



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# WFP Lesotho Country Brief August 2020



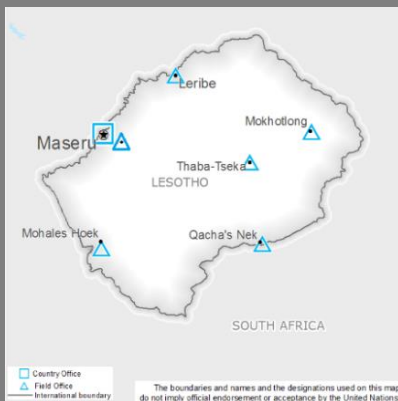
## Operational Context

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**

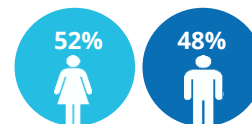
Chronic Malnutrition: **33% of children aged 6-59 months**

## In Numbers

**1,085 confirmed cases** of COVID-19 in Lesotho, including 31 deaths and 528 recoveries (31 August 2020)

**US\$ 27.6 million** six-month (September 2020 - February 2021) net funding requirements, representing 82 percent of total six-month requirements

**428,250 people** targeted in 2020



## Operational Updates

- On 24 August, Lesotho moved from Level "orange" to "purple", signalling a further easing of restrictions. Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro announced the opening of salons, liquor stores, churches and schools among others bearing in mind World Health Organization's COVID-19 protocols and guidelines.

WFP initiated a six-month urban response, targeting the urban councils of Maseru, Mafeteng, Mochales Hoek, Quthing and Qacha's Nek districts. The urban response is an expansion of the national Public Assistance Programme (PAP), one of Lesotho's social protection programmes managed by the Ministry of Social Development. A total of 8,500 households representing 34,000 people will be assisted every month with cash entitlements using Vodacom's MPESA mobile money platform. Distributions are currently ongoing in the urban councils of Mafeteng, Mochales Hoek, Quthing and Qacha's nek, assisting a total of 3,774 households (15,096 people) to date with LSL831 (USD 50) per household.

- Preparations are underway for crisis response interventions in the rural districts of Mokhotlong and Thaba-tseka where a hybrid intervention comprised of cash and food voucher to support vulnerable households will be adopted through a network of contracted retailers. Rapid market and retailer capacity assessment was conducted in Thaba-tseka to assess how the markets were functioning in terms of food and non-food items, as well as the capacity of retailers to offer commodities in line with WFP cash-based programme. Protection and security issues were assessed in view of promoting meaningful access, safety and dignified support. In addition, the availability of mobile agents and their capacity to issue cash was also assessed. This was done in a view to recommend the most feasible transfer modality of assistance in different councils.

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Further information: [www.wfp.org/countries/Lesotho](http://www.wfp.org/countries/Lesotho)

- Schools remain closed. In place of onsite feeding, WFP has distributed food commodities as take-home rations to primary school children from vulnerable households.

## Monitoring

- According to the newly released [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) assessment, some 380,000 people in seven districts (around 26 percent of Lesotho's population) are facing high levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3) from July to September 2020. This includes some 33,000 people facing Emergency levels (IPC Phase 4). This has been attributed to climatic shocks and socioeconomic impact of the pandemic.
- Between October 2019 and June 2020, WFP provided monthly food assistance to 118,000 beneficiaries in the four southern districts - Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthung & Qacha's Nek through its network of contracted retailers who are often also MPESA agents/merchants. Each household was entitled to LSL755 (USD 45) per month for maize meal and other essential food items, and LSL 330 (USD 20) through mobile money was allocated for other household needs. A close-out survey in July 2020 to establish changes in household food security brought by the intervention reported the following findings:
  - Proportion of both female- and mal-headed households with poor and borderline food consumption increased from 15 percent to 27 percent between pre- and post-intervention.
  - More than half of households did not adopt livelihood coping strategies.

## 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.
- WFP Lesotho has faced significant delays in getting commodities in transit to Lesotho through South Africa due to delays in getting border permits as most of the border authorities are working from home.

## Donors

China, ECHO, Japan, USAID/FFP

Country Strategic Plan (July 2019–June 2024)		
Total Requirements (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
111.3 m	36.2 m	27.6 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.

- Public works activities ended in August in the three southern districts (Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthung) and three northern districts (Berea, Maseru and Botha-Bothe).