

Lesotho: El Niño - related Drought

Office of the Resident Coordinator Situation Update. 02

(as of 20 Feb 2016)



This report is produced by Office of the Resident Coordinator in Lesotho in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It was issued by the Humanitarian Country Team. It covers the period up to 20 February.

Highlights

- A multi-stakeholder Rapid Drought Impact Assessment was completed on February 8, 2016. The preliminary findings confirm that the country is facing a serious crisis relating to food security and water availability.
- The assessment found that 534,502 (more than 1 in 4) people were at risk of food insecurity until June 2016 with the situation expected to worsen in the second half of the year and the beginning of 2017 once the summer crop forecast for 2016 is available (June 2016).
- Poor and very poor households are experiencing a 44% decline in their food and cash income compared to normal conditions. The current food and cash income is 31% below the survival threshold.
- Despite recent rains, increasing difficulties are being experienced with regards to accessing water with rationing, increased wait times and water purchasing widely reported. The elderly, people living with HIV and AIDS and/or TB, the disabled and the sick were indicated as the most affected by water shortages.
- Protection concerns were highlighted including reported use of negative coping mechanisms and Sexual and Gender Based Violence.



Map Sources: ESRI, UNCS, The Times Atlas of the World.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

534,502

People currently at risk of food insecurity up to June 2016

725,000+

Likely to be affected from June 2016

377,900

People immediately requiring food or cash assistance

US \$47.2 m

Resource Gap for UN and NGOs to meet current needs

Situation Overview

The Government of Lesotho (GoL) has declared a state of emergency (22 December 2015) in light of the drought that has gripped the country over the past several months and is expected to worsen in 2016. The historic delays in rains attributed to El Niño is expected to have a severe impact on the food security of the Basotho in 2016 and 2017, and many areas are already suffering from water shortages. The government's declaration was accompanied by the jointly developed response plan as well as an appeal for international support.

The current drought cannot only be seen as a food security crisis. It is impacting different sectors including food security and agriculture, water, health and nutrition as well as migration and protection. The poor harvest is a compounded issue which originated with the poor rainfall during the 2014/2015 agricultural season and has persisted during the 2015/2016 agricultural season and only a negligible harvest is currently expected during the normal May/June 2016 harvest due to the delayed rainfall (Figure 1).

According to the recent Lesotho Drought Impact Assessment done at the end of January 2016 and published on February 8, 2016, the current number of people assessed to be at risk of food insecurity and not able to meet their survival needs until June 2016 is **534,502 people** (over 25% of the total population). These numbers are expected to increase throughout 2016, particularly once the crop forecast is realized and the LVAC updated for the period June 2016 to May 2017. In the next months, incomes are likely to further deteriorate, the harvest is going to be very low and food prices are expected to further rise. In comparison 2012 a year with more favorable conditions than those currently being experienced left 725 000 Basotho food insecure. In the coming months, as the drought worsens, peri-urban and urban regions will also be increasingly affected, mainly due to increases of food prices and water shortages.

