



# LESOTHO

## 2026 IFRC network country plan



20 February 2026

### In support of the Lesotho Red Cross Society



**10**

National Society branches



**105**

National Society local units



**62**

National Society staff



**900**

National Society volunteers

### People to be reached in 2026



**800,000**

Climate and environment



**120,000**

Disasters and crises



**120,000**

Health and wellbeing



**100**

Migration and displacement



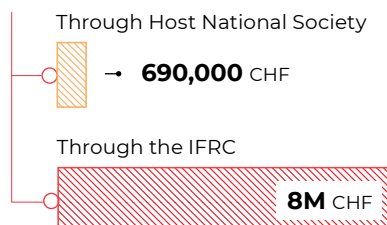
**20,000**

Values, power and inclusion

### IFRC network Funding Requirements

**2026**

**Total 8.7M CHF**



### Participating National Societies

Turkish Red Crescent

### IFRC Appeal codes

Longer-term needs:

**MAALS003**

## Hazards



Droughts



Floods



Disease



Food insecurity



High winds



Migration

## IFRC network multi-year 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

- Internal system strengthening
  - Branch development
  - Humanitarian diplomacy
- Youth and volunteering management

## Key country data links

**INFORM Severity rating**

**Medium**

**INFORM Climate Change Risk Index**

**Low**

**Human Development Index rank**

**167**

**World Bank Population figure**

**2.3M**

**World Bank Population below poverty line**

**50%**



Lesotho Red Cross, with support from the IFRC Pretoria Cluster Delegation and local authorities, planted 200 trees at a primary school in Ha-Ramabanta (Photo: IFRC)

# Detailed funding requirements

2026

	Host National Society	IFRC
<b>Longer-term needs</b>		
Climate and environment	10,000	850,000
Disasters & crises	150,000	1M
Health & wellbeing	370,000	5M
Migration & displacement	10,000	100,000
Values, power & inclusion	50,000	500,000
<b>Enabling local actors</b>	100,000	500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>690,000</b>	<b>8M</b>

## Participating National Societies bilateral support

National Society	Year	Funding Requirement	Confirmed Funding	Climate and environment	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration and displacement	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling Functions
Turkish Red Crescent	2026					-			

See back page for explanatory note on funding requirements

# 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 on 9 November 1967, shortly after Lesotho's independence in 1966. It was admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1971. Under the terms of the Lesotho Red Cross Society Act 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 Lesotho Red Cross Society subscribes to the seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: humanity, impartiality, independence, unity, volunteerism, neutrality and universality. It assists communities in need through its network of trained volunteers at the 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 Society has more than 30 years of experience in delivering health services in its four health centres, located in the three districts of Lesotho. It has an existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health that supports the operation of these health centres. 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.

Lesotho Red Cross Society developed its Strategic Plan 2023–2027 through a collaborative planning process, aiming to support joint monitoring and reporting.

In 2024, Lesotho Red Cross Society reached 12,000 people through its long-term services and development programmes and more than 1,061 people through its disaster response and early recovery programmes.

## IFRC NETWORK ACTION

### JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Lesotho is a small mountainous lower middle-income country of 11,720 square miles (30,335 square kilometres), enclaved by the Republic of South Africa, with a population of around 2.1 million, with a growth rate of about 0.5 per cent per year. Recent estimates place the population closer to 2.3–2.4 million, reflecting slow but steady growth and a predominantly youthful demographic.

It is mostly highlands, with its lowest point being 1,400 metres above sea level. A constitutional monarchy, Lesotho is ruled by the King serving as the Head of State and the Prime Minister acting as the Head of Government, governed by a 33-member Senate and a 120-member National Assembly. The most recent elections were held in October 2022, leading to a three-party coalition government. While relative calm has been maintained, political fragility persists due to recurring coalition instability and delayed constitutional reforms,

although regional confidence improved following Lesotho's removal from the SADC Organ Troika agenda in 2025.

