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UN DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL AMINA J. MOHAMMED'S VISITS LESOTHO, REAFFIRMS UN'S SUPPORT TOWARDS BASOTHO'S LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

By: Reitumetse Russell



United Nations (UN) Deputy Secretary-General (DSG), Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, visited Lesotho, 4-6th October 2024, to reaffirm the UN's commitment and support towards the country's efforts aimed at achieving its long-term vision and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Representing the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, the DSG attended the Kingdom's historic Bicentenary celebrations in Maseru. Her visit underscored the enduring partnership between the UN and Lesotho, highlighting a shared commitment to sustainable development, peace, and prosperity.

"Two hundred years ago, under the visionary leadership of King Moshoeshoe I, the Basotho nation was founded on the principles of diplomacy, unity, and a profound respect for human dignity. In times of conflict, displacement, and colonial expansion, King Moshoeshoe I chose a path of peace. His approach was revolutionary: to build a nation through dialogue, inclusion, and peaceful alliances." Ms. Mohammed said, while addressing attendees at Setsoto stadium. King Moshoeshoe's legacy of peace and inclusion continues to inspire globally, demonstrating the power of dialogue, inclusion, and peaceful alliances.

While in the country, Ms. Mohammed held high-level meetings with His Majesty King Letsie III and Prime Minister Samuel Matekane during which Lesotho's development progress and opportunities as well as challenges in meeting the SDG promise were discussed. The DSG reiterated the UN's continued support to and partnership with the Kingdom stressing that while the investment being made by the UN through the resident and non-resident agencies was making an impact in people's lives, a lot more could be achieved with more partners on board.



During her visit to the mountain kingdom, Ms. Mohammed, in the company of Her Majesty Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso, the country's Finance Minister, Honourable Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane and UN Residence Coordinator, Ms. Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, also engaged with survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). With a high rate of GBV in the country, the UN in Lesotho has developed a joint initiative to address the challenge and established a soon-to-be launched Multi-Purpose Centre for Survivors of GBV in Maseru – services such as psychosocial support, legal aid, medical care, and skills training, aimed at restoring dignity and fostering resilience among survivors will be provided at the Centre.

Ms. Mohammed also took time to review the progress of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project – an investment under the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) that is crucial for transforming social and economic fortunes for Basotho people. Additionally, she met with traditional leaders with whom she discussed several issues affecting communities, especially the youth and women. She acknowledged the importance of local leadership in strengthening social cohesion and advancing national development. During her dialogue with the youth, the DSG commended the efforts of young Basotho in combating poverty and contributing to the country's economic growth, aligning with her call for youth involvement in shaping Lesotho's sustainable development path.



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UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed



A COMMITMENT TO LESOTHO: UN'S HIGH-LEVEL VISIT AIMS TO BOOST FOOD SECURITY

By: Reitumetse Russell



Lesotho, grappling with a severe food insecurity crisis exacerbated by prolonged drought and El Niño impacts, had more than 699,000 Basotho facing food insecurity by early July 2024. In response, Prime Minister Samuel Matekane declared a state of food disaster on 12 July 2024.

A high-level delegation from three United Nations agencies, FAO, WFP, and IFAD, visited Lesotho from 4 to 6 August 2024 to appreciate the situation's impact. The visit also aimed to bolster agricultural investment and support efforts to improve food and nutrition security in the country.

Invited by His Majesty King Letsie III, who serves as the FAO Special Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition, the delegation included FAO Director-General QU Dongyu, WFP Assistant Executive Director for Programme and Policy Development Valerie Guarnieri, and IFAD Associate Vice-President for Programme Management Donald Brown. This visit underscored the UN's commitment to tackling Lesotho's pressing food insecurity issues.

Lesotho has faced significant challenges in achieving self-sufficiency in food production, particularly in cereals, meat, and vegetables. Even in favourable years, the country heavily relies on food imports, primarily from South Africa. The ongoing drought, poor rainfall, and rising global food prices has further deteriorated the situation, increasing vulnerability and unemployment.

