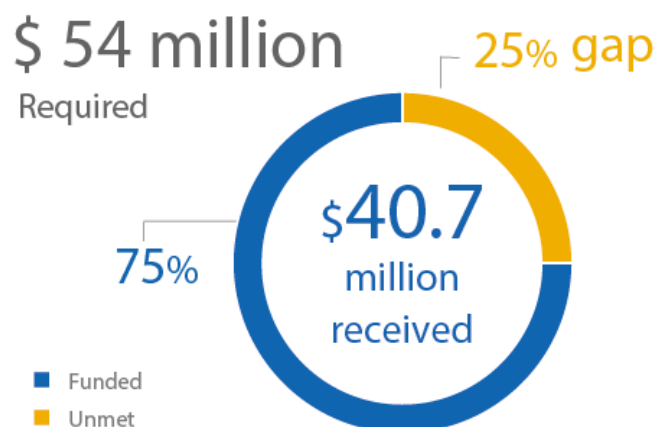




This report is produced by the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Lesotho in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It is issued by the Humanitarian Country Team. It covers the period from 31 May 2017 up to 7 August 2017.

Highlights

- The response to the El Niño-induced drought is still ongoing and is scheduled to continue until August 2017. While most humanitarian relief activities have been completed, the outstanding interventions will be terminated in the upcoming weeks and form the transition to the resilience-building dimension.
- The first integrated urban and rural vulnerability assessment undertaken, in June 2017, projects a total of 306,942 people food insecure from September 2017 to March 2018 (224,664 rural and 82,278 urban). The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis predicts Lesotho to be at Phase 1 (minimal) of food insecurity until September. As of October, Lesotho is projected to reach IPC Phase 2 (stressed).
- The food security situation has greatly improved due to the availability of food from household harvests, improved incomes and decreasing staple prices. In 2017, the national crop forecast estimates a total crop production of 239,361 metric tonnes, the highest within the past ten years.
- The June 2017 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment (LVAC) sees acute food security needs and malnutrition rates reducing, while chronic malnutrition and a considerable residue of food insecure communities remains. Humanitarian partners in Lesotho have recently developed an initial set of preparedness activities in various sectors, in order to set up medium to long term solutions which would mitigate the impact of further shocks, including a potential El Niño phenomenon in 2017.
- Humanitarian partners have been able to secure more than USD 40 million for the relief dimension of the response (more than 77% of the requested funds). The drought response in Lesotho is one of the best funded emergency responses in the Eastern and Southern African region against the financial requirements. The Government of Lesotho (GoL) has committed around USD 23 million through humanitarian interventions and a food subsidy program.
- A total of 466,563 beneficiaries have been reached so far through humanitarian interventions by humanitarian partners.
- The GoL together with its partners is currently developing a National Resilience Strategy Framework to address chronic gaps in the climate change adaptation, food security, chronic malnutrition and health emergencies. Further interventions are planned to strengthen emergency preparedness and resilience in Lesotho.
- According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), there is currently a 35-45% chance of another global El Niño event taking place during the second half of 2017. The likelihood for the region to be affected will be updated during the month of August.



Situation Overview

Rural and Urban Vulnerability Assessment, IPC Assessment and Crop Forecast results released

In June 2017, the LVAC and partners have conducted the first integrated rural and urban vulnerability assessment, as well as an Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) assessment and the regular crop forecast, assessing food security, agricultural production, nutrition and WASH needs in the 10 districts of Lesotho.

A first set of results has recently been released. The final assessment report will be ready in the coming weeks and it will incorporate further analysis and additional information, particularly on gender and HIV. The results showed a large improvement in food security in comparison to the previous years, forecasting the total national crop production in 2017 as the highest over the past ten years with a total of 239,361 metric tonnes produced.

The assessment has identified a total of 179,043 people to be in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) and Phase 4 (emergency) during the period July-September 2017 and therefore in need of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the assessment projected a total of 224,664 people in rural areas and 82,278 people in urban areas to be in IPC Phase 3 and Phase 4 in the period October 2017-March 2018, due to the expected lean season and the concurrent potential rise in staple prices.

