



Field in Qeme during LRCS food security assessment

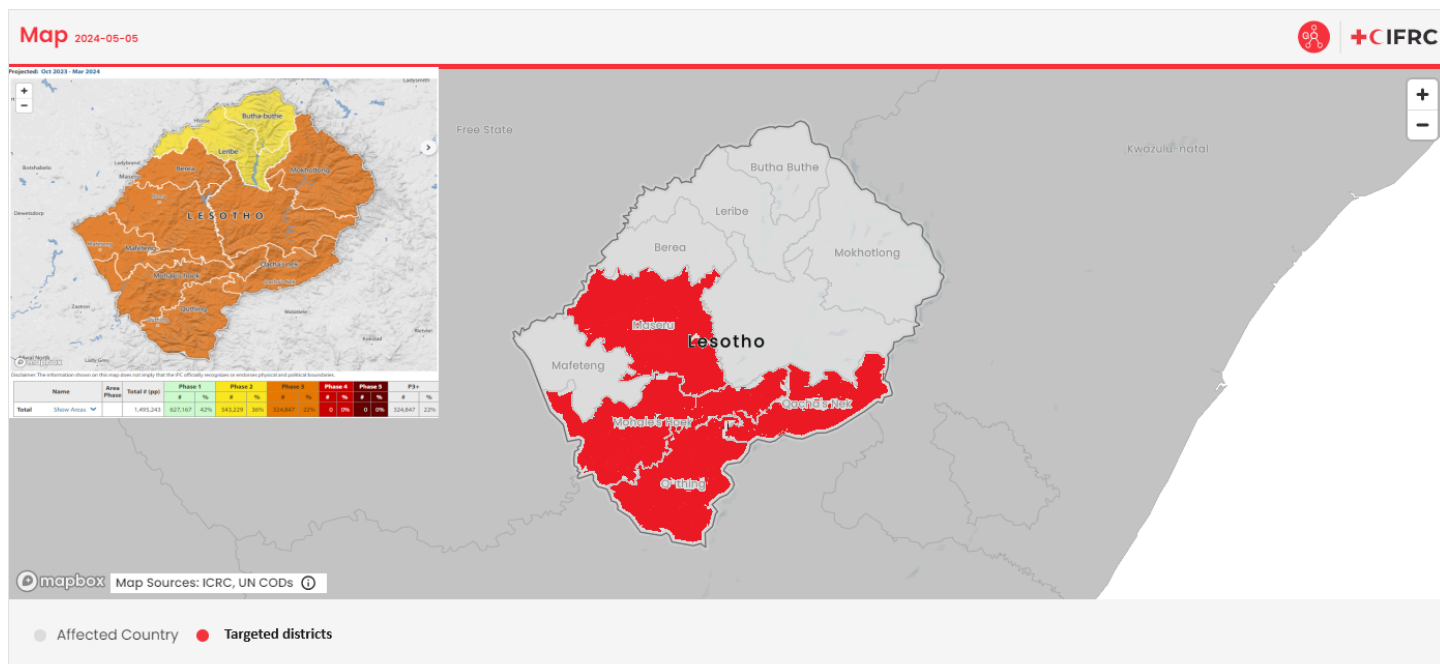
Appeal: MDRLS008	Country: Lesotho	Hazard: Drought	Type of DREF: Response
Crisis Category: Orange	Event Onset: Slow	DREF Allocation: CHF 711,203	
Glide Number: -	People Affected: 325,000 people	People Targeted: 12,500 people	
Operation Start Date: 2024-05-15	Operation Timeframe: 9 months	Operation End Date: 28-02-2025	DREF Published: 16-05-2024

Targeted Areas: **Maseru, Mohale's Hoek, Qacha's Nek, Quthing**

Description of the Event

Date when the trigger was met

2024-04-29



Map of Lesotho with targeted districts highlighted in Red colourr

What happened, where and when?

According to the weather update for quarter 1 of 2024 issued by the Lesotho Meteorological Services, the persistent heatwaves and exceptionally high temperatures experienced between January and March 2024 have led to widespread dryness of crops across most fields. The continuous crop failures over the past seasons is exacerbated. The past two quarters have seen the same crop failure leading automatically to the high food prices. There are 41% of rural families spending more than half of their income on food while most of the families leave with low income. In two consecutive agricultural seasons (2021/2022 and 2022/2023), Lesotho experienced harsh climatic induced shocks such as hailstorms, pests and heavy rainfall/waterlogging in most parts of the country. On the other hands, the heavy rainfalls in late December 2023 and early 2024 led to waterlogged fields which resulted in crop failure. The inflation resulting from this crop failures or production failures have a direct incidence to the families already struggling with low income and other factors that make them more vulnerable to food insecurity.

Approximately, 325,000 individuals are experiencing the ramifications of the ongoing food insecurity based on IPC information, stemming from the enduring drought that has gripped the nation for years and increased the food insecurity situation. This figure represents approximately 22% of the population. Eight districts on the ten in Lesotho are under Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 3 (IPC 3), signifying a crisis state. Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Thaba Tseka, and Leribe areas. In these districts, access to adequate food and nutrition is severely compromised, necessitating urgent intervention and support measures to alleviate the hardship faced by affected communities.

Lesotho is experiencing another negative impact on seasonal production since October, dry condition with likelihood of severe impact to coming productions, further reduction of job opportunity, lower income, poverty and un-employment and inflation.

Lesotho Red Cross Society has been monitoring this situation and the dry spells of the recent seasons with the Government through their active Drought Early action protocol (EAP). Following the seasonal outlook issued on October 19th, 2023, indicating the below average rainfall for OND, LRCS activated the EAP and supported the development and dissemination of early warning messages to over 10,000 individuals across Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Thaba Tseka, and Qacha's Nek. The second trigger was anticipated to be activated in January 2024, upon receipt of a report from the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) confirming* below-average rainfall during the period of October, November, and December (OND). However, contrary to expectations, the LMS report revealed that rainfall during OND was actually above normal hence the trigger was not met.

Despite this report, weather monitoring revealed that 2023/2024 season was characterize by mixed performance influenced by El Nino drought conditions, include OND. A comprehensive weather monitoring was conducted by LRCS, DMA and LMS during the first quarter of



2024 which revealed a pattern of below-normal rainfall and recurrent heatwaves across the country from January to March. These adverse weather conditions resulted in significant crop losses and a subsequent increase in the prices of staple foods, particularly maize meal. Furthermore, the dry spell of previous years and its incidence on the agricultural capacity with reduced access to agricultural inputs on planted areas, affected income-earning among poor households who rely on agricultural labor opportunities. In comparison with previous seasons, there was a decline in production of main staple food such as maize and sorghum in 2023/2024 season. This situation led to an increase in staple food prices which hinders households already in IPC3 situation and associated vulnerabilities to struggle further for food purchase in a low-income context. In the last two months, the prices of commodities such as maize have increased outrageously due to the general crop failure: 7% increase in April and from Government indications, the inflation will reach 22% increase by end of May. Maize being one of the basic family basket element, there is a likelihood of increased food insecurity and associated consequences such as other prices increased for Lesotho Flour Mills and derivate products in coming weeks. maize harvest.

It is against this background that Lesotho Red Cross request to launch a response intervention to mitigate the drought effects witnessed for the past season with an incidence on food insecurity for around 325,000 people that will certainly not be able to cope with the inflation in an already difficult context. Since OND, Government called for actions. The announcement of the production results and price increase brought Government to renew their call for assistance during the recent emergency coordination meeting.



An assessment in Qacha's nek @ LRCS picture



Fields_Qeme_Maseru

Scope and Scale

Lesotho has been experiencing fluctuating rainfall patterns since 2015/16 led to long standing drought episodes which impacted food security within the country. The adverse weather condition has particularly impacted the cropping and harvest expected across the seasons and over the years. Data are showing decreases in household annual crop production of 0.7 and 16.9 percent in Berea and Mafeteng, respectively. The current food security analysis indicate that 325, 000 people are affected by the current food insecurity and this constitute 22% of the population.

PROJECTED FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS Oct '23 – March '24

IPC 1	IPC 2	IPC 3	IPC 4
627, 000	543, 000	325, 000	0

- Currently eight districts on the 10 in Lesotho (Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng, Mophale's Hoek, Quthing, Thaba Tseka and Leribe) are classified to be in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification level 3 (IPC 3) which is a crisis situation.
- Two districts Mokhotlong and Botha Bothe are in IPC 2 (stress phase).

