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THE HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE IN LESOTHO: A CASE STUDY OF MANTSEBO

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Working Paper No. 16
July
1990

DEMOGRAPHY UNIT
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INTRODUCTION

In the absence of available comprehensive national data for analysis, any data however limited it may be, is of interest to depict the population structure and size.

Lesotho like most progressive 3rd world countries has since 1966 been conducting censuses of classical nature on decennial basis (UN recommendation 1974). It does not however differ from most of these developing countries which collect census data but are not able to process the information even five (5) years after census-taking. The long gap between census-taking and the publication of results for public use makes the data a "mockery of itself", because, the so-called newly published data are, of course, at least six (6) years old, meaning that any analysis made therefrom does not present the current situation but that of six or more years back. The long delay of getting census data out, calls for micro surveys to be conducted, not as a cross-check or validation of census data, but for immediate use representing the national character.

Research work in Lesotho has attracted many people, both near and far. Americans, British and most nationals from developed world come to do research there. Currently, some international organizations provide funds for research to be done in Southern Africa in general and in Lesotho in particular. One of the reasons which draw researchers to Lesotho is obviously the unique position in which it lies geographically. It is the only country COMPLETELY surrounded by the Republic of South Africa.

The Republic of South Africa is characterised by the apartheid system and its evils. People who want to know more about Southern Africa would prefer to come to Lesotho rather than to the Republic for fear of going against world-wide sanctions placed against South Africa to isolate and condemn the practice of apartheid.

Lesotho, apart from being enclaved within the Republic, also has another unique position, in that, it is the only country in the world which lies completely on the top of mountains. All of the land is at a height of more than 1000 metres above sea level. It is a small and barren country with an area approximately 30350 square kilometres.

At the moment, its arable land is estimated at 300,000 hectares which is less than 10% of the total area. The rate of erosion is such that, according to governments' report, the arable land will be totally used up in fifty (50) years if the present rate (of erosion) persists (Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agric. Report; 1990).

The country is divided into four (4) ecological zones: lowlands, foothills, dongas and sandstone. The lowlands are a narrow strip of land lying West of the mountains ranges and less than 1830 metres above sea level.

Dongas which have flat-topped hills and scarred with erosion gullies constitute less than 20 percent of the total land area. A sandstone escarpment at a height of 1830 metres crosses the country along an axis from North-East to South-West. It divides the lowlands from the foothills. The mountains which lie beyond the foothills rise to a rolling upland plateau in the North-East at about 2740m. The highest peak is Thabana Ntlenyana. The lowlands contain seven (7) out of the ten (10) district headquarters towns, most of the population and the best agricultural land.

Because of the high altitude, the climate of Lesotho is healthy and temperate. The average annual rainfall of 700 millimetres is concentrated in the summer months from October to April and very little falls in the winter months from May to September.

More than 92 percent of Lesotho's population lived in the rural areas by 1971. But now, because of the rural-urban migration in search of white-collar-jobs this percentage has decreased. The rural-urban growth has been at a rate between 7% and 15% in the last decade. The annual growth of 5.5% has decreased the rural population to about 84%. The people live in villages whose mean size varies between 94 persons per village in the district of Mophale's Hoek and 232 persons in Leribe district. The actual range of variation in village size is much greater, from a minimum of 40 persons to a maximum of about 1000.

Village homesteads in Lesotho are clustered around a central area (that is, the chief's place) and NOT dispersed across the landscape as in the Transkei and Zululand. The relatively concentrated settlement pattern is consistent both with high veld ecology (Sansom 1974) and with the Sotho political tradition (Kuper 1975).

On the whole, about 70 percent of the population lived in the lowlands and foothills, whereas the mountains, the largest of the zones in area are relatively sparsely populated. Resident population densities in 1976 were projected as 35 persons per square km in Lesotho as a whole and 275 persons/square km of available arable land. The corresponding figures for the lowlands only were, 80 and 219 persons per square km (Monyake 1973: 90-92). At the moment, the density for the whole country is estimated as 51 persons per square km. These figures illustrate the intensity of the pressure on the country's very limited land resources.

Lesotho's economy is inextricably linked with South Africa's. The Southern African Custom's Union (SACU) agreement negotiated between Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa provides for the distribution of customs revenues between the 4 countries according to a set formula. Revenue from the Customs Union Agreement is the largest single item of revenue accruing to Lesotho. But this has negative effect on Lesotho because of the unrestricted access to Lesotho markets of South African goods. Another effect on the Lesotho economy in recent years has been the importation of inflation from South Africa. In fact, Lesotho depends totally on South African goods.

Lesotho's economy showed a steady increase during the 1980's and her GNP rose by 24.4% in real terms. However, the increase in her population meant that GNP per capita in fact fell. Lesotho's GDP and GNP differ widely because of migrant labour. Some 125500 Basotho men work in the mines of South Africa but their income contributes to Lesotho's GNP through deferred payments. The number of migrant workers is declining and this could lead to severe unemployment problems for Lesotho in the next decade. Because Lesotho's economy is dominated by South Africa through (SACU), she has less control over her economic affairs than many other countries. With changes in South Africa, Lesotho's future is uncertain.

Lesotho having all aforementioned characteristics, will the demographic behaviour of Basotho be influenced by them? Will they have the same fertility and mortality rates as the other Southern African states? Will their household structure be different from the others? What will be the household size compared with other countries? Will the age sex structure of Lesotho be the same as other African countries?

The aim of this study is to attempt to answer some of these questions, using the survey conducted at Mantsebo as the principal data.

ONE: DATA

The data for this analysis comes from a survey conducted at Mantsebo between December 18 and 22nd 1990. Mantsebo is a "big" village in Maseru district, about thirty five (35) km from the capital (Maseru 'city'). It is thus found in the lowland area/region where the density is high and arable land for agricultural production is very important. Since Mantsebo is only a few kilometres from the capital, one can suspect that some of the inhabitants work in the city, thus the life style is likely to be influenced by the city dwellers. Almost all the inhabitants are farmers, the majority of them being women whose husbands are migrant workers living in the Republic.

The choice of Mantsebo is appropriate, for, it has both rural nature and urban-influence. They (the inhabitants) are villagers who are not completely detached from the urban style.

The survey was a complete count, touching all the housing units in the village. In this sense, it was a census of people in the village with 'de jure' counting.

There are about 290 households altogether with a population of about 1630 people out of which the males numbered 784 and females 845, resulting in a sex ratio of 92.7 males per 100 females. The sex ratios from the 1976 and 1986 censuses respectively give 93.3 and 95.7.

The number of children under 15 years is 651 constituting about 40 percent as against 39.9, and 40.8% for 1976 and 1986 censuses respectively.

The sex ratios for the children under 15 years are thus 103,4; 100,4; and 103,2; respectively for the survey and the 1976 and 1986 censuses in that order.

Table 1.1 gives a quick comparison of 1976, 1986 census and the survey's data for the broad population groups by sex.

TABLE 1.1 (A) PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF BROAD AGE GROUPS BY SEX

AGE GROUPS	WOMEN			MEN		
	1976	1986	SURVEY	1976	1986	SURVEY
0 - 14	38,6	39,2	37,9	41,2	42,5	42,4
15 - 64	55,0	54,7	56,8	54,7	53,6	54,3
65+	6,4	6,1	5,3	4,1	3,9	3,3

TABLE 1.1 (B) SEX RATIO OF BROAD AGE GROUPS

AGE GROUP	1976	1986	SURVEY
0 - 14	100,1	103,2	103,4
15 - 64	92,2	94,1	89,0
65+	60,0	62,3	57,8

The survey population consists of almost illiterates who do not know their ages accurately. Therefore analysis of data with respect to age should be taken with some degree of reservation and caution.

