



**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE DR. MOTLOHELOA  
PHOOKO**

**MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

---

**UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER  
REDUCTION (ISDR) SECOND SESSION OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM  
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR).**

**16 TO 19 JUNE, 2009.**

**GENEVA  
SWITZERLAND.**

Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me on behalf of the Government and people of Lesotho to share some thoughts at this important meeting and I would like to thank the ISDR for bringing us all together here.

### **NATIONAL DRR HIGHLIGHTS**

Chairperson, since the Global Platform meeting in Geneva in 2007, Lesotho has undertaken activities that are geared towards addressing issues relating to disaster and vulnerability reduction as well as improved early warning.

The process was guided by the commitments as stipulated in the Hyogo Framework for Action which Governments, regional, international and Non – Governmental Organizations (NGOs) committed to as well as the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Apart from HIV/ AIDS, the most prevalent hazard in Lesotho is periodic drought that results in high levels of food insecurity caused by unavailability and inaccessibility of food as well as inadequate nutrition to a majority our people. This is followed by strong winds or tornadoes that destroy roofs of many houses thus leaving many poor households homeless and even poorer. Snowfall is another hazard in winter particularly off-season snowfall that has become increasingly frequent with climate change. It causes death to both people and animals that may be overly exposed and in addition cause snow blindness.

## **PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION.**

**Commitment 1: To ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority:**

- **Financial resources**

The Government has, over the years, maintained a Disaster Management Fund that is meant to finance all disaster risk reduction activities in the country, including immediate response. The amount allocated for this purpose has increased over the years.

- **The National Platform.**

The Government approved the formation and launch of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in August, 2007.

- **DRR Policy**

Development of the DRR policy is at its final stages. It will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval in July, 2009.

**Commitment 2: To identify, assess and monitor risks and enhance early warning**

The Disaster Management authority which is a Public Office in the Prime Minister's Office, undertakes the following assessments on a regular basis:

- Crop Forecasting that is undertaken just before harvest (May, 2009).
- Vulnerability Assessment which is conducted once a year just before harvest (May - June, 2009)
- Price monitoring is undertaken monthly to monitor trends of vulnerability throughout the year
- Community and Household Surveillance which is conducted twice a year before and after harvest.

- Localized vulnerability assessments are undertaken by partners such as the World Vision and Red Cross to facilitate implementation of projects by these organizations.

All of these assessments are undertaken and sometimes financed by both the Government and its partners. These assessments provide vital information that informs programming in the country by all sectors of the economy.

**Commitment 3: Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.**

- Preparations for incorporating DRR in the school curriculum are already at an advanced stage.
- Regular awareness campaigns are conducted through the media for both slow and fast developing emergencies and disasters. Examples of the media used include ongoing radio slots, bill boards, newspapers and brochures.
- Training of Trainers has been conducted on Community Owned Vulnerability Assessment and Capacity Analysis (COVACA).
- 868 Village Disaster Management Teams (VDMTs) or 74% out of 1117 have been revived or formed and are actively involved in DRR activities in partnership with UNDP

VDMTs operate as facilitators for implementation of DRR activities at the local level. Their existence and active participation is therefore seen as a necessary condition for successful implementation of

**DRR programs in the country.**

- 363 or 35% of the total VDMTs have been trained in DRR.

#### **Commitment 4: To reduce the underlying factors**

Poverty, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, wrong building standards and lack of information are the main causes of vulnerability. To reduce the underlying factors, the country is currently engaged in the following activities:

##### **To Improve the Level of Food Security**

Homestead gardens (Keyhole and trench gardens) have been introduced in the communities for production of vegetables. The lead institutions so far have been the Red Cross and World Vision who are the main partners in DRR in Lesotho.

- This method of farming uses minimal water and it is very easy to maintain even for the elderly and the sick.
- Poultry and piggery are some of the small scale projects that are encouraged and established to improve the level of food security.
- The food produced is consumed by the family and the surplus is sold for income generation.

##### **To Minimize Exposure of both People and Animals to Snow and to protect Houses and Property against Strong Winds.**

The Lesotho Meteorological Services provides both short and long terms predictions and forecasts. These assist authorities to warn communities before hand so that both the people and animals are not overly exposed during snowfalls. We employ the use of radio, newspapers, billboards, brochures and warnings that may be obtained in public places such as Bank ATM machines, bus and taxi ranks.

- Awareness brochures are also distributed through the Village Disaster Management Teams (VDMTs,) Chiefs and Community Councils.
- An awareness campaign to sensitize people on the best type of roofing in order to reduce vulnerability to the hazard is in progress.

All houses that have been re-roofed as a response by the Government have been re-roofed using the experts recommended type of roofing.

**COMMITMENT 5: To strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels**

- The government and NGOs are involved in acquisition of equipment and materials as preparedness measures to facilitate effective response to disasters. To date, the Government has acquired river boats to facilitate safe crossing of rivers where there are no bridges and 88 all weather tents to accommodate people during emergencies.

**CHALLENGES**

Many challenges still lie ahead but I will highlight only a few that impact highly on slow performance in implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

- The main challenge is that of mainstreaming of DRR in development plans. Success in DRR can only be achieved when all sectors of the economy have incorporated DRR in their plans and programs. Negotiations are underway to start the process of mainstreaming into the two most important national documents of Vision 2020 and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRS).
- Financial and human (expertise) resources capacity also form part of the constraints to successful implementation of DRR activities in the country.
- Inadequate capacity to respond effectively to disasters. The required type of equipment include, fire fighting equipment, equipment that is used during road accidents such as jaws of life and equipment that is used to remove snow from the roads along major corridors.

## **WAYFORWARD AND CONCLUSION**

It is against the preceding background that the country has decided to engage in the process of mainstreaming that is aimed at bringing everybody/sector on board. Formation and training of VDMTs will be maintained as the VDMTs are considered to be the backbone of DRR as the impacts of disasters are felt most by communities. Finalization of the DRR policy and conducting of awareness campaigns will also form an important part of the country's activities this year sustainable capacity building remains another challenge.

In conclusion, DRR still remains a relatively new concept for the majority of the population. Therefore, the Government remains with a mammoth task of information dissemination and awareness campaigns in order to bring all sectors of the economy to the same level of understanding and awareness. It is only then that the occurrence of disasters can be minimized and effective response be achieved. In this way, people's livelihoods can be maintained and improved thereby reducing the level of poverty.

Lesotho is committed to responding fully to the call of Hyogo Framework of Action. Every effort will be made within Lesotho's ability to be equal to the task at hand. We invite our partners to stick with us in this journey. We invite others to join hands with us on the way forward.

**THANK YOU.**