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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINES

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COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE— LESOTHO

ABSTRACT

Lesotho is both a least developed and low-income, food-deficit country (LDC/LIFDC). The FAO Aggregate Household Food Security Index (AHFSI) for 1993–95 was 74. 1. The under-five mortality rate is 139 per 1,000 (Human Development Report, 1998). Lesotho's population is estimated at 2.1 million (1996), its per capita gross national product (GNP) is 770 dollars, and the gross domestic product (GDP) is 354 dollars (Human Development Report, 1998). The UNDP Human Development Index (1998) ranks Lesotho 134th out of 174 countries.

Lesotho depends heavily on its neighbour, South Africa, in terms of remittances from migrant miners, and import and export of food, goods and services. Poverty is much more pronounced in rural areas, where over 80 percent of households live. In the last 20 years, per capita cereal production has declined by seven percent to 185 kg, resulting in rising cereal imports (Human Development Report, 1998). Huge differences are found in access to food between households with, and those without, miners' remittances. Chronic undernourishment among children under five and primary schoolchildren is high, particularly in the mountains. In these areas, nearly 75 percent of residents over 16 years of age have either no formal education or an incomplete primary education.

WFP's strategy for the period 1999 to 2001 will involve food assistance of 2.1 million dollars a year. The strategy focuses primarily on the poorest rural mountain areas, in support of primary education (80 percent) and, to a lesser extent (20 percent), in support of early childhood development, rehabilitation of herd boys and vocational training for the rural poor, particularly women. Assistance to the food-for-work project for the construction and maintenance of rural access roads project will be terminated.

In addition, WFP will provide support through its Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit to the national Disaster Management Authority. WFP will continue to collaborate with other United Nations organizations, international donors and NGOs already active in the targeted areas. This Country Strategy Outline (CSO) has been shared with UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO and major resident donors (Ireland, United Kingdom, United States of America, European Union, the Peace Corps, the Red Cross, the Lesotho Council of NGOs, etc.). The Country Strategy Note (CSN) for Lesotho has not yet been prepared, nor have consultations started for the preparation of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The recent (September 1998) crisis in Lesotho resulted in the large-scale destruction of government infrastructure and private businesses. Emergency assistance was being provided at the time of preparation of this document. However, it is not expected that the medium-term strategy, discussed and endorsed by the Government, United Nations agencies and donors, will have to be changed as a result of the recent events.

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 of 1996, 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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FOOD INSECURITY AND THE HUNGRY POOR

Change in patterns and nature of food security

- ¹1. Lesotho is a small, land-locked, low-income and food-deficit country (LIFDC) belonging to the group of the world's least developed countries (LDCs). The country has a land area of 30,355 square kilometres, much of which is rugged mountainous terrain, with its lowest point 1,390 metres above sea level (Senqu River Valley). Lesotho can be divided into four distinct geographic and economic regions, namely: the lowlands, the foothills, the Senqu River Valley and the mountains.
2. Lesotho has a population of approximately 2.1 million, of whom 49 percent are under 18 years of age. An estimated 82 percent of the population live in rural areas and 53.9 percent of the rural population live below the poverty line (World Bank, 1998). The average population density is 68 people per square kilometre, whereas the density on the country's nine percent of arable land is 760 people per square kilometre. Sixty percent of the land is grassland and pasture. Lesotho depends heavily on its neighbour South Africa, in respect of remittances from migrant labourers working in South Africa, and the import and export of food, goods and services. Lesotho is part of the rand zone and is a member of the Southern Africa Customs Union. South Africa collects Lesotho's trade taxes, which accounted for half of Lesotho's budget revenue (excluding grants) between 1988 and 1993. The linked currencies and the relatively open border mean that the prices of goods in Lesotho are determined in South Africa. Lesotho's economy is therefore highly vulnerable to changes in South Africa.
3. An estimated 40 percent of the Basotho (Lesotho national) male labour force are employed in South Africa, but this is decreasing as a result of South Africa's preferential employment policy for South African nationals. Nevertheless, remittances still account for one third of the GNP. From 1988 to 1992, GDP and GNP have decreased, mainly because of two years of drought (1991 and 1992) and declining miners' remittances. Economic growth resumed after 1992 and has continued to improve. The Government's commitment to macro-economic stability improved the climate for investors, both foreign and local. Exports made a strong recovery and are currently increasing by more than 15 percent a year, driving the improvement in the current account balance. Foreign reserves increased from 41 million dollars¹ in 1989 to 378 million dollars in 1995. Overseas development assistance averaged 131 million dollars between 1992 and 1995.
4. Lesotho's income distribution is one of the most severely skewed in the world. The top 10 percent of households receive 44 percent of national income, while the bottom 40 percent of the population receive only eight percent. Poverty is disproportionately high in the nearly 40 percent of Basotho households that rely on farming, herding, informal business or casual labour for most of their income, as well as among the roughly seven percent of people living in households headed by unemployed adults. In rural areas, where over 80 percent of households live, an estimated 54 percent of households are poor; of these, 24 percent are extremely poor. Poverty is also much more pronounced in the rural areas of the mountains and Senqu River Valley than in the

¹All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated. One United States dollar equalled 5.7 Maloti in November 1998.



lowlands and foothills. Rural households are somewhat larger than urban households, and have twice as many adults over 60 years of age. In many poor households, too few members of working age have to support too many young and elderly dependents.

