

LESOTHO



Lesotho U.S. foreign assistance priorities are focused on assisting the Government of Lesotho in its efforts to address the country's HIV/AIDS crisis through prevention, care, and treatment programs. Further efforts are directed at developing human resource capacity in the health field, building more strategic health systems, and expanding services to orphans and vulnerable children.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Lesotho's geographic location makes it extremely vulnerable to political and economic developments in South Africa. It is a member of many regional economic organizations including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). Lesotho also is active in the United Nations, the African Union, the Nonaligned Movement, the Commonwealth, and many other international organizations. In addition to the United States, South Africa, China, Libya, Ireland, and the European Union all currently retain resident diplomatic missions in Lesotho. The United Nations is represented by a resident mission as well, including UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP, and UNAIDS.

Lesotho has historically maintained generally close ties with the United States, European Union member states, and other Western countries. Although Lesotho decided in 1990 to break relations with the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) and reestablish relations with Taiwan, in 1993 the nation restored ties with the P.R.C. Lesotho also recognizes Palestine as a state, was a strong public supporter of the end of apartheid in South Africa, and granted a number of South African refugees political asylum during the apartheid era.

U.S.-LESOTHO RELATIONS

The United States was one of the first four countries to establish an embassy in Maseru after Lesotho gained its independence from Great Britain in 1966. Since this time, Lesotho and the United States have consistently maintained productive bilateral relations. In 1996, the United States closed its resident bilateral aid program in Lesotho. In 2007, however, the Government of Lesotho signed a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation to provide \$362.5 million in support over the next five years to develop Lesotho's water, healthcare infrastructure, and private sector. An in-country program to support PEPFAR was established in 2005 and also includes representatives of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Centers for Disease Control. The Peace Corps has operated in Lesotho since 1966. About 80 Peace Corps volunteers concentrate in the sectors of health, agriculture, education, rural community development, and the environment. The Government of Lesotho encourages greater American participation in commercial life and welcomes interest from potential U.S. investors and suppliers.

Peace and Security: Funding provided through the Department of State, will be used to further professionalize the Lesotho Defense Force by supporting programs that emphasize leadership, management, civilian-military relations, improved health of the armed forces, and human rights. This training will also serve to safeguard against anti-democratic behavior and to solidify civilian-military cooperation.

Investing in People: Linkages with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR): Lesotho will receive significant support to build partnerships to provide integrated prevention, care and treatment

programs throughout the country and support orphans and vulnerable children.

Linkages with the Millennium Challenge Corporation

Lesotho signed a Millennium Challenge Corporation compact agreement in July 2007. Entry-into-force began in September 2008. The compact program focuses on water infrastructure; health infrastructure and human resources; and improvements in the business and investment climate. The supply of potable water to household and industrial users will be increased. Health care infrastructure investments are designed to extend medical care to rural populations, increase the quality of care, and ensure that sufficient medical staff is available to sustain higher levels of service. Programs to improve the business and investment climate will include reforms of judicial procedures and commercial law, border and customs procedures, as well as financial infrastructure and property rights. All of these activities are aimed at helping Lesotho attract new investment to develop value-added manufacturing and increase employment.