Despite these challenges, Lesotho has substantial potential for expanding its horticulture, livestock, and dairy industries, with opportunities in trout farming and growing fruits and vegetables. However, only a small fraction of arable land is actively farmed, and even less was under irrigation.

The agriculture sector, which employs around 38% of the population, is essential for poverty alleviation and rural development. There is a pressing need for investments in sustainable farming practices and green technologies to enhance resilience in Lesotho's agricultural sector.

The National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) has recognized the importance of improving nutrition through enhanced agricultural production and resilience. It stresses the interdependence of agriculture and ecosystem health, aiming to reverse environmental degradation and adapt to climate change.

During their visit, the UN delegation engaged in field visits, stakeholder meetings, and discussions with government officials, private sector representatives, women and youth groups, and people with disabilities.

Speaking at the High-Level Dialogue on Food Systems, His Majesty King Letsie III underscored the critical need to expand agricultural finance in Lesotho, stating, "The cost of agriculture transformation is enormous; thus, access to finance is a catalyst for growth and it must be addressed urgently."

King Letsie III highlighted the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, noting that financial institutions often minimized their exposure to agriculture due to perceived high-risk considerations. "It is our belief and hope that beyond this gathering, issues regarding access to finance in the agriculture space will be addressed," he said. He remarked that while there were significant impediments to the growth of a high-value agro-food system in Lesotho, finance remained a crucial catalyst for transformation. "To realize advancements in the agro-food value chain, it is essential to have innovative instruments designed by the private sector to mobilize additional resources, address market failures, and remove barriers," he added.

The dialogue occurred against the backdrop of a severe food insecurity crisis in Lesotho. "An alarming 700,000 Basotho—nearly one-third of the country's population—faced severe food insecurity, a sharp increase from 582,000 last year. The resources required to meet this crisis surged from M1 billion in March 2023 to M3 billion last year and M3 billion this year," King Letsie III noted.

FAO Director-General Dr. Qu Dongyu stressed the importance of coordination and timely delivery during the visit. "The first step was to build strength, followed by finding innovative solutions and then swiftly taking action," he advised. He also outlined the three components of food security: food availability, food accessibility, and food affordability, noting their varying levels of challenges worldwide.

Dr. Qu commended His Majesty for designating August as "Food Month" in Lesotho, reflecting the government's prioritization of food security. He emphasized the critical need for agrifood systems transformation to achieve food security and support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stating, "We all need to work together as one big team."

The visit represented a significant effort to strengthen cooperation between the government, the UN, and local and international partners to achieve food and nutrition security in Lesotho and ensure that future investments in the agricultural sector are impactful and sustainable.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL REENA GHELANI VISITS LESOTHO AS UN ALLOCATES \$2 MILLION FOR DROUGHT RESPONSE

Amid a growing food security crisis in Lesotho, Assistant Secretary-General and Climate Crisis Coordinator for El Niño and La Niña, Reena Ghelani, concluded a four-day mission to the country on 4 September 2024. Joined by Andrea Noyes, Head of the Regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and UN Resident Coordinator Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, Ms. Ghelani met with government officials, communities affected by the drought, and UN and civil society partners to discuss emergency needs and climate resilience.

During her visit, Ms. Ghelani announced 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 support a coordinated humanitarian response in Lesotho. The announcement comes in response to the severe drought conditions, which led the Government of Lesotho to declare a National Food Insecurity Disaster on 12 July 2024.

The drought, worsened by El Niño conditions, has resulted in the lowest crop yields since the 2018/19 season. Government assessments reveal that about a third of Lesotho's population—approximately 700,000 people—will face hunger in the coming months. Crisis levels of acute hunger are anticipated for over 400,000 people in rural areas through March 2025, while nearly 300,000 people in urban areas are projected to become food insecure. Additionally, water shortages have become critical, with many wells drying up across the country.



“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.”

Ms. Ghelani and Ms. Noyes discussed with government officials and partners on addressing immediate needs and strategies for long-term resilience against climate shocks. They visited the drought-affected regions of Qacha's Nek and Mafeteng, where they met farmers facing crop failures and families struggling to feed their children.

