



LESOTHO

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 1.7M**

Appeal number **MAALS003**

In support of the Lesotho Red Cross Society



88

National Society branches



72

National Society staff



2,500

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



30,000

Climate and environment



16,000

Disasters and crises



23,000

Health and wellbeing



200

Migration and displacement



15,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Longer term needs

- Food security and climate-smart livelihoods
- Disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action
 - Health and care
 - Protection, gender and inclusion

Capacity development

- Humanitarian diplomacy
- Internal systems strengthening
 - Branch development
- Youth and volunteer engagement

Key country data

Population	2.2M
INFORM Severity rating	low
Long-term Climate Risk Index	109
Human Development Index rank	168
Population below poverty level	49.7%

Hazards



Drought



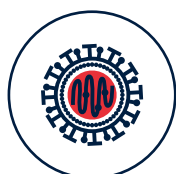
Floods



High winds



Food insecurity



Disease



Migration

Funding requirements

Total 1.7M CHF

Through the IFRC

1.4M CHF

Host National Society

→ **300,000** CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer term needs

- 750,000** CHF
Climate and environment
- 300,000** CHF
Disasters and crises
- 64,000** CHF
Health and wellbeing
- 30,000** CHF
Migration and displacement
- 35,000** CHF
Values, power and inclusion
- 219,000** CHF
Enabling local actors

Participating National Societies

Australian Red Cross

British Red Cross

German Red Cross

The Netherlands Red Cross*



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Lesotho Red Cross Society has provided humanitarian services in the country for 50 years, despite increasing challenges. Initially a branch of the British Red Cross Society, it was established in 1967, shortly after Lesotho's independence in 1966. Under the terms of the Lesotho Red Cross Society Act of 1967, the National Society acts as an auxiliary to the public authorities. This Act also ensures adequate humanitarian space for the work of the National Society at all levels, from national to district and local. The patrons of the National Society are Their Majesties King Letsie III and Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso.

The National Society has been a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) since 1971 and, as such, subscribes to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It assists communities in need through its network of trained volunteers at a national level, and by working in divisions across the 10 districts of Lesotho.

As an auxiliary to the public authorities, the National Society aligns its work with countrywide priorities through health and social services and disaster management programmes. It has been providing first aid services since its inception, and has made significant

strides in saving lives, thanks to enhanced first aid skills across its volunteer base, as well as extending the service to other institutions and the private sector through its first aid institutionalization programme. This programme also touches on capacity building of the National Society in terms of training, equipment and the development of policies.

The Lesotho Red Cross has more than 30 years' experience in delivering health services in its four health centres, located in three districts of Lesotho. It has an existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health that supports its running of these health centres. After HIV/AIDS was declared a national disaster in 2000, the National Society launched HIV/AIDS projects, and it has also greatly contributed to the fight against COVID-19. It helps communities and schools with water, sanitation and hygiene services, risk communication and community engagement, mental health, and support for livelihoods, among other activities.

The National Society has well-established partnerships within the wider Movement and collaborates with other organizations, such as UN agencies and other like-minded bodies. These partnerships empower it to fulfil its mandate to provide humanitarian services to vulnerable communities.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

Lesotho is a small, mountainous lower middle-income country spanning 30,335 sq. km and enclaved by the Republic of South Africa, with a population of around two million. Its landscape is largely highlands, with its lowest point at 1,400 meters above sea level. Previously a British protectorate, the nation gained its independence in 1966.

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy. It is ruled by a King who is head of state, and a Prime Minister who is head of Government. It is also governed by a 33-member senate and a 120-member national assembly. The most recent general elections were held in Lesotho on 7 October 2022 to elect all 120 members of the National Assembly, the lower house of the Parliament of Lesotho.

On 11 October, the Revolution for Prosperity leader Sam Matekane announced that his party had reached a coalition agreement with the Alliance of Democrats and the Movement for Economic Change. Sam Matekane will lead the Government as Prime Minister.

Economic growth

Lesotho's GDP per capita was US\$1,091 in 2021. The World Bank therefore classifies it as a lower middle-income country. In recent years, its economic performance has remained weak, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, sustained political instability has contributed to a weak economic performance. GDP contracted by an average of 0.7 per cent annually between 2017 and 2019 before it declined by 8.4 per cent in 2020.

The unemployment rate in 2019 remained high at 38.3 per cent, including discouraged job seekers, with economic hardship having a knock-on impact on social challenges too. Child marriages and maternal mortality rates have increased, as has drug abuse by young people, and gender-based violence has become the norm. In recent months, Lesotho has seen an alarming increase in murder cases too, making it the world's sixth most dangerous country.

