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CASE STUDY

THE LESOTHO FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAMME OF
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

by

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Food for Work (FFW) activities in Lesotho provide a useful case study as the country has nearly two decades of experience with FFW. The activities are supported with assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP), and from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which utilizes food commodities provided mainly from Public Law 480 supplies of the United States Government. The proportion of the rural workforce involved in FFW in Lesotho is large by African standards, and the programme is also large in relation to the population, which should assist in measuring impacts. FFW in Lesotho has been studied previously and considerable information is available on the programme.

Most FFW activities are organized by government departments, with CRS or WFP providing food commodities which are used to pay the workers. The commodities provided by both organizations are used on similar types of activities, particularly supporting workers constructing rural roads. For projects in the area of agriculture/conservation, WFP mainly provided resources used in large donor supported projects where FFW was a minor portion of the total inputs. CRS supports smaller scale activities organized by the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture or of the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development. In 1976, CRS also began supplying FFW resources to indigenous groups, which are used mainly on small local projects.

This paper is concerned primarily with the experience of the CRS programme. As there is an overlap between CRS and WFP activities, certain actions of WFP which affected the CRS programme are discussed also. In addition, analysis of the impact of FFW is generally in terms of the total impact of the activities of both agencies.

2.0 THE CONTEXT OF FFW IN LESOTHO

Lesotho is a nation in a uniquely difficult geographic position. It is a small country with limited natural resources, entirely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Despite the political disagreements between the two nations, Lesotho is dependent on the RSA for essential portions of its national livelihood. Upwards to forty percent of Lesotho's adult male labour force is employed in the RSA, primarily in the mines; miners' remittances are essential in financing the heavy deficit in Lesotho's balance of trade; and the revenues resulting from Lesotho's ties to the South African Customs Union and the Rand Monetary Area Commission (which are essentially under the control of the RSA) provide a major portion of the funds available for the government budget. Overall, Lesotho's dependence on external activities and resources (including those from aid provided by donors) results in a Gross National Product (GNP) which is nearly

twice the size of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Another feature of Lesotho's geography which conditions the agricultural and economic potential of the country is altitude. Lesotho's entire land area is at 1500 metres and higher above sea level, and the Maluti Mountains make up most of the country. Only 13 percent of land in the country is arable and only a small portion of this is considered to be prime agricultural land. Most of the cultivable land is found in the narrow strip of "lowlands" along the western side of the country, and in the lower levels of river valleys in the mountains. The problems of agriculture are further increased by an oscillating rainfall pattern of essentially ten years below average rainfall which mainly affects the growing season of agricultural crops, alternating with ten years of above average rainfall (the current period of below average rainfall will cover the 1980's); limited quantities of readily irrigatable land; the risk of hail damage to crops; and the fragile and highly erodible nature of much of the soils in the country.

Lesotho does not have a large population; its 1984 de jure population is estimated at 1.4 million persons, and its de facto population is 1.2 million when migrants are subtracted from the total. However, due to the very limited size of its cultivable land, Lesotho has as high a rate of population per unit of arable land as does the heavily populated countries of Asia. Lesotho's population is primarily concentrated in the lowlands; population densities fall sharply in the foothills and are lowest in the mountains. The population is also primarily rural, only 12 percent live in the 14 designated urban areas in the country.

Lesotho is facing a severe challenge in generating jobs for its growing labour force, particularly in view of the stagnation and anticipated decline in mine employment. At present, the modern sector employs approximately 40,000 persons and most of these jobs are in urban areas. FFW is the principal source of paid employment in rural areas, as distinct from self or household employment in agriculture or rural services. As the modern sector in Lesotho is so small, most new employment must be found in agriculture. It is estimated that the agriculture sector will have to generate 20,000 new jobs per annum over the next two decades.²

The large number of male migrants places heavy responsibilities on women for all aspects of Lesotho's economic and social life and especially agriculture. Thirty percent of rural households are headed by women (most of these are widows) while another 30-40 percent of households are managed by women with absentee husbands.³ Women make up the bulk of the agricultural labour force, and account for 80% or more of the workers on FFW projects. Male absenteeism creates constraints on agriculture as male household heads retain authority over important production decisions, and the performance of certain tasks in agriculture are sex-related, especially ploughing and planting in which women almost never participate.

Considerable data is available on trends in production, commercial imports and food aid imports with respect to basic

food grains (see Table 1 and 2. in the Annex). Both food aid and commercial imports increased significantly in recent years, while local production declined due to a number of factors but especially the drought conditions experienced by the country. Food aid provides an important fraction of the overall food supply in the country as it amounts to approximately ten percent of total food availabilities in weight terms. The quantity of food aid supplied for FFW activities is only a minor portion of the food assistance provided as Lesotho receives commodities to provide school lunches to the primary school children and for maternal/ child health activities, as well as programme food aid and periodic emergency assistance.