According to the LMS weather brief published on the 26th April 2024, during the April-May-June (AMJ) 2024, the country is expected to



experience normal to above normal rains and temperatures. Despite experiencing above-normal rainfall between October and mid-January, the 2023/24 agricultural season was characterized by a decline in production prospects due to prolonged dry spells and erratic rainfall since October 2023 to mid-January. This shift in weather patterns has adversely affected crop growth and green yields as well as the anticipated dry harvest across the country. It is also learnt that the projected rains will likely not improve the situation, especially as the country has been facing dry spell for years and other combined factors that weaken the capacity of the communities to cope with and significantly improve their condition despite the rain forecasts.

Furthermore, the October -December 2023, seasonal outlook published by Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) projected severe weather conditions indicating below normal to normal rainfall. It was within that period that the southern districts of the country received delay rainfalls coupled with storms. Eight percent of rural communities rely on rainfed agriculture as their main livelihood activity and were negatively impacted by the delayed rainfall and extreme temperature that occurred throughout the planting season. The situation further led to delayed planting of crops which resulted in poor green harvest which was expected in March 2024 and further threatens the upcoming dry harvest expected in May-June.

The anticipated below-average harvest, to provide minimal improvements in household food availability while many households will likely continue relying heavily on food purchases at local markets in order to access food during the harvest and post-harvest period. Despite sufficiently stocked markets, poor households' access to staples remains constrained due to weak purchasing power and above-average staple prices, which is typical during the peak lean season.

Field observations conducted by key informants indicate a varied picture of crop conditions nationwide also satellite imagery analysis, from the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) and the Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) also support the assessment observations.

Furthermore, the current drought induced by El Nino/la Nina resulted in reduction in agricultural livelihoods. In a country where the majority of income are agriculture related Lesotho is witnessing a decrease and loss of income from crop sales, decreased income from livestock and decrease of access to the labor opportunities linked to the farming activities has been escalating. The price increase for both food & non-food commodities negatively impacted household purchasing power hence compromised household food accessibility hence immediate measures are required to diminish existing food security gaps. Since april, the inflation has added to the economical stress of the families already battling with food accessibility, revival of livelihoods, protection of productive assets as well as preventing communities which led to adopt to negative coping strategies. Drought effect of El Nino/la Nina have been learnt to exacerbate the above humanitarian conditions. The 2015/16 El Niño-induced drought further exacerbated the situation, leaving 534,000 people vulnerable to food insecurity due to decreased food production, as highlighted in LVAC (2016).

The economic situation was further worsened by COVID 19, as most families lost their jobs led to reduction or no income especially for families that relied heavy on RSA remittances and factory workers. During that period, the country experienced increase in staple food prices such as maize meal (12%) and wheat flour (16%) since March 2020 and the prices kept on increasing to date. Inflation of up to 22% is expected by end of May 2024 coinciding with the harvest failure currently experienced. Indeed, adverse weather condition has particularly impacted the green harvest expected during this period, especially for those who managed to plant during the Summer cropping season (October, November, and December). Amidst, the situation, the Lesotho Flour Mills also increased the price of maize meal by 39% in two months and this is attributed to reduced in production of maize production following the adverse weather experienced during February and March 2024 that Lesotho import from RSA. As per the Lesotho Flour Meals the situation was exacerbated when South Africa revised its 2024 production estimates downwards to 13.256 million metric tons in late March, further straining regional maize supply and sustaining elevated maize meal prices in Lesotho compared to the five-year average due to heightened regional demand. Consequently, elevated maize prices are expected to persist, keeping household purchasing power below normal levels throughout the coming period.

In an historical analysis, Lesotho have seen successive drought period and long years of drought which has contributed to the decrease of the general agro-pastoral production over the past 10 years. The drought always came as a deteriorating factors to existing vulnerabilities, especially economical vulnerabilities such as poverty, low employment, low income, high food prices. The worst episodes of food insecurity in the recent years have been :

Year	Current (July-Sept)	Projections	(October-March)	Cause
2023/24	245,000 People		325,000 People	La Nina and El Nino
2020/21	346, 006 people		481, 725	Covid 19
2018/2019	273,635		433,000	Drought

Source Information

Source Name	Source Link
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1. Government of Lesotho	https://informativenews.co.ls/2024/04/10/weathering-the-storm-lesotho-flour-mills-works-to-cushion-basotho-from-maize-products-price-hike/#:~:text=As%20reported%20by%20Lesotho%20Flour,300%20by%2031%20March%202024.
2. FEWSNET march 2024	https://fews.net/southern-africa/lesotho/key-message-update/march-2024
3. Informative Newspaper	https://informativenews.co.ls/2024/04/10/weathering-the-storm-lesotho-flour-mills-works-to-cushion-basotho-from-maize-products-price-hike/#:~:text=As%20reported%20by%20Lesotho%20Flour,300%20by%2031%20March%202024.
4. EAP first trigger activation	https://adore.ifrc.org/Download.aspx?FileId=633011
5. IPC information october 2023 to March 2024	https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Lesotho_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Jul2023_Mar2024_Report_.pdf

Previous Operations

Has a similar event affected the same area(s) in the last 3 years?	No
Did it affect the same population group?	-
Did the National Society respond?	-
Did the National Society request funding form DREF for that event(s)	-
If yes, please specify which operation	-

If you have answered yes to all questions above, justify why the use of DREF for a recurrent event, or how this event should not be considered recurrent:

-

Lessons learned:



Insights gleaned from past interventions underscored the critical imperative to enhance community preparedness and response initiatives by focusing on capacity building for both volunteers and communities residing in high-risk regions.

Furthermore, it is essential to bolster the country's capacity to adopt anticipatory measures, thereby mitigating the impact of potential future shocks.

Strengthening community-based early warning systems is paramount to adapting to the ongoing shocks induced by climate change, ultimately ensuring community resilience.

Additionally, the utilization of cash-based interventions emphasized the significance of embracing a community engagement and accountability approach as the optimal communication and participation strategy across all LRCS initiatives.

This approach fosters active involvement and ownership within communities throughout the intervention process, ensuring effectiveness and sustainability.

Moreover, to cultivate community resilience and preparedness, it is imperative to provide comprehensive training in climate-smart agriculture practices and furnish inputs for homestead gardening.

These initiatives not only contribute to food security but also equip communities with the tools to adapt to evolving climatic conditions, thus reinforcing their long-term resilience.

Current National Society Actions

Start date of National Society actions

2023-10-19

Livelihoods And Basic Needs

The agricultural calendar delineates Winter planting, typically conducted from April to July, following the dry harvest, contingent upon the geographical location. Winter cropping practices are predominantly observed in lowland areas, whereas mountainous and foothill regions generally adhere to a single planting season, known as Summer. Moreover, to optimize preparations for the summer season, land preparation is typically undertaken from mid-August to September.

Furthermore, agricultural seasonal labor is often engaged in January through March, primarily focusing on tasks such as weeding in farms and fields. This period sees vulnerable households actively participating in agricultural activities, contributing to both their own livelihoods and the broader agricultural productivity of the region. The agricultural calendar delineates Winter planting, typically conducted from April to July, following the dry harvest, contingent upon the geographical location. Winter cropping practices are predominantly observed in lowland areas, whereas mountainous and foothill regions generally adhere to a single planting season, known as Summer. Moreover, to optimize preparations for the Summer season, land preparation is typically undertaken from mid-August to September.

