

ANNEX BWFP Assisted Project Lesotho 352 Exp. IV.DRAFT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

By

An Evaluation Mission composed of
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Conclusions.1. Background

WFP assistance to land conservation, development of Woodlots and improvement of roads through self-help started in Lesotho in 1968 under project 352 and subsequent expansions I, II, III and IV.

Activities have already been evaluated by UN inter-agency missions twice.

The justification of the activities has already been shown in the previous evaluation reports. The mission re-affirms that activities are fully justified.

The justification and feasibility of carrying out these activities through labor-intensive methods and to support them with food aid are also shown in those reports. Since the situation has not changed, the mission makes no further comment.

Three types of activities are being carried out with the assistance of the project by two different institutions, namely:

- Road development by the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development.
- Soil conservation by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Afforestation by the Ministry of Agriculture.

* The primary purpose of these Draft Conclusions and Recommendations is to provide materials for discussion. Conclusions and recommendations may be revised in substance before incorporation into a definitive report. They should therefore not be construed as the position of WFP since they only represent the views of the mission which upon return to Rome, will submit them to the WFP Executive Director. Conclusions and Recommendations approved by the WFP Executive Director and including revisions as he may deem necessary will be transmitted officially to the Government of Lesotho through the WFP Resident Representative.

The Catholic Relief Service is supporting the above mentioned institutions with food aid in similar activities.

Good coordination prevails between the local offices of CRS and WFP in order to preclude duplication.

2. Road Development

Work in upgrading of access tracks to standards acceptable for takeover by the Ministry of Works and in improvement and maintenance of access tracks to modest standards is undertaken with the assistance of this project by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Activities in construction, improvement and maintenance of motorable tracks are warranted on the basis of economic and social considerations.

Upgrading of access tracks and construction of bridges to standards established for takeover by Ministry of Works cannot be carried out with acceptable effectiveness using the resources specified in the project's Plan of Operations. The Ministry of Rural Development does not have at present sufficient resources to meet these standards.

The development of bridle paths, not heretofore included in the project, is a desirable means to service isolated communities through intermediate technology and to avoid foreign exchange expenditures on vehicles and fuel. This is particularly important, considering that the country's resources are severely limited.

It was not possible for the mission to compare quantities of completed work against targets set forth in the Plan of Operations. The records that are kept only contain limited information on man-days but none of physical achievements. The man-days utilized in road development up to December 1978 total 840,000.

The mission feels that the quality of the work which is under way is marginal at best, when operations are carried out within integrated development projects. It is unsatisfactory elsewhere owing to non-observance of standards, insufficiency or lack of drainage provisions, and low productivity of workers. Little durable benefits accrue from resources expended under current conditions.

Shortcomings are due to insufficient inputs of technical backstopping, field supervision and related training, equipment, and materials, mainly as a result of the limited availability at the Ministry of Rural Development.

The Government is aware of prevailing shortcomings. Steps are being taken to mobilize a proper package whereby the project's resources would be integrated with the required balance of inputs.

The possibility of a contribution for development of rural roads and tracks is currently being considered by USAID. The contribution, if forthcoming, could play a determining role in assembling an integrated package of resources.

Initial discussions have been held with an international agency concerning possible contributions for technical support and for training, as well as with the Irish Development Cooperation Office concerning a possible contribution for tools.

Based on observations made by the mission during its relatively short stay in the country, it would seem necessary to find more technical or economical justification for continuation of the works in its present form. There is cause, however, for continuation of the work on a provisional basis in order to preserve the existing operational structure with the expectation that prevailing short-comings will soon be eliminated and that effective implantation of construction, improvement and maintenance will be assured.

As indicated in the report of the 1975 evaluation mission, provision of equipment and tools and payment of cash wages to supervisors and foremen are essential for adequate implementation of road works. The previous evaluation mission recommended that if donors were not found to cover the above mentioned inputs, a supplementary 10 percent of food provided by WFP should be sold to meet these requirements.

This recommendation which was unfortunately not followed is reaffirmed.

3. SOIL CONSERVATION

It is readily apparent that there is a need for soil conservation in the country. Since the early 1900's erosion has accelerated, mainly as a result of population pressures on the land under the present tenure system.

Most of the gullies in Lesotho were formed in 1933, caused by intensive rainfall after a severe drought period. Rill and sheet erosion currently constitute the main hazards to Lesotho's agricultural lands, together with the severe consequences of overgrazing on rangelands.

The erosion problem is spiraling. Means must soon be found and implemented to fight deterioration and prevent the ultimate destruction of Lesotho's main resource, its land.

