



This report is produced by Office of the Resident Coordinator in Lesotho in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It is issued by the Humanitarian Country Team. It covers the period from 1 October 2016 up to 17 March 2017.

Highlights

- The response to Lesotho's unprecedented El Niño-induced drought is ongoing. Humanitarian partners have been able to secure more than USD 39 million for the relief dimension of the response. The Government of Lesotho (GoL) has committed around USD 23 million through direct humanitarian interventions and a food subsidy. The available funding has allowed to exceed the targets in the food security and agricultural sector previously set out in the RIASCO Action Plan.
- While around USD 11 million have been made available for the agricultural recovery, cash for assets programmes have not received sufficient funding so far, although they bear the potential for in building drought-resilient assets in communities. The priorities among the remaining gaps are the early recovery and resilience dimensions of the response.
- An update of the LVAC in November 2016, released in February 2017 sees the number of people living with a food security survival deficit to 46,000 from 476,000 prior.
- The GoL together with its partners is currently developing a National Resilience Strategy to address chronic gaps in the climate change adaptation, food security, chronic malnutrition and health emergencies.
- 82% of people facing food insecurity are receiving humanitarian assistance through cash grants, top-ups to social protection and in-kind assistance. GoL is contributing to the drought assistance through a 30% food subsidy on basic staple food (maize, beans, peas) for one year. Humanitarian partners are complementing the food subsidy through cash and in-kind assistance to approximately 460,000 people. An urban vulnerability assessment is currently ongoing to establish the number of affected people in urban and peri-urban areas, which is expected to increase the overall number of people in need.
- Lesotho is currently approaching the final stage of the lean season that is projected to end in April/May 2017 with the next harvest, depending on the livelihood zones.
- While water levels have recovered slowly, general water levels are still low in Lesotho. So far, approx. 110,000 people have been assisted through distribution of water purification tablets and provision of water through the rehabilitation of sites.
- Regionally, the El Niño phenomenon has officially ended in July 2016. Lesotho is currently experiencing the La Niña phase – normal rainfall and normal to above normal temperatures are expected for the period March-May 2017.



Map Sources: ESRI, UNCS, The Times Atlas of the World.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

561,814

People in need of humanitarian food assistance up to May 2017

\$13.5 million

Funding gap to reach the humanitarian needs

Situation Overview

LVAC update: Food insecurity persisting

Lesotho is currently approaching the final stage of the lean season that is projected to end in April/May 2017, once the next harvest is expected. In rural areas, food insecurity is around 58% with a total of 561,814 people currently affected (decreased from 709,394 in May 2016) in Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Maseru, Mophale's Hoek and Quthing districts. A total of 461,670 beneficiaries has been reached so far. The LVAC findings suggest that household food insecurity differs considerably with poor and very poor households being more adversely affected.

The number of people living with a food security survival deficit decreased from 476,842 in May 2016 to 46,521 in November (cf. Table 1), suggesting that food security interventions have successfully addressed the needs. Since November 2016, the number of people assisted with cash and food further increased.

Table 1: Comparison Number of people in Need May – November 2016

People in Need	May 2016	November 2016
Total of people in need (without humanitarian food assistance)	709,394	561,814
Total of people in need (with humanitarian food assistance)	679,437	159,959
Total survival deficit	476,842	46,521

Source: Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC)

Regarding the agricultural and pastoral situation, crops are currently in good condition and harvest prospects are positive. Assuming that the current rainfall conditions prevail, it is expected that an average harvest will be achieved for this season. In Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Berea, Mafeteng and Mophale's Hoek districts, winter wheat has reached maturity stage. Many areas in the highlands and lowlands had occurrences of hailstorms which have partially destroyed crops at germination stage therefore vegetable production was low in most districts.

Livestock is gradually recovering from the effects of the drought. The reports by Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security indicate that livestock mortality rate remains normal. Cattle prices slightly increased compared to May 2016 following some improvement observed in animal body conditions across the country.

According to FEWS NET, Lesotho is projected to be in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed) from February through April 2017, in the presence of humanitarian assistance. The country is then projected to reach IPC Phase 1 (Minimal) from June to September 2017.

Census data available – decrease in rural population

Findings of the recent 2016 Population and Housing Census suggest a slight population increase to 2,003,546 individuals comprising of 540,554 households. However, the results show a steady increase of the proportion of settlements in urban areas. While the last census in 2006 estimated 23.8% of the population to reside in urban areas the 2016 census records 34.1% and 7.5% living in peri-urban areas, equalling 41.6% (831,811) of the total population. Within the last 10 years, the rural population declined from 76.2% in 2006 to 58.4% in 2016. The total population in rural areas equals 1,169,961 people. In terms of the proportion of the population in need, all prior publications have been based on the population figures from 2006.

