

Denmark Lesotho Network	<h1>Lumela.dk</h1> <h2>DLN – Newsletter</h2>	Nr. 10 May 2006
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News from DLN's Executive Committee

Join the weekend of reflections on the DLN-future

The executive committee of DLN has come to the acknowledgement that nobody knows, what the vision or the goals of our organisation are. Where is Denmark Lesotho Network going? Do we aim at growing bigger or do we want to remain small? Do we want to become a large NGO with employed and paid staff? Do we want to remain a small NGO based on volunteers? As far as we know it has never been discussed, and now there is a need to discuss and decide on the issue.

The present situation is that DLN has about 85 members, and the exec. committee is composed of 5 persons elected on the annual general assembly. Besides the 5 exec. comm. members there are a few other active members contributing to the running of the organisation. We have right now one project in Lesotho that we are supporting financially, and there are about 3 other applications from NGOs applying for support. To be partner with an NGO in Lesotho and have a project running requires a lot of work, mainly paperwork and communication between the partner and DLN. As it is now we don't have capacity to run more than one project at a time, which means we have had to put some of the other applicants on hold as long as we have the water tank project with RSDA going on. Is that satisfactorily?

We have come to a point where we need to know the future direction of DLN to be able to make some of the necessary decisions in the daily work of the organisation. What do the members of DLN want of our organisation? Should we take on another project and expect more support to the exec. comm. later? Should we finish the RSDA-project first and then take in another project? Do we have some more resources in the organisation that we don't know of?

The exec. comm. has decided to allocate a whole weekend to the vision-talk of DLN. There will be a consultant from Projektrådgivningen, Johannes Nordentoft, to facilitate the process. It would be very nice to have as many input and ideas from all of DLN as possible, not only the exec. comm.

All members are hereby invited to come and reflect on and discuss the future of DLN during the weekend of 30th June – 2nd July. The venue will be on the tiny island of Fur in Limfjorden. Please call one of the committee members for signing up and for further information: chairperson Helga Højsager 66141694, Anders Hedegaard 87949420, Karina Ruby 87430285.

Karina Ruby

Annual General Assembly 2006

This year the AGM will take place on Saturday 16th September. Put a mark in your agenda now, more information about it later.

Festudvalg søges! We would like to make a party after the AGM like we did the previous years. It is about some good food, some talk and sharing of Lesotho opinions, some dance and some music and some fun. The exec. comm. will organise the food, but we need somebody to volunteer to organise some kind of entertainment. You have free hands to do anything you like. Please get in touch with someone from the committee, if you have the slightest interest in helping us make a nice evening. See contact details above.

Subscription

Please don't forget to pay your subscription for 2006. It can be done by transferring 100,- kr. to DLN account: 8401 1061912.

Water Tank Project Progress

DLN has received the January-March report from RSDA.

RSDA and their farmer groups are doing very well. Not only have they build 110 out of 116 water tanks, they have also got plenty of rains to fill up the tanks.

In 2005 farmers was trained on water harvesting and sustainable agriculture. In 2006 extension visits have been made to the households to observe the rate of implementation on the trainings. 155 households have planted vegetables according to training specifications.

More than 3 consultation meetings were held with farmers' groups in Phamong and Mafeteng. This is a platform where farmer leaders have learned to engage and interact with each other to build trust and relationships. The meetings have helped to establish base for advocacy and up coming leadership training. Preparations for establishing drip irrigation demonstration plots were done. FAO trained 8 RSDA staff members on drip irrigation and RSDA have probably received the 4 drip irrigation sets by now.

Karen Steffensen, DLN Board

News from members

Energy for the Rural Poor in Lesotho - developing a new strategy with support from the EU

By Gordon Mackenzie¹, Chief Technical Advisor (DANCED project) at Department of Energy, Lesotho 1999-2002

Energy in Lesotho - 4 years down the road



The author in a donga with Maseru Hash House Harriers during a brief dry spell in the torrential rains of February 2006.

¹ now Energy Policy Coordinator at UNEP Risø Centre, Risø National Laboratory, DK 4000, Roskilde, Denmark

From March 1999 to June 2002, I worked at the Department of Energy (DOE) in Maseru on a Danish project to assist Lesotho make a new energy policy. The three and a half year project - originally started under the Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED) – resulted in the Energy Policy Framework and Action Plan, the first stages of the rehabilitation of the national power utility LEC, a mapping of the wind power resources at three sites in the country and, not least, capacity enhancement of the local staff at the DOE. Therefore, it was enormously gratifying to return recently to a well-functioning department, with a core staff remaining from “the old days”, others moved on to other related positions – for example with the newly formed Lesotho Electricity Authority and the Petroleum Fund – and new enthusiastic young Basotho graduates to take their place in the DOE offices in the “agric” building on Kingsway, across from the QEII hospital.

The Energy Policy Framework and Action Plan, although not formally approved by Cabinet or Parliament (for reasons not entirely obvious!), provide the backbone for the work of the DOE, and many of the recommendations have been incorporated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and are being implemented, as funds become available.