5. The scarcity of arable land has led to over-cultivation of the available land and contributed to its degradation. Population pressure and land constraints have led to cultivation of marginal areas and to overgrazing, contributing to the depletion of already fragile soils. As the population increases (at an annual rate of about 2.6 percent) many become landless. Over 30 percent of the Basotho families are now landless, and most of those with land have only one field, averaging about one hectare in size and producing only a small annual harvest. A 1994 household survey *Poverty in Lesotho 1994, a Mapping Exercise* found that between 10 and 19 percent of households in the northern lowlands and foothills grew enough crops to feed themselves at the internationally accepted levels. This percentage was even lower in other parts of the country, especially in the mountains.

Food security

6. Approximately 13 percent of the land in Lesotho is cultivated or potentially arable, and 60 to 80 percent is pasture. An estimated 85 percent of rural households depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Subsistence farming dominates—mainly animal husbandry and the cultivation of maize. Other crops include wheat, sorghum, beans and sunflower oil. Droughts are a perennial feature in Lesotho, recurring every three years on average. The southern districts of Qacha's Nek, Quthing, Mohale's Hoek and Mafeteng are those usually most affected. In 1994, a severe drought badly affected the 1995 harvest, whose production was estimated at half its projected value. (*Africa Review*, 1997).
7. While agriculture provides employment for about 50 percent of the domestic labour force, its share of GDP fell from 50 percent in 1973 to 10 percent in 1996. Crop yields and livestock numbers are reported to have fallen since the seventies, and even further in the last decade because of drought, soil erosion and poor farming practices. In normal years Lesotho relies on imports for about 25 percent of its basic food needs. In some years over the last decade Lesotho has had to rely on considerably higher quantities of imported cereals. (*Economic Intelligence Unit*, 1998-99).
8. The importance of the light manufacturing, building, construction and small services sectors has increased with declining per capita food production. These sectors represent an increasing share of economic activity and employment (more than 50 percent of GNP in 1995). The country has begun to invest in labour-intensive, high-value agricultural products, small-scale enterprises, and export-oriented manufacturing. There has been a corresponding decline in the contribution to GNP of the agricultural and mining sectors.
9. Livestock continue to play a strong socio-cultural role in Lesotho. Sales of livestock, wool, mohair, milk and meat are important contributions to the household economy, and a large number of animals are viewed as a desirable means of accruing savings. Livestock production is normally less subject to the effects of drought and is therefore a more stable source of income. However, the particularly heavy droughts in the early nineties and consequent higher slaughter rates have led to reduced herd sizes in most districts.



Health and nutrition

10. The infant mortality rate in 1993 was estimated to be 85 per thousand live births; it is now 96 per thousand and the under-five mortality rate is 139 per thousand (Human Development Report, 1998). The main causes of infant and child mortality and morbidity are diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and, most important, malnutrition. The current maternal mortality rate is estimated at 610 per 100,000 live births (Human Development Report, 1998). In 1993 life expectancy at birth was 56.7 years for women, and 54.8 for men, with a considerable variation across ecological zones and districts, ranging from 58.5 years (urban) to 55 years (rural), with the lowest (50.7 years) in the mountains (UNDP, 1995). Now the average national life expectancy rate is 59.5 years for women and 57 for men (Human Development Report, 1998), indicating a small increase since 1993. There has been a steady increase in full immunization coverage from a level of 49 percent in 1984 to 71 percent in 1993. The exception is tuberculosis which is one of the main causes of death and disability among adults in Lesotho. Besides older men, this disease now affects more and more young and middle-aged men and women.
11. Chronic undernutrition is the most prevalent form of malnutrition in the country. A national survey (1992) showed that 33 percent of the under-five age group were stunted (height-for-age), with the highest prevalence in the mountains, and that 2.4 percent were acutely malnourished (weight-for-height), reflecting the emerging effects of the prevailing drought situation at that time. For all measures of malnutrition, boys under five fare substantially worse than girls in the same age group. This is explained by the common rural practice of sending even very young boys, from three to five years old, with older brothers to tend the family livestock. As a result, these boys eat only sporadic or inadequate meals.
12. HIV/AIDS progresses at an alarming rate, from 938 cases in 1995 to 4,075 reported cases in 1997; of these, 53.5 percent were females and eight percent children. Prevalence is highest in the 20-39 age group, which accounts for 65 percent of all new cases reported since 1990. In its projections, the Government estimates 40,000 AIDS cases by the year 2001, if the current trend continues.