On the whole, the population classified by age and sex is nearly like what Table 1.2 below shows:-

TABLE 1.2: PERCENTAGE OF AGE/SEX

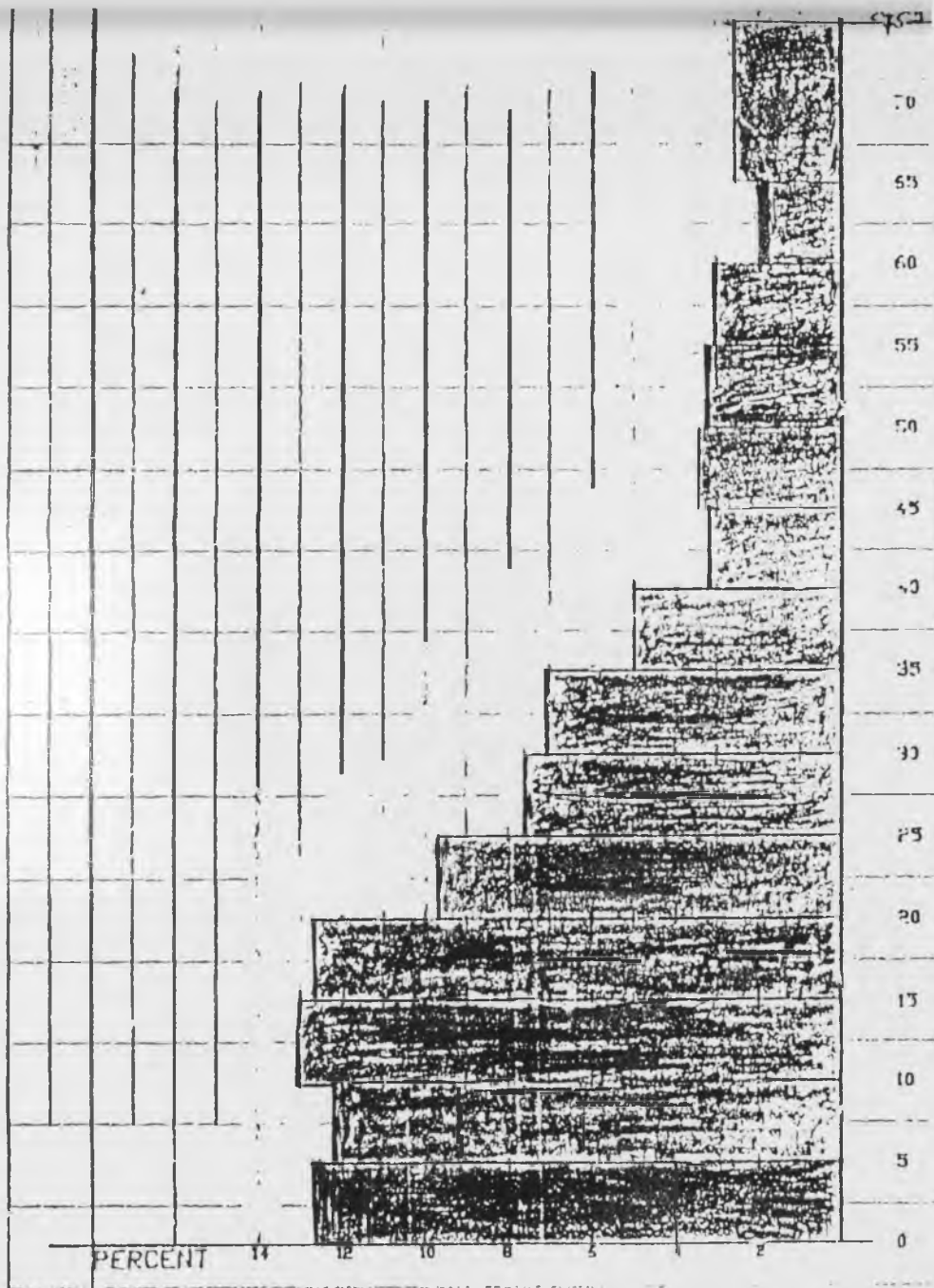
AGE GROUP	M	%	FEM	%	TOTAL	%
0 - 4	116	14.8	107	12.7	223	13.7
5 - 9	111	14.2	103	12.2	214	13.1
10 - 14	104	13.3	110	13.0	214	13.1
15 - 19	83	10.6	107	12.7	190	11.7
20 - 24	58	7.4	82	9.7	140	8.6
25 - 29	64	8.2	64	7.6	128	7.9
30 - 34	52	6.6	60	7.1	112	6.9
35 - 39	52	6.6	42	5.0	94	5.8
40 - 44	34	4.3	27	3.2	61	3.7
45 - 49	23	2.9	29	3.4	52	3.2
50 - 54	25	3.2	28	3.3	53	3.3
55 - 59	16	2.0	26	3.1	42	2.6
60 - 64	20	2.6	15	1.8	35	2.2
65+	26	3.3	45	5.3	71	4.4
	784	100.0	845	100.0	1629	100.0

even though the age classification has some degree of uncertainty, the percentage distribution of the population does not deviate much from those of the censuses data for the whole country. Table 1.3 gives such comparison.

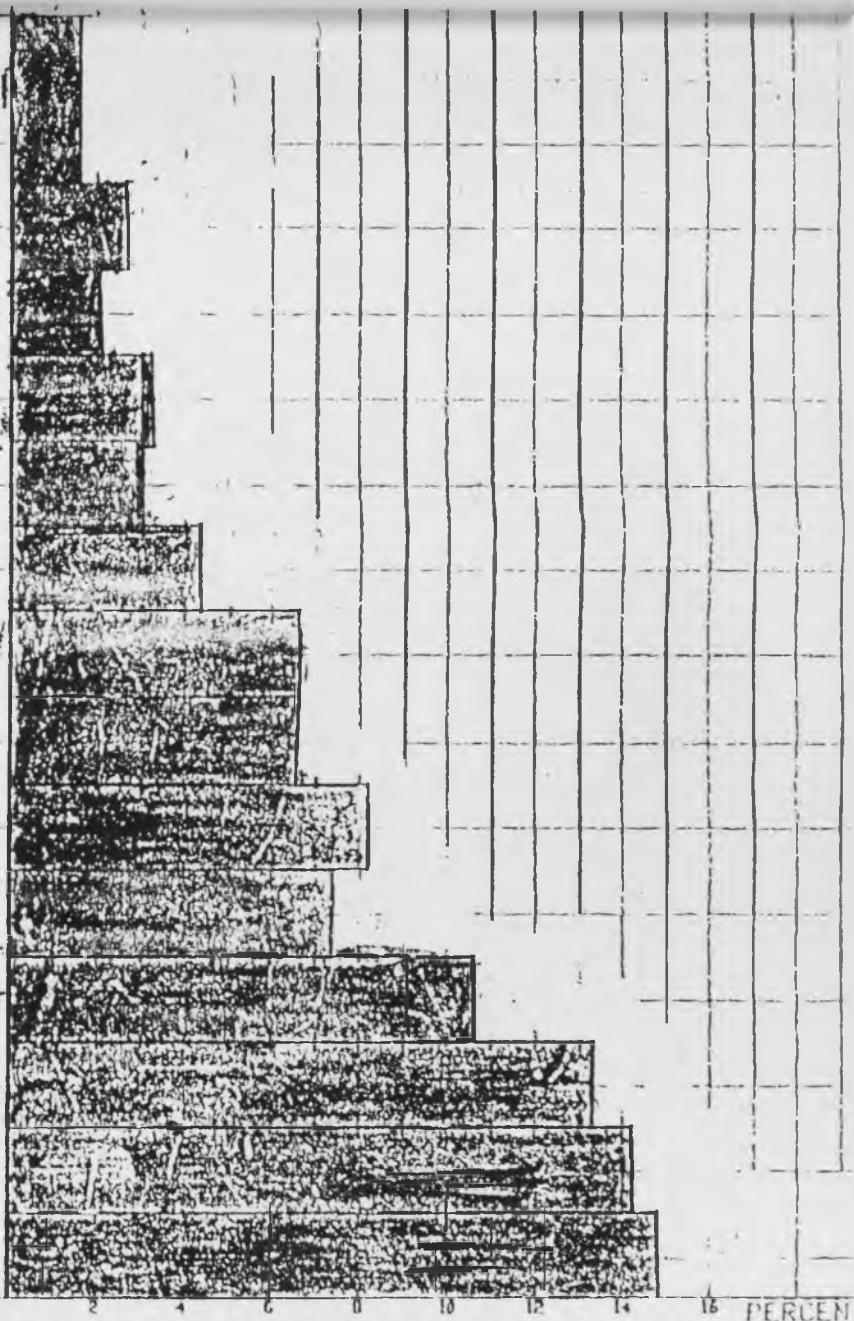
TABLE 1.3: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AGE SEX
BY CENSUS AND SURVEY

