COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY TO FOOD INSECURITY – A CASE STUDY OF WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP) FOOD AID PROGRAMME IN THE SOUTHERN LOWLANDS OF LESOTHO

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public and Development Management at the Stellenbosch University

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification – neither in its entirety nor in part.

Seipati P. Molapo: ........................... Date: ........................................
ABSTRACT

Chronic food insecurity continues to be a major problem for rural poor households in Lesotho. This condition is caused by a number of factors including poverty, landlessness, and extreme land degradation, reduced remittances due to retrenchments from South African mines, closures of some of textile industries, the effects of HIV/AIDS and a significant decline in farming practices due to erratic weather patterns and conditions. All these factors have led to an increase in vulnerability levels. This is magnified by the rapid erosion of traditional coping mechanisms, a situation that has consequently left communities unable to respond to any form of disaster. The primary aim of this research was to investigate the community vulnerability to food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands and review the World Food Programme (WFP) food aid programme in the same area. The research addressed the questions such as the causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands; and social protection initiatives that are being implemented by WFP to address food insecurity. The research revealed that WFP has been distributing food aid to the vulnerable households in the Southern Lowlands since 2002. These households belong to categories such as households hosting orphans and vulnerable children, chronically ill persons and physically disabled persons; female-headed households; elderly-headed households; child-headed households; and expectant and nursing mothers. In addition to these categories, WFP implemented food for work activities in which vulnerable households with able-bodied persons worked in to receive food aid.

The research found evidence of chronic livelihood failure in the Southern Lowlands. This failure renders it increasingly difficult for households vulnerable to food insecurity to develop and maintain sustainable livelihoods. In particular, the research revealed that, a large proportion of households (53%) are at risk of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands; the majority of vulnerable households did not hold any cereal stocks remaining from the immediate post harvest period; chronic illness, unemployment and erratic weather patterns are causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands. As means of coping strategies, most households adopt various strategies such as switching expenditure patterns; reducing number of meals per day; kingship support; selling of livestock; and searching for casual labour opportunities. Food aid has improved the livelihoods and quality of life of the beneficiaries especially the chronically ill people. While some food for work activities such as building of toilets and water taps have been very helpful, others such as tree planting were not embraced by some of the beneficiaries and finally food aid promotes dependency among its
beneficiaries and nursing mothers intentionally starve their children in order to stay in the programme. The two significant challenges in the distribution of food aid were found to be food pipeline break and the beneficiary selection criteria.

The findings therefore generate the conclusion that although there seems to be an improvement in food access by households benefiting from the food aid programme, there is no evidence that those households will continue to access food in the absence of food aid. In essence, the absence of social food security foundation, executed in tandem with food aid interventionist measures, does not realistically augur well for the future. This conclusion comes from the finding that food for work activities which are more likely to generate income for the vulnerable households are not sustainable because the discussions further revealed that these activities have been imposed on the beneficiaries, without the co-ownership corollary that partners the communities with food aid agencies such as WFP. It is therefore recommended that development agents should not determine the developmental projects/programmes within the communities. The process should be interactive and should not be done in isolation but in mutual social learning and capacity building process as both parties (development agents and the beneficiaries) learn from each other and manage to develop a reciprocal relationship and partnership that will eventually reap sustainable outcome. It is therefore concluded that, the food aid programmes failed to offer sustainable social safety nets to the beneficiaries. The research hypothesis that there is no clear exit strategy in the implementation of the food security interventions and that there are no sustainability and continuity measures that were put into place by WFP remains valid.
OPSOMMING

Langdurig kos onsekerheid hou ann om ‘n belangrik probleem te wees vir arm mense wat in de platterlands van Lesotho woon. Heirde kondise is deur oorsaaklike faktore soos, armoedigheid, uiterste land degradasie, afgemerkde betaling van afgdanking uit Suid Afrika se myne; afsluiting van die tekstiele fabriekse; die uitslag van HIV/AIDS en die belangrik verval in die boedery gewoonte deur ongereeld patronlike kondisie. All die factore het aan die groeinde wondbaarheid flakke geleë; en die situasie het erger geword volgens die gou wegspoeling van die gewoonte tradisioneel lewens meganieke. Uituindelik, die situasie het die gemeenskap (mense) onbekwaam gemaak, dus hulle kon nie op enige moeilikheid reageer nie. Die hoofsaaklike doel van hierdie ondersoeking, was om die gemeenskaap se wonderbaarheid aan voed anveilig heid in die Suidelik Laaglande te uitvind, en om die WFP (Voedsel hulp program) in die selfgde gebied te ondersoek. Die ondersoeking probeer ook om die oorsaaklike van voed onveiligheid in die Suidelik Laaglande te verstaan; en die sosiaal beskerming inisiatiewe wat deur WFP ge-implementeer word, om die voed onveiligheid te adresseer. Die ondersoeking het bekend gemaak dat WFP het voedsel uit ge gee vir die wonderbaarheid huishoude in die Suidelik Laaglande sedert 2002. Hierdie huishoude behoort aan die kategorie soos huishounding wat ouerloos kinders gasheer en wonderbaar kinders; langduring siek mense en fisiese ongeskik mense, vrouens hoof van die gesin, ouerige hoof van die gesin; kinders hoof van die gesin en verwagende en verpleegmoenders. Boon op al hierdie kategories, WFP het die voedsel vir werk doenerheid ge-implementeer, waarin wonderbaarheid huishoudige gesondlike persoone het gewerk om kos hulp te kry.

Die ondersoeking het ‘n bewys gevind van landurig druip in die Suidelik Laaglande. Hierdie druip oorgee meer en meer moeilik vir die kwesbaar voed onsekerheid te ontvou en versorg lewensonderheid vol te hou. Besonderheid die ondersoeking het gewys dat ‘n groot proporsie of 53% van die gesin is op gevaar van voed onsekerheid in die Suidelik Laaglande, die majoorskap van kwesbaar huishoude het graag nie graan opberging wat oorgebly het in die onmiddellik pos oestyd; chronies siekte; werk losheid en ongereeld weer patrone is oorsaak van voedsel onsekerheid in die Suidelik Laaglande. As middele van oorwelf strategies, moeste huis houdinge dit verskillende strategies soos wissel ankoste patrone; aflewering van etery nommers per dag; gesin onderhou; verkooping van lewendehave; en ondersoek van los arbeid kans ge-adopteer. Kos hulp het die lewensonderhoud an kwaliteit van die beneficiéer se lewe verbeter, veral die landurige siek mense. Terwyl ander koshulp werksaamheid soos die gebou van toilete an water pompe baie dienstvaardig was; anders soos boomplantery was nie
omarming deur ander benefiseer en laastelik kos-hulp bevorder vertroubaar tussen die benefiseer en ploegmoeders wat voordeel uit kos-hulp voorgenome laat hulle kinders honger bly, net om in die program tebly. Die twee belangrik uit dagings in die uitdeling van kos-hulp wat uitgevind is, is py plyn verbreek en die benefiseer seleksie ken merk.

Die bevinding, daarom verwek die besluit dat alhoewel daar lyk dat daar ‘n verbetering is in die voedsel toegang vir huishoude waarby hulle voordeel uit die kos-hulp program, daar is nie ‘n bewys dat daardie huishoude sal aanhoup om kos te kry in die afwegheid van kos-hulp. In essensie, die afwegheid van sosiale kos veiligheid fondament verrig in tandem met kos-hulp intervensionis maat, omdat dit nie realistiese waarse r goed vir die toekomende tyd.

Hierdie besluit bring voor die daad dat voestel vir werk doenerheid wat kan waarskynlik algemene inkome vir die wondbare huishouding is nie vol te hou want die besprekings verder verraai dat hierdie werkring is op die benefiseer opgel. Sonder om die mede eenaar afleiding was maat is met die gemeenskap van die hulp-agentskap soos WFP. Dit is daarom recomendeer dat ontwikkeling agente moet die ontwikkeling projek/programme binne in die gemeente te besluit nie. Die voortgang moes op mekaar reageer, en moet nie in afsondering te doen, maar in onderlinge hulp verrening, sosiaal geleerheid en bekwaamheid bouery voortgang as al twee partye (ontwikkeling agente en die benefiseer) leer van die ander een af, en beheer ontwikkel wedersydse verwantskap en deelgenoodskap wat sal gebeurlik verdedigbaar uitslag oes. Dit is daarom besluit dat die voedsel hulp program het geef om aanbod verdedigbaar sosiaal veiligheid netto na benefiseere en as ‘n uitslag die ondersoek veronderstelling dat daar is nie reinig uitgaan strategie in die uitvoering van die voedsel veiligheid intervensie, en dat daar is nie verdedigbaar en kontinuiteit maatre 1 dat was in plaas bymekaar gesit deur WFP het geldig gelby.
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KEA LEOBOHA!!!!!!!!!!
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WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME FOOD AID PROGRAMME IN LESOTHO AND
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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ARV - Antiretroviral Therapy

BOS - Bureau of Statistics

CAADP - Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

CBL - Central Bank of Lesotho

CBOs - Community Based Organisations

CSO - Civil Society Organisations

DFID - Department for International Development

DMA - Disaster Management Authority

DOTS - Directly Observed Treatment Short course

ECHO - European Community Humanitarian Office

EMOP - Emergency Operations

EU - European Union

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organisation

FFW - Food for Work

FMU - Food Management Unit

FNCO - Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office

FSP - Food Security Policy

FSPU - Food Security Policy Unit

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

HDI - Human Development Index

HIV - Human Immune Virus
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<tr>
<td>IMSC</td>
<td>Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee</td>
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<td>LHWP</td>
<td>Lesotho Highlands Water Project</td>
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<td>LNDC</td>
<td>Lesotho National Development Corporation</td>
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<td>LVAC</td>
<td>Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee</td>
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<td>MAFS</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security</td>
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<td>MAPOSDA</td>
<td>Management and Policy Options for the Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>MCH</td>
<td>Mothers and Children Health</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MHSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</td>
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<td>MLE</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Employment</td>
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<td>MMR</td>
<td>Maternal Mortality Rate</td>
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<td>MTICM</td>
<td>Ministry of Trade and Industry, Cooperatives and Marketing</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>National AIDS Commission</td>
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<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<td>NEWU</td>
<td>National Early Warning Unit</td>
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<td>NFSP</td>
<td>National Food Security Policy</td>
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<td>OVC</td>
<td>Orphans and Vulnerable Children</td>
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<td>PLWHA</td>
<td>People Living With HIV and AIDS</td>
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<td>PRRO</td>
<td>Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations</td>
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<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
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<td>PS</td>
<td>Principal Secretary</td>
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<td>RHVP</td>
<td>Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>RVAC</td>
<td>Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee</td>
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<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<td>Stakeholder Technical Committee</td>
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<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United State Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>VGF</td>
<td>Vulnerable Group Feeding</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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DEFINITION OF BASIC CONCEPTS

‘Pitso’: A public gathering, usually convened by the local chief.

Child-headed households: Household where there is a child (<18 years) taking care of her/his siblings and both their parents are died.

Chronic food insecurity: A situation in which households are consistently unable to meet their food consumption needs over time.

Chronic Vulnerability: Relates to demographic or life cycle factors, such as being an orphan.

Coping strategies: Activities that people resort to in order to obtain food income and/or services when their normal means of livelihood have been disrupted.

Disability: A disadvantage or deficiency especially a physical and/or mental impairment that prevents or restricts normal achievement.

Double orphan: A child under 18 years who has lost both parents through death.

Female-headed households: Households headed by widows and taking care of their own orphaned children (i.e. father died) and/or foster orphaned children from relatives.

Food Security: A situation in which all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary requirements and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle.

High burden of care: A household that hosts two or more double orphans.

Household: Group of people who live in the same household, provide things for each other and often share meals. Household members also include those who are temporarily absent but have returned at some point in the last year and are expected to resume residence in the same household in the future.
Livelihood: The capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.

Single orphan: A child under 18 years who has lost one parent through death.

Stakeholder: An individual or a group which can affect or is affected by the achievement of a certain action.

Structural Vulnerability: Caused by market failures, under-employment, social exclusion.

Transitory Vulnerability: Caused by livelihood shocks such as drought.

Village: Everybody living under the jurisdiction of the same headman.

Vulnerability: The presence of factors that place people at risk of becoming food insecure or malnourished, including those factors that affect their ability to cope.

Vulnerable child: A child who is living in a household other than that of his/her parents and both parents are alive.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cereal production in Lesotho is said to be on a long-term downward trend. Since 2001, crop production in Lesotho has steadily declined due to erratic weather conditions, endemic soil erosion and the impact of HIV/AIDS. During the 2001/2002 cropping season, Lesotho experienced unseasonably heavy rainfalls countrywide, and hailstorms in the Southern Lowlands. Worse still, there was severe and early frost. The following cropping season (2002/2003) was characterized by a very dry spell, which prevented timely planting of food crops. The winter of 2003 saw neither rain nor snow throughout the season. This meant that winter crops could not be planted. The drought continued through the summer of 2003 and meant a further delay in the planting of crops for that season. Consequently, communities have experienced not only food insecurity, but also severe water shortages for both human and livestock consumption. In addition, it is currently estimated that 23.2% of the population live with the HIV virus (UNAIDS, 2007:2). The significant theft of livestock, commonly used for ploughing Lesotho’s drought hardened soils and rocky surfaces, has contributed to household food insecurity. The aggregate of all these factors, compounded by the very low purchasing power of the majority of the people, has resulted in the poor being severely affected. As many have inadequate crop production, people are buying staples such as maize-meal although there is little or no purchasing power for the most vulnerable that are in dire straits. At the height of the emergency, the Government of Lesotho declared a state of emergency in April 2002 and requested the UN agencies and other local and international communities to join hands in the fight against food insecurity in the country. The UN consolidated appeal to the international community also followed in July 2002. This covered both emergency food aid and lifeline humanitarian concerns in the sectors of agriculture, water and sanitation, health, nutrition and public education. It was estimated then that 392,000 people required food aid. It was expected that emergency operations in Lesotho could end in December 2004, but WFP has once again extended its Emergency Operation Plan (EMOP) to April 2008 due to the continuing food insecurity in communities across Lesotho, and especially in the south of the country, where rains came late causing widespread crop failure. It was predicted that up to 228,822 people living in the Southern Lowlands (from very poor and poor households) would experience food shortages over the six months
leading up to June 2008 and that support of vulnerable groups would need to continue (LVAC, 2007:6).

The combined effects of all of these interrelated factors have created a protracted humanitarian crisis for most of Lesotho’s 1.8 million people (BOS, 2007:2), pushing the most vulnerable population groups to the edge of survival. Currently, there is nothing to indicate that this crisis will subside in the near term. On the contrary, there is every possibility that this crisis situation will persist and worsen for some years to come.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) (2005:5), food security is defined as: “All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. While Dercon (2005:3), defines vulnerability to food insecurity as “the probability of an acute decline in food access or consumption, often in reference to some critical value that defines minimum levels of human well being”. Social protection consists of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income, Asia Development Bank, (2007:7).

1.2 Rationale

1.2.1 Analysis of Food Security situation

Prevailing conditions in Lesotho are not favourable to both crop production and to general food access mechanisms, especially for rural poor households.

1.2.2 Crop production

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) baseline report (2006:3) indicates that poor households derive only 20% of their food energy requirements from their own production. Households with middle and higher incomes derive 40 and 49 percent of their energy requirements from their own production respectively. Even during bountiful harvest, poor households are still obliged to meet up to 80% of the food needs by purchasing on the local market (FAO and and WFP, 2005). Since 2002, the normal trend has been that crop production accounted for only 14% contribution to food access for rural poor households.

There are multiple factors responsible for poor agricultural performance in Lesotho. Arable land suitable for crop farming declined from 13% (400,000 hectares) in 1980 to 9% (280,000
hectares) in the mid-1990s, and the downward trend has continued in the last decade. The average area cultivated is estimated at 1.3 hectares, and only 11% of households cultivate more than three hectares (Mphale, Rwambali and Makoae, 2002:9). The scarcity of agricultural land is compounded by volcanic soils, which are shallow and highly susceptible to erosion.

This is exacerbated by the excessive removal of indigenous shrubs for fuel wood, leaving the land rootless and unable to absorb water for agricultural use. Furthermore, the use of unsustainable land management practices (such as monoculture, lack of effective anti-erosion farming practices, creation of hardpans and overgrazing) is devastating to agricultural productivity (MAFS, 2005:6). All of the above conditions exist against a backdrop of perpetual climatic variability. Climatic factors have been particularly extreme since 2001, when severe drought conditions pushed the country into a state of food emergency from which it is yet to recover. Between 2002 and 2005, agricultural production exhibited low records (MAFS, 2006:16).

### 1.2.3 Other factors affecting food access

As already alluded to above, own production contributes very little to food access for the rural poor; this food security analysis seeks to highlight critical factors affecting household ability to access food on local markets. They include high HIV/AIDS prevalence and unemployment rates.

Studies indicate that HIV/AIDS is a leading factor in the drastic reduction of household income for much of the population, thus a critical factor affecting household food security in Lesotho (FAO and WFP, 2005:9). With an estimated 23% of the adult population (15-49 years) currently infected with HIV, the country has the fourth highest prevalence rate in the world (UNAIDS, 2001:2). Given the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, those responsible for agricultural and non-agricultural labour are often either sick or looking after those who are sick or orphaned. This phenomenon has significantly reduced the potential of rural households to earn a meaningful income that would usually be translated into food access on the local markets. Some households infected and affected by HIV/AIDS do not have access to nutritious meals, which could prolong their lives. Food helps people including those with HIV to meet their nutritional needs associated with coping with the virus and fighting opportunistic infections. Owing to severe implications of the pandemic, the Government of Lesotho declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster in 2004. FAO and WFP (2005:7) revealed
that in addition to losing production hours due to chronic illness, households also reported high expenses associated with medication and funerals. Furthermore, social customs have also resulted in the depletion of productive assets as livestock are slaughtered for funerals or sold to meet medical and funeral expenses. Poor households are reported to be mortgaging cultivable land and any other assets as collateral for funeral expenses.

Next to HIV/AIDS, employment opportunities play a pivotal role in food access, and over the decades, the high unemployment rate in the country was cushioned by migration of Basotho men to work in South African mines. The remittances sent home afforded families with few other resources the means to underwrite the required annual food purchases. In the period 1992-1996, the number of mine-migrant workers averaged 110,686 (Sparreboom, 2004:3). However, with increased democratization in South Africa, the mines are obliged to increase employment for the South African citizens. This coupled with a period of intense restructuring driven by technological improvements, an increase in average wages and the relatively low price of gold in the 1990s, has led to the scaling down of mining operations and the closure of many others. Unfortunately, this had led to increased retrenchment of Basotho migrant labourers from South African mines, thus severely reducing family remittances (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2004:5). Figure 1.1 reveals a 28% decline in the number of mine-migrant labourers from 1998 to 2004.

Complementing Basotho labour retrenchments outside the country, unemployment has been further exacerbated by significant labour retrenchments within the country. In December 31, 2004, the Multi-Fibre Agreement which came into force in 1974 to establish quotas on different apparel and textile imports to the US and the EU was fully phased-out leaving significant number of workers retrenched. Beginning 2005, all WTO members had unrestricted access to the EU, USA and Canadian markets. Unfortunately, for small developing economies, the cost of the abolition far outweighs the benefits, especially as a result of the fierce competition from other cheap exporters like China.