Almost half of the Basotho people are economically dependent on informal crop cultivation or animal husbandry. Nearly two-thirds of the country's national income originates from the agriculture sector. Rural livelihoods remain highly climate-sensitive, with limited irrigation and continued reliance on rain-fed subsistence farming. The economy faces significant challenges, including high unemployment rates of approximately 30 per cent, inflation and a dependency on external economic support. According to the 2024 poverty and equity briefs from the World Bank, around 28.4 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line, with high vulnerability to economic shocks. Women and youth are disproportionately affected by unemployment and income insecurity, while migration—both internal and cross-border—remains a key coping strategy for many households.

The country faces a myriad of challenges impacting its population. Access to healthcare is limited, particularly in rural areas, resulting in inadequate health services and a high

burden of disease. Lesotho also has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates globally, at approximately 23 per cent among adults, placing sustained pressure on the health system. [Food insecurity](#) affects an estimated 30 per cent of the population, primarily due to climate-related challenges such as drought and flooding. Furthermore, environmental issues linked to climate change pose significant risks, with extreme weather events impacting agriculture and livelihoods. The ongoing crises, including disasters such as droughts and floods intensified by climate change, further exacerbate the situation, affecting food production and economic stability.

Lesotho is increasingly exposed to climatic variability, including frost, cold waves, and land degradation, which undermine long-term resilience.

Despite these hurdles, growth is predicted in the [mining industry](#) driven by an improved market outlook for rough diamonds and a current upsurge in commodity prices. Additionally, 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.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



### Climate and environment

Lesotho's topography and location influence its [temperate](#) climate, which exhibits alpine characteristics. This makes the country highly vulnerable to climate variability and long-term climate change. It is expected to become generally hotter and drier across projected future climates. According to the [World Bank Lesotho Climate Risk Country Profile 2021](#), high evaporation rates and the near absence of permanent surface water over large parts of the country combine to make water a scarce resource. Even without climate change, some projections indicate that water resources will significantly diminish in the future. The primary challenges stem from water resource availability, changing precipitation patterns and growing population demands.

Despite being known as the "water tower" of southern Africa, Lesotho relies heavily on [rain-fed agriculture](#), which heightens the risk of drought. [Droughts](#) are a major driver of food insecurity in the country, causing crop damage, loss of pasture and water sources, livestock losses, hunger, disease outbreaks, asset depletion, malnutrition and migration. Increased aridity and higher temperatures exacerbate these challenges, degrading agricultural conditions, reducing working days and undermining the economic resilience of vulnerable populations. Rising temperatures and aridity also heighten the risk of wildfires, with predicted climate change scenarios foreseeing more frequent and intense events. This poses significant risks to livelihoods, particularly in the densely populated Lowlands, Foothills and Senqu River Valley, which are the main crop-growing regions. Severe land degradation further amplifies the impacts of droughts and floods.

The rising temperatures are expected to worsen tensions between agricultural and livestock needs and the growing demand for water among the population, particularly during

dry seasons. Additionally, these changes are likely to alter the [quality of available surface and groundwater](#), while increasing pressure on urban areas due to urbanization. Changing rainfall patterns are expected to disrupt agricultural production and harvest seasons, with later rainfall onsets affecting crop productivity and livestock health.

The country's agricultural production pathway currently emphasizes extensive animal grazing and the expansion of cropland to meet the rising food demand. However, this has led to monoculture cropping systems dominated by maize production, which are unsustainable and gradually deplete soil fertility over time.

#### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Lesotho Red Cross Society 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.

The Lesotho Red Cross Society also aims to design the necessary preparedness programmes and play a coordinated role in the implementation and communication around

the interventions undertaken to mitigate effects of climate change. Additionally, it aims to promote the [Pan-African Tree Planting and Care initiative](#) through environmental campaigns to mobilize greater climate change mitigation efforts, to influence behaviour change and to promote environmentally sustainable practices in communities.

