



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Lesotho Country Brief

December 2020



Operational Context

More than half (57 percent) of Lesotho's population live on less than one dollar per day. GDP stands at USD 2.3 billion while its national GDI per capita is USD 1,270 (World Bank). Revenue from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) contributes a significant proportion to Lesotho's national budget. The Government allocates 7 percent of its national budget to social protection programmes such as school meals, pension for the elderly, child grants and public works.

The population's high vulnerability is exacerbated by recurring climatic hazards, including droughts, early frost, and a low performing economy. Twenty-nine percent of people below the age of 35 are unemployed. The country is also characterised by an extremely high HIV prevalence rate (25.6 percent: 30.4 percent for women and 20.8 for men), with care needed for more than 250,000 orphaned children, most of whom lost their parents to AIDS. Life expectancy stands at 49 years.

Agriculture, which contributes 7 percent of GDP, is a major source of livelihood for 80 percent of the population living in rural areas. WFP supports the Government's efforts in building the resilience of communities frequently affected by climatic hazards, with the view to stimulating agricultural production.

WFP has been present in Lesotho since 1962.



Population: **2.2 million**

Chronic Malnutrition: **33% of children aged 6-59 months**

2018 Human Development Index: **165 out of 189 countries**

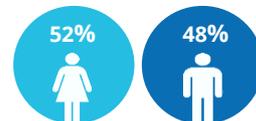
HIV Prevalence: **25.6% of people aged 15-49 years**

In Numbers

5,937 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lesotho (10 January 2021), including **85 deaths** and **1,572 recoveries**

US\$13.2 m six-month (January 2021-June 2021) net funding requirements

483,500 people targeted for assistance in 2020



Operational Updates

- On 06 January 2021, Lesotho moved back to Orange level restrictions, which implies tighter measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. Orange restrictions are one level lower than hard lockdown measures (red).
- All ten districts of Lesotho are currently classified to be in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 3 or worse, with some 582,000 people in rural areas and a further 184,000 people in urban contexts experiencing acute food insecurity.
- To enhance operationalisation of the Country Strategic Plan (2019-2024), WFP is developing a Country Capacity Strengthening Strategy (CCS). The development of the strategy is done in collaboration with key stakeholders and partners and is expected to guide WFP's capacity-strengthening efforts in the areas of coordination, design, implementation and monitoring of some key government programmes. Consultations and information-sharing sessions around the CCS were held with the partners on 15 and 16 December 2020.
- COVID-19 Response:** In efforts to support the most vulnerable people in urban areas who are affected by the impacts of COVID-19, WFP provides cash assistance to a total of 8,500 households, representing 34,000 people (52 percent female) in the urban councils of Maseru, Mafeteng, Mochales Hoek, Quthing and Qacha's Nek districts. Each household is entitled to LSL831 (USD 54) per month.
- Lean Season Response:** A total of 6,300 vulnerable households, representing 25,200 people (52 percent female) from the rural districts of Mokhotlong and Thaba-tseka were assisted through commodity vouchers redeemable at local retail shops and mobile cash transacted through Vodacom Mpesa platform. Each household receives a monthly entitlement amounting to LSL811 (USD 53) per household.
- A total of 201,960 people (75 percent of plan) under the crisis response remains without support due to funding constraints.

Country Strategic Plan (July 2019–June 2024)

Total Requirements (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
111.3 m	38.89 m	13.2 m

Strategic Result 01: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Shock-affected people in Lesotho are able to meet their basic food and nutrition needs during times of crisis.

Focus Area: Crisis Response

Activities:

- **Activity 1:** Provide cash and/or food transfers to populations affected by shocks.

Strategic Result 02: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 2: Vulnerable populations in Lesotho benefit from strengthened social protection systems that ensure access to adequate, safe and nutritious food all year round.

Focus Area: Root Causes

Activities:

- **Activity 2:** Support the Government in evidence-based planning, design, management and implementation of gender responsive social protection programmes, including by handing over the home-grown school meals programme.
- **Activity 3:** Strengthen technical capacity of the Government in early warning, food and nutrition security monitoring and vulnerability assessment and analysis through forecast-based financing approaches.

Strategic Result 3: End Malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Vulnerable populations in Lesotho have improved nutritional status, at each stage of the lifecycle, in line with national targets by 2024.

Focus Area: Root Causes

Activities:

- **Activity 4:** Provide capacity strengthening to the Government and other actors with regard to multi-sectoral coordination, planning, evidence-building and implementation of equitable nutrition policies and programmes.

Strategic Result 4: Sustainable Food Systems

Strategic Outcome 04: Communities in targeted areas, especially women and youth, have resilient, efficient and inclusive food systems by 2024.

Focus Area: Resilience Building

Activities:

- **Activity 5:** Support the design and implementation of assets that are nutritionally relevant to improve and diversify the livelihoods of vulnerable communities and households affected by climate change and land degradation.
- **Activity 6:** Provide technical support to smallholder farmers and other value chain actors, particularly women, in climate-smart agriculture, food quality and safety, marketing of nutritious foods and financial services.

School Feeding:

- With the closure of schools since March 2020, WFP has been providing take-home rations of canned fish to a total of 30,473 learners.

- WFP finalised the distribution of Super Cereal Plus, a nutrient dense breakfast cereal to a total of 17,779 pre-school learners (8,717 boys and 9,062 girls).

Strengthening technical capacity on early warning systems

- Through the ECHO funded project titled “Strengthening Disaster Preparedness and Response System in Lesotho”, which was implemented in collaboration with FAO and UNICEF, WFP supported the Disaster Management Authority to update the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Bill and develop a disaster risk reduction strategy, early warning strategy, early warning manual, early warning plan, and early warning standard operating procedures, with the aim of strengthening early warning and early action.

Nutrition

- WFP provided technical and financial support to the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office in developing the advocacy, and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategy on nutrition. The validation of the strategy and development of the dashboard to enable reporting of all SBCC activities will be completed in 2021.

Resilience

- Due to lack of funding, WFP was only able to assist half of the 14,250 planned beneficiaries under this activity. As a result, 7,125 of the targeted beneficiaries continue facing difficulty in accessing food commodities and resort to adopting negative coping mechanisms. USD 0.9 million, representing six months requirements, is needed to support the 7,125 that are without support.

Monitoring

Crisis Response: Process Monitoring Report (Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong), November 2020

- Generally, beneficiaries redeemed their entitlements without challenges and had clear understanding that the entitlement received was intended to increase household food security.
- About 70 percent of respondents stated that all food and non-food commodities were available at shops; however, the prices have increased.

Urban Crisis Response: Process Monitoring Report, October 2020

- On average, 52 percent of households headed by both men and women used their entitlement to buy food commodities, 34 percent bought non-food items, around 8 percent shared with friends and/or relatives, and 6 percent invested or saved for the future especially by households headed by women.

Donors

China, ECHO, Japan, USAID/FFP