



Lesotho

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1

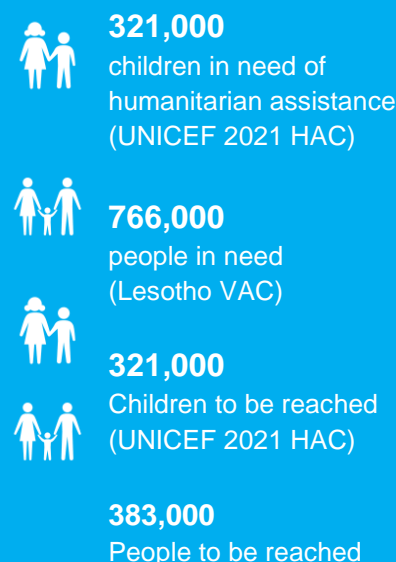


Reporting Period: January to March 2021

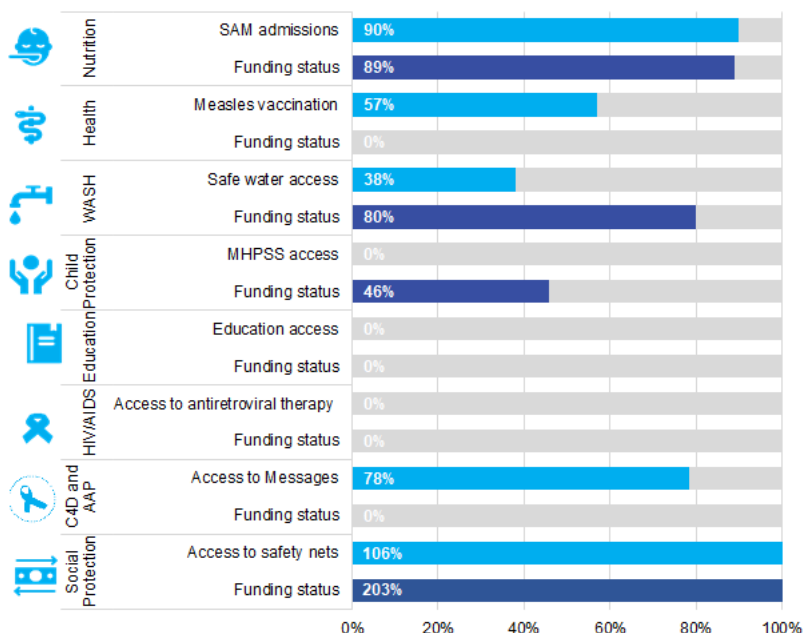
Highlights

- Humanitarian situation worsened with the highest number of COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths so far recorded in January and February 2021, leading to a total lockdown and the declaration of State of Emergency in February 2021, following catastrophic impacts from heavy rains.
- Through the COVAX facility, UNICEF facilitated the request, delivery, and deployment of the first batch of 36,000 vaccine doses to Lesotho.
- Enhanced demand creation for COVID-19 vaccines, including addressing vaccine hesitancy, with messaging reaching over 300,000 people, leading to 95% utilization of the first batch of doses.
- Provided social safety nets to 52,943 households through a government established humanitarian cash transfer system to mitigate impacts from COVID-19 for most affected children and their families.
- In 2021, UNICEF has so far received US\$ 6.5 million for the social protection sector. UNICEF still requires US\$ 2 million to urgently respond to the humanitarian needs in the other sectors.

Situation in Numbers

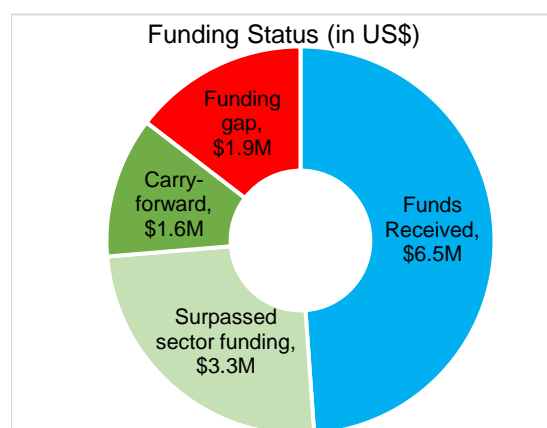


UNICEF's Response and Funding Status



UNICEF Appeal 2021

US\$ 6.7 million



Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF appealed for US\$ 6.7 million to meet the humanitarian needs of children and women affected by and at risk due to climate change (drought and flooding) and the impacts of COVID-19 in Lesothoⁱ. So far, the only funds received are from the EU has responded with US\$ 6.5 millionⁱⁱ, for social protection mainly through the child grant programme and provision of PPEs for sector frontline workers. Ongoing response for the WASH, Nutrition and Child Protection sectors, is funded mainly by funds received (US\$ 1.5 million) late last year from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), as indicated in previous situation reportⁱⁱⁱ. Ongoing response in schools including improving hand hygiene for learners, back to school campaigns and procurement of PPEs for learners and teachers, is done using funds received in 2020 from Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to these donors for the contributions received. The 2021 HAC still has a funding gap of US\$ 2 million (29%). Without additional funding, UNICEF will be unable to continue responding to the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change in Lesotho, especially in sectors that still need funding – WASH, Child Protection, Education, C4D, Nutrition and Health and HIV.

Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

Climatic shocks, declining economic growth and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic continue to be key factors contributing to increasing humanitarian needs in Lesotho. The estimated number of people in need is 766,000 (38% of the population), of which 582,000 people are in rural areas and 184,000 people in urban areas^{iv}. In February 2021, the Government of Lesotho, declared the State of Emergency following catastrophic impacts of heavy rains that hit Lesotho between December 2020 and January 2021, further worsening the humanitarian situation.

COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths peaked in January and February, with highest weekly confirmed cases recorded so far (3794 cases) in the week of 11th January and highest weekly deaths recorded so far (60 deaths) in the week 15th February, which led to a total lockdown (red level) from 12th January 2021. The restrictions were eased towards the end of the quarter. The lockdown curfews led to shorter working hours, lockdown of economic activities, restrictions in movement of people and goods within the country, closure of the border with South Africa which restricted movement of goods and people^v, worsening the situation even further.

Since schools were closed for most part of the first quarter. Only learners who would sit external examinations were allowed to return to school to take their examinations in January and February 2021. Schools began phased reopening from the 3rd March 2021, beginning with all grades in private schools (all grades) and public secondary schools. Reception classes and upper grades of primary school (Grades 5, 6 and 7) reopened on the 6th April 2021, while ECCD centres and lower grades of primary schools (Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4) reopened on the 12th April 2021. The schools are currently opened on a shift system with groups of learners alternating days while in some schools they alternate weeks.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health

Through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility, UNICEF supported the Government of Lesotho in development and submission of vaccine request, cold chain equipment application and the National Deployment Vaccination Plan. UNICEF ensured that all documents for shipment of the COVID-19 vaccine and supplies are available and the shipments arrive in the country in good condition and on time. The first batch made of 36,000 vaccine doses, 37,500 syringes and 950 safety boxes were safely received in early March 2021. UNICEF provided technical support through COVID-19 vaccine supply and logistics in developing vaccine management training materials and conducting trainings at national and district level, where 95% of health workers were reached. UNICEF provided technical support to the s Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform (CCEOP) project management team where 174 units of cold chain equipment were received in the country and handed over to the local suppliers.

UNICEF continued its support to maintain the maternal, new-born and child health (MNCH) services despite the secondary impact of COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF is promoting child health services through C4D interventions for demand generation and advocacy to the Government of Lesotho, to maintain a high-level commitment to essential health services. In the first quarter 2021, 7,190 children were vaccinated with the first dose measles.

Nutrition

UNICEF provided 2,250 children with therapeutic nutrition support, 22,624 pregnant women with iron folate supplements, and 41,345 children (6-59 months) with Vitamin A supplementation. Over 3,200 caregivers of children under five received counselling on infant and young child feeding (IYCF). The funding also supported joint supportive supervision and mentoring to health care workers assigned to the paediatric wards responsible for the treatment of SAM cases, which revealed that there were no reported stockout of SAM commodities and that Staff received on the job training with each monthly visit in 17 inpatient care facilities. Regular trainings and mentorship are critical to ensure optimum adherence to treatment protocols as frequent staff rotation has become a normal feature of care facilities. In addition, UNICEF worked with partners to strengthen community-based nutrition information and referral systems through active case finding at community and health facilities reaching approximately 220,000 children under the age of five years.

WASH

With FCDO funding, UNICEF commissioned rehabilitation and construction of 78 water systems in seven drought-affected districts, which will benefit over 100,000 people with sustainable water. As of the end of the first quarter in 2021, 45 systems were complete, benefitting 32,349 people. For schools, UNICEF is working with partners (World Vision International and Lesotho Red Cross Society) to improve hand hygiene for learners in schools. Targeting 800 schools (over 40% of schools in Lesotho), each school will have a durable group hand washing station and training on hygiene behaviour done for learners, teachers and school boards. As of the end of the first quarter in 2021, hand washing stations had been installed in 160 schools and 64,559 learners trained on hand hygiene behaviour change.

Child Protection

The focus in Quarter 1 of 2021 has been is strengthen structures and build capacity on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC). UNICEF supported strengthening capacities in 150 community structures in 5 of the 10 districts in Lesotho (Leribe, Quthing, Mafeteng, Qacha"s Nek, Mokhotlong and Maseru) to fight against COVID-19 GBV related stigma. These structures comprised 126 Chiefs, 68 Community Councillors, 60 Traditional Healers, 197 Farmers, 186 Young People, 37 people living with disability, 76 Religious Leaders, 146 Village Health Workers and 337 Community Policing Forums. With implementation of FCDO funding starting in Quarter 2 of 2021, the focus will be on supporting service delivery

- on mental health and psychosocial support and gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and response.