The economic downturn continued into the third quarter of 2021, and after that some recovery was observed in sectors such as construction, mining, manufacturing, business services and public administration, all which recorded double-digit quarterly growth rates. The economy was forecast to rebound by 1.3 per cent and economic activity was expected to pick up in 2022, underpinned by growth in the construction sector. As a result, GDP was expected to increase by 2.6 per cent in 2022 and then slow to 2.3 per cent in 2023, before accelerating to 2.9 per cent in 2024 as activity within the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Phase-II (LHWP-II) reaches its peak.

The agriculture and services sectors are also expected to drive growth in Lesotho. The services sector is expected to benefit from adjacent growth in the construction sub-sector, even though some gains are likely to be offset by elevated consumer prices, and from improved business and consumer confidence as the COVID-19-induced supply bottlenecks ease. The agricultural sector, meanwhile, is expected to obtain positive growth, thanks to strong forecasted harvests for crops, due to government subsidies for items such as seeds and fertilizers and good seasonal rainfall.

Further growth in the mining industry is predicted due to the improved market outlook for rough diamonds and a current upsurge in commodity prices. The return to full-scale production of some mines that were previously under care and maintenance in 2021 is expected to improve the sector's performance too.

There was only a limited recovery in 2021, and poverty levels were forecast to remain at 36 per cent in 2021. This is based on an income of US\$2.15/person/day. Other factors (such as rising food prices and slow labour market recovery due to COVID-19-related lockdown measures) have limited progress on poverty reduction.

Recurring climatic hazards, which adversely affect performance of the agricultural sector, exacerbate these challenges and increase levels of food insecurity,

particularly among the rural population. The poverty rate is expected to improve at a slow pace, with increases in food and energy prices, coupled with a fragile economic environment, constraining budgets and livelihoods across lower-income households. The US\$2.15/person/day poverty rate was projected to improve slightly to 35.2 per cent in 2022 and reach 34.1 per cent by 2024.

Development challenges and risks

Lesotho remains vulnerable to both existing and new infectious diseases, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The country launched a timely national response to the first cases of the virus in May 2020 and, since August 2022, the Government has lifted all COVID-19 restrictions. As of September 2022, it is estimated that about 45.2 per cent of the population has been vaccinated, 61.7 per cent of those above the age of 18, as well as 33.3 per cent of the population aged 12–17. During the same period, there have been 904,000 confirmed cases and 697 deaths.

The COVID-19 pandemic has set back human capital development in Lesotho. Although the country's human capital index increased from 0.34 in 2010 to 0.4 in 2020, this level is below the average of lower middle-income countries and the situation seems to have been exacerbated by the pandemic. As well as its immediate impact on income, disruptions in essential health and education services are likely to reverse progress made in human capital development and poverty alleviation.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated a weak macroeconomic performance and budgetary constraints in the country, leading to limited fiscal capacity to respond to future shocks. Lesotho's geographical proximity, porous borders and close economic ties with South Africa place it at particular risk of continued importation of infections and subsequent community transmissions. Exports have also declined as a result of economic contractions, the income from which Basotho households rely on.

A high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis remains Lesotho's greatest health challenge. HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 25 per cent of the adult population (those aged 15–49) which is the second-highest rate in the world. In 2020, the incidence of tuberculosis stood at 650 cases per 100,000. High associated costs for health services exert more pressure on the fiscal burden, while these high prevalence rate also contribute to persistent inequality and poverty.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Both Lesotho's mountainous topography and its location make it susceptible to climatic hazards, increasing the country's vulnerability to climate change. It is already experiencing negative effects, including the increased frequency of extreme weather events, such as drought, increased rates of soil erosion and desertification, and reduced soil fertility. Due to a combination of factors – political, geographic and social – the African nation is classified as highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, ranked 127 out of 181 countries in the 2020 ND-GAIN Index.

According to projected future scenarios, Lesotho is likely to become hotter and drier, and will continue to experience climate-related hazards, variable rainfall and increasing temperatures. According to the World Bank [Lesotho Climate Risk Country Profile 2021](#), high evaporation rates and the virtual absence of permanent surface water over large parts of Lesotho combine to make water a scarce resource, with some projections indicating that, even without climate change, water resources will be reduced significantly in the future. The primary challenges centre around water resource availability, changing precipitation patterns and increasing population demands.

Lesotho's agricultural system faces a growing number of climate-related vulnerabilities with drought, localized floods, snow and cold waves, pests and extreme temperatures all occurring more frequently. Current agricultural production focuses on extensive animal grazing and the expansion of agricultural cropland to keep pace with food demand from the population. This has resulted in monoculture cropping systems dominated by maize production which are unsustainable and deplete land fertility over time.

The risk of disaster due to increased temperatures in Lesotho is expected to exacerbate existing tensions between agricultural and livestock needs, as well as human population needs for water, especially during the dry season. It is also likely to alter the quality of available water from surface water and groundwater and increase pressure on urban areas due to increased urbanization. Changing rainfall patterns are expected to play a significant role in agricultural production and harvest seasons too, with later onsets expected to affect crop productivity as well as livestock health. Droughts have remained one of the key drivers of food insecurity

in Lesotho, with increased aridity and drought resulting in crop damage, loss of pasture and water sources, loss of animals, hunger, disease outbreaks, asset depletions, malnutrition and migration. Increased temperatures and degraded agricultural conditions are expected to adversely affect working days, affecting livelihoods and the economic resilience of vulnerable groups. Increased temperatures and aridity will also heighten the country's risk of wildfires.