The task of achieving income and food self-sufficiency for Lesotho's growing population (the growth rate is estimated at 2.3% per year) from Lesotho's restricted land base is becoming ever more difficult. Current policy of the Lesotho Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) places emphasis on increasing the output of high value cash crops e.g. fruits and vegetables, while still maintaining a focus on attaining the highest level of self reliance in the production of basic food grains possible given the limited agricultural resource base. This policy is intended both to support Lesotho's self-sufficiency and to expand the employment opportunities arising from the agriculture sector. In addition, it will assist in enhancing the nutritional value of diets in Lesotho which are restricted currently in such foods as milk, fruit and vegetables and heavily overbalanced to cereals consumption. This pattern results from the low incomes in the country and is the source of nutrition deficiency diseases found in the population.⁴

Increased production and consumption of more nutritious foods and a decline in cereals consumption would assist in correcting these deficiencies as well as creating the means of enhancing Lesotho's economic independence. Local production could supply a greater percentage of the country's food needs as well as earning a higher income from the export of any surpluses. However, such a shift will require profound changes in the production system and will meet with cultural resistance given the strong preference for maize production. A significant portion of the CRS FFW programme will be redirected to support the MOA policy by providing training and inputs as well as needed infrastructure (see section 3.4 below).

3.0 SUMMARY HISTORY OF FOOD FOR WORK ACTIVITIES IN LESOTHO

3.1 Overview

Lesotho became an independent country in 1966, and food aid activities began just before or at independence. FFW projects began in 1967 with the support of CRS and the World Food Programme (WFP). In the early years, the CRS programme supplied food for 9,258 workers while the WFP provided for 2,400 workers. Both agencies have continued to support FFW to the present, with some modest increases; food is currently supplied to approximately 17,000 workers (11,400 by CRS and 5,600 by WFP) plus four dependents each. CRS provides a wage per working period of 22.68 kilos of wheat flour, 22.68 kilos of cornmeal and two

liters of soybean oil. The present local market value of this volume of commodities is Maloti (M) 50 (approximately US \$25 at the current exchange rate of M2.0 = \$1). The WFP provides 45.36 kilos of cornmeal, 3.15 kilos of pulses, 2.75 liters of vegetable oil and 2.56 kilos canned fish per working period. The local market value of this combination of commodities is also approximately M50.

Both CRS and WFP supply commodities for use in the projects of government departments through the Food Management Unit (FMU), and CRS also supports a private programme which is discussed in 3.2 below. The donors retain rights to review and evaluate activities, and to make periodic checks of food stocks and usage. FFW has been utilised in support of minor roads construction, conservation works and selected activities within donor supported agricultural development projects for the entire period since 1967.

At independence, Lesotho had a very poor infrastructure. Until the mid-1960's there was only one mile of tarred road in the whole country, and outside the western and southern border areas there were virtually no roads apart from some tracks leading into the mountains. The new government appealed for villages to undertake voluntary road building activities as well as dam construction and conservation works. There was a substantial response, particularly from women who comprised the majority of the rural labour force.

The mid-1960's was also a period of drought in the country. The government wished to provide food to relieve these conditions in the villages, but was opposed to simply giving the food away as it could create a disincentive to future production when the drought lifted. When food commodities became available, it was decided to give the food to the volunteers working on roads and dams. During another period of low rainfall in the early 1970's, the government expanded the FFW programme to provide drought relief. WFP supplied commodities for an additional 5100 FFW labourers between 1970 and 1972 for this purpose.

Over time the programme evolved a system of village level management and central government overview of projects in consultation with the donors. The Village Development Committees (VDC) submitted proposals for projects to the District-level Committees. These committees in turn submitted their approved list to the central government ministry concerned, generally the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development (MCRD) or the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) which made the final selection of projects to be supported. Upon notification that a project was approved, the VDC concerned organized the roster from which workers for each work session were drawn, and the workers elected their supervisors. The VDC also supervised payment of workers when food supplies arrived in the village.

The VDC used this system partially to meet the welfare needs of the community and included on the rosters a high proportion of landless, aged and/or handicapped individuals. Other features of a welfare programme developed over time. These included the restriction of working to five hours a day, five days a week and

the mandatory turnover of all workers at the end of each work period. This policy was intended to insure that FFW did not result in dependency or conflict with time needed for agricultural production. However, it also indicated to the villagers that the actual work was low priority. It resulted also in limited possibilities for workers to acquire technical skills or for quality construction standards to be achieved on projects. Numerous projects were organised, each involving a small number of workers, which were spread around the countryside thus distributing the food resource as widely as possible.