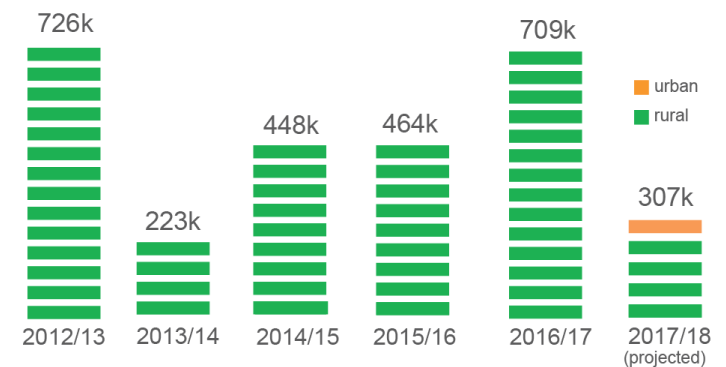
The findings also showed that 68.1% of households have adequate water supply through communal taps (52.7%), piped water (26.9%), unprotected springs (9.7%), protected and other sources (4%). Moreover, 80% of households are using improved sanitation, showing a 10% increase from the previous year. Nonetheless, some of the districts have a high percentage of households using unprotected water sources (10-17% of households in 6 districts). The assessment also highlighted that, for children under 5 years of age, the national prevalence of stunting is 36.2% while the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) is 4.7%.

Favourable agricultural situation fosters food security in Lesotho

Lesotho is currently in the middle of the crop harvest, which is set to continue until mid-August 2017. According to FAO GIEWS, the 2017 summer cereal production has been forecasted at a well above-average level, marking a significant increase in production compared to the drought-reduced level of 2016 (cf. Graph 3). Moreover, prospects for the winter wheat crop, to be harvested in the last quarter of 2017, are also largely favorable. As a result, the cereal import forecast for 2017/18 has been reduced to below-average level. According to FEWS NET, food security has greatly improved in rural areas due to the availability of food from household harvests, improved incomes and decreasing staple prices.

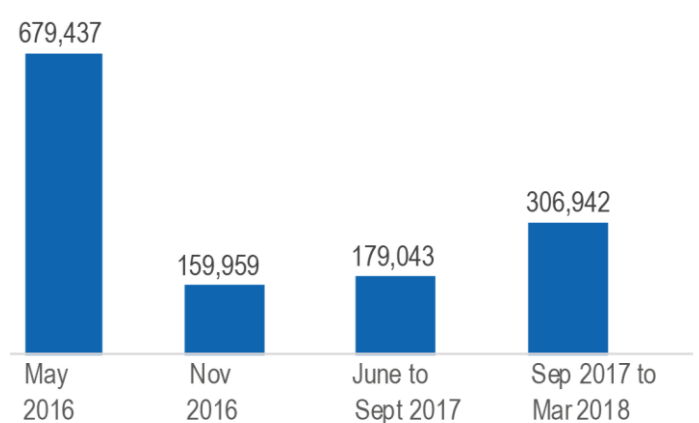
Preparations and planting for the winter crop production are currently underway. According to FAO, Lesotho is currently at risk of a fall armyworm outbreak and avian influenza, as already occurred in other countries in the region. These phenomena could cause disastrous consequences on livelihoods, particularly for small scale producers and those dependent on the poultry sector.

Graph 1: Food insecure population



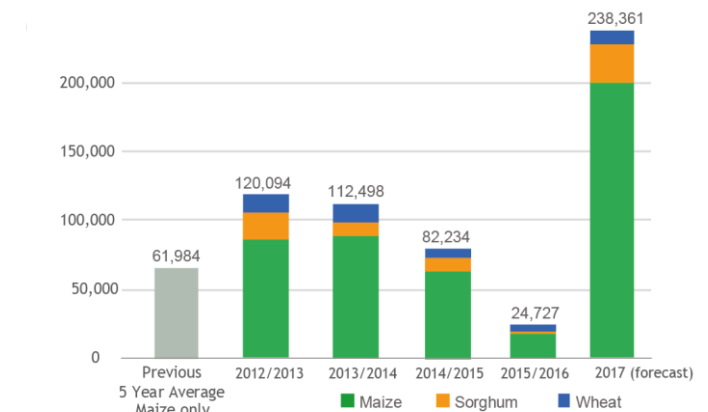
Source: SADC / LVAC / DMA

Graph 2: Number of people in food need (May 2016 to March 2018)



Source: LVAC / IPC

Graph 3: Cereal production trend and forecast



Source: SADC / LVAC / DMA

The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) registered in June 2017 highlights that the density and health of vegetation were normal to above normal in the country (cf. Map 1), with the exception of some areas in Mohale's Hoek and Berea district. The situation of the vegetation in the lowlands remains better than the one in the foothills and highlands areas. The NDVI values indicate improved vegetation conditions and pastures.