Hitherto, the textile industry, which employed about 40,000 personnel, was the largest private sector employer in the country (CBL, 2005:6). However, by the first quarter of 2005 alone, the Lesotho textile industry had phased out 9,680 jobs, which is 24.2% of the entire workforce (LNDC, 2005:3). The sector represents 87% of women employees that are said to be sole breadwinners in their families.
Furthermore, the collapse of textile industries is having ripple effects on those who had centred their businesses on the workers’ income, especially in the informal sector. This includes vendors who had set up small shops around industrial areas (LNDC, 2005:4). By June 2004, unemployment was estimated at 30% of the workforce (BOS, 2005:3). To date, there is general consensus that unemployment is far higher as a result of the continued collapse of Chinese-owned textile industries. Estimates from the Ministry of Labour put unemployment rates at 41% (2004:8).

It is against this backdrop that the LVAC report (2007:4) reveals an estimated 553,300 (more than 30% of the total population) people to be vulnerable to food insecurity in 2007/2008 agricultural year. The majority of this population lies within the Southern Lowlands, the Senqu River Valley and the Foothills livelihood zones (See Appendix 1).

1.3 Problem and hypothesis statement

Lesotho has been experiencing severe erratic weather conditions since 2001, culminating in the declaration of an emergency in national food security by the Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili (2002:2, 2004:3 and 2007:2). In his first declaration in 2002, the Prime Minister indicated that the country was experiencing serious food deficits due to a number of factors such as persistent drought and excessive untimely rains. He further cited that high unemployment and HIV/AIDS rates have aggravated the prevailing famine conditions in the
country. These were similar words he used during other subsequent declarations. He called upon all cooperating partners of Lesotho, donor agencies and UN agencies to intervene and redress the famine situation in the country.

In response to these appeals from the Lesotho Government, social protection initiatives emerged from different sources with an intention to confer resilience and set affected communities on pathways towards livelihoods recovery. However, empirical research has revealed that there is no link between vulnerability and the social protection programmes and projects that are considered suitable for dealing with those vulnerabilities.

The working hypotheses is therefore that there is no clear exit strategy in the implementation of the food security interventions and that there are no sustainability and continuity measures that were put into place by WFP. The main research questions were:

- What were the causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands?
- What social protection initiatives were being implemented by WFP to address food insecurity?
- Were these initiatives able to offer the social safety nets to the participants?

These questions were supported by questions such as: what categories of vulnerable groups benefited from programmes or projects; have the food security levels in these households improved, remained the same or declined? Can the affected households sustain themselves after the programme phases out?

1.4 Research objectives

Examining critically the vulnerabilities that lead to food insecurity was the central theme of this research. Specifically, an improvement in the levels of food security is the important indicator that needed to be looked upon for the purpose of data analysis. The detailed objectives of this research were therefore to:

- To identify main socio-economic indicators of the studied population: i.e. main sources of food and agricultural practices;
- To investigate the causes of food insecurity in the study area;
To identify the traditional coping mechanisms during disasters by affected communities;

To review the types of social protection initiatives that have been in place since 2002;

1.5 Research design

The research studied the food insecure vulnerable communities residing in one of the mostly affected livelihood zones of Lesotho, which is the Southern Lowlands. This research used the empirical data as it results in “studies that are usually qualitative in nature which aim to provide in depth description of a community” (Mouton, 2001:148). With the empirical data, a case study design was adopted. Data is presented in the form tables and figures. In order to identify the findings and conclusions, the tools and approaches used focused on qualitative information – focus groups and on quantitative from the secondary sources. The methods by which the information is collected have important implications on the type and quality of the data.

1.6 Methodological considerations and research methodology

1.6.1 Subject for study

This research studied the communities residing in the Southern Lowlands of Lesotho, as identified by LVAC in its latest assessment report as one of the most food insecure areas in Lesotho. The table below gives a summary of the sampling framework in terms of the population and sample size.

Table 1.1: Sampling Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Area</th>
<th>Number of affected Households$^1$</th>
<th>Number of Focus groups</th>
<th>Number of Vulnerable Households in the nine villages</th>
<th>Percentage of all vulnerable households.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Lowlands</td>
<td>38,137</td>
<td>Nine.$^2$</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^1$ Source of affected number of households Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee report (2007:23)

$^2$ The study was based on nine villages
A sample size of nine villages within the Southern Lowlands was studied as it was considered to be a fair representation of characteristics in all the selected areas. In each village, 8 - 14 community members were invited for discussions.

This study applied a qualitative methodology using the stratified sampling method. The use of unstructured questions through focus group discussions supplemented by other methods of information gathering such as community mapping, wealth ranking, seasonal calendars and pair-wise matrices are applied throughout the study. Unstructured interviews start with more general questions where relevant questions are identified and the possible relationship between these topics and the significant issues became the basis for more specific questions which do not need to be prepared in advance. This meant that the majority of questions were created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the interviewees the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues. In proportional pilling or wealth ranking, participants were asked to classify all households into four wealth categories from very poor, poor, moderate to better-off. Participants were then asked to identify the characteristics of each wealth group to ensure consistency throughout the ranking. Through probing, the position of each household was discussed until the group agreed on the appropriateness of the wealth category and finally in pair-wise matrices the researcher asked the participants to identify and prioritise the threats to food security within their respective communities. Threats and problems were compared against each other in order to achieve a unique list in order of priority. The list determined what threats prevail in different communities. In relation to qualitative data, the researcher undertook a document analysis of WFP reports, publications and any other secondary data available such as demographic and households’ data (see Chapter 3). This exercise assisted the researcher to triangulate the information from the focus group discussions.

1.6.2 Conceptual framework
The conceptual approach draws on several insights from the food security and vulnerability literature. For the purpose of this research key variables studied were food sources, income sources, expenditure, existing threats, and causes of food insecurity and vulnerability that exist within the studied communities.

1.6.3 Data collection
The researcher used the primary data collection. Unstructured questions were developed because of their flexibility to provide reasons for a specific answer that can be brought up during the interview as the result of the responses the interviewee gives. The interview flows
like a normal conservation unlike in the structured interview which has set of questions to follow.

1.6.4 Data analysis
The collected data is presented in four phases. The first set of data provides detailed descriptive information on socio-economic and agronomic characteristics, the second looks at the causes of food insecurity while the third discusses the coping mechanism or strategies that the communities resort to during times of crisis and the final phase gives an overview of WFP’s food aid programme in the studied areas. The data as analysed and presented reflects variations in household typologies in terms of income sources and expenditure and social protection programmes. The objective of this approach was to capture causal relationships and impacts of various key variables on levels of certain socio-economic and agronomic statistics within the Southern Lowlands.

In cases where the participants provided data in terms of percentages, the researcher used averages of the responses given. Therefore, Microsoft Excel was used to enable the researcher to cope with statistical requirements of the research. For non-statistical data, the researcher used manual coding of responses from the focus group discussions. This method assisted the researcher to transit from quantitative and hypothesis-driven research to the "new" field of qualitative research and, as a result, is still coping with the denotation of pre-defining books of codes (Mokorosi, 2007). It was also critical when the study required triangulation of data from different sources of information.

1.7 Chapters outline
In order to provide a general overview and framework of this study, the final output of the research is presented in the following format:

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the food security situation and gives a thorough background to the study. It includes the research design and methodology of this research. It further gives the reader the rationale and objectives of the research.

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review to the study. It reviews secondary information as to what other researchers and authors have written about the issues pertaining to food security and community vulnerability in Lesotho. It also highlights some of the findings brought by other researchers on the similar topic. Those findings can be different from the findings of this research, which will help build up a debate on the findings.
Chapter 3 discusses the case study of the research. It entails the general descriptions of the WFP food aid programme and the Southern Lowlands ecological zone.

Chapter 4 defines data collection methods, analyzes data and reveals key research findings. This chapter answers all the research questions of this study.

Chapter 5 provides conclusion and recommendations from the data analysis. It gives valuable and useable suggestions to policy makers and practitioners in the area of food security.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research background, problem and objectives. The rationale to the study was also presented, highlighting the analysis of food security in Lesotho. The key approaches to be used throughout the research have also been given, together with the proposed chapters’ outline. Chapter 2 focuses on food security and vulnerability in general and gives their theoretical aspects.
CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT FOOD SECURITY IN LESOTHO

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section sets out the theoretical review of food security. This will be done first by clarifying and articulating definitions of food (in)security. The second section highlights the socio–economic situation of Lesotho. The third section describes the causes of food insecurity in Lesotho. In the fourth section, analysis of Lesotho food security is discussed together with the livelihoods context and response strategies. The fifth and sixth sections look at the policy and institutional frameworks for the implementation of food security initiatives. Finally, the last section presents the food security social protection initiatives in Lesotho.

2.2 Definitions of food (in)security

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, (2005:2) in 1986, World Bank defined food security as “access by all people at all time to enough food for active and healthy life” and a decade later, World Food Summit of 1996 described food security as a situation when

\[
\text{All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.}
\]

This definition of food security implies that a number of conditions are to be fulfilled at the same time in order to achieve a state of food security, namely:

- **Availability**: Food supplies must be sufficient adequately to feed the population,
- **Access**: All people must have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food,
- **Stability**: Access and availability must be ensured at all times,
- **Effective utilisation**: The food consumed must be safe and nutritious.

*Food insecurity* exists if only one of these conditions is not fulfilled. Agricultural production is one important element in the first three of these conditions; however it is by no means the only element (MAFS, 2005:2).

One can distinguish between different levels of food security (MAFS, 2005:12):
1) Food security at national aggregate level: Total food available from different sources of supply is sufficient to cover the aggregate national needs. This particularly relates to the issue of availability.

2) Household food security: Capacity of different categories of households to obtain or to be entitled to the food they need. This relates to the issue of access.

3) Individual level: The food actually consumed covers the specific nutritional needs of the individuals. This particularly relates to the issues of utilisation and nutrition, but also intra-household distribution.

Nutritional security may be defined as a situation where all people at all times are able to utilise sufficient nutrients to live an active and healthy life. Food security is a necessary but not sufficient condition for nutrition security. This is because other factors, chiefly individual health, the level of hygiene in the environment and the quality of care can interfere with the translation of food security into nutrition security.

These definitions of the two concepts, food security and food insecurity have been accepted internationally as they are comprehensive and simple to understand. As already highlighted in the previous chapter, this research focuses mainly on the availability and accessibility to acquire food. Various definitions from other sources are presented in Appendix 2.

Food insecurity is a problem mainly at the household level. Here, two issues are apparent: (a) food from own production is low in relation to food needs, particularly for the poor and (b) therefore the poor largely depend on other ways of meeting their food needs (offering cheap labour to the rich and petty trading plus various coping strategies). Both these facts argue for an emphasis on increasing access to food, as opposed to increasing food supply at the national level. In addition, it is clear that chronic household access problems have been compounded by repeated shocks. According to Andersen–Pinstrup et al (1997:10) cited in Lado (2001:34), access to food is closely related to economic growth and poverty as the poor do not have enough means to gain access to food in sufficient quantities. This has resulted in reduced stability of food security at household level. To McCalla (1999:5), food security is proportionally related to income, access and utilisation components. This argument is further supported by Ebony Consulting International (ECI) (2002:10) where it reiterates that people can be food insecure when they lack adequate income to purchase food. At the same time, people can also be food insecure if they are denied access to food, that food is not physically available. The component of access incorporates the notion of entitlement to food, such as a
right to the financial resources to buy food. This entitlement can be receipt of government grant or protection from theft of one’s income. People can be food insecure if they do not correctly use the food they have access to, for instance when they do not follow a nutritious diet to keep them healthy. In relation to utilisation of food, available information indicates that there are some concerns regarding the energy density of food intake by infants, food safety and processing losses (possibly). The existence of malnourished children in the same household as well-nourished mothers indicates that there are problems either in intra-household food distribution and/or the quality of the diet given to children. Effective food utilisation depends on the knowledge held by each household in terms of food storage, processing and cooking.

Figure 2.1: Food Security Fields of Action, addressing Availability, Access, Stability and Utilisation.


Given the above definitions, food security can therefore not be defined synonymously with either agricultural development or food self-sufficiency. Rukuni and Eicher (1988:7) indicate that food self-sufficiency is a narrower concept than food security as it looks at the ability of
Food (in)security can therefore be defined at different levels, namely, individual, household as well as national level. All these levels are interrelated.

2.3 Socio-economic and agronomic context

Situated in the southern region of Africa, Lesotho is a small mountainous country covering a land area of approximately 30,000 sq. km. Landlocked and completely encircled by the Republic South Africa, it stands at an altitude of up to 3,500m above sea level. According to the Bureau of Statistics (BOS, 2007:2) about 76.26% of the country’s 1.8 million inhabitants live in the rural areas while the remaining 23.74% live in the urban areas. Most of the country’s population is engaged in subsistence farming and animal husbandry. However, the production of Lesotho’s major crops continues to decline, a trend, which started in the 1970’s due to erratic rainfalls, extensive environmental degradation deepened by overgrazing and other factors. Household income, once supplemented by remittances from Basotho employed in South African mines is falling due to the retrenchment of mine workers. Unemployment remains high at 30% (BOS, 2005:6) and is one of the most serious problems facing Lesotho. Poverty and malnutrition are particularly pronounced in the country’s rural areas and 16.3% of children under the age of five are estimated to be underweight (BOS, 2005:3). The GDP per capita is US$415 with an average of GDP per capita growth of 7.1%. The Human Development Index (HDI) for Lesotho is recorded at 0.549 which gives the country a rank of 138th out of 177 countries (UNDP, 2008:1).

Administratively Lesotho is divided into 10 districts and five agro–ecological zones namely the Foothills, Mountains, Northern Lowlands, Southern Lowlands and the Senqu River Valley (see Appendix 1). Population concentration in the arable land along the western and southern borders and foothills region presents an easy access to the majority of the population. Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho lies in the central west. There is a degree of commonality within the geographical footprint of the western foothill and the more arable land. The lowest lying areas have better soils and access to water, certainly better than the Foothills and demonstrably better than the Southern Lowlands and Mountains zones. People living in the Foothills, Mountain and Southern Lowlands are clearly amongst the poorest in Lesotho (LVAC, 2006:12). Lesotho has a semi–arid climate which faces severe weather variability. Hailstorms, heavy rainfall, drought, heavy snowfall and early frost are all
common phenomena (MAFS, 2006:2). Other important characteristics describing the socio-economic status of Basotho are presented in table 2.1. This illustration focuses on a number of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are relevant to food security.

Despite improvements in some of the indicators, most notably access to clean water (Goal 7), there is an alarming increase in maternal mortality rate (MMR) from 282 per 1,000 births in 1993 to 419 per 1,000 births in 2001 and HIV adult prevalence rate from 24 to 31 per cent which is among the highest in the world. According to FAO (2003:14), Lesotho has made progress in reducing the number of undernourished people from 17% of its population in 1992 to 12% in 2002. On a deeper analysis though, there is much to be worried about the food security situation in Lesotho. For instance, FAO (2005:16) states that due to acute shortage of arable land, which stands at 9%, because of factors such as overgrazing, population pressure and severe soil erosion, national cereal crop production has been on the decline. Since the mid 1970s, the national maize yields have fallen from 1400kg per hectare to a 500kg per hectare (LVAC, 2004:23). This means that national production of cereals represents 30% of the population needs, leaving 70% to be covered mostly by purchases.

For the past five years, Lesotho has been included in the WFP Emergency Operations that targeted around 700,000 (40% of the total population) people in total. This WFP programme recognises that the recurrent food shortages in the Southern African region are largely a result of growing poverty and vulnerability exacerbated by an increasingly complex and uncertain economic environment. Furthermore, it acknowledges that the reduced capabilities of national institutions to provide social protection compounded by the high HIV/AIDS prevalence have lowered the capacity of households to withstand economic and natural shocks (RHVP, 2006:7). Under its emergency operations, WFP has been tasked to work closely with the Government of Lesotho to supplement food aid with community services that help to address some of the underlying causes of food insecurity and vulnerability within the country.
### Table 2.1: Millennium Development Goals and Indicators relevant to Food Security in Lesotho

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Indicators for monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.</td>
<td>Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from</td>
<td>Share living below national poverty line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hunger.</td>
<td>Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy supply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce child mortality.</td>
<td>Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.</td>
<td>Under five mortality rate (per 1,000 births).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Infant Mortality (per 1,000 births).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of 1 year – old children immunized against measles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve maternal health.</td>
<td>Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality</td>
<td>Maternal mortality ratio (per 1,000 live births)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ration.</td>
<td>Proportion of births attended to by skilled health personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.</td>
<td>Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>HIV adult prevalence rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of Malaria and other</td>
<td>Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diseases.</td>
<td>Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course (DOTS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure environmental sustainability.</td>
<td>Halve by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to</td>
<td>Proportion of population with sustainable access to improved water sources, urban and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safe drinking water.</td>
<td>rural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 2020 have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least</td>
<td>Proportion of urban population with access to improved sanitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100 million slum dwellers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mphale and Rwambali (2003:13)

#### 2.4 Causes of Food Insecurity in Lesotho

Achieving sustainable food security in Lesotho like any Southern African countries is linked to overcoming other national crises such as unemployment, debilitating debt levels, environmental problems and poor economic governance all of which have significant negative impact on one another (ODI, 1997 cited in Drimie and Mini 2003:25). However, the
direct causes of food insecurity in Lesotho include HIV/AIDS, high levels of unemployment, poor harvest and erratic weather conditions (Mphale and Rwambali, 2003:17). In Lesotho, the large population which stays in the rural areas (76%) are faced with on-going food insecurity and high levels of poverty due to the factors mentioned above. This section aims to discuss at length the main causes of food insecurity in Lesotho.

2.4.1 HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS (2007:2) statistics identify Lesotho amongst countries with a high HIV/AIDS prevalence rating (23%). The infection rate is the highest amongst people between 15 and 45 years and hence is a constraint to farm labour. There is a clear and critical two-way relationship between food insecurity and HIV/AIDS in Lesotho (Oxfam and Save the Children UK, 2002:5). The impact of HIV/AIDS has affected food security as there is insufficient food produced by the households in the rural communities to last them a season (year) due to loss of labour and agricultural expertise. Therefore, the reduction in agricultural production leaves a lot of land uncultivated every year hence forcing households to reduce their meals and eat less inferior foods. The high hunger levels currently experienced by vulnerable households increase the likelihood of HIV infection as these people are tempted to adopt risky coping strategies for their survival. The strategies include, travelling to farthest places in search for food and other sources of income; migrating to other towns; engaging in risky and most abnormal behaviours such as stealing and robbing other people’s possessions; and women and girls exchanging sex for money or food. These strategies facilitate the spread of HIV and put individuals especially women and girls at higher risks of infection (Oxfam and Save the Children UK, 2002:6). The impact of HIV/AIDS on households has robbed them of their productive labour, especially among households with people living with HIV/AIDS. This lack of productive labour has had a great impact on the production in these households and, as a result, affected food security (Msikita, 2005:7). Insufficient food intake weakens the immune systems of individuals infected with HIV, as a result makes them susceptible to opportunistic diseases such TB, pneumonia and malaria which ultimately lead to a quicker progression from HIV to AIDS. People in this state find it harder to access food as they are not fit enough to work or walk long distances to the nearest food markets.