Soil conservation work supported with WFP assistance is carried out by the Soil Conservation Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as by the Conservation Section (previously Thaba Bosiu Rural Development Project), and the Thaba Tseka Project.

Food assistance from CARE has been introduced very recently in the Thaba Tseka Project and in the Soil Conservation Section of the Ministry of Rural Development. No conclusions or recommendations can be yet given on the effectiveness of their operations.

Soil conservation activities in the country are supported by USAID, ODM, UNDP, SIDA, Anglo-American/De Beers and Government of Lesotho. This support provides adequate financing of activities.

The WFP component of soil conservation activities covers part of the labour needs for implementation of the overall conservation programme which amounts to 131.220 man-days per year. A larger share of labour needs is covered by food aid supplied by CRS. Workers receive no cash payment.

Labour is utilized in activities such as construction of gabion and stone walls, grass waterways, silt traps, contour banks and other structures. 520,000 man-days have been utilized up to December 1978 for soil conservation activities receiving WFP assistance.

Most of the works are being carried out through use of both labour and equipment. No work norms are used in the conservation activities, and labour supervision is not always adequate in quantity and quality. The prevailing attitude appears to be that food-aid gangs work at no cost to anybody and a proper costing of food assistance should be carried out to assess the real cost of conservation works.

Food aid workers are recruited for year-round employment, with some exceptions so as not to cause competition with peak activities in agricultural work. However, in spite of efforts not to employ vast number of people in any given village at peak periods a dangerous condition still exists since people prefer to receive food for work, rather than produce their own food in their own fields at considerable risks. Conservation programmes take several years to be implemented in a given village, and they provide villagers work secure alternatives to farming.

Conservation programme should not be imposed. They should be implemented at the request of communities. Successful programmes and the guarantee of maintenance of works can only develop with the cooperation and participation of the villagers themselves.

It has not been possible for the mission to quantify completed works or labour productivity as a result of lack of relevant data.

The technical standards of current work are generally high. In the Khomokhoana Rural Development Project they were lower than in other instances, but they have improved since the beginning of this year.

The best results of comprehensive soil conservation in function of input of labour seem to have been achieved by the Thaba Bosiu Conservation Section (20,000 acres protected). The worst results have been in the Khomokhoana Rural Development Project (5,000 acres protected). The Conservation Division is spread over 7 separate project areas and reports to have protected nearly 30,000 acres of cropland.

About 250 km of roads have been built or upgraded using food assistance and equipment; labour was used for drainage works required to cut down maintenance. Fishponds were built with WFP assistance under the Khomokhoana project and under the Soil Conservation Division, totaling of 15 hectares. The mission feels however that construction of fish-ponds should fall under the responsibility of the Fisheries section and not under the Soil Conservation Section. The management of the fishponds which is carried out by the Fisheries section of the Livestock Division is in general moderately successful.

No use has been made of WFP assistance in grazing management. No use was made of WFP assistance by the Livestock Division of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Around 40 percent of the land presently ploughed consists of marginal to poor soils for row crop production. By altering land use, these soils could be protected and even improved.

4. Afforestation:

The population of Lesotho, 95% of which lives in rural areas, largely depends for cooking and heating on cowdung, wood, brush and agricultural residue. The use of cowdung and agricultural residue

which otherwise would have been ploughed back into the soil, reduces agricultural productivity, while the felling of trees on riverbanks and steep slopes further aggravates soil erosion problems. The natural vegetal cover only includes a very minor proportion of trees which cannot satisfy the needs of the people (these needs might be as high as one million cu. meters per year). The lack of fuel causes hardship in labour and/or financial terms particularly among the rural poor.

Recognizing the urgent need to satisfy the demands for firewood and building materials for village use, the Government of Lesotho, in cooperation with Anglo de Beers Forest Service (Lesotho) Ltd. and the Overseas Development Ministry of the United Kingdom embarked in 1973 upon a 12 year afforestation project, the Lesotho Woodlots project, which implements a successful programme of establishing small woodlots near villages, in close cooperation with, and only at the request of the villagers involved.

During the first six years of its operations a total of 2,171 ha has been planted, of which 800 ha were planted in 1978 and 1979. The World Food Programme's contribution to the Lesotho Woodlot project started in 1974 and has greatly facilitated the execution of the Project's Programme. An average of 400 daily workers had been allocated to the project in the Plan of Operations but by 30/6/79 an average of 650 workers had actually been employed, reaching 160% of the target. The areas planted in 1978 and 1979 corresponded to the Plan of Operations, but could have been larger if a serious drought had not prevented the planting with food aid work (land preparation and construction of access tracks). The mission considers therefore that the food aid has been used efficiently, and that supervision and reporting have been satisfactory under the Lesotho Woodlots Project. Targets and work norms have been set for most of the activities, and cash incentives were available for support.

