



Chairman's Breakfast Club Appeal

Paul Hanrahan

This year we have delivered, across our different projects, nearly **55,000** meals to children and to the ill. We have made over **600** nurse visits to our clients suffering from HIV/AIDS. Over **350** people have been raised out of poverty because of our jobs initiative through our Youth Textile Training Programme. Twenty-seven small farmers received training from our agricultural programme. Twenty individuals trained to start their own business. All of this and more was achieved on an annual budget for Action Lesotho of **€185,000**, less than the salary of one CEO in some of our Irish Charities.

I make the above point to emphasise the value we place on every Euro donated to us and to show what can be achieved by a well organised and committed group of volunteers here in Ireland and an excellent team of staff on the ground in Lesotho.

Last year I sought your support to help us establish a breakfast programme for **50** children. Your response was more than generous, exceeding what we had hoped for. As a result, we were able to take **25** children off the waiting list and increase the numbers receiving a breakfast before school each morning to **75**. It also meant we could add a fresh piece of fruit each morning to the breakfast. This is a rarity for the children and of significant nutritional value to their development.

We are committed to continuing this programme for the children, as we daily see the benefits to the them. For many of the children, the breakfast we provide is the only food they get since the lunch provided the day before at school. Their school attendance has noticeably **improved**, and their concentration and ability to focus has markedly **increased**. Going to school and keeping up with other students is vital to these children, as education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty in which they have been trapped.

For most of us, food, shelter and someone to care for us was the norm growing up. It can be hard for us to imagine that for some children this is just not the case. Many of our clients come from a home where, more often than not, there is simply no food. Many of them live in households where the head of the family is either another child or an ailing grandparent.

With the breakfast programme, we can at least provide the children with some food and, thanks to your generosity, show them that the world is not all unfeeling and that somebody, somewhere, cares about them.

Thank you for your support, and we hope you will consider renewing it this year. We would also be delighted to welcome new supporters who may feel able to commit some money to this vital direct action in feeding children who are hungry today.

**Paul Hanrahan, Chairman,
Action Lesotho.**



Halitsoaka community agriculture enterprise develop sustainable business - Carl Von Maltitz



In 2014 a week-long innovation & entrepreneurship training session was held for a group of small-scale farmers, both male and female. Known as **The Special Support Group Lesotho Orphans** in Halitsoaka, the group has 20 members who work closely together to create a smooth-running community farming project with strict, clear responsibilities for each member.

The **Action Lesotho** training team, consisting of **Dominic Matooane, Molemo Lethea** and myself conducted this course which turned out to be pivotal in proving the success of our training and resulted in such successful outcomes that it influenced our subsequent planning considerably.

When we first met them, the group had two small fields of cabbages and, unusual among Lesotho farmers, a borehole for irrigation. The problem was that they had no market for their produce, as there was an influx of cabbage from South Africa.

During the training sessions, they were encouraged to problem solve through newly acquired critical and innovative thinking skills developed during the week. The group was able to generate several innovative business ideas to realise some income from their cabbages. The simplest solution came when they were encouraged to think of themselves as the customer. The female members particularly took comfort into account. They realised that by chopping up the cabbage into meal size quantities, packing them in plastic bags and selling it to workers as they left the factories in the evenings they would be adding value to their cabbage and easing the cooking burden placed on their customers. They sold all their produce in record time, and we could tick off another innovation & entrepreneurship course as a success.



Fast forward two years, and it becomes apparent that nothing breeds success like success. Without receiving any help, other than some mentoring and innovative ideas, the group have now:

- started talks with seven schools to supply them with produce from their farm
- rented an extra ten acres of land and are planting sugar beans on it
- bought 500 chickens which are soon to arrive
- received a greenhouse from the government in which they've grown beautifully healthy tomatoes
- produced excess feed so are looking at procuring a dairy cow
- registered with the Ministry of Agriculture to avail of the contracting scheme. Action Lesotho's farm team is working for them under this initiative.

There is an open line of communication between the group and Action Lesotho and since the beginning of November 2016 I will now be mentoring the group through attendance at their monthly meetings. Action Lesotho has also offered to supply information and guidance on chicken farming.

The future plans of the group are to develop a sustainable agricultural business that enables the members to provide donations to the orphans within their community as well as produce an income for the group members. As the Action Lesotho Community Agricultural Enterprise trainer, I will be providing support and mentoring and will draw on business training expertise from the rest of the Action Lesotho Innovation & Entrepreneurship team as appropriate.

