

Strengthening rural livelihoods severely affected by climate change-induced drought in Lesotho



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Lesotho

Duration: March 2011 to February 2013

Implementing UN Agencies: FAO; UNDP; UNICEF; WHO; WFP; UNFPA

Other Implementing Partners: National Ministries; the National Climate Change Committee; local authorities; NGO's

Budget: \$1,820,436.20

Key Words: Food security; climate adaptation; agricultural development

BACKGROUND

The adverse effects of climate change have been hindering Lesotho's development progress in a number of key areas, including agriculture and food security, poverty reduction, water management, public health and disaster risk reduction. Inhospitable terrain, harsh climate and limited access to arable land put intense pressure on the environment and make the population highly vulnerable to climatic fluctuations. In the arable southern lowlands and mountain agro-ecological zones, the majority of the population depends on agriculture for their living and a small

increase in temperature will have direct impact on livelihoods and food security. With over 55 per cent of the population already living below the poverty line, decreasing productivity and continued reductions in the quantity and quality of agricultural land threatens to push even more people into poverty. Moreover, the increasing frequency of droughts, coupled with rising food and commodity prices heightens nutrition and health insecurity, compounding the situation of vulnerable groups, including those dependent on agriculture, as well as women and children.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To strengthen national responses and build community-based adaption strategies to the interconnected threats induced by climate change in Lesotho, the project aimed to: (i) increase crop production and nutrition security through improving agricultural techniques and cropping systems; (ii) protect the most vulnerable children from poverty and food insecurity; (iii) enhance the capacity of districts,

communities and households to combat the impact of anthrax on livestock; (iv) improve maternal health care by increasing access to emergency obstetric care services and by providing food supplements to mothers; and (v) increase the capacity of public authorities and local communities to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

BENEFICIARIES

The beneficiaries of the project included 483,500 individuals, particularly vulnerable people in the most severely drought affected communities in the southern lowlands of Maseru, Mafetung and Mohale's Hoek Districts, the Senqu River valley and the mountain

agro-ecological zones. More specifically, the beneficiaries were vulnerable farmers, pregnant and lactating women, as well as orphans and other vulnerable children.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) Food insecurity presented one of the most serious threats to human security in the targeted area. The project therefore promoted conservation agriculture (CA), an affordable adaptation technique for climate-vulnerable farmers that offers improved and sustainable livelihoods while reducing production costs. While CA was an appropriate strategy for rural farmers, additional avenues were developed to address the scope of food, nutrition and poverty challenges faced by rural households throughout Lesotho. Since most families had access to a small plot of land near their houses, the project extended basic agricultural training to households. These household gardens greatly improved families' access to a wider variety of food products throughout the year. Through the establishment of school gardens, children were able to benefit from improved nutrition at schools.

(ii) Recognizing the interlinkages between the various insecurities faced by the communities, the project advanced an integrated framework where improvements in agriculture were linked with efforts to diversify food products, train parents and care-

givers on nutrition and feeding methods, develop supplementary food and feeding programmes for pregnant and lactating mothers, and provide school-based agricultural training. By recognizing the importance of improvements in agricultural productivity to economic, food, nutrition and health securities, the project resulted in a virtuous framework whereby each activity built upon the other and subsequently resulted in a much greater impact in the daily lives of the communities.

(iii) Lastly, the project implemented numerous public education campaigns and trainings that helped build the capacity of people to identify and report potential problems in their communities. As a result, the project empowered communities to participate in public forums in order to discuss and assume leadership on decisions that affected their daily lives. Coupled with responsive Government institutions, these communities took a larger and more proactive role in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

LESSONS LEARNED

The human security approach highlights the interconnectedness and the cross-sectoral consequences of climate change. By applying a comprehensive human security framework, the project in Lesotho illustrated the added value of integrating efforts across related sectors that help amplify positive outcomes, strengthen community participation and resilience, and promote long-term and sustainable responses to the effects of climate change. In particular, the project demonstrated the benefits of simultaneously addressing food, health and economic

insecurities as a result of climate change. In addition, the project highlighted the need for collaborative partnerships across sectors, as well as cooperation among communities close to the ground and Governments responsible for institutionalizing responses. In this respect, the project demonstrated the benefits of effectively coordinating international, national, and local responses to climate change and combining top-down norms and policies with bottom-up participatory responses.