HIV/AIDS has an impact on all aspects (availability, access, utilisation and stability) and all levels (individual to national) of food security in the country. Accordingly, interventions are needed at all levels and across sectors to mitigate its effects. By the same token, improved
Food security can have significant impacts in both preventing contraction of HIV and in slowing the progression of HIV to AIDS. Food security in the context of HIV/AIDS needs to target communities’ and households’ resistance and resilience, and to ensure appropriate safety nets are operational. In order not to increase stigma and discrimination, there is a need to strengthen community coping capacity rather than just targeting individuals infected or affected.

**Figure 2.2: HIV/AIDS and Food Insecurity relationship**

- Poverty and Inequality
- Faster progression from HIV to AIDS
- Food Insecurity
- Malnutrition
- Risky survival

Source: Save the Children UK and Oxfam (2002:5).

### 2.4.2 Unemployment

According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2004:2), the social problem of unemployment in Lesotho has existed since as early as 1970s. The report further mentioned that the situation is getting worse due to unexpected events. Two significant examples are massive retrenchments of Basotho men from the Republic of South African mines and from local factory workers due to closure of some textile industries which employ most Basotho women. Standing currently at 30%, the Lesotho Government is facing difficulties of re-absorbing the retrenched people in the local labour market which is also saturated.

Why are employment status and income levels so important for food security? LVAC (2003:20) data suggests that income from sales of crops, livestock and livestock products accounts for about 20% of the total income of the poor. It is clear that high proportions of income and food intake come from other sources than own production. If we further add the
point that purchased food is extremely important for the poor in particular, then the importance of having consistent income to buy the food - and hence being employed or having remittance income - becomes clear. However, this cannot be easily achieved given the rate on unemployment. As long as the unemployment rates remain this high, the chances for the poor households of recovering their depleted livelihoods remain minimal and will therefore remain food insecure indefinitely.

2.4.3 Low agricultural production

Agricultural production in Lesotho includes maize, sorghum, wheat, beans, peas, lentils, potatoes, cabbage and carrots. Fruit trees such as peaches, apricots, apples and grape vines are also grown. Vegetable production is typically at small scale. The staple food in the country is maize, and to a limited extent sorghum. Paradoxically, Lesotho is a net importer of food from the Republic of South Africa.

The key development issues of Lesotho are inter-related with food production but also raise concern questions of access and utilisation of resources. The majority of households are dependent upon subsistence farming as the principal source of food and income. In a predominantly temperate but erratic climate that could offer greater productivity and alternatives, there is an almost exclusive high-risk dependence upon annual grain crops.

The last decade witnessed a decline in food production in Lesotho. It has been estimated that during the last twenty years, arable land fell from 13% to 9% of the country’s total area (WFP, 2007:3), and crop yields are now about half the 1970s level (BOS, 2002:4). The decrease in arable land is a result of soil erosion, a lack of previously subsidised inputs, an inappropriate extension system not responsive to changing conditions, poor agricultural practices (for example, removal of crop residues after harvesting) resulting in depletion of soil nutrients, shortage of capital and negligible access to credit. A mediocre application of post harvest opportunities further diminishes potential availability.

The limited arable land is not being used productively due to among other things; pursuit by farmers of a number of inappropriate farming methods (MAFS, 2006:8), (e.g. monoculture practices - maize being the staple food is planted yearly on the same piece of land) resulting in deterioration of soil fertility. Government extension has previously pursued a high input agricultural model bestowing top-down non-participatory methods. Prior to adoption of
structural adjustment policies, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security through its extension department, had promoted a broad-acreage commercially oriented agriculture model considered inappropriate to the smallholdings (MAFS, 2005:3). Very little leguminous crops are grown, and drought routinely hinders good crop growth resulting in poor yields.

Economic change has seen increasing retrenchments, loss of income, lack of alternative employment, diminished access to farm inputs and lack of access to capital and credit. Where farmers could previously afford high cost inputs, they now fail to meet basic needs or minimum caloric requirements and food resources commonly fail before the next harvest. People experience a chronic situation of food insecurity and their major annual challenge is to produce enough food to meet requirements.

The Lesotho Meteorological Services (LESMET) (2007:4) report states that even during periods when rainfall is promising, farmers are unfortunately unable to take advantage of this opportunity due to lack of cash to purchase inputs. Due to limited resources, there is an increasing tendency from farmers to minimize production costs by planting fewer fields or leaving the fields fallow (WFP, 2007:9). Previous field assessments by WFP in conjunction with World Vision and Disaster Management Authority between July and August 2005 have revealed that the majority of farmers are not planting due to lack of access to seeds, lack of cash for purchase of agricultural inputs and non-availability of such inputs locally.

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 present the area planted and cereal production of the 2006/2007 season compared to 5-year average. They reveal that there has been a decline in planted area of cereals over the past 5 years, with potential arable land left to idle mainly to due to the uncertainties of lack of cash flow for farm inputs, agro-climatic conditions and shortage of farm labour.
Table 2.2: Total Area Planted ('000 hectares in 06/07 compared to 5-year average (Av.))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>01/02</th>
<th>02/03</th>
<th>03/04</th>
<th>04/05</th>
<th>05/06</th>
<th>5 Years Av</th>
<th>06/07</th>
<th>06/07 as % of Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butha-Buthe</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leribe</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berea</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maseru</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mafeteng</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohale’s Hoek</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quthing</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qacha’s Nek</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>132</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mokhotlong</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thaba-Tseka</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>192.2</td>
<td>201.6</td>
<td>196.8</td>
<td>208.2</td>
<td>184.4</td>
<td>196.6</td>
<td>156.5</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2007:10)

Table 2.3: Total Cereal Production ('000 tonnes) in 2007 compared to 5-year average (Av.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>01/02</th>
<th>02/03</th>
<th>03/04</th>
<th>04/05</th>
<th>05/06</th>
<th>5 Years Av</th>
<th>06/07</th>
<th>06/07 as % of Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butha-Buthe</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leribe</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berea</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maseru</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mafeteng</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohale’s Hoek</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quthing</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qacha’s Nek</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mokhotlong</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaba-Tseka</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>134.6</td>
<td>118.9</td>
<td>104.1</td>
<td>118.9</td>
<td>126.2</td>
<td>120.5</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2007:10)

Stock theft also appears to have increased in recent years. There is speculation of raiding from the Republic of South Africa, but domestic raiding is also evident. BOS (2007:3)
reported that 14,500 cattle, 73,500 sheep and 25,633 goats were stolen in 2006/2007 agricultural year. Although livestock represent wealth and therefore larger holdings correspond with wealthier households, the sale and/or consumption of livestock as a food security strategy was evident during the start of the food crisis in 2002 (Cook, 2002:7). Due to the high increase in HIV/AIDS related deaths, people slaughter animals in respect of their deceased during the funeral ceremonies, which also contributes to the decreasing numbers in livestock.

2.4.4 Erratic weather conditions

Climatic variability is one of the greatest shocks to household food insecurity. Even if only 30 percent of household food needs are met by own production, the loss of this production as a result of drought, hail, or frost can create severe food crisis (Cook, 2002:9). Lesotho experienced severe droughts since 2002 which continued in years to follow. During the recent cropping season (2006/2007), the amount of rainfall was below normal and temperatures were higher than the average of the last five years (FAO and WFP, 2007:16). The February 2007 precipitation was the lowest recorded over the past three decades (Lesotho Meteorological Services, 2007:4).

As indicated by figure 2.3, seasonal rainfall started with promising rainfall that allowed farmers to plant their cereal on time. However, this prolonged dry spell was experienced from December 2006 until April 2007. The absence of rains in the critical stage of plant development and growth phases, that is between January and March, contributed greatly to irreversible damage caused to anticipated yields. Overall, the severe drought conditions coupled with extreme heat had a negative impact on food production, agriculture (crops and livestock) and water availability throughout the country. The drought was most accentuated in the lowlands, which the most productive region in the country.

As a result of these severe conditions more people, especially the poor households, suffer tremendously as they do not have the means to fill the food shortage gaps caused by unfavourable weather patterns.
2.5 Lesotho Food Security analysis

Shocking changes in poverty were revealed when the 1994/95 household budget survey data was compared with the 1987/88 survey. This report identified that over the 6-year period, the proportion of poor households did not improve, and worse, that the depth and the severity of poverty increased, as did the level of inequality (BOS, 1996:8). Recent trends also do not indicate improvement. Due to politically motivated national civil unrest of 1998, the completion of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and reduced remittances, the overall poverty levels across all the wealth groups (very poor, poor, middle and better-off) declined (CBL, 2000:2). Lesotho does not meet its food requirements from national production, rather food imports particularly maize are necessary to bridge the gap in order to meet a significant percentage of consumption needs (Cook, 2002:7). With increasing numbers of people infected with HIV/AIDS and agriculture production factors deteriorating, the country dependence on food imports remains high (LVAC, 2002:14). Lesotho is highly dependent on

Figure 2.3: Rainfall estimates for the 2006/07 cropping season in selected districts

the Republic of South Africa for importation of non-food and food items, therefore increases in prices on South African goods create a significant purchasing power shock for consumers in Lesotho, where 14.9% of its national population lives below ultra poverty line (UNDP, 2002:9). Agricultural production in Lesotho is not mechanised, therefore it is highly dependent on rainfall and average land holdings ranges from 0.5 acres to 2 hectares across all wealth groups (MAFS, 2005:10). Variability in production for Lesotho comes largely from climatic conditions, the most significant being hail, persistent drought spells and frost which are largely a function of precipitation and temperature (Lesotho Meteorological Services, 2007:4). It is anticipated that this variance in agriculture production will continue to increase in years to come and therefore the country will become more dependent on external food supplies and consequently plunge to the very poor and poor households into extreme poverty (LVAC, 2007:5).

A baseline study undertaken by LVAC in early 2006 revealed that households which rely primarily on farming as a major food source are very poor and poor families (LVAC, 2006:9). This finding reiterates that as agricultural production declines due to the already cited factors, the mostly affected are the very poor and poor households. Household food access is the most important component of analysis to determining food security in Lesotho. Food access is determined by all resources which households can draw upon to meet their food needs (LVAC, 2003:19). According to the LVAC baseline survey report (2006:11), the very poor and poor households spend almost 50% and 40% respectively of their income on food, while rich households spent 16% of their income on food. The same report also revealed that very poor and poor households meet their food and other basic needs requirements through a complex web of income generating activities such as casual labour (weeding, harvesting and ploughing for better-off households) hawking, traditional beer production, food aid and illegal activities such as selling of dagga and stealing (LVAC, 2006:8).

2.5.1 Livelihoods context

The core concern of this section is to identify changes in livelihoods over time. There have been many changes such as economic, social and climatic changes in Lesotho over the past 20 years. Three clear distinctions would be from 1993 when migrant labour levels fell, in 1996 when HIV/AIDS became a serious threat to Basotho’s livelihoods and since 2001 when archaic land tenure systems, declining levels of soil fertility and land erosion also made it harder to find a lasting solution to Lesotho’s structural food deficit situation.
The Foothills, Southern Lowlands and Mountain livelihoods zones are the most disadvantaged zones in terms of agricultural production as well as opportunities for income generation. Rainfall patterns are more erratic in these zones than anywhere else and this affects both agricultural production and livestock keeping. In spite of the erratic weather patterns in the zones, agricultural production and income generation from agricultural activities remain main elements of the livelihood strategies in the zones (Chakela, 1999:41). Land degradation due to poor conservation methods has greatly reduced arable land in the zones and the overall national arable land (BOS, 2002:5). Although it is much easier for the wealthier households to manage their land, the poorer households are losing arable land at a very high rate. This impacts on their ability to maintain access to food through own production. One of the findings from the LVAC (2006:9) suggests that efforts towards better soil conservation and reforestation need to be stepped up to reverse the current trend. Poor access to agricultural inputs especially seed and fertilizer is another major problem for most of the household in Lesotho. Whenever inputs are available, the prices are too high for the poorer households and this often results in reduction of cultivated area. The input supply systems should be reviewed to ensure that adequate, timely and affordable supply is provided to households to boost production (LVAC, 2006:11).

The main income sources for the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households who constitute approximately 55% of the country’s population are casual employment, remittances and self employment (LVAC, 2006:10). Casual employment includes activities such as weeding, house smearing, construction work and household activities such as washing while the category under ‘self employment’ is brewing. All these employment activities are not easily accessed and the poorer households that depend on them live very precarious lives. Programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities in Lesotho need to be established and these could include public works programmes targeted at the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households (LVAC, 2006:12).

2.6 Lesotho Food Security Policy framework

The importance of attaining food security in Lesotho is evident from the consistently high priority given to it in several national and international plans and strategies. The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 nations (Lesotho included) in 2000; these goals are aimed at responding to the world’s main development challenges (UNDP, 2008:1). The Lesotho Vision 2020 document, presents national goals which provide a broad perspective framework of how the Basotho nation, through its representatives would like to see their
country by 2020 (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2002: 2). The poverty reduction strategy for Lesotho is a national programme that outlines national priorities and strategies for reducing poverty and promoting economic growth (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2004:2). The agricultural sector strategy is a five-year plan that illustrates the government’s plan to ensure sustainability in the agricultural sector (MAFS, 2006:1). Finally, NEPAD is designed to address the current challenges facing the African continent. Issues such as the underdevelopment, escalating poverty levels, and the continued marginalisation of Africa are NEPADs. (NEPAD, 2008:1). Table 2.4 illustrates these policies and strategies.

Table 2.4: Food Security in Global, Regional and National Policies and Strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Strategy</th>
<th>National Goals</th>
<th>National Programme</th>
<th>National Sector Strategy</th>
<th>Continental Sector Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Millennium Development Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vision 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) Lesotho</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agricultural Sector Strategy</strong></td>
<td><strong>NEPAD/CAADP Pillars for priority investment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce child mortality.</td>
<td>A healthy and well developed human resource base.</td>
<td>Infrastructure development.</td>
<td>Improve efficiency (adopt a productivity culture).</td>
<td>Agricultural research technology dissemination and adoption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve maternal health</td>
<td>A strong economy and Prosperous Nation.</td>
<td>Promoting access to quality and essential health care and social welfare services.</td>
<td>Improved income distribution.</td>
<td>Integration of forestry, fisheries and livestock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases</td>
<td>A well managed environment</td>
<td>Improving quality of and access to education</td>
<td>Increase share of agriculture in GDP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure environmental sustainability</td>
<td>A well established Technology</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS pandemic</td>
<td>Additional cross cutting issues: HIV/AIDS and Inter-institutional coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a global partnership for development</td>
<td>Improving and sustaining food security for sustainable prosperity</td>
<td>Environmental conservation</td>
<td>Improvement of public service delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cross cutting priority: HIV/AIDS pandemic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2005:20)
2.6.1 Principles of the Food Security policy

The national food security policy is founded on a number of core principles. Underpinning the principles is the changing policy context for food security in Lesotho as illustrated in figure 2.4 below:

**Figure 2.4: The changing policy context for food security in Lesotho**

Source: Risner (2003:11)

The principles of the food security policy may be listed as follows (FAO, 2003):

- Food security is cross-sectoral and multi-levelled. It involves stakeholders from various fields, from household to national level. Food security is not the same as food production and it is not the same as self-sufficiency either at the national level or the household level. Food security is not just an agricultural issue and does not just involve the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. In order to address food security properly various other Ministries will need to be involved. Thus, tackling
food security goes beyond the current mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

- The Policy will build on existing policies, programmes and institutional structures and will be framed within current national and international targets and goals. Figure 2.5 shows the relationship between the policy and other policies and goals.

**Figure 2.5: Relationship between the food security policy and other policies, strategies and programmes using a “Food Security Lens”**.

Source: MAFS (2000:33)

- Design of the policy has been informed by the use of a “Food Security Lens” through which all existing and planned policies have been viewed. The lens shows the degree to which existing initiatives will or could have positive impact on food security for the country, and the resulting implications for a new food security policy. The policy relates to existing policies and goals in four ways:
• It provides strategic direction for achieving international and national goals to which the Government of Lesotho is committed.

• It plugs gaps in the current policy framework as this relates to food security.

• It provides strategic guidelines on precisely how to reach food security objectives through policy measures that are set out in existing policies (e.g. the Health and Social Welfare Policy and the Agriculture Sector Strategy).

• A food security policy will seek to ensure that strong monitoring and evaluation links are established so that impacts on food security can be measured and corrective actions taken if required.

• The policy is as specific as possible with respect to implementable actions and responsibilities which can be monitored. It sets out a framework which can easily be further elaborated in preparation for actual implementation.

• The policy relies on the principle of comparative advantage with respect to the different roles expected of key stakeholders. The government of Lesotho is expected to provide an environment in which the private sector, NGOs and communities can operate effectively in pursuit of food security. Where necessary, government of Lesotho will step in to provide public goods and to support vulnerable groups. The private sector is given the space and the opportunity to provide services in a cost effective manner. The government of Lesotho is responsible for playing a role in the coordination of NGOs and CSOs, building partnerships with them, and allowing them to operate freely. The policy will help to identify areas of support and priorities for UN agencies and donors.

• The policy will mainstream HIV/AIDS in terms of specifying:
  
  • The special conditions or special policy measures that are appropriate for People Living with AIDS (PLWHA), HIV/AIDS affected households and communities. This will include the access of children to assets;
  
  • That PLWHA and HIV/AIDS organisations are fully integrated into the institutional framework for the implementation of the policy;
  
  • That monitoring and evaluation mechanisms collect, analyse and disseminate information that allows the relationships between food insecurity and HIV/AIDS to be understood and acted upon.
• The Policy will mainstream gender concerns in terms of ensuring that:
  • The needs of men and women are catered for in suggested policy measures, separately if necessary;
  • The specific needs and human rights of women in relation to productive assets such as land and credit are reflected in suggested policy measures;
  • That monitoring and evaluation mechanisms collect, analyse and disseminate information that allows the relationships between food insecurity and gender to be understood and acted upon.

2.7 Institutional framework of Food Security in Lesotho

Several stakeholders, key actors and institutions have over the years implemented a number of initiatives in order to improve the food situation in Lesotho. In most cases these initiatives have shifted, changed, complemented or sometimes were in conflict with one another to achieve a common objective of improving the food situation in the country. This section gives an insight into different institutions that have been created to address food security issues in Lesotho. The section will only be limited to a representative number of stakeholders. In the context of food security a stakeholder can be defined as an active player involved in food production, distribution, consumption and marketing (Mphale and Rwambali, 2003:4).

The institutions that are involved in issues of food security in Lesotho include the government departments and institutions that set policies and implement them; government research institutions and monitoring networks such as vulnerability assessment committees. The private sector also plays a key role in terms of consulting services and input supply. All these efforts are complemented by the donor community, development partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and various international organisations which influence policy and also provide capacity building.

2.7.1 Government departments

Government structures play a pivotal role in terms of policy formulations to ensure food security.