Start Your Own Business Courses

Dominic Matooane

The first group trained under Action Lesotho's Start Your Own Business Programme was **Kome Community Enterprise**. We are proud to announce that these seven previously unemployed people now have a monthly turnover of six thousand Maloti (M6000.00) within 5 months of starting their tourism business.



The second group trained by Action Lesotho were in **Matlameng**. The group members are in the process of establishing at least four different businesses. So far we've been working mainly with the grass basket makers. We believe that with time they will become the premier grass basket company in Lesotho and we look forward to sharing their new product developments throughout 2017.

Two of the unemployed young men in **Butha-Buthe**, featured in our last newsletter, are now generating a monthly income of at least M900 per each with their embroidered blankets (pictured above).

Community Agricultural Enterprise Training, Hleoheng *Mahlonepho Makirika*



I had the great experience of attending a week-long community enterprise training course conducted by **Carl von Maltitz** in Hleoheng. It was incredible to spend the week with this group of 27 adults aged 40-82 and watch their transformation over the few days. I watched as they learnt how to create solutions for themselves and generate business ideas which required little or no financial resources to get started.

The group responded so positively to the programme. It was truly exciting to witness the participants growing their ideas and feeling motivated to start their own business immediately after the workshop.

The participants were given an opportunity to think about different types of agricultural business start-ups, explore innovative ideas and examine the steps needed to get a business off the ground. They were encouraged to think through all the steps, including how to obtain the financial & practical resources required. Exploring how they could work harmoniously & effectively as a group was also part of the process.

It was also inspiring to see the groups present their ideas to **Pippa Kearon**, our In-Country Director. She was impressed at how clearly the groups were able to articulate their plans & their depth of knowledge.

The outcome from this course is a highly innovative business idea which is in the very early stages of development and so is being kept under wraps for the moment! A few months of experimentation and learning will be required before the participants can get their product to market. We will be sharing their progress with you in the next newsletter!

The community agricultural enterprise programme is a relatively new development for Action Lesotho. It has grown from our Innovation and Entrepreneurship training delivered mainly to craft sector workers. An agricultural group received this training in August 2014 and their success to date has encouraged Action Lesotho to engage Carl to work with other landowners and agricultural entrepreneurs in an effort to replicate this success and improve many more lives in the future.



Agriculture *Mahlonepho Makirika*

Lesotho fighting drought



Last year Lesotho experienced the worst drought in 100 years. However, 2016-2017 is showing promise of being a better year for farmers. There was plenty of rain in early November which enabled people to plough their fields and begin to sow maize & sorghum.

Action Lesotho's farm manager, **Molemo Lethea** was despondent when the drought prevented him from planting maize last year and caused the failure of the small crop of sorghum planted in November 2015. However, in early 2016 he was able to plant 10 hectares of winter wheat. We have been monitoring the growth of the crop closely and we are delighted to report that, despite severe heat and lack of rainfall which resulted in yellowing of wheat stalks, a good harvest is expected in early December. The rainfall in November boosted crop growth and we now anticipate a harvest of over 1 tonne/ha. The biggest risk now will be hail. A heavy hail storm would severely damage the seed heads. However, at the moment, Molemo is positive and reports that the wheat is drying well and beginning to harden nicely.

The other fields are now being prepared for planting sorghum. We are feeling optimistic as the soil still has relatively high moisture levels and this should result in good germination. We plan to plant 5 ha of sorghum & 5 ha of yellow maize. Further rainfall is expected over the coming weeks so Molemo believes that we are going to be more successful on the farm this year.

Aside from our own fields, Molemo (right) has been actively encouraging other landowners to avail of a government scheme developed by the Ministry of Agriculture whereby they can sign up to engage registered contractors and receive a 50% grant towards the cost of ploughing, discing, sowing and harvesting. Action Lesotho is now registered as a contractor to assist landowners in the area through this scheme. Molemo produced information sheets to be distributed to people in the communities around us. We hope to encourage individuals to make full use of the scheme and are grateful to the Government for their assistance.





Lesotho Mountain Crafts attended **Cherry Festival 2016** from 17th to 19th November in Ficksburg and we were overwhelmed by the reaction to our beautiful stall by visitors at the show. We were delighted with sales of over R12,500 over the three days.

This year we were assisted in our stand set up by **Pam Subke** (below) from **Times Gone By** (Clarens) who brought her inimitable style and expertise, along with some lovely stand props. We began working with Pam in March and she has placed several orders with us for her beautiful shop and also offered advice & guidance on product development ideas and accessing raw materials. We are extremely grateful to Pam for her wonderful input to our work.