AGE GROUP	WOMEN			MEN		
	1976	1986	SURVEY	1976	1986	SURVEY
0 - 4	13.5	12.9	12.7	14.7	13.9	14.8
5 - 9	12.4	13.5	12.2	13.6	14.7	14.2
10 - 14	12.6	12.8	13.0	13.1	18.8	13.3
15 - 19	10.7	10.7	12.7	10.2	11.2	10.6
20 - 24	8.9	8.8	9.7	8.3	8.4	7.4
25 - 29	6.8	7.5	7.6	7.2	6.6	8.2
30 - 34	5.6	5.8	7.1	5.6	5.4	6.6
35 - 39	4.8	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.2	6.6
40 - 44	5.2	3.9	3.2	5.3	4.2	4.3
45 - 49	3.8	4.2	3.4	3.9	4.3	2.9
50 - 54	3.3	3.8	3.3	3.2	3.6	3.2
55 - 59	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.6	2.7	2.0
60 - 64	2.5	2.0	1.8	2.0	1.9	2.5
65+	6.4	6.1	5.3	4.1	4.0	3.3

SOURCE: BOS July 1989, op. cit., P. 4.



FEMALES



MAI EC

PERCENT

A look at the age distribution does not show any consistent regularity in any of the data. The 1976 distribution of the female population shows some "errors" in the age groups 5 - 9, 40 - 44 and 55 - 59. While age group 5 - 9 appears to suffer undercount or shifting of age (misreporting of age) to disfavour the group, 40 - 44 and 55 - 59 groups show overcounts or misreporting of age to heap the numbers. In 1986, the same sex suffers undercounts in age groups 0 - 4 and 40 - 44.

The survey tells something 'different' for the same sex. Either the age groups 0 - 4 and 5 - 9 were undercounted or the groups 10 - 14 and 15 - 19 were overcounted. From the population pyramid in Fig 1 above, it is clear that there is some error. of undercount in the group 40 - 44. The age group 40 - 44 seems to be the only group for the women where all the three data show "errors" - overcount in 1976 and undercounts in 1986 census and the survey. One may ask why this group has problems all the time? Do women in this group who have relatively 'more' children report of being in the 45 - 49 group and those with relatively fewer children declaring their ages as 35 - 39 years? Certainly, it cannot be due to counting, the reason should be misreporting of age.

For the masculine sex, the 1976 census data shows 'errors' in age groups 40 - 44 and 55 - 59. There were overcounts or misreporting in these groups. Incidentally, both sexes record the same "overcounting" in these specific age groups. Should the "errors" therefore be from the part of respondents or from "analytical" part due to editing, computation or data-processing by the Statistician?

The male data for 1986 appears to have slightly better structure than the female. There is an apparent undercount in 0 - 4 age group and a similar error in less magnitude in 40 - 44.

The 1976 and 1986 censuses show roughly the same errors in the same age groups for both sexes. Like it is stated above, in 1976, the errors (overcounting or misreporting of age) were apparent in groups 40 - 44 and 55 - 59. In 1986, the errors (undercount) were clearly seen in 0 - 4 and 40 - 44. The 40 - 44 problem cuts across the four sets. Women 1976 and 1986 and men 1976 and 86.

As far as the male data for the survey was concerned the 'errors' were many. Again, the figure 1 above shows that there were either undercounts in 20 - 24 and 30 - 34 groups or some overcounts in 25 - 29. Then the same inconsistency is repeated from age group 45 - 49 to 55 - 59; either undercounts in 45 - 49 and 55 - 59, or overcounts in 50 - 54. The irregularity in the males' structure can best be explained by the fact that, the ages were not reported by the men themselves. Rather, their wives reported the ages of their husbands who are away either in the Republic or to less extent in the fields. These wives certainly do not know the exact ages of their husbands. This characteristic is not peculiar with Mantsebo or Lesotho, but with all Africans. Majority of the literate (educated), Africans do not know the exact ages of

their spouses, let alone the illiterates. For the illiterates, the individuals do not even know their exact ages, how come they can tell the exact ages of their brothers, sisters or their spouses?? Until recently, most Africans did not know about birth certificates, and the importance of reporting births after delivery is still to be understood by the illiterate folks. Reporting birth events and subsequent issue of birth certificates are steps for ensuring exact and accurate dates of birth. But, in Mantsebo, parents do not report the births of their babies with urgency because, they claim that, those who do so take years, between 2 to 3 years - to receive birth certificates. Issuing of simple birth certificates from Maseru, Birth Registration Office, only 35Km from Mantsebo takes 2 years or more.

Even though, the age classification has some degree of uncertainty, the trend between the two sexes needs some comment. The male population for the children less than fifteen (15) years, is more than the female counterpart of the same age group. The sex ratio for this group is 103. From 15 years up, the number of women becomes more than men as anywhere else in the world. Nevertheless, the difference between the sexes cannot be purely attributed to high attrition rate due to high mortality rate of men, because, in some countries like Equatorial Guinea and Togo, the sex ratio for the broad age group 15 - 64 years is over 95 while it is 88 here in Lesotho (see Table 1.4 below). Furthermore, while these countries give sex ratio for the aged population, 65 years and above, as 80, the same ratio is only 58 here in Lesotho. One therefore can conclude that, apart from other errors due to counting, misreporting of age and the rest, there is an important factor which brings about this widening difference. This factor is obviously the migrant worker/labour issue. It is this factor which can best describe the figures above. Even though, the counting was "de jure" one can imagine that workers who had left Mantsebo or the country for some years are clearly excluded. Some of the household heads or respondents might not have been able to recollect such people. Migrant workers who have not been coming home frequently and who are NO LONGER SENDING IN MONEY regularly are likely to be left out.

TABLE 1.4: SEX RATIO OF THE BROAD AGE GROUPS BY COUNTRY

AGE GROUP	EQUATORIAL GUINEA	TOGO	LESOTHO
0 - 14	100,0	100,8	103,4
15 - 64	95,1	96,4	89,0
65+	80,0	80,3	57,8

TWO: HOUSEHOLD

2.0 Before tackling the analysis in this Section it may be necessary to define the concept of household as used in this analysis; because the definition of the word "household" is itself a problem. Household sizes have differed in many cases because the definition has changed. Household here is defined as consisting of all members living in a HOUSING UNIT and who provide for their own food and other means of living. The members were either all present at "home" at the time of survey or some were absent, either gone to field, farm, to Maseru for shopping, to work or to South Africa where they live as migrant workers.