2.7.1.1 The Disaster Management Authority (DMA)

DMA forms part of the Prime Minister’s office that coordinates the disaster management activities. This department theoretically coins all the national policies for managing national
disasters such as food shortages and snowfalls threatening human and livestock lives. Thus, food crisis mitigation policies and plans to fight food insecurity become one of the major roles and responsibilities of DMA. According to Disaster Management Act of 1997, another responsibility of DMA includes playing an advisory role to the Prime Minister to institute national disaster declarations for all kinds of disasters. DMA is also expected to solicit commodity and financial donations from international and national donors when food crisis occurs. (DMA, 2000:6) Additionally, DMA facilitates and coordinates disaster management capacity building programmes that are aimed at empowering various sectors and government departments to be able to handle and cope with disasters.

2.7.1.2 Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS)

According to its food security mandate, MAFS has assumed an overall coordinating role in food security matters. Furthermore, within its conventional mandate, MAFS is responsible for all fields of agricultural development contributing to access, availability and stability (MAFS, 2006:9). MAFS draws up all agricultural policies and implements them accordingly. Its role is to disseminate appropriate technologies and also to facilitate the availability of various agricultural inputs and implements to all categories of agricultural producers such as small and subsistence farmers and commercial and semi–commercial farmers.

In order to comply with its mandate for food security, MAFS has established a Food Security Policy Unit (FSP). The FSP has two basic functions:

a) To coordinate implementation of the policy at technical level.

b) To be the hub of food security and vulnerability information in Lesotho.

2.7.1.3 Food Management Unit (FMU)

FMU acts as a food receipt arm and storage facility of the government. It is therefore mandated and has powers on the national food transportation and reserves (MAFS, 2006:34).

2.7.2 Monitoring networks

Monitoring networks do not have long history in Lesotho, but the existing ones have a key role in carrying out annual assessments in food situation and liaising with relevant stakeholders to ensure that food supplies are sufficient and distributed to the right people.
2.7.2.1 **National Warning Unit (NEWU)**

Located within the Prime Minister’s office, this unit was established in 1974 on the recommendation of the FAO Conference and World Food Conference (Tola, 1988:8). NEWUs main objectives are to provide warning of prevailing changes in food conditions and to strengthen the capacity of government and other key stakeholders to take timely and appropriate action in dealing with food shortages.

2.7.2.2 **Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC)**

Established in 2002, the primary focus of LVAC is on household food security and also to provide necessary information on the famine situation within the country (LVAC, 2002:22). The committee is made up of specialists representing various key players in food security. They include staff from Bureau of Statistics, Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Management Unit, World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Production and NGOs representatives. LVAC produces annual reports that entail an in-depth analysis of food security in the country. The reports give details of how different wealth groups have access to food and cash in relation to their food needs and identify different coping strategies employed by these groups during times of disaster.

2.7.2.3 **Lesotho Meteorological Services**

Physical indicators of weather and climatic conditions are the key constituents of early warning systems in Lesotho. This department provides primary data on rainfall measurements such as daily rainfall, expected rainfall, recent rainfall and daily minimum and maximum temperatures. This information is very important for making crop production estimates and is used as a basis for agricultural planning and prospects.

2.7.3 **Research institutions**

According to Norse and Tschiley, 2000:27, there are three most important types of research within food security situations which are:

- Impact research which looks at the effects of changes in food security variables;
- Adaptation research which aims at the development of technologies and systems that would help people to cope with food insecurities; and
• Mitigation research that aims at minimising the impact of food insecurity on the most vulnerable groups.

In this section, various institutions involved in food security research are discussed.

2.7.3.1 Research division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security

The research department gives feedback to farmers that enable them to improve their food production and hence meet their food security needs (FAO, 2001:32). Thus various cultivars are being tested by this department in different agro–ecological zones to investigate their potential as well as to make recommendations.

2.7.3.2 The National University of Lesotho (NUL)

The Faculty of Agriculture within the university strengthens research in agricultural development in general. It offers breeding study programmes in both crops and livestock production (NUL, 2008:9). Farmers, policy makers and technical staff have in most cases been invited to information sharing workshops and seminars organised by the university through the faculty. Currently, studies on management and policy options for sustainable communal rangelands are being provided with the main aim of identification of technologies that enhance productivity, efficiency and livelihoods (MAPOSDA, 2002:34).

2.7.3.3 Consulting firms

Several consulting firms have generated some useful information that policy makers and implementing institutions use to make important decisions. Local consulting firms such as Sechaba Consultants have been involved in various evaluations and assessments that relate to food security. They are normally commissioned by other food security stakeholders to undertake studies on food related issues. Other firms include Baffoe and Associates and Metsi Consulting.

2.7.4 Donor community and international organisations

Since Lesotho’s independence in 1966, the capital budget for the agricultural sector has been heavily dependent on external assistance. Large contributions come from organisations that are discussed in next section.
2.7.4.1 *Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)*

FAO supports initiatives designed to strengthen rural development and self-reliant agricultural production. FAO is involved in the analysis of the agricultural census data, capacity building activities and information production processing (FAO, 2005:5).

2.7.4.2 *World Food Programme (WFP)*

WFP collaborates with DMA by providing food aid to the most vulnerable households. It also works with other key stakeholders on food security such as NGOs. More details of the World Food Programme will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.7.4.3 *Other international organisations*

International organisations have been making significant contributions in terms of supporting the implementation of food security initiatives. They include the World Bank, African Development Bank, GTZ of Germany, and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DfID). With the new developments in HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS has been actively involved in influencing policies to ensure that the food insecure households are given all the necessary support required and available.

2.7.5 *Private sector*

This sector is responsible for importing food and distributes them commercially to consumers. Nevertheless, this does not guarantee that food importations facilitate food access since the purchasing power is also one key element that plays a major role in food affordability.

2.7.6 *Non-Governmental Organisations*

Currently there are numerous NGOs within the food security arena. For example according to LVAC (2007), major role players are CARE, World Vision, Red Cross, Dorcas AID and Catholic Relief Services.

2.8 *Relationship between Vulnerability and Food Insecurity*

A simple way of conceptualising vulnerability is to analyse it as a product of two components: exposure to a hazard or shock and resilience. In the context of Lesotho, hazards could include natural shocks such as erratic weather conditions, or economic such as low purchasing power. Resilience relates to coping mechanisms or strategies at different levels.
Many Basotho are more vulnerable today than they were in the past as hazards seem to have increased due to lower food production, erratic weather patterns, high HIV/AIDS prevalence and few marketing facilities. As a result, people’s ability to cope has affected the livelihoods and ultimately eroded savings and assets (Devereux, Baulch, Macauslam, Phiri and Sabates-Wheeler, and 2007:4).

2.8.1 **Vulnerability analysis in Lesotho**

The Lesotho food crisis of 2001/02 changed the way the government and its donors perceive and respond to vulnerability. The crisis revealed deep structural vulnerabilities in rural livelihoods and micro level economies (RHVP, 2006:5). Erratic weather patterns triggered a more rigorous crisis than a comparable similar shock in the early 1990s. Since the crisis, several sources of vulnerability have deepened, while new vulnerability factors had surfaced such as HIV/AIDS, flawed economic reforms and governance failures (UN, 2003:8). Considerable efforts have emerged in an attempt to improve vulnerability analysis. They include establishment of the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee in 2002; installation of more effective safety nets such as distribution of food packages to the most affected households; and systematising social protection against chronic vulnerability, for example providing social grants to the elderly and orphans and vulnerable children.

Different analyses of vulnerability in Lesotho adopt different analytical and conceptual approaches. Ellis, Kutengule and Nyasula (2002:9) consider historical and contemporary limitations to livelihood diversification as a possible pathway out of rural poverty, and they provide a framework for analysing vulnerability and poverty based on characteristics of different ‘wealth groups’ such as productive assets owned (e.g. land and livestock), food security status, housing type and, labour market participation. TANGO (2004:7) summarises the underlying causes of livelihood vulnerability and food insecurity in Lesotho as a result of decades of exposure to macroeconomic shocks, weather-induced production shortfalls, and demographic pressures. The government’s focus on national self-sufficiency has not been sustainable or appropriate in the context of rapid population growth, rising input costs and recurrent droughts and floods. The country enjoys few employment opportunities outside of agriculture, while market liberalisation has increased rural inequality and stratification.

Dorward and Kydd (2002:8) developed a framework for understanding vulnerability in Lesotho that identifies linkages between transitory shocks and structural economic weaknesses. They conclude that low levels of financial and physical capital together with
reliance on agriculture and natural resources make poor rural economies and livelihoods particularly exposed and vulnerable to risks of natural shocks. These might arise from adverse weather (affecting crop yields or damaging physical assets); human, crop or animal disease; or physical insecurity (as a result of crime, or political violence, or conflict). Where markets are thin and there are poor communications and high transport costs, isolated markets are prone to large price risks when affected by local supply or demand shocks. This may be particularly problematic for food crops with relatively inelastic demand and where there are large differences between local import and export parity prices.

2.8.2 Types of vulnerability

There are three types of vulnerability and responses according to RHVP (2006:9):

- Transitory: caused by livelihood shocks such as drought. Emergency relief initiatives such as food aid and public works are the appropriate responses;

- Chronic: relates to demographic factors like being an orphan. Provision of social grants by government can be helpful; and

- Structural: caused by market failures, seasonal unemployment. Developmental safety nets are the most appropriate responses.

2.8.3 Population categories

For analysis purposes it is useful to categorise population groups according to their levels and features of vulnerability. According to LVAC (2007:9), the population can be divided into the following categories:

Category 1: Extremely poor: Households in this category are unable to make a living in normal times without some form of assistance (e.g. the disabled; many of the elderly; many of the de facto female-headed households; people living with AIDS). They are, however, not as numerous as the next group: the chronically vulnerable, and this needs to be considered in allocating resources also.

Category 2: Chronically vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity: Households in this category can make an independent livelihood and perhaps start to accumulate assets only in the most favourable of circumstances, e.g. a number of consecutive years of favourable weather for agriculture. Most would be classified as “poor” and would fall below the accepted poverty lines for Lesotho. People in this group are either in or “living on the edge”
of poverty. Unlike the first group, people in this category are economically productive and, depending on their livelihood, can respond to interventions aimed at supporting production of food, employment and trade.

Category 3: Vulnerable to transitory food insecurity: Households in this category are normally able to make an independent livelihood, but need assistance in hard times (e.g. after a climatic shock). More than the second group, they have the capacity to generate an economic surplus and employ others.

Category 4: Not usually vulnerable to food insecurity: Households in this group have either (a) sufficient wealth and assets to withstand food security shocks and / or (b) have a low probability of facing such shocks. Falling into category (a) would be the successful commercial farmers who have enough working capital and sufficiently diversified sources of income (e.g. remittances from RSA, a small retail business as well as commercial agriculture) to absorb downturns in production. Falling into category (b) would be salaried government employees. An illustration of the relationship of these different groups to food insecurity and vulnerability is depicted in the following figure 2.6.

2.8.4 Other sources of vulnerability to insecurity
There are several sources of vulnerability; however, based on the researcher’s own conceptual framework and review of literature, the researcher will subdivide the sources of vulnerability food insecurity into two clusters of factors: (1) demographic and (2) social vulnerabilities which will be discussed below.

2.8.4.1 Demographic vulnerability
Increasing number of households in Lesotho are headed by women, children or the elderly (who are looking after their orphaned grandchildren) and most of such households are normally faced with labour constraints that undermine their ability to sustain themselves (Kadzandira 2002:9). These types of households are more vulnerable to chronic poverty and to transitory shocks. Households affected by demographic changes share a common characteristic of either being structurally labour-constrained or their labour capacity has been affected by health problems such as HIV/AIDS. A loss of a productive adult male or both parents reduces consumption levels of those left behind (Hoddinott, 2005:9). High number of children or household members produces high dependency ratios which places more stress on bread winners.
Figure 2.6: Illustration of food insecurity and vulnerability of different population groups in Lesotho

As a custom in Lesotho, when a husband passes away, the widow is expected to remain in her husband’s village. This is to allow the widow to be ‘inherited’ by any relative of her late husband as it is believed that a dowry or ‘Lobola’ that was paid links a woman to her husband’s family (BOS, 2005:9). However, the system has reversed; the common practice recently has been that the wife is chased away from her husband’s village back to her parents’ home, leading to loss of assets and more insecure livelihood (Deveroux, 2001:10). This means the woman will become vulnerable as a result of losing all her husband’s belongings such as farmland, livestock and her household items. Property grabbing, loss of inheritance, and inadequate protection of human rights are recurring themes in Lesotho (Habitat for Humanity, 2007:8).

3 The Kilo-calorie (Kcal) figures are per person per day (pppd) figures. FAO recommends a pppd intake of 2,500 kcals owing to Lesotho’s cold climate. The World Health Organisation (WHO) figure is the minimum recommended pppd for Africa.
2.9 Food Security social protection initiatives in Lesotho

Social protection is defined by DFID (2004:24) as “the public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are considered socially unacceptable within a given polity or society” (DFID, 2004:34). In order to achieve food security objectives, is there more social protection than is currently being supplied necessary in Lesotho? As current “informal” safety nets of kinship and other networks are crumbling, and given the rather haphazard application of social protection measures by the state, (and supported by donors) over the years, the answer is yes. Given that this is the case, the next question is how can social protection be increased? In approaching social protection, there are a number of issues or dilemmas that have to be faced. Deveroux (2001:2) sums these up as follows:

How can undeveloped countries provide long-term social protection for their citizens, given the fiscal constraints these governments are faced with, and pressures to prioritise public spending in the ‘productive’ economic sectors rather than the social sectors?

Given the close linkages between transitory and chronic food insecurity, which public programmes can achieve positive synergies between social protection and pro-poor economic growth, by supporting people through short-term crises while reducing their long-term vulnerability?

How can governments and WFP move beyond supporting a set of loosely related ‘social welfare’ or ‘safety net’ instruments, towards an integrated approach to social protection that addresses vulnerability in a comprehensive and systematic way?

Given fiscal and administrative constraints, and a context of reducing government interventionism in the economy, how can public actors (governments, donors) work together in partnership with private and informal actors (communities, CBOs and NGOs, including faith-based organisations) to deliver effective social protection?

According to Deveroux (2006:24), “Lesotho has no social protection strategy. Instead a number of policies and programmes address specific dimensions of vulnerability and provide support to particular vulnerable groups”. There are currently three major stakeholders that contribute to social protection in Lesotho. They are the National Food Security Policy, Department of Social Welfare, and Disaster Management Authority through the financial assistance from developed countries and major international donors. In 2005, the Ministry of
Agriculture and Food Security launched a National Food Security Policy document which highlights many social protection interventions such as promotion of food production, public transfers and social safety nets, mainstreaming HIV/AIDS, management of food stocks and food aid, and employment promotion (MAFS, 2005:30). During the emergency of 2002 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security introduced agricultural inputs subsidies as a rehabilitation programme, but these have since been discontinued. MAFS (2005:14) gives four different categories of population in need of social protection or livelihood support: “a) the extremely poor, who will need safety nets and social protection measures; b) the chronically vulnerable, who will need transfers on a temporary basis c) those who are vulnerable to transitory food insecurity, who will need immediate food or cash based relief measures; d) those not usually vulnerable to food insecurity, who will need support to enable them to become more productive and competitive”. The Department of Social Welfare also provides social assistance to targeted vulnerable groups. This assistance in the form of cash transfers to vulnerable groups such as war veterans, orphans, people with disabilities older people, and the chronically ill (Pelham, Nyanguru and Croome, 2005:9).

Due to high levels of food insecurity among the very poor and poor households, and the declaration of famine emergency by the Prime Minister, the Disaster Management Authority is the government arm that is mandated to assist the food insecure households with food aid. The most targeted households are those living with People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and expectant and nursing mothers (USAID, 2005:23). The Disaster Management Authority implements the food aid projects in partnership with WFP and NGO’s. DMA (2003:12) “supports the use of food aid not only for disaster mitigation and response such as the Targeted Vulnerable Group feeding, but also to stimulate development initiatives”. Responsive measures concerning food aid include food-for-assets and food-for-work projects. “However concerns are growing about the negative effects of food aid on trade and farmers, in response to which the Lesotho Fund for Community Development implements cash-for-work projects rather than food-for-work” (Deveroux and Wheeler - Sabates, 2006:19).
Figure 2.7: Humanitarian Assistance that Lesotho received between years 2002 – 2007

Source: Reliefweb (2007:2)

2.10 Summary and conclusion

The available literature and data on different issues addressed in this chapter have revealed that Food Security has various definitions; the definition that has been internationally accepted is the one that was formulated during the World Food Summit in 1996. The discussions in this chapter have demonstrated that the poor and the vulnerable in Lesotho are cannot be separated. Those who are most vulnerable to food insecurity are the chronically poor. There are important concerns in all three areas of food security in Lesotho. National and household food production is both inadequate, although imports can improve aggregate food availability but may not render it more accessible. These are households in Lesotho which are not able to access and consume enough food throughout the year in the right amounts or the right types to maintain good nutritional status, as measured through both the status of children and women. There are clearly important behaviour patterns which need to be changed in terms of child care and food intake. Public health and nutrition programmes can improve the situation through changing behaviour and improving health and nutrition infrastructure. However, the fundamental problem remains that neither food production nor the purchasing power of households are sufficient to maintain food security from year to
year. There has been a general movement away from investment in agriculture by most farmers due to the fear of unreliable weather conditions which have for some years resulted in lower yields for the majority of them. Another factor is that of HIV/AIDS which plays a major role in driving households to severe levels of poverty and vulnerability as it affects the most productive age groups who are mostly bread winners within their respective households. Employment is also a key component in the attainment of food security at household level as it will enhance purchasing power within the households and offer various options to the employed in terms of sustaining their livelihoods.

The institutional framework of food security issues in Lesotho clearly articulated the division of labour among food security stakeholders. Chapter 3 gives a description of WFP program in Lesotho and also a description of the Southern Lowland zone.
CHAPTER 3

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME FOOD AID PROGRAMME IN LESOTHO AND SOUTHERN LOWLANDS ZONE

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give descriptions of a WFP food aid programme in Lesotho and the key characteristics of the Southern Lowlands ecological zone. The chapter has two main sections. The first section provides a detailed description of WFPs food aid programme. It covers key issues such as when it started; which groups of people are benefiting from the programme; how many households have benefited from the programme and the food tonnage distributed since August 2002 to April 2008. The second section also provides at length the description of the Southern Lowlands ecological zone highlighting its key characteristics.

3.2 Description of WFP programme in Lesotho

The World Food Programme (WFP) has been present in Lesotho since the mid-1960s, though, currently its primary focus is on small –scale development and acute emergency relief programmes. In 2002, when Lesotho experienced widespread agricultural failures as a result of unfavourable weather conditions and patterns, WFP approved an emergency food aid programme called EMOP 10290 (Emergency Operations) in order to address the food crisis in the country (WFP, 2007:12). This operation intended to sustain lives and prevent food shortages in vulnerable households that had been significantly affected by food shortages. It also intended to safeguard the nutritional well being of vulnerable segments of the population such as HIV/AIDS patients (PLWHA), Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), expectant and nursing mothers; and other vulnerable households (WFP, 2003: 2).

