



Executive Board

Third Regular Session

Rome, 21 - 24 October 1996

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PROJECT LESOTHO 352 (Exp.8)

Construction, upgrading and maintenance of rural access roads

Total food cost	4 863 600 dollars
Total cost to WFP	10 306 407 dollars
Date approved by the CFA	28 October 1993
Date plan of operations signed	18 March 1994
Date of notification of readiness accepted	24 May 1994
Date of first distribution	1 July 1994
Duration of WFP assistance	Five years
Duration of project as at 31 December 1995	One year and six months

All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 4.34 maloti in June 1996.

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Note to the Executive Board

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

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PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

1. The project's long-term objective is to support the Government's programme for the improvement of rural roads and the construction of footbridges, which aims at improving the living conditions of remote and isolated rural communities.
2. The immediate objectives are: a) to improve the accessibility of rural communities to markets and services through the construction, upgrading and maintenance of the national rural road network; and b) to provide temporary employment to the participants, thereby contributing to the alleviation of unemployment and underemployment in the country.

IMPLEMENTATION AND FOOD MANAGEMENT

3. Since the project is by now long-standing (initial phase commenced in 1966), it has a well established implementation framework. Through the provision of wage support, equipment and materials, the project supports over 80 percent of the Government's rural road improvement and footbridge construction programme, which is implemented by the Civil Works Section (CWS) of the Ministry of Local Government. The roads programme is supervised from the 10 district offices and implemented by site supervisory staff. A training unit in the head office conducts training for the supervisory staff. The footbridge component of the programme is managed by a sub-unit within the CWS head office which also undertakes its planning, design and implementation. Currently, 80 percent of the administrative and non-food items costs of the footbridge component are financed by the Government of Ireland (400,000 dollars).
4. Food management is the responsibility of the Food Management Unit (FMU) in the Prime Minister's Office. CWS transports the food from the warehouses to the distribution sites. A Project Coordination Committee (PCC), consisting of representatives from CWS, FMU and WFP, carries out quarterly reviews of project implementation and is responsible for managing the generated funds.
5. Communities initiate requests for food-for-work schemes through Village Development Councils (VDCs). These are also responsible for identifying the beneficiaries to carry out the work. The project allows up to five percent of food commitment to be utilized for community self-help projects executed by NGOs.

GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION

6. The Government has fully met its funding obligations in accordance with the plan of operations.



PROJECT PROGRESS (as at 31 December 1995)

Overall achievement

7. The project achieved an overall average of 93 percent of the planned prorated target (see Annex for achievement summary). More work than planned was undertaken on the construction rather than upgrading of roads. Construction activity (representing 39 percent of the total labour employed) significantly exceeded planned targets (185 and 151 percent of workday and physical targets, respectively) whereas upgrading activity was well below (66 percent and 55 percent, respectively). This was because of a continuation of work schemes started under the previous phase in which road construction, rather than upgrading, was the main emphasis. More construction work took place in the highlands than was originally planned (247 percent of the plan compared to 43 percent in the foothills), because the Government placed greater emphasis on expanding the road network there, where the communication infrastructure was more underdeveloped.
8. Low rates of achievement for culvert construction (30 percent) were due to a delay in the provision of materials, which included WFP non-food items. The low achievement of 40 percent for the footbridge component was due mainly to the provision of less foreign assistance (non-WFP) than originally planned.
9. The number of days worked was 85 percent of the plan. The actual average number of workers employed per day was 3,860 compared to the planned figure of 4,200. The plan was to rotate the workers after each work period of 20 days. However, because of need, workers tended to be re-employed. Interviews with workers indicated that they were re-employed after an average interval of 2.5 months. It is therefore estimated that the project has provided short-term employment to some 9,650 persons, which represents approximately 48,250 beneficiaries.
10. Under a provision for NGOs, two were engaged. Each employed 100 workers daily, and implemented road construction projects with technical assistance from CWS. Progress has been good and reporting timely.
11. Some 4,351 tons of maize meal, 482 of pulses and 158 of vegetable oil have been distributed, representing 85 percent, 85 percent and 92 percent of the prorated planned utilization. The total post-delivery loss was negligible (0.2 percent).