Meteorological update and emergency preparedness activities

According to Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), the country received on average above normal monthly rainfall in the period April-June 2017. The foothills and highlands benefited from a higher amount of rainfalls compared to the lowlands in the indicated period. Moreover, normal to above normal precipitation and temperature are expected in August 2017 which will positively affect the winter cropping.

Regionally, the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) state has recently transitioned to neutral (neither El Niño nor La Niña). Nonetheless, according to the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) update from July 2017, there is currently a 35-45% chance of another global El Niño event forming in the second half of 2017. The Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) meeting in August 2017 will provide a further update concerning the likelihood of another event during this year, factoring in regional weather patterns and trends.

Building on the lessons learnt from the El Niño event in 2015/16, Standard Operating Procedures have been developed at the global level that suggest a set of preparedness activities at global, regional and national level. Humanitarian partners in Lesotho have recently developed an initial set of preparedness activities in various sectors, to foster the preventive and adaptive capacity of institutions and communities to future shocks, in particular to a potential El Niño phenomenon in 2017.

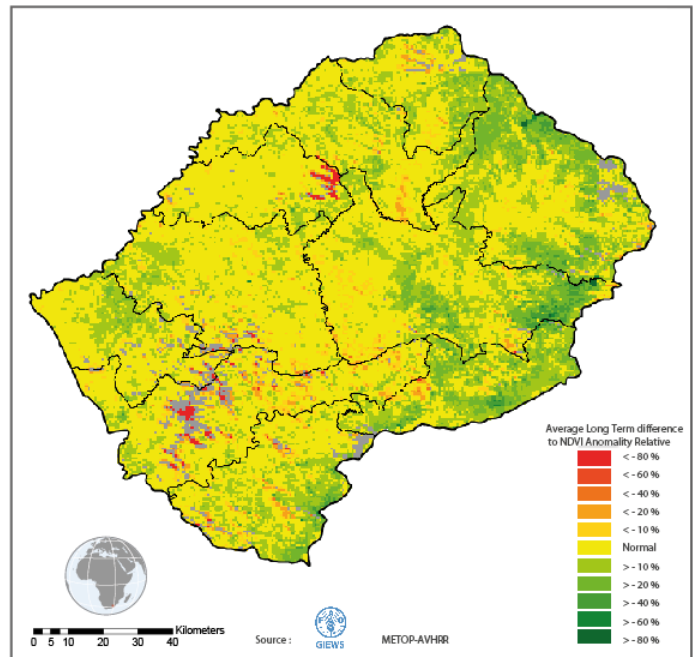
Food prices have moderately declined

According to FEWS NET, due to the good harvest, staple food prices have gradually declined and are expected to decline further between August and September 2017. The household purchasing power has increased by a combination of improved income (e.g. crop sales, harvesting labours, etc.) and declining staple prices, concurrently improving food security.

The WFP mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) data published in June 2017 shows that average maize prices fell slightly from M73.00/12.5 kg to M71.00/12.5 kg between April and May 2017. Prices were 24% lower than the same period in 2016 but still 4% higher than the five-year average (2012-2016). The national average price of wheat flour remained stable at M87.00/12.5 kg over April and June 2017.

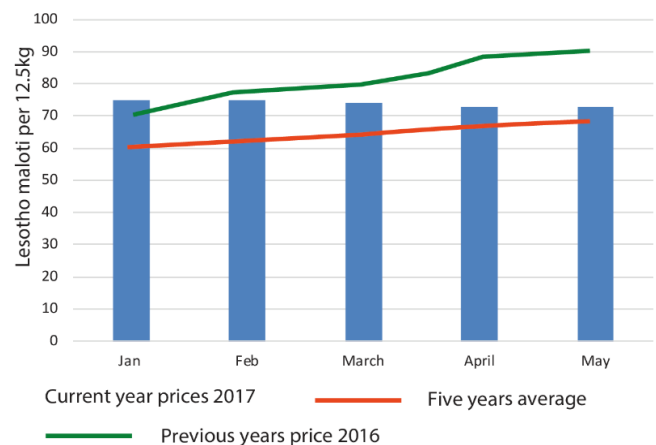
According to FEWS NET, households in Lesotho are continue to generate income through the ongoing crop harvest. The very poor and poor households are already selling some of their crops which is significantly improving their income. However, staple food prices on local markets are reducing due to the increased supply. As the harvest period ends, very poor and poor households are expected to start engaging in off-season labour activities. The normal harvest prospects this year are expected to contribute to normal income levels for better-off and middle households.