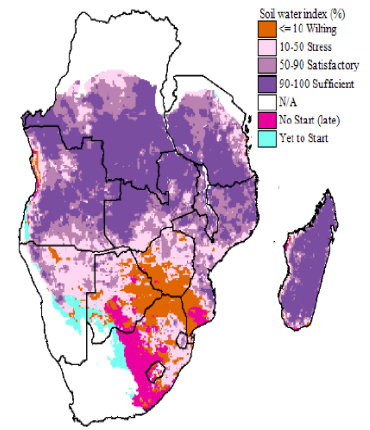


Figure 1: Soil water index showing late rains

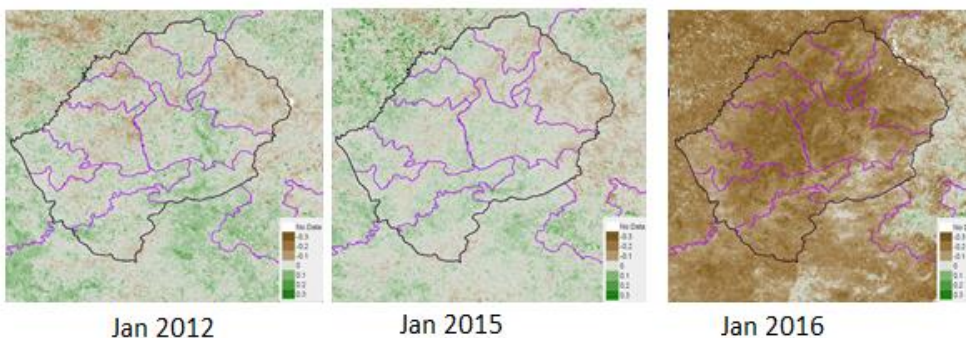


Figure 2: Comparison of vegetation expressed as deviation from average

The high temperatures that have been felt across the region and in Lesotho have increased evapotranspiration which places increased stress on the available water resources as well as causing heat stress in both the livestock and emerging crops (Figure 2).

Due to the low levels of rainfall, up to 70% of communities report not having planted their crops. The stresses of both the cumulative impacts of this agricultural season along with the previous two poor harvests have meant that many communities and households are reliant on government assistance to purchase food at high prices at local markets. Livelihoods have been negatively impacted due to loss of livestock (due to drought related hunger, thirst and disease, including resulting in poorer feeding/water sources and increased animal morbidity). Resulting food insecurity from loss of crops and livestock is exacerbated by the increase of food prices, compounded by the weak South Africa Rand. The decline in the agricultural sector is also impacting livelihoods as they are unable to earn incomes by working on the farms (Figure 3). According to the assessment, food stock outages have been reported almost universally across districts.

The Drought Assessment of Jan/Feb 2016 revealed that poor and very poor households in Lesotho are only able to meet 69% of their **survival needs**- a **deficit of 31%** (Figure 3). This can be seen to be a result of decline in both crop production as well as all types of employment. The household food and income basket when compared to the reference year 2009/10 has declined by over 44%. The deficit is expected to increase throughout the second half of 2016 and into 2017.

In addition to the inability to meet the normal survival requirements, the assessment found that **staple food price has also increased by 230%** percent compared to the reference year 2009/2010. Many households are purchasing water, increasing expenditure.

Water shortages have begun months earlier than in previous drought years. 291 villages or **302 507 people were without water** as of 18th November 2015 (Ministry of Water). Rivers dried up in Berea District and other parts of the country¹. The recent rains, while too late to impact the harvest since the planting window closed before their arrival in mid-January, may provide a brief reprieve for the water situation. However, during the Drought Assessment, which occurred after the (late) onset of rains, the visited communities reported a decline in safe water access due to erratic remains and low recharge of water bodies. Access issues were also reported with increasing waiting and collection time: 50-83% reported that not only are there health and nutrition implications to the drying up of water sources but the delivery of basic services are also impacted. **Water scarcity is affecting the normal functioning of hospitals and health centres** as well as schools and exposes the most vulnerable groups of the population to water-borne diseases and other health-related problems. The assessment found that the elderly, people living with HIV and AIDS and/or TB, the disabled and other sick people were indicated as the most affected (Figure 4).

Data from the integrated disease surveillance and response system show a general increase in the number of diarrheal diseases in different districts from November 2015 to February 2016 (table 1). The figures emerge from an average reporting performance of 39% completeness of reporting where Maseru, Leribe, Quthing, Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek reported at the range between 9 and 46%. This reporting level implies that more cases may have been seen but not reported on. The figures captured for 2016 (January to first two weeks of February 2016) are from the completeness of reporting rate of 66% where Botha Bothe and Maseru performed at 19 and 44% completeness of