One of the major successes in the Lesotho energy sector in the last few years has been the commercialisation of LEC and the renewed effort to provide electricity to the population. The task of turning LEC around and “kick-starting” the rural electrification was beyond the scope of the DANCED project’s resources and the present healthy state of LEC is more the result of a multi-million dollar programme financed by the World Bank through the Lesotho Privatisation Unit. The resulting increase in efficiency and targeted activity has enabled the fortunes of the company to be turned around and the percentage of homes electrified increased from 2.5% in 2001 to about 10% now.

Still, this leaves roughly 90% of Basotho without access to electricity, and in fact for a majority, little prospect of connection in the foreseeable future. What then do these people do for their energy needs in a world where we, in the privileged North, regard electricity and its associated comforts (lighting, computers, TV, labour-saving machines, etc.) as a basic condition for civilised life and productive activities.

Energy as a necessary input to development

A most important fact about energy is its unique position as a necessary input to development. It is now generally recognised that the provision of energy in one form or another is essential for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals: for example for water pumping, lighting and refrigeration for health centres, lighting and computers for schools, poverty alleviation through income generating activities, and even for gender equality, by alleviating the work load of women and girls.

What do people in Lesotho use energy for?

People use energy for various purposes, lighting, transport, pumping water, running machines, etc. but by far the most important uses in Lesotho are cooking and heating. Many people when asked about energy think immediately of electricity, but electricity is only one of many forms of energy, or “energy carriers”.

Lesotho is basically self-sufficient in electricity from the Muela dam, and is also connected to South Africa, which produces among the cheapest electricity in the world. Still, in the year 2000, only about 2.5% of households in Lesotho had connection to electricity. Now the figure is up to about 10%, thanks to a determined effort from the Government of Lesotho (GOL) and the Lesotho Electricity Corporation with assistance from the World Bank. Nevertheless, electricity remains an energy form for the few. Even among households who are connected to the grid, relatively few use electricity for much more than lighting, radio, TV and refrigeration. Cooking with electricity, as in most African countries, is rare, with people preferring by taste or necessity to use LPGas, paraffin, or, more likely, biomass.

The table below confirms that electricity is one of the least used forms of energy in Lesotho. The units are PJ – Peta Joules – and by comparison energy consumption of Denmark in 2005 was 824 PJ. The data for Lesotho is the latest available for the country, from the year 2000, and although some changes have

occurred it still gives a reasonably correct picture. The changes in recent years are mainly that more LPGas is used and more people have access to electricity.

Table 1. Energy consumption in Lesotho 2000

Energy form	Energy consumption (PJ)	Energy consumption (%)
Biomass	23.23	71.1%
Oil	6.6	20.2%
Coal	1.71	5.2%
Electricity	1	3.1%
LPGas	0.13	0.4%
Total	32.67	100.0%

The predominant form of energy used in Lesotho is biomass, which includes wood and shrubs, crop residues and animal waste. Dung accounts for as much as a quarter of this biomass fuel, a fuel which most Basotho are familiar with in one form or another. Basotho use low-grade fuels like dung, shrubs and crop residues rather than firewood or charcoal, as in other parts of Africa, simply because often that’s all there is! More modern and cleaner forms of energy – LPGas, paraffin or electricity – are often out of reach, economically, geographically, or both. What’s more, the “harvesting” of shrubs and bushes, and the non-return of dung to the soil, while not a primary cause certainly don’t help the on-going land degradation and erosion, manifested so picturesquely but tragically in dongas.



Baking bread using cow dung as fuel, Sani Top.

The second most used energy form in Lesotho is oil – which means petrol, diesel and paraffin (kerosene) – used mainly for transport, but also for lighting, heating and cooking.



LP Gas on sale: Use of gas for cooking and heating has increased considerably in the past 10 years, but is affected by recent oil price rises.

What about solar energy?

Solar energy does not appear in the above table, and yet there are so many sunshine days in Lesotho. This is not to say that it is not an important potential energy source for Lesotho. Ultimately of course the biomass as well as the hydropower from 'Muela are provided by the sun, but normally we think of three types of solar energy: solar cells or panels (photovoltaics or PVs) for providing electricity, solar water heaters (or collectors) and solar cookers. Each of these has a role to play in Lesotho, but unfortunately not as much as one might imagine. PVs are still very expensive (typically about M5000 for a 50W system) and provide only low power – say 4 or 5 light bulbs, a radio and a television, and certainly not thermal needs like cooking or heating – a slightly larger system could power a sewing machine; solar water heaters may provide a cheaper alternative than electric geysers for the rich or for institutions like hotels and schools, but are not relevant for the poor population; solar cookers have a niche market for schools and other institutions where food is required in the middle of the day – not the usual household need which is early morning and evening.



A solar cooker at the Taung Trades Training Centre, near Mochale's Hoek, self constructed and used for preparing meals at neighbouring school.



What's wrong with this picture? Solar PV panels installed on roof of government houses in Semonkong. The house is also wired to the local grid but the occupants couldn't pay the electricity bill, so the Ministry of Agriculture installed solar energy panels, worth about M5000 per house, instead of current limiters for a tiny fraction of the cost. The panels were probably free, donated by some donor, but they could have been used for a household without grid connection – like on the other side of that hill perhaps? If only the Ministry of Agriculture had asked the DOE. An example of non-coordination in government leading to a waste of money and resources.

