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Emergency appeal operation update

Lesotho: Food Insecurity

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Emergency appeal n° MDRLS003
GLIDE n°OT-2012-000155-LSO
31 October 2012

Period covered by this Ops Update:

15 October 2012 – 31 October 2012-10-31

Appeal target (current): This Emergency Appeal seeks CHF 1,119,000 in cash, kind, or services to support the Lesotho Red Cross Society to assist 8,000 beneficiaries (1,600 households) for 9 months, and will be completed by July, 2013.

Appeal coverage: 0%; [click here to go directly to the updated donor response report, or here to link to contact details >](#)

Appeal history:

- An [Emergency Appeal](#) was launched on 15 October, 2012.
- CHF 100,000 was allocated from the IFRC's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the National Society to start up activities and be able to provide immediate assistance. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.
- This operations update provides further information on the situation and the needs that were given in the Emergency Appeal document as a result of the Household Economic Survey (HES) workshop which was facilitated from 16 – 20 October by a HES specialist, provided by the British Red Cross.



Affected food insecure communities dressed for the cold of the Lesotho Highlands, Photo: British Red Cross

Summary: Agricultural production has dramatically decreased across Lesotho in recent months and severe food insecurity is affecting all ten districts of the country, including the mountainous areas, the foothills and the lowlands. More than 725,000 people are at serious risk of food insecurity. This year's crop failures follow poor harvests last year, and the two consecutive years of reduced crop yields have increased the vulnerability of many of the country's poorest farmers. While food insecurity and chronic vulnerability to hunger are unfortunately common in rural Lesotho, poor soil and the cumulative effect of the two bad harvests have pushed people into negative coping strategies and many have resorted to selling assets, taking children out of school and reducing meals.

The sharp reduction in agricultural yields has also been exacerbated by repeated flooding, late rains and early frost in mountainous regions. The situation is compounded by the fact that Lesotho has the third highest HIV prevalence rate in the world at 23.5%. Adequate and nutritious food is critical for these people.

In view of this, the Government of Lesotho (GoL) declared an Emergency Food Crisis on 9 August and launched an appeal for LSL 303,872,392 (USD 37,984,049), to support the distribution of around MT 61,885 of

maize (using current rural maize prices). The Prime Minister has also officially called for international assistance through an UN flash appeal for USD 151 million launched on 13 September.

To support national efforts, it was agreed that the Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) would also launch an international appeal to support their response to the crisis. This appeal is being launched based on the information currently available through the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) and through LRCS's own experience and assessments via their divisional and branch network. The LRCS response will focus on five of the most vulnerable districts, where the needs are great and where they have existing expertise and capacity in dealing with food insecurity and providing other integrated support to vulnerable communities. These five districts are Mokhotlong, Mafeteng, Quthing, Thaba-Tseka and part of Maseru (Foothills). These target districts do not overlap with the response of other actors who are working in the other affected districts. LRCS already provides integrated food security and home-based care / prevention programmes (for PLWHA) in the five districts, with support from partner National Societies and this appeal will enable LRCS to scale up their food security activities and provide emergency and longer-term assistance to a wider group of vulnerable people in these communities.

As the operation has only recently been initiated, so far, assessment and planning activities have been undertaken. LRCS has undertaken a detailed needs assessment, with support from a British Red Cross Household Economic Security (HES) expert.

The findings of this assessment will assist the national society to scale up its intervention appropriately. There will also be training for the national society staff and volunteers, to build national society capacity to carry out effective assessments and plan / deliver food security interventions.

Based on the situation in Lesotho, this Emergency Appeal responds to a request from the LRCS and provides support to take an appropriate and timely action by delivering assistance in the following sectors; food security, nutrition and livelihoods, as well as disaster risk reduction and capacity building.

To date, no funds have yet been received for this appeal.

Donors are strongly urged to provide necessary support, as needs are critical and ongoing. In particular, the window for preparing fields and planting new crops is short and needs to be capitalised on immediately, in order to ensure that families have new crops and therefore ongoing food supplies.

The situation

Further to the analysis provided in the Emergency Appeal, the HES workshop has provided some further information about the immediate situation in Lesotho.

