LESOTHO

NEARLY A QUARTER OF LESOTHO'S POPULATION FACES SEVERE ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY

IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS
May 2019 – March 2020
Issued 9 July 2019

CURRENT MAY - SEPTEMBER 2019			PROJECTED OCTOBER 2019 - MARCH 2020		
349,000 **24% of the population** People facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION	Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe	**433,000** **30% of the population** People facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION	Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe
	Phase 4	68,000 People in Emergency		Phase 4	71,000 People in Emergency
	Phase 3	280,000 People in Crisis		Phase 3	362,000 People in Crisis
	Phase 2	470,000 People in Stress		Phase 2	553,000 People in Stress
	Phase 1	637,000 People minimally food insecure		Phase 1	467,000 People minimally food insecure

Overview

Nearly a quarter of Lesotho's population (around 349,000 people) are facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phases 3 and 4) and require urgent humanitarian action. These include over 68,000 people in Emergency (Phase 4) and nearly 280,000 people in Crisis (Phase 3) conditions between May and September 2019. Households in these phases have moderate to large food consumption gaps and above usual acute malnutrition or are only marginally able to meet minimum food needs by depleting essential assets or employing crisis and emergency coping strategies. Almost 470,000 people are also in stressed conditions (Phase 2) and require livelihood support.

Between October 2019 and March 2020, it is projected that 30% of the population (over 430,000 people) will likely face severe acute food insecurity. The majority of households already lack food stocks due to poor crop production, and the lean season is expected to start earlier than usual. There is also a projected El Nino, that is likely to negatively impact agricultural activities. The purchasing power for the poor households is also expected to reduce due to the limited agricultural labour opportunities.

Key Drivers

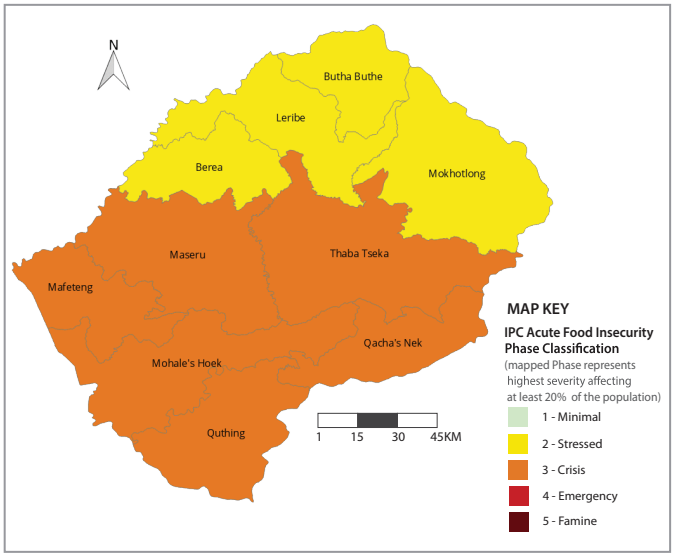
Dry Spells

There was a late onset of rains coupled with high temperatures, resulting in delayed cultivation of land and poor germination and crop conditions, which led to poor crop production.

High Food Prices

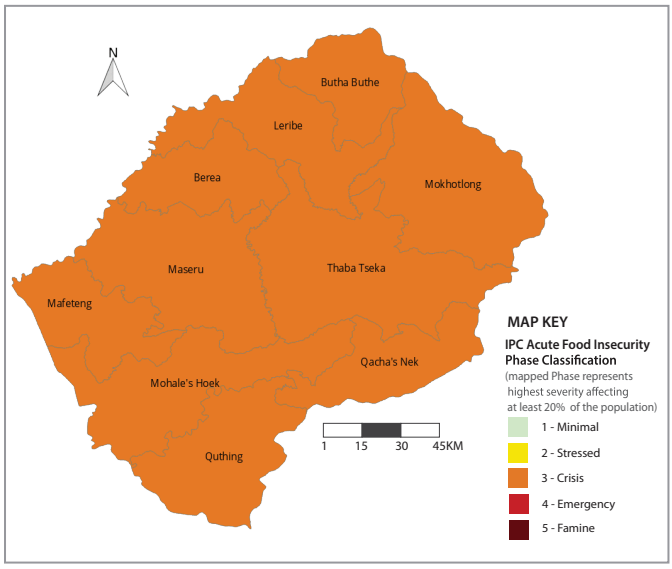
In the current period, in a few districts, prices of staple food remained slightly higher than last year (12-16%), although remaining below the 5-year average.