Electrification is working, but it can only go so far, and there's a long way to go

During the past five or six years the focus of the energy sector in Lesotho has been on electricity. This has meant getting LEC “back on its feet” as an operational entity and then pursuing the goals of electrifying the country. The terms of the World Bank assistance have meant that the country has been divided into two areas: one in which the population density is sufficient to justify “commercial” electrification. This is the so-called service territory of LEC, where it is commercially viable for the company to extend its distribution net and receive returns from customers. In the remainder of the country – the less densely populated mountainous areas and foothills where grid extension is expensive and the population density is insufficient to give an economic return on investment – it is Government's responsibility to subsidise and channel funds through a National Rural Electrification Fund.

So far so good. The institutions for the electrification drive are essentially in place and operating efficiently. Electrification is taking place at an annual rate of roughly 10,000 connections in the service territory and the less-dense areas combined. As mentioned, the share of electrified households is now about 10%. Optimistic projections lead to a level of 30-40% electrification in the year 2020. It seems that electrification can proceed quite efficiently when the appropriate institutions and legislation are in place, like commercially operating utilities, rural electrification funds and systems for channelling subsidies or donor funds, regulating authorities.

Energy for the rural poor with no access to electricity

In the meantime, the energy needs of the rest of the population are largely ignored, or left to “the market”. This means using whatever combustible material is available, travelling long distances and paying high costs for fuels like LPGas and paraffin, and doing without the developmental benefits that modern energy access can provide. The lack of affordable and clean modern energy, and the economic and environmental cost of using low-grade energy exacerbate the dire poverty in rural Lesotho.

My own professional interest since returning to the UNEP Risø Centre in Denmark has increasingly focussed on energy access for the rural and peri-urban poor, how this access can be increased and how it

can contribute to development, for example achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Although the Danish support to the energy sector in Lesotho terminated at the completion of the DANCED project, I have maintained contact with the DOE, and followed with interest the implementation of the Energy Policy Framework. Unfortunately, few donors active in Lesotho have regarded energy as a development priority, and the DOE has lacked resources to pursue the non-electricity part of its programme as much as it would have liked. This situation has recently changed with the increased focus on energy access for the poor on the global development agenda, and especially in the European Union's assistance programme administered by the European Commission.

European Union Energy Initiative and Partnership Dialogue!

In February this year I returned to Lesotho, on a one-week fact-finding mission to assist the DOE to identify and develop a possible project directed at energy for the rural poor. The target was to be the section of the population who would not get access to electricity, even 15-20 years from now, either because of geographical location or sheer poverty. The possibility for this mission, and the potential project, was provided by the Partnership Dialogue Facility (PDF) – part of the European Union Energy Initiative – one of the many initiatives launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. My mission was funded by the PDF with the objective of producing the Terms of Reference of a project energy access to the poor in Lesotho.

Energy has not been part of the European Union's development assistance for several years, a fact that reflects to a great extent the priorities of developing countries, as well as the general view that energy provision could be taken care of by market forces. There was gradual realisation through the 1990s however that the energy needs of the poor would not be addressed without significant public intervention. This change in attitudes was signalled particularly at the WSSD and embodied in the Millennium Development Goals, that access to modern energy is an essential input to development. This has led to a re-kindling of interest, both among donors and developing countries, for cooperation in the field of energy, especially targeted at the poor.

The PDF provides relatively modest funds (up to €200,000) for projects that can lead to improved energy access among the poor. Though insufficient for large-scale implementation, such funds could provide assistance to identify options, make strategies and remove barriers so that real progress could be made to improve the access of the poor to modern energy forms, and by attracting significant investment to where it is required.

The Lesotho Energy Access Strategy

The project-preparation funding from the PDF Secretariat (administered by GTZ) allowed me one week's work in Lesotho with DOE and some time to complete the project TOR. The intense week of project identification and discussion, based at DOE with a small working group of ex-colleagues, was highly productive, with high-level consultations at the Department of Development Planning, Forestry Department and the Electricity Authority. By the end of the week we had formulated a project, which could be funded by the EU's PDF and carried out by a team of consultants, to be hired through a tendering process, working closely with DOE and other relevant Ministries.

The aims of the project will be to assist the GOL to establish an implementable Energy Access Strategy to address the non-electricity energy access needs of the low-income part of the population in Lesotho, living predominantly in rural and peri-urban areas likely to remain without electricity for the foreseeable future. Bearing in mind that affordability is a major constraint, the project will also address the issue of energy for productive uses in the areas, to identify and promote ways in which improved energy access can contribute to income generation and rural development.

Conclusion – Wait and see!

My assignment was completed with the submission of the recommendation and draft TOR to the PDF Secretariat in Germany. The project is now awaiting formal approval from the DOE, after which the process of tendering for consultants will begin, and hopefully the Energy Access Strategy project will be

able to start within a few months. (In contrast to larger EU projects, the PDF is designed to respond rapidly to needs and to initiate projects with a minimum of “red-tape”.)