Mountain livelihood zone

- Very poor and poor are most affected by agricultural production shocks because their production is already low and losses can be total, whereas middle and better off households can have other holdings, food reserves, etc. This includes drought and frosts (wherein they lose seed stocks that other households might have in reserve).
- Middle and better off cope with agricultural losses to food and income sources by storing reserves and not selling, in addition to utilising household labour instead of employing poorer households. Hiring others for domestic work and giving gifts are also both reduced.
- Poorer households cope with reduced agricultural labour, domestic work, and gifts by increasing what they can and depending more generally on sharing within the community – even from other poor households.
- Very poor and poor affected more by livestock diseases because of the potential to lose all of the few animals they have, whereas other households lose a portion of their stock. This is happening this year because of drought.
- Brewing is an important income source for poorer households but input costs are increasing, especially if sorghum production is low. This reduces profitability and access to food.
- Heavy firewood harvesting is undermining regeneration and reducing income potential for poorer households. Alternative income sources are few and this will create a gap.

- Drought and overgrazing are depleting wild foods, an important source of food and income for poorer households. There is limited expandability in other food/income sources to fill this gap.
- Fruit and vegetable production declines with drought, reducing capacity for drying household reserves and profitability of anything sold.
- Natural resources used for handicrafts are negatively affected by drought, reducing profitability and therefore access to food.
- Middle and better off households are more directly affected by drought related production losses. Poorer households are indirectly affected too from lost food or income earning opportunities from agricultural labour for middle/better off.
- Market purchase is an essential food source for all households, and availability of food is never a problem, even in drought years. However, poorer households have access problems because of their comparatively limited purchasing power, especially with food prices increasing.
- Banking is used primarily by better off households. Poorer households do not have enough, and middle households tend to establish their own markets and use money for essential needs.
- Savings and loan groups are common, used mostly by middle households. Better off can borrow from banks and poorer often cannot access. Poor help establish these groups but as other households join the subscription and dues increase to the point that poorer can no longer participate.
- Banking facilities are available only in the district centre.
- Women and men are equally engaged in food and income production, but with specific gender roles and tasks that will need to be considered for project targeting.
- Community priorities are improved knowledge on production, storage, and marketing; conservation agriculture; stronger community based organisations for savings, loans, and production; income generating activities like poultry and pig production; inputs for those without reserves or capacity to purchase, such as seeds and tools.
- A range of services is already available in the mountains, such as: livestock extension, food aid for lactating mothers and children under five years, and advocacy for conservation agriculture. However there are gaps in these services: extension is only at resource centres and not community based, conservation agriculture skills are still generally lacking along with soil conservation and management, rangeland and water conservation activities by Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation are not sufficient.
- Village level shops are few, and only sell 1-2 kilograms of maize meal. Larger purchases such as a 50 kg sack must be made in the district centre. Transportation services are readily available for a fee.

Southern lowland livelihood zone

- Situation generally the same as in the mountain zone, however the severity is much more intense.
- Livestock disease is greater, including black quarter, scab, blue tongue, anthrax, pulp kidney, and internal and external parasites all worse for sheep (and cattle) than in the mountain zone. More frequent in the lowlands than the highlands, potentially two outbreaks per year instead of one.
- Excessive soil erosion and land degradation in the southern lowlands is reducing the amount of arable land and decreasing food production. This erosion is further exacerbated by drought.
- Some poorer households have access to land, but lack the tools and inputs necessary to cultivate or increase cultivation.
- Handicrafts are different and mostly for knitting and sewing, because the natural products found in the mountains for brooms, hats, etc. are not available in the southern lowlands.
- There are two growing seasons here for field crops, compared with one season in the mountains.
- Water scarcity is generally greater in the southern lowlands than in the mountains, even in normal years.
- Larger quantities of maize meal and cereals are available to purchase at village level.
- Transportation to district centres is widely available for a fee.
- Availability of financial institutions like banks is greater than in the mountains, but only in the district centre.
- Current services available include: agricultural extension, NGO livelihood recovery activities, and home based care activities. Knowledge gaps nonetheless remain, particularly in conversation

agricultural and corresponding extension services. Community based organisations can also be strengthened.

- Focus group participants report that seasons are gradually changing; with unreliable and unpredictable weather patterns becoming more frequent and intense. This has a negative affect on crop and livestock production, along with the complicated web of food and income relationships across the different wealth groups.
- There is lots of labour migration from this district, of both women and men. This includes working outside Lesotho in South Africa.

Coordination and partnerships

Remain as reported in the [Emergency Appeal](#).