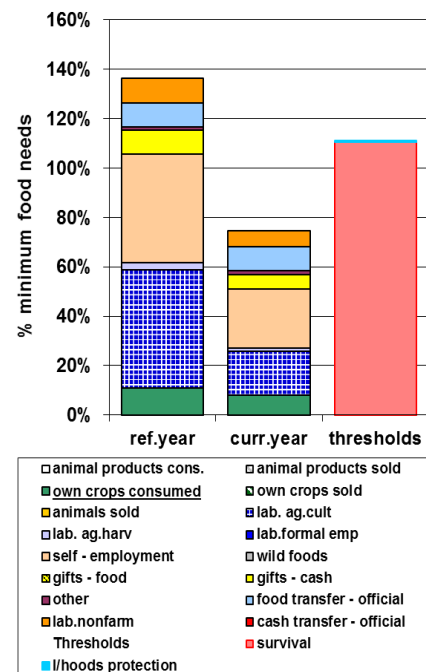


Figure 3: Poor and very poor households food and income as of January 2016

¹ WFP 'Relief Challenges As Drought Plunges Lesotho Into Emergency'. 29 December 2015

⁴ FAO Briefing Note No. 2- 03 December 2015 Lesotho

⁵ ibid.

reporting. The system also shows a total of 2,240 cases of malnutrition reported where 6 deaths were recorded. 1,192 cases (53%) were recorded between August 2015 and January 2016.

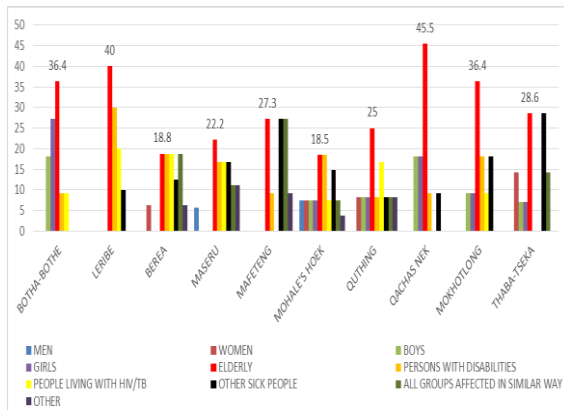


Figure 4: Groups affected by decreased water access

The assessment also revealed some worrying trend with regards to coping mechanisms with all participants reporting adjusting food consumption to account for shortages. These trends include:

- Borrowing food or using credit to purchase food (76.7%)
- Illegal activities e.g. theft, prostitution and drug sales (66.7%)
- Consumption of seed (55%)
- Children engaged in income generation activities (43.3%).
- Eating fewer meals per day (88.3%)
- Going an entire day without eating (over 51.7%)

Because of the expected negligible harvest and the impact of El Niño on the region, the situation is expected to persist and deteriorate, with **little prospects of recovery until the next harvest of May/June 2017**.

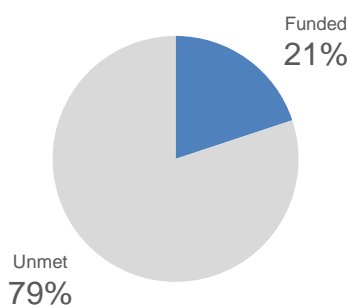
Table 1: Number of diarrheal cases reported by districts March 2015 to February 2016

Disease	2015										2016		Total
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	
Bloody diarrhoea	32	8	12	15	17	71	27	32	88	263	360	105	1,030
Typhoid	0	0	0	1	0	80	3	6	12	62	24	0	188

