



World Food Programme

# WFP Lesotho Country Brief

## May 2020

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

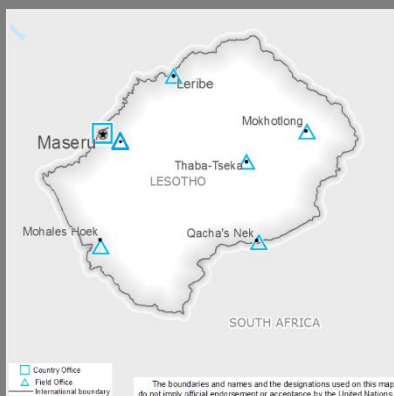


### Operational Context

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**

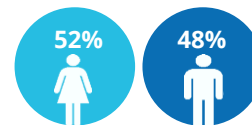
Population: **2.2 million**

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

## In Numbers

**USD 14.6 million** six months (May–October 2020) net funding requirements, representing 17 percent of total six-month requirements

**428,250 people** targeted in 2020



### Operational Updates

- New Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro was inaugurated on 20 May, following the resignation of his predecessor, Thomas Thabane. Majoro promised to make tackling COVID-19, poverty, and unemployment his main priorities.
- Lesotho registered its first case of COVID-19 on 12 May. A national state emergency has been declared earlier, enforcing a national lockdown from 29 March until 05 May. The Government has released a National Response Integrated Plan for COVID-19 with the total cost of M700 million (approximately USD 38.6 million).
- The COVID-19 pandemic follows a previous declaration of a national emergency due to a severe drought in late October 2019. The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) predicts that a third consecutive poor harvest is on the horizon.
- WFP emergency drought distribution interventions are ongoing until funding comes to an end in June in the worst-affected districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing and Qacha's Nek.
- Double distributions are taking place for the months of April and May. A total of 68,690 people are being assisted across four districts with a combination of cash and commodity vouchers redeemable at local retailers. To help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, additional soap has been added to the non-food items provided for each household.
- Public works activities have resumed in all three districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing. Key activities include sensitization on COVID-19, rehabilitation of *dongas* (steep-sided ravines), removing dense vegetation, harvesting of vegetables and planting of fresh ones, and land cultivation.
- WFP continues its efforts to mitigate the health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to WFP staff, and cooperating partners, as well as to assisted population at food distribution sites across the country. WFP continues to procure additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to enable safe distributions.

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Beneficiaries observe social distancing at emergency distribution site. WFP/Washi Mokati

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

Total Requirements (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
14.6 m	10.1 m	6.7 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 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.

## Monitoring

- The recent LVAC rapid assessment (March 2020) report projects a third consecutive poor harvest. It also 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 imposed national lockdown, coupled with the COVID-19 WHO safety guidelines, have resulted in delays in distributions. The guidelines entail procurement and delivery of PPE, remote payments, and sensitisation of retailers on the new safety measures. had to be delivered, payments made remotely and retailers sensitised on new safety measures.
- 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

CERF, China, ECHO, and Japan