



# WFP Lesotho Country Brief October 2024

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES



## Operational Context

Lesotho is a lower-middle-income country with a population size of about 2 million. Lesotho remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. Poverty is widespread, persistent, and deep, especially in rural areas. Almost half of the population of Lesotho suffers from poverty (50 percent) and almost one quarter (24 percent) suffers from extreme poverty, living below the food poverty line.

**Food insecurity** remains a chronic challenge, hindering the country's development and progress towards zero hunger. A **third of the population** faces high levels of acute food insecurity and requires humanitarian action to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods, and prevent acute malnutrition.

Lesotho struggles with **chronic malnutrition**, particularly among children aged 2-3, where stunting (impaired growth due to malnutrition) rates are as high as 36 percent. Micronutrient deficiencies (mainly iron and vitamin A) also remain a challenge, affecting more than half of children under 5.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has been present in Lesotho since 1962.



Population: **2 million**

2021 Human Development Index:  
**168 out of 193**

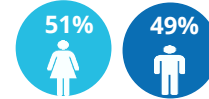
Income Level: **Lower middle**

Stunting: **36 % of children between 6-59 months**

## In Numbers

**USD 45 million** six months (Nov 2024 - April 2025) net funding requirements, representing 88 percent of total requirement.

**76,608** people assisted from January to October 2024.



## Operational Updates

### Activity 1: Crisis response

- In response to the declared food insecurity emergency related to the El Niño induced drought, WFP started distributions in Qacha's Nek district, providing food assistance to 12,724 people facing high food gaps. WFP is working with a network of local retailers to provide the prescribed food items (maize meal, wheat flour, sugar, beans, split peas, eggs, tinned fish, milk, iodized salt, cooking oil, paraffin, washing powder, soap bars, matches, vegetable seeds) to the targeted people.
- During the distributions, WFP collaborated with the Department of Environmental Health, Police, Department of Nutrition from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition to undertake Social Behaviour and Communication education on Food Handling and Hygiene, Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Protection issues, Gender Based Violence issues, as well as Good Nutrition practices.
- Preparations are ongoing to start distributions in the other 3 targeted districts (Maseru, Mochales hoek, Quthing). WFP plans to support 272,000 people during the lean season (October 2024-March 2025), however the available funds will enable WFP to support a total of 72,600 people until December 2024.

### Activity 2: Emergency preparedness

- WFP supported Government staff from Disaster Management Authority and the Ministry of Social Development to attend the 1st Africa Early Warning for All Multi-Stakeholder Forum held in Namibia alongside the 9<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The forum called upon governments and stakeholders to commit to enhancing early warning systems in Africa by allocating resources, strengthening institutional capacities, promoting technology transfer, and fostering collaboration at all levels. Key lessons included the importance of building capacity for urban vulnerability assessments, integrating early warning systems with local response plans, and incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into disaster risk reduction efforts. Additionally, the workshop emphasized the need for regional data sharing frameworks, harmonized and institutionalized anticipatory action tools, and regional logistics prepositioning strategies, while fostering multi-sectoral coordination across the Disaster Risk Management cycle. These lessons will inform activities implemented in collaboration with the government ensuring

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**Photo:** WFP food distribution point in Qacha's Nek. Photo:

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**Country Strategic Plan (July 2024-June 2029)**

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
<b>94.8 m</b>	<b>5.3 m</b>	<b>45 m</b>

**Strategic Result 1: People are better able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs.**

**Strategic Outcome 1:** Food-insecure and crisis-affected people in Lesotho are able to meet their essential needs before, during and after crises, including through anticipatory actions and shock-responsive national social protection programmes.  
**Focus area:** *Crisis Response*

- Activities:**
- Activity 1:** Provide crisis- and shock-affected people and people at risk with packages of assistance that improve their access to safe food and nutrition and/or their ability to meet their own essential needs.
  - Activity 2:** Support the Government in implementing effective, targeted and inclusive early warning systems, anticipatory action, disaster risk reduction, crisis response interventions and shock-responsive social protection.