Current Acute Food Insecurity May - Sept 2019



Source: IPC Technical Working Group, Lesotho

Projected Acute Food Insecurity Oct 2019 - Mar 2020



Source: IPC Technical Working Group, Lesotho

IPC Analysis Partners:

LESOTHO Vulnerability Assessment Committee
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
WFP World Food Programme wfp.org

CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW

The current season shows a deteriorating food security, as the number of acutely food insecure households has been increasing steadily since last year. Nearly a quarter of the rural population (349,000 people) are estimated to be experiencing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+), with over 68,000 people in Emergency (Phase 4) and nearly 280,000 people in Crisis (Phase 3). Six districts, namely; Maseru, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka, have been classified in Phase 3, and the other four districts in Phase 2 (Stressed), namely: Berea, Butha Buthe, Leribe, and Mokhotlong. Last year, all ten districts were classified in Phase 2 in the current period, and four out of these moved into Phase 3 by the November update. This means two more districts have now slipped into a Crisis situation. Having districts classified in Phase 2 or worse, at the time when households are supposed to have enough food stocks, is an indication that household ability to cover food consumption needs has weakened.

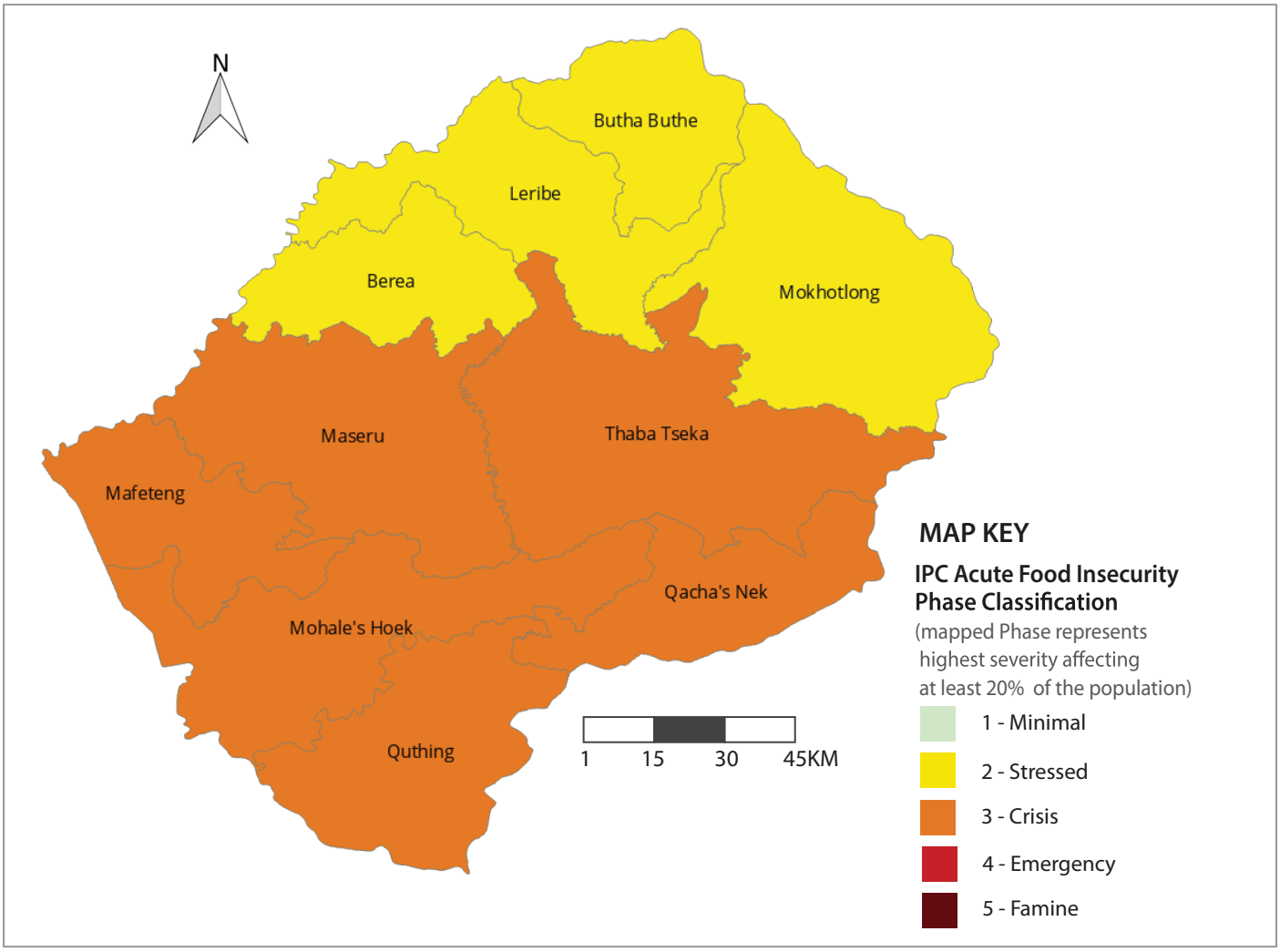
The country experienced a late onset of rains coupled with high temperatures, and resulted in late planting. For the districts which planted on time there was poor germination due to low moisture content, while for those which planted late the crops did not reach maturity. Other shocks that affected crops negatively include hailstorms and pests. Although in the highlands planting was done on time, prolonged dry spells resulted in poor germination and crop conditions. Crop estimates show a declining trend over two consecutive years, with production of maize declining by 70% compared to last year, which already had a 36% decline in the same crop that year. Sorghum production declined by almost 98%, while wheat production decreased by 75% compared to last year.