Social Protection

In the first quarter, with support from the European Union, 47,146 households under Child Grant Programme were provided with cash top-ups for three months to respond to the effects of Covid-19. About 5,797 new poorest households are included in the programme payment of which is on-going and is expected to be completed by end of May 2021. The intervention is complemented with strong COVID-19 prevention messaging and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provision for frontline staff to ensure safe and uninterrupted distribution of much-needed cash transfers to vulnerable households.

Education

Focus was on working supporting the safe return to schools for learners. Education worked with WASH to continue improving hand hygiene in schools with infrastructure and trainings. Also, to ensure learners return to schools, Education enhanced return to school campaigns, working with C4D.

C4D and AAP

UNICEF continues to use various platforms including radio, social media and community engagement, Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) forums at district and community level to increase awareness on COVID-19 through messaging. In Quarter 1 of 2021, more than 300,000 people were reached. In partnership with the national RCCE Group, radio slots were purchased through partnership to respond to callers' questions on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and promote its acceptance. UNICEF provided technical support to the COVID-19 vaccine demand generation to create demand for the vaccine and address vaccine hesitancy with the use of U-report where 319 health workers were reached. This has contributed to 95% utilization of the first batch of 36,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine doses so far received in Lesotho.

To enhance continuity of health services, C4D targeted 11 health care facilities in 6 districts to ensure that 1400 children aged 0-24 months get back on track on their immunization schedules, which were derailed by COVID-19 restrictions. This was done through messaging of essential continuity of health services messaging to the mothers. Discussions were also held with 100 frontline workers to assess the impact of COVID-19 to inform humanitarian programming. Finally, with most learners being out of school in 2020, C4D intensified messaging in communities to enhance safe return to schools. Through this engagement the district RCCE teams established community platforms to engage with schools and set up mechanisms for ensuring schools operate safely during the covid-19 pandemic. Radio programmes and community meetings were held to get feedback from communities to establish issues of concern and to respond.

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy

UNICEF is leading the UN support to the Government of Lesotho to coordinate WASH, Education and Social Protection through the Disaster Management Authority. UNICEF is providing technical and financial support to ministries – Ministry of Water, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Health, to improve humanitarian coordination.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

Lesotho receives its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccine: <https://lesotho.un.org/en/114734-lesotho-receives-its-first-shipment-covid-19-vaccine>.

Leveraging Social Protection programs to address impact from COVID-19 in Lesotho. Humanitarian Cash Transfers (HCT), Quarterly Newsletter ISSUE #7, May 2021. <https://us20.campaign-archive.com/?u=1b77a1d35399a831f371706da&id=67ab0c29eb>

Next SitRep: 30 June 2021

UNICEF Lesotho HAC Page: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/lesotho.html>

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Summary of Programme Results

Sector	Overall needs	2021 target	Total results*
Nutrition			
# of primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling	n.d	10,000	3,200
# of children aged 6 to 59 months with severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment	nd*	2,500	2,250
Health			
# of children aged 6 to 59 months vaccinated against measles	nd	12,600	7,190
# of children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities	nd	262,000	0
WASH			
# of people accessing the agreed quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene	n.d	80,000	32349
# of children accessing appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces	321,000	321,000	64,559
Child Protection			
# of children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support	nd	15,000	0
# of women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and response interventions	160,000	75,000	0
Social protection and cash transfers			
# of households reached with cash transfers through an existing government system where UNICEF provided technical assistance and funding	n.d	50,000	52,943
Education			
# of children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	n.d.	184,000	0
HIV/AIDS			
# of pregnant and lactating women living with HIV receiving antiretroviral therapy	n.d.	8,200	0
C4D, community engagement and AAP			
# of people reached with messages on access to services	766,000	383,000	300,000
# of people who shared their concerns and asked questions/clarifications to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms	n.d	0	0

Funding Status*

Sector	Requirements	Funds available		Funding gap	
		Received Current Year	Carry-Over	\$	%
Nutrition	180,000	0	160,000	20,000	11
Health	150,000	0	0	150,000	100
WASH	1,550,000	0	1240,000	310,000	20
Child Protection, GBViE and PSEA	350,000	0	160,000	190,000	54
Education	850,000	0	0	850,000	100
HIV/AIDS	150,000	0	0	150,000	100
Social Protection	3,200,000	6,500,000	0	0	0
C4D, Community Engagement and AAP	200,000	0	0	200,000	100
Cluster Coordination	70,000	0	0	70,000	100
Total	6,700,000	6,500,000	1,560,000	1,940,000	29

* As defined in Humanitarian Appeal of 01/01/2021 for a period of 12 months

ⁱ UNICEF Lesotho Humanitarian Appeal for Children. <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/lesotho>

ⁱⁱ This amount surpasses the appeal amount in UNICEF Lesotho HAC 2021 for this sector by US\$ 3.3 million, hence the indication of overfunding in the funding graph.

ⁱⁱⁱ UNICEF Lesotho Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 Mar-Dec 2020

^{iv} Lesotho IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis: July 2020- March 2021. Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee, August 2020

^v Lesotho is completely surrounded by South Africa and the two countries have very socio-economic linkages between the two countries