

"The Child Grant is a blessing for me."

Mavis

TESTIMONIES

AN EMERGENCY CASH TOP-UP HELPS VULNERABLE PEOPLE TO ABSORB SHOCKS

"When my daughter passed away I had to take care of her two children. I am too sick and too old to be employed. El Niño has worsened my situation. The Child Grant is a blessing for me. With the quarterly emergency cash grant, I receive, I am able buy food and school clothes for the children"

Mavis, 65, Child Grant Programme (CGP).

Mavis's family is among those who received emergency cash top-ups under the CGP using the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA), which allowed many families to keep their children in school and provide food for them.

TARGETING POOR HOUSEHOLDS FOR BETTER RESPONSE

"People pay me differently, sometimes it is with food such as beans or money which I use to buy soap, cooking oil, Vaseline and sugar and tea. There is never enough food"

Maleboko Motlohi, 65, Ha Ramapepe, Leribe District, NISSA targeted household.

Maleboko, the sole breadwinner in a household of 5 who owns a small, low-producing plot of land and does "piece jobs" for her neighbours, was not registered on any of Lesotho's social safety net programs. Thanks to NISSA, her household is now captured and prioritized.





BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Lesotho, despite being a middle-income country, has deep poverty and chronic malnutrition problems. Almost 1 out of every 2 persons in Lesotho lives below national poverty line, with more than 1 in 3 persons below the national food poverty line (extreme poverty) of M138 per adult a month. With a Gini coefficient of 0.53, Lesotho is the 10th most unequal country in the world.

Children are often the most severely affected victims of poverty and inequality. About 46% of Basotho children live in income poverty, while 52% experience deprivation of at least 1 of the 7 basic social services, with disparities across gender, wealth status and geographic regions. Poverty is compounded by very high HIV prevalence (25% among adults), unemployment (more than 33% among youth), and food insecurity caused by the effects of climate change, including droughts and floods. In late 2015, the Prime Minister declared a state of emergency due to the El Niño-induced drought that affected 679,437 households with 476,842 requiring emergency assistance.

PROMISING PRACTICES

The UN (UNICEF, WFP, FAO), EU and the World Bank, under the government's leadership, launched an integrated short- and long-term response to the crisis. The short term-response followed a two-prong 'Cash+' approach. UNICEF, complemented by the World Bank, supported the Ministry of Social Development to provide emergency cash top-ups under the CGP to approximately 27,000 affected families with about 80,000 children, using NISSA. Furthermore, humanitarian cash and food transfers were provided to 181,000 acutely vulnerable people in areas not covered by NISSA. Both approaches were complemented with a 'Cash+' intervention that included home gardening kits and training by FAO. Emergency support reached a total of 466,563 people.

The World Food Programme supported the government in determining the transfer value and period for the humanitarian assistance by comparing household capacity to meet their minimum food and non-food thresholds. The transfer value was based on the missing entitlements to the threshold resulting in \$35 per household (5kg cereals, 0.25l oil and 0.65 kg pulses/per person per month) which covered the 29% deficit identified in the vulnerability assessment. The presence of a need-based threshold and determining deficit helped to determine the level of transfer/top-up required for households on social protection.

To address long-term development and humanitarian needs, the government and other partners are working to strengthen the social protection system by consolidating policies and strategies; integrating programs to address age-specific vulnerabilities; and strengthening institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms. NISSA, a nationwide single, integrated, web-based database to store socio-economic information on all households, aims to address not only the chronic vulnerabilities in the country, but also to contribute to the development of an integrated shock-responsive social protection system for Lesotho. NISSA will enable the government to identify vulnerable populations and target potential social protection beneficiaries with greater precision, improved accountability and better coordination. Currently covering about 49% of households, the system will progressively cover 100% of rural households (about 365,000) by the end of 2018 and will be fully decentralized by 2019.



KEY LESSONS:

- Building a shock-responsive system is pivotal to addressing emergencies efficiently and effectively. Where NISSA is available, Lesotho reached the most vulnerable people, the poorest of the poor, relatively quickly because it did not require a complex targeting exercise during the emergency and it allowed piggy backing on existing social protection systems – thus strengthening the linkages between emergency and development programming;
- Humanitarian crises can catalyze action to strengthen the long-term development of social protection: the successful use of NISSA proves the need to reach its nationwide coverage, and strengthen the overall social protection system;
- Robust coordination among humanitarian stakeholders is fundamental to avoiding duplication and double dipping;
- Single vulnerability and response planning models to avoid duplication or discord in transfer value and modalities, especially a focus on need based assessment, is critical;
- Partnerships are essential for addressing the multiple needs of affected populations and leveraging the comparative advantages of partners. An example of this is the 'Cash+' package provided to CGP households.

MAIN CHALLENGE(S) AHEAD AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- A single updated and accessible national registry covering the whole country is critical to supporting emergency responses through social protection systems. Lesotho is focused on attaining full NISSA coverage and updating old household data.
- It is essential to invest in decentralizing NISSA to facilitate quick updating of household information with minimal cost while also developing protocol to govern NISSA data accessibility by various stakeholders. Doing so requires investment in electricity wiring and internet connectivity for sub-national offices and including training officials on the use of the system. NISSA can also be improved by linking it with various national platforms like the national Civil Registry or Population database and the Education Management Information System (EMIS).
- It is important to support the government in linking cash transfer beneficiaries with livelihoods interventions. Partners are currently supporting the Ministry of Social Development to put in place a community development model to support vulnerable families to move out of poverty.
- The need for evaluation, review and lesson learning on approaches linking humanitarian, social protection and climate adaptation.

USEFUL RESOURCES

[The Impacts of the Child Support Program in Lesotho](#)