



WFP Lesotho Country Brief June 2021

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



Operational Context

More than half (57 percent) of Lesotho's population live on less than one dollar per day. The gross national product stands at USD 2.3 billion while its national gross domestic income 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.



Population: **2.2 million**

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

2019 Human Development Index: **165 out of 189 countries**

HIV Prevalence: **25.6% of people aged 15–49 years**

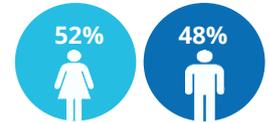
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In Numbers

12,490 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lesotho, including 345 deaths and 6,602 recoveries (17 July 2021)

US\$ 10 million six months (July-Dec 2021) net funding requirements

343,410 people targeted in 2021



Operational Updates

COVID-19

- The country has moved to the blue level coding stage, allowing for social and economic activities to resume while adhering to COVID-19 risk and mitigation measures under the COVID-19 Risk Determination and Mitigation Framework.

Crisis Response

- The USAID and Government of Canada funded emergency response that has been ongoing for three months (April-June) has ended in the three districts – Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka and Maseru – where a total of 57,193 people residing in rural and urban community councils were targeted. The cash and voucher modalities were adopted and each household was entitled to approximately USD 54 per month. The commodity voucher was distributed through a network of local retailers contracted by WFP while cash was transferred through the Vodacom Mpesa mobile money platform. In June, a total of 50,752 people were assisted in the three districts. WFP experienced operational challenges that adversely affected reaching all the planned beneficiaries in June; beneficiaries that were planned for and not assisted in June will be assisted in the second week of July.

School Feeding

- Schools were abruptly closed three days before the end of the second quarter as per the 2021 school calendar. The closure was due to the 3rd wave of COVID-19 threat which affected many schools and had already forced a closure of some schools in Leribe district. The schools are scheduled to reopen on 2 of August 2021 for the third school term. WFP is working with the Ministry of Education to ensure that pre-primary learners will receive nutritious meals when schools open. WFP is providing financial support for the provision of school meals at pre-primary level to 60,000 pre-school learners in the country. WFP is also providing technical support to the Ministry of Education and Training to implement home grown school feeding programme; and the Ministry of Education and Training and WFP have signed a technical assistance memorandum of understanding. The ministry has recently requested financial and technical support from WFP for the review of the school feeding policy, and the private sector implemented school feeding programme at primary level. The concept note to guide the undertaking of the requested reviews is currently being reviewed by the country office with the support of the Regional Bureau.

Photo: WFP beneficiaries in Mokhotlong district gathering at a distribution point to collect their food parcels. WFP/Aurore Rusiga

Country Strategic Plan (July 2019–June 2024)

Total Requirements (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six-Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
118.3 m	44.6	10 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.

Strengthening technical capacity on early warning systems

- WFP continues to support the Government through the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) in conducting various assessments including the recently launched

crop assessment report. WFP is currently working with the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee, led by the Disaster Management Authority, to carry out the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis that will inform the nutrition and food security situation across the 10 districts of Lesotho. The report will be validated in July 2021.

Nutrition

- In February 2020, the Government officially adopted the first food fortification regulation to address the problem of micronutrient deficiencies (mainly iron and vitamin A). As part of operationalising the regulation, WFP has procured the fortification equipment for the Government and the equipment will be used to conduct tests at port of entries and national laboratories to ensure that the identified staple foods (maize meal, wheat flour, oil and sugar) contain the necessary fortificants.

Resilience

- Asset building activities are ongoing at household level in the three southern districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing. These include keyhole gardening, bee keeping, small stock rearing and water harvesting. Also, brush control, land rehabilitation and crop production activities are carried out at community-based level. There is an ongoing training on beekeeping and climate smart agriculture.

Technical Support to smallholder farmers

- In liaison with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, through the Marketing Department, WFP, through the Improving Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable and Food Insecure Populations in Lesotho (IACoV) project, submitted a concept note to hold a national market linkages forum for buyers and sellers to learn about available products and opportunities.

Monitoring

Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee Crop Assessment- March 2021

- Food prices were higher than the previous year and the five-year average and are expected to remain high through the lean season period.
- Some households had reduced income from livelihoods such as casual labour, remittances, formal salaries, brewing, and petty trade which were below normal mainly due to movement restrictions and loss of employment related to COVID-19.
- Around 60 percent and 44 percent of rural and urban households had inadequate diet respectively. While most households (56 percent) were not adopting alternative coping strategies, those who did were using stress coping strategies.
- Currently, 179,000 rural households are food insecure. About 312,000 people from rural areas and 158,000 people from urban areas will be food insecure between October 2021 to March 2022.

Donors

Canada, ECHO, Germany, Japan, USAID/FFP