Water, agriculture, forestry, human health and livestock are Lesotho's most vulnerable sectors with respect to climate change. The increased frequency of intense rainfall will lead to a heightened risk of floods, riverbank overflow and flash flooding. This may also result in soil erosion and waterlogging of crops, thus decreasing yields with the potential to increase food insecurity, particularly for subsistence-scale farmers. Higher temperatures also increase aridity and can lead to livestock stress and reduced crop yields, with an impact on economic and food security. Furthermore, land degradation and soil erosion, exacerbated by recurrent floods and drought, adversely affect agricultural production, and hence the livelihoods of the rural poor. Small rural farmers are more sensitive to the impact of such disasters, as they have limited resources with which to influence and increase adaptive capacity. Most recently, Lesotho suffered from a severe drought in 2015–2017, due largely to El Niño events that affected Southern Africa.

The [National Strategic Development Plan II 2018/19 to 2022/23](#) for Lesotho integrates environment and climate change as critical components in achieving sustainable development. Lesotho relies heavily on climate-vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, water resources and biodiversity to maintain livelihoods. The plan emphasizes that actions to manage the environment and climate change must be appropriately implemented for sustainable development and inclusive growth in Lesotho.

Lesotho observes the annual Tree Planting Day in March and, in 2022, government officials, led by the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Forestry, Dr Kamoho Matlama, planted five thousand indigenous trees at Ha Ntsane, Thaba-Bosiu. It was reported that the private sector would further support this gesture by planting an additional 20,000 trees in 2023.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC Pan-African Tree Planting and Care initiative is an important contributor to the country's climate goals. The IFRC and Lesotho Red Cross will support this government initiative through environmental campaigns to mobilize greater climate change mitigation efforts, to influence behaviour change and to promote environmentally sustainable practices in communities.

The Lesotho Red Cross is also part of the [IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

Planned activities include:

- Training staff and volunteers on community engagement, with a focus on behaviour change approaches for climate adaptation
- Promoting community-led solutions to address challenges, improve behaviours and promote climate action
- Equipping the National Society with education on comprehensive end-to-end early warning early action and anticipatory action
- Conducting community education and awareness-raising activities, including some based in schools, on adapting to and reducing climate-related risks
- Training district disaster management teams and technical members of forecast-based financing teams to work on drought, snow and cold waves
- Training staff in how to undertake a simplified environmental analysis as part of emergency needs assessment processes

- Developing environmental campaigns to mobilize greater climate change mitigation efforts and influence behaviour change – this may include a reduction in plastic use, tree planting and restoration, beach clean-ups and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Pre-positioning drought and snow relief materials

Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, go to IFRC GO page [Lesotho](#)

Lesotho's population face multiple hazards which affect their resilience. These include weather-related hazards exacerbated by climate change, such as floods and drought. The country is also prone to windstorms. At the end of August 2021, Lesotho experienced windstorms that destroyed shelter, food and household items in the districts of Qacha'snek and Thaba Tseka. Assessments of this damage, in which the Lesotho Red Cross participated, indicated that approximately 2,550 people (equivalent to 510 households) were affected by the disaster. Of the affected households, 162 had their homes destroyed and had to be hosted by neighbours or relatives. The remaining 348 sustained damage to their homes or resided in undamaged areas, but had lost their basic household items.

Based on Lesotho's demographics, the communities most prone to severe impacts from natural hazards are those living in the Highlands.

Hunger and malnutrition remain major challenges in Lesotho. Due to prevailing drought conditions, Lesotho is in the midst of a situation of acute food insecurity in which a relatively large proportion of those affected live in rural areas. Disruptions to water and food supplies are predicted to increase, thereby endangering people's livelihoods and exacerbating negative coping mechanisms such as migration, selling assets and child labour. Between July and September 2021, an estimated 178,694 Basotho in rural areas were facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 - crisis). These figures increased to 311,868 people in rural areas during the October 2021 to March 2022 lean season. In addition, 158,000 urban Basotho are food insecure, bringing the total to about 470,000 people nationally.

A political commitment to end hunger has been reflected in Lesotho's adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and the involvement of His Majesty King Letsie III at national, regional and global levels.

The Disaster Management Authority, via the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee, conducts annual assessments on food insecurity and identifies those regions requiring assistance.

Main actions and areas of support

To address the challenges faced by the country, the Lesotho Red Cross will scale up disaster risk reduction measures, ensure that communities prepare for timely and effective responses to mitigate the impact of hazards, and boost recovery from crises and disasters. The National Society is a first responder during emergencies and maintains ready and trained disaster response teams, as well as emergency stocks. In 2021, it carried out an [operation](#), supported by the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), to respond to the windstorms.