The stand was superbly run by four members of Lesotho Mountain Crafts with support from **Action Lesotho**. The team demonstrated just how far they have come in exhibition sales skills and many people to our stand were enthralled by the spinning and needle felting demonstrations and explanations given about how the crafts were made. Our own staff were excited to try their hand at spinning: our Sales, Purchasing & Distribution Co-ordinator, **Thapelo Khasela**, was an absolute natural.

We were delighted to have **Anthony O'Connor** with us this year to capture footage and photographs of our attendance. We hope you enjoy his photographs with this article and we hope to have some video



footage on our website very soon. The ladies staffing the stand were proud that they caught the attention of the **South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)** and featured on the Saturday evening news broadcast.

It was very pleasing to see new Lesotho companies exhibiting at Cherry Festival this year and we were happy to assist them wherever we could. Three of the new exhibitors had time to sit with

our Innovation & Entrepreneurship team and were delighted to hear about our craft sector support service. They have requested mentoring and training and we hope to begin work with them shortly.

We were fortunate enough to be offered access to a fund for micro/small business start-up and growth grants earlier this year. We have facilitated applications from the **Lesotho Mountain Crafts** companies to this fund and our impact since January 2016 has been:

- 57% of LMC companies were assisted with sign boards to attract footfall to their centres
- 50% received grants to install electricity so that they can use computers at their centres, increase production particularly in the winter and begin to invest in modern electrical equipment to speed up their production processes
- 10% got a grant towards the purchase of craft equipment

The total turnover this year for the craft companies we work with has shown an incredible 64% increase since last year. This was achieved through individual monthly consultation meetings, ongoing mentoring, assistance in finding innovative solutions to challenges, training and developing markets through which orders are generated and sales increase. As a result of this process, 78% of LMC company workers have been raised above the international poverty line since we began working with them in 2013.

*An example of the success of a craft sector worker, who in 2013 was living below the international poverty line, is **Nkhono Mamolapo Setho**. She was working at a car wash where she earned R5 per month, the whole family depended on her salary. She was not making enough and she therefore decided to become self-employed. She collected t-shirt off-cuts from the factories to make blankets to sell. She was making very little money but she was able to send her children to school and put some food on the table. She first met Action Lesotho in 2008, where she was introduced to needle felting. During the first two years of production her needle felted figures looked rather scary, stiff and not very saleable but the progress she has made to date is huge and she is now the best-selling producer in LMC.*

We work closely with the companies to guide them on how to broaden their product range to accommodate targeted markets, making sure they respond and understand customer demand. It's a lengthy process to get the samples right but highly rewarding as new products create great success stories for companies and, most importantly, increased sales. We have launched more than 15 new product ranges through our outlets and catalogue since July 2016. The response is highly positive.



You're never too old to learn new tricks!

Thapelo Khasela, our new Sales, Purchasing & Distribution Co-ordinator, has helped two LMC companies to source and be inspired by new product development ideas by learning to access the internet for research (left). These are older ladies who we never believed would be so enthusiastic and dedicated to learning new technology skills. It has been inspirational for us to witness the outcome of their research and to see that they are gaining sustainable & independent skills as they grow their businesses. It has been a lot of fun to see how much they now enjoy it.



Swaziland visit

Action Lesotho's **Pippa Kearon**, **Mantai Mpesi** and **Saskia Czimenga** were invited to Swaziland by **Fr Tim Wrenn** and **Imvelo Eswatini**, following on from an initial consultation on their product range with Action Lesotho in Ha Magele in July. Swaziland has a remarkably impressive range of traditional crafts and opportunities for selling to the high volume of tourists who pass through the country and this is what we hope for in Lesotho. We are fortunate to have made such wonderful and thoughtful friends. We are looking forward to an ongoing relationship and exploring possibilities of how best to benefit the craft sector in both countries with all that we share.



LMC marketing and sales news

We launched our first **catalogue** in June 2016 but the photography was not as good as we hoped for and we have been looking at ways of getting our products photographed professionally for a relaunch of the catalogue and also for an online shop. We are absolutely delighted to have **Anthony O'Connor** from Ireland with us and he is doing a wonderful job helping us to improve our product photography. He is not only taking stunning photographs but also training the **Action Lesotho** team to be able to take quality photographs independently when he returns home in mid- December. Thank you so much Anthony!

We will keep you updated on our soon to be launched online **LMC shop and website**. In the meantime, to request our latest catalogue and pricelist email: actionlesothomantai@gmail.com or tkhasela@gmail.com.

Our Lesotho Mountain Crafts Facebook page will also keep you in touch with our progress and events.

