

# UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



54564  
Distr.  
LIMITED

E/CN.14/SWCD/INF.12  
2 October 1969

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Africa Regional Conference  
on the Integrated Approach to Rural Development  
Moshi (Tanzania), 13-24 October 1969

## COUNTRY STATEMENT - LESOTHO

### INTRODUCTION

Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) was a British Colony for about 100 years when she got her independence on 4 October 1966. The country is surrounded by the Republic of South Africa and is completely landlocked. What are regarded as lowlands range from 5,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level and the highest peak in Southern Africa is in Lesotho at the altitude of about 12,000 feet above sea level.

### Size

Lesotho's size is approximately 11,700 square miles and the population is just over a million people (1966 census) about 117,000 of these (mostly men) are always out in the Republic of South Africa in gold mines and other forms of employment.

Population density is estimated to be 83 persons to the square mile.

### Economics

Lesotho's economy is mainly, if not purely, agricultural. About two-thirds of the land are mountainous grasslands suitable for stock farming and very little crop farming is being done. The lowlands comprise about one-third of the total area and the soil is fairly fertile and fertile enough for crop farming.

### Problems

The two basic problems of Lesotho are the extremely low productivity in agriculture and the very high rate of soil erosion.

Other major problems are the lack of industrial activities, dependency on foreign budgetary aid and like any developing country inadequacy of the public administration.

### Land tenure

The problem of the present land tenure system involving various legal, economic, social and political aspects is a complex and controversial one, having both pros and cons. All land in Lesotho, whether agricultural or urban is the property of the Basotho nation - The King is the traditional trustee on behalf of the nation and is assisted by chiefs and headmen to perform his duties.

### Objectives and targets

The main objectives of the country's development plan are:

- (a) To increase level of production;
- (b) To raise the standard of living;
- (c) To increase the capabilities of the Basotho to shoulder their own responsibilities and to reduce the country's dependence on foreign aid.

### Sectional targets

Agriculture, being the mainstay of the country, should be given top priority, and all efforts are being made to obtain a higher crop production as has been proved in concentrated areas like Maseru Experimental Station and Thaba-Phats'oa Irrigation schemes. The yield per acre on the above amounted to 50-60 bags per acre as against the average minimum of about 2-3 bags per acre.

The Ministry of Agriculture consists of various divisions:

- (1) A livestock service;
- (2) Agronomy;
- (3) Agricultural information services;
- (4) Farmers' training centres and extension services;
- (5) Training College;
- (6) Soil Conservation;
- (7) Nutrition and training farms.

As the country is split into nine administrative districts, in every district there is a district extension officer who takes charge of the district activities and the supervision of the district staff. Considerable progress is being made to foster a close co-operation between the farmer and the Ministry, through dynamic extension service; a regular Adult Education Programme has been organized throughout the year.

### Co-operation movement

The Department of Co-operatives is responsible for the implementation of government policy, in fostering and promoting a soundly based co-operative movement in Lesotho.

### Nutrition and home economics

The Applied Food and Nutrition Scheme (FAO and UNICEF and Lesotho).

The above-mentioned scheme is a joint project of the two United Nations bodies, also mentioned above and the Lesotho Government.

As a result of a food consumption survey conducted by WHO (Dr. Munqz and Miss Anderson in Lesotho which lasted for four years, 1956-1960) the scheme was launched in Lesotho during 1962.

There are representatives committees at village level and at regional level which include Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health and Interior.

Whereas a Permanent Bureau of Nutrition at national level includes the above ministries plus voluntary organizations, such as the Catholic Relief Services, the Save the Children Fund and the Red Cross Society.

The Lesotho Government is responsible for asking from world organizations for help, such as technical staff, equipment and transport facilities, and also fellowships for local people to further their training locally and abroad. The scheme is mostly manned by women and has gained much success.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

### Education

#### Primary education

Lesotho is fortunate in that it is regarded as having the highest percentage of literacy compared to other African States.

Primary education is free, and non-compulsory; (It is estimated that about 90 per cent of school age children do go to school, especially in the lowlands where schools are evenly distributed).

### Secondary education

The country is served by several junior or secondary schools offering courses of three to five years duration respectively. Most of these schools are run by missions and are being aided by the Government either wholly or partly, while others, which are being opened as a result of the pressing need, get no assistance from the Government due to the latter's lack of funds.