Finally, I have to say what a positive experience it has been to revisit my counterpart colleagues and to work with them again in following up the activity that I had been part of during the DANCED project. I thank all colleagues at the Lesotho Department of Energy, especially the Director, Ntate Thabang Phuroe and the Deputy Director, Ntate Leloko Mokhuts'uane for warm hospitality and an intensely stimulating week's work. I wish them all success for the future.

Khotso, pula, nala!

Dear member. You are very welcome to participate with an article, an opinion or just any comment on the work of DLN. Just send it on e-mail to someone in the information group:

Karina Ruby: karinaruby@bigfoot.com
Peter Rathmann: petula.rathmann@mail.dk
Michael Hansen: haslund@cool.dk

News from Lesotho

Bono from the rock band U2 in Lesotho, big news that brings focus on Lesotho, read more on following link:

[Bono launches 10-day African tour](#)

2006 Population census officially launched with counting of king

The 2006 Population Census was officially launched with the counting of King Letsie III and his family at the Royal Palace on Sunday.

King Letsie III encouraged the public to open their doors to enumerators, saying the census is an important milestone towards development as it will assist Government Ministries to plan based on the statistics.

'It is therefore important for the public to give the correct answers so that we have the right figures and statistics,' he remarked.

Dr. Majoro said the census will enable the country to know exactly the number of its people including those out side the country.

'It will give us the numbers in general and how they earn their living, their needs and qualifications,' he stressed.

Preliminary statistics will be announced after a year while the official statistics will be announced after two to three years.

LENA April 12 2006

Memorial service for 18 taxi accident victims to be held at Tsereokane

The Memorial Service of 18 people, who died in a road accident that occurred at Ha Mots'oene in the Tsereokane area on Friday last week, will be held at Tsereokane in Berea on Thursday, next week.

This was agreed at the meeting that was held at the District Administrator's office on Monday, where Teyateyaneng business community, particularly transport owners and the relatives of the deceased were present.

Mr. Lebona Lephema said him and other transport operators have decided to assist the bereaved families with funeral arrangements, as the accident was one of the most horrible road accidents that occurred in the Main North One road.

Mr. Lephema said business owners in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport will open a bank account to allow people of good will to make their contributions towards assisting the families.

Superintendent Mojalefa Mpele of the Berea police said two of 18 people who deceased have not yet been identified, adding that their ages range between 18 and 40 years.

The accident occurred at Ha Motsoene in Tsereokane last Friday, where a taxi and a bus collided. 18 people including taxi driver and conductor died instantly.

LENA April 12 2006

NGO calls for audit of dam construction tenders

Following allegations of corruption, a local NGO has appealed for an audit of the tenders allocated in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), the world's largest water transfer operation.

"Bribery for tenders goes along with compromising of workmanship standards. We can only pray that, despite this, standards for constructing these kind of dams was not compromised, as it would be a double punishment to the people living around the Katse and Mohale dams," said Mabusetsa Lenka of the Transformation Resource Centre (TRC), an NGO fighting for the rights of communities displaced by the multi-dam project.

Lenka urged the government to audit the LHWP tenders before construction of Phase 2 began.

Mohale and Katse dams, the first phase of the LHWP, were built on the Senqunyane river in the Thabaputsoa mountain range in southern Lesotho at a cost of US \$4 billion, to supply water to neighbouring South Africa's rapidly expanding industrial hub in Gauteng province.

The appeal came a few weeks after reports of a second bribery case in connection with construction of the two dams. Lesotho's former representative to the Highlands Water Commission (LHWC), Reatile Mochebelele, and his deputy, Letlafuoa Molapo, have been accused of accepting a bribe to the value of about \$163,965 from Germany's largest engineering consultancy, Lahmeyer International.

Several companies involved in the project have been investigated after allegations of corruption and bribery. Lahmeyer, the second firm to be convicted, was fined more than a \$1 million in 2003 for paying a bribe to an official. Acres International, a Canadian construction firm, was convicted of bribery in 2002.

Acres maintained it was not aware that money paid to its local representative, the now-deceased Zalisiwonga Bam, was being passed on to the former head of LHWP, Masupha Sole, who is serving a 15-year prison term.

A recent crack in the wall of the Mohale dam has sparked safety concerns, bringing corruption allegations back into the spotlight, said the TRC. "It is very scary when more people are being charged of bribery in different cases and, at the same time, the dam walls are cracking. It makes one wonder if the dams are safe at all," Lenka commented.

Borotho Matsoso, head of the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Offences, told a recent press conference, "It is obvious that Masupha Sole was not the only one." Earlier in the year he remarked, "We suspected there were others whom we had not yet touched. As we went along with this case we found payments that have been made, and at that stage we were not sure who had got the money."

The TRC pointed out that while allegations of corruption have plagued the project, compensation had yet to be paid to some residents displaced by construction of the dams.

