“You must be prepared for a lack of amenities you may be accustomed to in the United States”.(Peace Corps)Although there are beautiful landscapes, bright blue skies,with rich heritage. Lesotho has a rather dark side. Imagine waking up and breakfast isn’t just sitting on the counter waiting for you. You wake up in a home made from locally sourced products around you. you’ll find your food in local markets,small cafes, or what you find on your own. There is no running water in some parts or electricity. Today you skip school to help your parents make money, either farming,mining, textiles. You work long days just to achieve basic necessities and risk your education. However this seems drastic, in Lesotho this is normal. The biggest contribution to this is the lack of food and resources. Approximately 2.33 million people in the country currently suffer from long-term food shortages. Contributions to this are social and political welfare, ultimately leading to poverty and food insecurity in this country, people call home.

The country itself is landlocked making importing/exporting hard to do, due to the fact you have to rely on the laws of the surrounding countries. Lesotho is located in Southern Africa, the population is about 2.39 million. Basotho households experience, according to World Bank data which shows that 49.7 % of the population lives in poverty.The economy heavily depends on agriculture and remittance from other countries, due to Lesotho’s land only 10 % is cultivated. Lesotho's land is mountain terrains, commonly called “ kingdom in the sky”.

Agriculture plays a big role, due to the land being rough terrain.

The Kingdom of Lesotho exists as a high elevation nation with South Africa which is completely landlocked. Lesotho, locally known as the "Kingdom in the Sky", features stunning geographical landscapes. But the country experiences major farming difficulties because its land consists of rough terrain which extends from its lowest point of 1,400 meters above sea level to its highest point of 3,480 meters. The landlocked nature of Lesotho creates greater difficulties for the country to obtain its necessary imports. This creates Lesotho to rely on the laws, political stability and much more from surrounding countries. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) data shows that about 580,000 people or 25% of the total population currently is facing a severe decrease in food. The crisis operates at a core level within social and economic problems which Basotho households experience, according to World Bank data which shows that 49.7 % of the population lives in poverty.

Lesotho now experiences a significant economic problem because it needs to depend on South Africa while the regional mining industry continues to decline. Basotho men historically traveled to South Africa to find mining jobs which allowed them to send money home. The automation and mine closures have resulted in job losses, which have driven Lesotho's unemployment rate to 22.5% (World Bank). The youth unemployment rate has reached approximately 38% according to World Bank estimates. Workers in this situation receive monthly salaries that range between LSL 2,000 and LSL 3,000 which equals approximately 110 to 165 USD. More than 30% of the population lives in extreme poverty while many families must survive on less than 2.15 USD per day (UNDP). The rising cost of living which changes between 6% and 9% restricts the purchasing power of people who receive low wages because 70% of their food needs to be imported from South Africa (CIA).

The political system of Lesotho operates as a constitutional monarchy. The King serves as the symbol of national unity while the executive authority exists with the Prime Minister and the two-house Parliament system.The government funds education because it claims that 81% of people can read and write. Economic pressures force children to leave school despite their right to education. Students who start secondary education face a dropout rate that exceeds 80%. The net enrollment rate for secondary education is only about 44.2% as children must help at home herding livestock or farming to boost their family income. Most families in Lesotho maintain rural traditions but these traditions face increasing challenges from modernity. The population distribution shows that approximately 70% of people inhabit rural areas while 30% live in urban centers according to CIA data. Rural families often live in "rondavels," which are traditional circular stone huts that have thatched roofs to protect against cold mountain weather. The kitchen serves as the main space for daily activities because people prepare meals there by using open wood fires and small paraffin stoves. "Papa," which is a thick porridge made from maize meal and water, serves as a basic food item. The food is affordable while providing enough energy to support physical work. People usually eat "moroho," which contains different types of leafy green vegetables, and they sometimes add beans or tripe to their meals. People treat meat as a special dish that they serve during wedding and funeral and ceremonial occasions. The restricted eating habits of this population result in health problems which affect 34.5% of children under five who experience stunting because of continuous malnutrition according to World Bank data.

Agriculture stands as the most important part of the rural economy, which faces restrictions because of both limited available land and environmental problems. The country depends on three main crops for its domestic needs, which are maize and sorghum and wheat. Lesotho has a large rural population, but only 10% of its land can be used for agriculture, which decreases every year because of soil erosion that loses 40 million tons of soil according to FAO. The available land suffers from complete underutilization because severe soil erosion together with unpredictable weather patterns that climate change has intensified

make farming operations unstable. The country generates export revenue by selling specific goods that go beyond subsistence farming. Lesotho mainly exports diamonds, which account for 35% of total export revenues, and textiles that the United States imports through trade agreements, which include the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The clothing factory sector serves as a major source of employment for women, but it faces risks because of fluctuations in the global market according to CIA. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project generates essential income through its water sales to South Africa, which creates major contributions to the national GDP. The Loti (LSL) serves as the national currency of Lesotho, which maintains a one-to-one exchange rate with the South African Rand (ZAR). The South African Reserve Bank establishes most monetary regulations that govern Lesotho because of this currency relationship.

Family stability and food production depend on health factors and demographic characteristics. Lesotho has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates worldwide, affecting roughly 21.1% of adults throughout the country according to UNAIDS. The health emergency results in two effects because it reduces available healthy workers for agricultural tasks and has created a concerning situation where 170,000 children have lost their parents to the epidemic and now live in child-headed households. Lesotho has a low life expectancy which reaches approximately 54 years according to UNDP. The lack of healthy adults who can manage essential agricultural work results in families being unable to farm their entire land area which creates a pattern of poverty and hunger.

This "Kingdom in the Sky" needs to focus on supporting small farmers while economic development needs to establish permanent stability. The project requires improved access to drought-resistant seed varieties together with building better irrigation systems which will use mountain runoff because only 1% of agricultural land currently has irrigation systems. The government needs to cut its historical spending which has reached 4% to 7% of GDP because this will enable the government to finance social safety nets according to World

Bank research. The government needs to change its approach to natural resource management in Lesotho because this will create a better foundation for future development. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) should become standard agricultural practice. The government and international organizations should direct their resources toward developing solar energy systems which will benefit rural areas. The small milling and cooling units will provide farmers with electricity which will enable them to decrease food waste while keeping their profits within local communities. The country needs to find new revenue sources because it must develop beyond its declining mining sector and unstable clothing industry which produces less valuable products than organic mountain mohair and medicinal herbs. The Lesotho Highlands Water Project needs to build a better connection with local agricultural requirements because this relationship will make sure that "white gold" resources benefit the country's dry agricultural regions before they enter export to South Africa. The Basotho people need support through modern farming methods and economic diversity which will protect them from unpredictable regional challenges.

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