- Train key stakeholders in the activation of [early action protocols \(EAPs\)](#) through simulation exercise
- Train staff in undertaking a simplified environmental analysis as part of emergency [needs assessment](#) processes

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## Planned activities in 2026

- Expand the use of anticipatory action approaches beyond hydrometeorological hazards
- Strengthen exchange and knowledge management on early action and [anticipatory action](#)
- Conduct community education, awareness-raising activities and school-based activities focused on adaptation to and reduction of climate-related risks
- Conduct local dialogue platforms on impact-based [forecast-based finance \(FbF\)](#)
- Develop environmental campaigns to mobilize greater climate change mitigation efforts and influence behaviour change
- Support the use of climate smart agriculture making fertilizers and use of conservation farming techniques

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## Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC aims to strengthen the capacity of the Lesotho Red Cross Society in strengthening locally led approaches that scale up [anticipatory action](#). This will involve utilizing the expertise of communities and local actors on the frontlines, ensuring that [early warning and early action](#) become integral to societal responses, especially for those most vulnerable to such impacts. The IFRC will also support the National Society in developing programmes and projects that adopt [environmentally sustainable practices](#), contributing to climate change mitigation and promoting capacity building for sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, the IFRC will work with the Lesotho National Society to implement climate-friendly policies and practices that strengthen community resilience against climate change. This will include support for [disaster risk reduction](#) initiatives, climate change adaptation training and the promotion of sustainable development to help communities better adapt to environmental challenges.



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## Disasters and crises

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

[Disasters](#) are projected to become increasingly frequent, costly and intricate, disproportionately affecting communities least equipped to handle them. In Lesotho, demographic patterns indicate that the highland regions are particularly susceptible to severe impacts. Over the past five decades, the frequency and intensity of these extreme weather events has increased, with droughts and floods reoccurring every 3.5 to 4 years. These events not only threaten the country's already poor infrastructure but also impact various socio-economic aspects, including agriculture, health and overall livelihoods.

The winter period is considered the driest season, with snow and frost being the most common forms of precipitation. While snowfall is generally regarded as a normal weather phenomenon in Lesotho, there are instances of [exceptionally heavy snow](#) that can persist for several days. Such extreme snowfall can lead to significant disruptions, including road closures and ice formation, which hinder mobility and restrict the transportation of essential services. Over the past two decades, both the intensity and frequency of these [heavy snow](#)

[events have increased](#), posing challenges to communities and infrastructure. This rise complicates daily life and impacts the delivery of critical services such as healthcare, education and emergency response. In 2024, 500 sheep and goats perished in September as a result of the cold front and snow that occurred immediately after the animals were sheared of their mohair and wool.

Currently, Lesotho is grappling with acute food insecurity exacerbated by persistent drought conditions, which predominantly affect a significant portion of its rural population. As the disruption to water and food supplies worsens, it poses a threat to people's livelihoods. Negative impacts such as migration, sale of assets and reliance on child labour are expected to amplify as individuals and communities grapple with the challenges of dwindling resources and food scarcity.

[Heatwaves and high temperatures](#) in early 2024 caused widespread crop dryness, worsening the effects of consecutive crop failures. Rising food prices have left [41 per cent](#) of rural families spending over half their income on food, with many already struggling due to low income. Heavy rains

in late 2023 and early 2024 further led to waterlogged fields and crop failures, intensifying inflation and food insecurity. Around 325,000 individuals or 22 per cent of the population, are affected, with eight districts classified under [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 3](#). These compound shocks illustrate the interaction between drought, heat stress and flooding within a single agricultural cycle.

To mitigate the effects of climate change, the government of Lesotho has implemented various policies and plans aimed at addressing this critical issue. These include the [Lesotho National Climate Change Policy 2017-2027](#), which outlines measures for both mitigation and adaptation to climate change, as well as best practices for forestry and rangelands. Other priority areas involve advocating for climate-proof human settlements and infrastructure, along with promoting agro-ecological approaches at both the district and local levels. Despite progress, limited resources and infrastructure constraints continue to challenge effective preparedness and response, underscoring the need for strengthened community-level resilience and early-warning systems.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The National Society plans to strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation by supporting the implementation of national policies and plans, including the Lesotho National Climate Change Policy 2017–2027, with a focus on enhancing best practices for forestry and rangelands, promoting climate-proof human settlements and infrastructure, and advancing climate-resilient livelihoods. In parallel, it will scale up disaster risk reduction and community preparedness efforts by expanding the dissemination of early-warning messages and strengthening the capacity of community- and district-level disaster management teams to systematically integrate climate considerations into DRR strategies, preparedness planning, and emergency response.