This definition does not differ much from the national definition for households, nor does it differ much from even international definition.

"In Lesotho, almost all men and a few women spend most of their middle years absent from their rural homes. Yet, when their working lives are over, the large majority return home to settle permanently. Membership of a particular household is expressed in terms of a continuing responsibility to contribute towards its maintenance. Thus, household is not defined in terms of a co-residential group, nor is it defined by criteria of kinship. Although its members are almost invariably kin of one sort or another, there is striking variation in actual kinship composition both between households and within households over time. The term household like in many countries does not have an equivalent term in Basotho language the Sesotho. The terms "Ntlo" and "Lelapa" used to equate household, both have physical referents, respectively to the hut and to the yard - the enclosed domestic space outside the hut. Both are used to refer to the house or the - property within a complex house. Lelapa may refer both to the nuclear family as the basic form of domestic association and to the wider agnatic family.

(Homestead is the area occupied by those members of the household who are resident in the reference community.

It consists of one or two or several huts, often forming the apices of a small enclosure which afford, some domestic privacy, bounded by mud-brick walls or a high need fence known as Seotloana).

Mixed households then comprise resident members who occupy a homestead in a Lesotho village and one or more absent members who may be contributing to its income. It is difficult to distinguish clearly between its tangible manifestation as a partially co-residential group and its overall functional manifestation in terms of income-generating activities. The term household is retained when referring to both these aspects of its identity, because the household remains the unit of economic viability whether or not its members are physically dispersed at any one time. It is however absurd at times, because in the village, the term means or refers to actual residents. (Those we live with) "ba o le lulang le bona" or to those who eat from one pot "ba jang potong e le 'ngoe" and to absent migrants as those who make us live.." (Murray 1980: 47 - 49).

The Labour Force Survey (1985/86) defined household to consist of persons who provide for their own food and other means of living. Absent members who expect to go back to the household were included e.g. migrant workers who temporarily or permanently work outside Lesotho or migrant workers temporarily living or working elsewhere in Lesotho including students, patients in hospitals etc.

Similarly, the Household Budget Survey 1986/87, defined a household as a group of persons who live together in the same compound or dwellings and share the same sleeping facilities and/or the same cooking or eating facilities. Servants living in the household and sharing the same cooking or eating arrangements are considered members. However, if they have their own quarters (even within the same compound) where they sleep and prepare their own meals, they are taken to constitute separate households.

Then in the 1986 census also, the definition of a household was taken as consisting of a person or a group of persons who live together and have common catering arrangements, whether or not they are related by blood or marriage.

At international level, the term household is defined as a group of several persons who provide their food and basic vital needs in common (United Nations 1970); or in common under the same roof (Multilingual Demographic Dictionary 1981). In practice, the household is often defined as a group of persons living within the same residence and taking their meals in common.

Clearly we see that, the definition of 'household' used in the Labour Force Survey differs a bit from the definition used in the HBS and for this survey. One will therefore not be surprised if the household sizes from Labour Force Survey differs from that of HBS or from this survey.

In Madagashy, the general census recorded the mean sizes as 4,5, but a demographic survey held in 1966 put the average household size as 5,3. Whereas the 1966 survey defined household in the light of people who pull their resources together, and live together as one (i.e. budgetary household), the census definition insisted on the number of people living together under the same roof (habitat) [CAHLERS 1986 P. 6].

2.1 FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS:

The survey recorded a total of 287 households in Mantsebo; out of which the number of households headed by women was seventy (70) and that headed by men was 217 households. Thus, the households headed by females constituted 24,4 percent and those headed by men, 75,6 percent.

As we shall see later, the proportion of households headed by females, being 24,4%, is substantial compared with the proportion of households headed by females from other countries. But when we compare this figure with those estimated for the whole country in 1986, the survey figure is the smallest. The following Table shows the national figures.

TABLE 2.1 - HOUSEHOLD HEAD BY SEX

REGION	WOMEN (%)	MEN (%)
URBAN MASERU	25.2	74.8
OTHER URBAN	37.0	63
ALL RURAL	26.5	73.5
SURVEY	24.4	75.6
SURVEY (BY SEMBAJWE)	31.1	68.5
LESOTHO	27.6	72.4

SOURCE:[i] Lesotho Household Income, Expenditure and Consumption Survey 1986/87.

[ii] BOS, Basotho women and their men, July 1989, P. 9.

From the Table above, we see that the proportion of households headed by women is the smallest for the survey and largest for the other urban regions in Lesotho, i.e. 24.4% against 37%. The female proportion for the national figure which is 27.6% lies between them and in fact, closer to the survey figure than the "Other Urban." The definitions used for data collection seem to be the same, therefore these differences might represent the true character.

Note that, in 1986, there were about 330,000 households in Lesotho out of which 278000 were in rural areas and 52000 were in urban areas. There were about 84 percent of the total households in rural areas and 16 in the urban areas. The urban households are increasing due to rural-urban migration which has increased the urban population by 12 percent i.e (between 7% to 15%) during the last decade. The population in Maseru doubled from 55031 in 1976 to 109382 in 1986 being approximately 7 percent per annum. It is estimated that by 1996, Maseru will have about 210000 inhabitants.

Though we do not have concrete statistics about the composition and size of households in Maseru, one can expect that, household size will be small, with 1 - 2 person(s) households being a considerable amount. One can expect to see young men and young girls who are wage workers in Maseru, living on their own.

In Lesotho, the female population is more educated than the male population. Hence, there will be more females (educated and semi-educated, young or mature, and/or single) living on their own in one-person household working in Maseru or other urban areas. These ladies will definitely be the heads of their households.

For the female headed households, the national value of 27.6% puts Lesotho as one of the highest proportion in the 3rd world countries. In Africa, the proportions range from 10.5% in Ivory Coast to 29.5% in Kenya (Therese Locoh 1988:14) with Bukina Fasso having an exceptional low value of 5%.

In Latin America however the proportion of households headed by women/females is between 13.6% in Mexico and 20.8% in Dominican Republic. Thus some African countries like Rwanda, (25.1%) Lesotho, (27.6%) and Kenya, (29.5%) have higher proportions of households headed by females than in Latin America. In Asia and middle East, the proportion is even less, because their culture makes women more submissive and less independent. For example, in the Arab world in the Middle East, women do not have that independence to be heads. The moslem tradition makes them 'slaves' to men. Their participation rate to domestic issues and social life is too small.

In Asia, however, it is the extended family system that forbids or prevents women to assuming important roles. Nonetheless, with industrialisation, education and urbanisation touching the people, women participation rate has gone up in places like Taiwan, Thailand Singapore and the rest. Female headed households have thus increased in these places, and one person households among women is likely to have increased considerably.

The survey figure of 24.4% is a more plausible figure than the other urbans whose value of 37% is the highest ever known.

In Rwanda, the high percentage of households headed by women was explained by:-

Widowhood, spatial displacement of married men from their homes to work elsewhere, by temporary absence from home to other places during the census period; and most importantly due to emigration of married men to other neighbouring countries - - to Uganda because of tribal conflicts resulting in vindictiveness by Government, or to Kivu to work in the mines.

The high proportion of households headed by women in Ghana is due to: businesswomen, traders and professionals (be they married or not) who have their own households. In Ghana, quite a substantial percentage of female headed households are young unmarried "ladies" who, because of their "lucrative" profession, create their own households. In most African countries very few young unmarried ladies have their own households. But in Ghana and some other places where economic situation has forced young ladies to migrate, this is not so.