“The situation is difficult,” Ms. Noyes remarked. “We met farmers whose crops have failed, and distressed mothers who shared their struggles to find enough food for their children. This CERF allocation will be critical in helping people access sufficient food and essential services. The time for action is now. OCHA is committed to supporting the UN and partners in Lesotho to strengthen coordination and scale up the response to complement government efforts.”

UN Resident Coordinator Amanda Khozi Mukwashi reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to supporting Lesotho. "We stand with the people of Lesotho in this time of need," she said. "The emergency allocation underscores the UN's commitment to working closely with the Government of Lesotho and all partners to ensure a coordinated and effective response."

The UN in Lesotho is actively working to implement the recently launched National El Niño Response Plan, which requires an estimated \$212.9 million. However, \$112.8 million is still needed to fully meet the demands of the current crisis. This plan emphasizes immediate relief and long-term resilience to reduce the impact of recurring climate shocks.

With the support of the CERF allocation and ongoing partnerships, the UN and Lesotho are taking critical steps toward a coordinated response to the current crisis while strengthening resilience for the future.



Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator will release US\$2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support a coordinated humanitarian response in Lesotho.



UN DAY 2024: A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE AT THE UN OPEN HOUSE

By: Reitumetse Russell



The UN family in Lesotho came together with learners from local schools in Maseru on 24 October 2024 to celebrate the 2024 UN Day, marking 79 years since the organization was founded.

The day's activities provided an opportunity for learners to engage with and learn more about the work of the UN in the country in support of the government's efforts to address development challenges - from delivery of education, health, and other essential services, to addressing inequalities, responding to climate change and strengthening national institutions of democratic governance, among others.

The learners met the Resident Coordinator, Ms. Amanda Khozi, who shared her insights on pressing issues affecting Lesotho, including gender-based violence, migration issues. She encouraged the students to remain aware of their surroundings and take initiative in finding innovative solutions to these challenges.

"You are the leaders of today; don't wait until tomorrow to start asking questions and being part of the solution," the RC emphasized. Her words resonated deeply with the students, inspiring them to think critically about their role in shaping the future of their communities and the nation.

The students reflected on their experiences. Relebohile Sello from Life High School expressed her excitement, saying, "I really learnt a lot today about the UN, and I now understand the role of the UN in the country."

The Ambassador for a Day 2024 winner, Kananelo Matsimane, delivered a powerful statement on behalf of the Resident Coordinator, "Through your questions, ideas, and active participation, you've shown us that the future of Lesotho—and the world—is in good hands. You are the generation that will carry forward the big goals we've set, like reaching the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030," she said.

The Ambassador for a Day initiative, an annual competition aimed at empowering young girls across Lesotho, provides participants with firsthand experience in diplomacy and leadership.



“I really learnt a lot today about the UN, and I now understand the role of the UN in the country.”

Relebohile Sello



NAVIGATING THE HIGHLANDS: RANTAHLI'S DUAL ROLE AS HERD BOY AND PEER EDUCATOR

By: Violet Maraisane



Every morning Rantahli Mosae dons his gray blanket, typically worn by herdboys in Lesotho, to stave off the biting cold. Wearing a balaclava hat and his rubber boots, he sets off to tend to his family's herd, carrying not just the weight of responsibility, but also a mission that transcends his pastoral duties.

Rantahli, a recent graduate of Lerotholi Polytechnic with a Diploma in Marketing Management, lives at Ha Labane, Mant'sonyane in the Thaba-Tseka district. While he expertly navigates the hilly terrain as a herd boy, he also serves as a peer educator, guiding his friends in discussions that delve into critical issues such as HIV prevention, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Rantahli usually joins gathering spots where his peers often congregate, occasionally roasting corn and potatoes over an open flame. It is here, amidst laughter and the warmth of camaraderie, that he initiates conversations about sexual health. As he distributes condoms—a symbol of empowerment and protection—he also encourages dialogue about safety in sexual relationships.

“When we talk about sexual relations, that’s when they ask a lot of questions, giggle, and express their views,” he states. Such open engagement fosters an atmosphere where the young men feel safe to voice their uncertainties and thoughts on a topic often shrouded in secrecy.