### Higher education

The University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland caters for higher education for the three countries but admission is open to students from other countries depending on the availability of places.

### Vocational training

There are two main technical centres which offer artisan, craftsman and commercial courses respectively. The two schools are by no means adequate to meet the country's demand. Attempts are being made, and some institutions do offer similar courses, but there is much room for improvement.

### Problems in education

Although a great percentage of children of school age do attend schools, in most cases their attendance is hampered by various economic problems to such an extent that a serious "wastage" is experienced; a great percentage ("Drop-outs") do not complete their Primary course.

The proportion of students in primary and secondary schools is greatly unbalanced; on the average it is only about two-thirds of pupils who complete their primary course who can find places in the secondary schools, either due to limited places or on account of economic reasons affecting parents.

Most of our secondary schools are boarding and fee-paying. Some schools especially in urban areas, permit day scholars.

Many children have difficulty in attaining higher education because parents are unable to pay for them but the Lesotho Government is trying its best to award bursaries and scholarships to the promising students.

## HEALTH

Owing to geographical and climatic conditions, on the whole the average Mosotho enjoys good health free from the tropical diseases prevalent in most African countries, except for deficiency diseases and a few others.

The main functions of the Ministry of Health are to provide facilities for the treatment of diseases to prevent illness and to promote health in all districts of Lesotho.

The main objective at present is to try to bring preventive health facilities to at least the same level as the curative services by providing a number of health centres in the country.

The Permanent Secretary for Health under the Minister is held responsible for the organization of health services in Lesotho.

In each of the nine administrative districts there is a government hospital. There are also eight mission hospitals subsidized by the Government and a number of health centres. There are also voluntary agencies such as the Lesotho Red Cross Society, the Lesotho Socio-Medical Services (Flying Doctor) and the Catholic Relief Services.

#### Distribution of health facilities

Although the health units are not evenly distributed throughout the country, health installations are not strikingly insufficient, given the country's level of economic development.

The lowland seems to be in a favourable situation, with more health services and better facilities for communications.

#### Community Development

The Department of Community Development is under the Ministry of Interior. The Permanent Secretary, under the Minister is responsible for the whole Ministry composed of various departments.

#### Organization

The Community Development Department is headed by the Chief Development Officer who has an Assistant or Deputy also assisted by District Community Development Officers, one in each of the nine districts and a few Community Development Assistants at village level.

In Lesotho, rural development is the concern of a number of government departments and organizations; the main function of Community Development is to serve as a link to co-ordinate the activities of the technical departments and voluntary agencies.

#### At village level

There are Village Development Committees elected by the people. Planning starts at village level in a democratic way and is passed to the District Development Committee.

At district level

There is a District Development Committee composed of Heads of Departments, Principal/Ward Chiefs, District Community Development Officers, an Assistant Minister as Chairman and a District Administrative Secretary as his deputy.

The main function of this body is to assess the village development plans and provide technical and other forms of assistance wherever possible, to make recommendations for outside help, and also to prepare the District Development Plan.

At ministerial level

There is a Central Committee composed of the heads of Ministries concerned and its purpose is also to encourage co-ordination and co-operation, but co-ordination at central level has not been functioning properly.

Community Development Programme

Since the country attained its independence in 1966 Community Development was accepted as a national movement to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions by way of self-help; as a result the country has embarked upon extensive mutual and self-help schemes such as improvement of roads, communications, sanitation, adult education in various fields and promotion of voluntary organizations.

Problems

- (a) Lack of trained manpower.
- (b) Inadequate resources.
- (c) Shortage of staff at village level.

Major projects of development

Lesotho is endowed with plenty of water. Most of the rivers in Southern Africa have their sources in the country. The Oxbow Scheme is intended to harness these water resources and to generate power for local use and for sale outside the country.

Surplus water will also be sold to the Republic of South Africa. The schemes are under way.

There are also diamond deposits in Lesotho and recently what was found to be the seventh largest known diamond in the world was unearthed in Lesotho in the mountain diggings, which are operated by peasants using primitive and old fashioned methods.

There is a hope that if modern methods could be used we can discover the most hidden wealth. Agreements have been made with the Rio Tinto Company to exploit the deposits.

With increased production in agriculture, water and diamonds, there is hope for the future viability of the economy and development of Lesotho through co-operation and hard work.

-----