The National Society plans to scale up the dissemination of early warning messages and will focus on integrating climate considerations into disaster risk reduction strategies and improving response capabilities. It also aims to support vulnerable populations through initiatives such as winter preparedness for herders by distributing warm clothing and resources. The National Society will train volunteers in cash and voucher assistance (CVA) to ensure timely and effective support for affected communities during emergencies.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Serve as leaders in anticipatory action, influencing the government to integrate anticipatory action into its disaster risk management policy

- Activate and strengthen the disaster response teams by conducting periodic training in [disaster law](#) and legislative advocacy
- Increase investments including through multilateral funding facilities such as the Green Climate Fund and World Bank
- Preposition drought and snow relief materials
- Engage in forecast-based financing related events at the local, regional and national level for continued awareness raising and advocacy
- Invest in the development of systems and tools that will ensure the delivery of cash at speed and scale
- Promote usage of [cash and voucher assistance](#) across thematic and sectoral areas
- Conduct local and national market assessments, to enable [food security and livelihoods \(FSL\)](#) programming

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the National Society in designing programmes such as livelihood support for distribution of food and non-food items to people affected by drought, floods, conflicts and other disasters. It will provide technical support to the Lesotho Red Cross Society in [disaster law](#) and help it strengthen its auxiliary role through legislative advocacy efforts including the review and implementation of disaster risk management laws and policies as well as the review of the Lesotho Red Cross Society Act. Additionally, it will help the National Society reduce the risk of disasters by supporting it in implementing the preparedness for effective response (PER) approach, conduct training and workshops in disaster preparedness including contingency planning as well as improving early warning systems to save lives and property.

IFRC mechanisms such as the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (IFRC-DREF) and Emergency Appeals will be drawn on as needed for the National Society to respond to disasters and crises. In 2024, IFRC provided DREF allocations for one Early Action Protocol. The IFRC approved a [DREF Coldwave Early Action Protocol](#) in October 2024, in support of the Lesotho Red Cross Society. This enabled the National Society to utilize an immediate allocation of CHF 550,000 allocated to implement early actions once the defined triggers are met. The actions which include readiness and prepositioning of stocks are meant to support up to 20,000 people during an early action timeframe of three months. The protocol is meant to be in place for five years.



The Lesotho Red Cross Society carries out tree plantation as part of its response to climate initiative. (Photo: IFRC)



## 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.

Lesotho has the second highest tuberculosis (TB) incidence rate in the world. It is estimated that a person falls ill every 35 minutes and one dies every 2 hours due to [TB in Lesotho](#). While [tuberculosis](#) incidence in Lesotho has declined by 13 per cent over the past decade to 661 cases per 100,000 people, the country still has one of the highest rates globally. Case-finding improved from 32 per cent in 2020 to 47 per cent in 2023 but must nearly double to achieve national and global targets for eliminating tuberculosis by 2030. Health facilities play a vital role in active case detection, enabling timely diagnosis and treatment. With a treatment coverage rate of [77 per cent](#) the country is within reach of the 90 per cent target.

The recurrent disasters in Lesotho consistently disrupt community health service systems, thereby limiting access to essential health services. Concurrently, [primary healthcare](#) initiatives suffer interrupted as resources are diverted towards disaster response efforts. During periods of disaster, whether

it be a pandemic, drought or floods, the already high rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, surge rapidly. The [vaccination status](#) in Lesotho reveals concerning levels of zero-dose and under-immunized children, highlighting the need for targeted vaccination campaigns to improve coverage. The country faces a [triple burden of malnutrition](#) – undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Stunting (impaired development due to malnutrition) affects 36 per cent of children under five.