The Lesotho Red Cross, in collaboration with the German Red Cross, the German Federal Foreign Office, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and the World Food Programme continue to work on developing a framework for [forecast-based financing](#) in Lesotho. The National Society will also be working on an [Early Action Protocol](#) (EAP) for drought risk, for which new partnerships and a national technical working group for drought have been established. At a later stage of project implementation, the National Society will on-board an EAP for cold waves and heavy snowfall, with anticipated heavy snowfall occurring in the Highlands during Lesotho's winter, primarily affecting shepherds and farmers and impeding humanitarian access to remote Highland communities. The forecast-based financing project carries a strong cash readiness and shock-responsive social protection component, as well as capacity strengthening for wider preparedness for effective response.

The IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative will support integrated interventions in the country that provide basic needs, prevent asset depletion and protect livelihoods, as well as those targeted at livelihoods recovery and strengthening. As part of the initiative, the National Society will also support measures that bolster household food security in emergencies through relief and long-term livelihoods approaches. The Lesotho Red Cross will form strategic partnerships within the country for the advancement of the IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative. Food security programmes will ensure the provision of adequate food security and nutritional support to those it works with, and establish and strengthen the structures, capacity and systems for disaster preparedness and response at branch, divisional and national levels.

The IFRC will also support the National Society in the area of disaster law and legislative advocacy, as well as capacity building and preparedness for effective response. This is in line with the IFRC Pan-African Red Ready initiative, which aims to strengthen disaster operations management, coordination and accountability, and promote the localization of humanitarian response by strengthening the capacity of local branches and volunteers.

Other planned work in 2023 includes:

Early warning, early action and anticipatory action

- Providing the National Society with a comprehensive end-to-end early warning, early action, anticipatory action learning approach – including tools and guidance
- Strengthening its knowledge exchange and management on early action and anticipatory action through the [Anticipation Hub](#) and the dialogue platform on anticipatory humanitarian action
- Supporting the National Society to expand its use of anticipatory action approaches beyond hydrometeorological hazards to challenges including epidemics, food insecurity and displacement, as well as slow-onset and less visible risks, such as heatwaves and droughts, and compound risks
- Increasing access to disaster risk financing for anticipatory action
- Supporting the National Society to serve as a leader in anticipatory action, influencing the Government in Lesotho to integrate anticipatory action into its disaster response management and climate change adaptation policies, and increase investments (including through multilateral funding facilities) such as the Green Climate Fund and World Bank

Scaling up the use of cash assistance

- Investing in the development of systems and tools that will ensure the delivery of cash at speed and scale
- Promoting the use of cash and voucher assistance across thematic and sectoral areas
- Supporting the National Society to develop interventions that support basic needs, prevent asset depletion and protect livelihoods, or for livelihoods recovery and strengthening

- Conducting local and national market assessments to underpin programmes for food security and livelihoods and cash assistance
- Rolling out standard operating procedures for food security and livelihoods safety nets

Health and wellbeing

Lesotho's greatest health challenge remains HIV/AIDS, with nearly a quarter of the adult population affected by the virus. The country has been ranked second highest in the world for HIV/AIDS prevalence (most recently estimated to be 22.7 per cent), and the highest in the world in incidence among people aged 15–59. However, HIV/AIDS incidence has declined from 1.9 per cent (identified in the 2014 Demographic and Health Survey) to 1.1 per cent (in the 2016–2017 Lesotho Population Based HIV Impact Assessment) and most recently to 0.5 per cent in 2020. This was a household-based national survey among adults defined as individuals aged 15 years and older.

According to UNAIDS Spectrum estimates, Lesotho has achieved epidemic control – the point at which new HIV/AIDS infections fall below the number of deaths among persons living with HIV/AIDS. The Government has revised its National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS 2018–2023, aiming to halve new infections and AIDS-related deaths by 2023 and eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

While this is a positive achievement, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on HIV/AIDS response in Lesotho over the past two years. The pandemic meant that many programmes were either stopped, restructured or scaled down to reduce the risk of transmission and protect the safety of both staff and clients.

The latest 2021 estimates for the prevalence of tuberculosis were 614 per 100,000 people and a total of 14,000 cases, among which 1,100 were children, according to the World Health Organization. This represents the highest incidence of tuberculosis globally, for a population of only two million. Due to the double burden of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, 62 per cent of tuberculosis patients are co-infected with HIV/AIDS. Timely detection through quality screening is needed to improve treatment rate, reduce mortality and control transmission.

Lesotho's COVID-19 pandemic response included lockdowns and other restrictions of movement which caused the country to pause services for communicable and non-communicable diseases, especially those that used community outreach. The pandemic, along with

other natural hazards, has brought distress to families due to a loss of income, displacement from South Africa or loss of loved ones, thereby affecting household nutrition and food security. Findings by district indicate that mental health problems are on the rise due to the amplification of violence, sexual abuse, substance and drug abuse, as a result of economic and social challenges.

