In Numbers

2,214 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lesotho (9th December 2020)
44 deaths
1,302 recoveries

US$15.6 m six months (December 2020 – May 2021) net funding requirements

483,500 people targeted in 2020

Operational Updates

- The Honorable Prime Minister, Dr. Moeketsi Majoro announced on 22 November that Lesotho is now on level blue restrictions. This implies that tourists are now permitted to enter the country while observing COVID-19 protocols including a 72-hour negative COVID-19 test certificate. Restaurants will also resume normal operations.

- Cash assistance is ongoing in the urban councils of Maseru, Mafeteng, Mohale’s Hoek, Quthing and Qacha’s Nek districts. In October, a total of 8,500 households representing 34,000 people (52 percent female) have been assisted with LSL 831 (USD 55) per household.

- Crisis response interventions are ongoing in the rural districts of Mokhotlong and Thaba-tseka, where a total of 6,300 vulnerable households are being assisted through a hybrid intervention comprised of cash and food voucher redeemable through a network of contracted retailers. Each household receives a monthly entitlement amounting to LSL 811 (USD 54) per household. In October, a total of 4,897 households representing 19,588 beneficiaries were assisted.

- The food intervention support included a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) component, focusing on improving the knowledge of women, men, boys and girls on nutrition, HIV awareness, sexual reproductive health, human rights, gender, climate awareness, and other care practices that contribute to improved household food security and nutritional status.

- While schools remain closed due to COVID-19 pandemic since mid-March 2020, a total of 30,473 learners (representing 51 percent) are being provided with canned fish as take-home rations from the Government of Japan.

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

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Country Director: Aurore Rusiga
Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/Lesotho
Country Strategic Plan (July 2019–June 2024)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Requirements (in USD)</th>
<th>Allocated Contributions (in USD)</th>
<th>Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111.3 m</td>
<td>38.6 m</td>
<td>15.6 m</td>
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**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, 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.

- Although public works activities ended in August in the three southern districts (Mafeteng, Mohale’s Hoek, Quthing) and three northern districts (Berea, Maseru and Botha-Bothe) due to funding constraints, matching activities are ongoing through facilitated support for household-level asset-building activities by local non-governmental organizations.

**Monitoring**

**Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment committee (LVAC)**

**Food Security Update (October 2020)**

- 582,000 people in rural areas and 184,000 in urban areas are acutely food insecure.
- Food prices remain high yet purchasing power is low for at least 40 percent of the population.
- Majority of households had depleted their food stocks and food was mostly obtained through purchases.
- Reduced incomes coupled with high food prices weakened the ability of many households to access food, thereby forcing them to apply negative coping strategies such as buying food on credit and borrowing food from neighbours.

**Challenges**

- Due to funding constraints, at least 75 percent (201,660) of WFP’s targeted population under the crisis response activity will not receive any support to meet their immediate food needs.
- Similarly, 50 percent of 14,250 people (52 percent women) planned to be assisted under the public works activity during this lean season period are without any support due to funding constraints.

**Donors**

China, ECHO, Japan, USAID/FFP