



**Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Compilation Report**

**- Universal Periodic Review:**

**The Kingdom of Lesotho**

**I. Background and current conditions:**

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a landlocked country, surrounded by South Africa, with a population of about 1.8 million people. Notwithstanding its small size (30,355 sq km), Lesotho perceives itself as a country of significance in the global scheme of refugee protection. During the apartheid regime, Lesotho was a host country for thousands of South African refugees. It is a Party to all relevant refugee instruments, namely: the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The State has also enacted appropriate national refugee legislation.

Lesotho is a member of UNHCR's Executive Committee (EXCOM), and has played an active role within the EXCOM framework

**II. Achievements and best practices**

In 1997, UNHCR phased out its administrative presence in Lesotho, but continues to undertake its responsibilities in terms of refugee protection through the auspices of UNDP.

Lesotho currently hosts about 64 refugees of various nationalities. The majority of refugees living in Lesotho are fully integrated and do not require any form of assistance from UNHCR. They are economically productive and self-sufficient, some are employed as teachers, doctors and radiographers. The legislative framework and the Government's policy favour local integration. Refugees have the right to work, freedom of movement and they have access to social services. The Government provides social grants in the amount of 400 Rand per month, as well as free accommodation and utilities for persons with specific needs. The Government promotes local integration for

refugees as a policy to the highest possible effect, despite the challenges of the economic crisis.

UNHCR in Lesotho has been focusing on promoting local integration for the limited number of refugees in the country and on encouraging continuation of the generous practices of the Government, such as unconditionally granting citizenship to all refugees, who have resided in the country for five years or more.

UNHCR appreciates Lesotho's staunch and consistent protection of refugees. While the number of refugees currently hosted in the country, may be relatively small, the contribution by the Kingdom of Lesotho should be acknowledged.

### **III. Challenges and Constraints**

The changing economic and financial climate has had a serious impact on small nations like Lesotho, making it difficult for the State to avail the necessary resources even to its citizens, let alone refugees. This was highlighted in the recent UNHCR mission to Lesotho, where several vulnerable refugees had difficulties in accessing grants from the Government. In addition, the prevailing economic situation has fuelled xenophobic attitudes in the population, which once used to be more receptive, because of the increase in competition for scarce resources and lack of employment opportunities for the larger population.

### **IV. Recommendations**

UNHCR urges the Government of Lesotho to work closely with UN Organisations and specialized agencies to further enhance integration policies and put in place programmes fostering tolerance.

**Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section  
Division of International Protection Services  
UNHCR  
November 2009**