Community Development

Limakatso Rantso

Malimpho programme update

Malimpho is a programme with 40 critically ill patients. Currently there are 18 women, 10 men, 13 children and 5 babies. This year, we have had 7 new admissions and 6 people recovering sufficiently to exit the program. Sadly 2 clients passed away.

The programme was named after the first client of the programme, **'M'e Malimpho**. It caters for critically ill patients with HIV/AIDS and other diseases who at best would be going to bed hungry and at worst would have died had we not intervened with regular visits from our nurse and monthly deliveries of food.



The programme saw great progress in 2016, with many of the clients engaging in projects to improve their lives: fifteen participated in the new **home gardening project**; ten joined our **small business project**; and five joined **Mampoi Nyenye** in her **Textile Youth Employment Programme** (pictured).

I am very proud to be the **Malimpho Programme Officer** & to co-ordinate the work of such a dedicated team. The programme has a very positive impact on people's lives and the team work very hard to ensure that we achieve sustainable change in our clients.

Home care programme, Lepoqong

We deliver food packages to the 53 children in this outreach programme at the end of every month and spend time with each family assessing their health and well-being.

The food packages consist of 12.5kg of maize meal, 750ml of oil, 500g of salt, 30 eggs, 1kg of beans, toiletries and fresh potatoes or vegetables grown on our farm. The children and care givers are always excited to see us and we are pleased to see that all the children are well at the moment and are maintaining good school attendance.



The children are getting excited about attending the Action Lesotho Christmas party in December and joining the children of Ha Magele to celebrate and receive their Christmas presents.

Ferrando Resource Centre

Pippa Kearon



Friday 18th November was a memorable day for the **Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC)** and differently abled children & their carers, when the **Ferrando Resource Centre Special School** officially opened in Ha Nyenye. The Sisters were very proud of their new school which was funded by **Misean Cara** in Ireland with additional funding from donors in Ireland and Lesotho businesses and community.

The project began in 2010 when two **Action Lesotho** volunteers initiated a programme to assist 6 differently abled children in Maputsoe. The children were all in need of physiotherapy and mainly had cerebral palsy (CP). **Eileen O'Leary** and **Ntate Mankoe** started a weekly programme which continued until 2013 when **MSMHC** expressed an interest in taking over the running of the project and developing the dream of an established special school and resource centre.

In 2013 Action Lesotho and MSMHC worked hand in hand to secure premises at **St Luke's Mission** in Maputsoe and register the centre with the **Ministry of Social Development**. Action Lesotho resourced the centre with toys, educational and physiotherapy equipment. The centre opened its doors with 20 children registered but during the first year only around 8 children attended regularly due to families not having transport or money to get their children to the facility. The initial group were taught by a team of 4 young voluntary teachers under the management of MSMHC. The centre was named Ferrando Resource Centre after MSMHC's founding Father.

Action Lesotho connected Sister George with a wonderful NGO in Johannesburg called **Malamulele Onward** who are involved in rural CP services across Sub-Saharan Africa and who offer innovative solutions to improve the children's quality of life. Malamulele Onward provided physiotherapy training for the staff at the centre and developed individual programmes for each child. They also invited some of the families to attend an intensive 2-week course in Johannesburg. **Heather Kearon** volunteered with the Sisters at this time and assisted in training the staff in **Applied Behavioural Analysis** which helped enormously with the autistic children at the centre.

Teboho Senemolele, a young man with cerebral palsy, was amongst the first students to attend the centre. He was 17 years old and had never been to school before. He was fortunate to have a very conscientious sister who had taught him to read and write in Sesotho & English. Within 6 months of attending the centre he became the first ever student with CP to sit a state exam in Lesotho. His Standard 7 exam result was the 6th best in the country and both Teboho and the centre found themselves in the spot light with lots of media attention surrounding his success. This year he sat the Junior Certificate and is awaiting the results. His ambition is to be a lawyer.

By 2014, twenty children were regularly attending the centre and availing of the wonderful programmes offered. The Sisters began to realise that the temporary classroom they were using was not sufficient to meet the needs of the community. They were introduced to **Misean Cara** in Ireland and began the process of securing a grant for a much bigger & permanent special school. **Action Lesotho** worked with Sister George towards obtaining official special school status with the **Ministry of Education**. We are grateful to **UNESCO** for assisting in this process.



The **Bishop of Leribe** donated a large site to the Sisters near the main Maseru to Maputsoe road. The first block was laid on 26th December 2015 and 11 months later the centre is ready to open its doors to 40 children from January 2017. **Nt Mankoe**, our previous General Manager is on the Management Board, along with **Mme Mat'sirletso**, our Children's Programme Officer, and community representatives.