**Strategic Result 2: People have better nutrition, health, and education outcomes.**

**Strategic Outcome 2:** By 2029, national systems and programmes for nutrition security and school-based programming in Lesotho are strengthened.  
**Focus area:** *Root Causes*

- Activities:**
- Activity 3:** Provide and support inclusive nutritious school meals in pre-primary and primary schools through school-based programming.
  - Activity 4:** Assist the Government in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and strategies that strengthen nutrition programmes.

**Strategic Result 3: People have improved and sustainable livelihoods.**

**Strategic Outcome 3:** By 2029, populations at risk in Lesotho benefit from strengthened, climate-resilient food systems and sustainable livelihoods.  
**Focus area:** *Resilience building*

- Activities:**
- Activity 5:** Assist the Government in the design and implementation of diverse livelihood and natural resource management programmes using ecosystem-based and climate change adaptive approaches.
  - Activity 6:** Provide support to value chain and market actors, including the Government, to enable communities at risk to aggregate, add value, access markets, reduce food losses and consume safe and healthy foods.

**Strategic Result 4: Sustainable Food Systems**

**Strategic Outcome 4:** The Government, development partners, civil society and private sector organizations in Lesotho have improved access to innovative, effective and cost-efficient on-demand WFP services by 2029  
**Focus area:** *Resilience Building*

- Activities:**
- Activity 7:** Provide the Government, development partners, civil society and private sector organizations with on-demand services that promote innovation and expertise in supply chains and other areas.

that initiatives are well-aligned with regional priorities and are strengthened through a unified approach to disaster preparedness and response.

**Activity 3: School feeding**

- As part of capacity strengthening initiatives, WFP provided financial support to the Ministry of Education and Training to train about 800 school feeding committee members and 90 caregivers on school feeding management focusing on food safety, handling, and storage.
- Under the home-grown school feeding pilot project supported by the Government of Monaco, WFP in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition at district level trained 60 smallholder farmers on climate smart farming in efforts to support farmers to increase production for a steady supply of vegetables to local schools.

**Activity 4: End malnutrition**

- WFP in collaboration with the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II sensitized 15 roller millers on food fortification to ensure that they are aware of the food safety dynamics and abide by the national fortification regulation. The training follows an assessment that was undertaken in August to evaluate the knowledge of local millers on food fortification and labelling and the national food fortification regulations and guidelines. Results indicated that the millers had limited knowledge on issues related to food fortification.
- WFP conducted the Gender Rapid Assessment to understand the link between food insecurity, Gender Based Violence, and the risks related to WFP transfer modalities to put in place mitigation measures in WFP's emergency response. The assessment was conducted in Qacha's Nek and key findings highlighted that food insecurity and tensions in the household caused by lack of consensus on prioritisation and lack of financial literacy are some of the contributing factors towards violence against women.

**Activity 5: Resilience building**

- WFP as part of the Climate Resilient Food Systems (CRFS) Alliance supported the Government to facilitate the National Climate Resilient Food Systems dialogues. As a follow up to the country diagnostic exercises, and using Lesotho as a case study, the CRFS Alliance in consultation with the Government of Lesotho held a multi-stakeholder workshop, to foster dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collective action to drive the transformative changes needed to build food systems resilience in the face of climate change. The workshop brought together diverse key actors and stakeholders to identify priorities and guide future interventions and investments in building climate-resilient food systems in Lesotho.

**Challenges**

- In July, WFP Lesotho started implementation of its new 5 years (2024-2029) Country Strategic Plan, however funding constraints remain a key challenge that impacts effective implementation of the planned activities including school feeding, resilience building and emergency response. WFP urgently needs USD 42 million to respond to the declared food insecurity as a result of the El Niño induced drought.

**Donors**

Adaptation Fund, ECHO, Japan, Lesotho, Monaco, UN CERF (in alphabetical order).