



Resource Management



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The Lesotho Highland Water Transfer Project (LHWTP)

quiz



The Big Picture



What is the LHWTP?

The Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) is a large-scale water transfer scheme where water is diverted from the highlands of Lesotho to South Africa's Free State and the greater Johannesburg area, which desperately needs water. The project includes the construction of dams, reservoirs, and tunnels designed to capture the headwaters of the Senqu/Orange River in Lesotho and transfer it to South Africa.



Why was it introduced?

When complete, 200km of tunnels will transfer 2000 million m³ of water to South Africa annually. The project was introduced because:

- **South Africa's Demand:** South Africa has an ever-increasing demand for water due to urbanisation, economic growth, and a relatively dry climate.
- **Economic Benefits for Lesotho:** Lesotho sees this as an opportunity to generate revenue by selling water, which can be used for the country's development.
- **Environmental Conservation:** The project provides a clean and sustainable source of water for South Africa



LHWTP Advantages

Advantages to Lesotho:

- 💰 Provides 75% of its GDP and improve living standards. 1000s jobs have been created.
- 👤 It will meet Lesotho's HEP needs.
- 👤 The development of infrastructure such as roads and communication networks
- 👤 Areas benefit from improved water supply e.g. 90% of the population of the capital, Maseru.
- 👤 Sanitation coverage will increase from 15% to 20%.



Key Terms



Water conflict – A dispute about the distribution of fresh water.



Water insecurity – When water availability is not enough to ensure the population of an area enjoys good health, livelihood and earnings. This can be caused by water insufficiency or poor water quality.



Water transfer – Water transfer schemes attempt to make up for water shortages by constructing elaborate systems of canals, pipes, and dredging over long distances to transport water from one river basin to another.

Advantages to South Africa:

- 👤👤 Water security for South Africa
- 👤 Provides safe water for the 10% of the population without access to a safe supply.
- 💰 Sustains economic activity in Gauteng Province.
- 👤👤 Mitigates the effects of periodic droughts in the region.
- 👤 Freshwater reduces the acidity of the Vaal River Reservoir.



LHWTP Disadvantages

Disadvantages to Lesotho:

- 👤👤 The construction of the first two dams meant 30000 people have been displaced.
- 👤 The destruction of a unique wetland, as rivers no longer flood downstream of the dams.
- 👤👤 Corruption has prevented money and investment from reaching those affected.
- 💰 Over-reliance on revenues from water sales to South Africa may make Lesotho economically vulnerable.

Disadvantages to South Africa:

- 💰 Very expensive project - \$4 billion +
- 👤👤 40% of water is lost due to leaks.
- 👤 Increased water tariffs for the scheme are too high for the poorest people.
- 🏠 Reliance on Lesotho for a critical resource.
- 👤👤 Conflict over water rights could arise.