Due to recurring disasters in Lesotho, community health service systems are regularly disrupted, limiting access to appropriate health services. Primary health care initiatives are also interrupted while efforts are diverted to disaster response. Depending on the type of disaster, be it pandemic, drought or floods, the rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, which are already high, increase rapidly during these periods too. The gap between urban and rural areas is increasing, with acute shortages in hard-to-reach mountainous areas. The distribution of skilled health practitioners is also uneven, as most skilled health workers concentrate on urban areas. As a result, task shifting and work overload is experienced by those health workers in remote areas. Water, sanitation and hygiene is often a problem in these remote areas, which makes delivery of health services a problem. The high rate of maternal mortality (618 per 100,000 live births) is particularly acute among young girls aged 15–24 due to complications with unwanted pregnancies, which often result in them dropping out of school. This is raised as a great concern by the United Nations Population Fund in Lesotho.

Main actions and areas of support

The Lesotho Red Cross is implementing primary health care in remote areas of the country, where its four health centres are placed. This activity is supported by the Ministry of Health through a government grant disbursed annually. It is also supported by the ministry's technical and health partners in order to achieve sustainable health coverage, as part of technical health working groups. In addition, the Secretary-General of Lesotho Red Cross sits in Immunization Inter-agency Coordination Committee meetings chaired by the Minister of Health.

In 2022, the National Society continued to support the Government in ensuring that communities and schools were safe from COVID-19 in seven selected districts. Working in partnership with UNICEF, it implemented a project to drive vaccine demand in schools and communities, boost risk communication and community engagement, provide water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and services in schools, as well as building awareness and provision of community-based

mental health and psychosocial support services. About 400 schools were provided with WASH supplies to help curb the spread of COVID-19 with dedicated WASH clubs created and equipped with training and supplies. Key messaging on COVID-19, vaccines and integrated WASH (particularly as regards nutrition and HIV/AIDS) was also disseminated through community forums. In addition, a community engagement and accountability approach was used to collect community feedback on the impact of the pandemic and its vaccine and, where necessary, referrals were made.

One key achievement has been the contribution of the Lesotho Red Cross's four health centres in supporting vaccine rollout in communities. As an example, one of the National Society's nurses, walked three hours through the river to reach people in the remote catchment areas of the Kena Health Centre with COVID-19 vaccines. People in these communities had not been accessing vaccines due to the long distance. This highlights that, though the National Society is under resource constraints, its nurses have worked against the odds to support communities. This dedication has inspired and motivated other staff members in using the limited resources they have to fulfil the Lesotho Red Cross mission of helping the nation.

Work to combat COVID-19 will be reinforced through a continent-wide initiative between the IFRC and Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to invest in a resilient public health security infrastructure in Africa. Under the US\$39 million Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative, funded by the Mastercard Foundation, the IFRC and African National Societies are building a programme that aims to ensure that 60 per cent of Africans are vaccinated against COVID-19. The partnership between the IFRC and Africa CDC will support the procurement and delivery of tens of millions of COVID-19 vaccines and hasten economic recovery on the continent. Under this programme, the Lesotho Red Cross will deliver critical risk communication and community engagement activities to vulnerable communities, in support of vaccine uptake. UNICEF will provide procurement and logistics services to a central warehouse, the World Food Programme will oversee in-country logistics, Amref Health Africa and GHSS will manage COVID-19 vaccination centres, and safety surveillance will be provided by Akros.

The Lesotho Red Cross will also scale up support for mental health and psychosocial support, improving awareness of these topics in communities and responding to mental health and psychosocial needs

both during emergencies and to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

In addition, to reduce the number of illnesses, deaths and wider impact from diseases and public health emergencies, the National Society will work in the following areas:

- Primary health care
- HIV/AIDS
- Blood donor recruitment
- Water, sanitation and hygiene
- First aid

Activities planned for 2023 include:

- Developing a health strategic plan for the National Society
- Positioning the National Society as a key public health actor for COVID-19 and other epidemics
- Delivering health promotion, disease prevention and community-based care activities related to capacity building and training
- Ensuring epidemic preparedness and response readiness of the National Society, such as supply procurement and building preparedness for an effective response (including first aid), community resilience activities, introducing a multi-hazard perspective into responses and training first responders
- Providing care, support and referral services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in disasters and other emergencies
- Ensuring access to sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services, including capacity building and training of staff and volunteers, latrine construction, procurement and distribution of hygiene and dignity packages in schools and vulnerable households, raising awareness of water-borne epidemics in communities, development of anticipatory action protocol and contingency plans for epidemics to be better prepared for cholera and other water-borne diseases
- Finalizing and implementing the water, sanitation and hygiene strategic plan
- Advocacy for early, coordinated and sustained mental health and psychosocial support in response to critical events, while reflecting the mental health and psychosocial support service provision of the National Society in existing referral pathways



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Migration and displacement

Migration, both internal and external, continues to be a common strategy for households in Lesotho, with almost half (43 per cent) of households reporting at least one member living away in 2014. The total emigration stock for Lesotho was last recorded in 2019 and stood at 16.07 per cent, with a total of 341,580 Basotho emigrants. The main reason for emigration was employment and the top five countries of destination were South Africa (331,312 people), Mozambique (7,869), the United Kingdom (789), Botswana (279) and Swaziland (220). Intra-regional labour migration is well established in Southern Africa.