Very few resources were available to provide the other inputs needed for effective development activities (except where WFP programmed FFW as a component of donor development projects).⁵ Workers often provided their own tools, and there were very limited quantities of technical assistance, training, effective supervision for workers, and material resources available to assure the quality of the structures being built. The MOA and MCRD are responsible for arranging for food deliveries to pay the workers, and as they experience transport difficulties, workers are rarely paid on the last day of a work period. At times, payments have been as much as five months late. When the welfare features of FFW are coupled with these problems it is easy to understand why the rural participants in FFW believe that they are working mainly for the food and place less emphasis on their expectations with respect to benefits from the development activity.

3.2 The CRS Private Programme

CRS began providing commodities to support FFW activities of communities, churches and private organisations in 1976. The size of the programme gradually increased over the years to the level of approximately 20 percent of the total programme, i.e. commodities are available to support approximately 2280 person years of labour per annum. CRS considers this the maximum level which they can supervise given the limits on their administrative and monitoring capability. Construction activities supported currently include dams, schools, clinics, airstrips, roads and water protection schemes. There is also one activity to establish a tree nursery and tree planting for conservation purposes.

CRS receives requests directly from individuals in a variety of capacities (e.g. headmasters, priests, Peace Corps Volunteers etc.). Such requests may also be forwarded to CRS by other organizations which are aware that CRS can provide this form of assistance. If CRS believes the proposed project may be suitable, they forward an application form which solicits details of the project. Following review of the application, a site visit is generally made and thereafter the project is approved or disapproved. CRS provides only the food to pay the labourers, and projects are disapproved when no provision has been made for tools, technical supervision, or materials necessary for the project. If the project is approved, a formal agreement is signed between CRS and the individual (now called the "project holder") who will be responsible for supervising the project and controlling the commodities. In 1984 and 1985 activities of 22

project holders received assistance (some project holders carried out more than one project). CRS normally approves activities for four working periods (three months) at a time, and checks on progress before making the next allocation. The workers are paid in the same commodities and the same amounts as on government projects.

The private programme provides CRS with the means to respond quickly and flexibly to the interests and needs of communities and organisations. It is mainly supporting short term activities. In this way, CRS can fill in the gaps in what government is able to do, and also can support activities which may not be a current government priority. An example of the latter is the airstrips which are primarily used by the "Flying Doctor" service which is bringing health services to remote communities. CRS also uses the private programme to support construction needed for its own activities, for example, dam construction for gardens which is organised in association with the CRS maternal/child health programme.

CRS/Lesotho finds its headquarters in New York is often prepared to provide funding for needed material inputs when there is a way of meeting the labour costs on an activity. This is the case also with many of the other projects, as communities and organisations find they can secure donations for materials if the donors know labour will be available for construction. The labour costs generally account for 60 percent or more of the total costs of construction, especially as villages provide many of the construction materials, e.g. stones, sand, timber, etc. free of charge when labour is paid to collect and prepare them.

3.3 Recent Efforts to Improve Programme Implementation

3.31 General Improvements in Government Activities

Considerable effort has been expended over the past few years to improve the management of FFW projects and to increase their developmental impact. Part of the impetus for these changes originated with donor organisations. The Lesotho government has also increased the personnel and other resources for FFW projects, and especially those relating to rural road construction. Some of the improvements were made possible by modifications in the rules of donors concerning the uses of project food aid, and in particular, on the sale of commodities to generate funds to provide other inputs needed for the projects.

CRS increased its technical and supervisory staff involved with FFW to provide enhanced planning and management inputs to the activities of government departments. USAID provided technical experts and scholarships for Lesotho project managers with funds from its regular development programme. WFP provided more complementary inputs. It was arranged that experts from United Nations organisations work in the programme. Wheat was sold to provide funds for tools and other materials. MCRD increased the numbers of personnel involved in supervising its civil works programme, and beginning in September 1980 secured resources from the budget to pay a cash supplement of M7.50 per 15 day work

period as an incentive for more productivity from workers.

The improvements made include developing basic information on projects (e.g. surveys of roads under construction), establishing expected completion dates based on work norms, increasing the numbers of technical supervisory personnel and providing training for all levels of personnel in methods of labour intensive construction. With respect to roads this process has been accompanied by a marked decrease in the number of projects which makes supervision easier and permits increases in the numbers of workers per project thus speeding project completion. The quality of construction has improved, but more material inputs are required for durable roads and a maintenance organisation should be established. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided a number of experts at the request of WFP to assist with the roads program.