While the last situation update referred to 48% of the rural population affected (679,000 out of 1,400,000), the percentage should have been 58.

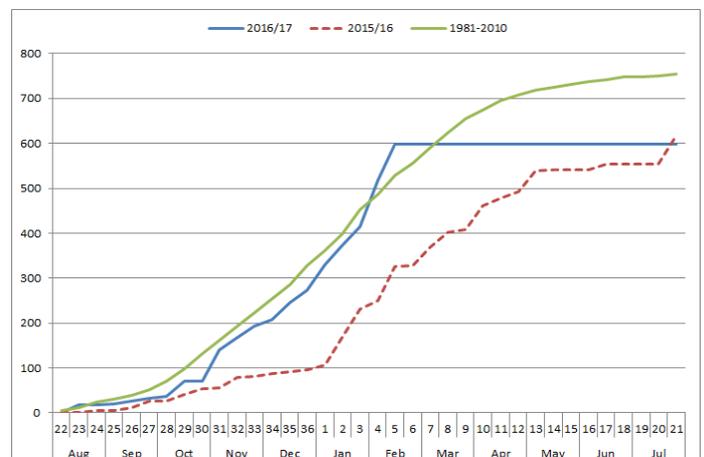
Based on the recent LVAC update, published in February 2017, the percentage of the population food insecure remains at 48% (561,814 out of 1,169,961).

Meteorological conditions and vegetation improved

Regionally, the El Niño phenomenon has officially ended in July 2016. Lesotho is currently experiencing the La Niña phase.

However, according to the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), the cumulative rainfall remained below normal until January 2017 (cf. Graph 1). The country received above normal rainfall from the end of January to February which created relief for aquifers and improved

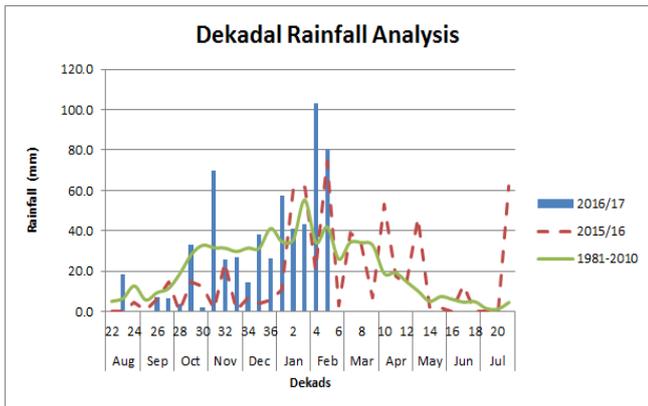
Graph 1: Comparison - Cumulative rainfall distribution in Lesotho



Source: Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS)

the moisture content for crops. The highlands and foothills benefited from a higher amount of rainfalls compared to the lowlands. Since the onset of rains in October, aquifers and water levels in dams have only slowly recovered. The water levels in dams remain below the normal with Katse Dam are at 64%, Mohale Dam at 65% of their capacity.

Graph 2: Dekadal Rainfall August 2016-February 2017



Source: Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS).

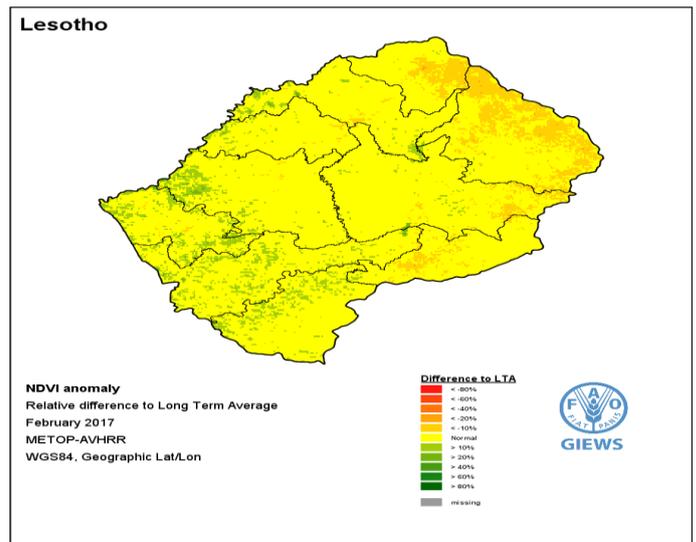
In agricultural terms, the Lesotho Meteorological Service has defined the onset of rains for the agricultural cycle for November.

