



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

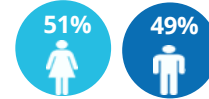
Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

In Numbers

USD 26.5 million six months (Jan - June 2025) net funding requirements, representing 90 percent of total requirement.

60,250 people assisted in December 2024



Operational Updates

Activity 1: Crisis response

- WFP provided food and cash assistance to 60,250 people (31,793 women) in Qacha's Nek, Quthing, Mahale's Hoek and Maseru districts in response to the high levels of food insecurity. WFP partnered with 41 retailers to provide food assistance to the targeted people while the cash assistance was administered through Standard Lesotho Bank's UNAYO platform.

Activity 2: Emergency preparedness

- To enhance the capacity of the Ministry's staff in data analysis and monitoring of agricultural programmes implemented in collaboration with WFP, WFP engaged the National University of Lesotho to conduct a training on Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The training aimed to equip participants with skills needed in using SPSS for agricultural data analysis and to strengthen data interpretation to support evidence-based decision making.
- Further to this, WFP supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition to update its Strategic Plan (2024-2028) and develop a Monitoring and Evaluation logical framework. This was done as part of capacity strengthening for the Ministry through the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project under which WFP is implementing the nutrition component in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Activity 3: School feeding

- WFP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) and Ministry of Health conducted a training for 16 National Management Agents and other Government ministries to capacitate them on the management of school feeding. The workshop aimed at ensuring the understanding of the objectives of the school feeding programme as a social protection programme, its health benefits, and the value addition benefits of home-grown school feeding on local economy and food security. The training is expected to improve timely delivery of food to schools, provision of quality food and improve local economy through procurement of food from smallholder farmers.
- WFP and MoET signed a Technical Facility Memorandum of Understanding aimed at strengthening the Government capacity for sustainable financing, implementing the school feeding policy, strengthening coordination, update school menus and mapping of school feeding supply sources.

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Photo: WFP Rapid Rural Transformation Hub at Mochlakoana project site in Quthing. Photo: ©WFP/Malehloa Letsie

Country Strategic Plan (July 2024-June 2029)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
94.8 m	5.2 m	26.5 m

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.

Activity 4: End malnutrition

- WFP held a strategic meeting with the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office (FNCO) to review the progress of the nutrition campaign launched by the Government in July through WFP support. The campaign advocates for good nutrition practices, challenging the socio-cultural norms that contribute to malnutrition, which disproportionately affects women and children. The meeting aimed to support FNCO in conducting a Target Audience Analysis to better understand the demographics, behaviors, and socio-cultural factors of the audiences that were not effectively reached. The analysis also sought to identify gaps and develop engagement strategies to inform and strengthen post-campaign activities.

Activity 5-Resilience building

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry through WFP's support, facilitated a number of capacity strengthening trainings for 40 participants across the districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong and Quthing on aquaculture and trout fish production and productivity, fire belt establishment in rangelands, poultry and piggery management and products. These trainings were geared towards improving production for income generation and enhanced food and nutrition security.

Activity 6: Smallholder support

- WFP through the Adaptation Fund project supported the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition through the Department of Marketing and the Department of Crops – Horticulture Section, with training of 150 smallholder farmers on Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Programme with the goal of transforming small-scale farming into sustainable, business-oriented ventures. The training equipped farmers with essential and required production and marketing skills. The training has also equipped farmers with knowledge and skills needed to improve their horticultural practices, resulting in higher productivity and better-quality produce for better access and linkages to markets.
- WFP is in discussion with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition to support with designing the next phase of the small holder farmers agricultural development programme that focus on improving the livelihoods of farmers in Lesotho.

Monitoring

- The Food Security Update of December 2024 indicates that Food security in Lesotho remains a pressing concern, with approximately 700,000 people currently food insecure until March 2025. This situation is driven by poor food production and persistently high food prices, compounded by frequent adverse climate events like the recent drought and global economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia conflict.
- The 2024/25 agricultural season presents mixed prospects, with forecasted below-normal rainfall during the critical planting period and normal to above-normal rainfall later, suggesting both challenges and opportunities for recovery.

Donors

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