3.4 A New MOA/CRS Agriculture Production/Conservation Project

A current priority of the Government of Lesotho supported by CRS is planning the improved approach to conservation activities. Soil erosion is a major problem of agriculture in Lesotho, and conservation activities have always been a preoccupation of the MOA. It is now recognized that conservation structures alone are of limited effectiveness unless they are allied with biological measures and conservation farming. In addition, a comprehensive management plan for a total watershed or catchment area, including the placement of any conservation structures, is required if the measures are to be effective. The large number of small isolated FFW conservation activities do not meet these conditions.

Experience with projects indicates subsequent maintenance is a problem also as the villagers perceive little economic benefit from the structures. The large number of small projects creates further management problems in providing technical supervision and especially in the transportation of food commodities to pay the workers. The proposed new approach to the FFW conservation program is intended to address this range of problems, and to add a further dimension by attempting to create subsequent increases in incomes and employment.

A planning process is currently underway involving CRS and the MOA which will agree the final scope of the project. The essential feature of the new project will be the progressive concentration of activities in a limited number of watersheds (defined as that area of land draining into a river, river system or body of water). At each location, the project will have two objectives: (a) to protect and develop the soil, water and vegetation resources of the watershed; and (b) to manage and utilize these resources so as to increase the agriculture production and incomes of families living in the watershed. Activities are to begin in a pilot area during 1986, and there will be a gradual build-up in the number of areas between 1986 and 1989. The activities are to be supported by a new management structure and a new worker supervision/payment system.

NOTES

1. Much of the information presented in this paper was originally collected in the course of consultancies for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission to Lesotho and for the World Food Programme. Many individuals, especially in Lesotho, contributed data and observations, and their contribution is gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks are due to the staff of CRS, and especially the Lesotho country representative, Mr. Michael Ridenour for assistance in preparing the paper. However, the opinions expressed here, and any errors and omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

2. P. 17 in Jerry B. Eckert et.al., Towards the Year 2000: Strategies for Lesotho's Agriculture, Lesotho Agriculture Sector Analysis Project, Ministry of Agriculture/Colorado State Univ., May 1982.

3. These percentages of female household heads, and household managers with absentee husbands appear in a number of social surveys. For example see Pages 37-38 in A.C.A. van der Wiel, Migratory Wage Labour: Its Role in the Economy of Lesotho, Mazenod Book Center, Mazenod, Lesotho, 1977. Also pages 8-9 and 33 of Judy S. Gay, Women and Development in Lesotho, paper prepared for USAID, June 1, 1982.

4. Gross figures of food supplies in Lesotho indicate that caloric needs are adequately met as are a bare minimum of protein requirements. The most serious problem in the nation's diet is the heavy dependence on maize in particular and cereals in general for both calories and protein. On the other hand, consumption of such foods as milk, meat, fruit, and vegetables are considerably below recommended levels. Available evidence indicates that the composition of the diet results in deficiencies in calcium, Vitamin A, Riboflavin and Niacin (some chronic, more seasonally). Removing these deficiencies will require a general increase in production and consumption of fruits and vegetables and of livestock products. Data concerning these problems are discussed, and several different sources of information are analysed and presented on pages 31-54 of Eckert, et.al., Towards the Year 2000.

5. The development projects which WFP supported were large area-based agricultural development projects, and the Woodlots project, where there were significant levels of technical and material resources available (largely donor-financed) in addition to food aid. A variety of donors were involved in the various projects including United Nations Agencies, USAID, the World Bank, the United Kingdom, Anglo de Beers, etc. In some projects funds were provided for cash wages or cash supplements, in addition to food, for workgang supervisors. FFW was used for a variety of purposes in the projects including building roads, constructing terraces, grassing waterways, maintaining tree nurseries and planting and tending trees.

In view of the objectives of the project, the watersheds are to be selected on the basis of their priority in agriculture production plans and national conservation plans. Local residents are to be fully involved in planning the activities in their area. In the case of each watershed, the activities are planned to be sufficiently comprehensive as to make a significant improvement to the environment. Activities will also continue for a period which is long enough to accomplish the training and production aspects of the project. A particularly significant change is the plan to pay workers partly in food and partly in agricultural inputs. This will require new administrative arrangements, but it also offers the possibility of promoting increased agricultural production. CRS is financing the purchase of these inputs with funds from commodities monetised during the recent drought emergency.

4.0 IMPACT OF FFW ACTIVITIES

4.1 Accomplishments of the Food for Work Programme

FFW supported by CRS and WFP has had important physical accomplishments. The most significant is in the area of road construction; FFW was utilised to create over half the road network in the country (at least 2500 kilometres were constructed with FFW labour out of a total road network of 4000 kilometres). Also, a significant portion of the ongoing soil conservation activities were supported by FFW over the period. Finally, the Woodlots Project succeeded in establishing 4484 hectares of trees in the 11 years from 1973-1984, which will make a major contribution to the fuelwood and timber needs in the country as well as serving soil conservation purposes.