Taking into account the harsh ecological conditions and the almost total lack of a forestry tradition, among the people as well as within the Government, the project may be regarded a success.

In selecting species little attention has been paid to the preferences of the villagers and to non-wood qualities, such as soil conservation, soil improvement, fruits and nuts, etc. No detailed analysis has yet been made of the growth rate and caloric value of the species planted.

The main considerations for selection of species has been their capacity for self re-generation, so as to reduce costs for second and third

harvest rotations. After testing more than 20 species of Eucalyptus only four appeared to be ecologically suitable. Two of these suffered from damage by insects and unusually severe frost in the past two years. As a consequence, starting with the 1979/1980 planting season, species other than Eucalyptus, will be introduced on a fairly large scale.

The previous evaluation mission recommended a greater emphasis on Woodlots establishment in mountain areas. While still very modest in scale (5% of the total area established) some good initiatives have been taken in cooperation with the Thaba Tseka Project.

The rotation originally envisaged for harvest was 10 to 12 years. The mission visited a number of 7 to 9 year old plantations, where it appeared that harvesting could be initiated on a selective basis. It was understood that active consideration is given to selective harvesting and other means to provide benefits from the woodlots to the villagers at an earlier stage than originally planned.

The project has trained 12 foresters at the Diploma level, of which 9 are still working in the project. An additional 9 persons have been trained locally through in-service training as forest rangers supervisors and nursery men. The project has not been able to identify and motivate Basotho nationals for higher degree fellowships for forestry training. The Government has re-assessed the need for additional training and requested assistance in such training and extension from FAO/SIDA. This assistance is expected to materialize by mid 1980.

The Wood requirements of the country are of such a magnitude that the present rate of establishment by the Lesotho Woodlots Project will only satisfy the need of less than 10% of the population by the year 2000. The mission endorses the proposed FAO/SIDA project, which is expected to increase local managerial capability, promote tree planting by individuals and communities on a self help basis, and develop other forms of non conventional forestry.

The mission noted with satisfaction that USAID will carry out a study on alternative sources of energy in the rural areas, with a considerable emphasis on the development and introduction of improved wood-burning stoves.

5. Food Management

WFP commodities received in the country for the project until December 1978 amount to 6107 metric tons.

The total man-days worked under various subprojects is 1,725,000 having utilized 4,121 m.t. Losses have been negligible.

WFP arrangements for appropriate delivery of the commodities to the frontier stations of Leribe and Butha Buthe via Gumtree, Maseru, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing via Zastron, Qacha's Nek via Matatiele, Mokhotlong via Underberg, seem to work satisfactorily.

From the above frontier points the commodities become the responsibility of the Food Management Unit (FMU) which is attached to the Prime Minister's office. The FMU is responsible for all WFP assistance to this project as well as CRS. It has the overall responsibility for co-ordination and control of all food assistance.

The mission is satisfied with the overall management of food supplies under the control of the FMU. Adequate storage and transport facilities are available for the present level of food assistance. The mission further notes with satisfaction that plans exist within FMU to increase storage capacity to meet anticipated increase in volume.

There is no evidence of problems in regard to the distribution of supplies from the stores to the beneficiaries at their work sites.

The mission found no indication that any of the food items of the ration were particularly unacceptable to beneficiaries. However, some of the beneficiaries interviewed expressed a preference for white maize meal, which can be purchased locally as opposed to yellow maize meal presently used in the project.

The mission is concerned that quarterly progress reports have not been forthcoming from the FMU and that they are currently a year behind schedule. Even those already presented have been incomplete. No Annual Audited Accounts have been received to date.

The mission appreciates the practical difficulties of compiling much of the data specified in the Plan of Operations. A more simplified reporting system should be developed for the future.

6 . Others

In all food assisted projects, the recruitment of workers in most instances has been very easy since prospective candidates exceed

the available opportunities. This is a clear manifestation of the high level of unemployment in rural areas especially among women. The project has undoubtedly helped to temporarily reduce the level of unemployment by providing job opportunities to an average of 5,600 women, with a total of about 2,7 million man-days for the first two years.

Up to end December 1978, it is calculated that 1.7 million family rations (estimated 2.7 million for the first two years) have been distributed to an average of 5,600 workers. With an estimated local value of US \$1.20 per ration this has meant an additional income of 2 million dollars up to December 78, (3 million dollars for the first 2 years). Given the limited availability of alternative income generating employment in the area it may be concluded that by far the greater proportion of this figure represents extra real income for the workers.