What could be the reasons for the high percentage of female household heads in Lesotho and Kenya? Certainly, the migrant labour system in Lesotho is the major reason that makes women to become heads. But is there any other reason or that is the sole reason? Admittedly, over thirty (30) percent of the men aging between 18 and 54 years live outside Lesotho working. So is that the explanation?

Migrant workers, usually outside Lesotho, were most common among the rural households. Almost half i.e. forty-seven (47) percent of these households had at least one migrant worker compared with only one fourth (i.e. 23) twenty-three percent of the urban households. Two or more migrant workers were more prevalent among rural households, which send 5 percent than among urban households when send 2 percent.

A survey on Lesotho Households Income, Expenditure and Consumption, 1986/87 indicates that the main source of income for the majority of Basotho households is remittances from the mine migrant workers in the Republic of South Africa. The second and third most important sources of income are subsistence farming, wages and salaries. The distribution of heads of household by sex shows some important differences. For female headed households, for instance, subsistence farming seems to be the most important main source of income with the migrant remittances and wages and salaries ranking as the second and third important major sources of income. For the male headed households, on the other hand, migrant remittances is strongly dominating.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

The total population of Mantsebo according to the survey was 1629. These people were found in a total of 287 households, hence the average household size gives 5.7 persons.

The average number of members in a household according to the Labour Force Survey was 5.3, and according to a survey by Sembajwe and Makatjane - Fertility and Mortality Survey 1987 - was 5.4.

The survey figure of 5.7 is not surprising because Mantsebo being in a lowland region, is normally expected to be densely populated. Its proximity to the capital even makes it more densely populated. Of course, the Fertility and Mortality Survey was carried out in Mohale's Hoek district, another lowland region, however, its distance from the capital can cause a difference in density. Besides, Mohale's Hoek is the only lowland region with the lowest density. It is the LEAST densely populated district in the lowlands. The Labour Force Survey was of a national character, and it is therefore not surprising that it yields a lower value, because in the mountain and Senqu regions, the densities are smaller, sparsely populated.

The average size of the capital itself will most likely not exceed 5 persons because of its considerable percentage of one-person households.

According to the 1986 population census, the average number of persons in a household was 4.8, a value which is far lower than all the survey figures; but which best explains the fact that the "wider" area of the country is sparsely populated and that most households are "less dense."

Survey figures in Mauritania and Sudan indicate that the average size of a household is 5.5 or thereabout.

The following Table shows households size from other surveys.

TABLE 2.2: HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY SURVEY

CAMEROON	5.5	SRI LANKA	5.8
MAURITANIA	5.7	SYRIA	6.8
MOROCCO	6.2	PERU	5.4
SUDAN	5.5	COLUMBIA	5.6

SOURCE:- WFS Comparative Studies, No. 45, December 1985.

All the figures are above five persons per household.

By contrast census figures hardly exceed 5 persons; confirming that censuses being total counts do have on the average, smaller household size than surveys. The following Table shows the comparison:

TABLE 2.3 - HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY CENSUS

GHANA	1970	4.9	CAMEROON	1976	5.2
RWANDA	1978	4.6	BURUNDI	1979	4.5
LESOTHO	1986	4.8	TANZANIA	1978	4.8

SOURCE: [i] National Censuses results.

[ii] National Censuses data, Theseuse Locoh: Structures familiales et changements sociaux, un edatement des structures traditionnelles, INED, 1987, P. 5.

From the two Tables above, we see clearly that the mean household sizes calculated from the censuses are lower than 5 persons for all the countries except Cameroon. On the other hand, the mean sizes calculated from the surveys are all more than 5 persons. In Syria, for instance, it is even more than 6 persons. The mean household sizes for Cameroon clearly confirms the above hypothesis, because the survey figure is 5,5 persons while the census figure is 5.2.

TRANSITION

The average household size was 5.0 according to the 1976 census. But the 1986 figure gives the mean as 4.8. Can one say that the average size of household is declining in Lesotho? If so what can be the causes?

In the developed world, literature shows us that countries had systematic decline in their average household sizes; save the United Kingdom which jumped from 4.4 persons in 1871 to 4.6 in 1891 before declining regularly (UN 1973: 341).

In Africa, however, previous analysis has shown that almost all the countries which have data for more than one occasion, have shown a rise in average household size (Kyei, 1988: 61). From the Table 2,4, we see that, apart from the Reunion, the household size has increased in all the countries. The decline in household size in the Reunion is well understood, because it is one of the countries in Africa where fertility has been controlled. At the moment, its total fertility rate is estimated as 2.1 persons, the Crude Birth Rate is 20 births per thousand. Obviously, Lesotho's fertility level and trend are not the same as Reunion, so where do we place Lesotho? Does its household size follow the

For the female households, the modal size is 3, the median 4 and the mean is 5 persons while the male households have 4 as the modal size, 5 as the median and the mean being 5,8 persons. In Rwanda, the mean household size was 4,6, that of the male households was 5 and the female households had 3,4 persons.

Like it has been stated above, these are not comparable, because Rwanda's data comes from census whilst this is survey. We have said that the sizes differ according to whether they are from census or from survey. Note that, while the survey gives 5,7 persons as the size for the country, the 1986 census puts it as 4,8 persons.

Below is a Table of percentage distribution of households by number of persons, by countries and by censuses and surveys.

TABLE 2.5: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD
BY NUMBER OF PERSONS BY COUNTRY

		LESO THO	CAME ROON	MORO CCO	MAUR TANIA	PERU	COLUM BIA	RWANDA
		(A)	(B)	(A)	(A)	(A)	(A)	(B)
1	PR. HSH.	2.8	12.9	4.5	7.3	7.3	5.4	7.7
2	PRS. HSH.	6.6	15.0	9.4	10.5	8.8	9.3	14.2
3	PRS. HSH.	12.2	13.0	9.6	12.5	11.8	13.1	17.2
4	PRS. HSH.	18.8	11.8	11.2	13.6	13.9	13.5	15.2
5	PRS. HSH.	15.7	10.4	11.5	13.1	14.7	13.7	13.1
6	PRS. HSH.	9.8	8.9	11.6	11.6	12.9	12.7	11.1
7	PRS. HSH.	10.8	7.1	11.5	9.5	10.8	9.4	8.7
8	PRS. HSH.	8.7	5.5	10.1	7.0	7.8	7.5	6.1
9	PRS. HSH.	5.6	4.0	7.4	4.9	5.0	5.6	3.7
10+	PRS. HSH.	9.1	11.4	13.1	10.0	7.0	9.8	3.0
		<u>100.1</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
MEAN		5.7	5.2	6.2	5.7	5.4	5.6	4.6

PRS. = PERSONS
HSH. = HOUSEHOLD

A = SURVEY
B = CENSUS

SOURCE: WFS - COMPARATIVE STUDIES NO. 45, DECEMBER 1985,
P. 66 - 67.

A close look at the Table shows that, the survey data does not deviate much from the survey data from Mauritania. They both have the modal household size as 4, median size as 5 and mean size of 5.7 persons. Nevertheless, whereas the proportions of households with more than 6 persons is 34.2 and 31.4 percent for Lesotho and Mauritania respectively, the one-person households differ markedly. We have only 2.8% from the survey while the Mauritania's figure is 7.3.

