



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Lesotho Country Brief March 2019



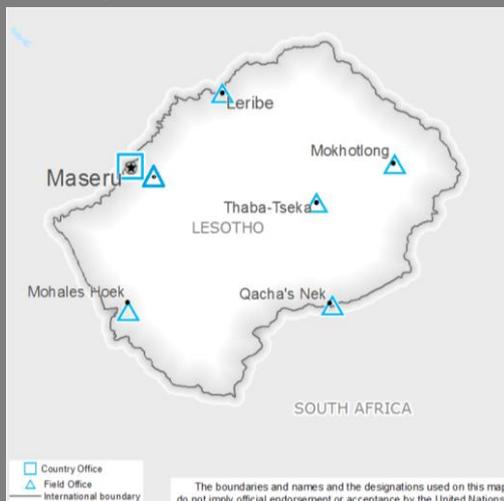
Operational Context

More than half (57%) 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% 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 % of people below the age of 35 are unemployed. The country is also characterized by an extremely high HIV prevalence rate (24.6 %) and should provide care 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% of GDP, is a major source of livelihood for 80% of the population living in rural areas.

WFP supports the Government's efforts to build the resilience of communities frequently affected by climatic hazards, with the view to stimulate agricultural production.

WFP has been present in Lesotho since 1962.



Population: **2.2 million**

2017 Human Development Index: **159 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **33% of children between 6-59 months**

In Numbers

US\$ 4.1m six months (February – July 2019) net funding requirements, representing 30% of total

278,250 people targeted in 2019



Operational Updates

- WFP Lesotho is presently scaling up operations to meet the most pressing needs of vulnerable communities during the lean season. WFP completed initial preparations such as targeting, collecting baseline data, external consultations, contracting, and a retailer market assessment for assistance to be implemented through a joint UN rapid response targeting orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). With funding from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), WFP is aiming to assist a total of 8216 OVC households with unconditional transfers using a hybrid of cash and vouchers through retailers/merchants. The entry point for targeting OVC's are primary schools and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centers. For verification and to avoid duplication, the lists are confirmed by the Ministry of Social Development, the custodian ministry for OVCs.
- In March, WFP distributed cash and vouchers in four community councils, in Mochales Hoek and Quthing, two of the worst affected districts. In collaboration with Vodacom, using a mobile cash delivery mechanism, cash was distributed via M-pesa to 15,375 beneficiaries (3075 households). Preparations are underway to ensure that operations in April will reach all 41,080 targeted beneficiaries.
- FAA activities have expanded from 8000 to 22,955 beneficiaries. Preparations are underway for an operational expansion to be rolled out in April to all beneficiaries. Targeted communities create soil and water conservation assets that address land degradation to improve their livelihoods. The Ministry of Forestry provides technical supervision in the implementation of quality assets. WFP provides cash transfers, non-food items and technical assistance on targeting and quality assurance in the creation of assets. FFA activities are funded until June via a WFP internal mechanism aimed to minimize the impact of funding fluctuations, as decided by the Strategic Resource Allocation Committee (SRAC). March saw 3345 beneficiaries reached.
- A total of 178,208 learners from about 910 primary schools continued to receive school meals.

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Interim Country Strategic Plan (Feb 2018 - July 2019)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
24.2 m	15.3 m	4.1m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Households in chronically food insecure areas can meet their basic food and nutrition requirements throughout the year, including in times of shock.

Focus area: Resilience Building

Activities:

- Strengthen the resilience of communities in shock prone areas

Strategic Result 2: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 2: Children in food insecure areas have access to nutritious food throughout the year

Focus area: Root causes

Activities:

- Provide capacity strengthening and implementation support to governmental bodies responsible for the national school meals programme

Strategic Result 3: End Malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 3: Targeted populations in prioritized districts have improved nutritional status in line with national targets by 2023

Focus area: Root causes

Activities:

- Provide chronic malnutrition prevention services to at risk populations in targeted areas
- Provide cash and/or food transfers to households of malnourished ART and TB DOT clients

- WFP, MOET (SSRFU) and other stakeholders held a joint planning meeting for the development of a joint school feeding plan to be endorsed by both MOET and WFP management. A draft national and district work plan was developed. The meeting also discussed the preliminary audit findings and how these would affect/improve the national school feeding programme.
- His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho, Champion of the African Union Commission's Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025), was a keynote speaker at the official opening of the WFP Centre for Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition in Cote d'Ivoire on March 25th. The Centre of Excellence shall be assisting support the Ministry of Education in Lesotho to develop the handover strategy of the WFP supported school feeding programme. The strategy is expected to guide the implementation of school feeding programme and capacity strengthening activities in preparation for the handover process.

Monitoring

- According to Lesotho Meteorological Services most parts of the country recorded good to excessive rains during March. A distribution of normal and above normal rainfall was recorded throughout many parts of the country. LMS further indicated that the period March-May 2019 will receive normal to above normal

rainfall. Despite this these rains came after the planting season and thus many farmers failed to plant crops or planted very late.

- Baseline assessments for the rapid response for OVC support and lean season support through FFA were conducted. Data analysis is ongoing

Challenges

- The preliminary results of the LVAC Rapid Assessment conducted to estimate the number of vulnerable populations, their location and level of severity in Lesotho for the period March to June 2019 results Food security is anticipated to deteriorate further from July 2019 to June 2020 with the food insecure population projected to increase to 640,000.
- Due to the nationwide teacher strike in the first quarter, the condition of food commodity balances in primary schools is facing issues with pest control due to storerooms having been kept closed, with little ventilation in damp conditions. Additionally, the teachers strike also resulted in learners only receiving meals for an estimated 5 days out of 20 planned feeding days.
- ECCD learners continued without school feeding due to challenges in financial resources. A total of about 50,000 learners were affected thus impacting on the attendance of learners to these institutions.
- A few issues were identified with the initial distributions in March, these included: errors on beneficiary lists, lack of capacity at contracted retailers, delays in communicating distribution dates to beneficiaries and reported cases of inflated prices by retailers.
- It was identified that the distribution of monthly vouchers to beneficiaries was immensely labour intensive for the Country Office. Therefore, ration cards that can be utilised multiple times are going to used as of April.

Donors

- WFP Lesotho has received USD2.7m from CERF for lean season response.
- The People's Republic of China gave WFP USD1.4m to support pre-primary school feeding.
- The Government of Japan gave \$1.3 m contribution in the form of IK tinned fish to support ECCD feeding.
- WFP Lesotho received USD1.3m from WFP's Strategic Resource Allocation Committee (SRAC). The funds will be used for cash distributions to FFA participants during the January to June 2019 lean season.