Trained by Help Lesotho, through the financial support of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, Rantahli brings critical knowledge to a community that desperately needs it. In a country where 86% of Basotho women are reported to have experienced some form of GBV in their lifetime and 67% of them through intimate partner violence, Rantahli's efforts are plausible. He educates his peers on the importance of understanding and combatting GBV, emphasizing the repercussions of violence and the necessity of healthy relationships.

Asked about the extent of child marriage in his area, Rantahli chuckles a bit, “These people get married. They drop out of school and get married. since they marry when they are still very young, their marriages rarely last.” During the gatherings, he therefore also warns his peers about the pitfalls of such early commitments and advocates for the importance of staying in school.

Through UNFPA’s support, over the years around 5000 herd boys have been reached with GBV, Comprehensive Sexuality Education and HIV interventions as well as advocating for the rights of women and girls.

In addition, with new HIV cases at 5000 per year (LePHIA 2022), Rantahli’s work becomes even more vital. UNFPA ensures that peer educators like him have sufficient supplies of condoms and provides support for education and outreach programs to encourage their use.

As a major procurer of condoms globally, particularly in the context of efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and promote sexual and reproductive health, UNFPA emphasizes the importance of condom use as a key strategy in response to HIV/AIDS, alongside other interventions like education, testing, and treatment.

Through its crucial role in ensuring the availability of condoms as part of comprehensive sexual health programs aimed at preventing the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as reducing unintended pregnancies UNFPA ensures that no one is left behind and that even those in the remotest areas like Rantahli and his peers are able to access a condom that could save their lives.

LESOTHO COMPILES A SECOND PERIODIC REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES

By: Tshupo Molefi

From the 26 to 28 August 2024, in a meeting held in Berea, IOM supported the Ministry of Law and Justice in compiling the second periodic report on the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant workers and their Families (CMW), which Lesotho signed in September 2004. The report will be submitted to CWM treaty monitoring body, reporting on the domestic implementation of the convention’s provisions. It will demonstrate the country’s actions and measures taken both in law and practice to improve the rights of migrant workers and members of their families in the country.

The report will also state the challenges the country is still facing to fully implement the provisions of the convention. Through this report, the country will be able to request a technical and financial support required to meet its obligations under a certain convention. Following this meeting, the report will be validated on the date unspecified.



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EMPOWERING YOUTH, TRANSFORMING FUTURES - THE 2ND ANNUAL SEBABATSO CONFERENCE

By: Reitumetse Russell

The 2nd Annual Sebatso Conference took place during the first week of October, shining a spotlight on the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of Lesotho's youth. The week-long event, officially opened by The Right Honourable Prime Minister, brought together young innovators, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to driving youth empowerment and economic growth.

The conference celebrated the remarkable achievements of the Sebatso initiative, which has provided mentorship, grants, and international exchange opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Over 60 promising youth innovators showcased their groundbreaking ideas, with the top 30 STEAM innovators presenting their pitches to potential investors. This platform not only celebrated youth creativity but also fostered partnerships that are set to transform ideas into viable businesses.

During the conference, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi delivered an address, reaffirming the UN's unwavering commitment to youth empowerment in Lesotho. She celebrated the creativity, resilience, and determination of the top 60 youth entrepreneurs, commending their potential to shape the nation's future. Highlighting the Government of Lesotho's efforts, including the Vanguard Initiative for Youth Empowerment, she emphasized the critical role of private sector partnerships and the importance of inclusivity, particularly for marginalized groups such as women and people with disabilities.

“Youth empowerment is not just a policy agenda—it is a necessity for Lesotho’s development,” she stated, stressing the need to align entrepreneurship with productive sectors to drive sustainable economic transformation. She also commended initiatives like the National Youth Strategy and the forthcoming Youth Development Bill of 2024 as crucial steps toward creating an enabling environment for youth-led innovation and growth.

The UN played a pivotal role in supporting the Sebatso initiative. UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and IOM provided financial support for the conference, demonstrating the UN’s ongoing commitment to fostering a vibrant ecosystem for young entrepreneurs in Lesotho.