Key issues related to progress

12. **Project management.** The CWS staffing requirements for the road component have not been achieved. Four out of eight engineer posts were vacant as of December 1995, including that of Planning and Monitoring Engineer, unfilled since the start of this phase. This was the result of the discontinuation of externally supplied engineers and a difficulty in obtaining adequately qualified local staff. There was also a shortage of site supervisors, as only 182 out of a required 223 were available. This was due to an employment freeze under structural adjustment programme obligations. It affected the planning, monitoring, training and, to some extent, work quality. The footbridge subsection was adequately staffed.
13. **Food management.** Delays of up to three months in the food payment to workers posed a problem. These were mainly attributable to: a) difficulties with transportation because of slow payment by the Government and the payment of non-competitive rates; b) a delayed arrival of WFP resources; and c) priority given to emergency food. However, beneficiaries continued to participate despite these delays, as they were in need of food, and project implementation was not noticeably affected.
14. **Targeting.** Field monitoring confirmed that beneficiary targeting was effective. The majority of workers were landless, often the only income earner in the household, and had very limited alternative employment opportunities. The project appeared to be self-targeting as those with other means of income tended not to apply for this type of work. Women (many of them heads of household) were well represented: consisting of 70 percent of the workers and most of the supervisory staff. The women appeared to be more attracted than male workers by payment in kind.
15. **Income transfer.** The workers receive a combined wage of food and cash. The cash component is three maloti per day. The total value of food and cash is approximately nine maloti per five-hour work day, about 78 percent of the minimum daily wage equivalent. It was originally agreed that during implementation there would be a review of the Government's financial situation and, if feasible, the cash component would be revised to five maloti to comply with ILO standards. This was not possible, as expected external funding was not forthcoming. Therefore, the Government had to bear extra unforeseen costs and was not in a position to cover any increase.
16. **Quality improvement.** Work quality was to be improved through the provision of non-food items, the application of the group task system (whereby payment is made upon completion of tasks rather than on the basis of a 20-day work period) and intensified training of the site supervisory staff. Regrettably, the implementation of these measures was problematic. The group task system proved impractical and CWS continued to apply a daily individual task system but made efforts to improve its effectiveness through improved site supervisory staff training. Observations through field monitoring indicated satisfactory results. The provision of non-food items was untimely. Expected training requirements were not fully met (68 percent achievement: see Annex) due to understaffing of the training unit, together with the reduction and delay in expected WFP funds for training caused by budget limitations.
17. **Emergency.** The project provided an effective mechanism through which food for work was expanded for the 1995 emergency drought relief operation. The long-standing



nature of this project meant that its implementing framework was familiar and well institutionalized in the rural areas as an employment-generation approach. It was used to employ an additional 5,000 workers who mainly supplemented the maintenance activities of the roads component. Additional non-food items were provided and site supervisors recruited.

18. ***Non-food items.*** To improve effectiveness and work quality, a provision for 1,905,000 dollars of non-food items was planned through donations or monetization. Fifty-one percent has been provided (for vehicles, hand tools, machinery and equipment). Delays in donations and sequencing of the provisions caused problems. For instance, hand tools were delivered eight months after project commencement (borrowed tools enabled work to start). Moreover, 21 percent of machinery and equipment became available a year after commencement; the remainder was either awaiting arrival (24 percent) or yet to be donated (55 percent). Materials for the construction of culverts, other structures, and retaining walls were not yet funded.
19. ***Monitoring and reporting.*** The use of information for management purposes is not well established mainly because there was no Planning and Monitoring Engineer. Although expected soon, a JPO to assist in the improvement of the M&E system had not arrived during this reporting period.
20. ***Phasing in by the Government.*** Under the previous phase, all workers engaged in the CWS programmes were supported by WFP. However, under the current phase, the Government is supporting 20 percent of the work force. In addition, the cash component of the wage, which was previously financed from the monetization of bilateral food aid, is now entirely funded by the Government.