A significant drop in crop production in two successive years has resulted in low or no household food stocks, and has also negatively affected livelihood and income sources, especially for households which depend mainly on agricultural labour activities. Opportunities for other income sources such as self- employment (beer brewing) and non-agricultural casual labour, especially those that offer payment in-kind, also declined as food stocks declined. Prolonged dry spells further affected the grazelands adversely and led to poor livestock and livestock products conditions. The majority of households rely on unreliable livelihood sources that are prone to small shocks, thus reducing household purchasing power and widening food gaps.

Although food production has declined significantly compared to last year, food availability remains a minor limiting factor. This is attributed to the fact that the country has proven to have the ability to import food from South Africa over the years and the markets are fully functional. Prices of staple food remain slightly higher than last year, but are stable and below the five-year average. Food access becomes a major limiting factor for most districts, due to reduced own production and purchasing power to buy food.

Low purchasing power has also resulted in some households consuming less diversified meals. Most of these households employed stress coping strategies in responding to the food gaps. Even though there were low levels of water from main water sources, food utilization was not compromised in most districts, except for Maseru where it was a minor limiting factor, since some households accessed water from unprotected sources as well as used open defecation.

CURRENT IPC ACUTE FOOD FOR MAY - SEPTEMBER 2019



Population Table

Districts	Population Total	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3 +	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Berea	179,283	81,000	45	81,000	45	9,000	5	9,000	5	0	0	2	18,000	10
Butha-buthe	85,619	51,000	60	21,000	25	13,000	15	0	0	0	0	2	13,000	15
Leribe	255,921	128,000	50	90,000	35	26,000	10	13,000	5	0	0	2	38,000	15
Mafeteng	153,904	62,000	40	31,000	20	54,000	35	7,000	5	0	0	3	62,000	35
Maseru	229,285	69,000	30	80,000	35	69,000	30	11,000	5	0	0	3	80,000	10
Mohale's Hoek	156,906	78,000	50	39,000	25	31,000	20	8,000	5	0	0	3	39,000	40
Mokhotlong	97,386	44,000	45	39,000	40	10,000	10	5,000	5	0	0	2	15,000	15
Qacha's Nek	54,848	22,000	40	22,000	40	8,000	15	3,000	5	0	0	3	11,000	30
Quthing	116,111	52,000	45	29,000	25	29,000	25	6,000	5	0	0	3	35,000	25
Thaba Tseka	125,992	50,000	40	38,000	30	31,000	25	6,000	5	0		3	38,000	30
Grand Total	**1,455,255**	**637,000**	**44**	**470,000**	**32**	**280,000**	**19**	**68,000**	**5**	**0**	**0**		**349,000**	**24**