The Sebatso Conference marked a significant milestone in youth empowerment in Lesotho. With initiatives like the National Youth Strategy and the forthcoming Youth Development Bill of 2024 on the horizon, the UN reaffirmed its dedication to working with all stakeholders to unlock the potential of Lesotho’s youth. By integrating entrepreneurship with economic competitiveness and prioritizing inclusivity, Lesotho continues to pave the way for transformative growth.





EMPOWERING INNOVATION: STEAM2024 FUELLED INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN LESOTHO

By: Kefuoe Kajane

The second annual STEAM 2024 Conference, held during the Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Week and themed “Global Science for Global Wellbeing,” marked a significant milestone in Lesotho’s efforts to harness innovation for sustainable development. Organized by the Ministry of Information, Communications, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MISCTI) in partnership with UNDP Lesotho, the conference concluded a week-long STEAM Bootcamp, which showcased some of the brightest minds from across the country.

This year, the initiative saw an impressive 1,944 applications, highlighting the growing interest in innovation nationwide. From these applicants, 200 innovations were selected to attend the bootcamp, and 15 of them received grants to advance their projects. Gender parity and inclusion were key focuses, with the top 30 innovators comprising 16 women and 14 men, including two persons living with disabilities. This emphasis on diversity highlighted the importance of making sustainable innovation inclusive for all.

Hon. Nthati Moorosi, Minister of Information, underscored the critical role of innovation in driving economic growth and solving community challenges. She emphasized the importance of aligning innovation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), positioning Lesotho as a future leader in Africa’s innovation landscape. Dr. Jacqueline Olweya, UNDP Resident Representative, celebrated the progress of the initiative since its launch in 2023. She highlighted its inclusivity, stating, “This initiative reflected our commitment to leaving no one behind, ensuring that innovation drives not just economic growth but also social inclusion.”

A key highlight of the initiative was the selection of the top 15 innovators who were awarded at the Sebatso Conference, an initiative of the Right Honourable the Prime Minister. This platform became a major showcase for innovation and entrepreneurship in Lesotho.



Additionally, 10 of the STEAM innovators were selected to attend the Youth Connekt Africa 2024 Summit, further enhancing their role in the continent's development.

The STEAM2024 Conference demonstrated the power of innovation to drive inclusive economic growth, promote gender equality, and enhance sustainable development. Through its partnership with the government and other stakeholders, Lesotho steadily built an innovation ecosystem that empowered local talent, fostered creativity, and contributed to the global sustainable development agenda. Furthermore, the STEAM initiative also worked as a conduit towards access for participation in regional innovation ecosystems, such as Youth Connekt Africa, of which Lesotho became the 33rd member. This membership opened new avenues for cross-border partnerships and cross-pollination of innovative ideas for development in Africa and globally.

The STEAM2024 initiative reflected Lesotho's commitment to nurturing talent, fostering sustainable solutions, and creating opportunities for all. By doing so, the country ensured that its future was both innovative and inclusive.



WFP RESPONSE TO EL NINO INDUCED DROUGHT & HIGH LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY

By: Malehloa Letsie

In response to the declared food insecurity disaster, WFP is scaling up efforts to support the National El Niño Response Plan. WFP started distributions in Qacha's Nek district, providing cash and food assistance to 24,444 people facing high food gaps. Preparations are ongoing to start distributions in the other 3 targeted districts (Maseru, Mohale's hoek, Quthing) with the highest number of people in IPC 3 and above. WFP plans to support 272,000 people during the lean season (October 2024-March 2025), however the available funds will enable WFP to support a total of 72,600 people until December 2024.

To provide meaningful and impactful assistance, WFP, in collaboration with the District Disaster Management Authority, undertook the targeting exercise to identify the poor and very poor people in need of food assistance across the six most affected districts. This was complemented by community participatory verification exercise to ensure that the identified people are eligible for humanitarian assistance. The exercise included engagement of communities and community leaders, especially village chiefs who played a pivotal role in validating the lists of the identified people.





