



World Food Programme

# WFP Lesotho Country Brief

## June 2020

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

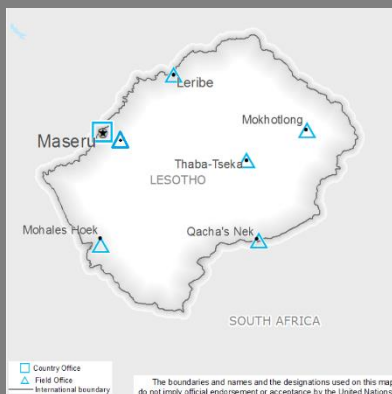


### Operational Context

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 characterized by an extremely high HIV prevalence rate (25 percent), 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 stimulate agricultural production.

WFP has been present in Lesotho since 1962.



Income Level: **Lower Middle**

2018 Human Development Index: **159 out of 189 countries**

Population: **2.2 million**

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

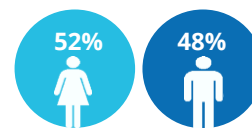
## In Numbers

**91** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lesotho

**11** recoveries of COVID-19

**USD 31.2 million** six months (July–December 2020) net funding requirements, representing 89 percent of total six-month requirements

**428,250 people** targeted in 2020



### Operational Updates

- COVID-19 tests can now be performed in country at the National Reference Laboratories (NRL). Prior to this, the country was sending samples to South Africa for testing.
- WFP's emergency drought funding ended on 30 June 2020. In May, a total of 62,360 people were assisted (51 percent women and 49 percent men) across four Southern districts (Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing and Qacha's Nek) with a combination of cash and commodity vouchers, redeemable at local retailers. Taking into consideration the nature of COVID-19, additional soap has been added to the non-food commodities received by each household to help curb the spread of the virus.
- Through ongoing emergency drought distributions, in June, WFP worked with 218 retailers to distribute 450 mt of in-kind Super Cereal to households hosting pregnant and lactating women (PLW) in the worst-affected districts (Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing and Qacha's Nek). A total of 17,967 households were reached.



Super Cereal at a distribution point.  
Photo: WFP/Malehloa Letsie

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## Country Strategic Plan (July 2019–June 2024)

Total Requirements (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
<b>110.7 m</b>	<b>30.5 m</b>	<b>31.2 m</b>

**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 03:** 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 04:** 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.

- With 800 public schools across the country having no handwashing facilities, all schools remain closed with the exception of examinations.
- In response to COVID-19, preparations are underway for starting an urban response in mid-July. A total of 8,500 vulnerable households in urban areas, representing 34,000 beneficiaries, will be targeted through cash-based transfers (CBT) using mobile money in Maseru, Mofale's Hoek, Mafeteng, Quthing and Qacha's Nek districts. Targeting and verification exercises are underway in collaboration with the Government through the Ministry of Social Development.

Public works activities have resumed in all three districts of Mafeteng, Mofale's Hoek and Quthing. A total of 5,752 people (51 percent women and 49 percent men) were reached in May. Key activities include sensitization on COVID-19, rehabilitation of *dongas* (steep-sided revines), removing dense vegetation, harvesting of vegetables and planting of fresh ones, and land cultivation.

## Monitoring

- The recent LVAC rapid assessment (March 2020) report projects a third consecutive poor harvest this year. The report estimates that from April to September 2020, the food-insecure population in Lesotho will rise to 899,287 people, of which 720,000 people are in rural areas and 179,287 in urban areas. This represents an increase of 40 percent in rural areas and a whopping 58 percent in urban areas.

## Challenges

- The political situation in the country remains precarious and continues to create operational challenges. Politicking has affected government efforts in providing a unified, swift and focused national response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The border closures with South Africa are immense and are threatening to cripple the economy and severely impact livelihoods. South Africa, Lesotho's main trading partner, supplies about 80 percent of all imported goods and services, and imports one quarter of Lesotho's total exports. This has resulted in unavailability of some commodities and an increase of prices.

## Donors

China, ECHO, Japan, USAID/FFP