Education

13. In 1995, there were 1,240 primary schools in Lesotho with 378,011 pupils, of whom 53 percent were girls. Twenty-eight percent of the boys and 24 percent of the girls were 14 and over. There were 7,923 teachers (79 percent female), giving a teacher/pupil ratio of 48 to 1. Primary schools, particularly those in the mountains, suffer from acute problems. The average drop-out rate for classes 1 to 7 is 11.2 for boys and 7.2 for girls. In class 1, it is 13.6 percent and 10.6 percent respectively (1996). The drop-out rate is highest in the mountains. School fees are a major cause of drop-outs. Boys are more likely to drop out because they are required for herding or they go to initiation school (traditional tribal school) at puberty. Boys are also expected to find work as unskilled labourers in South Africa. Repetition rates are high, sometimes as much as 25 percent. Absenteeism, especially in the mountain districts, is increased by bad weather during the winter. The Government is working towards free but compulsory schooling, and is raising the primary school limit from 7 to 10 grades. The feasibility and affordability of these measures are under study.



14. The Education Sector Development Plan aims to improve the quality and management of primary education and streamline the syllabus to emphasize grass-roots skills. This is to be achieved by a policy of "Education with Production" to ensure a balance of academic and practical skills. The main emphasis of this policy is on the teaching of agriculture and the achievement of self-reliance in food production.
15. Education receives 12.2 percent of the Government's recurrent budget allocation (Human Development Report, 1998). Approximately a quarter of the education budget (1996/97) was allocated to the National University of Lesotho. As elsewhere, there is a negative correlation between educational attainment and poverty. According to a 1993 survey, about 43 and 46 percent of the heads of poor and ultra-poor households respectively, had no formal schooling, compared with less than 23 percent of the heads of non-poor households. A similar pattern is apparent in the different geographical areas. Nearly 75 percent of mountain zone residents aged over 16 years have either no formal education or incomplete primary education. Lesotho's educational system is sustained to an unusual extent by a network of private schools. Approximately 95 percent of primary schools are owned by churches, although the Government, which also sets the basic standards, pays most of the teachers.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES

16. The current Sixth National Development Plan (April 1996-March 1999) has the overall objective of "poverty reduction in the context of good governance" and also addresses the problem through civil-service reform and decentralization, employment creation, and provision of social services such as primary health care and education to the majority of the population by the end of the current period. The Plan anticipates that these goals will be attained through the adoption of eight key strategies, namely: 1) sound macro-economic management; 2) commercialization, privatization and private-sector development; 3) regional economic integration; 4) improvement in the effectiveness of the civil service; 5) expanded development of the semi-formal and informal sectors; 6) support of labour-intensive community-development projects; 7) containment and reduction of environmental degradation; and 8) expansion of the agricultural sector for export.^{1,2}
17. A review of existing programmes on poverty revealed the following: a) despite the high priority given to poverty reduction, current activities are dispersed, leading to reduced impact and effectiveness; b) although provision of infrastructure and emergency relief has been successful in some areas, efforts to reach the mountains and other remote areas have not been as successful; c) employment-generating programmes have provided only temporary support to the poor, very few having had a long-term sustainable impact; d) in many ministries, the difference between a poverty-focused programme and other general development activities is not well understood.
18. Priorities of the poverty reduction programme are to, *inter alia*: a) focus on those regions where the poor are concentrated, namely the mountains and the Senqu Valley particularly

¹ Document presented by the Government of Lesotho to the 8' Round Table Conference (1997) on 'Poverty Reduction Within the Context of Good Governance'.

² "Pathway out of Poverty - An Action Plan for Lesotho (1996)" prepared by the Government of Lesotho in collaboration with the Lesotho Council of NGOs, the World Bank, USAID and the European Union Delegation.



within the districts of Mofales Hoek, Quthing, Qacha's Nek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka; b) strengthen the capacity of local institutional stakeholders who represent, or come in contact with, the poor; c) enhance service delivery through public service reform, decentralization and privatization; d) extend primary health care and primary education, vocational and non-formal education through, among others, construction of additional classrooms, and use of existing primary and secondary schools for evening classes for drop-outs, herd boys, and unemployed miners; e) strengthen employment and income opportunities for the poor; and f) expand public assistance programmes, notably for the destitute, the aged and the disabled.