Notes

During the current period, a total of 6 districts are classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). All are on the southern part of the country. On the other hand, all four northern districts are classified in Stress (IPC Phase 2). Around 44% of the population is in Phase 1 with over 637,000 people, 32% (nearly 470,000 people) is in Phase 2, 19% (nearly 280,000 people) is in Phase 3, and 5% (around 69,000 people) is in Phase 4. All districts have High evidence levels (Evidence Level 3) except for Maseru and Mokhotlong, which have Medium evidence levels (Evidence Level 2).

PROJECTED SITUATION OVERVIEW

In the projected period – October 2019 to March 2020 – the food security situation is likely to deteriorate across all districts. October usually marks the start of the lean season, where the majority of households, especially the poor and the very poor, experience food gaps.

This year, however, the lean season is expected to start earlier than usual due to low crop production. Staple prices are expected to be higher than usual. El Nino conditions have been predicted with chances of around 50%. The planting season is expected to start late, and this might compromise the income from agricultural labour opportunities for poor households. All the districts are expected to be in Phase 3 (Crisis). Around 30% of the rural population (over 433,000 people) is expected to be in Phase 3 (Crisis) or Phase 4 (Emergency).

Food availability is expected to remain stable throughout the projected period due to the stable supply from South Africa. The markets are expected to remain fully functional. Income from agricultural labour will be decreased, prices for staple foods are likely to increase, therefore the purchasing power of the poor and the very poor households will be reduced. Income from remittances is likely to remain stable, thus sustaining some families. Anticipated low water levels will impact negatively on households. Hygiene is expected to be compromised. More households are expected to resort to unprotected water sources.

Due to low production, households are expected to have depleted their food stocks earlier than usual. Decreased income opportunities from agricultural labour coupled with high prices will mean food consumption will be low in quantity and dietary diversity. Green consumption will be limited due to the late start of the season.

Due to the increased food gap, households are likely to engage in coping strategies. Those who depend on livestock sales might sell more livestock than usual, with lower prices due to poor body conditions of livestock. A higher proportion of households are expected to buy food on credit.

With regards to the nutrition situation, typically, wasting and mortality rates in Lesotho have been within acceptable levels. The expectation is that the rates will remain within the acceptable levels.

Key Assumptions:

Climate outlook

According to CPC/IRI official probabilistic ENSO forecasts, 50-55% chances of El Nino conditions are expected between September 2019 and March 2020. Usually, El Nino conditions are associated with reduced summer rains. These could negatively affect the planting period and crop performance.

Agricultural labour

Due to the delayed start of the season, there will be limited opportunities for agricultural labour between September and February. The income and food for the poor households who depend on agricultural labour will be decreased. Wage rates will likely remain normal as they typically do not fluctuate.

Rangelands and livestock conditions

Due to decreased poor rains, rangelands and livestock conditions are likely to be affected negatively. Livestock diseases are likely to increase because of unusually dry conditions. Income for households who depend on livestock sales will decrease.

Remittances

Remittances will likely remain stable during the projected period. This is because the employment sectors that are non-farm related that typically provide employment for Basotho migrants in South Africa are likely to remain stable. It is not yet clear how the employment sectors that are farm-related will perform.

Water shortages

Typically, Lesotho faces water shortages when experiencing above normal dry conditions. This will negatively impact on water availability for humans and animals.