The building is beautifully designed with classrooms, a staff room, dedicated counselling & therapy rooms, a training room, dining room, toilets and an office. The opening was attended by the **Minister of Education** and other dignitaries from the Leribe District. The choir from **St Luke's Mission** sang beautifully and the children of Ferrando Resource Centre Special School amazed the visitors with their singing and dancing.

I have been with this project since the beginning and the joy I felt at the opening on Friday 18th November was indescribable. We wish **The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians** every success when they open the doors to the first students of the **Ferrando Resource Centre Special School** on 23rd January 2017.



Volunteer's report

Anthony O Connor (Ireland)

Hi all, my name's **Anthony O Connor** (pictured with Action Lesotho's former general manager **Ntate Mankoe**). I'm volunteering in Maputsoe at the moment and my brief is based primarily around photography, filming & skills transfer. For the past two weeks I've been developing a product photography programme for our craft products, for use with a new price list and eventually a website to facilitate wider sales.



My job is not just to fly out and take the photos but to put systems in place that will allow the programme to continue after I depart. Initially this required me sourcing the materials for a lightbox and installing this in our **Phukala** centre. Secondly I'm training the Basotho staff in product photography as I work. Finally, I'll have to source a suitable camera and lens for future use.

Whilst making a lightbox would be a simple enough job in Ireland, in Lesotho it's fraught with challenges, including finding materials (even a cardboard box and duct tape were no easy task), light (my rig uses mainly natural sunlight, which is a problem on a cloudy day, or even during different times of day), and electricity outages (for the diffusing side lamps).



My second job is to make a series of short videos about **Action Lesotho's** programmes. This I have just started and it will be a combination of interview and documentary footage, ideally culminating in a series of 30 - 90 second videos. I'll also be training our staff in portrait and social documentary photography, along with the product photography training already mentioned.

Finally, I'm hoping to use some of my skills as a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine to run a series of workshops in medical massage for anyone that's interested. This could be a safe, simple and sustainable way to help with everyday aches & pains.

It's difficult to say exactly what I'll be able to accomplish while I'm here, as every day brings new challenges. As well as that, I'm committed to the Action Lesotho ideal of sustainability, meaning I don't just want to help while I'm here, but also set up systems that continue after I return home. This is obviously far more effortful, but equally far more valuable.



I was last in Lesotho six years ago, also volunteering with **Action Lesotho**. I'm incredibly impressed with the way the organisation has grown. The projects are exceptionally well-managed and running as efficiently as I see possible. The team on the ground are capable, committed and (very rightly) very proud of their work. Seeing the **Phukala Centre** full of the craft groups and Youth Textiles Employment Programme, or the happy and well-fed school kids waving to us as they trot out of **Ha Maqele** in the mornings is very satisfying.

Like I said, I'm only two weeks into my work here. I'm excited to see what I'll be able to accomplish before the end.

For anyone that's interested in learning more about Anthony's time in Lesotho, search YouTube for 'Lesotho Vlog' and watch his online videos under the name Tony O Connor.



ACTION LESOTHO IMPACT 2016



27

Community agriculturalists were trained and are now embarking on a unique and innovative business development using readily available local resources.

20 + 10

20 groups were given training in innovation and entrepreneurship. 10 groups already started their own business and are being mentored and helped to register.



55172

Meals were provided. 40612 to children and 14560 to clients under the Malimpho programme.

64%

Increase in sales of all the companies in the period of July to September 2016 that are mentored by Action Lesotho compared to the sales during the same period in 2015.



VISIT:
<http://actionlesotho.ie/>



95%

Of the children who have received food through Action Lesotho have gained weight.

20

Agricultural support group members mentored who have increased their initial project from 2 fields of cabbages to:



a greenhouse, chicken project, irrigation system, 6 hectares of tillage and vegetables (green peppers, spinach, cabbages, onions)

215



Men and women were trained in using industrial sewing machines. 114 of them found permanent employment at the local factories and can support approximately 350 people with their income and put food on their table.



Action Lesotho relies on a number of key sources of funding and for these we are extremely grateful. The core funding comes from **Irish Aid** and **IMPACT Trade Union**, with substantial donations also coming from **CityWire**, **Arrabawn Co-op** & **Dochas Drama Group**. In terms of our own fundraising efforts in 2016, the **Action Lesotho Bookshop** will have contributed nearly €30,000 by the end of the year and **Bantry Friends of Lesotho** have contributed €10,000. However, we also depend on donations from individuals so thank you to **each and every person** who supported us this year.

