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Agenda item 11

*For information**



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DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (1 JULY – 31 DECEMBER 2007) – LESOTHO 10582.0

Support Access to Primary Education

Number of beneficiaries	80,000
Duration of project	3 years (2008–2010)
WFP food tonnage	6,669 mt
Cost (United States dollars)	
WFP food cost	2,722,181
Total cost to WFP	4,674,623

* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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ABSTRACT

1. Three quarters of Lesotho's 1.8 million people live in mountainous districts, and 68 percent are considered poor. Lesotho has a 24 percent HIV prevalence rate, the third highest in the world, which intensifies poverty, undermines food security and increases the care burden.¹ There are 270,000 people living with HIV and 180,000 orphans and other vulnerable children.
2. According to the March 2006 mid-term review, Lesotho is some way from achieving the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education and gender parity because of the effects of HIV/AIDS, despite laudable government policies and financial commitments. Government expenditure on education – 12 percent of gross domestic product – is high by international and regional standards; the world average is 4 percent.² In the seven years of Free Primary Education (FPE), the Government has increased its education budget by 51 percent, of which a quarter supports school feeding under FPE; the allocation is further increased for 2007/08.
3. It has been observed, however, that even with FPE some poor households still have to send their children out to work; hiring boys out as herders is a common survival mechanism among resource-poor households. Girls are frequently removed from school to care for sick relatives or younger siblings while both parents look for work. Many orphans drop out of school to care for younger siblings or to seek work.
4. The Government intends to make primary education compulsory from 2008, so enrolment is expected to increase. The number of orphans registered in primary schools increased from 99,240 in 2004 to 128,860 in 2006. Efforts are required to keep them at school.
5. WFP started a phase-down in 2007, supporting only mountain areas. Continued WFP support during this period will help to cover funding gaps in the Government's FPE budget. The Government has agreed to a WFP phase-out by the end of 2010.
6. Food assistance will contribute to (i) increased enrolment and retention of children in primary schools in the mountain areas, (ii) stabilized attendance rates among primary schoolchildren in WFP-assisted schools, (iii) improved capacity to concentrate and learn in WFP-assisted schools and (iv) capacity-building for the hand-over to the Government.
7. The food requirement for development project 10582.0 is 6,669 mt, valued at US\$2.7 million; the total cost to WFP is US\$4.7 million to support 80,000 school children.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. 2005. *HIV/AIDS Policy Fact Sheet*. Available at <http://www.kff.org/hiv/aids>

² World Bank. 2005. *Building on Free Primary Education, Primary and secondary Education in Lesotho. A Country Status Report*. Washington DC.