More than 30,000 people, mostly subsistence farmers, affected by the building work had to opt for either an annual compensation of between \$49 and \$290 for 50 years or a lump sum payment of up to \$13,000, explained Lenka. "Those farmers who wanted the lump sum compensation had to submit business plans. Some of them did - as far back as four years ago - and nothing has happened."

The project has four phases and is expected to be completed in 2015, provided funds are made available in time.

IRIN April 10 2006

Electricity goes to the rural communities

The National Coordinator for Rural Development Mr. T'sehlo Thulo has shown that the electrification project that it is expected to be launched this year will not cover all the areas of Dilli-Dilli and Sinxondo.

Mr. Thulo said the project will start at peri-urban areas and added that it will take phases to complete.

He was speaking at a public gathering at Mpeka in the Dilli-Dilli on Wednesday, where he urged chiefs and community councils to work towards the success of the project.

Mr. Thulo also urged them to ensure that orphans benefit in the same manner as others by mobilizing funds for installation of electricity in their homes.

He stated that chiefs and community councils are bound by the law to develop and protect the lives of vulnerable people.

He indicated that installation of electricity is expected to improve the lives of the community since electricity accelerates development.

Over M21 500.00 has been collected by the community for electrical installation in the two areas.

LENA April 7 2006

Conductors Feel Wrath of Police

In a move that caught many by surprise, police began enforcing Section 72 (G) of the Road Traffic Act No 8 of 1981, which forbids passengers in a vehicle having any part of their bodies protruding from the moving vehicle.

At least 21 taxi conductors serving the Maputsoe, Botha-Bothe and Peka routes felt the wrath of the police when they were arrested for "touting customers with parts of their bodies showing outside a moving vehicle."

Extending a head or arms through the windows or doors of the vehicles is an offence commonly committed by taxi conductors when touting, according to police spokesperson Superintendent Ts'eliso Ts'ita.

Ten drivers who failed to pay spot fines issued in December to January and two drivers whose licences had expired were also arrested in the swoop, Superintendent Ts'ita said.

LENA 17 February 2006

Towns Out of Water Because of Rain

The four urban centres of Teyateyaneng, Mapoteng, Maputsoe and Botha Bothe are currently suffering water supply problems because their sources are nearby rivers, which are now flooded. Water and Sewage Authority (WASA) public relations officer Mr. Khotso Letsatsi has announced that all four centres have had their water purification plants and associated machinery either washed away or immersed in the overflowing waters.

Botha Bothe gravity mains in the Moroeroe river have been washed away by the rains and in turn affected the town's water treatment plant. Work has however, already started to normalise the situation.

At Maputsoe, well points in the Mohokare River are covered by the overflowing water making it difficult for WASA to access them.

The main pumps at the water treatment house in Teyateyaneng, also situated near the Phuthiatsana are

covered by water and at Mapoteng the mains have been washed away. WASA was working around the clock to correct this situation, Mr. Letsatsi said.

LENA 14 February 2006

Heaviest rainfall in two decades

Lesotho's heaviest rainfall in nearly two decades has destroyed more than a third of the crops in the ground ahead of the April harvest, according to the agricultural NGO, Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM).

The organisation's estimate of 35 percent crop loss, was based on weekly updates provided by 8,000 small-scale farmers who are members of the NGO.

"Most summer crops including maize, sorghum and bean, planted in mid-December last year, were destroyed by the rain as the top soil was washed away," said Moshe Tšehlo, PELUM's coordinator. The Ministry of Agriculture and the government's Disaster Management Authority (DMA) are still assessing the damage.

Heavy rain has fallen since January in the mountain kingdom, following long spells of drought, which has left 20 people dead, according to police reports.

Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) said the recorded rain so far in 2006 was twice the amount received over the same period in 1988 - when the country experienced its last heavy storms. The rains are expected to continue into March.

Years of drought has hardened the soil in Lesotho's southern districts to such an extent that the rains have cracked the ground, resulting in the formation of gullies in farmers' fields, and washing away top soil, said PELUM.

The LMS has warned the bad weather could also impact on the winter harvest due in September/October. "The heavy rains will delay ploughing for the winter crops because of the wetlands that have been created," said meteorologist Mabafokeng Mahahabisa.

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP), which is monitoring the situation, said frost in April could prove a further threat to the winter crop. According to WFP, 200,000 to 250,000 people out of a population of 2.2 million are chronically food insecure in Lesotho.

According to WFP, food production in Lesotho has been on the decline for almost three decades because of a combination of factors including erratic weather, decreased soil fertility, extreme poverty and HIV/AIDS. By 2004, cereal production was estimated to cover only 30 percent of the country's requirements.

Farmers are not the only ones to have been hit hard by the recent heavy rains. "The damage caused by the rains has reversed gains of infrastructure made over years. Access roads and bridges have been destroyed, making travelling difficult for people, especially in the remote parts of Lesotho," said a report from the DMA.

Rolling boulders from the mountains in the southern districts of Maseru, Leribe, Butha Buthe and Quthing have smashed houses and blocked roads, said the DMA.

IRIN 28 FEBRUARY 2006

Crack in dam wall sparks safety concerns

A crack in the wall of Mohale dam in Lesotho, one of the world's highest rockfill dams, has sparked concern among neighbouring communities, according to a local NGO.

