



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Lesotho Country Brief July 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 characterized 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.



Income Level: **Lower Middle**

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

Population: **2.2 million**

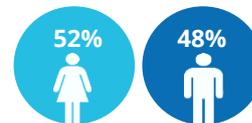
Chronic Malnutrition: **33% of children aged 6-59 months**

In Numbers

726 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lesotho
174 recoveries from COVID-19

US\$30.7 million six months (July–December 2020) net funding requirements, representing 87 percent of total six-month requirements

428,250 people targeted in 2020



Operational Updates

- The Prime Minister announced the closure of churches, schools, initiation schools, political rallies, gyms and parks, sports except non-contact sports such as golf, and public gatherings, except those intended for COVID-19 awareness with maximum of not more than 30 people. Prison visits have also been banned except for health workers and law enforcers with permits, noting that community service provided by prisoners have also been suspended.
- In July, public works activities resumed in Berea, Maseru and Botha-Bothe, engaging 198 participants. This is an expansion of the ongoing public works activities in Mafeteng, Mofale's Hoek and Quthing, reaching a total of 9,794 people (52 percent women) during the month. Measures to observe COVID-19 guidelines have been enforced, ensuring that each working group has 10 participants working in different areas of the project sites. WFP partnered with Red Cross in assisting with sensitizing participants about the virus.



- In response to COVID-19, preparations are underway for starting an urban response in Maseru, Mofale's Hoek, Mafeteng, Quthing and Qacha's Nek districts. 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. Targeting and verification exercises were done in collaboration with the Government through the Ministry of Social Development.

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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)
110.7 m	30.5 m	30.7 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.

- In support of the Disaster Management Authority, WFP held a workshop on 13 July to validate policy documents on disaster management that have been reviewed and updated under the ECHO-funded project. This project is implemented in collaboration with UNICEF and FAO with the main objective of strengthening early warning/early action system linked to social protection.

Monitoring

- June-July 2020 price data monitoring indicated that generally, June prices have increased compared to May 2020. Significant price increases were observed in maize meal, beans, peas, eggs, sugar and Weet-Bix. Non-food commodity prices such as washing powder and matches have increased.
- **Key finding from the Rapid Crop Assessment Report May 2020:**
 - The food insecurity situation is deteriorating, adding to the already high levels of food insecurity.
 - Food insecurity will remain high in the next consumption year, with increases expected in the number of food-insecure people due to anticipated low crop production.

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 threaten 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