Map 1: Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), June 2017



Source: FAO (<http://fao.org/aiews/earthobservation>)

Graph 4: Average prices of maize meal compared to 2016 and the five-year average

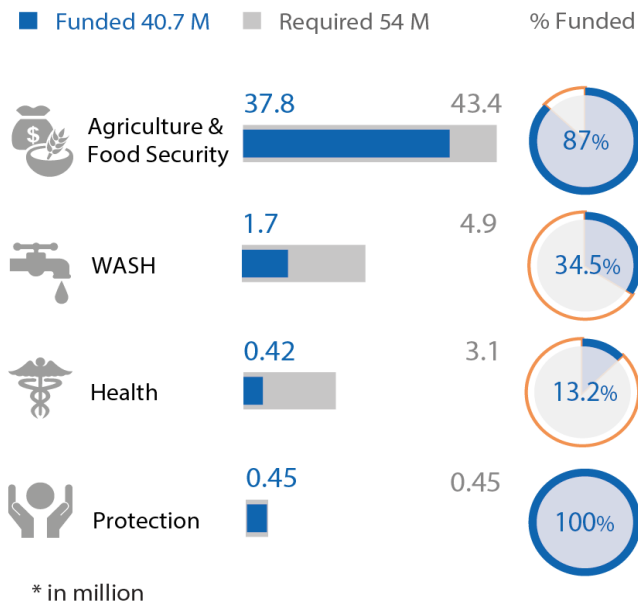


Source: WFP mVAM Bulletin #13, June 2017

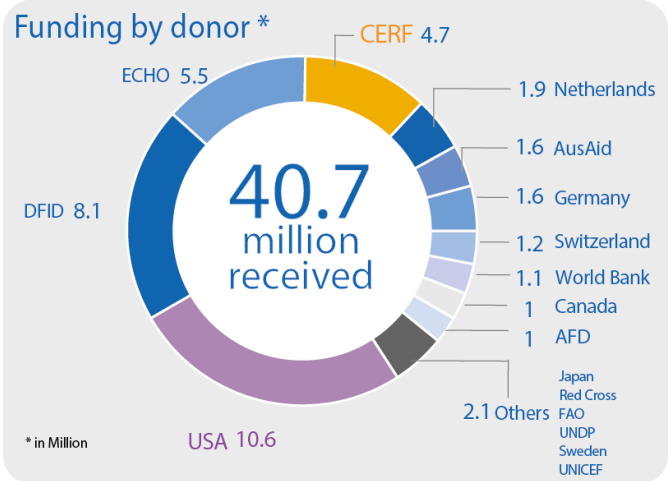
Funding

Following the announcement of the government appeal in January 2016, the GoL has committed LSL 155 million (approx. USD 10 million) to implement humanitarian emergency projects in the first six months. Moreover, the GoL has also committed LSL 162 million (approx. USD 12 million) for a 30% Food Price Subsidy Program for the period June 2016-May 2017.

Funding by sector *

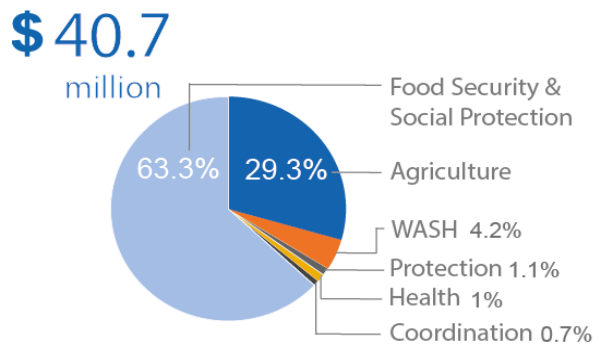


highest funding against the requirements (77% of the response is currently funded). However, most of the funding focusses on relief activities. Recovery and resilience activities are still to be funded. The Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) has launched an appeal in January 2016 for CHF 735,735 (approx. USD 750,000). LRCS has received 91% of the requested funding.