Under HIV/AIDS feeding programme, EMOP supported efforts to scale up the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic by providing family food rations\(^4\) to people who are HIV positive, chronically ill or diagnosed with TB, through hospitals and health centres (WFP, 2003:3). The food helped people with HIV to meet nutritional needs associated with coping with the virus and fighting opportunistic infections. Food was provided to the TB patients as an incentive for them to adhere to, and complete, treatment and once they were cured, they automatically graduated from receiving food. Given that tuberculosis affects mainly the most

\(^4\) The Food Ration consisted of 50kg Maize Meal, 5Kg Pulses (beans or peas), 2.5 litres Cooking oil and 5kg Corn Soya Blend in the case of HIV/AIDS patients and nursing mothers.
poverty-stricken households, family rations were distributed to selected TB patients on monthly basis through health centres. This assistance encouraged patients to complete the long treatment regime while also providing for their families’ food needs.

In the case of Orphans and Vulnerable Children, food assistance is mainly intended to ensure their continued participation in education or training activities. Food was channelled through schools, where take home rations were provided to vulnerable children. The school advisory committees and the local chiefs assisted in identifying the food insecure OVC, while the communities helped to identify needy OVC that were out of school to ensure that they did not fall out of the programme.

Through health posts and clinics, WFP provided fortified food rations to underweight children below the age of five also to anaemic expectant and nursing mothers. This approach encouraged them to attend pre and post natal care at their local clinics. Lastly, under the vulnerable group feeding category, the EMOP specifically provided food rations to the most vulnerable and food insecure families and individuals. Beneficiaries under this category were selected through a community-based targeting approach in cooperation with the Disaster Management Authority (DMA). EMOP 10290 lasted for 2 years (from 2002 – 2004) where WFP distributed 4,858.17 metric tonnes (MT) of food parcels to 345,000 households (WFP, 2004:7).

From January 2005 until April 2008, WFP introduced another feeding programme, PRRO (Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations) 10310. There were a number of feeding intervention activities under the PRRO. They included feeding categories under EMOP and in addition WFP supported Food for Work (FFW) projects, school feeding programme and HIV/AIDS advocacy (WFP, 2008:3). According to WFP (2007:5), PRRO aimed at improving food security, sustainable livelihoods and productive capacity of vulnerable poor as well as people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. WFP achieved this goal by:

- Increasing households’ food access by providing food aid through a significant number of distribution points and health clinics;
- Reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security;
- Meeting the nutritional needs of vulnerable households;
- Building of productive assets through FFW initiatives; and
- Increasing school enrolment, attendance and ability to learn and concentrate.
As part of the recovery component of PRRO, WFP embarked on nutrition training, homestead gardening, skills transfer and HIV/AIDS education (WFP, 2008:9). Nutrition education was found to be vital for particular groups such as patients on ARVs and TB medication, nursing and expectant mothers, health professionals and village health workers. WFP also established a unique mobile video unit to provide educational information on HIV/AIDS to peripheral and rural communities. This on-going initiative provides information and education on HIV/AIDS and to reduce the stigma associated with the disease. Positive living messages at food distribution sites such as health clinics and schools are displayed by this mobile unit (WFP, 2008:3–4).

According to WFP (2006: 13–14) under the food for work category, WFP introduced the following initiatives as part of the recovery component. The activities are carried out at either community or household levels. They are listed below:

Water harvesting: The rainy season in Lesotho lasts from November to April, during which time the majority of water is lost through run-off. Throughout the rest of the year the land becomes very dry, impeding activities requiring water use, including gardening and raising livestock. To mitigate this problem, surface run-off from the rainy season was harnessed for use during the dry months of the year. This was done through the repair, rehabilitation or construction of small dams or catchments, the purchase or construction of rainwater harvesting tanks, and the improvement of water sources.

Gully reclamation: Soil erosion is a substantial problem. Gullies dominate the landscape, and once they begin to develop, they rapidly erode valuable topsoil, exposing the subsoil and eventually the bedrock. This makes the land very unsuitable for agricultural production. Gully reclamation reduces soil erosion, recharges the water table and leads to increased water availability during the dry season. This will eventually result in higher yields. Gully reclamation was achieved through the construction of silt traps across gullies, the establishment of tree nurseries and the raising of woodlots.

Gravity irrigation schemes: Irrigation schemes are a good way of addressing food insecurity as they facilitate the growing of crops on a large enough scale to have a significant impact on household food security. In the affected areas there are some reliable water sources located in such a way that water can gravitate into good agricultural land. This provides an opportunity for the establishment of gravity irrigation schemes at affordable and realistic costs.
Communities identified sites where the activity took place. Irrigation experts inspected the sites and designed gravity irrigation systems together with project beneficiaries. Due to high prices of materials for this type of activity, the irrigation schemes were limited in number, small-scale in size and located in priority areas. Material requirements included materials for constructing or repairing rainwater tanks and small dams, PVC piping and fittings and cement and tools for maintenance.

Gardening: Homestead gardens were promoted in order to increase the small-scale productive capacity of beneficiaries’ food insecure households. Beneficiaries incorporated double digging and keyhole garden technology at the household level. Beneficiaries were supplied with context sensitive training material to facilitate learning. Beneficiaries were able to acquire all the skills necessary for construction and maintenance of homestead gardens, which ultimately increased food security while improving nutrition (micronutrients) of vulnerable households.

Conservation farming: As the rainy season began, beneficiaries needed to be supported in their efforts to grow food crops. Such support was provided through proven agricultural methods such as terracing, pot-holing and the application of organic material to planting stations. After harvest, communities embarked on a full program of conservation farming, involving five principles: retention of crop residues in fields; reduced land tillage and nutrient application to 10% to 15 % of the surface area in planting basins where crops are sown; completion of land preparation during the dry season; establishment of a permanent grid of planting stations within which successive crops were planted each year. Inter-cropping was also encouraged, as appropriate. Conservation farming was implemented to provide families with agricultural technology that maximizes grain production, while efficiently using agricultural and environmental inputs.

Integrated poultry production and grain production: In 2006, WFP assisted approximately 200 families with an integrated poultry production and grain production training activity. Food was used as a training incentive. Through this new activity, WFP managed to create small-scale productive systems within households that mitigated the impacts of erratic weather and unemployment. In addition to training in poultry production, the beneficiaries were integrated into grain production training to ensure that the total training package guaranteed success and sustainability once the beneficiary graduated from the programme.
“Likoeke” (Local chicken breed) birds are excellent and rapid egg producers, averaging more than one egg per day. In addition, they are foragers, eating vegetable and fruit bits as well as grasses and other wild field grains. They do not require expensive animal feeds in order to maintain production and fatten for slaughter, making them a low-cost, high production alternative for food insecure families. Five hens can produce enough eggs and meat to supplement the diet of a family of six, while also providing a small income through the sale of eggs and chicks. By end of April 2008, the PRRO programme had distributed 2,994.74 MT of food aid to 250,000 households (WFP, 2008:8).

3.3 Description of Southern Lowlands

3.3.1 Key characteristics
The Southern Lowlands livelihoods zone is one of the most disadvantaged zones in terms of agricultural production as well as opportunities for income generation. Rainfall patterns are more erratic in this zone than anywhere else in Lesotho and this affects both agricultural production and livestock keeping. In spite of the erratic weather patterns in the zone, agricultural production and income generation from agricultural activities remain the main elements of the livelihood strategies in the zone (FAO and WFP, 2007: 13). Introduction of drought resistant crop varieties and water harvesting techniques would benefit the community and help maintain agriculture as a main source of livelihood. Land degradation due to poor conservation methods has greatly reduced arable land in the Zone. Although it is much easier for the wealthier households to manage their land, the poorer households are losing arable land at a very high rate. This impacts on their ability to maintain access to food through own production. Efforts towards better soil conservation and reforestation need to be stepped up to reverse the current trend (LVAC, 2007: 9).

Poor access to agricultural inputs, especially seeds varieties and fertilizer is another major problem in the zone. Whenever inputs are available, the price is too high for the poorer households and this often results in reduction in cultivated area (MAFS, 2005:30). The input supply systems should be reviewed to ensure that adequate, timely and affordable supply is provided to households to boost production. The main income sources for the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households who constitute approximately 55% of the population are through casual employment and self employment (BOS, 2005:40). Casual employment includes activities such as weeding, house smearing, construction work and household activities such as washing while the activity under self employment is brewing of local beer. All these
employment activities are not easily accessed and the poorer households that depend on them live very precarious lives. Programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities in the zone need to be established and these could include public works programmes targeting the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households.

3.3.2 Zone description

The Southern Lowlands covers extensive parts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale’s Hoek districts supporting the biggest national population component compared to other livelihood zones estimated at 597,175 (BOS, 2007: 20). At the same time, this is one of the most food insecure zones and in the past has shown signs of chronic food insecurity (LVAC, 2007:8). Southern Lowlands is one of driest regions of Lesotho and even in years of good rains, the zone always experiences late start of rainy season and uneven spread of rains. It is quite common to find some areas in the zone experiencing floods while others are going through dry spells (LESMET, 2007:2). Agriculture is a main source of livelihood for majority of the population across all wealth groups. The main crops grown are maize, sorghum and beans during summer and wheat is a main winter crop that is planted mainly by the wealthier households. The main livestock kept are cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens. Most of the livestock is owned by the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ while the ‘poor’ own some pigs. Although most households own chickens, the numbers are quite insignificant due mainly to recurrent diseases such as newcastle (MAFS, 2005:35). The most common types of casual labour are weeding, herding, washing and house smearing.

3.3.3 Markets

As it is the case in most parts of Lesotho, markets are basically village shops and main supermarkets around the major towns. There are no formal livestock markets and traders have to directly contact sellers when they come to buy livestock. The only organised market system is for wool and mohair though this is not a major income generation activity in the zone. The major crops sold are beans, maize, sorghum wheat and vegetables. Vegetable gardening is a very common activity and in the past few years more households are engaging in the activity to raise cash. This has been boosted by recently introduced gardening techniques such as ‘keyhole’ gardening. Programmes such as the Livelihood Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP) that have supported vegetable gardening also helped organise common marketing arrangements to enable producers sell to some of the major shopping centres in main towns. Throughout the zone, food markets function well and one
would be able to find maize meal (staple) in almost every small village shop. Grain is not sold in shops but directly from farmer to trader. Prices of maize meal fluctuate a bit depending on production levels but it can be concluded that prices are fairly stable for most of the year. There are several routes to South Africa and it appears informal trade in food items is happening this may partly explain why the price of maize does not fluctuate much in a season (MTIMC, 2006:3).

3.4 Summary and conclusion

This chapter highlighted in detail the descriptions of the WFP food aid programme in Lesotho and also defined key characteristics of the Southern Lowlands ecological zone. It revealed that WFP has been operating in Lesotho for nearly ten decades but only began its food aid distribution in 2002 when Lesotho first experienced its food crisis. By April, 2008, WFP managed to distribute 7,853MT of food aid to 595,000 households.

Among the households who were mostly affected by food shortages, most of them reside in the Southern Lowlands ecological zone, where vulnerable households constitute 55% of the zone’s population. This zone is characterised by persistent drought that affects the inhabitants’ agricultural production and lowers purchasing power among the ‘poor’ and ‘very poor’ households.

The problem of food insecurity still prevails in Lesotho, and the Southern Lowlands zone is still among the most affected areas. As a result, WFP approved another 2 years Food Aid Programme which started on 1st May 2008. The programme is expected to be completed on 31st December 2010.

The next chapter defines data collection methods, analyzes data and reveals key research findings.
CHAPTER 4

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter documents the findings of this research. The chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section outlines the methodology and design of the research. The methods and tools used to gather information are illustrated are discussed. This section further brings forward the method assumptions and limitations to the research. The second section discusses details of the key findings of the research, discussing in depth the main socio economic indicators of the communities; the causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands; the traditional coping mechanisms communities often resort to during the food crisis; and the WFP activities in the Southern Lowlands. The final section sums up the discussions and provides the conclusive statements.

4.2 Research methodology and design

According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004: 1 – 6), in order to determine which methodology, methods and data sources are most appropriate to use in a particular research project, it is important to consider the aim of the research and the research questions that are to be dealt with. It will be recalled that this research aims to identify the causes of food insecurity within the communities residing in the Southern Lowlands of Lesotho; to investigate the interventions initiated by the World Food Programme within the studied area; and finally to determine whether such initiatives are able to offer social safety nets to food insecurity (See sections 1.3 and 1.4). The study adopted a case study design which uses the qualitative methodology in order to provide an in-depth description of the research questions (See section 1.5).

For the purpose of this research, the methodology used seeks to address key functions. Firstly, to dictate and control the acquisition of data and secondly to extract meaning from the captured data (Leedy, 1997:9). In this study, the research employed a qualitative method. The main objective of qualitative research is to focus on the real life experiences of the studied communities and to understand the actions of the participants during the discussions. In this respect, the researcher becomes a participant observer who is closer to the object of study in a way that he/she is able to interpret the actions of the participants (Rubin and Rubin in
4.2.1 Data collection and analysis

The information contained in this thesis was collected from 9th – 20th September 2008 within the nine geographical villages that were classified by LVAC (2005: 43) as food insecure and enduring a significant, predicted food deficit. These villages are characterised by inadequate rainfall, poor soils, declining purchasing power, high food prices, poor rangelands and livestock conditions (LVAC, 2005:44). For a list of villages surveyed refer to Appendix 3. In each village, the data collection exercise was conducted at the village Chief’s place. The researcher selected the Chief’s place because it a custom in Lesotho for villagers to gather at their Chief’s place and the Chief is always the convener of such gatherings.

4.2.1.1 Sampling

The research was carried out in the three districts that form the Southern Lowlands ecological zone. In each district, three villages were randomly selected. According to LVAC (2006:12), the four distinct households’ typologies within the Southern Lowlands are ‘very poor’ (VP), ‘poor’ (P), ‘middle’ (M) and ‘better-off’ (BO) families. The definition of these typologies is based on household resources in terms of productive assets such as livestock and arable land, other non- productive assets such as houses and access to employment. For the purpose of this research, in order to capture the information of the defined household typologies in the selected villages, the researcher used a stratified sampling approach which ensured fair representation of household typologies.

Sampling Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Area</th>
<th>Number of vulnerable Households</th>
<th>Number of Focus groups</th>
<th>Number of Vulnerable Households in the nine villages</th>
<th>Percentage of all vulnerable households.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Lowlands</td>
<td>38,137</td>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.2 Conducting Focus Group Discussions

Through the assistance of village chiefs, 8 – 14 people per village were selected representing the household typologies. The table 4.1 reflects the groups’ composition. Each discussion was facilitated by the researcher. The use of tape recorder was allowed during the
discussions; therefore the researcher used it to capture the proceedings. In conducting the focus groups, the researcher used unstructured questions to allow for deeper discussions. The discussions were conducted in Sesotho, the main official language of Lesotho. Appendix 4 presents the community dialogue schedule. Upon the completion of each discussion, the researcher translated and transcribed the data.

In addition to the questions that were asked, the following methods and tools were used to gather some more information:

- **Pair-wise ranking**: This method was used to identify and prioritise the problems within communities. In each village, the researcher requested the participants to draw a list of threats and problems. Threats and problems were compared against each other to achieve a unique list in order of priority.

- **Community Mapping**: Participants were asked to draw maps of their villages and detail household locations. Each household was identified by name. Participants were asked to ensure that each household in the village appeared on the map. Participants were also asked to identify households with chronically ill members, living with orphans and vulnerable children, elderly-headed households, families living with disabled members and female-headed households. Each indicator was coded with a different colour. The village maps provided information on the total number of households in each village, number of households living with chronically ill persons and information on orphans and vulnerable children.

- **Wealth Ranking**: Following the completion of the community mapping exercise participants were asked to classify all households into households’ typologies as mentioned in 4.2.1.1 above. Each participant was given 10 seeds (1 seed = 10%) asking them to depict the proportions of household typologies. The 10 seed technique is a Participatory Learning and Action tool that is useful in gathering qualitative information on various issues, especially related to the communities’ perceptions and the way people see themselves in relation to others (Jayakaran, 2002:5). Participants were asked to identify the characteristics of each wealth group to ensure consistency throughout the rankings. Through probing, the position of each household was discussed until the participants agreed on the appropriateness of the wealth category.

- **Seasonal Calendar**: Participants were asked to describe the major agricultural activities that take place throughout the year. These activities covered the rainy period, planting period, harvesting, etc.
The table 4.1 presents attendance per focus group discussion in terms of numbers, age, gender and wealth status.

4.2.1.3 Data analysis

As indicated in Section 1.6.4, for each set of data that is expressed in percentages, the researcher presents the findings in the form of averages scores while for qualitative data, the researcher manually coded the responses from the focus group participants.

4.2.2 Method assumptions and limitations

The following limitations were observed:

- **Definition**: Given the definition of food security (See section 2.2), the research was only confined to the accessibility and availability of food to the studied communities.

- **Attendance**: In some villages, attendance was lower than in others. Some of the households identified as ‘Middle’ and ‘Better-off’ were reported to lack interest to participate in the discussions due to social reasons such as attending to their businesses.

- **High Expectations**: Some of the participants were expecting to be compensated after the discussions, although the objective of the study was thoroughly discussed beforehand.

- **Openness**: Some participants were reluctant to disclose their wealth status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name (FGDn)</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Average Ages of participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Wealth Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ha Tieli (FGD1)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3 6</td>
<td>4 3 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Pii (FGD2)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>3 4 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoaba Leabua (FGD3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Majake (FGD4)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6 5</td>
<td>3 4 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Mofoka (FGD5)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5 9</td>
<td>5 3 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Ramahotetsa (FGD6)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4 5</td>
<td>3 4 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsoeneng (FGD7)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4 8</td>
<td>3 3 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qhuqhu (FGD8)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6 4</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Toloane (FGD9)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6 7</td>
<td>4 3 3 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Research findings

4.3.1 Introduction

Chronic and persistent vulnerability to food insecurity prevails in the Southern Lowlands of Lesotho. The livelihoods of ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households are compromised and there is evidence of livelihood failure that impacts household income, health and food security. Livelihood systems appear to have become more structurally vulnerable as a result of declining agricultural capacity, loss of economic activities, high prevalence of chronic illness and erratic weather patterns that affect agricultural production.

The majority of households vulnerable to food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands do not have secure ownership or access to productive assets and income generating activities. This compromises their ability to cope with potential risks and shocks. Adequate food is becoming less and less accessible to many households, whose daily diets are shown to lack quality and diversity. Agricultural production provides few ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households with a secure livelihood, either through the provision of food for consumption or through the sale of crops for income. A large proportion of vulnerable households do not have access to agricultural assets including land. Many households with fields do not have the assets and inputs necessary to utilise them. Chronic illness has a profound impact on rural livelihoods, with many households being directly affected by death, illness or a high-burden of care.

Chronic livelihood failure renders it increasingly difficult for ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households to develop and maintain sustainable livelihoods. Targeted social protection mechanisms, including social safety nets such as food assistance, in areas where markets are weak, or cash transfers, where markets function, can ensure that chronically poor groups maintain access to food markets and cope with short-term shocks that increase their vulnerability to hunger.

