA, to provide any support required to address the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable households, including orphans and vulnerable children, elderly and disabled persons. In particular, the UN Disaster Risk Management Team (DRMT) partners committed to support the Government of Lesotho and DMA with a series of possible short-term interventions, including the pre-positioning of winter cropping for the next planting season; monitoring and support to livestock; psychosocial support to the children and families affected by trauma; support to the rehabilitation of schools or set up of temporary learning spaces; provision of safe drinking water and support related to health and sanitation.

In the medium- and long-term, HCT/DRMT partners remain committed to support the Government of Lesotho through its National Resilience Strategic Framework, strengthening the Early Warning and Shock-Responsive Social Protection systems that would allow for better emergency preparedness and response, particularly in disaster-prone areas of the country.

The next Flash Update will be issued as required, as soon as more information is available.

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