In support of government activities, humanitarian partners have managed to mobilise USD 40.7 million to date. Most of the funding has been directed to food security and agriculture interventions. The main donors are USAID, DFID, ECHO, CERF as well as other bilateral donors and development banks. In the Southern African region, Lesotho has been amongst the countries that reached the

FUNDING ALLOCATIONS



Humanitarian Response

The emergency response to the El Niño-induced drought is currently ongoing and is scheduled to continue until the end of August 2017.



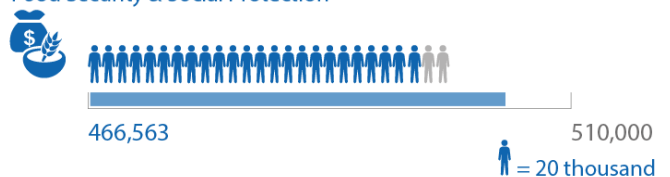
Agriculture and Food Security including Social Protection Top-ups

The food security and agriculture sector has responded to the humanitarian needs identified by the LVAC assessments in May and November 2016.

Based on the original financial requirements in the sector, more than 87% have been funded. Overall donors have made USD 37,844,838 available for the agriculture and food security response, including social protection top-ups. With this funding, humanitarian partners have been able to assist a total of 466,563 vulnerable people to date with either cash or food to date out of 510,000 initially targeted. This represents 98% of the people that have been found to live with a food survival deficit, according to the figures of the LVAC assessment in May 2016. The assistance will continue until August 2017.

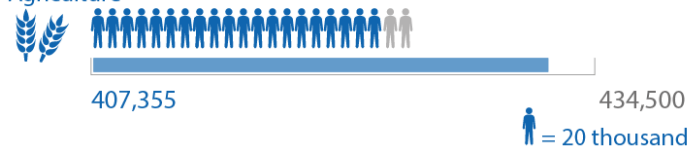
REACHED vs TARGETED POPULATION

Food Security & Social Protection



REACHED vs TARGETED POPULATION

Agriculture



households that have benefited from cash transfers with home gardening package. CRS, World Vision, ADRA and the Lesotho Red Cross Society have also provided vegetable inputs to a total of 47,175 beneficiaries from the beginning of the response.

FAO has supplied 223,645 people (44,729 households) with home gardening and nutrition complementary packages and will continue the distributions to reach around 280,000 people. This packages are complementary to the support provided by either UNICEF, WFP, ADRA and other cash or food assistance. FAO targets exactly the same

According to the WFP Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) report, published in May 2017, there is a 12% increase in households that have an acceptable food consumption compared to November 2016. This improvement is the result of food and cash assistance commenced in March 2016 and continued until June 2017. Overall, households with poor food consumption patterns have declined from 34% to 12%. Nonetheless, the diversity of the food consumed has remained very low, with four or less food types consumed by households over a period of seven days. This raises the need to address low dietary diversity and poor consumption of micro-nutrients. Moreover, food related coping strategies have reduced compared to the baseline survey undertaken in November 2016 and/or the vulnerability assessment of May 2016.

A similar trend has been identified by the UNICEF Field Monitoring Report on the emergency cash top-up programme. The results of the report have indicated a general improvement in households' food security, with the average number of meals consumed by both adults and children increasing from below two to three. The results also highlighted a positive effect on beneficiaries' saving capacity and debt reduction together with an improved capacity to cope with the food crisis.



WFP and World Vision International organizing the food distribution in Ha Raleqheka, Maseru District, June 2017. Photo: RCO



Media interviewing vulnerable farmers that received livelihood recovery packages and seeds of grazing vetch. Mahobong, Leribe District, June 2017. Photo: FAO



Health and Nutrition

The humanitarian response in Lesotho in the Health and Nutrition sector focusses mainly on HIV/AIDS patients, Pregnant and lactating mothers as well as children under the age of 5. All health and nutrition programmes have been completed in October 2016, by the end of the CERF funding. Overall, the sector received USD 423,796 and managed to assist a total of 89,386 people across all districts of the country.

REACHED vs TARGETED POPULATION



UNICEF led the response of malnutrition pre and post-hospitalization, procure and distributed the relevant treatment items in partnership with the Ministry of Health (like ready to use therapeutic food, F-75 and micronutrients), and monitored and reported on cases and commodity stock outs in communities. Overall, more than 36,600 people benefitted from UNICEF's interventions.

