

# Ministry of Environment and Forestry Lesotho



RANGELANDS • RECOGNIZE • RESPECT • RESTORE



INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS,  
DESERTIFICATION &  
DROUGHT DAY  
**17 JUNE 2026**

**VENUE: BEREA, SEBITIA**



## Lesotho Marks UNCCD Desertification and Drought Day and International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026

By Lerato Loke

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The first rays of sunlight spill across Sebitia's terraced hills, illuminating a landscape that tells two stories at once: one of hardship etched into the soil, and another of resilience rising from the community that calls it home. On Desertification and Drought Day 2026, Sebitia became the stage for a powerful narrative of struggle, renewal, and hope under the global theme *"Rangelands: Recognize, Respect, Restore."*

For the Basotho people, rangelands are more than stretches of grassland; they are the backbone of survival. Covering nearly 60 percent of Lesotho's territory, these lands feed livestock, provide medicinal plants, and yield resources such as thatch grass essential for daily living. Yet years of overgrazing, uncontrolled burning, soil erosion, and invasive species have left them scarred. Farmers and herders, whose livelihoods depend on these fragile ecosystems, have borne the brunt of the decline.



**Figure 1: Showcasing the restored rangelands in Sebitia, Berea District**

Among those gathered was Moeketsi Seisa, a 40-year-old herder who has lived with the consequences of degraded land. “We decided to come together as herders to rehabilitate our rangelands and put an end to the poor practices that were causing damage,” he explained. Once accustomed to burning rangelands in hopes of faster regrowth, Mr. Seisa now understands the long-term harm it caused. Training workshops by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry revealed how fire destroys grass seed, preventing regeneration.

For younger herders like Teboho Ramaema, 22, the lessons have been transformative. “For many of us, we lacked knowledge about sustainable range management. Since the training, we now practice rotational grazing, follow grazing plans, and apply deferred grazing. It has changed our behavior and our outlook,” he said, acknowledging the role herders themselves played in past degradation.



**Figure 2: Communities and students commemorating Desertification and Drought Day and International Year of Rangelands.**

The hardships of drought, livestock losses, dwindling wool and mohair proceeds pushed Sebitia’s pastoralists to act. Their collective decision to embrace sustainable practices marks a turning point. What was once a cycle of decline is slowly becoming a story of renewal, with visible signs of recovery across the hills.

The Honorable Minister of Environment and Forestry, Thabo Mofosi, praised Sebitia’s efforts, pledging continued government support. Subsidized grass seeds are already being distributed to accelerate rehabilitation, while legal frameworks are being strengthened to protect rangelands

nationwide. “Poor rangelands affect the productivity of livestock and agriculture as a whole,” Honorable Mofosi noted, underscoring the urgency of reform.



**Figure 3: Hon Minister for Environment and Forestry Hon Thabo Mofosi (3<sup>rd</sup> from the right)**

This year’s commemoration was more than symbolic. It was a recognition of pastoralists as custodians of the land. Their work embodies the spirit of the UNCCD’s mission: to combat desertification and drought by empowering communities to restore ecosystems.

Sebitia’s hills stand as living proof that the battle against desertification is not won in distant boardrooms but in the daily choices of herders, farmers, and communities who depend on the land. Their journey from degradation to restoration is evidence that knowledge, unity, and determination can heal even the most fragile ecosystems.

Lesotho’s pastoralists have shown that resilience is not merely about surviving droughts or enduring hardship; it is about transforming adversity into action. Their commitment to sustainable rangeland management is more than a local success; it is a beacon for the world. As the Mountain Kingdom joins the global community in commemorating Desertification and Drought Day, it sends a clear message: when people recognize the value of their land, respect its limits, and restore its vitality, they secure not only their livelihoods but also the future of generations to come.



**Figure 4: Herders during the Desertification and Drought Day 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026.**