
Lesotho receives UN support for People affected by Drought

Maseru, 5 September 2024. As Lesotho faces a worsening food security crisis, Reena Ghelani, the Assistant Secretary-General and Climate Crisis Coordinator for El Niño and La Niña, accompanied by Andrea Noyes, the Head of the Regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) undertook a four-day mission to the country to meet with communities affected by the drought, Government officials, UN, and civil society partners.

Ms. Ghelani, Ms. Noyes and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Ms. Amanda Khozi Mukwashi informed the Government that the acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator will release US\$2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to facilitate a joint, coordinated humanitarian response.

On 12 July 2024, the Government of Lesotho declared a state of National Food Insecurity Disaster after a historic drought triggered by El Niño led to the lowest crop yields since the 2018/19 agricultural season.

According to the Government, about a third of the population—approximately 700,000 people—will face hunger in the coming months. In rural areas, more than 400,000 people are expected to experience crisis levels of acute hunger through March 2025. Vulnerability assessments show that an additional 296,049 people are expected to become food insecure in urban areas. The drought has resulted in severe water shortages, with wells drying up.

"We must support vulnerable communities affected by the drought in Lesotho," said Reena Ghelani. "This US\$2 million allocation will help scale up humanitarian assistance for those most in need, but we also need to strengthen long-term resilience to prevent future crises."

During her mission, Ms. Ghelani engaged with Government and partners on immediate needs, ongoing response, and strategies to build long-term resilience against climate shocks. She met with affected communities in Qacha's Nek and Mafeteng to assess the impact of the drought on the most vulnerable.

"The situation is difficult. We met farmers who said the drought has led to crop failures, and we spoke to distressed mothers who told us they don't have enough food for their children. This allocation will be critical to help people access sufficient food and other essential services. The time for action is now," Andrea Noyes said. "OCHA is supporting the UN and partners in Lesotho to strengthen humanitarian coordination and scale up the response to complement Government efforts."

“We stand with the people of Lesotho in this time of need,” said Amanda Khozi Mukwashi. “As demonstrated by the emergency allocation, the UN is committed to working closely with the Government of Lesotho and all partners to ensure a coordinated and effective response.”

The UN in Lesotho is actively supporting the operationalization of the recently launched National El Niño Response Plan, which requires approximately \$212.9 million, with outstanding funding needs of \$112.8 million.

Media contacts:

Resident Coordinator Office: Reitumetse Rusell, reitumetse.russell@un.org

Climate Crisis Coordinator: Priscilla Lecomte, WhatsApp: +254 794 32 10 34, lecomte@un.org

OCHA ROSEA: Basma Ourfali, WhatsApp: +254780926564, basma.ourfali@un.org