Heavy rain in the mountain kingdom led to a sudden filling of the Mohale dam, part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), creating a crack in one of the panels of the 145 m high wall.

"An expert in dam construction from Europe is arriving in Lesotho next Monday to assess the damage ... at the moment it is hard to make any assessments ... because the dam is still filled to capacity. We are, however, hoping that the water level will go down in time to see how far the crack has gone," said Liphapang Potloane, chief executive of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA).

Transformation Resource Centre, an NGO fighting for the rights of communities displaced by the multi-

dam LHWP, has expressed concern that should the crack be severe, the resulting seepage could be disastrous.

"We have been told by the LHDA that the crack is nothing to be worried about, but until a final assessment has been done, we have to keep our fingers crossed," said Mabusetsa Lenka, a spokesman for the NGO.

The LHDA said they were monitoring the crack round the clock, and a statement on their website noted "the amount of seepage experienced at Mohale Dam is for now within the expected range and significantly less than on other dams of this type elsewhere in the world".

Water from Mohale Dam is being transferred into the Katse reservoir, which is 78 percent full.

Constructed on the Senqunyane river in the Thabaputsoa mountain range in southern Lesotho, Mohale is one of two dams that comprise the first US \$4 billion phase of the LHWP, built to supply water to neighbouring South Africa's rapidly expanding Gauteng province.

Water is Lesotho's largest single source of foreign exchange. The country, one of the poorest in the world, earns almost US \$30 million in annual royalties from South Africa - roughly 75 percent of its budget.

According to the International Rivers Network, an NGO campaigning against dam construction, the completion of all five dams conceived under the LHWP would displace 30,000 rural farmers and deprive them of their livelihood.

However, no agreement has been reached between South Africa and Lesotho to go ahead with the remaining phases of the project.

IRIN 01 March 2006

Lack of healthcare workers a drain on new HIV/AIDS plan

As the Lesotho government prepares to launch a 'Know your HIV status' campaign, a shortage of qualified healthcare workers threatens to derail plans to increase access to AIDS treatment in the mountain kingdom.

According a nurse [who wanted to remain anonymous] at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the country's main referral hospital, 70 nurses tend to around 3,400 patients – an average of close to 50 patients per nurse.

"There is a lot of work and given a chance I would leave the country for greener pastures," she said.

Lesotho's skills base has been bled by a 'brain drain' and health care services have been particularly hard hit, with skilled medical staff seeking higher pay abroad. HIV/AIDS has also taken its toll of health professionals.

Lesotho's 'Know Your Status' campaign, a world first, will offer confidential and voluntary HIV testing and counselling with the aim of reaching all households by the end of 2007.

With an adult prevalence rate of 23.2 percent in a population of 1.8 million, it is estimated that 265,000 people in Lesotho are living with HIV/AIDS, and 49,400 are already in need of life-prolonging antiretroviral (ARV) treatment.

But Lesotho is short of 600 nurses, and the success of the new campaign will depend on filling the medical staff void.

"Already the country is about to hire 200 nurses from Kenya to fill some of these positions," Ministry of Health's Human Resources Manager Koenene Leanya said on a national radio station.

Leanya said 16 doctors would be employed from India and the "Clinton Foundation has also made promises to help with extra doctors and nurses".

"We are also revising remuneration to attract personnel into the health sector," he said. Currently a basic monthly salary for a nurse with a general nursing education is R2,900 [US \$470] while for midwives the salary is R3,200 [US \$520].

Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) April 27 2006

Dr Phooko receives equipment amounting to 917,649.00

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) has received health equipment worth M917,649.00 donated by the World Health Organisation at an occasion held at the United Nations building on Tuesday.

Handing over the equipment, the WHO representative to Lesotho Dr Angela Bensons said the equipment is meant to meet the needs of health sectors in the districts of Botha Bothe, Mokhotlong and Thaba Tseka. She said it will also be helpful in the promotion of the Adolescent Health in the country especially in the fight against HIV/AIDS which she said Lesotho has moved a step forward in sensitizing the nation about this disease.

She indicated that as part of the donation, three 4X4 drive vehicles are already in different parts of the country assisting with immunization of children, and the last vehicle is being handed over today.

Dr Bensons added that WHO intends to extend assistance to all districts, and in the Know Your Status campaign.

Dr Motloheloa Phooko expressed his appreciation to the WHO for their daily involvement in the activities of the Ministry.

He said the office equipment that is being donated today is valuable as some of the Health Sectors lack tables, cupboards and chairs.

He indicated the challenge is now to protect the equipment from theft, keeping it in good condition so that future generations could use it.

Lesotho News Agency (LENA) April 27 2006

‘Know your status’ drive needs \$12.5m and people’s cooperation

The success of Lesotho's plan to increase access to HIV/AIDS treatment will depend on a national commitment to being tested for the virus and a R75 million (US \$12.5 million) financial boost.

Motloheloa Phooko, Minister of Health and Social Welfare, said at a press conference on Wednesday that "the money needed will be used in the two years of the campaign to mobilise people to know their status - but getting the money alone will not make the campaign a success unless Basotho [Lesotho people] own up to the programme and get tested".