Most families in Lesotho are dependent on remittances from abroad. In 2020, these made up 21 per cent of its GDP, which made the country one of the top five remittance-receiving countries that year. Of Basotho's professionals, 14 per cent (about 135,000 people) – including teachers, lawyers, accountants and engineers – migrate and take up citizenship in other countries because of low salaries and poor working conditions in Lesotho. Recent trends show an increasing number of migrants working in other sectors, including domestic and services sectors. On a scale of 0-10 with regards to brain drain in Southern Africa, in 2021, Lesotho obtained 7.5 index points, which is above the world average of 5.25 based on analysis of 173 countries. This is despite permanent positions in the public sector being reserved to Basotho nationals only. Before

allowing a foreign migrant to receive a work permit in Lesotho, the National Employment Services verifies that no Basotho citizen is qualified for the job.

Due to COVID-19-related border closures, most Basotho migrants were forced to return to Lesotho. A study conducted in July 2020 found that most returnees (81.4 per cent) came back only because of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. The COVID-19 situation in South Africa has resulted in 15,000 mineworkers coming back to Lesotho; they are still waiting to see if they can return to South Africa for employment. Another 5,000 farm workers from Ceres came back as their farms are closed, and others came back to escape from the COVID-19 pandemic in the Western Cape province. Many returnees from South Africa lost their jobs as a result, fuelling concerns around a lack of food, their loss of employment and securing income. The International Organization for Migration reported that 24,000 Basotho migrants received very low wages during the pandemic, obtained from casual labour. Food insecurity and poverty were the main issues faced by vulnerable youth and adult migrants, usually without valid documentation.

The latest available displacement data for Lesotho in 2018 identified a total of 1,400 internally displaced persons as a result of natural disasters. These included flash floods, hailstorms and heavy rains recorded in March that year.

Successive El Niño drought-induced conditions in Lesotho have left more people prone to food insecurity, forcing many to leave their homes in search of work. This is amplified for girls and women who leave their rural homes to find work in urban areas or South Africa, mostly as domestic workers or sex workers. In addition, both women and men, boys and girls are vulnerable to trafficking because of these irregular and illegal migrations.

In 2019, UNHCR identified 106 refugees and asylum seekers in Lesotho. Approximately 80 per cent of these were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the remaining 20 per cent were from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda. In 2020, the number of forced migrants in Lesotho increased to 281. In that same year, 168 asylum applications were processed by the local government and had a 100 per cent success rate, with most applications lodged by DRC migrants. Close to 40 per cent of refugees are asylum seekers and children, who can therefore enjoy access to basic health care and education.

Unemployed refugees receive a government grant of M400 per month (approximately US\$28) and the Lesotho Government has also begun providing housing, water, and electricity at no cost. Once a work permit has been obtained, refugees are able to seek employment. However, there are challenges when it comes to education and the provision of travel documentation, as refugees have often said they experience discrimination when trying to access these services.

Main actions and areas of support

With technical support from the IFRC, the Lesotho Red Cross will provide assistance and protection services to migrants, displaced people and their families, and promote these services through engagement with local and national authorities, host communities and affected people, in partnership with relevant organizations. This will include:

- Providing humanitarian assistance for migrants – including health, psychosocial support, safe referrals, food and non-food items, shelter, cash and voucher assistance, risk communication and community engagement, and information about livelihoods and education
- Providing protection services for migrants, in line with protection, gender and inclusion guidelines and the minimum protection approach. This includes legal assistance, safe referrals, border and detention monitoring, restoring family links, child protection and anti-trafficking initiatives

- Carrying out activities to support the establishment and implementation of humanitarian service points in line with the IFRC relevant toolkit
- Carrying out activities to build social cohesion between migrants and host communities, including activities to address stigma and xenophobia
- Strengthen restoring family links activities

