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Reports of the Executive Director on
Operational Matters
For information

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Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations Approved by the Executive Director (1 July–31 December 2016) – Lesotho 200980

Support to Drought-Affected Populations

Number of beneficiaries	263,226
Duration of project	1 June 2016–31 December 2017
Gender marker code*	2A
WFP food tonnage	15,667 mt
Cost (United States dollars)	
Food and related costs	11,718,259
Cash-based transfers and related costs	11,461,746
Capacity development and augmentation	150,000
Total cost to WFP	26,741,170

* <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/gm-overview-en.pdf>.

Abstract

1. Lesotho is a lower-middle-income country with a population of 1.9 million people. It ranks 162nd of 187 countries on the 2014 United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index. The country continues to struggle with a range of development challenges, including chronic poverty and high levels of unemployment. Food and nutrition insecurity is exacerbated by recurrent climatic shocks, chronic malnutrition and the world's second highest HIV and AIDS prevalence.
2. While agriculture is the main livelihood source for a majority of the rural population, Lesotho's ability to produce its own food needs has declined in recent decades as a result of recurrent drought, soil infertility and land degradation. Together, these factors heighten vulnerability to recurrent shocks, and increase food insecurity and undernutrition. Today, agriculture contributes only 7 percent of gross domestic product, down from 20 percent in 1983.

Focal points:

Mr C. Nikoi
Regional Director
Southern Africa
email: chris.nikoi@wfp.org

Ms M. Njoroge
Country Director
email: mary.njoroge@wfp.org

3. Following poor rains since 2013, the country is currently facing one of the worst drought in decades, amid the impact of an El Niño event that will continue to be felt throughout 2017. The result has been a sharp decline in food production and a failure to plant new crops by a large proportion of farmers.
4. In December 2015, the Government of Lesotho declared a state of emergency. A January 2016 Multi-Agency Drought Assessment Team Rapid Drought Impact Assessment found that some 535,000 people were at risk of food insecurity. More recently, the June 2016 annual Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee exercise estimated that 709,000 people across the country will be food insecure at the height of the 2016/17 lean season; of these, 491,000 people are believed to be in need of emergency assistance.
5. In response, this protracted relief and recovery operation 200980 will concurrently pursue immediate life-saving objectives and a longer-term vision around recovery, resilience and strengthening national response capacities.
6. The operation will support an estimated 263,226 vulnerable drought-affected people through:
 - monthly relief food assistance in priority locations to stabilize or improve food security and dietary diversity during the lean season;
 - food assistance for assets in areas recurrently affected by shocks to reduce disaster risks and strengthen resilience over time; and
 - technical assistance to the Government's national public works programme to become a more effective and shock-responsive safety net in the longer-term.
7. In line with the results of a March 2016 market assessment, assistance will be provided in the form of both food and cash-based transfers.
8. This operation is aligned to the 2013–2017 Lesotho United Nations Development Assistance Plan and the 2012–2017 National Strategic Development Plan. It contributes to WFP Strategic Objectives 1, 2, and 3, and Sustainable Development Goals 2, 5 and 17.