Although improvement of nutritional status of the beneficiaries is not the prime objective of the project, its impact in this sector is quite important. Considering the difficulties of access and limited availability of food in remote and isolated areas the mission feels that WFP assistance has effectively contributed towards an improvement in the nutritional status of the population concerned, particularly during drought periods.

The mission observed that most workers employed on the project are women, this is confirmed by a survey undertaken by WFP office in Maseru which revealed that 90% of the labour force is comprised of women. The attitude expressed was that men did not consider food for work a suitable form of employment.

Generally village chiefs and local committees representing the communities participate fully in decision making and planning on how, where and when the work will be executed. Especially in the integrated rural development projects - Thaba Bosiu, Khomokhoana and Thaba Tseka consultation has satisfactory results. The mission appreciates that the work undertaken is mainly executed by women.

The mission noted that within the integrated rural development projects in general qualified technical assistance and funds and equipment are available. Due to the accompanying other rural development activities the works executed through this WFP projects will socially and economically have a much greater impact on the development of the region than in cases where these additional activities are lacking.

The mission considers that the success of any type of labour intensive works rests in the availability of well prepared medium level supervisors and foremen. It is noted however with concern the limited availability of such personnel which is one of the most serious shortcomings faced by the project. With the exception of one training course executed in the Thaba Tseka region for field supervisors there is no evidence that training courses of this type are held within the project.

FMU distribution mechanism is a potential channel for implementing nutrition education at present not exploited. The impact of the distribution of food could be extended by the simultaneous distribution of nutrition literature presently available or to be drawn up in the near future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. WFP assistance to the project should continue, with the introduction of the recommendations mentioned below.

Road development

2. Construction, improvement and maintenance of motorable tracks to standards shown hereunder should be continued.
3. Upgrading of access tracks and construction of bridges to standards acceptable for takeover by Ministry of Works is to be discontinued, because of its relatively high cost and the reduced availability of resources.
4. Development of bridle paths is to be introduced.
5. Records on the advancement of the works should be kept by the Ministry of Rural Development and these records should be prepared on a quarterly basis for submission to WFP.
6. Continuation of work should be contingent on the availability of a proper package of technical backstopping, field supervision and related training, materials, and equipment in addition to WFP resources, so as to ensure effective project implementation.
7. The required package of inputs should be assembled by the Ministry of Rural Development at the earliest opportunity, and in no case later than July 1980. Work is to be continued on a provisional basis while the package is being assembled. Resources earmarked for work on access tracks are to be transferred elsewhere in the project in the event that the package cannot be assembled by July 1980.
8. Work to be undertaken hereafter is to be identified in specifications which are to be annexed to the project's Plan of Operations. Coverage of specification is to include:
 - Location, description and selection criteria of the works to be undertaken.

- Standards to be observed 1/
 - Estimated quantities of work to be undertaken at each individual site.
 - Timed breakdown of items to be incorporated in work at each individual site (Labour, equipment, materials, technical backstopping, and field supervision and related training).
 - Summary of inputs available for project implementation
 - Programme of works
9. Specifications are to be drafted by the Ministry of Rural Development. They are to be finalized in consultation with the Government by a technical adviser to be fielded by WFP in January 1980.
10. While in the field in January 1980, the technical adviser is to report on progress made by the Government in mobilizing the package of resources required for project implementation, and, if need be, seek the best means to transfer resources earmarked for work on access tracks to other activities in the project.

1/ The following standards are offered as a suggestion:

- Motorable track: a track suitable for four-wheel drive vehicle travel at an average speed of 20 km/hr. for a cumulative total of 11 months yearly.
- Bridle path: a path suitable for safe passage of a horse carrying a rider or an equivalent load under sustained conditions of 40 km/day march.

Soil Conservation

11. For all food aid activities the existing worknorms should be reviewed. This revision should be carried out by the Conservation Division in conjunction with WFP and the Labour Construction Unit.
12. Supervision should be improved by employing more medium level supervisory staff. If no transportation is available for them, more staff should be hired to cover all food aid teams on a regular basis.
13. In service training of staff should be introduced or strengthened, to achieve more efficiency, better deployment and higher productivity.
14. In order not to interfere with regular agricultural activities the recruitment of a large amount of workers for soil conservation activities at the same time in a certain area should be avoided. At peak agricultural seasons, food aid activities should be reduced considerably.
15. Attempts should be made to use voluntary labour to guarantee true interest and involvement of the people in improving the new very doubtful maintenance of conservation works. Expansion of soil conservation will become increasingly more difficult since technicians and equipment more fully involved in all maintenance of conservation works due to lack of interest of the village people.
16. It seems that conservation programmes are requested by the population because of the food aid component rather than for the programme itself. A very strong conservation education programme should precede and accompany the implementation of soil conservation at any time.
17. Possibilities should be further explored to use food aid in pasture and Livestock development together with Livestock Division. If there is no need for WFP assistance this should be made clear.
18. Fishpond construction should be carried out by the Fisheries Section with technical assistance of the Conservation Division.