A second area of accomplishment is in employment generation for rural areas. At least 25 percent of the approximately 250,000 rural households receive some income from FFW employment each year. Although the CRS and WFP programmes together support only 17,000 person years of employment, the regulations of FFW in Lesotho require a turnover of workers at the end of each working period. A survey carried out in 1980 found that FFW laborers each worked an average of four sessions per year (i.e. twelve weeks).⁶ As a result, approximately 56,400 individuals⁷ participate in the employment provided each year. The Lesotho government does not have the cash resources available from its own resources or from donors to generate the level of employment provided by FFW. FFW employment is valuable to rural women as it provides the principal source of organised employment, especially in the case of older women with limited education. Women do not have the possibility to work in the RSA and there are employment opportunities for only a small percentage of women in Lesotho's small modern sector.

4.2 Reaching the Poor

The significance of FFW for poor households is demonstrated in a recent household survey.⁸ Nineteen percent of the households in the survey reported that FFW was either the most important (this was the case with six percent of the households), or the second (thirteen percent) most important source of income. Those

households which reported FFW as the primary source of income had a monthly wage income from all other sources of Malouti 32 (approximately US \$16 at current exchange rates) as compared to an average household wage income of M161 for the whole sample. Nearly half of these households did not include an adult male, which indicates again the importance of FFW to poor rural women.

Data available on the Lesotho programme also indicate that FFW involves the poor to a greater extent than other food aid activities, and that it is directed at groups which are not reached by other types of food aid intervention. In the first instance a survey conducted in 1980 found that women in attendance at maternal child health clinics were somewhat better off and better supported than women on FFW (e.g. only 9% of the women at the clinics were the sole support of the family as compared to 25-30% of women on FFW). This is partially due to the costs involved in participation in the clinic programme (travel expenses and fees). In addition, the maternal child health programs focussed to a large extent on young women and children, while FFW includes large numbers of older men and women. Approximately 33% of the FFW labourers in the sample were aged 18-35 and 63% were above the age of 40, while the reverse was found for women in attendance at the clinics.⁹

4.3 The Role of FFW in an Emergency Situation

The FFW programme has certain possible advantages in dealing with potential food emergency. These include an existing structure and pipeline of supplies which permits more rapid response than is possible if preparations and shipments begin only when the emergency is imminent. The project context of distributions also may assist in controlling abuses.

However a tension between the "development" returns desired by the donors for FFW and using FFW to cope with a food emergency was indicated by Lesotho's recent experience. As was mentioned in section 3.1 above, the FFW programme was expanded twice in the period 1968-1972 to respond to drought emergencies. During the most recent drought, in 1983/1984, the Lesotho government again wished to use the FFW programme as a mechanism to distribute drought relief.

However, CRS, WFP and USAID considered that the efforts being made to improve the technical standard of FFW activities would be undermined by overburdening the system with large numbers of additional workers to supervise. In the end a decision was taken to make a free distribution of six months food supply to needy households. It was necessary for the government to set up a new structure to deal with the distributions and new criteria for selection of households to be included in the programme. This led to delays in distribution of the food and there has also been subsequent criticism that certain of the households receiving distributions were not needy.

It is not possible to compare directly the recent experience with the earlier emergency programmes. First, there is little information available on the earlier programmes which would make it possible to determine how targeted they were on those most in

need. Secondly, there was limited concern about the involvement of less needy households as they were working for the food. However, it is possible that FFW serves as a useful sorting mechanism as only those who really require the food are prepared to work for it.

5.0 Food Aid Issues

5.1 Commodity Appropriateness

CRS provides a food wage consisting of maize meal, wheat flour, and vegetable oil. All these commodities are and were part of the diet in Lesotho prior to the introduction of food aid as both maize and wheat are grown in the country. Vegetable oil was consumed already, although it has to be imported. CRS now has an experimental program to introduce production and processing of sunflowers for oil. Sunflowers are successfully grown for this purpose in the surrounding RSA.

The commodities received while on FFW generally appear to substitute for the normal purchases of all but the poorest households. Only a small portion of households in Lesotho have sufficient land and other agricultural resources to produce enough food for their needs. Most households purchase cornmeal, wheat flour and oil each month using cash income from mineworker remittances. Interviews with FFW labourers indicated most of them reduced normal purchases by the amount of the food provided. Accordingly, FFW serves mainly as an income transfer rather than a nutrition supplement, because the workers use the cash normally applied to food purchases mainly for purchases other than food¹⁰.

5.2 Production Disincentives

Since the inception of the programme, questions have been raised concerning the effects which FFW might be having on agricultural production in Lesotho have been raised. The major concern has been whether FFW was a disincentive to production. However, the likelihood of any direct production decline arising from FFW is small.