WHO led the support to health clinics and hospitals to strengthen the response to disease outbreaks and the treatment of patients in all district. Training in effective case management of severe malnutrition was conducted for health care workers in the Ministry of Health and the Christian Health Association of Lesotho to improve in-patient management of severe acute malnutrition in 18 of their hospitals. WHO support has allowed to respond to the outbreak of anthrax, food poisoning and bloody diarrhea deriving from poor access to water.

In addition, WFP has provided nutritional supplements to 2,000 children and lactating women to prevent Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). In 2016, UNICEF together with the Ministry of Health and the Food & Nutrition Coordination Office conducted a nutrition assessment, in which assessment finding indicated low overall Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) rates in Lesotho. However, in 2016 the case fatality rate of severe acutely malnourished children has been above international standards.



A nurse measuring the status of a severe acute malnutrition (SAM) case at Berea Government Hospital, Berea district, June 2017. Photo: UNICEF



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Initially, around 25% of the rural population (302,507 people) were without access to safe water due to the drought emergency in 2015/2016. The current humanitarian response targeted 131,714 people in the WASH sector with a received funding of more than USD 1.70 million. To date, a total of 141,173 people have been assisted by humanitarian interventions.

Humanitarian partners contributed to creating relief in the WASH sector during the peak of the drought, through the distribution of water purification tablets and sanitation and hygiene education to more than 70,000 people. Further, WASH partners have rehabilitating sites allowing for 61,274 people to have access to water by August 2017. In parallel, the GoL continues drilling to provide water to communities in need. The Ministry of Water committed to drilling 413 boreholes, out of which 49 had been drilled and 20 had been tested by March 2017.

While the first set of interventions focused mostly on procurement and deployment of water tanks, distribution and training on the use of water purification, latrine and hand washing station rehabilitation/construction and hygiene promotion trainings, the second phase of the response focused more on the rehabilitation of water sources to increase the availability of potable water in safe locations.

REACHED vs TARGETED POPULATION



141,173



131,714

= 20 thousand



A part of the beneficiaries of a water system project in Ha Lephallo, Berea district, June 2017. Photo: UNICEF



Protection

Humanitarian partners are addressing protection needs within the emergency response. UNFPA has recently finalised and featured a Gender Based Violence Baseline Study report which covered the ten districts of Lesotho and a total of 1,000 households. This was the first study of its kind and highlighted various forms of gender based violence as a direct result of the El Niño induced drought.

In response to needs reported in the study, UNFPA is implementing an intervention to strengthen the prevention, coordination and response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Lesotho. Following the drought, increased cases of GBV have been registered across the country that UNFPA is addressing by supporting referral systems, strengthening community capacities to prevent and coordinate in the case of GBV.

The project targeted 70,000 beneficiaries in Maseru, Mafeteng, Mhale's Hoek and Butha-Buthe district with messaging and improved response structures. It further ensures clinical, psychological and legal assistance to victims of GBV. To date, a total of 80,305 have been reached.

REACHED vs TARGETED POPULATION



80,305

70,000

= 20 thousand



Training organized by UNFPA on protection and support with Gender Officers from the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sport and Recreation and Child and Gender Protection Unit in Butha Buthe district. Photo: RCO



General Coordination

An Inter-Ministerial Cabinet Task Force has been established to support the coordination efforts by the Disaster Management Authority. To further strengthen the humanitarian coordination, the United Nations, together with NGOs has established a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). This coordination mechanism seeks to optimise the collective efforts of the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement in the effort to strengthen the overall drought response. The HCT is chaired by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. Moreover, the HCT gives strategic support to the Government of Lesotho in order to continue assisting its response and preparedness efforts.

The United Nations system together with NGOs supported the Government of Lesotho in the development of a drought resilience and mitigation plan which accompanied the declaration of emergency on 22nd December 2015. To strengthen the coordination of cash transfers in Lesotho, the Ministry of Social Development together with other government partners, NGOs, UN agencies and the World Bank has created a coordination forum for cash transfers and social protection.



Useful Links



<http://www.undp.org/content/unct/lesotho/en/home/humanitarian-efforts.html>



<https://www.facebook.com/pg/UNLesotho>



<https://twitter.com/UNLesotho>



<http://reliefweb.int/country/lso>



<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/lesotho>

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