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

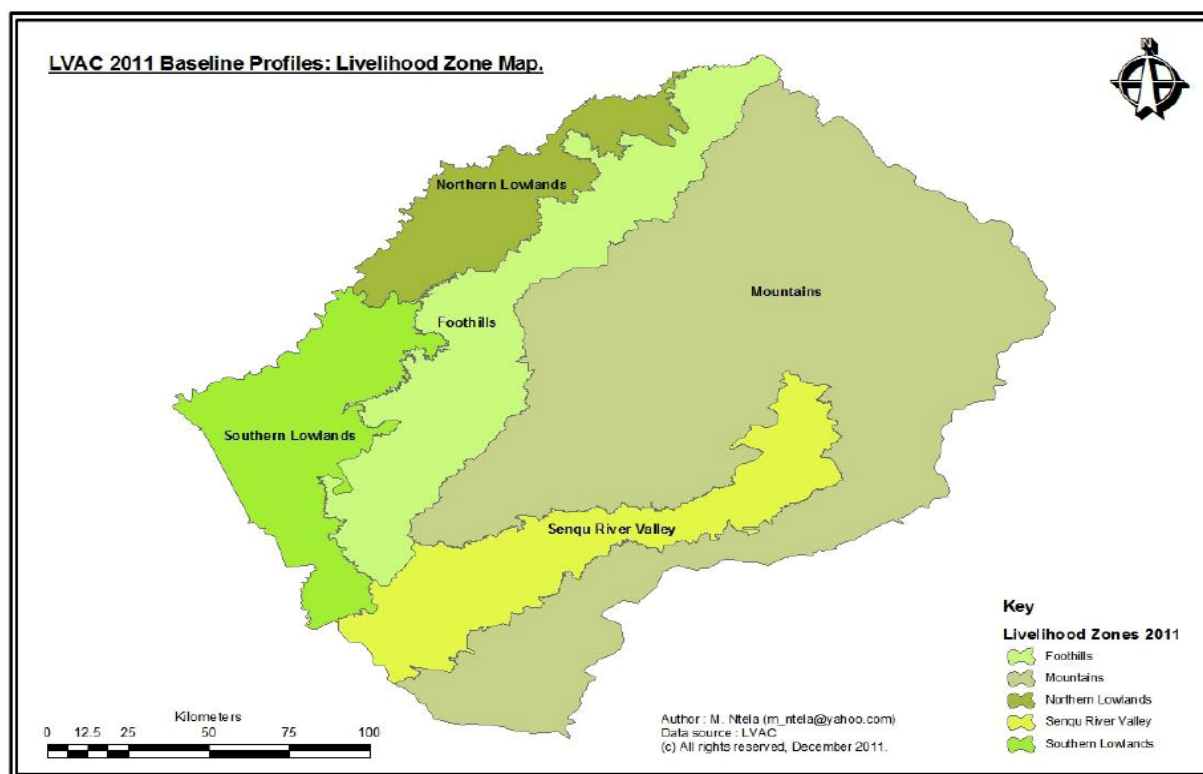
Household Economic Security (HES) assessment and training workshop was conducted in the Lesotho to consolidate and deepen existing analysis of food security and livelihoods. The HES spent five days with the national society. The workshop combined theory and practice over five days and focused on strengthen analysis and planning for the 9-month appeal. The methodology used during the assessment included collection of primary and secondary information, field visits and observation. Tools used include direct interviews with key informants (local authorities, lead gardeners and care facilitators) and communities (focus groups disaggregated by gender).

CHF 100,000 has also been allocated from the DREF to the current emergency appeal to allow the LRCS to start up relief activities and provide assistance to some of the most vulnerable communities.

The needs

As a result of the support from the British Red Cross funded HES, the needs have been further analysed. Food sources, income sources and expenditure of each wealth group (very poor, poor, middle and better off) in each livelihood zone (e.g. highlands, lowlands etc.) were explored and the impacts of each hazard on the food and income sources across the wealth groups and livelihood zones.