First, the quantity which is received by any one household is limited. The four work periods per annum of the typical FFW laborer results in her receiving some 200 kilos of wheat flour and/or maize meal (plus oil and possibly minor amounts of other items) while the average household requires approximately 1000 kilos of grain per annum. Very few households produce 800 kilos of grain per annum given the limited production areas available and the technologies used. Accordingly, most households would have to produce normally, work on FFW, and purchase additional grains to meet their needs.

Second, food imports to support FFW account for only a small portion of cereal imports and an even smaller portion of the total national supply (see Annex Tables 1 and 2). Production disincentives in Lesotho are more likely to have been caused by two other factors: rising mine wages and the low or negative returns to traditional agricultural production. Production declined steeply after the large increases in mine wages in the

1970s, and analysis of the costs and returns (at import parity prices) of the agricultural production of the typical household in Lesotho indicates that they do not break even if any value is given to the household labour involved in production.¹¹ Accordingly, a more important question than that of production disincentives is whether or not FFW can make any contribution to changing this situation, as is discussed below.

5.3 Lesotho's Food Dependency

Lesotho receives a major portion of its basic grain supply from external sources. Lesotho produced approximately 38 percent of its supply of maize and 26 percent of its wheat supply in 1983/84 and even in more normal years produces little more than half of its maize requirements (Annex Table 2). The funds to import food come mainly from external sources, i.e. the wages of miners working in the surrounding RSA and from the budgets of foreign donors. Food aid is a significant part of the development resources available to Lesotho. It is as valuable to the government as cash resources as it permits savings of foreign exchange which would otherwise be required for imports.

However, food aid does not reduce the dependency of Lesotho on external sources for its food supply. Dependence on mineworker wages is merely replaced by dependence on foreign donors. Lesotho may have even less influence on the decision-making process of the donors, than it has on the decisions made in the RSA concerning the levels of mine employment for its citizens. This situation is not desirable either in terms of the country's aim of economic independence, or in terms of Lesotho's long term food security. It is likely that Lesotho's agricultural situation and high ratio of population to arable land inevitably will result in a requirement to import a substantial percentage of its basic grain supply. Lesotho needs to generate the funds for grain purchases from domestic resources if it is to achieve independence and self-sufficiency; the limited possibility of substantial growth in other sectors indicates that these funds must come from agriculture.

One of the goals of current policy emphasising production of high value food crops and intensive livestock production is to achieve higher incomes from agriculture. The new approach to the MOA/CRS FFW activities outlined in 3.4 above is intended to support achievement of that policy. It is recognised that the redirection of production represents substantial new risks for rural households and requires new skills. In this case, the process of change will be supported by the FFW programme to cushion the risks, both in terms of the family food supply and the costs of modern agricultural inputs. If successful, the project will be an example of the creative use of food aid to reduce dependency on external food supplies.

5.4 Women in Development

The FFW supported activities have provided several benefits to women. Many adult women in rural areas have the opportunity each year to participate in organized employment activities and they receive food in turn which helps them to stretch out the

resources they have from their husbands or other male relatives (which are remittances of mine wages in most cases) and/or from household production. Certain observers believe compensation in food is important to women's access to these employment opportunities, and that they would be monopolised by men if compensation was in cash.¹²

There is concern about the negative impact of FFW on women because of its welfare image which is demoralizing for them. The limited impact of certain of the activities and the criticism of low worker productivity which is made by some analysts, derive at least in part from the limited technical supervision, tools and materials which have been available on projects. But, these criticisms often fall on the women workers, and in many cases, the women themselves cannot take pride in their work accomplishments due to the lack of the other inputs needed for durable structures. CRS and the government have recognized these difficulties, and the efforts currently underway to supply other needed inputs may go some way to solving the problems.

Another problem is that the types of projects which were supported have not resulted in any significant increases in employment opportunities following project completion. Road construction and conservation structures may be necessary for economic growth, but in and of themselves they do not generate on-going employment opportunities (except possibly in maintenance work, and this is at a much reduced level as compared to employment in the construction phase). To address this problem CRS is encouraging a more comprehensive project approach in planning and implementing the new watershed management program so that the ultimate effect of activities will be to increase incomes in the area in the long term. Another feature of the new approach will be to include a significant training element in the activities. The regulations governing both CRS and WFP FFW activities permit use of the food specifically for education but to date FFW has not been used for this purpose to any significant degree. Organising training opportunities which permit real skills transfer to rural women has the potential to improve their effectiveness on the work activities and to increase their subsequent income-earning potential.

6.0 Considerations for FFW Programming Arising from the Lesotho Experience

The Lesotho experience suggests certain questions for future FFW programming for Lesotho and for other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the pertinent issues are discussed in this section.