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Agriculture-based labor opportunities are seasonally declining and are expected to remain limited with the start of the dry harvest. In mid-March the government issued an alert on Bluetongue disease affecting livestock (sheep) in two districts; Maseru and Mafeteng. Bluetongue disease is spread by mosquitos that have benefited from the high



	<p>temperatures and erratic rainfall that the country experienced since October- December 2023 to date. The reports further indicate that over 300 sheep have died and 1,880 sheep have been affected. NATION WARNED OF RECENT ANIMAL DISEASE - Government Of Lesotho (www.gov.ls).</p> <p>In response to the situation, LRCS is conducting the initial food security assessment to understand the current situation. In addition, LRCS mobilized resources through radio station and pleaded for more support from the public to donate more in LRCS donation boxes.</p>
<p>Multi Purpose Cash</p>	<p>To ensure timely response, the National Society, have an existing memorandum of understanding with the financial Service providers (Vodacom and Econet) to ensure that mobile cash transfers are done in a timely and dignified manner. However, the decision on which service provider to engagement will depend on the beneficiary's preference and phone network availability in the targeted area.</p>
<p>Protection, Gender And Inclusion</p>	<p>Drought induced food insecurity is usually associated to an increase in safeguarding concerns such as early child marriage, school drop outs and GBV issues. Therefore, LRCS through the safeguarding national and district based technical working group composed of volunteers started conducting child protection and GBV awareness campaigns in all the ten districts. During the campaigns, LRCS revives or capacitate the help desk by ensuring gender and inclusiveness in identifying members of the help desk.</p>
<p>Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation And Recovery</p>	<p>The LRCS EAP covers the two-livelihood zone mainly Southern lowland and Senqu Valley which are known as at high risk when coming to drought. Under the drought EAP, NS has gain key readiness capacity and complete already some actions that also serve to the drought National plan in Lesotho. This include the dissemination of drought related Early Warning Messages using media platforms and trained DRR structures, facilitating the pre-agreement between the three financial services providers (Vodacom, Econet and Chaprone), trainings of 15 volunteers in each district on CVA as well as building upon CVA simulation exercises that were held in December 2022 -January 2024.</p> <p>The LRCS EAP was activated upon reaching the first trigger on the 19th October 2023. Trigger statement: LMS issued a seasonal outlook statement indicating that the country is expected to receive normal below normal rainfall for OND and the IPC report indicating at least 20% of the population being food insecure. Upon reaching the mentioned trigger, LRCS supported the dissemination of EWS. LRCS prompted the development and dissemination of early warning messages to over 10,000 individuals across Mafeteng, Mophale's Hoek, Quthing, Thaba Tseka, and Qacha's Nek. These messages were crucial in alerting communities to the impending drought conditions and preparing them for potential challenges.</p> <p>The second trigger was anticipated to be activated in January 2024, upon receipt of a report from the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) confirming* below-average rainfall during the period of October, November, and December (OND). However, contrary to expectations, the LMS report revealed that rainfall during OND actually above normal hence the trigger was not met. As per procedures, the activation was stopped.</p> <p>Subsequently, with the collaborative support of the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), comprehensive weather monitoring was conducted during the first quarter of 2024 and is still ongoing and serving NS planning. The findings revealed a pattern of below-normal rainfall and recurrent heatwaves across the country from January to March. These adverse weather conditions resulted in significant crop losses and a subsequent increase in the prices of staple foods, particularly maize meal.</p>
<p>Community Engagement And Accountability</p>	<p>During the LRCS food insecurity assessment, LRCS used various CEA approaches to ensure community participation. Help desk were revived during child protection awareness campaigns . Furthermore, LRCS has an approved CEA strategy and existing toll-free line which is shared with communities to give feedback on LRCS interventions.</p>



Coordination

LRCS actively participates as a member of the National Emergency Operation Centre, which is coordinated by the Disaster Management Authority (DMA). This collaborative platform serves as a forum for deliberating on interventions aimed at mitigating crises. In response to the escalating food insecurity crisis, the government, through the Disaster Management Authority, activated the emergency operation committee on April 29, 2024, to deliberate on potential strategies to alleviate the impact of food insecurity and address the prevailing situation. This action was prompted by a 7% surge in food prices effective from April 8, 2024. Additionally, the Lesotho Flour Mills announced another impending price hike of 15%, scheduled to take effect from May 6, 2024. During this meeting, the government has appealed to all humanitarian actors for support in addressing food security concerns.

Throughout the response implementation phase, LRCS will closely collaborate with key stakeholders, including the DMA, Department of Local Government and Chieftainship, and Department of Social Development. Together, they will prioritize the identification of the most vulnerable households requiring assistance. LRCS is committed to fostering and maintaining robust partnerships with local authorities, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and existing mobile service providers. By working together closely, LRCS and its partners aim to ensure a coordinated and effective response that addresses the pressing needs of affected communities.

National Society Readiness

LRCS has established a dedicated Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) focal point, overseeing an internal national technical working group comprised of representatives from Disaster Management (DM), Program Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER), Finance, Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), and Logistics. Furthermore, in early 2024, LRCS conducted training for 15 volunteers on CVA in key districts including Thaba-Tseka, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Qacha's Nek, Quthing, and Qacha's Nek, with the aim of expanding CVA interventions. These volunteers are crucial in bolstering readiness for CVA response initiatives, ensuring adequate support availability across the country.

In a proactive measure to expedite response times, LRCS has forged a memorandum of understanding with financial service providers such as Vodacom and Econet. This agreement ensures that mobile cash transfers are executed promptly and with dignity. However, the selection of the service provider is contingent upon beneficiary preferences and the availability of phone network coverage in the targeted areas. Presently, LRCS is actively engaged in providing mobile cash transfers to 770 individuals using Vodacom Lesotho, spanning Maseru and Quthing. This initiative underscores LRCS's commitment to delivering timely and efficient assistance to vulnerable populations, leveraging mobile technology to enhance accessibility and dignity in aid distribution.

In order, to ensure the NS readiness to drought induced food insecurity, LRCS developed and EAP for drought to cover food insecurity and early warnings. The LRCS EAP covers the two-livelihood zone mainly Southern lowland (Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing) and Senqu Valley (Thaba Tseka and Qacha's Nek) which are known as at high risk when coming to drought. In addition, to complement the efforts already done under the drought EAP such as dissemination of drought related Early Warning Messages using media platforms and trained DRR structures, facilitating the pre-agreement between the three financial services providers (Vodacom, Econet and Chaprone), trainings of 15 volunteers in each district on CVA as well as building upon CVA simulation exercises that were held in December 2022 -January 2024.

The current DREF response will complement the afore-mentioned activities to allow timely and effective interventions to the affected communities. However, Mafeteng district, which is one of the targeted districts with EAP interventions is not targeted for the DREF response operation, due to more than three organisations (WFP, WWL, CRS to mention a few) operating in the area with similar intervention and targeting the similar people that LRCS aims to target.

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	<p>expected to receive normal below normal rainfall for OND and the IPC report indicating at least 20% of the population being food insecure.) Upon reaching the mentioned trigger, LRCS supported the dissemination of EWS. The second trigger was to be reached when LMS issued a report indicating that the country indeed received below normal rainfall for the period of October, November and December (OND). However, the report indicated that the observed rainfall for OND were above average.</p> <p>Throughout the food insecurity assessment conducted by LRCS, a range of Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approaches were deployed to foster active community involvement. As part of this endeavor, LRCS revitalized help desks during child protection awareness campaigns, providing accessible platforms for community members to seek assistance and share concerns.</p>
National Society EOC	<p>In response to the significant 39% increase in the price of maize meal, the government took proactive measures by activating emergency operation centers, where LRCS holds a membership. This sudden surge in maize meal prices prompted swift action to address the emerging food security challenges facing the nation. As an integral part of the emergency response framework, LRCS stands ready to collaborate with governmental authorities and other stakeholders to implement effective interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of rising food prices on vulnerable populations. This collective effort reflects a commitment to safeguarding the welfare of communities and ensuring access to essential food supplies during times of crisis.</p>

IFRC Network Actions Related To The Current Event

Secretariat	<p>Currently, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is actively engaged in offering technical support to monitor the ongoing situation. Additionally, leveraging the Early Action Protocol, IFRC has played a vital role in facilitating the dissemination of early warning messages concerning drought. Moreover, IFRC continues to maintain vigilance and monitor the situation closely.</p> <p>IFRC's involvement in providing technical assistance underscores its commitment to supporting disaster response efforts and enhancing resilience within communities facing challenges. By participating in early warning initiatives and ongoing monitoring activities, IFRC aims to ensure that communities are adequately informed and prepared to respond effectively to evolving crises. This proactive approach aligns with IFRC's mission to alleviate human suffering and promote the well-being of vulnerable populations worldwide.</p>
Participating National Societies	None

ICRC Actions Related To The Current Event

None

Other Actors Actions Related To The Current Event

Government has requested international assistance	Yes
National authorities	<p>Following the escalating drought situation since end of 2023, the government took decisive action by activating the national emergency operation centre. This central hub serves as a coordination mechanism to effectively monitor and manage the evolving situation. Through the national emergency operation centre, various stakeholders are brought together to streamline efforts, facilitate timely decision-making, and ensure a unified response to address the pressing needs of affected communities. This coordinated approach underscores the government's commitment to addressing emergent crises and safeguarding the well-being of its citizens.</p> <p>Utilizing its response capacity, the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) has initiated</p>



one-time food-for-work initiatives across all ten districts. However, the current efforts may prove insufficient, given the anticipated exacerbation of food insecurity in the upcoming months. This heightened concern stems from the projected failure of crops due to the El-Nino-induced drought and the occurrence of heavy rains in December 2023 and March 2024.