4.3.2 Community mapping

The participants were asked to define the most vulnerable groups within their respective villages. Families living with people who are chronically ill, orphaned children, elderly-headed households, families living with physical disabled members and female-headed households came out very strongly as the most vulnerable households. Once this information was provided and agreed upon by all participants, the researcher asked the participants to
draw their respective villages map (See Appendix 5) and indicate households which met the
descriptions of the vulnerable groups above.

**Table 4.2: Number of households per village**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name (FGDn)</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
<th>Number of households vulnerable to food insecurity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD1</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD3</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD4</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD5</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD6</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD7</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD8</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD9</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,477</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,312</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.1 Chronic illness

Chronic illness is seriously impacting on the livelihoods of vulnerable households, which are
directly affected through the death or illness of household members and the higher burden of
care associated with caring for PLWHA and their offspring. The number of households
identified as chronically vulnerable by the participants appears rather high, perhaps reflecting
the level of misunderstanding of the pandemic in these villages. These rates show that
chronic illness is having an impact on households’ ability to meet their livelihood needs and
has severe impact on household’s vulnerability to food insecurity.

**Table 4.3: Households living with chronically ill people.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name FGDn</th>
<th>Chronically ill as percentage of vulnerable households.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD1</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD3</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD4</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD5</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD6</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD7</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD8</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>28%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.2 Orphaned children

The community-mapping exercise provides information on the number of double and single orphans in the studied villages. Across all the villages, a total number of 768 (31%) households are supporting both single and/or double orphans. Over half of single-orphan hosting households are identified by the participants as being vulnerable to food insecurity. Almost two-thirds of double-orphan hosting households are identified as vulnerable to food insecurity by the participants. This suggests that orphan status is a relatively good indicator of household vulnerability status. The discussions further revealed that most households were shown to have a high burden of care, hosting two or more double orphans.

Particular attention must be given to the existence of child-headed households. Child-headed households are considered to be a particularly vulnerable group within Lesotho. Statistical data on child-headed households is considered to consistently under report the existence of such households. This research was able to identify that only 1% of vulnerable households are headed by children. An analysis of their status shows that these households are severely vulnerable to hunger and food insecurity.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that child-headed households are not identified as child-headed by communities, who traditionally share the burden of care for orphaned children. Such children may fall under the responsibility of an adult within the community. Other evidence suggests that as the ‘pitso’ is primarily attended by adults, even when children are called, their attendance is normally low as they are unfamiliar with these events. As a result, the researcher firmly believes that their existence and needs may not be fully accounted for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village (FGDn)</th>
<th>Number of Child-headed households</th>
<th>Child-headed households as a percentage of all vulnerable households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>1%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.2 Elderly

The elderly make up a large proportion of the households, accounting for 29% of studied villages. Differences in the number of elderly-headed households vulnerable to food insecurity are observable across all the villages. At Ha Majake, elderly-headed households represent almost half of the households in the village. Qhuqhu village, however, showed the lowest proportion of elderly-headed households vulnerable to food insecurity, with just over one-tenth of households being headed by persons over 60 years of age.

Table 4.5: Vulnerable elderly-headed households per village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name (FGDn)</th>
<th>Number of Elderly-headed households</th>
<th>Elderly-headed households as a percentage of all vulnerable households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD4</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.3 Physical disability

For the purpose of this research, disability means a disadvantage or deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that prevents or restricts normal achievement. About 4% of the total households have the presence of physically disabled people. There are observable differences in the level of disability across the villages with Ha Tieli hosting more disabled people. In Khoaba Leabua and Qhuqhu vulnerable households appear to have the lowest proportion, with just 2% of households hosting a member with a physical disability. Table 4.6 details the presence of disability by village.

4.3.2.4 Female-headed

The research revealed that of the studied villages, 30% of the vulnerable households are headed by females. The participants also indicated that female-headed households are slightly more vulnerable than their male counterparts. The reason is that women are the primary providers for their children’s food, clothing and education needs. Nearly all females are involved in some type of informal income generation such as housekeeping for the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ families to meet the daily needs of their immediate families. With many
unskilled Basotho men finding jobs in neighbouring Republic of South Africa, the provisions for day to day sustenance fall on mothers and older children to provide care and support to dependant youth, and with the increased pressure from HIV/AIDS, taking on additional extended family members has made a difficult living situation even worse. When looking at the presented information disaggregated by gender, it seemed obvious that as the level of household vulnerability rises, there is more likelihood that such households will be headed by females. The results also revealed that female-headed households owned the smallest pieces of arable land as compared with male headed households.

Table 4.6: Presence of disable household members per village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name (FGDn)</th>
<th>Presence of Disability</th>
<th>Number of households hosting disable members as a percentage of all vulnerable households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Vulnerable female-headed households per village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name FGDn</th>
<th>Female-headed Households</th>
<th>Number of households headed by females as a percentage of all vulnerable households.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD5</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD7</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>388</strong></td>
<td><strong>30%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3 Socio-economic and agronomic indicators

4.3.3.1 Wealth breakdown

Participants were engaged in a proportional piling exercise where each participant was given 10 seeds to give a picture of the household typologies in their respective villages. The results revealed that, in the Southern Lowlands, the ‘very poor’ constitute 20% of the population while the ‘poor’ make 33% the ‘middle’ 27% and the ‘better-off’ 20%. Land ownership is not a major issue but rather land cultivated creates the difference between poorer and wealthier households. Due to factors such as lack of inputs, labour and draught power, the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ are unable to cultivate much of their land and instead resort to renting it out to the ‘better-off’ households or use it for sharecropping. Land cultivated therefore becomes a major wealth defining characteristic in the Southern Lowlands. The poorer households cultivated about 2 to 3 acres while the wealthier households cultivate 4 to 5 acres.

In share cropping arrangements, the poorer households contribute land while the wealthier households contribute inputs and draught power. It appears this arrangement does not benefit the ‘poor’ much because the wealthier would have to recover all their costs before sharing out the remaining harvest with the ‘poor’. In some ways, share cropping seems to benefit the wealthier households. The other problem facing the poorer households is that they lack draught power and this leads to delays in planting because they have to wait for the owners of draught power to finish their own fields then borrow the draught power. In the end, this late planting coupled with no inputs results in low production. The ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ have access to more land as they have their own and sharecrop with the poorer groups. This enables them to produce enough food to meet 60 to 75% of their annual food requirements as well as sell some for cash income. In terms of education levels for children, the ‘very poor’ and the ‘poor’ can only afford primary school education while the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ can afford higher levels as well as private schools. Since primary education is free, the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ have to find money to cater for uniform and other related costs only. Livestock ownership is a major determinant of wealth in the Southern Lowlands. The main livestock kept are cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and chickens. Most of the livestock are owned by the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ while the ‘poor’ own some pigs. Although most households own chickens, the numbers are quite insignificant mainly due to recurrent diseases.

Having employment is also a determining factor on the household wealth status. Community members who are formally employed are classified as either ‘middle’ or ‘better-off’ families.
The participants understand employment as being employed as a civil servant or working in the private sector.

**Table 4.8: Participants Description of Wealth Groups.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name</th>
<th>Vulnerable Households</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Better-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD1</strong></td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Sharecrop with other households.</td>
<td>Pensioners.</td>
<td>Earn monthly salary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not have enough food.</td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Own number of livestock.</td>
<td>Own number of livestock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rely on gifts.</td>
<td>Have access to land but no farm inputs.</td>
<td>Own fields.</td>
<td>Own fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children dropped out of school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD2</strong></td>
<td>Limited land.</td>
<td>Casual labourers.</td>
<td>Own livestock.</td>
<td>Monthly income exceeds R5, 000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child headed household.</td>
<td>Few livestock.</td>
<td>Own fields.</td>
<td>Own tractors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rely on gifts.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Own a number of livestock.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD3</strong></td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>No formal employment.</td>
<td>Own livestock.</td>
<td>Employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not have enough food to eat.</td>
<td>Sharecrop with other households.</td>
<td>Own fields.</td>
<td>Sell agricultural products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child headed household.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children dropped out of school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited land.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD4</strong></td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Elderly-headed.</td>
<td>Sharecrop with poorer households.</td>
<td>Have enough food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few livestock.</td>
<td>Own fields but no implements.</td>
<td>own fields.</td>
<td>Employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No farm implements.</td>
<td>Brew beer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD5</strong></td>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Pensioners</td>
<td>Formally employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough food</td>
<td>Casual labourers.</td>
<td>Own number of Livestock</td>
<td>Own fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No clothes.</td>
<td>Few livestock.</td>
<td>Own fields</td>
<td>Sell agricultural products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD6</strong></td>
<td>Limited land.</td>
<td>Sharecrop with other households.</td>
<td>Earn monthly income of more than R3, 000.</td>
<td>Run business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few livestock.</td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Own fields.</td>
<td>Have enough food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No clothes.</td>
<td>Have access to land but no farm inputs.</td>
<td>Own a number of livestock.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD7</strong></td>
<td>Disabled.</td>
<td>Casual labourers.</td>
<td>Own livestock.</td>
<td>Employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD8</strong></td>
<td>Female-headed.</td>
<td>No formal employment.</td>
<td>Sharecrop with poorer households.</td>
<td>Have enough food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children dropped out of school.</td>
<td>Sharecrop with other households.</td>
<td>Sell agricultural products.</td>
<td>Employ casual labourers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FGD9</strong></td>
<td>Not enough food to eat.</td>
<td>Elderly-headed.</td>
<td>Pensioners</td>
<td>Formally employed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployed.</td>
<td>Own fields but no implements.</td>
<td>Own number of livestock.</td>
<td>Own fields</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3.2 Income and assets ownership

The discussions revealed that cash income levels of households in the Southern Lowlands are generally low. The main income sources for the ‘very poor’ are casual labour in agricultural and domestic activities, and brewing. They also get some remittances from relatives working in other towns and the capital. The main income sources for the ‘poor’ are the same as the ‘very poor’ but in addition, they get income from sale of livestock (piglets) and petty trade activities such as sale of groceries in the village. The monthly total cash incomes for the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ are R470.00 and R875.00 respectively as compared to R5,350.00 and R10,170.00 for the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ respectively. The main sources of income for the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ are salaried employment, remittances, livestock and some small amount from crop sales. The research revealed that it is quite a common practice for ‘poor’ households to migrate to other areas in search of income opportunities and in some cases this involves crossing the border into South Africa. Unauthorised employment in South Africa is illegal and this underlines the difficulty amongst poor households in accessing income and thus the need to generate local employment to discourage this kind of risky activities.

When examining the major sources of income using 10 seed technique pilling, the results show that, ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households have a lower number of income sources than ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ households. About 37% of the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households have no source of income. The majority of households in the surveyed villages have one income source, and only 1% of households have two income sources. No households have three or more sources of income.

When examining those households that have one or more sources of income, the pattern is observed as follows:

- Casual labour accounts as the most important source of income. A higher proportion of households in Ha Pii and Ha Majake depend on this source, as compared to the other seven villages.
- Traditional beer brewing ranks as the second most important source of income.
- A small proportion of households receive income from either salaries or pensions.
- Remittances are an insignificant source.
- Agriculture, either through livestock or crop practices, does not appear to be an important income-earning strategy for ‘very poor’ or ‘poor’ households.
Table 4.9: Income Sources among the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Income</th>
<th>Village name (FGD&lt;sub&gt;n&lt;/sub&gt;)</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty trade</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop Sales</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary/pension</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Labour</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer brewing</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Income</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a broad concurrence in the level of agricultural-asset ownership across all villages that were studied during the research. Above three-quarters of households across all the villages do not own any agricultural assets. One-fifth of all households have a piece of arable land. However, this does not suggest that these households have the means of tilling their land, the land usually remains fallow unless the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households sharecrop with the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ households. About 2% of ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households own draught animals but no mechanical power. These animals are often rented out to those who can afford it in exchange of food or money during the planting season.

Table 4.10: Agricultural Assets Ownership among the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets Ownership</th>
<th>Village name (FGD&lt;sub&gt;n&lt;/sub&gt;)</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draught Animals</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arable Land</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Assets</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3.3 Sources of food

Production from own sources appears to be a major source of food across all wealth categories, though its contribution to total household requirements increases with wealth. The ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households’ access 20% of annual consumption from own crops, the ‘middle’ close to 60% and the ‘better-off’ about 75%. The reason for a high access through own crops by the wealthier households is the good production yield they are able to secure as a result of using inputs and the additional production from crop sharing arrangements. For the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’, payment in-kind is a major source of food contributing close to 20% of total food access. This is payment with food for agricultural labour especially during weeding and harvesting times. This in-kind payment is almost as important as own crop production for the ‘very poor’ and highlights the high reliance of this wealth group on labour to meet their annual food requirements. Food purchases are main sources of food for all wealth groups though for the ‘very poor’ it is significantly higher at almost 30% of total food access. The ‘poor’ access about 40% of their food through purchase while the ‘middle’ about 40%, and the ‘better-off’ 20%. The high reliance on purchase for the ‘middle’ could be explained by the fact that there are hardly any other sources of food unlike the ‘poor’ and ‘very poor’ who access food through in-kind payment and received food aid in addition to own crop production. The ‘very poor’ and the ‘poor’ household receive food aid which contributes about 10 to 15% of their total food access. The food aid mainly comes from WFP through Food for Work (FFW) activities and vulnerable group feeding food distributions. All wealth groups benefit from school feeding programmes that provide meals at school to all children. This accounts for approximately 5% of total food access across the wealth groups. The research revealed a 10% and 5% gap in food access for the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households respectively. This difference indicates that these households either sometimes go to sleep without food or skip some meals during the day.

Table 4.11: Annual Sources of Food across all wealth groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Food</th>
<th>VP</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>BO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own production</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment in-kind</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food purchase</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School feeding</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3.4 Expenditure patterns

Similar to income patterns, the expenditure patterns in the Southern Lowlands depict very low expenditure by the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households and no element of potential savings is evident for the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’. The ‘very poor’ expenditure patterns show a really high expenditure on staple food at 37% and this highlights their vulnerability to food price changes. For the ‘poor’ the percentage expenditure on staple food is 17% while for the middle and better-off it is 9% and 3% respectively. It should be noted that in the Southern Lowlands the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households purchase more food than what they secure from own crop production. This very high expenditure on food means very little cash is left for other essential expenditure such as access to health services, clothes and education. Expenditure on non-staple food is also quite high at 12% and 14% for the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ respectively. This means that for the ‘very poor’, the combined expenditure on staple and non-staple food is about 50% of total annual expenditure. The total expenditure on staple and non-staple for the ‘poor’ is about 30% of total expenditure while for the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ it is at about 15% of total annual expenditure. The ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ spend significantly on inputs and this explains the fairly high level of production they secure as compared to the ‘very poor’ households who do not use inputs. Other areas in which all households incur expenses are on public transport, paraffin, traditional beer, tobacco/cigarettes.

4.3.3.5 Food Security situation

The discussions disclosed that during the current agricultural year (2008/2009), food security conditions are worse than normal across the Southern Lowlands. Most households, especially the ‘middle’ and the ‘better-off’ are moderately food insecure, while the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households are worse off as a result of below-normal rains and harvests in 2007/2008 agricultural season. There is also inadequate availability of pasture for livestock. Those households which keep livestock were forced to sell them to the national abattoir at cheaper prices as they feared they would die still in their possession. Extremely dry conditions in the Southern Lowlands since mid February to September 2008 have severely reduced crop production while some of the fields remained fallow. As a result, food stocks for households that managed to cultivate from their fields are quickly depleting and, in some areas, households have started eating wild foods which reflects food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands. There is no doubt that more people will quickly become food insecure and may require food assistance before December 2008. This low crop production also limits
market supplies while commodity inflows from neighbouring towns are also low due to poor roads network and conditions. This ultimately reduces households’ access to alternative food sources in the markets, and food supplies’ prices have also increased due to increase in global fuel prices.

The agricultural year circle begins in August and ends in July. Therefore, under normal circumstances, the summer planting season starts in August in the Southern Lowlands; however, due to prevailing drought spells, no fields were cultivated during the data collection period (See Appendix 6). The most common planted major crops are maize, beans, peas, sorghum, wheat and some vegetables. Table 4.12 below presents the seasonal calendar under normal conditions in the Southern Lowlands.

**Table 4.12: Seasonal Calendar – Southern Lowlands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seasonal Activity</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rains</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summer Planting</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize and Beans Planting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harvesting</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Winter Planting</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas and Wheat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harvest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the normal season, households are able to produce cereals and pulses in quantities presented in table 4.13 below.

**Table 4.13: Crop Production – Southern Lowlands**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>VP</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>BO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>120kg</td>
<td>300kg</td>
<td>550kg</td>
<td>900kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>20kg</td>
<td>50kg</td>
<td>200kg</td>
<td>400kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>0kg</td>
<td>0kg</td>
<td>300kg</td>
<td>800kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>20kg</td>
<td>50kg</td>
<td>115kg</td>
<td>250kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>20kg</td>
<td>30kg</td>
<td>70kg</td>
<td>100kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research found that the vast majority of ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households do not keep any significant stocks of cereal or pulses. Almost 90% of households in Ha Pii and Ha Mofoka keep none or less than one month’s stock of maize. In certain villages such as Tšoeneng and Ha Toloane, a higher than normal proportion of households possess one to two months worth of stock. Furthermore, in Ha Majake a significant proportion of the households have maize stock that is expected to last for three to six months. Given that the research took place immediately after the harvest period, it was expected that a higher proportion of households across all villages would have staple foods in stock. This, however, is not the case.

4.3.3.6 Hazards

According to the participants, drought conditions have affected the Southern Lowlands every year in the past 6 years or so. As a consequence, crop production has been declining and households especially the poorer ones struggle to meet their annual food requirements. The drought hazard is particularly serious for the ‘very poor’ and the ‘poor’ because it affects them from different angles namely; reduced crop production, reduced casual labour opportunities for both cash and in kind payment from ‘better-off’ households. In addition, when the drought hazard extends to larger parts of the Southern African region, this translates into increased price of staple food thus reducing the amount of food households can access through purchase. The Southern Lowlands occasionally experiences flooding that causes massive water logging and crop destruction. In addition, flooding usually disrupts movements within the area that involves crossing rivers and this has an impact on other food access strategies such as casual labour. Land degradation is a major hazard in the Southern Lowlands. Widespread soil erosion results in deep gullies and soil erosion also results in diminishing soil quality and lower yields. This increasingly means that crop production as a livelihood strategy is being reduced and households have to look for alternative strategies though options are limited. Hailstorms are frequent and they completely destroy crops, especially maize. This usually results in heavy losses for those who will have invested in crop production and usually discourages further investments in agricultural production. Livestock theft has been a major problem in the Southern Lowlands. This has discouraged livestock ownership and investment and partly affected land cultivation due to reduced draught power.

4.3.3.7 Threat analysis

Participants presented a number of threats to their well-being using a pair-wise matrix. Initially, the participants were asked to mention any phenomenon that they felt was a threat to
their livelihoods. A list of 11 threats was produced. The participants were later asked to rank the threats in terms of severity and agree on the top three. Drought was noted as a primary concern in all the villages. Poor soils are recorded as a major concern in Ha Pii, Ha Majake and Tšoeneng villages. Other significant threats include the increasing number of orphaned and vulnerable children and high prevalence of TB and chronic illness. In response to these threats, the communities proposed a number of different solutions. The majority are associated with the construction of key community infrastructure, such as water harvesting and supply, development of irrigation schemes, agricultural extension services and job creation activities.