Lesotho's maternal mortality rate stands at [566 per 100,000 live births](#), reflecting a slight improvement from previous years. This high rate is particularly concerning among young women aged [15 to 24](#), who often face complications from unintended pregnancies, leading to increased school dropout rates.

The disparity between urban and rural areas is increasing, with acute shortages in hard-to-reach mountainous areas. Moreover, the distribution of skilled health practitioners is uneven, with majority concentrating in urban areas. As a result, health worker in remote areas face task-shifting and work overload. Inadequate [water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) infrastructure](#) also makes delivery of health services challenging.

## Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Lesotho Red Cross Society is collaborating with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to implement primary healthcare in the remote areas. The Lesotho Red Cross Society aims to scale up support for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), improving awareness of these topics among communities and responding to needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The National Society will also finalize and implement its WASH strategy plan. It aims to reduce the number of illnesses, deaths and wider impact from diseases and public health emergencies by focusing on primary healthcare, HIV/AIDS, blood donor recruitment and First Aid.

### Planned activities in 2026

- Build capacity on health promotion, prevention, curative and rehabilitation services
- Train healthcare workers, village health workers and healthcare committees on health initiatives
- Respond to the health consequences of disasters and crises, including epidemics and pandemics
- Build and maintain community-level capacity in effective prevention, detection and response to infectious disease outbreaks
- Provide care and support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as appropriate in disasters and other emergencies
- Build on community resilience activities, such as community-based surveillance systems

- Procure and distribute water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and dignity packages in schools and among vulnerable households
- Finalize its WASH strategy plan

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC's primary objective in collaboration with the National Society is focused on strengthening community health driven outputs and epidemic and pandemic preparedness at a national level. This is driven through the key strengths available within the National Society such as the professional health services in clinics and long-standing government relationships. The IFRC will also support initiatives that are directed towards the establishment of accessible and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services by soliciting funding opportunities and providing technical expertise. It will support the National Society to actively participate in collective and coordinated approaches to risk communication and community engagement for epidemic response and for non-communicable diseases. Additionally, the IFRC will help the Lesotho Red Cross Society ensure that menstrual hygiene management programmes are designed to appropriately respond to disclosures of sexual and gender-based violence.

Also to address these challenges, the Government of Lesotho, in collaboration with partners, has prioritized health system strengthening through key frameworks, including the Lesotho National Health Policy (2011) and the Lesotho Health Sector Strategic Plan II (2023–2028), which emphasize universal health coverage, resilient service delivery, and integrated health and WASH interventions. The Lesotho National Climate Change Policy (2017–2027) further supports a multisectoral approach by addressing climate-related health risks and strengthening climate-resilient health systems.



Migration, both internal and external, remains a key livelihood strategy for many households in Lesotho, driven by employment, education and poverty alleviation. [Nearly half](#) of households report at least one member living away from home, with many Basotho working in South Africa's mining sector or increasingly in domestic and service industries. Cross-border labour migration and remittances remain structurally important to household income and the national economy. Internal migration from rural to urban areas, including women seeking employment in textile industries and domestic work, plays a vital role in socioeconomic development. However, women and youth engaged in informal and urban wage labour face heightened economic insecurity and exposure to exploitation.

Additionally, [internal displacement](#) due to climate change, environmental degradation and localized conflicts highlights the interconnectedness of migration patterns. Migration from rural areas often stems from the search for employment, climate-induced agricultural challenges and the need to support families, reflecting the multifaceted reasons behind population movements. Recurrent droughts, extreme cold waves, land degradation and livestock losses have intensified climate-induced displacement, pushing vulnerable groups into precarious migration pathways.