Recognizing the pressing need to address these challenges, additional interventions and support will be essential to mitigate the looming food crisis. The DMA, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, will need to explore innovative strategies and scale up assistance efforts to effectively respond to the evolving situation. Proactive measures and comprehensive planning will be vital in safeguarding the well-being of communities and minimizing the adverse impacts of the anticipated crop failure on food security.

In an effort to reduce the impact of the forecasted El Nino, the government of Lesotho through the Anticipatory Action Plans and Early Action Protocol led by Lesotho Red Cross commenced the dissemination of Early warning information mostly in the southern districts (Mafeteng, Mophale's Hoek, Quthing) considered to be drought prone. Farmers were encouraged to plant drought tolerant seeds while communities were advised to start water rationing and practicing hygiene to avoid drought related disease outbreaks.

UN or other actors

At present, the World Food Programme (WFP) is implementing cash-for-work initiatives in five districts—Mafeteng, Mophale's Hoek, Quthing, Thaba Tseka—with a focus on assisting vulnerable households through the Anticipatory Action initiative. However, it's worth noting that not all community councils are encompassed within these interventions. Hence, LRCS has set its sights on reaching out to the hard-to-reach community councils that aren't currently under the purview of UN interventions.

LRCS's proactive approach underscores its commitment to ensuring that no vulnerable community is left behind in receiving essential support. By extending assistance to these hard-to-reach areas, LRCS aims to bridge gaps in coverage and address the urgent needs of communities that may otherwise be overlooked. This inclusive strategy aligns with LRCS's mission to provide humanitarian aid to those most in need, regardless of geographic constraints or existing intervention frameworks.

Are there major coordination mechanism in place?

The government has entrusted the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) with the pivotal responsibility of coordinating all Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans. This coordination is executed through the National Disaster Risk Reduction Team (NDRT) and District Disaster Management Teams (DDMTs). Together, these structures play a crucial role in overseeing and coordinating all response initiatives. They meticulously map out existing interventions to prevent duplication of efforts, ensuring efficient allocation of resources and maximizing impact.

In response to the current situation, the government has taken proactive measures by activating the national emergency operation center. This central hub serves as a command post to coordinate and closely monitor the evolving situation. By centralizing efforts through the national emergency operation center, the government aims to enhance coordination among stakeholders, streamline decision-making processes, and facilitate a unified response to address the pressing needs arising from the crisis. This coordinated approach underscores the government's commitment to safeguarding the well-being of its citizens and effectively managing emergency situations.

Needs (Gaps) Identified



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

Livelihood

Cumulative effect of drought have weakened the agricultural capacity and worsen the access for staple foods for the already food insecure people. The agricultural production has decrease over the years due to drought effect on agricultural land and decreasing capacity of the population to access intrants. This situation worsened for the harvest of early 2024.

Agricultural production

Field observations conducted by key informants indicate a varied picture of crop conditions nationwide which is confirmed by satellite



imagery analysis/data from the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) and the Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI). Based on these Normalized Difference Vegetation Index in the last week of February, vegetation in Lesotho was at 80 to 110 percent of the 10-year mean. Although slightly below average, the situation worsened in March-April as a result of recurrent heatwaves and below normal rainfall that the country experienced. The results converged to the crop failure and below average production and vegetation.

It is crucial to highlight that around 80% of the rural population depend on rainfed agriculture, and they were adversely affected by delayed rainfall and recurring heat waves during the planting season. Additionally, those who managed to plant during the first rains in August could not achieve a good green harvest, further jeopardizing the anticipated dry harvest in May 2024. The situation was exacerbated by a 22% price increase by Lesotho Flour Mills.

The 2023/24, Summer cropping season was characterized by erratic rainfall and recurrent heat waves. During the October- December rainfall season, Lesotho experienced delayed rainfalls which did not only negatively impact livelihoods and water sector but also household economic stability. The situation was exacerbated by the above normal temperature and recurrent heat waves that caused prolonged dryness of crops hence reducing the expected green harvest in March. The staple food prices increased putting most vulnerable households at risk. In addition, the anticipated weather condition also threatens the upcoming Winter cropping as above normal temperatures are expected.

The Lesotho Meteorological Service reports that the situation worsened due to persistent heat waves and dry weather, causing the premature drying of crops and posing a threat to the upcoming dry harvest scheduled for May 2024. It is anticipated a below-average harvest that couldn't provide minimal improvements in household food availability. Hence, many households will likely continue relying heavily on food purchases at local markets in order to access food during the harvest and post-harvest period. Despite sufficiently stocked markets, the communities are characterized by poor households/low-income households. This maintain the access to staples constraining due to weak purchasing power and above-average staple prices, which is typical during the peak lean season.

Drought induced by El nino and consequences on farming activities

Moreover, livestock farmers faced challenges due to an El Niño-induced outbreak of animal diseases in mid-March. The government of Lesotho issued an alert about the occurrence of Bluetongue disease in Maseru and Mafeteng, where at least 1,880 sheep were affected, resulting in 300 deaths. This situation significantly impacts families reliant on livestock production as a primary source of income, compelling them to adopt negative coping strategies to survive.

Gaps on current assistance

Although the seeds were distributed in Berea during the planting season by active partners, the crop production was affected by the December 2023 and early January 2024 heavy rains that resulted in destruction of crops and therefore affecting the expected green harvest. Additionally, To date, the government distributed once-off food items in the 10 districts in a form of maize meal and beans to vulnerable households. In Berea, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts, communities received humanitarian assistance in a form of cash transfers while other received food vouchers in the current analysis period where the amount of cash as well as the food voucher value covered 100 percent of kcal to at least 6-9 percent of the total populations in the targeted locations. Farmers were encouraged to plant drought tolerant seeds while communities were advised to start water rationing and practising hygiene to avoid drought related disease outbreaks.

The aforementioned situation led to food insecure which requires need for humanitarian assistance to meet their immediate needs by saving lives, reducing food consumption gaps and protecting livelihoods of all vulnerable people in Crisis.



Health

Please list some information relative to malnutrition and health in the section as you are planning to intervene to some extent in that sector. E.g. malnutrition figures for children under 5, etc., from government or UN sources.

Lesotho struggle with persistent malnutrition issues, especially prevalent among children aged 2-3, with stunting affecting 34.5 percent of this demographic. Based on World Health Organization (WHO) criteria, approximately 40% of children under five years old in Lesotho experience chronic malnutrition or stunting.

These concerning rates are particularly pronounced in the mountainous regions of Thaba Tseka, Mokhotlong, and Qacha's Nek. The ramifications of malnutrition are multifaceted, encompassing hindered mental and physical development, weakened immune systems, and perpetuating a cycle of intergenerational malnutrition. Urgent and targeted interventions are imperative to break this cycle and safeguard the health and well-being of Lesotho's youngest citizens.

Additionally, deficiencies in essential micronutrients, such as iron and vitamin A, pose significant challenges, impacting over half of children under the age of 5. This underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to address malnutrition comprehensively and improve the health outcomes of Lesotho's young population.



Food preparation and handling is usually a problem especially in families that have children below 5. Poor handling results in disease outbreak.



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

The heavy rains had a significant impact, disrupting water sources and limiting access to clean water, both in rural and urban areas. However, the repercussions were particularly acute in rural regions, where communities heavily rely on open water sources like springs and wells. Many water sources in targeted districts require rehabilitation, while in other areas, there's a pressing need to construct water infrastructure to facilitate homestead gardening.

Moreover, the water scarcity experienced from January to March was linked to the El Niño phenomenon. These events not only hindered households' access to clean water but also had detrimental effects on agriculture, particularly rainfed farming and small-scale irrigation reliant on disrupted water sources. Hence, there's a critical need to rehabilitate existing water sources and construct new ones to enhance preparedness for similar future shocks.

In rural areas of Lesotho, diarrheal illnesses pose significant public health concerns and are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among infants and young children. These illnesses often coincide with periods of water scarcity during droughts. Therefore, disseminating information on sanitation and hygiene practices will be crucial in preventing diseases that could affect these vulnerable communities.



