Country 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.

In Numbers

- **14,395** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Lesotho, including 403 deaths and 6,830 recoveries (26 August 2021)
- **US$ 16 million** six months (September 2021 - February 2022) net funding requirements

- **343,410 people** targeted in 2021

Operational Updates

- Although heavy rains destroyed some crops in January 2021, causing waterlogging in some parts of the country, Lesotho registered an improvement in crop production this year due to the good seasonal rainfall performance, after three consecutive years (2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20) of poor agricultural production.

Crisis Response- Activity 1

- The period from October – March marks the lean season in Lesotho, when most households are expected to have depleted their produced stocks and increase their reliance on purchases and casual labour for food and income. Preparations are underway to start the lean season response, targeting 28,900 people in Mokhotlong, Thaba-tsek, Maserau and Qacha’s districts. The targeted people will be assisted through cash and voucher modalities. The commodity voucher will be distributed through a network of local retailers contracted by WFP while cash will be transferred through Vodacom’s Mpesa mobile money platform.

School Feeding- Activity 2

- WFP continues to provide financial support for the provision of school meals at pre-primary level to 50,000 pre-school children in the country. Following the reopening of schools in August 2021, WFP worked with the Ministry of Education to deliver 324 MT of super cereal plus (nutritious morning porridge) to 2,000 Early Childhood Care Development (ECCD) centres across the country.

Strengthening technical capacity on early warning systems- Activity 3

- WFP is supporting the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) with the development of a dashboard that will provide real-time data for evidence-based decision making for food security and nutrition interventions. The dashboard will also allow learning by different sectors that are key for food security and disaster risk reduction.

- WFP is also supporting the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) to carry-out capacity needs mapping which will enable development of country strategic plan and prioritise immediate actions to ensure that DMA enhance coordination of disaster risk reduction interventions.

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Photo: WFP food for asset beneficiaries in Lithakaling, Mohale’s Hoek district watering fruit trees after the planting. WFP/Malehloa Letsie
WFP Country Strategy

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>118.3 m</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>16 m</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**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.

**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.

**Nutrition- Activity 4**
- WFP is providing capacity strengthening to the Government of Lesotho and other actors in multi-sectoral coordination, planning, evidence-building and implementation of nutrition policies and programmes.

Following the finalization and approval of the Advocacy, Social Behavior Change Communication strategy (SBCC), WFP is supporting the Government through working with the Food and Nutrition Coordinating office (FNCO) towards dissemination of nutrition-oriented messages.

**Resilience- Activity 5**
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation, WFP assisted 9,000 people affected by food insecurity in the three northern districts (Mafeteng, Mohale’s Hoek, Quthing) through engagement in community asset-creation activities and homestead farming activities. The resilience activities aim to help people create assets that increase their adaptive capacity and strengthen their resilience to climatic shocks.
- WFP procured a total of 18,000 fruit trees worth USD 53,477 for establishment of orchards across the three operational districts to support smallholder farmers, selected individuals and organised groups that have suitable and enough land to produce more fruit trees and establish orchards to engage in group marketing while also supporting the government’s initiative of creating employment through commercialized farming.

**Technical Support to smallholder farmers- Activity 6**
- 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, organized a market linkages forum for buyers and sellers that is planned to be held in September 2021.

**Monitoring**

Annual Vulnerability Assessment Report - July 2021
- According to the results of the latest IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis, 179,000 rural households are currently food insecure. About 312,000 people from rural areas and 158,000 people from urban areas will be food insecure between October 2021 and March 2022.
- Prices have remained higher than the five-year average and higher than last year.
- Lockdown measures have caused a reduction in remittances, reducing purchasing power of remittance dependent households

**Challenges**
- With a funding shortfall of USD 5.4 million under crisis response, WFP will be able to assist only 24 percent (28,900 people) of the targeted people, leaving 93,324 (76 percent) food insecure people without any support.
- There is a funding shortfall of USD 4.2 million for the School Feeding Programme which is limiting WFP’s ability to assist all vulnerable school children planned to be supported, many of whom receive nutritious food only through school meals.
- In addition, WFP needs USD 1.6 million to assist all targeted people under activity 4, without which a total of 30,800 targeted people will be left without any support.

**Donors**
- ECHO, Germany, Japan, USAID.