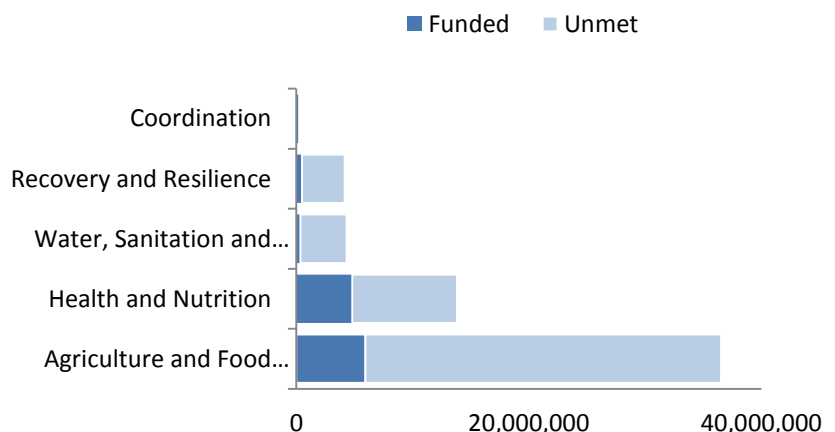
Funding

Lesotho UN and NGO Drought Response Requirements

US\$59million requested



Funding by sector (in million US\$)



The Government of Lesotho released an Appeal Document in January 2016, and has pledged to fund around US\$ 10 million in immediate interventions, predominantly to address water shortages. This appeal is set to be revised in light of the assessment and its projected requirements.

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) (UN and NGOs) have compiled their revised current and projected requirements and have planned interventions that will address drought and this amounts to \$59 million of which 21% funded. This HCT requirement (not including government requirement and commitments) is outlined in the graphic above.

The extent and projected length of the crisis means that Interventions are needed that both address immediate needs and build resilience against on-going and future shocks. These resilience building interventions also need to begin immediately.

The financial aspect, if cleared, will allow HCT partners to support the government in providing an effective response that will help alleviate the negative impacts of drought to the most vulnerable of the Lesotho population.

The Lesotho National Red Cross Society has launched an appeal for CHF 741,557 (US \$738,502).

All humanitarian partners, including donors and recipient agencies, are encouraged to inform OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS - <http://fts.unocha.org>) of cash and in-kind contributions by e-mailing: fts@un.org

Humanitarian Response

- The UN and NGOs are working jointly with the Government of Lesotho to complete further assessments. Complementing the Rapid Assessment, a market assessment is being conducted to generate further insights into food and market prices. This exercise will further inform the programming of emergency response activities and targeting.
- The UN has established a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), combining UN, NGOs and the Red Cross and is chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The HCT will give 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 December 22, 2015.



Agriculture & Livestock and Food Security

Needs:

- Increase in social protection safety nets. The poor are most vulnerable and susceptible to the lack of agricultural production and stocks. Although many are covered under the current social protection schemes, these need to be up-scaled and expanded due to the price increases of staple products which erodes purchasing capacity and the intended protection levels of the programmes. The Lesotho Drought Assessment in February 2016 projects that expenditure of households for food will increase. The market price for staple products has increased by up to 230% compared to normal conditions (reference year 2009/10). The crop production is expected to drop by 60%. Until June 2016, 534,502 people (89,200 HH) that are not all covered by safety nets are at risk. Households that are currently under safety nets are increasingly in need of further assistance.
- Increase access to food for vulnerable groups. Four out of the ten districts in Lesotho, currently have no food stocks left which force them to purchase food on local markets or reduce their food consumption, which increases the risk of malnutrition and disease outbreaks in the country.
- Protect livelihoods and restore productive capacities among rural communities with sustainable agriculture technologies (according to the Lesotho Drought Impact Assessment February 2016, 55% of the communities interviewed reported having consumed the seed stocks that needed to be kept for the next planting season).
- Improve animal health capacities, preventing transmission of animal diseases to humans.
- Increasing need of livestock feeding, which will facilitate the transmission of anthrax and will decrease animal health conditions due to deteriorating food and water quantity and quality.
- Insufficient livestock feeding will further lead to increased pressure on natural resources, notably rangelands, resulting in further soil erosion and deterioration of natural resources. Mortality related to drought in livestock has been reported and is likely to increase throughout 2016.

36.6m

Required for
agricultural and food
security support

- Consolidate resilience building initiatives in the adequate management of Natural Resources and agricultural practices.
- Improve information management and GIS, enabling evidence-based decision making in the sector.

