



## **LHDA supports Community Based Field Demonstration at Sekokong in Mokhotlong**



As part of the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) legal obligation to restore the livelihoods of individuals, households and communities affected by the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, the LHDA Phase II livelihoods restoration team has embarked on a farming project with Sekokong Community members. These the LHDA does as part of its obligation as specified in the Treaty of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (1986), the LHDA Order (1986) and the Phase II Agreement (2011).

Livelihoods in the project area revolve around both “on farm” and “off-farm” livelihoods activities in the form of subsistence agriculture, various forms of employment, and natural resource harvesting. In Mokhotlong, most households have access to agricultural fields, however, very few survive solely on agricultural endeavors. Livestock is owned by some households, with the larger herds being owned by few households at the top of the economic pyramid. Neither crops nor livestock farming seem to significantly generate substantial income for households to improve their livelihoods.

To address the prevailing conditions while also affirming LHDA’s commitment to livelihoods restoration and improvement, the LHWP Integrated Catchment Management Strategy and Livelihood Restoration Framework emphasizes the promotion of alternative livelihood options. Pivotal to this approach is a strong push towards market-oriented production, which seeks to enhance agricultural practices on available land. This shift aims to diversify household incomes and improve overall livelihoods by improving agricultural techniques, expanding opportunities for income generation, and reducing dependency on traditional farming methods.

A notable example of this commitment is the community-based field demonstration piloted at Sekokong, where LHDA partnered with seven (7) local farming households to support potato production using share-cropping model.

Recognizing the dedication of these farmers who had already invested in field operations (ploughing) and general field management (weeding and ridging), in 2023/2024 cropping season, LHDA provided 300 bags of 25 kgs of seed potato, sixty (60) bags of 50 kgs fertilizer, and 1500 bags (10kg bags) of harvesting materials to enhance their efforts, covering an area of 45.5 acres or 18.2 hectares.

This initiative fostered a strong partnership between the LHDA team and the community, ensuring a successful and impactful project. The agricultural inputs coupled with technical support from LHDA and solidarity with the hardworking community of Sekokong, successfully accumulated proceeds of approximately M100,000.00 from the sales of potatoes. This empowering feat has bolstered the farmers to seize their potential for intensive production that can tackle broad market needs.

The remarkable yield also served as an eye-opener to the existing market channels which effectively absorbed the harvest of the potatoes.

According to Miss Boitumelo 'Mote, the Polihali Branch Agricultural Officer Grops, after engaging with the National Lesotho Potato Association, the farmers were assisted to acquire market from the diamond mines (Letseng and Kao).