CONCLUSION

21. Overall, the project is progressing well, both in providing employment and in developing the rural road network. By emphasizing employment generation in the highlands, the most deprived areas have been targeted. The roads and the footbridges are well located; they connect isolated communities to vital services, markets and major roads, thereby contributing to the social and economic development of the more disadvantaged communities in the country. Successful targeting and the high rate of participation by women have ensured that the assistance is targeted to the most needy, providing them with vital income transfer and promoting food security. The project therefore appears to be achieving its objectives as well as fulfilling WFP's mission of reaching the hungry poor and providing appropriate assistance for their development.
22. The project provides a structure which can readily be expanded to meet emergency relief requirements, without significantly affecting the implementation of work undertaken.
23. Staffing shortages and the inability to attract and retain qualified staff continue to be a problem. The Government has, however, proposed a budget which will provide funding to support adequate staffing levels. The integration of the project into a national road planning strategy will result in a larger pool of technical staff being available.



24. Delays in the transportation of commodities to the work sites will be addressed as the availability of vehicles to CWS increases (through WFP non-food-item contributions) and arrangements are put into place to speed up payments to transporters.
25. The implementation of the project should be reviewed in the context of the Government's new roads programme rationalization arrangements in order to strengthen its effectiveness.



ANNEX

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS (July 1994 - December 1995)

	Total target - plan of operations			Prorated target as at 31.12.95			Actual achievements as at 31.12.95			Achievement as % of prorated targets	
	Norm wd/km	wd	km	Norm wd/km	wd	km	wd/km	wd	km	wd	km
PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE OF ACTIVITIES AND RELATED WORKDAYS											
Upgrading											
Lowlands	3 000	456 000	152	3 000	136 800	46	4 152	58 209	14.0	43	31
Foothills	4 000	576 000	144	4 000	172 800	43	5 161	188 866	36.6	109	85
Mountain	5 900	790 600	134	5 900	237 180	40	5 554	113 803	20.5	48	51
Subtotal		1 822	430		546 780	129		360 878	71.1	66	55
Construction											
Foothills	5 600	334 320	60	5 600	100 296	18	8 579	65 653	7.7	65	43
Mountain	9 600	648 000	68	9 600	194 400	20	9 555	478 468	50.1	246	247
Subtotal		982 320	127		294 696	38		544 121	57.7	185	151
Culverts											
		270 000			81 000			24 480		30	
Routine maintenance¹											
Upgraded roads						36			36.8		102
Constructed roads						11			22.3		212
Previously constructed/upgraded						1 249.5			1 384.3		111
Subtotal	170	885 881	5 211	205	265 764	1 296	283	407 860	1 443.4	153	111
Periodic maintenance¹											
	1 500	1 116	744	1 500	334 997	223		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Footbridges²											
	4 800	360 000	75	4 800	108 000	23	5 783	52 050	9.0	48	40
Average achievement											
											95
Total (workdays)		5 437			1 631			1 389		85	

¹ Maintenance of existing roads. The figures are cumulative. Since maintenance works are carried out more than once on the same location during the lifetime of a project, the figure for routine maintenance corresponds to more than 200 percent of the entire rural roads network.

² The unit for this norm is wd/bridge while the indicator (km) figure under this item is the number of bridges to be built.
wd: workdays, km: kilometres



SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS (July 1994 - December 1995)
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	Total target - plan of operations		Planned target as at 31.12.95		Actual achievement as at 31.12.95		Achievement as percentage of planned targets	
	Days	No. of trainees	Days	No. of trainees	Days	No. of trainees	Days	No. of trainees
TRAINING								
Foremen	1 950	195	1 000	100	772	67	77	67
Technicians	1 000	40	275	17	48	16	17	94
Technical assistants	1 750	110	587	42	360	24	61	57
Store assistants	300	45	187	22	0	0	0	0
Plant operators	300	30	75	7	120	10	160	143
Village Development Council members	625	50	0	0	120	10		
Total	5 925	470	2 124	188	1 420	127	67	68