19. The use of WFP assistance in grazing management should be further investigated considering the importance of live-stock in the overall economy.

Afforestation

20. The allocation of food aid to the Lesotho Woodlot Project should be increased by 25 percent per year to allow the project to expand its programme and respond to the increasing demand for the establishment of woodlots. This would mean that the average number of daily workers would increase from 650 in 1979 to 1550 in 1983.
21. An urgent start should be made by the Lesotho Woodlot Project to develop and execute a programme of felling trees at an earlier stage than originally envisaged and to promote the cutting of grass in the woodlots for stallfeeding or hay-making. Such a programme would ensure that the benefits from the woodlots will reach the villagers involved as early as possible.
22. The Ministry of Agriculture should encourage the analysis of studies already made on tree species occurring naturally or introduced in the country with particular emphasis on their socioeconomic acceptability for local use. Such analysis should, if found necessary, be accompanied by proposals for additional studies and for introducing exotic species to be planted on an experimental basis. A high priority should be given to selection of species appropriate highland zones. This might require specific consultancies, some of which could be provided by FAO.
23. Thorough consideration should be given by the Ministry of Agriculture to expand forestry and tree planting through non-conventional means and with greater participation of the population e.g. tree planting at the household level, small community self help programmes, linear planting along roads, waterways and fields. The establishment of a mobile forestry extension unit should support such activities and could be attached to the Lesotho Woodlot Project

or the Conservation Division with possible assistance from the proposed FAO/SIDA project.

24. Close cooperation should be sought between the wood producing sector and the wood using sector in the country and support by foresters should be given to any programme involved in improving the efficiency of wood utilization for cooking and heating.

Food Management

25. The FMO should submit to WFP the Quarterly Progress Reports regularly and in time, with all information required, as specified in the Plan of Operations. The mission feels however that the table on progress attached to the Plan of Operations are too complex and recommends its simplification. For this purpose the WFP office in Maseru should get in touch with the executing agencies and develop together a simplified record system.
26. The Government should submit without delay an audited amount covering the operations of the project since its inception up to date.

Others

27. Training of supervisors and foremen should have high priority in all sub projects. In consultation with local committees more foremen should be selected and thereafter trained in methods of ditching and shaping of roads, principles of soil conservation, tree planting and management and administration of progress and productivity. The experience of Thaba Tseka, where supervisors were trained during 4 weeks in the Labour Intensive Construction Unit, could be followed-up in other areas.
28. Professional technical expertise needed in the form of engineers and eventually training-officers could be provided in various ways. It may be recorded that the government can

seek this type of assistance through the UNDP/ILO interregional project "Planning Administration and Implementation of Labour Intensive Public Works" (INT 78/020), in which Lesotho is already participating, and which can provide expertise, equipment and funds for other requirements such as training, wages, etc.

29. In order to increase the productivity of the workgangs, foremen should be paid at least half in cash, half in food. Women should have equal opportunity to become a foreman, and should accordingly be equally eligible for training and cash wages.
30. The executing agencies should provide the work-sites with sufficient and adequate tools, and should utilize the workshop for repair and maintenance of tools.
31. Additional measures will be necessary to ensure that construction of roads, conservation-works and woodlots will indeed lead to the creation of employment and income. Integrated rural development projects seem to be the right approach. Organization of farmers and rural workers will be necessary to improve their living conditions, production and income. The integrated rural development project may contact ILO for advice on the establishment of the institutional framework required for the different type of associative organizations.
32. The possibility of utilizing the savings derived from WFP's contribution towards local transportation costs in the implementation of the project, should be investigated by the executing agencies, particularly the Ministry of Rural Development.
33. The FMU infrastructure should be utilized for distribution of nutrition literature to the beneficiaries.
34. The mission reaffirms the recommendation made by the previous evaluation mission that if no inputs are available for the implementation of the sub project for road development, WFP should authorize the sale of 10% additional food and utilize the funds to cover the other inputs required.