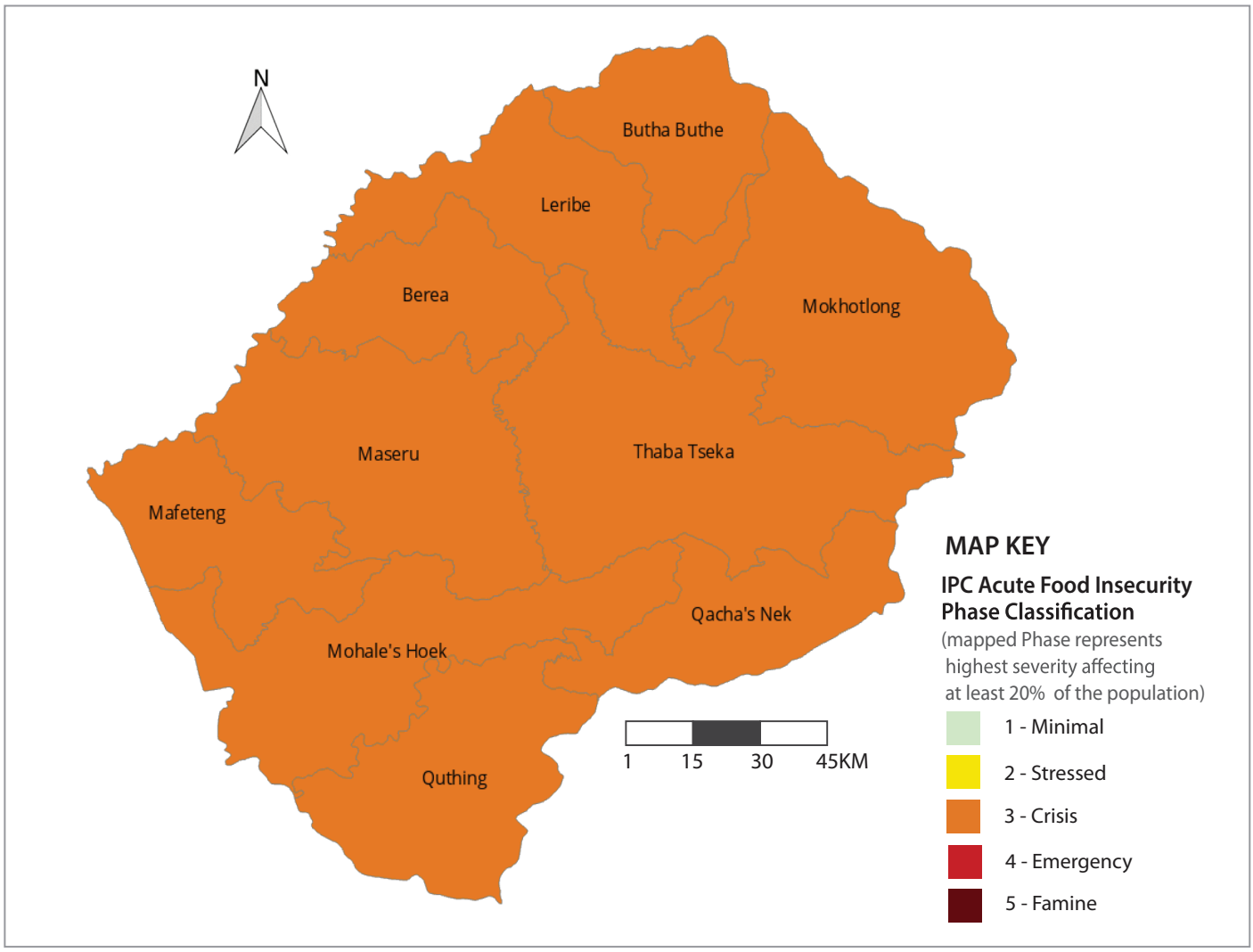
Staple prices

Current prices of maize meal show lower prices by 4% compared to the 5-year average and higher by about 16% compared to last year's price. Projected prices of maize meal in Lesotho (WFP VAM) show, that although prices seem to be higher than last year, they will remain fairly stable until October 2019. Based on South African agricultural market data, dated 3rd of June 2019, prices of yellow and white maize have increased by 11% and 10%respectively from 30th April to 30th May 2019. Lesotho imports the bulk of its staple (70%) from South Africa, therefore, the increase in prices in South Africa could increase the prices of staple in Lesotho.

Imports

Imports are expected to remain stable due to supplies from source markets in South Africa. Typically, Lesotho does not experience supply challenges, as South Africa-based imports are always consistent.