Response:

- To support the most affected households, FAO Lesotho intends to support communities in the adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture technologies such as Conservation Agriculture, improved Home Gardening & Nutrition and Sustainable Land Management through the provision of inputs (e.g. maize and beans seeds, cover crop/fodder seeds, shade fabric and vegetable seeds kit) and training. The poorest households will be supported with productive packages such as Home Gardening & Nutrition kits complementing Social Protection cash transfers (funded by the Government of Lesotho) and top ups channelled through UNICEF or WFP. The programme will enhance convergence of services and messages to the targeted communities through chiefs, schools, extension services and wider communication channels.
- As part of the emergency response addressing the impact on livestock and vulnerable owners, FAO plans to implement activities in support of animal health and disease surveillance as well as a pilot de-stocking initiative based on FAO de-stocking initiatives successfully implemented in Ethiopia, complemented with the promotion of cover crops and fodder improving the integration of crop production and livestock rearing.
- From a Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience building dimension in the food security sector, FAO Lesotho will continue to promote communication activities and training on Conservation Agriculture and improved Home Gardening & Nutrition while completing the production of training materials on Sustainable Land Management. This includes an innovative communication campaign involving the distribution of training materials for trainers, brochures for schools, rural communities and the general public. TV/radio channels are enabled to use a combination of technical and audio/visual inspirational messages developed with local musicians attracting attention to this important topic across different age groups and targeting particularly the youth.
- Demonstration of mechanical Conservation Agriculture planting techniques will be expanded and continued in Agricultural Resources Centres of the country and demo plots complemented with water harvesting structures will be supported in schools facilitating the effective inclusion of Climate Smart Agriculture in school curriculum.
- Formal training and refreshers on the Conservation Agriculture techniques and newly developed material will take place among extension officers, rangers, teachers, local leaders, traders and farmers' organizations.
- FAO Lesotho also intends to develop additional applications of the Land Cover map for Lesotho, such as early warning and monitoring systems for rangelands status, soil erosion risk analysis and customization of the Land Cover map per water catchment and subnational administrative levels enabling sub national stakeholders to understand the status of the natural resources in their area allowing adequate action to be adopted.
- WFP plans to assist the most vulnerable households through unconditional cash and/or in-kind assistance.
- In line with the government's response plan to assist the affected communities on water-harvesting projects, WFP will provide the food insecure communities with conditional cash and/or in-kind aid for the creation of assets.
- At a policy level, WFP will keep assisting the government to strengthen its DRR and Resilience framework. At the same time, it will continue to implement jointly with the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and the Ministry of Forestry resilience based longer-term programmes.
- WFP will continue implementing a school feeding programme for both pre- and primary school children.
- UNICEF plans to support scaling up social safety nets by providing cash top-ups to vulnerable households enrolled in the child grant programme. The cash top-ups will buffer against the hike in food process and other essential commodities.

Gaps & Constraints:

- There are currently financial constraints in Lesotho to cover the needs of this sector. Initial pledges for over USD1m have been made by ECHO. Additional funds are likely to be made available by CERF, though confirmation is pending.



Health and Nutrition

Needs:

13.8m

Required to support
Health and Nutrition

- Provide supplementary food assistance to vulnerable groups including children below the age of five, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and people living with HIV and AIDS or TB.
- According to the Lesotho Drought Impact Assessment February 2016, the most affected groups of the population are elderly, people living with HIV and AIDS and/or TB and disabled people. Children under the age of five eat meals that lack a variety of food groups and nutrients. Their diets are high in carbohydrates and low in micronutrients such as iron and proteins which are critical for linear growth. The various food consumption studies conducted in the country show that this dietary patterns are universal across all districts. Ensure provision of health facility maternal health care services such as antenatal care and deliveries.
- Provide safe water for vulnerable populations. Access to safe water has become increasingly difficult with communities such as Maseru seeing 67% of their population having to buy water. If communities are not buying water, there is an increasing waiting and collection time from around 1-3 hours of questionable water quality. Some communities are collecting water from unprotected water sources predisposing people to contamination.
- Strengthen disease and nutrition surveillance system at all levels
- Need for timely detection and response to disease outbreaks associated with the crisis. The Lesotho Drought Impact Assessment February 2016 indicates that only Maseru has not seen a big escalation of disease outbreaks while the other districts have reported significant increases in disease outbreaks.
- Need for early detection and response to all forms of malnutrition at the community and health facility levels
- Strengthen public awareness on the health and nutrition related aspects of the crisis, on HIV and AIDS and/or TB prevention care and treatment as well as water-borne illnesses.
- Train health and nutrition workers on case identification, referrals and follow-up.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the Health response.