19. In the Action Plan for Lesotho (1996) a gender bias favouring girls over boys has been noted, regardless of the gender and other characteristics of the head of the household. This is evidenced by statistics on malnutrition and education, particularly in the mountains where nearly 30 percent more girls than boys attend school. However, a specific gender policy to address this imbalance has not yet been developed.
20. In 1992, the Lesotho Highlands Revenue Fund (LHRF) was established to manage half of the annual earnings of approximately 140 million maloti (25 million dollars) for the transfer of water to South Africa. The LHRF was suspended in 1997 because of mismanagement, but since then the Government has reformulated the Fund, in cooperation with communities, and will now finance projects aimed at achieving national objectives such as: a) poverty reduction, with particular emphasis on poverty-stricken areas; b) local initiatives for employment creation and sustainable income generation; and c) improving and protecting the environment and the natural resource base of the country. The Fund will support community-based projects, where the community will play a leading role in project identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring, operation and maintenance.
21. Lesotho is prone to a variety of natural adversities such as drought, heavy snowfall, hailstorms, tornadoes and localized floods. In 1997, the Government of Lesotho established the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) to execute Disaster Management Plans (DMP) which are, as much as possible, to be integrated with national development plans. The DMPs are supported by a Disaster Management Manual detailing responsibilities and procedures. The main thrust of the current Plan is to reduce Lesotho's vulnerability to disasters, increase its resilience to the effects of disasters, and deal with disasters more effectively and expeditiously than in the past. The Ministry of Finance will establish a fund, known as the Disaster Management Fund. A national strategic food reserve, currently 7,000 tons of grain, is held inviolate for the Government by large local milling firms.
22. Despite agriculture's declining share of GDP and steadily increasing grain imports, the Government considers the agricultural sector to be the backbone of the country's economy because 80 percent of the population are classified as rural and are engaged in agricultural activities in one form or another. In view of this, the Government intends to launch a Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) and merge it with the Agricultural Sector Investments Programme which is committed to the policy objectives of poverty alleviation, ensuring household food security and creating employment. The main components of the SPFS are water control, intensification of agricultural production, diversification of farming systems and analysis of constraints in food security; FAO is involved in the preparation and implementation of the SPFS.

Food aid

23. Lesotho receives food aid in two forms: direct and indirect. The former is given directly to beneficiaries, while the latter is monetized or used in other ways that reach beneficiaries



indirectly. Between 1993 and 1997, direct food aid represented 92 percent of all food aid delivered, i.e., 113,210 tons, including 76,481 tons supplied by WFP. Of this amount, 50 percent was for drought relief and included some 20,000 tons supplied by WFP. Nevertheless, the quantities of food aid reaching Lesotho are relatively small compared to the amount commercially imported every year. In 1997, food aid represented 5.25 percent of commercial imports (Lesotho National Early Warning Unit). The food aid consisted mainly of maize and maize products (86 percent).

ASSESSMENT OF WFP'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE

Types of food assistance

24. Since WFP began its intervention in Lesotho in 1964, it has delivered food aid worth 222 million dollars to 26 development projects and six emergency operations. During the current phase of the school feeding project, WFP provided food aid to an estimated 192,000 pupils in 1995, a figure which progressively decreased to 173,000 in 1996 and 135,000 in 1997. WFP has also reached 48,000 beneficiaries in the current phase of the road construction project (mid-1994 to mid-1998); there has been no noticeable change in the number of workers on the project. The activities of WFP are centred on the alleviation of poverty and malnutrition, development of human resources, rural development and assistance to drought victims. The nature of the programme has not changed drastically over time, with support mainly for primary education and community road infrastructure. WFP's current programme comprises the two development projects described below.

Lesotho 352—"Construction, upgrading and maintenance of rural access roads"

25. WFP assistance to rural infrastructure goes back to 1966 under food-for-work schemes to support soil and water conservation activities, and to construct and improve rural roads. The objective of the ongoing project (352.08) is to support the Government's rural infrastructure programme aimed at improving the living conditions of remote and isolated rural communities in the foothills and mountains. Food aid acts as an incentive for the rural population to participate in the project. Most of the road workers in the project are from poor rural communities, and are unskilled, unemployed or under-employed; 60 percent are women. The labour force is selected by the village development councils on the basis of need and willingness to perform the work. The participants receive a monthly family food ration from WFP and cash from the Government. Workers are rotated every month, and come back to work after two and a half to three months, to allow others to participate in the project. Some 12,000 workers per year are provided with short-term employment and benefit from family food rations and cash, reaching about 60,000 of the rural population. In the process, access to markets, facilities and services is improved. Non-food items (NFI), including equipment and hand-tools, have been provided, and donors have made various hardware and steel construction materials available through WFP.