In February, the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) (cf. Map 1) highlights that the areas planted and the state of the vegetation are comparatively largely normal in Lesotho. While the situation of the vegetation in the lowlands is slightly better than the one in the mountain areas. As for the period December 2016-February 2017, NDVI values indicate improving vegetation conditions and improving vegetative cover. Therefore, pastures are expected to improve. Since Lesotho relies on sheep and goats for wool, mohair, and meat, improved livestock conditions will consequently improve household earnings in the coming month.

During the period January-March Lesotho experienced below average rainfall with periods of strong rain in November and February (cf. Graph 2). Normal rainfall and normal temperatures are expected for the period March-May 2017.

So far, the impact of the recent strong rainfall and localized flooding on the agricultural cycle is not established.

Map 1: Lesotho Vegetation February 2017

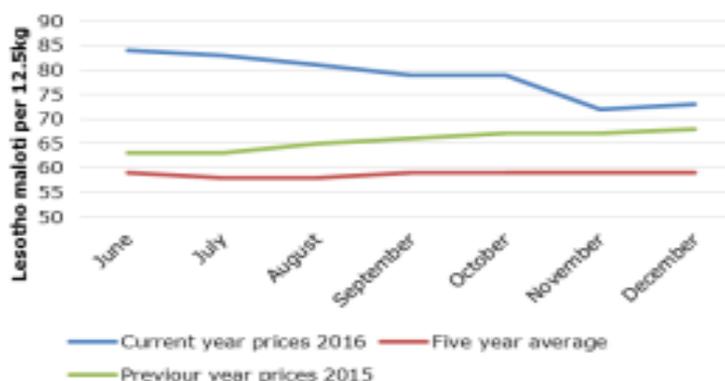


Source: FAO Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (<http://www.fao.org/aiews/earthobservation>)

Food prices gradually decreasing

According to FEWS NET, food prices remain above average in the covered period, but they have gradually declined since April 2016. December maize meal prices were above the five-year average (2011–2015) by 24% and they were 7% higher than in December 2015. Food access for households remains constrained by below normal incomes and staple prices above average. This has led to continued food consumption gaps. If rainfall amounts and seasonal progress continue on their current pace, household could possibly anticipate the consumption of green crops in March/April. This should provide food security relief to households.

Graph 3: Development Maize price per 12.5kg



Source: WFP mVAM Bulletin #8 - January 2017

WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) data shows that average maize meal prices remained stable at M73.00/12.5 kg in the covered period. Lower prices continued to be recorded in most of the lowland districts (M59.00–M75.00), while prices were slightly higher in mountain districts (M78.00– M81.00). The national average price of wheat flour, beans and peas has remained fairly stable since December.

The government's 30% food price subsidy on maize meal, sugar beans and split peas has led to the reduction of food prices. A reduction in market prices in South Africa resulted in lower food prices in

Lesotho. However, according to WFP food price monitoring, the decrease of market prices and the 30% food price subsidy have not fully been translated into local markets (cf. Graph 3).

While millers and packers continue to submit claims to the Government of Lesotho for payment, around M152 million have already been submitted until the beginning of March. At the current spending rate, the allocated M162 million will be reached before the end of the 12 months programme. The World Bank, in collaboration with FAO and WFP have conducted an analysis of the subsidy programme that will be released soon providing additional information.

Funding

Following the announcement of the government appeal in January 2016, the GoL has committed M155 million (USD million) to implement humanitarian projects in the first six months. The expenditure rate of the funding remains low. The exact expenditure is unknown for the time being. In addition, the GoL has also committed M162 (USD 12 million) for a 30% food price subsidy. According to the Ministry of Small Business, so far, claims amount to M152 million. Millers and packers implementing the food subsidy have received around M120 million.

In support of government activities, humanitarian partners have managed to mobilise ca. USD 39 million. Most of the funding has been directed to food security and agriculture interventions. The principal donors are USAID, DFID, ECHO, CERF as well as other bilateral donors (Australia, Netherlands, Japan etc.) and development banks (World Bank and African Development Bank).

In the southern African region, Lesotho has been amongst the countries that reached the highest funding against the requirements (more than 74% of the response is funded). However, most of the funding focusses on relief activities. Recovery and resilience activities are still to be funded.