Response:

- Strengthen Government safety nets and link them to other sectors.
- Support awareness raising on household treatment of drinking water and hygiene.
- Strengthen public awareness on the health and nutrition related aspects of the crisis.
- Implement water Quality Surveillance at District and community levels.
- Support Health centres under affected by water shortage and shortage of nutritional supplements.
- Support investigation and response to outbreaks of diarrhoea diseases in the ten districts.
- WFP will provide specialized nutrition supplements to children 6-59 months of age, pregnant and lactating mothers of identified food insecure households and patients on ART and TB treatment. It will also include in the MAM treatment the TB and HIV and AIDS patients through the food-by-prescription approach and will support the food insecure households of the PLHIV and TB clients with food rations.
- UNICEF and WFP will provide therapeutic and specialized nutrition supplements for acutely malnourished groups.
- Facilitate access to other critical health services, including maternal and children health services, HIV prevention, care, treatment and support for targeted populations.
- Facilitate access to safe water and sanitation at health facilities and in the community.
- Support water quality monitoring and surveillance.
- Strengthen disease surveillance system at national, district, facility and community levels using the integrated disease surveillance and response strategy.
- Provide comprehensive support for investigation and response to outbreaks associated with the crisis (water-related outbreaks, foodborne outbreaks and zoonotic diseases).
- Support outreach services for provision of integrated community health services.
- Support Health facility and community management of malnutrition.
- Facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the targeted interventions to document response to the proposed interventions.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Financial restraints.

- Weak disease surveillance systems.
- Weak laboratory capacities for confirmation of suspected outbreaks.
- Shortage of skills in outbreak investigations amongst some of the district epidemic preparedness and response teams.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs:

- Increased water sources for both human and animal consumption. The drought has caused many communities to ration the available water. Many communities have started to purchase water.
- Increased access for hospitals and schools that are currently not meeting their required water amounts in order to maintain their service delivery. Schools have reportedly sent children home early due to the lack of water and some health facilities which are without water have asked patients to bring water for their treatment.
- Increase access to safe water sources. There is a sharp decline of water access in the majority of the regions across the country. 23-56% of the communities interviewed during the assessment have indicated that they are using unprotected sources for water.

4.3m

Required to support
WASH

Water shortages are being reported from several districts where restrictions have started to be applied to rural communities (e.g. Mohale's Hoek). Important water sources and streams such as river Makhaleng River (Mohale's Hoek district) have dried up during the month of November and remain low following the January rains.

Response:

- The Government of Lesotho is responding in the sector particularly with regards to mobile water tinkering and treatment. These programmes need to be scaled up in order to meet the needs of the communities.
- Identification of areas that are at risk as well as increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- Identification of water sources and distributing clean water to affected communities.
- Repairing broken water systems and installing new ones in other areas.
- Acquiring water cleaning trucks/vehicles and drilling rigs for exploration of new underground water sources.
- UNICEF and WHO will support strengthening treatment of drinking water and household water storage.
- WHO will support strengthening the water quality monitoring and surveillance.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Financial restraints limit possibility of implementing the planned responses above.
- Further need for surveillance of the water situation.

General Coordination

An Inter-Ministerial 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, non-governmental organisations and the Red Cross movement and to strengthen the overall drought (current and anticipated) response.

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