26. The current phase of the project started in mid-1994 for a period of five years at a total cost to WFP of approximately 10.3 million dollars, to provide food for work to the extent of 18,903 tons of commodities, for the construction (128 km), upgrading (430 km) and maintenance (2,500 km) of rural access roads. The project is implemented by the Civil Works Section (CWS) of the Ministry of Works and receives technical assistance from Skill Share Africa (UK) and the Irish Government, which also provides financial assistance



for the construction of footbridges. Under the current phase of the project, the majority of the resources (95 percent) are used for road activities implemented by the CWS. The balance is used for community self-help activities and for the construction of village access roads and river fords or crossings.

Monitoring and evaluation

27. When the previous phase of the project was evaluated, ILO recommended the preparation of an annual work plan for each type of activity by district, and that the progress of each main activity be broken down by the amount of activities which eventually led to the completion of one kilometre of road, such as retaining walls and rock/gravel collection. Due to the lack of field staff and communications, reports from the numerous work sites were often late, thereby delaying the compilation of the implementation progress reports. Qualitative information needs to be collected by WFP during field visits to the project sites. In December 1997, CWS collected data on NFI throughout all project sites in the country. However, the report on the findings still has to be finalized. This indicates problems in monitoring which should be minimized by thorough training at all levels of monitoring and reporting.
28. A qualitative reporting and monitoring system was introduced within CWS with the aid of a WFP Junior Professional Officer who was posted to the country office in order to develop and review the monitoring and reporting system and identify problems and solutions within the existing system, so that an effective management system could be devised. Quality improvement within project Lesotho352.08 is planned through the provision of NFI, intensified training of site supervisory staff, and the introduction of a group task system (where payment is made on the basis of the completed task as against the number of days worked in a given period), and intensified training of site supervisory staff. Although 87 percent of NFI have been provided, the implementation of other measures proved to be difficult. The group task system proved to be impractical even though it gave positive results at the pilot stage. Instead, CWS continues to apply a daily individual task system where feasible and is making efforts to improve the effectiveness of the group system through training of supervisory staff. Detailed data on progress is collected at district level but not effectively utilized at the head office which lacks a planning and monitoring engineer. Privatization and decentralization of food management are long-term government goals, to go hand in hand with a general empowerment of the regional district structure. In the short term, it is intended to merge all government sectors involved in public works and road construction into one single department within the Ministry of Works.

Conclusions on performance

29. The food-for-work project has improved food security for targeted beneficiaries during specified, though limited, periods of time; provided better access to services and markets; and contributed to the long-term development of the country. In addition to short-term relief, the project has contributed to structural improvements. There is, however, room for improvement at the implementation level of CWS, particularly at the project sites where a shortage of technical assistants and foremen affects correct reporting of performance and progress of activities. Provision of usable and adequate hand-tools and equipment is not always satisfactory, although CWS still has funds available from the monetization of wheat during the previous phase of the project. Delivery of food commodities from the main stores to district sub-stores, and to the project sites, is often delayed due to the temporary



unavailability of project vehicles or because local contractors are reluctant to move into difficult terrain for the relatively low transport rate set by the Government.

30. A recent WFP study *Benefits and beneficiaries* analysis survey found that the selected project sites were well targeted at poor communities in remote areas of the country. The participating household heads, being poor with little crop production and very low cash income, benefit greatly from the project. Most participants, 98 percent of the people interviewed, were content with the combination of food and cash. However, the study mentions that there were frequent delays in receiving payments. The criteria for the selection of workers were considered to be valid, but there was a need to ensure that proper selection procedures are followed as some irregularities were reported.

L esotho 3853—"Food assistance to primary schools"

31. WFP has supported the education sector since 1965. In 1989 the Government introduced the policy of "education with production" the aim of which is to strengthen the teaching of practical skills, particularly in agriculture, which is important for the numerous children who never go beyond a few years of primary schooling. This started with the phasing out of food assistance in conjunction with the implementation of the School Self Reliance Project (SSRP) and enables schools and communities to provide school meals from their own resources, once WFP assistance is withdrawn. The current phase of the school feeding project started in 1995 for five years at a total cost to WFP of 13.3 million dollars. At the beginning of this phase some 183,000 pupils in 865 schools were receiving 7,085 tons of WFP food aid for the preparation of one school meal a day. Every year approximately 60 schools in the foothills are prepared for self-reliance with the assistance of an income-generating package and training by the Ministry of Education, and garden tools and fencing material from WFP. At the end of 1997, the number of schools receiving food assistance had been reduced to 740 with some 136,000 pupils receiving WFP food aid.
32. The immediate objectives of the project are to provide nutritional support, improve attention span by alleviating short-term hunger, stabilize attendance and reduce drop-out rates at assisted schools mainly in the mountains. Drop-out rates are highest (11.2 percent) for boys who are herders in mountainous areas. A considerable number of children arrive at school without having eaten breakfast, suffering from short-term hunger and its detrimental effects on attention span. Absenteeism is generally low (5 percent), and is due to bad weather and illness or work at home. Not all schools are able to provide a cooked meal every day because of bad weather or lack of fuel.
33. During the preparatory year before food assistance is phased out, Peace Corps Volunteers (USA) assist the schools by providing technical assistance and training. During the previous phase of the project, the SSRP was implemented in the lowlands and WFP food assistance withdrawn. During the current phase, some 123 schools in the foothills had been phased out by the end of 1997. The school feeding programme receives technical assistance from Save the Children Fund (UK) for the construction of school kitchens, and fuel-saving stoves and food stores are purchased with funds from United Nations Capital Development Fund. The Government of Ireland is involved in the construction of additional classrooms in mountainous areas.