What could be the small value of 2.8% for Lesotho? Incidentally, it is the least value for all the one-person households ever known. In the earlier analysis, it was agreed that the more rural a country is, the smaller the value of one-person households. The more urbanized and industrialized a society is, the higher the proportion of one-person households. While the proportion of households with more than 6 persons is more or less the same for all the countries, ranging from 31.4 to 35 percent with only few exceptions, the difference in the one-person households is quite large, (i.e. from 2.8 to 12.98 percent).

Thus, Lesotho should be the MOST rural and the LEAST industrialized or urbanized of all of them; and Mantsebo is really a village!

The results from the Labour Force Survey show that the large households were more frequently found in the rural areas, which had (88) eighty-eight percent of all households in Lesotho. The proportion with 9 or more was 13 percent in rural areas compared with 6 percent in the urban areas. The equivalent figure for the survey is 14.6 percent, which is even higher than the rural figure. For small households with one or two persons, it was observed that, they were most frequent in urban areas. The following Table gives the comparison.

TABLE 2.5(B) HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE, 'REGION' & MANTSEBO

SIZE	URBAN(%)	RURAL(%)	LESOTHO(%)	SURVEY(%)
1 - 2	30.0	13.8	15.8	9.4
3 - 4	29.0	24.1	24.7	31.0
5 - 6	22.5	29.6	28.7	25.5
7 - 8	12.6	19.1	18.3	19.5
9+	5.9	13.3	12.4	14.6
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

SOURCE: COMPUTER TABLE 2.1

The proportion of one or two persons households is 30 percent for the urban areas, 13.8 for the rural, 15.8 for the whole country and only 9.4 percent from the survey. The survey figure is even smaller than that of the rural areas. Does it mean that Mantsebo is the smallest village in the country? Such characteristic needs more probing, certainly. Paradoxically, however, the modal household size is 3 - 4, just as the urban, while the rural areas and the national figure put the modal size as 5 - 6.

2.4

HOUSEHOLD-COMPOSITION

Out of the 287 households covered in the survey, only 10 of them were not found in SINGLE HOUSING UNITS. One housing unit contained three households and about three units housed two households each. The rest was such that each homestead (housing unit) contained a household.

Members of a particular household were, in fact, members of nucleus family comprising (absent) father, mother and children. On the average the survey gives de jure household composition as a man, his wife and three or four children of whom two are girls. Each household has two or three children below fifteen years and one youngster between the ages fifteen and twenty-four (15-24) and who incidentally is a female. Members of (horizontal) collateral relatives in households are not as prevalent as observed in Western and Eastern Africa. In these places, Western and Eastern, cousins, aunts and uncles do live in the same household, and circulation of children among relatives is common. (see Hilary, Page, 1986).

It is true that household composition in Lesotho is restricted to parents and their own children. But occasionally, one finds grand-children living with their grandparents. For example, a married son who is a migrant worker in the Republic of South Africa normally sends his "family" to live with his parents in the same household. This normally happens in the cases when the married son's wife is young or the marriage is young. His parents then become the custodian, looking after his wife and children, while he himself becomes the breadwinner of the entire family - mothers (parents), his wife and children.

In a case where an aged mother or parents have two or more married sons working in the mines, the youngest son's wife and children stay in the parents household; but the older sons' wives can stay on their own if matured enough and so wish. Otherwise all of them stay with their in-laws in the same household or in the same compound. Certainly, this practice is not applied strictly to the "educated" wives who are likely to be working in the urban areas. The contact with their in-laws, however, is regular even if they stay in urban areas.

The household composition from the survey is similar to what was obtained from the household Budget Survey 1986-87. They got the size to be 5.2 persons composed of two or more adults and three or more children. As it is expected, they found out that in Maseru, the most

common household composition is 2 adults and 1 - 2 children which constitutes 17.9 percent of all households. Concerning the other urban areas, they observed that most households are made up of three or more adults and three or more children, something similar to the survey's results.

The HBS report continued that, for one person households, Maseru has the highest percentage of 13.8 compared to 11.1 percent from the other urban areas, 6.9 percent for rural areas and 7.7 percent for all households. One-person households normally consist of widowed or divorced people staying alone or one member of a family unit staying alone while the rest of the family members, staying elsewhere.

2.5 ABSENT MEMBERS FROM THE HOUSEHOLD:

About 117 households out of the 287, being 40,8 percent have at least one male migrant worker in the Republic of South Africa. These migrants are almost all working in the mines. Only 12 percent of the households which send migrant workers to South Africa have more than 1 male worker, 88 percent of them (households) send only one person (man).

More than the other countries within the region, Lesotho depends on migrant labour. The average number of miners working in the gold and coal mines of South Africa rose to a peak of 129000 in 1977, part of an estimated total of 174000 Basotho working in all sections in South Africa. After 1977, as a result of mechanisation in the mines and economic constraints in the mining sector, few new miners have been recruited resulting in an increase of criminal activity amongst frustrated youths.

Many miners go straight from herding at remote cattle posts in the mountains to the strenuous mining work at the age of 18. 50% can neither read nor write and spend 35% of their working life (15 years) away from home. 50% of all miners have no agricultural land and the major impact of the migrant labour system is that the responsibility for raising of children is left entirely with their wives left behind (Murray 1980, P. 68).

Looking at the proportion of men aged between 20 and 60 years who leave Lesotho to work in the Republic, the survey reveals that 32 percent does so. The average age of these migrant workers is 38,1 years, and according to Murray, the duration of their stay while working outside Lesotho is between 15 and 33 years.

By contrast, the survey shows that only 15% of the households have male workers working outside the periphery of the survey area, Mantsebo. Since Mantsebo is near Maseru, one can believe that these male workers work in the city. These workers constitute 15 percent of the male population between 20 and 60 years. Their mean age is 42.4 years, an age which is higher than that of the migrant workers outside the country.

The reason for this higher mean age, could be that, these group constitutes retired migrant workers who are NOT strong enough to do agricultural/field work. Some even do not have land to do field work. They therefore decide to work as afternoon house guards or shop supervisors and the like. Of course there are some other younger men who may either be working in the offices as clerks in Maseru or some other big towns; or who may be drivers/mates and the rest. The mixture of these retired workers and the young clerks gives a mean age which is not too much deviated from the mean age of the other - migrant workers outside Lesotho.

On the other hand, the survey indicates that 9,1 percent of the households have women between the age group 20 - 55 years working outside the survey area. Those women incidentally constitute 9,9 percent of the women in the same age group 20 - 55 years. Their mean age is 28,9 years. Thus as expected, relatively younger women work in Maseru or other big towns, compared with some old men (retired) who work in big towns, outside the survey area.

HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP RATES

Establishing separate households is a function of age, and in fact, it is inversely proportional to age. A good index of the rate of separate household formation is the headship rate.

The concept of headship rate is very important because it is a way out for projecting households. Like economic activity (participation) rate, household headship rates also show some biases in the age-sex distribution. The rates are high for males and low for females. For the males, they are low for young ages below thirty years and high for those above thirty five. For women, they are generally low except at the advanced age of 60 years and above when their husbands had died and left them as heads.

When the rates are classified according to marital status, we get very high rates for married males, high for widowed females and low rates for unmarried (single), both males and females. The married female rates are obviously low since the man is more often declared as a head in married households. The woman becomes temporary head when the man is travelled or is working in different location or at the other extreme, when the man has more than one wife and stays with only one. The other wives then become heads in "their households." With the Akans in Ghana, the matrilineal system of inheritance (where the children belong to the mother-line) encourages married females to become heads. In the rural areas or when a man and his wife come from the same town, the woman always stays with her parents or in her parents house(hold) with her children. She only goes to share the night with the husband in his house and returns to her "home" the next morning. In such cases when her parents are not there or dead, she obviously becomes the head.

The following Table shows the household headship rates for Lesotho according to the survey.