Lesotho also hosts refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily fleeing conflict and wars. The Refugee Coordinating Unit, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, facilitates their protection, welfare and integration. Lesotho hosts [623 refugees and asylum-seekers](#) and remains a signatory to international refugee frameworks, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention. Since 2022, Lesotho has also accepted refugees in dire human rights situations through a "Protection and Solutions Mechanism," requiring intensive individual case management. These evolving migration dynamics underscore growing protection and humanitarian needs linked to mobility, displacement and access to services.

On [10 September 2024](#), Lesotho launched its National Labour Migration Committee to improve labour migration governance through collaboration across multiple government ministries. Strengthened coordination remains critical to ensuring safe, dignified and rights-based migration for migrants, returnees and displaced populations.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Lesotho Red Cross Society will provide assistance and protection services to migrants, displaced people and their

families. It will promote these services through engagement with local and national authorities, host communities and affected people. These services include legal assistance, safe referrals, border and detention monitoring, [restoring family links](#), child protection and anti-trafficking initiatives. The Lesotho Red Cross Society will undertake collaborative effort in partnership with relevant organizations to ensure support and advocacy for those in need.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Strengthen restoring family links (RFL) activities
- Provide repatriation package to refugees
- Provide assistance for migrants through [humanitarian service points \(HSPs\)](#)
- Provide protection services for migrants, in line with [protection, inclusion and gender \(PGI\) guidelines](#) and [minimum protection approach](#)
- Conduct activities to build social cohesion between migrants and host communities
- Establish digital platforms to facilitate access to all tools, guidance and other documents related to migration and displacement

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the National Society to strengthen the implementation of the integrated approach in responding to the needs of the migrants and displaced populations. It will support the National Society in the establishment and development of [humanitarian service points](#) and help advocate for the rights of migrants and displaced people. Additionally, the IFRC will strengthen the capacity of the Lesotho Red Cross Society to respond to the needs of migrants and displaced people. This includes providing training, technical assistance and funding in partnership with relevant donors.

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The ICRC provides support to the National Society under the [Restoring Family Links](#) initiative.



## 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. For instance, Basotho women who voluntarily migrate to South Africa in search of domestic employment often fall victim to sex trafficking. It has been reported that human traffickers exploit domestic as well as foreign victims in Lesotho. Basotho victims of trafficking are also forced into criminal activities such as theft, drug trafficking and smuggling. This is enforced by the trafficker through threats of violence or by forcibly administering drugs. Economic hardship, climate-related displacement, and livelihood losses further heighten the risk of trafficking and exploitation, particularly among women and youth.

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 and frontline responders are often ill-equipped to address trafficking crimes. Victims of human trafficking are referred to NGOs that provide different services, such as shelter, medical care, counselling, job skills training and legal assistance. The Lesotho Government covers the cost of the shelter's utilities. The Government has also taken proactive steps to combat human trafficking within Lesotho through the initiation of a 2021–2026 anti-trafficking action plan. This comprehensive strategy aims to address trafficking issues within the country.

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. Gender-based violence remains pervasive, with recent assessments indicating extremely high lifetime exposure among women, reflecting deep-rooted structural inequalities that exacerbate vulnerability to HIV, exploitation and abuse.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Lesotho Red Cross Society will expand humanitarian education programmes focusing on values, a culture of peace and inclusion, as well as improving access for people whose education has been disrupted due to disaster or displacement. Priority will be given to initiatives that help

foster and promote the fundamental principles. The National Society will also focus on initiatives that promote inclusion and diversity in opportunities, representation and decision making. It will expand its work in diversity and inclusion, to be more intersectional and support women's leadership across all levels of Lesotho Red Cross Society.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Develop and implement sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) preventive activities and modules such as psychosocial support groups for men and boys, in emergency operations
- Conduct training in inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action
- Develop child-friendly communication tools for emergencies, migration crisis and pandemic response
- Develop and implement systems for protection, gender and inclusion (PGI) data collection and analysis in collaboration with planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) and information management (IM)
- Integrate community engagement and accountability (CEA) commitments into key policy documents, guidance, tools and plans, programmatic operational procedures

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will support the National Society to operationalize and scale up community, engagement and accountability (CEA). It will support the Lesotho Red Cross Society in the development and implementation of procedures for investigation and comprehensive and holistic care for survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding concerns as well as the mainstreaming of protection, gender and inclusion (PGI). Additionally, the IFRC will support the National Society in developing quality educational programmes targeting marginalized groups.