Values, power and inclusion

Lesotho is a source, transit and destination country for victims of human trafficking, especially women and children subjected to forced labour or sex trafficking and men forced to carry out hard labour. Basotho women who have willingly migrated to South Africa in search of domestic-related employment have then been forced into sex trafficking, for example. It has been reported that human traffickers exploit domestic as well as foreign victims in Lesotho. Due to COVID-19-related border closures, many Basotho people have illegally crossed the border into South Africa looking for employment and, due to their lack of legal status, they are more vulnerable to being exploited and/or trafficked. Most traffickers use social media platforms to advertise employment opportunities in South Africa. Basotho men who migrate to South Africa voluntarily are also found to have been exploited by traffickers. They have entered South Africa voluntarily without any valid documentation and work in either agriculture or the mining industry. Often these men work for weeks or months, then their employers hand them over to the South African immigration authorities for deportation, to avoid compensating them for their work. Basotho victims of trafficking are also forced into criminal activities such as theft, drug trafficking and smuggling. This is enforced by the trafficker under threat of violence or forced drug use. Children in Lesotho are engaged in the worst form of child labour, which includes commercial sexual exploitation.

Victims of trafficking receive no protective services from the Government, which has failed to fund either the Victims of Trafficking Trust Fund or the Child and Gender Protection Unit, and frontline responders are often ill-equipped to deal with trafficking crimes. Victims of human trafficking are instead referred to NGOs that provide different services, like shelter, medical care, counselling, job skills training, and legal assistance.

The Lesotho Government then covers the cost of the shelter's utilities. The Government passed a 2021–2026 anti-trafficking action plan to combat human trafficking within the country. It also initiated four new trafficking investigations, pursued another three from previous reporting periods, prosecuted four cases and convicted one trafficker.

Lesotho faces other safeguarding problems: only 46 per cent of children aged 12–18 reportedly had a birth certificate in 2018, severely limiting their access to services, such as education and health, as well as their opportunities later in life. Ten thousand children experience sexual violence, including child marriage, each year and one in three live with someone other than their biological parents.

Gender inequality and gender-based violence continue to contribute to the escalating spread of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. This is compounded by the low socio-economic status and legal position of women and cultural norms and values. Generally, women are not empowered to make decisions affecting their lives. A study in 2018 looking at sexual violence against women in Lesotho found that 61 per cent of women reported having experienced sexual violence at some point in their life, with 40 per cent experiencing coerced sex, 50 per cent assault and 22 per cent rape.

Main actions and areas of support

The Lesotho Red Cross is looking to expand its humanitarian education programmes, focused on values and developing a culture of peace and inclusion, as well as improving access for people whose education has been disrupted by disasters or displacement. These programmes will also prepare people for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Focus will be on initiatives that help foster and promote the Red Cross Fundamental Principles, incorporating sustainability, equality and inclusion, and the agency of local communities to lead their own change; in particular, initiatives that promote inclusion and diversity in opportunities, representation and decision-making, both within the National Society and its network, and society at large. It will also expand its work on diversity and inclusion in order to be more intersectional, particularly with regard to the support of women, girls and people with other

gender identities. It will work to increase support for, and focus on, women's leadership across all levels of the organization.

The Lesotho Red Cross plans to work in a number of areas:

- **Orphans and vulnerable children care and support:** developing child-friendly communication tools for emergencies, migration crises and pandemic responses; implementing safe spaces for children in emergencies and integration of support into relevant programmes and activities to protect children in vulnerable situations
- **Survivors and people at risk of sexual and gender-based violence:** testing or scaling up projects to protect adolescent girls from sexual and gender-based violence (especially child marriage) during emergencies; developing or adapting referral systems to include safe referrals for sexual and gender-based violence; developing and implementing relevant preventive activities and modules to train staff and volunteers on prevention and responses to trafficking, and embedding this into population movement-related activities
- **Youth as agents of peace:** scaling up technical and financial support for youth-led action; building on the youth engagement strategy and other youth-led initiatives
- **Mainstreaming of protection, gender and inclusion:** integrating safety and inclusivity into all programmes, operations and services by application of the minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion, and safety and inclusion; conducting protection, gender and inclusion assessments using the revised organizational assessment toolkit; developing and monitoring recommended plans of action based on the results
- **Movement and external cooperation on protection, gender and inclusion:** developing projects based on the Movement Protection Framework and the Protection in the Movement Initiative
- **Community engagement and accountability:** developing a policy and strategy and adopting minimum standards during emergencies

Enabling local actors

The Lesotho Red Cross is committed to building a strong organization and carried out the [Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification \(OCAC\)](#) process in 2015 and the [Branch Organization Capacity Assessment \(BOCA\)](#) in 2017, as a follow-up. The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. It identified three areas of improvement: identity and image; resource mobilization and external communications; branch development, youth and volunteers. The National Society has acknowledged the need for a paradigm shift in its programming, with greater focus on community resilience-building programmes to enhance operational sustainability and improved resource mobilization efforts.

The Lesotho Red Cross has since given strong attention to both these issues and the four strategic focal areas of its 2018–2022 Strategic Plan. These are humanitarian diplomacy, organizational development, programme management and sustainability.

The National Society is also committed to the [Preparedness for Effective Response \(PER\)](#) process and is at the orientation phase. This is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of their preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve.