TABLE 2.6.1: HEADSHIP RATES BY AGE AND SEX

AGE	MALES			FEMALES		
	NO. OF HEADS	TOTAL	RATES (%)	NO. OF HEADS	TOTAL	RATES (%)
15 - 19	-	83	0	-	107	0
20 - 24	3	58	5,2	1	82	1,2
25 - 29	20	64	31,3	2	64	3,1
30 - 34	23	52	44,2	5	60	8,3
35 - 39	44	52	84,6	3	42	7,1
40 - 44	27	34	79,6	5	27	18,5
45 - 49	20	23	87,0	8	29	17,2
50 - 54	21	25	84,0	8	28	28,6
55 - 59	15	16	93,8	10	26	38,5
60 - 64	19	20	95,0	7	15	46,7
65+	25	26	96,2	21	45	46,7

The data at our disposal will unfortunately not permit us to find the headship rates classified by marital status.

But as seen above, the rates do not deviate from the normal trend. They are low for females and high for males. The rates jump after 35 years for the males. They approach 100 percent after 60 years showing that almost all the males in the advanced age group are heads of their households. This is a typical African phenomenon because in African context, the grown-ups are not sent to HOMES FOR THE OLD PEOPLE as done in developed countries. Instead, they stay with the children and grandchildren and automatically become heads. Note that, in Africa, the respect for old-aged persons has not died out, but is still an important factor to our way of life.

There is no doubt that the survey figures are good in this wise, because they compare fairly well with other rates from some African countries. The following Table shows the comparison.

TABLE 2.6.2: COMPARISON OF LESOTHO HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP RATES (%) WITH OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

AGE	LESOTHO		RWANDA		GHANA	
	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES
15 - 24	2,1	0,5	21,3	5,4	15,0	7,7
25 - 34	37,1	5,7	84,2	14,1	69,4	15,6
35 - 44	82,6	11,6	96,0	21,4	86,9	23,5
45 - 54	85,4	28,1	98,1	32,0	93,1	30,8
55 - 64	94,4	41,5	98,6	49,0	94,5	42,7
65+	96,2	46,7	96,5	64,5	94,0	47,6
MEAN AGE	52,7	57,9	50,1	57,7	51,3	55,0

All across the countries, the rates for the male heads exceed 80 percent after 35 years. The above Table shows that, the rates for Lesotho are lower than for Ghana and Rwanda. They get close together only after 55 years.

The low rates seen in the male households for the young ages before thirty years can best be explained by marriage and migrant-labour factors.

The (young) men marry late (in their thirties) due to the high bride wealths (Lobola). Those married leave their young wives with their parents who serve as custodians while they, the youngmen, leave the country to work in South Africa. Their parents obviously become the household heads and they, the breadwinners. The migrant labour issue could be the same reason for the low rates for the female heads before age 45 years. At age 45 years, their husbands could have got them their own households which would permit these women to be heads (temporary or otherwise depending on where their husbands would be).

In Lesotho, the female literacy rate is very high, that is, one of the highest in the continent. One wonders why the high level of female literacy rate has not transformed itself to make the headship rates high. One would expect that these "highly educated young women" would have their own households, therefore raising the rates for the age group 25 - 44 high. In Ghana, the creating of household among young unmarried girls has made the headship rates high for the young ages. They are higher than the rates from the other countries for the ages from 15 years up to the age 44 years.

In Rwanda, the high headship rates among the males has been explained by total and universal marriage. Unlike other countries, especially in the developed world, almost all the grown-up men (aged 50 years and above) get married. The tradition is such that, the moment one gets married, he establishes his own household, whether he be young or not. (The intensity of first marriage at 50 is 0,987 in Rwanda. That means that only one male person out of 100 men does not get married, see Kyei 1988 for more discussion on this topic).

It has been pointed out in the above that, the proportion of households headed by females in Africa is higher than the other regions in the developing world. The female headship rates also confirm such hypothesis. The following Tables show headship rates for Lesotho, Rwanda and some Latin American countries.

TABLE 2.6.3: AGE SPECIFIC HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP RATES BY COUNTRY (MALES)

	LES	RW	GH	COL	C/RICA	DOM/R	MEX	PAN	PERU
15 - 24	2	21	15	10	10	11	14	10	9
25 - 34	37	84	69	64	65	64	71	62	62
35 - 44	83	96	87	85	84	87	89	84	88
45 - 54	85	98	93	90	92	90	93	89	94
55 - 64	94	99	95	89	88	91	93	90	92
65+K	96	97	94	80	80	84	86	85	84
MEAN AGE	52,7	50,2	51,3	51,1	51,1	51,2	50,8	51,5	50,2

SOURCE: SUSAN de VOS OP. CIT. P. 513 - 514 KYEI 1988, P. 86, 90, 93.

TABLE 2.6.3 (B): AGE SPECIFIC HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP RATES BY COUNTRY (FEMALES)

	LES	RW	GH	COL	C/RICA	DOM/R	MEX	PAN	PERU
15 - 24	0,5	5,4	7,7	1,5	7,5	2,5	0,8	1,3	1,1
25 - 34	5,7	14,1	15,6	5,7	6,0	9,8	3,9	8,8	4,5
35 - 44	11,6	21,4	23,5	13,4	12,2	17,3	9,0	15,7	9,0
45 - 54	28,1	32,0	30,8	23,3	20,2	27,8	16,5	24,5	16,6
55 - 64	41,5	49,0	42,7	28,6	26,5	37,2	25,9	33,5	26,3
65+	46,7	64,5	47,6	31,4	35,0	47,3	33,3	42,3	28,9
MEAN AGE	57,9	57,7	55,0	57,5	58,4	57,8	60,1	58,1	58,9

SOURCE: SAME AS THE ONE ABOVE (TABLE 2.6.3)

The rates for Basotho women are low compared with those from Ghanaian and Rwandan women. Only at the age of 50 that the rates for Lesotho and Ghana get so close. But comparing the rates from Lesotho and those from some Latin American countries, we see that the rates from Lesotho are not low. It is true that for the first group 15 - 24 years, the Lesotho rate is the lowest. However, it closes up after the age 25 years and in fact, surpasses all the rates from the Latin American countries after age 45.

As far as the mean age for becoming a household head is concerned, we see that, the lower the rate for the young ages, the higher the mean age. This trend holds for both sexes. Because the rates are lower for Basotho especially for the young age groups, the mean age is higher than those in Ghana and

Rwanda for both sexes. When we take the female rates, however we see that, because the rates for the young age groups are low for Lesotho and for the Latin American countries, the mean age for a woman to become a head of a household is almost the same for Lesotho, Columbia, Dominican Republic and Panama.

2.7 HOUSEHOLD HEADS AND THEIR PROFESSION:

The following Table shows the classification of household heads by profession, based on the data from the survey.

TABLE 2.7.1: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS BY PROFESSION AND BY SEX..

MALES			FEMALES			
PROF	NO. OF HEADS	%	MEAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE (MHHS)	NO. OF HEADS	%	MEAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE (MHHS)
NON-AGRIC (SELF-EMPLOYED)	18	8,3	5,5	18	25,7	6,2
"LABOURER"	29	13,4	5,2	3	4,3	4,0
FARMER	23	10,6	7,3	13	18,6	3,3
UNEMPLOYED (BUT ACTIVE)	14	6,5	6,0	8	11,4	3,5
UNEMPLOYED (NOT ACTIVE)	26	12,0	6,5	22	31,4	5,6
"HIGHLY SKILLED PROOF"	22	10,1	6,0	3	4,3	4,3
MIGRANT WORKERS IN RSA (MINES)	77	35,5	5,6	-	-	-
NON CLASSIFIED	8	3,7	-	3	4,3	-
	217	100,0		70	100,0	

For the male distribution, we see that about 40 percent, being the majority of the household heads are working in South Africa. About 7 percent of the heads are without employment, but are still searching for work, 12 percent are not employed because they are old and not active. The proportion of the heads who are in agricultural sector is the same as those in "highly skilled profession." Those heads who work in other areas outside agriculture constitute about 21 percent, with 8 percent being self-employed and 13 percent as employed rural workers or "labourers."