6.1 Is Lesotho a Special Case?

This question needs to be addressed in determining whether the lessons of the Lesotho experience can be applied elsewhere. There are unique problems facing Lesotho which arise from its geographic situation. The question to be answered is whether or not this unique position creates conditions for FFW activities which are unlike those of other African countries. The more

relevant characteristics for consideration include Lesotho's size, the fact of a female labour force, the role of remittances and savings of mine workers in providing cash resources, the lack of alternatives to FFW employment in rural areas and the limits on agricultural production. Although each of these features are different from the situation found in specific other countries, there are also other African countries where one or even all of these circumstances may be found.

There are a number of small countries in Africa, and there are also areas within larger countries which are chronically food deficit. Many rural areas in Africa have large numbers of female-headed and female-managed households, though not usually as high a percentage as is found in Lesotho. Male migration to the cities or to other countries in search of wage labour which is the source of the remittances and savings is not unique to Lesotho or even to the countries of Southern Africa, e.g. there is large scale migration of males from Borkina Faso to work in coastal countries of West Africa. Limited off farm employment opportunities in the rural sector is a general problem in most of sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, there are many countries, and also many highly productive areas of countries where the availability of agricultural land is becoming a severe problem and the size of land holdings of households is falling below that needed to provide self-sufficiency. Given these circumstances it appears the experience of Lesotho is relevant to the situation of other areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

6.2 Using FFW in Emergencies

In the recent food emergency, neither CRS nor WFP used the FFW programme to distribute extra food. As was described above this was due to concerns with the impact of an enlarged programme on the efforts underway to improve the development impact of the existing activities. Although this may have been a pertinent concern in 1983/84, consideration should be given to the future possibilities of using FFW, especially in view of the problems which arose with the free distribution of commodities.

Another problem CRS experienced was a long delay in receiving commodities for emergency distribution which is a problem commonly found in the response to food emergencies. Finding means of utilizing commodities from the existing programme and replacing these with the commodities provided for the emergency would permit a more rapid response. CRS enjoys very good commodity management in Lesotho with losses on the order of only two percent. As there is a five percent reserve allocation made for losses, the programme normally has available about 103 percent of its budgeted commodities. In addition the maternal/child health clinics normally carry 4 months stocks for each three month period and delays with FFW projects also normally result in substantial reserves (It should be noted CRS has an easier commodity management situation than WFP as CRS has only one source of commodities while WFP has several, in addition CRS has 70 clinics plus its FFW sites while WFP has a similar number of FFW sites but is supplying food to 1,149 primary schools also).

One approach could be contingency plans to develop a dossier of quick action projects, (possibly similar to those included in the CRS private programme - e.g. schools and clinics) which could be activated when food emergencies arose. These activities could be kept administratively separate from the ongoing projects supported with FFW to avoid disruption of the existing activities. However the reserves of the ongoing programme would be used thus permitting a timely response. This more flexible approach to the use of FFW in emergencies would have the added advantages of helping to insure the commodities went to those individuals and households really requiring food and would also result in the accomplishment of useful work, thus minimizing the cost of the emergency response.

6.3 Organizing Other Inputs

The importance of complementary inputs is emphasized by the Lesotho experience. Identifying sources for such inputs is a priority for FFW programming in Lesotho and elsewhere and should be undertaken during the design or redesign of activities. Insuring that FFW is used on priority development projects of the government concerned and that budgetary resources are committed to cover complementary inputs is an obvious possibility. Monetization of food commodities is another possible source of funds. Lesotho enjoys a particularly advantageous situation here as the monetized commodities substitute for commercial import requirements and in addition, the currency generated can be used to purchase items such as tools which are readily available either incountry or from the RSA.

In other countries where such items cannot be purchased easily with local currency, programming FFW as a component of other donor funded activities is a possibility. The Woodlot project in Lesotho is an example of such a joint activity which has worked relatively well. Another possibility is using a combination of monetization (to cover such costs as a cash component of wages) combined with programming FFW as a component of aid projects to cover those inputs which require foreign exchange. Such flexibility in the use of FFW resources will require changes in the regulations of donors which should receive priority attention. If sources of funds cannot be found for essential inputs for a planned activity, however, a final possibility would be to consider using FFW on other activities which require less inputs, e.g. classrooms rather than roads. In all these cases, the importance of a planning process for FFW activities is indicated.

6. P. 27, in Bryson, Judy C., An Evaluation of Food Aid Programs in Lesotho With Emphasis on the CRS Program, prepared for USAID, January 3, 1981.