Protection, Gender And Inclusion

Farmers predominantly rely on rain-fed agriculture and small livestock, leaving them particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate-induced shocks. In times of crises and emergencies, vulnerable demographics, including women, girls, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, face heightened risks and endure severe hardships. Women and girls confront significant obstacles such as sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, exacerbating their vulnerability. Meanwhile, individuals living with disabilities and the elderly often encounter challenges accessing timely information, compounding their difficulties during emergencies.

Relative to other segments of society, vulnerable groups often lack adequate resources, leaving them exposed to various forms of abuse and exploitation. Addressing this vulnerability requires prioritizing the needs of these marginalized populations and bolstering community awareness of their unique challenges. By elevating awareness and prioritizing support for vulnerable groups, we can mitigate the burden of vulnerability and foster more inclusive and resilient communities.

Amidst the array of challenges confronting us in the present era, it is imperative to prioritize addressing the escalating safeguarding issues that are emerging. These encompass not only traditional concerns but also newer, pressing issues like child safeguarding and gender-based violence. These issues demand urgent attention and comprehensive strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals within our communities.



Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation And Recovery

The country faces recurrent climatic hazards that significantly impact household food security, livelihoods, and overall economic development. According to the Lesotho Meteorological Service, the situation has been exacerbated by persistent heat waves and dry weather, resulting in premature crop drying and posing a threat to the upcoming dry harvest scheduled for May 2024. Lesotho operates with two distinct planting seasons: Winter and Summer and any planning involving farming have to consider those element for appropriate community based solutions.

- The Winter planting season commences in June,
- The Summer planting starts in August.

The anticipated Winter conditions (May, June, July) suggest that the country may experience below-normal precipitation (including snow) and normal temperatures, potentially adversely affecting Winter crops and subsequently, income derived from crop sales. This could impede farmers' ability to procure seeds for the upcoming Summer planting season. Consequently, a pre-seasonal cropping assessment is necessary to evaluate ground conditions and assess farmers' readiness for the Summer season. It's crucial to consider both seasons when providing support to affected communities, given that 80% of rural communities depend on rainfed agriculture as their primary livelihood activity.

The lack of climate-smart agriculture practices and food preservation skills further inhibits communities' productivity. Unlike commercial



farmers, most subsistence farmers heavily rely on rainfed agriculture, often utilizing low-quality seeds and facing challenges in accessing agricultural inputs, resulting in reduced harvest yields.

Moreover, limited understanding and access to early warning messages hinder communities' ability to prepare and respond to disasters proactively. Disseminating early warning information is particularly critical for farmers, schools, and the wider community, yet vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people living with disabilities, herders, and farmers are often marginalized in this process. Efforts to bridge this gap in information dissemination are essential for enhancing community resilience and disaster preparedness.



Community Engagement And Accountability

In order to uphold accountability to the communities throughout the intervention, LRCS will employ Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) tools to identify needs and guide the targeting process. Public gatherings, overseen by local authorities, will be convened to pinpoint vulnerable individuals based on pre-established selection criteria. Moreover, to facilitate two-way communication and gather community feedback, suggestion boxes and help desks will be established during all interactions with the communities. This approach aims to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness in the delivery of assistance and services

Any identified gaps/limitations in the assessment

The government of Lesotho has yet to initiate a comprehensive vulnerability assessment across the country. However, the process has encountered delays due to financial constraints. Consequently, the government has reached out to humanitarian organizations for financial support to kick-start the assessment. The lack of funds for this assessment poses a risk of prolonging the turnaround time needed to conduct the assessment, which is crucial for identifying potential interventions to mitigate the impact on food security.

Furthermore, some assistance and presence are noticed as per described above. The government has provided one-time food aid in the form of maize meal and beans to vulnerable households across all 10 districts. UN agencies are also active. In Berea, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts, communities received humanitarian assistance in a form of cash transfers while others received food vouchers in the current analysis period where the amount of cash as well as the food voucher value covered 100 percent of kcal to at least 6-9 percent of the total populations in the targeted locations.

However, important gaps persist due to the coverage of only up to 9-10% of the people in need and mainly focusing on food and limited cash value. There is still a need to complement the unassisted communities and cover initiatives that will support the food production as a condition for local community improvement but also market and sub-economic dynamics.

In addition, Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS), operating as an auxiliary to the government, aims to undertake needs assessments and analysis in three targeted districts. This initiative is scheduled for June 2024, strategically planned ahead of the next planting season to gather vital information on the prevailing food security situation. It's worth noting that September marks the onset of the lean season in Lesotho, highlighting the urgency of conducting assessments and implementing interventions promptly.

Operational Strategy

Overall objective of the operation

The objective of this DREF allocation is to provide assistance to 12,500 individuals (equivalent to 2,500 households) in four districts who have been impacted by food insecurity, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) challenges, and disruptions to their livelihoods. This support will be delivered through sustainable interventions, including access to clean water, crop production initiatives, and multipurpose cash transfers. The assistance program will span a duration of nine months, commencing in May 2024.

The planned interventions have been carefully crafted to provide ongoing support to the affected communities, not only during the emergency phase but also as they transition into the next planting seasons. These seasons encompass the Winter, typically the driest period, and the subsequent seasons. By extending assistance beyond immediate crisis response, we aim to bolster the resilience of both communities and farmers against the adversities posed by harsh climatic conditions. This proactive approach ensures that support remains in place during critical periods, empowering communities to better withstand and recover from climatic challenges.

Operation strategy rationale

These interventions are triggered by the dry spell experienced in the country for the past seasons and the subsequent deterioration of food production, income and overall food security parameter for hundreds of thousands of people in the current period. This DREF comes as a response to the needs of communities in IPC3 of food insecurity in Lesotho. The operational design aims to mitigate the high risk of seeing this situation worsen with the new failure of the green harvest and cumulative decline of the staple food production and its consequences on the inflation that has arisen since April 2024. As such, through the planned interventions of this operation, communities will



be empowered to safeguard their productive assets and ensuring their ability to meet their basic needs to avoid resorting to negative coping mechanisms that could further expose them.

The ongoing drought Early action protocol (EAP) will continue to support the anticipatory actions, focusing primarily on readiness measures, such as training volunteers on Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA), educating community Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) structures on relevant issues, and updating public assistance waiting lists to enhance the effectiveness of shock-responsive social protection, our current intervention takes a more direct approach. The current DREF response will be a complement and continuity to the afore-mentioned activities to allow timely and effective interventions to the affected communities already in IPC3+. This DREF is mainly focusing on the response to immediate and medium-term needs with the emergency support and transition activities that could build some resilience in the communities for food and water access as apart of main challenges. The vulnerability information and analysis documented under the EAP is also included in this planning and the priority target. Hence, the areas most vulnerable to drought induced humanitarian needs are considered in this plan, except for Mafeteng district, which is one of the targeted districts with EAP not targeted for the DREF response operation, due to more the coverage from other partners. More than three organizations (WFP, WWL, CRS to mention a few) operating in the area with similar intervention and targeting the similar people that LRCS aims to target.

To bolster the affected regions, the National Service (NS) will mobilize its efforts and resources to implement cost-effective programs:

1. Assessment and continuous learning:

As part of this initiative, LRCS will conduct a comprehensive assessment that will focus on the FSL, health and WASH needs as a priority. Various methods, including community participation, group discussions, household interviews, key informant interviews, and observations, will be employed to conduct the planned assessment. Data collection and analysis will incorporate both primary sources and secondary data from relevant local government departments and institutions, informing the development of an exit strategy that guides recovery projects.

This assessment is required to complement the available information from IPC and the vulnerability assessment recently conducted. Through that assessment, LRCS will identify suitable water sources, wash facilities main deficiencies and the health gaps and suitable approach for a possible scale-up of those sectors.

This intervention will be updated depending on the result of the assessment if required based on findings and gaps. Another operation update at the 6 months will also be provided to inform on progress.

Continuous monitoring and assessment will provide tailored community-based solutions for different stages of action within this DREF, particularly in anticipation of the upcoming winter (starting August 2024) and summer (starting October 2024) planting seasons. LRCS will prioritize direct observations and communities expressed preferences during the different engagement to take place during the 9 months, the PDM and additional direct consultations with communities through toll-free lines and suggestion boxes to gather feedback and address any concerns. The result of the assessment plus the learning build through community engagement plus monitoring and evaluation will give ground to define an exit strategy that will be aligned with the community preferences and humanitarian context.