It will also support the development of and fundraise for quality educational programmes targeting marginalized groups (especially economically vulnerable young persons), for instance leveraging technical and vocational training, basic education (literacy, numeracy, ICT), life skills and other topics as appropriate

## ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Lesotho Red Cross Society 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 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.



### Key Institutional Indicators

The National Society has put in place the following:

- Youth engagement strategies
- Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policy
- PSEA Action Plan



## Strategic and operational coordination

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Strengthen participation in existing national and inter-agency coordination mechanisms
- Enter into memoranda of understanding or formal agreements with selected external partners with concrete delivery outcomes
- Organize joint events with external partners on issues of common interest

- Develop a joint resource mobilization strategy that also includes scope for larger joint programme development processes

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** will support the National Society in forging partnerships and enhancing its leadership capacity. It will also assist the Lesotho Red Cross Society in mobilizing resources for its various activities.



## National Society development

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Review its governance and establish governance structures led by the youth
- Focus on branch development
- Conduct training to establish a pool of facilitators for branch capacity assessments
- Implement a peer-support mechanism and branch pairing approach among branches
- Implement youth-led innovation programmes and educational outreach initiatives

- Maintain a strong and motivated volunteer base

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** will assist the Lesotho Red Cross Society in its financial sustainability and transformational leadership agendas. It will support it with the review of the Lesotho Red Cross Society Act. Additionally, the IFRC will provide the National Society with technical support to attract quality staff and volunteers to its network of divisions and branches and assist in the development of active youth structures.

The **Swedish Red Cross** will support volunteer management systems of the Lesotho Red Cross Society.



## Humanitarian diplomacy

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Ensure the availability and implementation of an external communications plan to promptly provide information to the public during emergencies within a 24-hour timeframe
- Utilize both traditional and social media platforms to highlight unmet needs and advocate for the rights of affected individuals
- Regularly assess public perception of its work, identify areas of improvement in terms of public image and implement requisite measures

- Develop tailored content and key messages for specific audiences, utilizing the most effective communication channels and facilitating two-way communication
- Organize regular meetings at a senior level with relevant ministries and governmental departments, both for advocacy and profiling purposes

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** will work with the National Society leadership to make the organization a humanitarian partner of choice with its public authorities and local as well as international organizations. It will promote the humanitarian diplomacy initiatives of the Lesotho Red Cross Society and support it in developing a communications policy and strategy.



## Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Develop robust integrity systems, policies and procedures, improving transparency and accountability
- Encourage its staff to take the fraud and anti-corruption courses on IFRC's e-learning platform

- Design services that are inclusive of gender, diversity, language and mobility, with a focus on placing communities at the centre
- Implement a robust performance management system that includes regular feedback and performance evaluations

- Focus on digital transformation and data protection
- Improve talent acquisition efforts by implementing effective recruitment strategies, including building partnerships with educational institutions and professional networks

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will encourage the National Society to promote the prevention of fraud and corruption within the institution. It will support it in innovating its monitoring and evaluation processes. The IFRC will assist the Lesotho Red Cross Society in its digital transformation. It will also assist with the revision of its human resources policy and improving financial reporting.

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## THE IFRC NETWORK

### The IFRC

The IFRC supports the Lesotho Red Cross Society through its country cluster delegation for South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho and Namibia. This delegation is based in Pretoria, South Africa. Its support centres 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.

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### IFRC membership coordination

IFRC membership coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing on common priorities; jointly 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, links with development assistance and efforts to reinforce National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

Participating National Societies supporting the Lesotho Red Cross Society comprise the following:

The **Turkish Red Crescent** provides support to the National Society in strengthening First Aid.