7. As there are 16 working periods in a year and each worker works an average of 4 sessions it might be expected that 68,000 individuals would participate (ie. 17,000 x 4). The 56,400 estimate results from the fact that only 14,100 workers are working at any one time. This is an example of the confusion concerning the number of FFW labourers which arises due to the 3 week working session, and the fact that labourers are issued with rations for one month for each working period. As there are 16 working periods in a year CRS has to programme for 25 percent more person years of recipients than the actual number of workers (this problem does not affect WFP).

8. The "Selabathebe Household Survey, 1986", MOA, Lesotho (forthcoming). Prepared by the Land Conservation and Range Management Project Social Analyst, Mr. Stephen Lawry.

9. P.21-26 passim, in Bryson, op.cit.

10. P.23-24, in Bryson, op.cit.

11. David Holland, Economic Differentiation and Agricultural Commercialization in Three Rural Areas of Lesotho, RD-D-20, August 1983.

12. This observation derives from discussions with government officials and other individuals in Lesotho in 1984 during the course of preparing an assessment of food assistance experience for the WFP.

TOTAL SUPPLY FOR
FIVE MAJOR CROPS (Whole Grain Basis 000 Tons)

Lesotho
1973/74-1981/82

Exports/Production	Year									
	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Commercial Imports:										
Maize	62.7	76.4	86.5	109.2	122.4	108.8	121.9	128.5	107.4	117.5
Wheat	32.0	31.2	32.8	31.7	35.7	30.8	31.5	30.3	23.9	22.0
Sorghum	3.1	5.1	5.8	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.0	1.7	3.3
Pulses (Beans & Peas)	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.6
Total:										
Maize	11.8	6.7	9.8	5.8	8.3	9.5	14.9	11.7	9.2	9.1
Wheat	1.8	1.5	1.1	1.3	6.9	7.4	6.4	11.8 ^a	20.6 ^a	26.6
Sorghum	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulses	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.5	0.7	0.7	1.1	1.1
Total Imports:										
Maize	74.5	83.1	96.3	115.7	130.7	118.3	136.8	140.2	116.6	126.6
Wheat	33.8	32.7	33.9	33.0	42.6	38.2	37.9	42.1	44.5	48.6
Sorghum	3.1	5.1	5.8	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.0	1.7	3.3
Pulses	0.9	0.3	0.8	0.9	1.6	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.6	1.7
Total Domestic Production:										
Maize	70.3	49.1	125.9	143.2	124.9	105.6	105.7	79.8	76.2	79.4
Wheat	45.3	44.6	61.4	57.9	33.6	28.2	17.0	14.5	14.8	17.1
Sorghum	37.4	24.5	62.3	85.8	69.0	59.3	47.7	26.0	30.7	33.8
Pulses	19.2	18.8	27.9	15.2	15.3	8.1	6.7	7.1	4.0	5.0
Total Supply:										
Maize	144.8	132.2	222.2	258.9	255.6	223.9	242.5	220.0	192.8	206.0
Wheat	79.1	77.3	95.3	90.9	76.2	66.4	54.9	56.6	59.3	65.7
Sorghum	41.1	29.6	68.1	87.9	70.9	61.1	49.7	27.0	32.4	37.1
Pulses	20.1	19.1	28.7	16.1	16.9	9.1	7.6	8.3	5.6	6.7

a. Includes donated whole wheat sold through commercial channels.

- Source: 1) Bureau of Statistics
2) Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office
3) Lesotho Flour Mills
4) Marketing Section Ministry of Agriculture

Prepared by the Agricultural Planning Office, Ministry of Agriculture and the Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning and Statistics, Lesotho.

Reprinted as Table 51, P. 72 of the Lesotho Agricultural Situation Report, 1974-75 - 1983/84.

PERCENT OF SELF SUFFICIENCY* FOR
FIVE MAJOR CROPS

Lesotho
1973/74-1981/82

YEAR

	<u>1974-75</u>	<u>1975-76</u>	<u>1976-77</u>	<u>1977-78</u>	<u>1978-79</u>	<u>1979-80</u>	<u>1980-81</u>	<u>1981-82</u>	<u>1982-83</u>	<u>1983-84</u>
Maize	48.5	37.2	56.7	55.3	48.9	47.2	43.6	36.3	39.5	38.5
Wheat	57.3	57.6	64.4	63.7	50.6	42.5	31.0	25.6	25.0	26.0
Sorghum	91.0	82.7	91.5	97.7	97.3	97.1	96.0	96.2	94.8	91.1
Peas & Beans	95.5	98.4	97.2	94.4	90.5	89.0	88.2	85.5	71.4	74.6

calculated By:
$$\frac{\text{Total Domestic Production}}{\text{Total Domestic Production plus Total Commercial and Donated Imports}}$$

above table is based on the data presented in Table 1.

P.