Participants were adamant that Food for Work and income generating projects would be appropriate to address food security issues. Food assistance is proposed in some villages as an appropriate safety net to provide social support to orphaned and vulnerable children and other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the disabled and female-headed households. Improved health services were recommended to assist those who are sick. Full details are provided in Table 4.14.

4.3.4 Causes of Food Insecurity

After the threat analysis exercise, the participants were asked to define the concept of food security as they understand it. Out of the nine focus group discussions held, four groups defined food security as ‘enough food to last throughout the year’, while three groups said ‘eating three satisfying meals per day throughout the year’ and the last two groups defined it as ‘being able to produce enough food that will last longer’. Given these definitions the participants were asked to identify the causes of food insecurity in their respective villages. A list of five common causes was developed, which included: chronic illness, drought, unemployment, erratic weather patterns and an increase in number of orphans. The list was ultimately narrowed down to three as some of the participants argued that drought and increase in number of orphans are effects not causes. Therefore, the discussions that follow hereafter will be on chronic illness, unemployment and erratic weather patterns as causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands.
Table 4.14: Threats and Solutions presented by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village name (FGD&lt;sub&gt;n&lt;/sub&gt;)</th>
<th>Threats to livelihoods (top 3)</th>
<th>Proposed Solutions: in order of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Construction of water tanks and pipes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased number of orphans.</td>
<td>Irrigation schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic illness</td>
<td>Dam construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Income-generating projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Provision of farm inputs and supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor soils</td>
<td>Dam construction for irrigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing food prices</td>
<td>Construction of water tanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Supply of farm inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing food prices</td>
<td>Dam construction for irrigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor accessibility to farm</td>
<td>Road construction and maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Food aid for OVC and other groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Soils</td>
<td>Dam construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor accessibility to farm</td>
<td>FFW development projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inputs</td>
<td>Supply of farm inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;5&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing number of orphans.</td>
<td>Dam construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing food prices</td>
<td>Road construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;6&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Road construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Soils</td>
<td>Improved health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor accessibility to farm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;7&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Dam construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor Soils</td>
<td>FFW development projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor accessibility to farm</td>
<td>Supply of farm inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;8&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Job creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing food prices</td>
<td>Dam construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor accessibility to farm</td>
<td>Road construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD&lt;sub&gt;9&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>Income generating activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing food prices</td>
<td>Improved health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.4.1 Chronic illness

The claim that the current food crisis in the Southern Lowlands is inextricably linked to high incidences of chronic illness, which has deepened the food crisis, is much supported by the food security literature (Section 2.4.1) and the current thinking of the studied communities. The participants defined chronic illness as any illness that renders an individual unable to
engage in productive activities for three months or more. The participants believed chronic illness to be a good proxy indicator of HIV/AIDS.

As already indicated in table 4.3, the discussions revealed that about 28% of the vulnerable households are living with members who are chronically ill. However, the participants were not able to estimate the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate within their respective villages but were of the opinion that it is high since some of the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ households members are infected with HIV/AIDS. It is worth noting that all dimensions of food security definition, accessibility, availability and use of food are impacted where the HIV/AIDS prevalence is high.

Some of the significant reasons the participants cited as to why they consider chronic illness a constraint to food security attainment is that it undermines food security through its impact on households’ incomes and food purchasing power; affects the people’s ability to engage in agricultural crop production; and forces households to sell their households productive and non-productive assets to pay for the health care of those who are sick. The discussion also suggested that the situation is more severe for households infected and affected by HIV/AIDS as some of the chronically ill people do not have access to nutritious meals, which could prolong their lives. In addition, as most medications must be taken with food, the lack of food inhibits improved health and reduces their quality of life. Also, research has revealed that few vulnerable households can afford to pay for transportation to the nearest health clinics or fees for medical attention and many remain at home untreated. Moreover, the participants associated the fast growing number of orphans with the chronic illness, claiming that HIV/AIDS affects the most productive and sexually active age group (15 - 49 years). In addition, households that take care of orphans are forced to increase their expenditure patterns to accommodate the needs of those orphans such as school fees.

The discussions further indicated that the impact of HIV/AIDS on households is not equal. The ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households are much less able to cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS than ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ households who can afford to hire casual labourers when there is need to plant and harvest the crops.

In the Southern Lowlands, household income is particularly important for food security as it allows households accessibility to food. Income sources from agricultural and non-agricultural activities allow households to purchase food, however, the participants pointed
out that HIV/AIDS can have a negative effect through decreasing the quality and quantity of income generating activities. Moreover, HIV/AIDS affects labour quality and quantity as households have less working hours. This argument was supported by the fact that physical fit members of the households affected by HIV/AIDS divert more time away from income generating activities to take care of those who are sick.

4.3.4.2 Unemployment

According to the research participants, employment opportunities within the Southern Lowlands are very minimal. Very few members of the communities have formal employment, while a majority of them engage in casual labour activities. The participants further emphasised that, casual employment has its own challenges because it is not full time; lasts only for some few days and pays little money that cannot sustain households for long periods and/or until another opportunity comes by. Within the vulnerable households, female and elderly-headed households are the most affected because most of the casual labour opportunities are predominately offered to the physically fit and healthy males as they require a lot of strength and lifting of heavy materials. In the absence of adequate cash flow, these vulnerable households are often faced with the dilemma of purchasing food or agricultural inputs such as hybrid seeds and fertilizers to produce their own food, thereby becoming vulnerable to food insecurity.

The research noted that food insecurity within vulnerable households exposes family members to negative coping strategies that may predispose them to HIV infection and other sexually transmitted infections, through engaging in behaviours that can increase HIV risk such as exchanging sex for money or food. The risk of sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable groups by other groups which have enough food is highly possible.

The research revealed that ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households sometimes engage in self-employment activities such as producing and selling of traditional beer, however, this type of business is not sustainable as they often run out of inputs such as sorghum and paraffin. The explanation behind this was that, because of their desperate situation, as soon as they get paid by the buyers, these households divert the all money to purchasing of food instead of keeping it some to buy the inputs. This type of behaviour clearly indicates that these households either lack basic skills in running small businesses or they get minimal profit margins or have limited market spaces.
4.3.4.3 Erratic weather patterns

The results of the research showed that the production of Southern Lowlands’ major crops has suffered a progressive decline since the 1970s, which worsened from 2001 until now. The significant change in weather patterns is one of the key factors contributing to this decline. By erratic weather patterns, the participants referred to late and too much rain which often waterlog the crops; too much heat which leads to drought; and early frosts that destroy crops before they mature. Since 2001, the average cereal yields have fallen from 600kg to 140kg and 900kg to 350kg per acre among ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households respectively. In general, the Southern Lowlands has a semi-arid climate and faces severe weather variability characterized by drought, torrential rainfall, early frosts, heavy snowfall and hail storms. One recent example is the hailstorm that severely lashed and knocked down immature maize crops in some areas in early April 2008.

The participants reported that, because of severe prevailing drought, water sources for domestic, livestock and agricultural use have been affected. Most of the households were already experiencing water shortages, including the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’. The communities, through the assistance of the local chiefs and councillors have opted for water rationing strategy to extend the availability of water from the communal water taps. This is done by locking the taps during the day from 10am to 5pm every week day and each household is allowed 60 litres of water every day despite the size of the household. Households which have planted vegetables in their respective gardens are forbidden to irrigate them, therefore the plants have died. Communal dams, an important source of water for livestock were exhausted during the time of this research. Participants mentioned a huge loss in number of livestock. Livestock that are now surviving are not as productive as they used to be. Cattle are no longer producing enough milk to be sold and the small stock such as sheep and goats might not produce good wool and mohair. The research also revealed that households which practice roof water harvesting have their water tanks depleted.

Since the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households do not plant hybrid seeds and do not use fertilizers, their crops are more prone to be affected by drought because the seeds they use are not drought-resistant. During the harvesting season, they were able to produce food that will last them for few months.
The research found out that normal rain that was once witnessed between September and November every year, which helped to facilitate the planting of crops now comes from January to March since the last seven years. The discussions revealed that due to the heavy rains, plants are sometimes waterlogged restricting them to be exposed to sunlight and therefore die at the early stages of their growth.

Occurrence of early frosts is reported to be more often. The participants mentioned that sometimes the frosts come as early as April. Under normal circumstances, early frosts are seen late June after families have harvested their crops, but now the situation has reversed. This is a similar pattern with snowfall which used to occur in July, but for the past three years, the Southern Lowlands have been experiencing snowfall from May and sometimes up to September.

4.3.5 Coping strategies
The researcher asked the participants to list the most common coping strategies that they often employ with the food crisis. The strategies that participants mentioned were that households tend to switch from purchasing non essential commodities such as beer, clothes, etc., to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts of money on beer and other luxurious items, which they reduce to buy staple food. Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is a major response strategy. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households. Kinship support is a fairly common strategy though it depends on the situation of the wealthier households in a particular year. The ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the Southern Lowlands. This is a common community support mechanism that happens even in normal times. The ‘very poor’ and the ‘poor’ will seek for more assistance from the ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ during a bad year. Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is another normal response strategy. The households sell their livestock to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage. Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is commonly practiced by the poorer households. The availability of casual labour opportunities in the Southern Lowlands is limited especially given that the majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during the food crisis, there is increased search for casual labour and often this
involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The younger members of households are even able to move into South Africa in search of labour opportunities. Due to the limited labour opportunities both within the Southern Lowlands and in South Africa, it is difficult to estimate how much extra income this option may provide.

In order to obtain full information on the households’ coping strategies, the researcher gave each participant from the nine focus group discussions, 10 seeds asking them to depict the proportions of households in their respective communities that rely on various coping strategies using three categories: frequently do, rarely do and never do. The categorisation was done by comparing the situation now to that of 2001\(^5\) (about seven years ago). The findings suggested that, the overall the proportion of households, using the various coping strategies increased by 29.2% (range: 18 - 37%). The category ‘never and rarely’ is also reduced by 29.2% over the past seven years (Table 4.15). This finding denotes an extreme food insecurity situation in the Southern Lowlands.

**Table 4.15: Household Coping Strategies trend: Seven years ago versus now**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven years ago (% of all households)</th>
<th>Now (% of households)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never or rarely</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change expenditure patterns</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce number of meals per day</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship support</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell livestock</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour opportunities</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.3.6 WFP Food aid programme**

Based on the literature review and the research findings, WFP has been implementing its food aid programme in the Southern Lowlands since mid 2002. The participants indicated that for almost a year, WFP was distributing food only to households which were considered vulnerable, the vulnerable group feeding (VGF). The names of such households were compiled by the local chiefs from various villages (not all villages within the Southern Lowlands) together with the relief committees that were established.

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\(^5\) 2001 was selected because most households were considered to be food secure.
The participants revealed that, beginning 2004, categories like HIV/AIDS and TB patients, OVC, the elderly, the disabled, mothers and children health (MCH) were included in the food aid programme while the Food for Work activities only started in 2006. The participants were not sure how many people were benefitting from the food aid, however, they mentioned hundreds of households. According to the discussions, food aid is being distributed monthly to the vulnerable categories. Each household receives 50kg Maize Meal, 2.5 litres of cooking oil, 5kg beans or peas and 5kg corn soya blend for households under HIV/AIDS and TB and MCH. The participants argued that cereals sometimes do not last a month for households of more than five members throughout the month since it is consumed as soft porridge in the morning and as staple food during lunch and dinner times. The discussions on food aid brought mixed opinions from some of the participants. One of the participants is quoted as saying:

Some of the lactating mothers want the village health workers to write the weight of the child that is below what appears on the scale. In other words, they want the weight of their children reduced to a weight that would be able to grant them the chance either to remain in the programme or to be eligible for the food aid scheme. Sadly, it seems that most lactating women only come to the clinic to weigh their children, because they want the food aid, they are not necessarily concerned about the health of their children. Consequently, most lactating mothers have now discontinued to go to the clinic because of the Village Health Workers refusal to write a weight that is below what appears on the scale as demanded by the mother and have gone somewhere else where they would have their children put on the food aid scheme. This type of behaviour is called ‘intentional starving’ where children are being starved by their parents or guardians in order to remain in the food aid programme. While different focus groups argued about this, about 65% of the respondents from the participants who spoke about the issue to indicate that it is definitely happening and that is happening more often to be of concern.

The other concern that came from the participants, was that corn soya blend because of its sugary taste, is often not given to the people it is meant for, such as HIV/AIDS and TB patients and underweight children, instead other healthy members of the families consume it.

Another statement of concern that came from most of the participants was that food aid sometimes causes dependency as some beneficiaries do not want to work, especially those under the vulnerable group feeding who are neither sick nor disabled. They turn their
vulnerability into an opportunity. In support of this statement one of the participants expressed that:

If they have no animals due to stock theft, they don’t want to plough and are not always hopeful, given poor rains...... some who I agree are vulnerable were receiving under vulnerable group feeding but now do not want to work, even though they have land. Some have continued to try but others have not......at one time FAO provided seeds, but many ate the seeds and at the same time they were getting food. Why they ate it, we do not know. Some planted the seeds but it did not bear anything. The plant would grow tall, but it would not harvest anything. Others say that even though there is no rain, we prepare and plough hoping that if the rain does come, our seeds are in the ground. Why all do not copy this, I do not know.

Despite these negative statements, most participants agreed that food aid has brought quality of life to the HIV/AIDS patients and the OVC because many vulnerable households have access to food through the food aid programme only, which is said to have kept them from going to be bed hungry. Before the programme, many beneficiaries were dependent on already overburdened extended family members and neighbours.

According to the participants, the food aid programme impact on the quality of life has been enormous. The project has created hope, inspired the community and given them sense of pride. The most cited outcomes depicted from the discussions included:

- The project has given people hope that things can change and get better in the future. “Even when people are walking or working they are happy because they have food.”
- The food from the project has helped many to feel strong enough that they have energy to cultivate their fields and grow vegetable gardens near their homes.
- Food aid beneficiaries involved in TB and HIV, are taking their medication as required because they have to take it properly to so that they receive food. They are gradually, but noticeably, getting better as they are able to do other households’ chores that they not able to do before they received food rations.
- Toilets built under FFW have been very important in reducing pollution in and around the villages. As one of the participants stated: “we are no longer ashamed when a visitor asks for a toilet because before we were using dongas”.

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• Water taps built under FFW have been very beneficial because beneficiaries stated that they no longer have to drink dirty water. FFW allowed the community to dig holes for dispersing dirty water.

• Vulnerable people were engaged in a lot of robbery before the food aid program because they were hungry. Poor people could be easily manipulated by the ‘better off’ to engage in crimes, but by having the food they are less open to both committing crimes and/or being manipulated to commit a crime by the ‘better off’s’. As many participants expressed it: “… now that we have been provided with food the crime rate has reduced”

While some of the participants from Ha Pii indicated that:

Most men from the mines are suffering from HIV/AIDS. Once you see them when they come from South Africa you would swear that they would die soon and because their complexion has darkened and their eyes are pale almost to the point of being very white in a rather unusual way. However once they got food aid we soon saw them gaining strength and stamina although they are still coughing. Indeed in the earlier days a lot of patients never finished their treatment because some of the pills they took made them sick, especially side effects. After being provided with food they have been able to finish the treatment they had been given.

and

Under nursing and expectant mothers’ category, food was used as an incentive to encourage people to go for the HIV tests and this has helped the health department to trace the trend of the HIV infection in our area. Most lactating mothers used not to bring their children to the clinic but food aid has encouraged them to bring their children to the clinic for immunization. WFP revised their policy and gave food only to the double orphans and this has also encouraged the relatives to be the guardians of the orphans who would otherwise be alone.

The discussions further disclosed that before the food aid programme, non-school attendance at primary level, where the Government of Lesotho introduced free primary education, was a big issue in the Southern Lowlands due to early marriage by the youngsters and high levels of child labour aggravated by their guardians. However, this problem has subsided because the OVC are able to receive food take home ration and have maintained regular school attendance. It was realised during the discussions that the take home ration motivates OVC
to attend and legitimises their school attendance among reluctant guardians who might otherwise aim to keep the children to do domestic and other duties. Though no empirical evidence was available, the participants were of the feeling that food aid improves children’s performance too. However, most of the participants were concerned that the guardians are only sending children to school for their own selfish reasons such as getting access to food because the children sometimes do not have adequate share of their food.

While discussing the Food for Work activities and its outputs, the 80% participants felt that these activities have not had really impact at all as people continue to slip back to their vulnerability and that is sad. They argued that, free food aid is responsible for this and FFW failed to emphasize the need for the community to build their livelihoods so that after the emergency they could become self sufficient. These participants reported that they have cases where communities do not display ownership of the assets they have created under FFW. For example, it is a common practice for the community to let their livestock destroy the trees that were planted under FFW. They further revealed that communities destroy FFW assets to ensure WFP does not leave but continues to provide food. The communities do not feel they own the assets even though the projects that are implemented are supposed to come from the communities themselves. It was however noted that, in some cases, projects have been imposed on the community and in many cases they lack relevance to the communities’ needs. In addition, projects that have been implemented have not had enough expertise to ensure quality and most outputs have been of poor quality, meaning they will not be sustainable.

The extent, to which food aid has facilitated social cohesion or threatened it, may be debated. Through the discussions, it was evident that food aid had clearly played a significant role in reducing begging, the number of thefts and the tension caused as the result of both.

1999 was the last year we experienced a good harvest of maize. Since 2000 there has been very little. Since 2002 we’ve been receiving food aid. There was a woman who nearly died in our community and after receiving food she improved. We realised she was not sick, but malnourished. People were going days without food. People even our elders, were travelling to South Africa searching employment and food, but the number leaving reduced when food aid arrived. The situation improved. We knew of many who did not have enough to eat and theft was high. The number of thefts from fields and begging has decreased significantly. There were children living on their own who had nothing to eat and were stealing from others. Now they are able to live
alone with their siblings as they have something to eat, by going to school. They can now eat 3 times per day, at home, at schools and at night (Local chief who was part of the discussions)

The collary of this positive impact on social cohesion, is that there are accusations and counter-accusation of preferential treatment for some beneficiaries by either VHW or Village Distribution Committees. It is said that there are many who are not vulnerable but that they are “fighting to get food because they are selfish and because of witchcraft, the committee are afraid to say anything”. (FGD participant)

People were very happy with the food and they were thankful, but some did not receive food…. there were many complaints….. there are conflicts at home... if I have conflict with a neighbour I might not allow the food to reach her, so I might give it to someone else. Some were getting food who should not be, while others were not receiving and should have been. The tension continues. People are refusing to unload the trucks when the food arrives. They say, ‘if we don’t get anything, why should we help’. The food has not caused conflict directly, but somehow it has. Perhaps there should be something for those who unload the trucks. (FGD participant)

The fact that WFP now request distribution on the basis of actual numbers per HH has caused tension.