Engaged

In line with the IFRC Pan African National Society Development and Resilience Initiative, the Lesotho Red Cross will work to promote digitalization and data literacy, and ensure both data protection and responsibility are addressed in all relevant plans and activities. It will also plan for digital maturity assessments and integrate data and digital tools in any programmatic proposal, including requirements for training, software and hardware.

Accountable

The Lesotho Red Cross's focus is on increasing its reach through partnerships with other like-minded organizations and on ensuring that its unique role is understood, while maintaining and promoting its independence and identity. As an auxiliary to the public authorities, and a trusted partner, it is strategically positioned to play

a strong advocacy role and to mobilize resources on behalf of the vulnerable.

To achieve this, the National Society will promote partnerships by forging stronger and impactful relationships with volunteers, partners and donors, as well as designing and implementing specific resource mobilization approaches, tailoring financial risk management capacity building and improving planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) systems.

The National Society will work to increase its income streams by establishing agri-business income-generating activities. It will work to improve its financial software and upgrade servers for human resources, logistics, communications, information management and PMER systems. It will foster accountability by encouraging clear, easy, computerized processes where appropriate.

To ensure that quality and efficient health care services are delivered, the National Society will also procure additional ambulances and recruit more volunteers

Trusted

The Lesotho Red Cross aims to excel in what it does and achieve sustainable growth through effective leadership, and well-defined roles within governance and management, to ensure it can demonstrate best practice and operational standards to its donors, partners and beneficiaries.

To achieve this, the National Society will focus on:

- Strengthening its governance structures and management systems to further enhance leadership capacity
- Developing robust integrity systems, policies and procedures, improving transparency and accountability to partners and vulnerable people
- Using leadership capacity as a strong indicator of its success at both divisional and national level
- Developing a leadership that is representative of its members and adheres to the highest standards and principles of good governance
- Establishing effective volunteer management systems and capacity building at all levels to ensure it maintains a strong and motivated volunteer base
- Enhancing its youth engagement strategy to ensure the youth are represented in the leadership, activities and future of the National Society

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC supports the Lesotho Red Cross through its country cluster delegation for South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Namibia. This delegation is based in Pretoria, South Africa. Its support focuses on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

The IFRC has, from time to time, supported the Lesotho Red Cross through its DREF and Emergency Appeals, most recently in response to the [2021 windstorms](#). Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its [global Emergency Appeal](#), has also supported the National Society in its COVID-19 response.

IFRC membership coordination

IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the wider humanitarian context, humanitarian situation and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance and reinforce National

Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

The Lesotho Red Cross is part of the four IFRC Pan-African initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care, Zero Hunger, Red Ready and National Society Development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan.

The Lesotho Red Cross has long-term partnerships with three participating National Societies:

The **Australian Red Cross** provides support on a project to feed children, which cuts across many of the priorities of the Lesotho Red Cross.

The **British Red Cross** supports work related to migration and displacement, as well as values, power and inclusion, and organizational strengthening through support on safeguarding and National Society development.

The **German Red Cross** focuses on support for forecast-based financing. This contributes to addressing climate change adaptation priorities, and preventing consequences resulting from disasters. This work will strengthen the disaster risk management approach of the Lesotho Red Cross, as well as other national stakeholders.

Other National Societies support the Lesotho Red Cross through the IFRC.

Movement coordination

The IFRC liaises with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on regional and sub-regional areas of collaboration, including support to National Societies in Southern Africa. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC, through its Pretoria regional delegation, monitors the humanitarian situation in the region, promotes international humanitarian law, restores contact between family members separated by conflict and helps National Societies enhance their emergency response capabilities.

Coordination with other actors

In line with its auxiliary role, the Lesotho Red Cross collaborates closely with authorities at a national level, including the Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Training, Department of Traffic, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water Affairs and Ministry of Communication. At a district level, it works alongside the District Administration, Disaster Management Team, District Health Management Team and District Child Protection Team, with which the frequency of meetings depends on projects implemented, and the District COVID-19 Secretariat. At a community level, it works with councils and chiefs, Ministry of Agriculture extension workers, the Community COVID-19 Secretariat and village health workers.

As part of the national disaster management mechanisms in Lesotho, the Lesotho Red Cross typically supports with initial rapid assessments when a disaster

strikes and is among the first responders. When it designs its own humanitarian response based on assessments, it does so in close coordination with authorities.

Internationally, the Lesotho Red Cross also collaborates with a range of other actors, such as the World Food Programme, the UN Development Programme, UNICEF, UNESCO, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Health Organization, UN Population Fund, and civil society organizations, including the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN), Lesotho Network of People living with HIV and AIDS (LENEPWHA), Partners In Health (PIH), Johns Hopkins Program for International Education in Gynaecology and Obstetrics (JHPIEGO), Lesotho Network of AIDS Services Organization (LENASO), Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), and World Vision Lesotho.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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