Some of the assessment findings were that very poor and poor are most affected by agricultural production shocks because their production is already low and losses can be total, whereas middle and better off households can have other holdings, food reserves. The shocks includes drought and frosts (wherein they lose seed stocks that other households might have in reserve). Middle and better off cope with agricultural losses to food and income sources by storing reserves and not selling, in addition to utilizing household labour instead of employing poorer households. Hiring others for domestic work and giving gifts are also both reduced. Poorer households cope with reduced agricultural labour, domestic work, and gifts by increasing what they can and depending more generally on sharing within the community – even from other poor households. The situation generally seemed to be the same as in the mountain zone and lowlands; however the severity is much more intense in the Southern Lowlands.



Progress towards outcomes

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Outcome: 1,600 food insecure families in the five regions are provided with emergency assistance for a period of three months with on-going evaluation to determine if further assistance is required

Outputs (expected results)	Activities planned
1,600 households (8,000 people) are provided with appropriate food items distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide initial support for assessment and planning through the Africa Zone Food Security coordinator and the HES delegate from British Red Cross; Deploy HES delegate to assist LRCS in training and conducting a detailed emergency needs and capacity assessments in Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Maseru, Mafeteng and Quthing to start up the operation; Develop beneficiary targeting strategy and registration system to deliver intended assistance; Procure food for food distribution through local sources (regional if there are pricing issues); Deliver food distributions to beneficiaries in coordination with other actors (13.5kg maize meal, 1.8kg pulses, 0.9 gms vegetable oil, 0.45 gms salt per person per month); Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions.

Food Security, nutrition and livelihoods

Outcome: Food security of 1,600 affected vulnerable families in five regions is met by the end of response intervention

Outputs (expected results)	Activities planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,600 households (8,000 beneficiaries) are provided with food security starter packs (1,600 with garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with Government agriculture extension service and other actors to provide training on basic drought tolerant seeds and agricultural techniques to 50 volunteers (10 per districts) and to 161 lead farmers/gardeners;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • packs and field crop packs); • Households are provided with appropriate extension services and agricultural inputs and livelihoods restored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute garden starter packs (vegetables, spinach, rape, beetroot, mustard seeds) for 1,600 families; • Distribute additional field crops as food security starter packs (maize, beans, and potatoes) for 1600 affected households; • Provide training to the communities on the growing and preservation of vegetables and on relevant farming techniques; • Provide ongoing monitoring and educational support to target communities on agricultural techniques to sustain impact.
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Disaster Risk Reduction

Outcome: The target community's resilience to disasters is protected and restored	
Outputs (expected results)	Activities planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity affected communities are better prepared, respond and recover to weather induced emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building of community-based disaster preparedness (CBDP) for the Disaster Management Task Force or committees; • Train staff and local leaders on climate change adaptation techniques, • Development contingency plans and community based early warning systems.

Logistics

Outcome: The relief operation is supported in delivering a range of relief items in line with the operational priorities in a cost effective and timely manner	
Outputs (expected results)	Activities planned
<p>LRCS, with support from the Africa Zone, has coordinated the procurement, storage, transport and distribution of relief items, ensuring efficient delivery to beneficiaries at final distributed points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient and cost-effective procurement of food and seeds locally (or in the region if prices rise) meeting procurement standards and procedures; • Provision of logistics support to LRCS branches to deliver the appropriate assistance (vehicles for transportation of goods and monitoring, warehouse rental/storage etc); • Control of the efficient movement of goods to the end user; • Provide logistics technical capacity through short-term delegate and/or RDRT support.

Communications – Advocacy and Public information

LRCS through its Communications Manager and with technical support from the IFRC's Southern Africa regional office (SARO) will conduct awareness and publicity activities including field trips to sensitise the public and the media on the situation on the ground and the humanitarian response provided by the National Society.

The SARO will play an important role of linking together progress across all food security operations in the region to ensure that these activities are replicated, where possible and that lessons learned are applied and advocated PNS, government and non government fora.

In order to ensure a steady flow of timely and accurate information between field and other stakeholders both internal and external is maintained, the following activities will be undertaken:

- Develop a communication strategy for developing awareness campaigns on issues related to food security in Southern Africa
- Support field staff in producing regular updates for sharing with stakeholders.
- Prepare and develop press materials to support the visibility activities in LRCS.
- Collect and prepare stories, pictures and other visual materials

Progress and Challenges:

As the operation has only recently been initiated, to date, assessment and planning activities have been undertaken. A draft plan of action (PoA) has been prepared and is being shared internally for feedback and will be ready for publishing shortly.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.



The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
 2. Enable healthy and safe living.
 3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
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