Lesotho's 'Know Your Status' campaign, the first of its kind worldwide, will offer confidential and voluntary HIV testing and counselling with the aim of reaching all households by the end of 2007.

The funds will be used to employ counselling and testing personnel, print educational material and purchase vehicles for the campaign.

With an adult prevalence rate of 23.2 percent in a population of 1.8 million, it is estimated that 265,000 people in Lesotho are living with HIV/AIDS, and 49,400 are already in need of life-prolonging antiretroviral (ARV) treatment.

The number could be higher, as national statistics indicate that only 72,000 people have been tested to date, with less than 10,000 receiving ARVs.

Despite massive HIV/AIDS campaigns, very little behavioural change had been observed, Phooko said. The programme, launched by the King on World AIDS day in 2005, will use the same model employed by immunisation programmes: extensive community mobilisation and education, followed by door-to-door visits.

Communities will decide how and when their members will be offered HIV/AIDS testing and counselling, and independent people's committees will be established at local, district and national level to ensure that testing is always voluntary, confidentiality is maintained and post-testing services, including treatment, are provided.

Lesotho has been testing and treating people free of charge at all hospitals, and plans are underway to make ARV treatment available at all community clinics.

Jim Yong Kim, Director of the World Health Organisation, praised the Know Your Status campaign last year, saying, "Lesotho's initiative is an excellent example of this global trend towards expanding and integrating prevention and treatment efforts. Many nations like Lesotho are now empowered to develop exciting, bold programmes that directly confront the epidemic."

Guidelines to help care givers

A rapidly increasing population of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Lesotho has forced the government and NGOs to draw up guidelines for their care.

The 'Residential Care for Vulnerable Children and Youth Guidelines and Standards' was "critical" to ensuring the safety of OVC at the hands of their caregivers, said Bertrand Duemollins, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) resident representative in Lesotho.

"The roadmap is now set; we now envisage a strong coordination and increased support to ensure that all places of safety will be able to implement these new standards."

Lesotho is one of six countries in Southern Africa suffering a humanitarian crisis driven by drought, poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. According to recent statistics, the country has about 180,000 OVC, of which 100,000 are AIDS orphans. With an HIV prevalence rate of 23.2 percent, the number of OVC is set to rocket.

"There are many registered organisations around that offer shelter, care and support to the OVC. Unfortunately, in some of these centres, children are abused," said Limakatso Chisepo, director of the department of social welfare.

The guidelines seek to protect the rights of all OVC, and those orphaned by HIV/AIDS from stigma; create a culture of assuming responsibility for the care of OVC by families and communities; and address the unregulated removal of children from the streets or abusive homes, which often occurred in the absence of social workers.

"Given the vulnerability of children growing up without parental care, these children, especially girls, drop out of school," the guidelines observed. "Because of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS, the children are discriminated against and get excluded from accessing basic services such as education, in addition to suffering abuse and exploitation. Some are being denied their rightful inheritance."

According to Lesotho's First Lady, Mathato Mosisili, who has been advocating for the care of OVC, "In the Sesotho context, an orphan is everybody's responsibility; a needy person is the chief's child," but also noted that, unfortunately, the tradition of looking after the destitute no longer existed.

UNICEF's Social Policy Officer, Sefora Makepa-Tsiu, said once the guidelines had been adopted by the cabinet, the UN agency would help to facilitate their rollout and build capacity in the number of caregivers and law enforcement personnel.

Lowland districts face water shortages

The Lesotho Highlands scheme supplies South Africa with millions of cubic metres of water per year, while people living in the lowlands of the tiny mountain kingdom struggle to find water for domestic consumption.

Young women and children queuing with containers, waiting to draw water from boreholes or public taps, are a common sight in many parts of the country.

"Life is difficult because we always have to travel for long distances to get water, and when we finally find a place that has water, there are many people waiting to get a turn," said Makemohele Koetle, from Lithabaneng district, southeast of the capital, Maseru.

Maseru and other lowland districts of Lesotho suffer serious water shortages. In a bid to address this, the Lesotho Lowlands Water Supply Scheme (LLWSS) plans to build the Metolong dam along the Phuthitsana river on the outskirts of the city.

An LLWSS spokesman said an environmental impact assessment needed to be completed before international organisations could be approached for funding.

"We have started with the assessments and hope that the final report will be out by October and, hopefully, by then we will find a sponsor. Dams like Metolong cannot be constructed on a loan because, in order to refund the money, we will have to [raise] the cost of water from its current price [thus making it less affordable]," the spokesman noted.

After completion of the first feasibility study in 2003, the cost of the dam was estimated at around R950 million (US \$154 million), "but with inflation and the rand gaining on the dollar, we are expecting to need about R1.2 billion [\$192 million] to put the project in place".

Once built, the Metolong dam could provide water to six lowland districts - Butha Buthe, Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing - for domestic, commercial and industrial purposes.