1. Multipurpose Cash Transfers:

The NS will provide unconditional cash for multi-usage to the affected communities. This initiative aims to empower vulnerable households, enabling them to purchase essential items and access basic needs. Beneficiaries will receive cash assistance of 1,200 LSL per household per month for three months via mobile e-wallets. With more than 48% of household's income allocated to food in common situation, this installment is planned to be used proportionally to cover for food and contribute to the emergency lifesaving services access for which the families in IPC3 may not have the capacity. Especially for those with the lowest income and socio-economic challenges that their like food. The cash transfer value was determined based on the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee survival deficit threshold 2023/2024. It also considers the food basket, local market prices and the potential impact of inflation to the local market. The monthly allocation to be provided to 2,500 families will ensure they have the means to sustain themselves, especially leading up to the Winter cropping season.

The NS will undertake beneficiary verification, registration, and monitoring processes to ensure effective program implementation. As part of the targeting strategy for this pillar of intervention, the economic criteria will be used with a selection of the lowest income households and very poor households. Due to that criterion, LRCS has learnt that in most cases these groups tend to lack the financial literacy to effectively make financial plans for three months in the future in case of lump sums. As such, prior to cash transfers LRCS will conduct information campaigns explaining the intended purpose of cash transfers and ensure a proper monitoring and guidance where needed. The transfers will also be scheduled in three installments to help limit diversion of funds by beneficiaries.

Prior to the disbursement of funds, NS personnel and volunteers will undergo training on registration and payment procedures. Furthermore, five volunteers in each district will receive specialized training in mobile data collection and Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA), enhancing their capacity to support this critical initiative.

The NS will conduct Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) following the initial transfer to assess the impact and effectiveness of the assistance provided. The insights gleaned from the PDM will inform strategic actions to be undertaken before the subsequent distribution, thereby optimizing the support provided to beneficiaries.

2. Livelihood, Food Security Sector:

2a. Support of intransit to boost the local food production and markets.

Through this intervention, 2,500 households will receive vegetable seeds and agricultural inputs to promote homestead gardening, thereby fostering self-sufficiency. In most cases, families in rural areas rely on keyhole gardening or homestead gardening to produce their own food and surplus is usually sold. However, the situation differs in urban settings. Therefore, there will be a need for increased



monitoring and supervision, particularly in urban areas, to address any potential obstacles and ensure the successful establishment and maintenance of such gardening initiatives. By closely monitoring and providing necessary support. The NS will purchase and distribute vegetable seeds and fruit trees to effected households following the planned assessment in preparation for summer cropping (August 2024). The distribution of seeds will be done in line with LMS May, June, July, August and September outlook to ensure that seeds and trees distribute cope within the forecasted weather.

By equipping households with vegetable seeds, the NS will aim to ensure they have access to essential food items that they can both consume and sell. The surplus produce from homestead gardens can be sold in local markets, providing families with additional income to cover other basic needs. This strategy not only enhances food security within households but also contributes to economic resilience by diversifying income sources.

Moreover, selected households will have the opportunity to showcase their crops during food preservation and handling trainings and campaigns. By incorporating real-life demonstrations into these educational initiatives, participants can learn practical skills for maximizing the shelf life and nutritional value of their produce. This hands-on approach fosters greater engagement and retention of knowledge, empowering households to effectively preserve and utilize their harvests for long-term food security.

2b. Trainings on climate smart Agriculture.

The NS will facilitate agricultural training sessions for 40 lead farmers, each assuming the crucial role of disseminating acquired knowledge and skills to 10 follower farmers within their respective communities. These training initiatives aim to equip affected communities with a diverse array of farming techniques, strategically designed to mitigate the adverse effects of drought. While encompassing a broad spectrum of farming practices, emphasis will be placed on methods proven to minimize drought impact, such as meticulous seed selection, strategic intercropping, heightened mulching practices, rotational cropping techniques, and the adoption of soil and moisture conservation methodologies like keyhole and trench gardening.

These lead farmers will then play a pivotal role in training approximately 4,000 households on homestead gardening techniques, include the 2500 targeted. By deploying lead farmers as trainers, LRCS and its partners aim to empower communities with the tools and knowledge needed to establish and maintain productive homestead gardens, thereby enhancing food security at the household level. These cascade workshops will serve as platforms for establishing and nurturing the exchange of indigenous community knowledge and practices. Moreover, they will delve into the root causes of climate change, exploring the various factors that contribute to its exacerbation. Through comprehensive mapping exercises, communities will assess their available resources, capacities, and the environmental hazards precipitating climate change. By empowering communities with this knowledge, the workshops aim to facilitate proactive measures and foster resilience in the face of climate-related challenges.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, department of extension services and resource centers, have the lists of community-led farmers (lead farmers) who are selected by their respective communities to provide essential support and guidance in agriculture related sectors. These community lead farmers play a crucial role in facilitating agricultural activities and supporting local communities in enhancing food security.

3. Health:

To combat the prevalent issue of malnutrition across all districts in Lesotho, the Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) will integrate to the assessment the health and nutrition to further assess what are the emergency needs and gaps based on what other partners are already doing. This will also serve to identify in the targeted districts the best approach depending on the type of malnutrition and existing systems. The NS through volunteers will work closely with Ministry of Health, to gather nutrition related information. The results of the assessment to be conducted in June will be considered to strengthen the interventions.

In the current phase, LRCS will enhance the community knowledge on the malnutrition in general and the risk on the health. Recognizing already the urgent need to address malnutrition and reducing the risk of more people failing in malnutrition phase, LRCS is ensuring that its proposed interventions encompass nutrition education campaigns, as well as training sessions on food handling and preservation. Collaborating closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Department of Nutrition, LRCS aims to raise awareness about proper nutrition and food hygiene in communities.

Education campaigns will be conducted in specific group engagement and large message diffusion will be organized to disseminate the messages on the main route of the malnutrition and the adequate nutrition practices for households and for most vulnerable groups, especially PLW and children. As part of this initiative, LRCS will conduct refresher training "training of trainers" workshops for 30 community members from catchment communities. These workshops will focus on equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to educate their communities on proper food handling and the preparation of nutritious meals to combat micronutrient deficiencies. This focal point person will support the demonstrations and sensitization during door to door and group sessions.

4. Water, Hygiene and Sanitation:

During the planned assessment, the WASH will be one of the main areas. LRCS will conduct initial assessment to establish the key hygiene risks that trigger or worsen the food insecurity to ensure the action remain focused and relevant for each districts targeted.

LRCS Furthermore, LRCS will use volunteers to map out water sources/structures requiring rehabilitation or most appropriate communities and areas for construction. This assessment will enable a comprehensive understanding of area-specific needs for water services, gaps and the water usage dynamics and preferences for the best option of water system. This process will take into account various factors, including the level of need, reliability of water sources, the use of water source and community preferences. By



prioritizing the most vulnerable populations and ensuring access to essential resources such as water, LRCS endeavors to alleviate hardship and enhance the resilience of communities facing food insecurity.

In the selection of water systems to be rehabilitated/constructed, LRCS approach for now (revisable based on assessment) will be to prioritize sites where communities are already practicing use of water for community multi-usage. Meaning the sources that are serving the direct consumption and productive purposes such as crop production. This approach will ensure the Water point put in place serve as a Multi-Use Water Systems (MUS) that takes into consideration the needs for water access, hygiene and the small agriculture activities, especially knowing that majority of peri-urban families have small food productions or garden. The Water point setting will be designed to be an added value to the LRCS intervention by tackling different food insecurity roots. Contributing to the sustainability and effectiveness of the food support above while setting path for food security through maintenance of food availability and reduction of the Water/hygiene risk factors for the food insecurity. In the aspect of WASH risk factors reduction, the areas targeted for the water point will also consider the most vulnerable groups for waterborne diseases and children. This proactive approach not only enhances access to safe water but also strengthens community resilience against waterborne illnesses.

To further prevent the risk of associated Water and hygiene diseases and their contribution to the food insecurity and nutrition challenges, LRCS will extend its support to communities by facilitating WASH and hygiene campaigns. These campaigns will aim at promoting awareness and ensuring access to clean water, thereby mitigating the risk of waterborne diseases. The effort for wash campaign will be coordinated with the ongoing DREF storm surge response which has ongoing WASH campaigns but limited in few community councils in Maseru and Quthing. The messages were also prioritizing the WASH risk following floods with water-related outbreaks while the current campaign will be extended geographically and cover the risk of hygiene, food hygiene, food manipulation, animals' manipulation and agro-pastoral minimum hygiene and sanitation rules to prevent against common drought season outbreaks for human and animals.