Lesotho Red Cross supports farmers in Mafeteng as extreme drought devastates crops, livestock and livelihoods (Photo: IFRC)

## Movement coordination

The Lesotho Red Cross Society ensures regular exchanges with the IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and participating National Societies, for the alignment of support and action between Movement partners. In times of emergencies, closer coordination is organized. This is carried out in line with the [Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation \(SMCC\)](#) principles and the newly-adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

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**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 Society collaborates closely with authorities at national level. These include 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 district level, it works alongside the district administration, disaster management team, district health management team and district child protection team. At community level, it works with councils and chiefs, Ministry of Agriculture extension workers and village health workers.

As part of the national disaster management mechanisms in Lesotho, the Lesotho Red Cross Society is typically a first responder and also supports with initial rapid assessments when a disaster strikes. It designs its own humanitarian

response based on assessments, in close coordination with the authorities.

The Lesotho Red Cross Society also collaborates with a range of international and local actors. These include UN agencies comprising the World Food Programme, UNFPA, the UN Development Programme, UNICEF, UNESCO, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Health Organization and UN Population Fund. International and national non-governmental actors and civil society organizations include the Lesotho Council of NGOs, Lesotho Network of People living with HIV and AIDS, Partners in Health, Johns Hopkins Programme for International Education in Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Lesotho Network of AIDS Services Organization, Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric AIDS Foundation and World Vision Lesotho.



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 16 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.

### About the plan

This plan reflects the priorities of the host National Society, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support, for 2026 and subsequent years. It is aligned with IFRC [Strategy 2030](#), representing the collective ambitions of IFRC membership, and is the result of a joint planning process and will serve for joint monitoring and reporting. It will be revised on an annual basis to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

### Explanatory note on funding requirements and definitions

- The total funding requirements show what the IFRC network seeks to raise for the given year through different channels: funding through the IFRC, through participating National Societies as bilateral support, and through the host National Society from non-IFRC network sources. All figures should include the administrative and operational costs of the different entities
- Host National Society funding requirements not coming from IFRC network sources can comprise a variety of sources, as demonstrated when reporting on income in the [IFRC network databank](#)
- Participating National Society funding requirements for bilateral support are those validated by respective headquarters, and often represent mainly secured funding
- IFRC funding requirements comprise both what is sourced from the IFRC core budget and what is sought through emergency and thematic funding. This includes participating National Societies' multilateral support through IFRC, and all other IFRC sources of funding
- Figures for the years beyond 2026 most often represent partial requirements that are known at time of publication. Many National Societies have annual internal approval processes for funding requirements, and lower figures do not mean a decrease in funding requirements in future years
- Missing data and breakdowns: data may not be available from all IFRC network members for funding requirements. This may lead to inconsistencies across different reporting tools as well as potential under-estimation of the efforts led by all
- Reporting bias: the data informing this Federation-wide overview is self-reported by each National Society (or its designated support entity) which is the owner and gatekeeper, and responsible for accuracy and updating. IFRC tries to triangulate the data provided by the National Societies with previous data and other data in the public domain
- **Definitions:**
  - » **Local units:** ALL subdivisions of a National Society that coordinate and deliver services to people. These include ALL levels (provincial, state, city, district branches, sections or chapters, headquarters, and regional and intermediate offices, as well as community-based units)
  - » **Branches:** A Branch has its roles, responsibilities and relationship with the National Headquarters defined through the National Society's Statutes, including the level of autonomy given, especially in the area of its legal status, mobilising local resources and building local partnerships, and the decisions it makes. It has a local-level decision-making mechanism through its Branch members, board and volunteers, equally defined through the National Society's Statutes

### Additional information

- [IFRC network country plans](#) • [All plans and reports](#)
- Data on National Societies on [IFRC Network Databank](#)
- Live data on active emergency operations on [IFRC GO platform](#)
- Live data on [IFRC-Disaster Response Emergency Fund Response and Anticipatory pillars](#)
- [Evaluations and research bank](#) • [Donor response reports](#)

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