For the female distribution on the other hand, the majority of the heads are the 'old-women' who are unemployed. These are the widows and who by their age become heads. Their working children send money to keep them. The next group are those females who are self-employed working in non-agricultural sector. They form about 26 percent. The heads who work as paid 'labourers' or are "highly skilled professions" constitute the minority being only 4,3 percent in each case.

On the level of household size classified according to the profession of the head, it is interesting to note the discrepancies. For the male-headed households, the largest size is found among the farmers; there are over 7 persons in these households. The smallest size is found in the households headed by paid 'labourers'; there are about 5 persons in such households. The reasons for these observations are quite clear. Traditionally, farmers want more children to till the land and hence have high fertility rate or large family size whose members may be related by blood, adoption or the like. The 'poor labourers,' whether educated or not, would naturally not like to have 'big' responsibilities, hence will reduce the number of children desired.

What is interesting to note is the households headed by unemployed but looking for jobs, and those headed by "highly skilled professionals." They both have the same size of 6 persons. The second largest size comes from households headed by unemployed and non active due to old age, and the smallest but one comes from the self-employed headed households.

One can understand why the households headed by the inactive old-persons are large, because in these households, the daughters-in-law and their children (especially those young and newly married ones) stay with their parents in-law while their husbands work outside the country. But why the households headed by self-employed non-agriculturists have small size is something one cannot easily explain.

When we look at the female headed households, we note that, the largest size being 6 persons comes from those headed by self-employed non-agriculturists. For the male counterparts, the size was the smallest but one; about 5,6 persons are found in the households headed by the inactive old-women. Incidentally, the rank for the size is the same for both male and female households. The households with the smallest mean size are those headed by farmers. The size is 3,3 persons. In the male households, the largest size was found among those headed by farmers, but here they are the smallest size. The households headed by the "highly skilled professionals" maintain their "medium size" in both cases, males and females. There are about 4 persons in the female headed households and 6 persons in the male households.

Elsewhere the household sizes were classified according to the level of education for the female heads.

TABLE 2.7.2: HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION
FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	SIZE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	SIZE
HIGHER SCHOOL AND ABOVE	5,5	PRIMARY SCHOOL	4,7
SECONDARY SCHOOL	5,9	NO SCHOOLING	4,9

One would expect that, highly educated women, who have attained higher levels of education, would have lower fertility rate and consequently have smaller household size (in a society where no circulation of children is common). However, the above Table shows that the household size of female heads who have completed higher education is the second largest. Rather, households headed by females who have completed some primary school education have the smallest size of 4,7 persons. What is more astonishing is that, households headed by females who have completed secondary school education have larger size than those headed by females who have had NO SCHOOLING. Does it mean that the level of education attained has no influence on the household size? Or are these heads staying with other siblings or relatives? It is a common knowledge that, the level of educational attainment (beyond the primary school) (especially for females), influences the fertility level (see Caldwell 1973). Is this not true for Basotho women? If so why is the household size not depicting that? Why is it that the households headed by "highly educated women" have mean size larger than those headed by "less educated women?"

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussions have shown that, in spite of the unique geographical position of Lesotho, its household structure does not differ from other households in the region or in the continent. For example the proportion of households headed by females falls within the range found in Africa (that is, falls between 10,5 percent in Ivory Coast and 29,5 percent in Kenya). [Countries with high proportion of female headed households are those which send male migrant "workers" to foreign countries. There are some countries which though do not send male workers outside, because of high divorce rate or the system of inheritance, makes this proportion high. For instance, Mauritania is a Moslem and Arab country where women's freedom and participation to domestic and social life is checked. But because of the high rate of divorce, about 20 percent of the household heads are females. In Ghana, the matrilineal system of inheritance encourages women to become heads].

he household size in Lesotho compares well with the sizes from other countries in the third world. Neither the 1986 figure of 4,8 persons per household is smaller, nor the survey figure of 5,7 persons is bigger.

The composition of the household members is just what is expected: household head with his family and a few relatives from the vertical line. Nonetheless, the proportion of

one-person households is very small in Lesotho. The survey figure is the smallest ever known, implying that, Lesotho is not developed but is rather predominantly rural and Mantsebo is a village.

Concerning the classification of household heads by profession, it is on record that, the majority of the male heads are workers in South Africa. Household heads who are self-employed and working in the non-agricultural sector form the minority. For the female headed households, the heads who are unemployed and not-active form the majority, and the "highly skilled professionals" as well as the paid "labourers" form the minority.

There is no regular trend for the household sizes classified by the profession of the head; especially, when the two sexes are compared. Neither does the size classified by the level of education attained by the female heads, agree with the hypothesis put forward by Caldwell, nor does the size classified by profession conform to any known trend or hypothesis. [According to Caldwell, the higher the level of education attained by a woman, the smaller the number of children she would have. And for that matter, the smaller the household size except she stays with younger siblings or relatives].

As far as the household headship rates are concerned, the rates from the survey do not deviate from known rates either obtained from some African countries or from some Latin American countries.

Concerning the transition of household size in Lesotho, there is some fuzz about it. The size was 5 persons per household in 1976 but was 4,8 persons in 1986 (that is, according to the estimates from the two censuses). Thus, the mean size is seen decreasing. But the figures from surveys show that the size is increasing when compared with the 1976 census data. So we are not sure of the direction of the transition which is taking place.

If the size is declining, then the better, because heads will have fewer mouths to feed. Conversely, if the size is increasing as the survey data has shown, then there is some danger ahead. Because, this study has shown that, the majority of the heads are migrant workers in South Africa. Nursing the fear that the changes going on in the present South Africa might result in the expulsion of "foreign" migrant workers, it is clear that this will definitely have an adverse effect on Basotho nation and consequently make household members to suffer. Underfeeding and malnutrition could be the result at last.

But where more households are to be formed or the existing ones were to be disintegrated to reduce the mean size, then there would be the need for more housing units to be constructed and more land to be available. It has been stated above that erosion is eating all the land away, therefore the household/housing problem is not solved. No matter the existing

number of households and the average size, more households will be created, because the population is increasing and relatively more people are becoming adults; and would own their independent households.

In view of the fact that this paper has not sought to find the levels of fertility and mortality, it cannot give the number of households which will be added to the existing ones in the future. All the same, it is absolutely certain that more new ones will be formed, whether the population is increasing or not. Because, even in the developed countries, where growth rates have dwindled (because fertility rates have got smaller), more households are being formed especially the one person households. In Italy for example, the proportion of one person households has increased by over 40% during the last five years. How many households will be formed every year is the open question.

We still come back to the question: 'Is the household size decreasing or increasing in Lesotho?' How do the people in authorities view the household size? By looking at the average housing unit in the country, do they consider the size as problematic -- as creating congestion because of overcrowding? Or do they believe that it is underpopulated?

Planners and decision-makers have a growing need for statistical information to determine the effect of economic growth on the well-being of the population and to take corrective measures where necessary. Analysis of household structure is one of the most effective ways of investigating and understanding the problems of the people. Hence, there is the need for consideration of household structure in Lesotho.

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