In December 2004 when the PRRO was being prepared, there was honesty…we are x number in our HH, but in April 2005, when there was a verification – family members increased all of a sudden. Most are saying the beneficiary lists are inaccurate. We live in the village and we know who is alone and who is fighting for food. Those who are 4 in the family are suddenly 18. ..... many are vulnerable, but some are more vulnerable than others (FGD participant).

The extent to which distributions per household are being abused as described above is unclear, indicating the need for closer review.

It appeared also that the participants were not aware of other stakeholders in the food aid programme. They were only familiar with WFP. This discovery came out when they were asked about other role players in the food aid distribution such as DMA and FMU.
4.3.6.1 Programme challenges

Two significant challenges that were identified through the group discussions were food pipeline break and targeting issues.

Food pipeline break was a concern because the participants mentioned that sometimes WFP does not distribute food without prior warning of notifications to the food recipients. Due to shortages, WFP had to stop distribution or reduce food rations or number of beneficiaries.

On various occasions, participants indicated that the current selection criteria and the development of beneficiary lists for all feeding categories is not optimal. The participants stated their belief that some of the vulnerable households who are food insecure are not participating in the programme due to either the subjectivity of the selection criteria or cheating that is done by the relief committees. The participants repeatedly indicated that there are a lot of orphans who remain without any form of food aid and it was suggested, this may be as a result of names being removed or altered in some way from the list.

4.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter offered the details on the findings of the research. The methods and tools that were used to gather information were pair-wise ranking; community mapping; wealth ranking; and seasonal calendar. Most of the data collected was done through participatory learning in action approach. The chapter presented the socio and agronomic characteristics of the Southern Lowlands. It further explored the causes of the food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands and the coping strategies that households often resort to during food crisis. Finally, the food aid programme itself was examined.

This research finds evidence of chronic livelihood failure in the Southern Lowlands. This failure renders it increasingly difficult for households vulnerable to food insecurity to develop and maintain sustainable livelihoods.

In particular, the research shows that:

- A large proportion of households (53%) are at risk of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands.
- Households which are more vulnerable are those headed by females or elderly; those taking care of orphans or psychically disabled people; and those with chronically ill people.
- The degree of vulnerability to food insecurity varies across villages.
• The majority of vulnerable households did not hold any cereal stocks remaining from the immediate post harvest period.
• The majority of vulnerable households depend on payment in kind and purchasing of food as their primary source of food.
• The majority of vulnerable households rely on just one source of income, either casual labour or beer brewing.
• A large proportion of vulnerable households are without an adequate means of income.
• The majority of vulnerable households do not have access to either agricultural land and/or the inputs necessary to engage in productive agriculture and own few livestock.
• The most common threats are drought, soil erosion and an increasing number of orphans.
• Chronic illness greatly affects vulnerable households, with almost one-quarter experiencing illness in some form.
• There are a large number of single and double-orphans identified as vulnerable by their communities.
• Chronic illness, unemployment and erratic weather patterns are causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands.
• Most households adopt various strategies such as switching expenditure patterns; reducing the number of meals per day; kingship support; sale of livestock; and searching for labour opportunities.
• WFP has been distributing food aid in the Southern Lowlands since 2002.
• WFP distributed food aid under vulnerable group feeding, HIV/AIDS and TB patients, OVC, the elderly, the disabled, nursing and expectant mothers; and Food for Work categories.
• Food aid has been able to improve the livelihoods and quality of life of the beneficiaries.
• Some FFW activities such as building of toilets and water taps have been very helpful, while some such as tree planting were not embraced by some of the beneficiaries.
• Nursing mothers who benefit from food aid intentionally starve their children in order to stay in the programme.
• Challenges in the distribution of food aid are food pipeline break and the selection criteria.

The next chapter provides the general conclusion of this research and gives the key recommendations.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to investigate community vulnerability to food (in)security in the Southern Lowlands of Lesotho and review the WFP food aid programme in the same area. This research was two-fold: firstly, the researcher critically studied the literature from different sources that relate to food (in)security in Lesotho and secondly undertook the qualitative research on the communities residing in the targeted areas. The empirical research specifically focused on socio-economic and agronomic indicators, the income sources, the food sources, the expenditure patterns, the causes of food insecurity, the most common hazards, the threats, the traditional coping strategies, and the food security situation of those households indentified as the most vulnerable to food insecurity (see Chapters 2 and 4). This chapter therefore, has as its objective the following:

- To revisit the research aim, objectives and methodology and confirm whether they have been met;
- To summarise the key components of the research;
- To highlight the key lessons learned and key implications;
- To present the key recommendations emanating from the research; and finally
- To provide recommendations for other future related research possibilities in this field of study.

The research broadly looked into the vulnerabilities to food (in)security, with a special focus on the communities residing in the Southern Lowlands of Lesotho, a geographical entity comprised of parts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale’s Hoek districts. An analysis on the socio and agronomic indicators of the vulnerable households were discussed. A further review of the WFP food aid programme was done to better understand the social protection initiatives that WFP implementing in the said areas and to make conclusive remarks on whether this programme made an impact or not.
The research objectives of this thesis were:

- To identify main socio-economic and agronomic indicators of the studied population: i.e. main sources of food and agricultural practices;
- To investigate the causes of food insecurity in the designated study area;
- To identify the traditional coping mechanisms during disasters by affected communities;
- To review the types of social protection initiatives that have been in place since the food crisis in 2002;

In terms of this research, the results were obtained through qualitative methodology through the review of theory and gathering of empirical data. Data related to types of vulnerabilities of the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ households; various socio-economic and agronomic indicators within Lesotho as a whole and among households residing within the Southern Lowlands in particular; as well as the causes of food insecurity generally and within the research area; the traditional coping strategies employed by the Southern Lowlands’ residents and finally key role players in food security issues at national level and in the Southern Lowlands. This research was manageable as it was linked to the vulnerable households in the Southern Lowlands and the WFP food aid programme operations in the area. The scope of the research was specific (Southern Lowlands ecological zone) to provide results.

5.2 Key lessons learned and key implications

1. The empirical research revealed that most households have a rather skewed limited understanding of the complexities associated with food security. Accordingly, they narrow the definition to continuous availability of food lasting for only a specific period in a year. The other key components such as stability, accessibility and dietary diversity are often left out of the equation;

2. The empirical research is in support of the literature in terms of the causes of food insecurity. They both identify HIV/AIDS, unemployment and erratic weather conditions as causes of food insecurity.

3. The overall impact of food aid in the Southern Lowlands over the past six years appears to have given hope to the vulnerable households. Lives were saved and tensions created by theft and exchanging sex for food or money which have now been
reduced. The food aid distribution initiatives have also helped to keep children, especially the OVC, in school where and when they would have otherwise dropped out.

4. The need for food is influenced by many factors well outside the scope of the food projects themselves, including structural problems and the use of available resources such as water within the country as a whole. These problems require high level advocacy and lobbying in order to attract donor and institutional support to address them adequately. In addition, the current WFP’s food aid programme needs a clear exit strategy to instil a sense of urgency for the government to meet its obligations towards its people.

5. The VGF and MCH programme components in particular, have been plunged into conflict due to actual or perceived problems with the beneficiary selection process as there were claims of misconduct among the relief committees and village health workers resulting in exclusion and inclusion errors. This has reduced the potential impact on these components. Programme sustainability challenges beyond the proposed or agreed phases in view of the potential overall increase in the number of beneficiaries and the inevitable decline in assistance given the more urgent and globalised commitments driven by the eminent further collapse of the international financial systems, recurrence of tsunamis, floods and other natural or manmade disasters.

6. Evidence shows that there has been a significant decline in agricultural production and land use in the Southern Lowlands. Some of the causes are clear, such as lower than average and unevenly distributed rainfall patterns (see section 4.3.4.3) as well as soil erosion caused by deforestation and poor agricultural practices, lack of agricultural inputs and reduced ploughing capacity. The findings suggest that there is a discernable decline in agricultural production and land use, related to dependency. People are not cultivating their fields, or they are cultivating less land, because they are depending on the food aid rather than on their own productive capacity to feed themselves. In short, the food aid programme appears to be generating a negative psychological mindset contributing to laziness and jealousy (that others are receiving food aid while others do not) instead of a positive perception of a temporary interventionist.

7. Food aid appears to have encouraged adult carers, including grandparents to take care of vulnerable and orphaned children, which can be interpreted as a healthy response.
However, a concern has been raised that guardians are being opportunistic and are abusing this situation by mistreating the children in their care and are not giving them an adequate portion of the food aid.

8. Unreliable food pipeline continues to be a major determinant of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the food aid programming, resulting in WFP’s inability to fulfil its promises and obligations to the vulnerable households.

9. The Lesotho Government has seemingly distanced itself from the plight of the poor and the OVC and is not playing any significant partnership role in the coordination of operational activities of WFP and not participating in the conceptualisation of exit strategies and the roadmap ahead.

Having made the above observations, the researcher therefore concludes that although there seems to be an improvement in food access by households, there is no evidence that those households will continue to access food in the absence of food aid. In essence, the absence of food security foundation, executed in tandem with food aid interventionist measures does not realistically augur well for the future. Food for work activities which are more likely to generate income for the vulnerable households are not sustainable because the discussions revealed that these activities have been imposed on the beneficiaries, without the co-ownership corollary that partners the communities with food aid agencies such as WFP. It is of key importance that development agents do not determine the developmental projects/programmes within the communities. The process should be interactive and should not be done in isolation but in mutual social learning and capacity building process as both parties (development agents and the beneficiaries) learn from each other and manage to develop a reciprocal relationship and partnership that will eventually reap sustainable outcome. It is therefore concluded that, the food aid programmes failed to offer sustainable social safety nets to the beneficiaries and as a result the research hypothesis remains valid.

5.3 Key recommendations

1. By receiving food aid alone, communities are not being assisted to find and adopt new farming methods that conserve soil and water, or to adopt new crops that are appropriate for the changing climate. Therefore, WFP should lobby its sister agency FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to encourage the communities to use drought resistant seeds and engage in organic farming since fertilisers are expensive.
2. The establishment of an outreach team should be considered in all food aid programmes designed to monitor on a regular basis the extent to which children’s entitlements have been abused by their guardians and to ensure that measures are adopted to address the issue. This could be done through community mobilisation and the establishment of an independent complaints mechanism and feedback loop. An appropriate module in child protection would need to be developed to facilitate rapid training of the community committees and those involved in the feedback mechanisms. This effort will not only protect the OVC, but even those children who are perceived to be intentionally starved by their mothers.

3. WFP needs to develop a dependency measurement tool to be used to monitor the extent to which food aid is eroding existing community survival strategies. This tool may assist in determining why some households are not cultivating their land.

4. WFP should monitor closely the selection criteria to ensure that only those households in need of food assistance are included in the programme and how long they will remain in the programme.

5. The implementation of a food aid programme should fall within the framework of the National Food Security Policy, such as purchasing of locally produced food items for food assistance programmes. This will help to develop local markets and give incentive to local producers. In October, 2008, and in the face of current international financial and economic meltdown, WFP has kick-started a $76-million five-year pilot project in 21 member countries. The central focus of the project is to boost fragile economies in the developing world by buying surplus crops from low income farmers. According to information related to this exercise, more than 350,000 small scale farmers in Africa and Central America are earmarked to benefit in the short to medium terms while entire communities and nations will benefit in the long-term.

6. In the implementation of food for work activities, WFP should carry needs assessment study that will provide feedback as to what productive activities will work best for the beneficiaries. By creating productive assets that are identified by the beneficiaries it will contribute to an improved productive basis for sustained long-term food security. Typically, these activities are aimed at improving rural infrastructure or natural resources conservation which can absorb a high number of unskilled labourers, which will ultimately reduce the high levels of unemployment.
7. The establishment of a unique mobile (see section 3.2) video unit to provide educational information on HIV/AIDS to peripheral and rural communities should be extended to cover most parts of the country. This initiative is very important in curbing the HIV/AIDS prevalence which is recorded as one of the causes of food insecurity in the Southern Lowlands and other parts of the country (see section 2.4.1).

8. The Government of Lesotho has established a social grant for the elders above the age of 60 who now receive R300.00 every month. WFP needs to ensure that the elders who are benefiting from the food aid programme are also registered with the Department of Social Welfare to benefit from the grant. The similar approach should apply to the OVC as well. In other words, the key stakeholders, the Government of Lesotho through the Department of Social Welfare and WFP should develop a database for all food aid beneficiaries.

9. As indicated in Section 2.7.4.2, property grabbing such as farm land and other household items from female-headed households and OVC has become a norm in Lesotho. An advocacy programme related to inheritance rights for widows and OVC should be designed within which strategies should be formulated to close the gaps which prevent widows and OVC form inheriting land and other productive assets in the event of the husband’s and parents death.

10. The scope of the newly introduced orphan-hood epidemic demands an immediate response. The framework for care of orphans and vulnerable children produced by UNICEF states that communities and extended families provide the most effective care for orphaned children, but those communities and families need strengthening and support. The capacity of such families needs to be strengthened to better protect OVC by providing economic and psychosocial support. Acquisition of essential services such as primary health care, access to documents (birth certificates, education records, land deeds, etc) and food security pose significant challenges for OVC. However, a community based support mechanism can be mobilised to create a supportive environment for OVC by raising awareness through advocacy and social mobilisation.

11. The illusion that donor-funded programmes have to be in their implementation stages for eternity has to be revisited if not discarded outright. Interventionist donor-funded programmes no matter how well-meaning have to remain just that - well thought-out, results driven, time-framed, temporary measures while
simultaneous long-term remedial measures are agreed on and implemented. A poverty stricken Southern Africa nation of Malawi is a classical example of a strong-willed nation which addressed its long-term starvation and shortage of grain by risking international support donor support and executing a far-sighted grain seed and fertiliser acquisition subsidy programme. This was in response to a major famine that devastated over five million people in 2005. Today, that national food self-sufficiency programme has somewhat dramatically moved Malawi from a serious food deficit importer to becoming a net food exporter, harvesting nearly three million metric tonnes per annum. In a cited Malawi case, a plethora of inter-linked stakeholders such as the seed traders association, agricultural production researchers, resource-poor, small-holder farmers, Ministry of Agriculture and a host of regional multi-stakeholder networks, promoting food security policies in the region were enlisted. There are some challenges remaining but the immediate food surplus impact has generated a lot of buoyancy to the economy and produced a huge optimism for the future. If such policies become integral to the donor community exit strategies, the future could become brighter for millions of marginalised communities and OVC (UNDP, 2008:3).

12. It is equally high time that the much-hyped MDGs that world leaders have set for themselves, such as halving the extreme poverty by 2015, effectively addressing hunger and its chronic malnutrition, should have concrete measures in place for their realisation. The added bonus here is that the richer nations have committed themselves to a global partnership in which they provide the financial stimulus while the developing, poorer nations offer the leadership for execution, nurturing and monitoring so that measurable results are possible. It is a combination of the political will that will accelerate and sustain programmes and initiatives such as the WFP plus the honouring of contractual obligations in the development partnership between the developing and the richer countries.

5.4 Future research possibilities

The problems of food insecurity in Lesotho and within the Southern Lowlands as outlined in this research cannot all be solved by such research. Many issues related to the problem of food insecurity covered in this research are either not adequately explored or discussed given the limited scope of this research. Further investigations based on the collection and analyses of empirical data are needed in order to delineate concretely that such problems are addressed
in the implementation of food security programmes and initiatives. Therefore, the following require further investigation:

- In a country where the agricultural sector impacts massively on the national Gross Domestic Product and is also one of the major food sources for Basotho nationals (CBL, 2006:1), agricultural production and development is clearly lagging behind population growth and as result leading to high levels of poverty and hunger. Further studies need to be undertaken that will look into the possibilities of increasing food production through agricultural expansion strategies in a way that will meet the food needs of the current and future population in Lesotho.

- Many problems of food security emanate from poor implementation of the food security policy. Therefore, a study on how the Government of Lesotho with food security stakeholders as mentioned in section 2.7 can work together in partnership to implement effective food security initiatives to vulnerable households needs to be explored.

- A major issue of concern that needs further investigation relates to the role of women in food security. Female-headed households play a major role in food and agricultural production. This role needs to be recognised, therefore, the reasons for lack of recognition as well as how to address such a lack of recognition needs to be further considered.

- A study on food utilisation, food variety and dietary diversity should be considered.

None of the above suggested research areas is new to the agricultural economists, nutritionists or development specialist, but generating clearer answers lies at the core of food policy implementation and improvement, aimed at achieving long-term and sustainable food security in Lesotho.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Lesotho Map – Districts and Agro-ecological Zones

Source: FAO and WFP (2007:26)
Appendix 2: Definitions of food (in)security, 1975 – 1996

1. “Availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food stuffs.....to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption ....and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (UN, 1975, cited in Abdalla, 2007: 186 – 188).

2. “The probability of food grain consumption in developing countries falling below a desired level due to a fixed upper limit on the food import bill they can afford and an unfavourable combination of poor harvest and world food grain prices” (Reultinger, 1977, cited in Abdalla, 2007: 186 – 188).


6. “Ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food they need” (FAO, 1983, cited in Abdalla, 2007: 186 – 188).


11. “The ability of a country or region to assure, on a long term basis, that its food system provides the total population access to a timely reliable and nutritionally adequate supply of food” (Van Zyl and Coetzee, 1990, cited in Abdalla, 2007: 186 – 188).

13. “When all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life” (USAID, 1992, cited in Abdalla, 2007: 186 – 188).

Appendix 3: List of studied villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ha Tieli</td>
<td>Mohale’s Hoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Pii</td>
<td>Mohale’s Hoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoaba Leabua</td>
<td>Mohale’s Hoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Majake</td>
<td>Mafeteng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Mofoka</td>
<td>Mafeteng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Ramahotetsa</td>
<td>Mafeteng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tšoeneng</td>
<td>Maseru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qhuqhu (Ha Tšiu)</td>
<td>Maseru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha Toloane</td>
<td>Maseru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 4: Community Dialogue Schedule

Steps

1. Introduce yourself and the purpose of the visit.

2. Create a conducive environment to break the ice, before the start of the exercise.

3. Ask the participants to draw a map of the village on the ground that shows the major infrastructures such as schools and clinics. This is to enable them to locate individual households. Where are the major infrastructures located in the village (use big stones to locate them).

4. Provide the participants with small cards to write the names of all households in the area and place them on the map in appropriate locations.

5. After placing the names in appropriate locations, number all the cards.

6. Ask a few people to copy the map to a flip chart and write the numbers of each card to replace the names.
7. Ask people to mark in red for example or using symbols (using makers) the households with chronically ill.

8. Ask them to mark in blue the households with single and double orphans.

9. Ask them to mark in green the households that benefited from food aid last month.

10. Ask the participants to provide characteristics of the wealth groups that exist in their villages.

11. On a flip chart or ground, draw a table that shows wealth groups and ask the participants to categorize the names of the households into appropriate wealth groups.

12. Make a record of the total number of households in the village and of households by categories.

13. Produce the lists of the asset poor, households with chronically ill, orphans and those already benefiting from external support (only among the poor/very poor).
Appendix 5: Community Mapping Exercise
Appendix 6: Southern Lowlands in September 2008