A LIFELINE FOR MOTHERS AND NEWBORNS: TRANSFORMING MATERNAL HEALTH THROUGH TRAINING AND INNOVATION

By: Thato Mochone

Lesotho's maternal and neonatal health indicators reveal a critical situation that demands immediate action and systemic reform. The neonatal mortality rate of 26 deaths per 1,000 live births and a maternal mortality rate of 566 per 100,000 live births highlight severe gaps in healthcare services. These figures have remained stagnant over the past decade, underscoring the need for focused interventions.

With a stillbirth rate of 27 per 1,000 total births, largely linked to preventable causes, the urgent need for improved prenatal and perinatal care is clear. Key challenges include limited systematic monitoring during childbirth and inadequate access to emergency obstetric care, which can be lifesaving for mothers and newborns alike. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing enhancements to healthcare infrastructure, training for healthcare providers, and ensuring that critical resources are readily accessible.

In Lesotho, inconsistent access to quality Maternal and Neonatal Health (MNH) services highlights systemic weaknesses within the healthcare framework. Although certain areas show signs of progress, the national picture remains troubling, with high rates of institutional mortality and frequent stillbirths persisting.

To tackle these challenges, UNICEF has partnered with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to implement sustainable and scalable in-service education and professional development initiatives. At the heart of this collaboration is the establishment of learning and training hubs, which include simulation centers designed to provide hands-on training for healthcare providers.

These simulation centers offer a safe environment for healthcare professionals to practice and refine their skills, improving their readiness for real-life situations. The initiative also incorporates a catchment area-based mentorship model, where experienced healthcare workers mentor their peers, fostering knowledge-sharing and supporting continuous professional growth.

By enhancing healthcare providers' skills and competencies through innovative educational strategies, this partnership seeks to elevate the overall quality of maternal and neonatal health services in Lesotho, ultimately contributing to better outcomes for mothers and infants.

Led by the Ministry of Health, the project engages a range of stakeholders, including health training institutions, medical and nursing councils, and professional associations, to advance maternal and neonatal care. Currently, the project is active in five of Lesotho's ten districts—Maseru, Berea, Leribe, Mafeteng, and Mohale's Hoek. A learning and training hub has been established at the country's only tertiary institution, alongside seven simulation centers in hospitals, including two regional referral hospitals.

To support these centers, 34 mentors have been trained to lead simulations and conduct practical demonstrations. This mentorship approach not only improves healthcare providers' skills but also cultivates a culture of continuous learning and clinical excellence. Through these concerted efforts, the project aspires to significantly enhance the quality of care provided to mothers and newborns across the region.

FROM CHAUFFEUR TO FARMER: HOW NKOPANE THOHLAKA TURNED A HOME GARDEN INTO A THRIVING BUSINESS

By: Mathabana Kotelo



When 54-year-old Nkopane Thoahlaka from Tsikoane in Leribe left his job as chauffeur, he took up home gardening to grow food for subsistence for his household of 6. In just 2 years, Thoahlaka has grown his produce significantly and gone from subsistence to a full-time small-scale commercial farmer.

“I grow enough crops to feed my family and sell to my community.” Thoahlaka shares. “The income I earn supports household expenses and supplements my wife’s teaching salary to cover other family needs.”

Thoahlaka has quickly adapted to farming and now produces a variety of crops including cabbage, beetroot, green peppers, spinach and carrots. His green pepper harvest was so plentiful in the past year that he was able to supply the Shoprite chain of supermarkets.

While farming has become a source of livelihood, it has also become a passion for Thoahlaka. “Tending to my crops is therapeutic, it has become a hobby I enjoy,” he says.

Thoahlaka is part of 10,000 small holder farmers across Lesotho benefiting from the Food and Agriculture Organization’s Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) project funded by the World Bank. In response to severe flash floods in 2022, CERC provided vulnerable farming households with home gardening kits consisting of shade nets and 6 crop seed varieties including spinach, beetroot, carrots and onion.

Speaking about the support he received, Thoahlaka said the crop seeds and shade he received along with training on best farming practices have helped boost his production. He aspires to scale up his production to be able to regularly supply major grocery stores while continuing to sell within his community.

“The seeds and equipment have helped to improve my yield, with ongoing input support and training, I hope to expand my production and supply more grocery stores while also serving my local community.

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