Monitoring and evaluation

34. The education project has suffered from an insufficient feedback from the schools. This has recently been improved with the introduction of a newly designed waybill for food deliveries to schools, where each school indicates the school roll (by gender) and its current



food stocks. This will enable the Food Management Unit (FMU), established in the Prime Minister's office and which has responsibility for food deliveries, to better calculate the next food allocation and prevent the delivery of too much or too little food. Monitoring forms, used by project staff and WFP, need to be synchronized and further improved to obtain more qualitative data. The role of parents' and teachers' associations in the monitoring and evaluation process needs to be strengthened.

35. The reporting capacity of the FMU still needs improvement. Communication is slow between that office and its district main and sub-stores, which delays information on food arrivals, inter-store transfers and distributions, required for the preparation of Quarterly Progress Reports and for planning purposes. FMU has received technical training in the past from Save the Children Fund (UK), but the present reporting system is outdated and incompatible with current requirements.

Conclusions on performance

36. A recent review by a team of WFP and Ministry of Education staff identified some technical shortcomings in the feeding and self-reliance management and monitoring. These include the insufficient cooking capacity of some school kitchens, lack of fuel, the use of incorrect measures, and the timing of the meal. Corrective measures in this field will help to ensure that children receive the intended WFP rations. Recently, the Government of Norway donated measuring buckets to all schools receiving food aid, thus eliminating the problem of the ration scale.
37. Problems that occurred with the school gardens were insufficient water supply, deliberate vandalism of produce, fences and water pipes, and inadequate or late preparation of seedbeds. Income-generating activities were sometimes ill-chosen or ill-advised, resulting in problems with marketing of produce. Practical agricultural teaching in primary schools was not always up to standard. There was not enough involvement of the community in general, particularly at the beginning, when the purpose of the self-reliance project was explained and introduced. A lack of communication between teachers, parents and communities was evident in many schools. It was generally felt that much more advice and training was required from the Ministry of Education after the preparatory year.
38. Notwithstanding these problems, the project has achieved its main goals of encouraging the regular attendance of children at primary schools, specifically in the mountains, improving the diets of the majority of participating children and providing an important income transfer to the parents. This was confirmed by a mid-term review of the project with the participation of UNESCO and WHO in October 1997.

Emergency food assistance to drought-affected people in Lesotho

39. WFP emergency food aid to Lesotho since 1964 totals 17.4 million dollars, or 7.8 percent of the total food aid delivered to the country to date, it has been aimed solely at drought victims. During the nineties WFP provided 12.2 million dollars' worth of emergency food aid under two emergency operations. WFP's latest intervention in this sector was in 1995 under emergency operation 5640.00, for a total value of 4.8 million dollars. This operation commenced distribution in September 1995 and ended in June 1996.
40. The 1995 WFP food, consisting of maize meal, sorghum and pulses, was pooled together with bilateral and government food donations and distributed under one operation to some 600,000 beneficiaries and 23,000 malnourished children. Distribution was implemented by



NGOs and various government bodies, and monitoring was carried out jointly by WFP and government food monitors. Each NGO was assigned one or more districts, depending on their familiarity with the districts. NFI such as hand-tools and construction equipment were provided, and Ireland, the Netherlands and the United States of America provided material worth 262,600 dollars for the food-for-work component of the operation. An extension was approved for this component until the end of 1996.

41. In January 1998, WFP Lesotho commissioned a consultant to undertake a crop assessment study to look at the status of the crops in the fields, household stock levels and their coping mechanisms. The study was carried out in collaboration with the government departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and the DMA. The outcome of the study clearly shows the effects of E1 Niño on crop production and livestock, and indicates drought coping mechanisms in rural areas are insufficient. The study helped WFP to produce a contingency plan for Lesotho.
42. Although Lesotho was affected by drought during the 1997/98 crop year, the Government has not officially declared an emergency and has not requested donor assistance. The Government has allocated 11 million dollars for the implementation of a drought relief plan, which is aimed at drought rehabilitation and mitigation, mainly in the agricultural and health sectors. The duration of the activities varies from one to three years. Part of the funds will be used to purchase fortified food for malnourished children and will be channelled through hospitals.