5. The integration of Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) principles, along with Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) strategies:

Both PGI and CEA will be embedded to the project approach from the assessment to the delivery and post-delivery of assistance. During the selection process of beneficiaries, special consideration will be given to households headed by vulnerable individuals, including children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. This prioritization ensures equitable access to support and addresses the specific needs of marginalized groups within the community.

Furthermore, community engagement will be emphasized throughout the project lifecycle to foster ownership and sustainability of initiatives. Communities will be actively involved in decision-making processes, ensuring transparency and accountability. The NS will employ various CEA approaches, such as suggestion boxes, utilizing existing toll-free numbers, and establishing community help desks, to facilitate two-way communication channels between the NS and community members. These mechanisms will enable feedback, input, and dialogue, empowering communities to actively participate in shaping and driving the project's direction.

6. Initial planning path for the transitional strategy:

It is anticipated that the findings from this assessment will inform long-term strategic planning and recovery measures to ensure the sustainability of projects implemented under this operation. Following the above assistance, LRCS will utilize the Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) survey facilitate by the district team will be a key learning for planning design after this response phase and for transitional and resilience potential planning.

NS enjoys a robust working relationship with the government and will collaborate closely with them in conducting the planned assessment. This collaborative effort will facilitate the development of actionable project activities to mitigate the impact of the drought and establish long-term strategies. Strong partnerships will be established and maintained with stakeholders such as the disaster management authority and government departments responsible for coordinating disaster-related response initiatives. Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) staff and volunteers will work closely with the government and its partners during project initiation and implementation to minimize duplication of efforts and ensure a smooth transition. This coordinated approach will enhance project sustainability, as key stakeholders and LRCS volunteers will continue to support and monitor initiatives even beyond the project's duration. It should be note that the NS will develop an Operational update after 6 months of launching the operation (November 2024). The aim of this ops update will provide update to indicate the progress on the implementation of project and whether the situation is improving or not, and this will be aligned with the new forecast and IPC projections as well and the findings of the planned assessment to be conducted in June/July 2024.

Targeting Strategy

[Targeting Strategy Supporting Document](#)

Who will be targeted through this operation?

LRCS aims to extend support to the most vulnerable populations residing in the four districts categorized under IPC 3 food insecurity phase. Districts of Maseru-rural, Mohale's Hoek, Qacha's Nek, and Quthing. The overarching objective is to provide assistance to 2, 500 households, benefiting approximately 12,500 individuals, to address their fundamental needs.



Priority will be accorded to households facing heightened vulnerabilities, including :

- Social vulnerabilities such as households composition with priority to families with highest number of children, especially children under 5; families with child-headed, pregnant women, lactating mothers, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly.
- Economical vulnerabilities with families with low or no income generating activities; household's ownership of dwelling, assets and livestock; household's main source of income and the frequency of that income.

In addition, the households facing IPC3 selected as per the criteria above will be filter by the socio-economical criteria. For the specific agricultural intrans support, the families matching the above criteria will then be prioritized based on the condition of having garden or small farms. The households matching this additional criteria will be provided with vegetable seeds to bolster their homestead gardening efforts. This multifaceted approach aims to not only address immediate food needs but also empower households to generate income by selling surplus produce. This approach is the more efficient given that for Lesotho context, in rural and peri-urban areas the majority of households have small gardens or planting as first or secondary activities for subsistence and selling.

Prior to the distribution of seeds, the Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS), in close partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, conducts thorough assessment meetings to ensure that seeds reach the right households. This collaborative effort aims to target households most in need and ensure equitable distribution of resources. As part of the coordination, LRCS will engage with partners active on the field and Government to ensure targeting consider the humanitarian assistance from others actors. Communities that have already benefited from other supports will not be prioritized to avoid overlapping.

Explain the selection criteria for the targeted population

LRCS will implement community-based targeting strategies to identify individuals eligible for assistance, emphasizing active involvement from community members, local leaders, and stakeholders. Before commencing the targeting process, thorough criteria for selection will be collectively deliberated and endorsed by community members. This participatory approach empowers communities to rank households based on their susceptibility to food insecurity, thereby ensuring that aid reaches those facing the greatest vulnerabilities. By promoting transparency and community ownership, this inclusive methodology facilitates precise beneficiary identification tailored to the unique circumstances and requirements of each locality.

In addition, Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS), in collaboration with the Disaster Management Authority and the Department of Social Assistance, in ensuring the accuracy in targeting and that assistance reaches the most deserving beneficiaries, LRCS will use community engagement approach, use of auxiliary social workers under department of social assistance to further verify the lists. Also, local leaders, including village chiefs and community councilors will be involved to ensure oversight and accountability throughout the process. By engaging local stakeholders and leveraging community knowledge, LRCS aims to effectively target and assist those in greatest need, thereby maximizing the impact of humanitarian efforts.

Total Targeted Population

Women	3,600	Rural	100%
Girls (under 18)	3,900	Urban	0%
Men	2,300	People with disabilities (estimated)	10%
Boys (under 18)	2,700		
Total targeted population	12,500		

Risk and Security Considerations

Please indicate about potential operation risk for this operations and mitigation actions

Risk	Mitigation action
Beneficiary Safety	Mobile cash transfers will be done and each recipient will withdraw cash at his /her comfort.
Grievance and risk of claim and communal conflict.	Feedback mechanisms will be adopted to ensure that grievance is given and responded to in a timely manner. Local farmers lead and local representative will be engaged to the early



	communication on targeting criteria and processes with the communities. They will also be engage on any conflict resolution.
Risk of duplication or error in the targeting	Community based targeting and verification with local authorities will be done to avoid duplication and corruption related targeting. For the farming, ministry of agriculture will be involved, as well as the local representative.

Please indicate any security and safety concerns for this operation

L RCS maintains a strict policy of zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse. As such, all beneficiaries will receive comprehensive empowerment sessions on this crucial subject and will be encouraged to utilize safe reporting channels should they encounter any instances of misconduct. Additionally, in a proactive measure to prevent potential family conflicts within households, beneficiaries will have the opportunity during the assessment and registration process to designate a trusted individual to receive cash assistance on behalf of their family. This approach aims to foster transparency, mitigate risks, and ensure that aid reaches its intended recipients while upholding the dignity and safety of all involved.

Has the child safeguarding risk analysis assessment been completed?

Yes

Planned Intervention



Livelihoods And Basic Needs

Budget: CHF 64,632

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators

Title	Target
# of families who received seeds and agricultural inputs for summer cropping	2,500
# of households who receive trainings on Agricultural practices	2,500
# of households who received homestead gardening seeds (spinach, rape, beetroot and carrots)	2,500
# of households who recieved trainings	2,500
#of post diistribution conducted and reported following the FSL assistance	3
% of families who confirmed the intrant was used for garden and planting	100

Priority Actions

- Agricultural training to 40 lead farmers on farming practices, seed selection, inter cropping, intensifying mulching, rotational cropping, soil and moisture conserving practices like keyhole and trench gardening.
- Training of 10 community-based farmers groups on food preservation and climate smart agriculture.
- Procurement and distribution of seeds and agricultural inputs (hybrid seeds of maize, beans for summer cropping).
- Procurement and distribution of vegetable seeds for homestead gardening (spinach, rape, beetroot and carrots).
- Training and engagement of of farmers and agricultural actors and association and small farmers on conservation and safe management of crops/Harvest.



Multi Purpose Cash

Budget: CHF 490,171

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators



Title	Target
# of households who received cash	2,500
# of Post distribution Monitoring Conducted following the cash assistance	1
# of monitoring visits and engagement of communities that are documented on the use of cash	3
% of families that confirmed the cash assistance have increase their capacity to access food	90
% of families that confirmed the cash assistance have increase their capacity to access other needs or services	70

Priority Actions

- Refresher training of volunteers on mobile data collection for verification purposes and Training of volunteers and staff on CVA. 3 transfers to the 2500 HH beneficiaries.
- Verification and registration of beneficiaries.
- Monitoring of the cash assistance and cash utilization and engagement of communities on the use of cash before each transfer.
- Post distribution monitoring for the cash implemented.
- Beneficiary community discussion on the relevance of the cash intervention to build learnings prior to the lessons learnt. As part of the engagement of the communities.