PROJECTED IPC ACUTE FOOD SECURITY FOR OCTOBER 2019 - MARCH 2020



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Quthing	116,111	35,000	30	35,000	30	41,000	25	6,000	5	0	0	3	46,000	40
Thaba Tseka	125,992	31,000	25	50,000	40	38,000	30	6,000	5	0	0	3	44,000	35
Grand Total	**1,455,255**	**467,000**	**32**	**553,000**	**38**	**362,000**	**25**	**71,000**	**5**	0	0		**433,000**	**30**

Notes

During the projected period, all ten districts will likely be classified in Crisis (IPC phase 3). Around 30% of the population is estimated to be in Phase 1 with over 460,000 people, 38 % (over 553,000 people) in Phase 2, 25% (over 362,000 people) in Phase 3 and 5% (around 71,000 people) in Phase 4. All districts have High evidence levels (Evidence Level 3) except for Maseru and Mokhotlong, which have Medium evidence levels (Evidence Level 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Response Priorities for the current period (May – September 2019) for the districts in Phase 3 and 4.

While the population in Phase 2 is able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in any untypical or unsustainable strategies to access cash and food, the population in Phase 3 and 4 are already using crisis and emergency coping strategies, mainly selling their productive assets. Urgent action is therefore required to protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps as well as saving lives.

1. Immediate food aid
2. Cash transfers (vulnerable groups not receiving any kind of assistance)
3. Livestock vaccination campaigns nation-wide for livestock keepers
4. Disaster-risk reduction programmes to protect livelihoods for the population in Phase 2
5. Identification of hotspot areas and beneficiaries nation-wide
6. Capacity building on climate-smart agriculture for the stressed population
7. Cash top-ups for those groups already receiving grants
8. Fodder production interventions.

Response Priorities for the projected period (October 2019 – March 2020)

1. Livelihood recovery programmes for the stressed population (agricultural inputs)
2. Development of complementarity programmes (backyard gardening inputs for the poor and the very poor)
3. Capacity building programmes for the population in Phase 2
4. Water distributions to the most affected communities (water tankers)

Situation Monitoring

1. Prices for staple food and inputs
2. Prices for animal feed and livestock drugs
3. Rainfall patterns
4. Water source levels
5. Rangelands
6. Livestock and human diseases
7. Income sources.

Update of Activities

1. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification update (Acute)
2. Baseline updates
3. Market assessment update
4. Vulnerability Assessment Update.

PROCESS, METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Process and Methodology

The June 2019 analysis was attended by the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee, which comprises of multi-sectoral stakeholders and agencies. The team was made up of 24 analysts and 4 Technical Global Support Unit members from the region. The team conducted the current and projected analysis using Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment data collected in May 2019 and vetted by the technical team from the Global Support Unit.

The technical common consesus was reached on each outcome and the results were reported. Sources of data used were, the LVAC 2019 assessment and the Household Economy Approach (HEA) outcome analysis, the BOS 2018/2019 Crop Forecasting Report, South Africa Grain Information Services (SAGIS), the WFP ALPS and Forecast and the IRI ENSO Forecast.

Limitations of the Analysis

The team comprised of new members to the IPC, therefore, the analysis took a longer time than planned. Furthermore, the transition from IPC Version 2.0 to Version 3.0 delayed the analysis process. The country has chronic issues but the analysis is currently undertaking Acute Food Insecurity analysis. The analysis is based at district level, which is a barrier to identify hot spot zones, except when using the HEA indicator. Even though the team was multi-sectorally represented, other stakeholders did not participate.

What is the IPC and IPC Acute Food Insecurity?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

Contact for further Information

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This analysis has been conducted under the patronage of the Government of Lesotho represented by Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) Chaired by the Disaster Management Authority. Partners include the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; Ministry of Livestock; Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme.

Classification of food insecurity and malnutrition was conducted using the IPC protocols, which are developed and implemented worldwide by the IPC Global Partnership - Action Against Hunger, CARE, CILSS, EC-JRC , FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, IGAD, Oxfam, PROGRESAN-SICA, SADC, Save the Children, UNICEF and WFP.

IPC Analysis Partners:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Food Programme