FUTURE ORIENTATION OF WFP ASSISTANCE

Intended beneficiaries and priority sectors for assistance

43. WFP assistance to date has supported the Government's efforts to reduce poverty and specifically to improve education in rural areas; provide access to markets and services to the rural population; increase the food security of poor households in rural areas; and mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas of the country. Despite a number of weaknesses, the results achieved so far confirm that the type and level of WFP assistance were fully justified and corresponds with WFP's mandate and guiding principles. A recent consultant report has confirmed the relevance of food aid in the construction of community roads from the point of view of reducing unemployment, improving food security and meeting a concrete community need. The scheme attracts the unemployed and under-employed men and women in rural areas. although the wages are below the minimum level set by the Ministry of Employment: 21 maloti for an eight-hour day. The Government of Lesotho provides a cash component of 3 maloti daily, while the value of the food component is 5.34 maloti for a total of 8.34 maloti as compensation for a five hour day (see document CFA:36/SCP:11/4-A(ODS) Add. 1, paragraph 16). Prorated to an eight-hour day, the shortfall is 7.65 maloti.
44. However, since WFP now has fewer resources available than in the past, its activities in Lesotho must be refocused, and the road construction project will be phased out. Now that food aid projects have built a large network of feeder roads, food can be replaced by other sources of finance. The Government of Lesotho will thus be in a position to assume full responsibility in this area after 30 years of development cooperation. Already the Government of Lesotho is in contact with other donors for the continued funding of road rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. Both the World Bank and the European Union (EU) are, or will be, providing financial assistance to this sector. The Government of Lesotho is also implementing various labour-intensive and community-based projects with the Highlands Development Fund which is financed from the sale of water to South Africa. Both the Government of Lesotho and donors prefer that participants in these types of activities are fully compensated in cash.

Support to basic education

45. The Government of Lesotho intends to increase primary school education from 7 to 10 grades and make primary schooling both free and compulsory. This will place new demands on school feeding programmes. WFP will allocate 80 percent of its Lesotho portfolio to support primary school education, with emphasis on food assistance to schools in the mountains, especially in remote areas. The more distant schools with minimal facilities will clearly have increasing problems because of the poverty in such localities, and the scarcity of land and markets for produce.
46. This will allow WFP, in coordination with other donors, to target its project work to the poorest rural areas on a priority basis, according to one or more of the following criteria: high rates of malnutrition, low school enrolment levels and high drop-out rates, and marked food insecurity. The objective is to support the Government in the development of human resources in areas of considerable potential economic growth.
47. Save the Children Fund (UK) are planning to promote, with other NGOs and UNICEF, a programme for a national network of schools targeted to physically or mentally handicapped children. WFP already cooperates with UNICEF in this field at the primary



education level, and will extend its area of intervention to secondary and vocational schools for the handicapped.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

48. According to the latest (1995) statistics, there are approximately 1,440 registered ECD centres throughout the country with a total of 33,100 children and 1,800 teachers. Only 13 percent of the two to six-year olds are enrolled in ECDs, with the lowest enrolment rates in the mountains. Many parents of children enrolled in centres keep their children at home when they can no longer afford the feeding fee. Food assistance to ECD centres is a global WFP programme priority. It will not only attract more children but also provide them with a balanced meal. At the same time, it will allow mothers to work in the fields, find employment or participate in income-generating activities. The Government of Lesotho has confirmed its intention of increasing its support to the continuing development of community-based ECDs. The Lesotho Council of Women, which is a founding member of the pre-school system, will be a major partner in this venture.
49. UNICEF has been involved since 1995 in funding training workshops for ECD staff to improve teaching skills. Several NGOs assist in the provision of manpower for training the ECD staff. These include Lesotho Pre-school Day-care Association, Lesotho Early Childhood Teachers' Association and World Vision. WFP plans to allocate initially 10 percent of the resources earmarked for the programming period to the ECD component. In coordination with the ECD unit of the Ministry of Education, centres will be selected in the mountains and the Senqu Valley.

Food for capacity-building

50. The remaining 10 percent of WFP's portfolio will be allocated to capacity-building projects including the rehabilitation of herd boys and vocational training for the rural poor, particularly women. These two important areas have the full support of the Government of Lesotho.

Herd boys

51. At a very early age, many rural boys herd the family cattle or are hired for this purpose by others. These boys have either dropped out of school after the first or second class, or have never enrolled. Their only future and expectation is that of becoming an unskilled labourer in South Africa, particularly in the mines. With the continuing decline of job opportunities in the mining sector, the chances of these herd boys becoming employed are slim. Voluntary organizations, such as churches, are trying short-term vocational training and evening classes for drop-outs, but there is not enough incentive for the boys to continue. Food aid will provide an incentive to attract and retain the herd boys. UNICEF is conducting a study on the educational needs of herd boys and the Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a proposal for the necessary infrastructure.