Health

Budget: CHF 12,926

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators

Title	Target
# of nutrition campaigns conducted	4
# of people reached with health prevention activities	12,500
#of groups engaged on the health discussion, training or consultations	12

Priority Actions

- Training of communities on disease linked to hygiene, nutrition practices.
- Nutrition campaigns in each district (04) through door to door and group discussions targeting specific vulnerable groups. Key groups include PLW and mothers (especially mothers with children under 5), people with chronic vulnerabilities (diseases or disabilities), elderly. At least 3 groups per districts engaged in regular sessions in each district.
- In each district (04) through door to door and/or group discussions cover the disease prevention messages that are common in the drought context. Include WASH related diseases and animals/food hygiene transmittable diseases.



Water, Sanitation And Hygiene

Budget: CHF 23,268

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators

Title	Target
# of rehabilitated and constructed water sources	6
# of people reached through WASH campaigns	12,500



% of people that confirmed their water management and drinking water practices have changed after the intervention	40
% of people that confirmed their hygiene practices and food management have improved following the intervention	62

Priority Actions

- Mapping of water sources will be done and sources in need of rehabilitation and construction in 06 communities.
- Construct or rehabilitate water facilities. 6 in total.
- WASH messages to the communities on the hygiene and WASH general challenges identified. Including the food hygiene, the communities water treatment technics, the environmental and households' hygiene. Focusing mainly on most vulnerable areas, schools where children are currently accessible and small agro-pastoral actors.
 - Awareness messages to the communities on food management, handling and hygiene. To include messages on hand and food washing, food conservation as appropriate based on context.
 - Through door to door and public awareness, emphasize on the general environmental hygiene, animals and carcass handling and all WASH risks that could worsen the situation of food insecurity for the communities.
- Demonstration/engaging communities on Local technics for water treatment technics and effective water management.
- Setting-up and monitoring the water point management committees with the support of community leaders/representatives where water points will be established or constructed. They will support on the monitoring of the work and safety.



Community Engagement And Accountability

Budget: CHF 3,826

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators

Title	Target
# of people engaged and reached with CEA activities	12,500
# of established CEA Feedback approaches	4
Group discussion held	20
% of feedback collected that are successfully treated or responded to	100

Priority Actions

- Project introduction.
- Community sensitization meetings.
- Volunteer monthly meetings.
- Focus group discussions with local representatives, community of farmers and existing community organization structures.
- Focus group discussion with specific groups such as mothers, head of households, pregnant and lactation women to enhance the food hygiene and nutrition practices.
- Continuous consultation with key groups for the communities' preferences, harmonization of targeting criteria, pre and post assistance consultations feedback, feedback collection on the intervention.
- Monthly debriefing on feedback collected and integration to the intervention to inform decision and orient on messages to the communities.



Secretariat Services

Budget: CHF 9,307

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators

Title	Target
# of monitoring visits conducted and reproted	4



# of Coordination meeting organised or attended to on the drought- food insecurity planning within RCRC	2
# of Coordination meeting organized or attended to on the drought- food insecurity planning with partners	1

Priority Actions

- Provide remote support on operations, technical and coordination.
- Monitoring visits.
- Technical guidance on different sectors.
- Support NS compliance to operational and reporting requirement.
- Supervision and compliance to finance and logistic processes.
- Support RCRC coordination and external as well.
- Support resource mobilization and planning, exit strategy etc. This involve supporting LRCS as part of the Southern Africa approach to the drought and food insecurity strategic orientation, data collection, coordination and resource mobilization.



National Society Strengthening

Budget: CHF 107,073

Targeted Persons: 12,500

Indicators

Title	Target
# of meeting for technical and supervision	4
# of Lessons learnt workshop	1
#of assessment carried out	1
# of monitoring visits reported	9
#of laptop procured	4
#of video documentary produced and disseminated	1

Priority Actions

- Volunteer insurance.
- Communications and visibility - video documentary.
- Procurement of branding and visibility materials.
- Procurement of 04 Laptop for the staff engaged in the intervention.
- Logistic mobilization for the intervention and the monitoring.
- Monitoring visits from HQ technical profiles required to the induction and the implementation of the key activities. Technical support to be deployed, mission to cover the documentary, mission to assist on the CEA strategy.

About Support Services

How many staff and volunteers will be involved in this operation. Briefly describe their role.

There will be in total 45 volunteers engaged at minimum for this intervention. 40 volunteers and 5 supervisors. 10 volunteers at least involved in each districts. The NS will organize the volunteers deployment and activities following the implementation agenda. Cost for each districts activities being included. from a minimum of 7 months. taking into account the high activities weeks and the lowest to the rounding of 28 Weeks/7 months full mobilizations.

For the successful execution of this operation, all essential departments within LRCS, including the Programmes team comprising the Senior Management team, Disaster Management, Finance, Communication, PMER, Logistics, Fleet, and Division/Branch Managers, are fully committed to supporting project implementation at various stages, tailored to the specific needs as they arise.



The Senior Management team holds responsibility for overseeing the overall implementation of the project and monitoring its progress. Their key role involves ensuring the availability of both staff and volunteers to provide necessary support throughout the process.

Within the Disaster Management department, project activities will be executed with the assistance of branch managers acting as project officers. This collaborative effort will involve support from all relevant departments. Meanwhile, the Finance and PMER teams will provide essential support by managing all financial transactions and ensuring compliance with accountability measures.

Furthermore, the Logistics, Legal, and Fleet departments will play integral roles in ensuring the seamless execution of the project. They will focus on maintaining up-to-date agreements and facilitating logistical requirements, thereby enabling smooth operations and enhancing overall project efficiency. This coordinated effort across departments underscores LRCS's commitment to delivering impactful humanitarian assistance while upholding transparency and accountability standards.

If there is procurement, will it be done by National Society or IFRC?

IFRC will be consulted for procurement services to offer guidance.

A large percentage of the funding is allocated to the cash assistance. In the cash process, LRCS will use mobile money transfers, working in partnership with the Vodacom Lesotho and Econet Lesotho. Selection of the mobile service providers will be done based on their network coverage and willingness to scale up number of agents. LRCS has established pre-existing agreements with mobile service providers, including Vodacom Lesotho and Econet Lesotho, to facilitate timely transfers of assistance.

How will this operation be monitored?

LRCS has a Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER) unit. The unit has one PMER staff and two interns and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) focal point who reports directly to the Programmes Director, who oversees all projects implementation. The unit ensures that LRCS effectively implements its projects while also ensuring accountability to both stakeholders and donors, and this is achieved through effective project planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Similarly, to any other project that LRCS has, the LRCS PMER unit will ensure that all the M&E activities such as tracking of project performance, reports and conducting PDMs and lessons learnt workshops will mainly be the major responsibilities of the department.

In addition, after 6 months in the operation, LRCS will provide the Ops update to indicate the progress on the implementation of project and whether the situation is improving, and this will be aligned with the new forecast and IPC projections. A monitoring framework with time frames will be developed with the support of IFRC. This tool will be used to provide technical support, track the implementation progress, identify challenges as well as manage the risk that could hinder the implementation on time and come up with remedial interventions thought out the implementation phase. Monitoring visit will be conducted by IFRC to support the NS to provide technical support.

Please briefly explain the National Societies communication strategy for this operation

In collaboration with IFRC communication office, LRCS communication will cover and document all operations through social media presence and collect success stories.





DREF OPERATION

- Lesotho Red Cross Society
Lesotho_Drought

Operating Budget

Planned Operations	594,823
Shelter and Basic Household Items	0
Livelihoods	64,632
Multi-purpose Cash	490,171
Health	12,926
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	23,268
Protection, Gender and Inclusion	0
Education	0
Migration	0
Risk Reduction, Climate Adaptation and Recovery	0
Community Engagement and Accountability	3,826
Environmental Sustainability	0
Enabling Approaches	116,380
Coordination and Partnerships	0
Secretariat Services	9,307
National Society Strengthening	107,073
TOTAL BUDGET	711,203

all amounts in Swiss Francs (CHF)

[Click here to download the budget file](#)



Contact Information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

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IFRC Appeal Manager: Kopano Masilo, Head of the Delegation, kopano.masilo@ifrc.org, +27663203886

IFRC Project Manager: Bongeka Mpinke, Senior Disaster Management Officer, bongeka.mpinke@ifrc.org, 0747920279

IFRC focal point for the emergency: Bongeka Mpinke, bongeka.mpinke@ifrc.org, 0747920279

Media Contact: Susan Nzisa Mbalu, Communications Manager, susan.mbalu@ifrc.org, +254733827654

[Click here for the reference](#)