Table 2: Overview funding and assistance by sector

Sector	Funding required (USD)	Funding received (USD)	People in Need	People Targeted	People Reached
Food Security and Agriculture	43,477,256	36,231,513	709,394	523,480	461,670
Health and Nutrition	3,182,613	423,796	69,430	69,430	88,386
WASH	4,948,030	1,707,536	302,507	103,000	110,440
Education	282,000	2,000	310,000	310,000	n/a
Protection	455,300	455,300	206,666	206,666	n/a
Coordination	296,395	296,395	n/a	n/a	n/a

All humanitarian partners, including donors and recipient agencies, are encouraged to inform OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS - <http://fts.unocha.org>) of cash and in-kind contributions by e-mailing: fts@un.org

The Government of Lesotho released an Appeal Document in January 2016, and has pledged to fund around USD 11,5 million in immediate interventions, predominantly to address water shortages. However, until March only around USD 3,65 million have been expended. So far, the expenditure has focused on agricultural inputs for summer cropping and drilling and piping activities in the water sector.

The Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) has launched an appeal for CHF 741,557 (USD 738,502) and have received the funding.

The Government of China has contributed to the drought response by providing MT 2,477 of rice that has been distributed. The Government of Botswana has supported Lesotho with MT 60 of food parcels.

Humanitarian Response

Humanitarian response activities have been intensified over the last months and the number of people benefitting will still increase over the upcoming weeks.



Agriculture & Livestock and Food Security including Social Protection Top-ups

The food security and agriculture sector is currently responding to the humanitarian needs identified by the LVAC assessments in May and November 2016. The design of the food security response has been based on assisting people that experienced survival deficit.

461k

People reached with food/cash assistance

Table 3: Overview Food Security actors and number of people reached (February 2017).

Actor	Type of activity	Number of people reached
WFP	In-kind assistance	92,689
WVI	In-kind assistance	103,387
WFP	Cash assistance	79,754
Action Aid/WVI	Cash assistance	33,500
UNICEF	Social protection top-ups	138,665
Lesotho Red Cross Society	Food and cash assistance	9,000
ADRA	Food	1,250
CRS	Cash assistance	3,425
TOTAL		461,670

Based on the originally stipulated financial requirements in the sector, more than 83% have been funded. Overall donors have made USD 24,494,521 available for the food security response, including social protection top-ups. With this funding, humanitarian partners have been able to assist 461,670 vulnerable people with either cash or food. This represents 97% of the people that have been found to live with a food survival deficit, according to the figures of the LVAC assessment in May 2016. The assistance has been provided during the lean season in Lesotho and continues until April/May 2017. Currently, WFP is further increasing the number of people benefitting throughout the month of March and April. Through the coordination within the sector, duplication has been avoided and vulnerable people in all districts have been assisted.

In terms of agricultural support, FAO, CRS, World Vision and Caritas have been able to complete the distribution of agricultural recovery kits to vulnerable farmers have been completed in 2016 before the end of the planting season, with more than 153,000 people benefitting. The inputs for agricultural recovery include, seeds for staple and vegetables, fertiliser and shade nets/greenhouse that will support households for up to two years. The kits include training materials on climate smart agriculture and conservation agriculture techniques and address recovery and resilience needs.

Further, FAO has supplied 165,456 people with home gardening and nutrition complementary packages and continues distributions to reach around 302,000 people. This packages are complementary to the support provided by either UNICEF, WFP, ADRA and other cash or food assistance, as detailed above.

FAO targets exactly the same households that have benefited from cash transfers with home gardening package comprising of six different varieties of vegetables, shade net and technical information. CRS, World Vision, ADRA and the Lesotho Red Cross have also provided vegetable inputs to additional 21,800 beneficiaries.

In total, agricultural activities have assisted more than 332,000 so far and will reach more than 437,500 people. The agriculture sector has received USD 11,324,415 by humanitarian donors.

60MT of in kind assistance from the Government of Botswana was distributed in Mokhotlong. The Government of Lesotho has also received donated staple foods from the Government of China (2,477MT) that have been distributed.

Further, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security assisted farmers by supporting summer cropping activities.



Beneficiary of home gardening package in Butha-Buthe district. Photo: FAO



Health and Nutrition

The Humanitarian response in Lesotho in the Health and Nutrition sector focusses mainly on HIV/AIDS patients, Pregnant and lactating mothers as well as children under the age of 5. All health and nutrition programmes have been completed in October 2016, by the end of the CERF funding. Overall, the sector received USD423,796 and managed to assist 89,386 people across all districts of Lesotho.

UNICEF led the response of malnutrition pre and post-hospitalization, procure and distributed the relevant treatment items in partnership with the Ministry of Health (like ready to use therapeutic food, F-75 and micronutrients), and monitored and reported on cases and commodity stock outs in communities. Overall, more than 36,600 people in benefitted from UNICEF's interventions.