Vocational training for the rural poor

52. The majority of people interviewed in connection with the 1998 evaluation of the community road construction and maintenance project indicated sewing and knitting as the preferred alternative employment. Food aid as a component of vocational training, and during the launching phase of small-scale manufacturing of knitwear and other manufactured products, is currently under review. The manufacture of soap and candles is



another potential activity for food aid support. This would provide much needed relief for rural households headed by women, as recommended by ILO.³ It would also enhance a value-adding activity in the textile sector, which is currently underdeveloped. Small-scale manufacturing in the rural areas is on the increase, and 70 percent of the currently 450 members of the Lesotho Manufacturers Association are women.

53. The Government of Lesotho agrees with the initiative of WFP to provide food aid in support of vocational training. The WFP contribution should be directed at community-based groups and include equipment for start-up activities, should cash be available. The Lesotho National Council of Women is running three vocational centres in Pitseng (Leribe), Morijan and Maseru East, which could be used as models.

Support to Disaster Management

54. WFP Lesotho is now preparing to set up a Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit with the aim of supporting WFP's overall programming as well as the activities of the Disaster Management Authority (DMA). The unit will work with relevant government departments, partner agencies and NGOs in order to avoid costly duplication of efforts.
55. The results of the VAM analysis will assist in planning mitigation activities and contingency planning for emergency response. These activities will receive WFP support and benefit from the Disaster Management Fund. During times of drought-induced food shortages, the DMA may distribute fortified food to malnourished children through health centres and hospitals, food to the most vulnerable households, and undertake food-for-work activities in the most affected areas.

Collaboration and partnerships

56. To date, there is no Country Strategy Note (CSN) for Lesotho, nor have consultations started for the preparation of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework. In the above-mentioned activities, WFP will collaborate with other United Nations organizations and NGOs already active in the targeted areas. The present CSO has been shared with UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, and major resident donors (Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, EU, the Peace Corps, the Red Cross, Lesotho Council of NGOs, etc.). A framework of periodic consultations already exists between the DMA, ministries, United Nations agencies and NGOs involved in disaster mitigation and preparation. The consultative process will also be intensified to arrive at a better coordination of international development cooperation with the Government of Lesotho. In view of the proposed strong future concentration of WFP resources in the education sector, the Ministry of Planning has designated the Ministry of Education as the main implementing partner of WFP projects.

Programme approach

57. The present CSO maps out the overall strategy for WFP assistance to Lesotho for the next three years. This time frame has been chosen since the Government of Lesotho's current tri-annual development plan ends in March 1999, and the future orientation of the Government's development policy is not yet decided. However, rehabilitating and reconstructing the country, following the civil unrest in September 1998, will receive priority. In the event that the Government gives a new direction to development planning in Lesotho which would seriously affect WFP's input, the CSO may have to be withdrawn and resubmitted to a future session of the Executive Board.



58. However, because of the changing circumstances in Lesotho the situation will have to be studied from a different perspective. The tragic destruction of part of the nation's patrimony and infrastructure during the recent civil unrest has already prompted a WFP intervention in the form of emergency food relief. The present CSO marks the beginning of a programmatic reorientation process which will be taken into account during the development of a Country Programme for Lesotho in early 1999, together with any comments of the Executive Board which will be duly incorporated.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

59. Lesotho is largely dependent upon the economy of South Africa in terms of currency fluctuations, trade and manpower. Donor support has lessened with the end of apartheid and the future trend is not known. Unemployment is increasing as men return from South Africa where the mines are being closed and employment preference is increasingly given to South African nationals. This in turn is destabilizing the social and political situation in Lesotho. In addition, soil erosion is increasing, overgrazing of marginal lands continues and population growth remains unchecked.
60. Against this scenario, opportunities for food aid in support of capacity building in evolving markets will be explored as part of a Country Programme. Poor marginal areas will be targeted and the direct participation of local communities and authorities in resource management will be encouraged. The Government of Lesotho is committed to involving women more in decision-making and in determining their rights and responsibilities in project implementation and the future maintenance of assets. NGOs will be involved to facilitate this process in areas where they have the necessary strengths and experience.
61. Finally, within the southern Africa regional cluster WFP has developed the ability to quickly mobilize resources in case of a food emergency. As a result of extensive contingency planning for El Niño in 1997/98, WFP is in a much better position to cope with natural disasters well in advance and can also use these mechanisms to quickly mobilize the resources needed to mitigate suffering in disasters of human origin.