"I cannot wait for the construction of the dam because every morning I have to wake up at 4am and walk to the hilltop to collect water. Even when I get there I still have to wait in long queues for my turn to come before returning home. The time I use to get water, I could use it to do other things," said Mathabiso Pelea of Ha Leqele, five kilometres outside Maseru.

With her baby on her back, the young woman has to carry a 20-litre bucket of water on her head every morning and evening. "I was born here and I grew up doing this, and now that I am sick the situation is even worse," she said. Mathabiso, a married mother of four, suffers from tuberculosis.

Water is Lesotho's largest single source of foreign exchange. The country, one of the poorest in the world, earns almost \$30 million in annual royalties from South Africa - roughly 75 percent of its budget. The kingdom has an unemployment rate of 45 percent, with 49 percent of people living below the poverty line.

IRIN March 21 2006

Job-hungry Basotho risk exploitation in South Africa

Desperate Basotho are risking exploitation in neighbouring South Africa as they search for employment outside the borders of Lesotho, one of the least developed countries in the world.

On a warm autumn morning in Maseru, Lesotho's capital city, a crowd of young men congregate at a traffic circle, waiting to be picked up by anybody who might come looking for a labourer.

"Life has been difficult since I was retrenched from the South African mines and I came back to Maseru looking for a job," said 36-year-old Motlalentoa Monyamane. Originally from the rural town of Butha Buthe in the southern part of the country, he has been a regular at the traffic circle since 2003.

"I went back to South Africa to work in the factories in [the port city of] Durban late last year, but the working conditions were just too horrible. The starting salary was below that of the factories here in Lesotho," he explained.

"Because we do not have proper documentation, we cannot take the matter [to the authorities] anywhere. When we report to the police they say we are illegal immigrants who need to be deported back to Lesotho."

Monyamane's tall frail frame looks as if it has seen better days. Dressed in a blue overall, he is one of thousands of Basotho men who go into the city each day to look for work. Some wait outside factories hoping to be called in; many others cross into South Africa, hoping to find a job that will lift them out of poverty.

Lehlohonolo Matsoai, 28, said he endured three weeks of hardship when he was hired as a labourer on a state housing project in South Africa's northern Limpopo province in February.

"We spent three weeks working like slaves. We slept outside and were forced to eat baboon meat because there was no food. Snakes crawled into our blankets at night and bit us. A group of four people were forced to construct and complete a four-roomed house a day, and for each house we would share [payment of] US \$200, yet we were promised \$583 each for every completed house," he alleged.

Eventually, five of the workers 'escaped' and fled back to Lesotho. "Forty-one others are still stuck in Limpopo, as they do not have money to come back home. They need help because they are not even taken to a doctor after being bitten by snakes or crawlies," Matsoai said.

The Basotho did not have work permits and had been told to disguise themselves as South Africans from the rural district of Qwaqwa near Lesotho, Matsoai explained.

Macaefa Billy, leader of Lesotho's Factory Workers Union (FAWU), said unemployment, poverty and despair made young Basotho vulnerable to exploitation.

About half the Basotho live below the poverty line, and according to official statistics 31 percent of people of working age are unemployed. But Billy says the jobless rate is much higher - closer to 65 percent - and this was the primary reason young men crossed the borders of the tiny landlocked country in search of jobs in South Africa.

"Last year alone, more than 15,000 Basotho men and women lost jobs in the textile industry, which was the main employer [in Lesotho]. That is nothing compared to the 23,000 Basotho men retrenched from South African mines between 2002 and 2003. So if you look at all these figures, adding school leavers to them, where are they being absorbed [in the job market]?" asked Billy.

IRIN 9 March 2006

Good Advice to all Readers of Lumela.dk

If you would like to read more in-depth going news stories from Lesotho, we highly recommend the website of former MS-partner Transformation Resource Center:

www.trc.org.ls

where you will find a summary of recent events provided by Professor David Ambrose from the National University of Lesotho.

This summary is excellent stuff for hard core connoisseurs.

Lumela

What is Denmark Lesotho Network?

The NGO Denmark Lesotho Network (DLN) was founded in 2002 by former Danish development workers in Lesotho and other good friends of the tiny mountain kingdom in Southern Africa. DLN aims at supporting NGO's in Lesotho in their work to develop civil society. DLN uses its network of people and organisations in Lesotho to pinpoint beneficiaries of DLN's support – and to keep an eye on that funding is used according to agreements made. DLN wishes to enhance knowledge of the living conditions in Lesotho and to seek funding from foundations, business enterprises and organisations for actual projects in Lesotho.

Membership of DLN

Anyone, who can support the aims of DLN, can achieve a membership. Members contribute to support initiatives in Lesotho that develop and better living conditions in the country. Members will receive an electronic newsletter four times a year and be invited to DLN's annual general assembly. The cost of a membership is 100 Danish kroner yearly.

For membership contact cashier Karen Steffensen, tel.: +45 97578252, e-mail: karen.steffensen@mail.dk

DLN's address is: Denmark Lesotho Network, C/O Helga Højsager, Asylgade 16, DK-5000 Odense C, Denmark

Homepage: www.lumela.dk

KHOTSO – PULA – NALA