WHO led the support to health clinics and hospitals to strengthen the response to disease outbreaks and the treatment of patients in all district. Training in effective case management of severe malnutrition was conducted for health care workers in the Ministry of Health and the Christian Health Association of Lesotho to improve in-patient management of severe acute malnutrition in 18 of their hospitals. WHO support has allowed to respond to the outbreak of anthrax, food poisoning and bloody diarrhea deriving from poor access to water.

In addition, WFP has provided nutritional supplements to 2,000 children and lactating women to prevent moderate acute malnutrition.

In 2016, UNICEF together with the Ministry of Health and the Food & Nutrition Coordination Office conducted a nutrition assessment, in which assessment finding indicated low overall Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) rates in Lesotho. However, in 2016 the case fatality rate of severe acutely malnourished children has been above international standards.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

22% of the rural population (302,507 people) were without access to safe water due the drought emergency in 2016. This number was obtained by seeing how many were switching from protected to unprotected water sources. The current humanitarian response targeted 139.600 people in the WASH sector with a received funding of USD1.66 million So far, more than 110,000 people have been assisted by humanitarian interventions.

300k
People without access
to safe water

Humanitarian partners contributed to creating relief in the WASH sector during the peak of the drought, through the distribution of water purification tablets and sanitation and hygiene education to more than 70,000 people. Further, WASH partners are rehabilitating sites allowing for 46,000 people to have access to water by August 2017. In parallel,

the GoL continues drilling and water trucking activities to locations most in need. The Ministry of Water committed to drilling 413 boreholes, out of which 49 have been drilled and 20 have been tested.

By March 2017, the Ministry of Water managed to expend M21 million out of the allocated M115 for the WASH response.

While the first set of interventions focused mostly on procurement and deployment of water tanks, distribution and training on the use of water purification, latrine and hand washing station rehabilitation/construction and hygiene promotion trainings, the current phase of the response is focusing on the rehabilitation of water sources to increase the availability of potable water in safe locations.

Therefore, in addition to the efforts of the Ministry of Water, UNICEF has drilled or rehabilitated 34 water supply systems in 30 villages. Constructed 155 latrines in 21 schools. Constructed 9 water systems in schools, provided hygiene facilities and engaged in hygiene promotion, reaching more than 40,000 people.

In 2017, UNICEF plans to provide safe drinking water to 17,000 people affected by the drought. Preparatory activities such as technical assessment of water sources that require rehabilitation and communities that need new water sources are underway. Following the completion of the assessment and procurement of contractors in March, construction and rehabilitation of water sources will commence. In addition, 34,900 people in the drought affected areas will be provided with information on WASH-related personal hygiene.



Protection

Humanitarian partners are addressing protection needs within the emergency response. Based on DFID funding, UNFPA has commissioned the drafting of a baseline study in the field of Gender Based Violence. This is the first study of its kind and highlights various forms of gender based violence as a result of the El Nino induced drought.

In response to these needs, UNFPA is implementing an intervention to strengthen the prevention, coordination and response to Gender Based Violence in Lesotho. Following the drought, increased cases of GBV have been registered across the country that UNFPA is addressing by supporting referral systems, strengthening community capacities to prevent and coordinate in the case of GBV. The project is meant to reach more than 125,000 beneficiaries in Maseru, Mafeteng, Mhale's Hoek and Butha-Buthe district with messaging and improved response structures. It further ensures clinical, psychological and legal assistance to victims of Gender Based Violence.

In May 2016, UNICEF supported the Multi-sectorial Child Protection in Emergencies training to build partner capacity. Work continues with Child Protection teams in communities and the police to address increasing cases of sexual abuse and exploitation. UNICEF has been working with authorities to exercise rigor in the collection of data on protection issues, and will work to strengthen referrals and the provision of psycho-social support for children affected by the drought emergency. The response focus includes government institutions such as youth correctional facilities, where there are vulnerable captive populations.

General Coordination

An Inter-Ministerial Cabinet Task Force has been established to support the coordination efforts by the Disaster Management Authority.

To further strengthen the humanitarian coordination, the United Nations, together with NGOs has established a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). This coordination mechanism seeks to optimise the collective efforts of the UN, Non-Governmental Organisations and the Red Cross Movement and to strengthen the overall drought (current and anticipated) response. The HCT is chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator. Moreover, the HCT gives strategic support to the Government of Lesotho in order to continue assisting its response and preparedness efforts.

The United Nations system together with NGOs supported the Government of Lesotho in the development of a drought resilience and mitigation plan which accompanied the declaration of emergency on December 22, 2015.

To strengthen the coordination of cash transfers in Lesotho, the Ministry of Social Development together with other government partners, NGOs, UN agencies and the World Bank has created a coordination forum for cash transfers and social protection.

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