



Unleashing potential - *Mahlonepho Makirika & Dominic Matooane*

Action Lesotho's Business Development Programme team is working hard to unleash the potential in Basotho Arts and Craft skills in several districts around the country. **Ms Ntsiuoa Mosuoane** (pictured below left) in Pitseng is one of the trainees who completed our Innovation and Entrepreneurship course in July 2016 and she is now being mentored by **Dominic Matooane** through our Business Development Programme. She has been developing a new range of Seshoeshoe accessories and we were delighted with this travel bag and wash bag she designed for the Action Lesotho Crafts product range (modelled here by **Limakatso Rantoa**).

Meanwhile, Action Lesotho was delighted to see some stunning new grass baskets at **Matlameng Crafts Centre** (above). These unique baskets have been exclusively designed for the Action Lesotho

Crafts product range and are being marketed through selected sales outlets in Lesotho and in South Africa which will begin to generate income for this dynamic group of women. This is just one example of the impact that Action Lesotho's Business Development Programme is having on people's lives.



Ongoing mentoring



Action Lesotho now has over 9 years of experience working with craftworkers in Lesotho and has a comprehensive understanding of the day-to-day needs of small craft enterprises and the requirements needed to grow them into sustainable businesses, providing access to expertise, knowledge and business advice.

Action Lesotho started mentoring 13 companies through Lesotho Mountain Crafts in 2012. In January 2017, 5 new companies joined which brings the total number to 18. Action Lesotho aims to grow the existing craft businesses ensuring that they make profit, generate adequate income and are sustainable in the future. This is achieved through monthly mentoring sessions with every company.

Though our intervention, 98 jobs have been created since 2012. 95% of the workers in the companies have been raised out of poverty. During mentoring sessions we address challenges facing each company and provide appropriate further training and skills development.

Embassy visitor

Mr Tony McCullagh), Deputy Head of Mission at the Irish Embassy in Pretoria (pictured left with Action Lesotho's **Mphoko Molatsa**), recently visited our craft centre in Phukalla. The purpose was to see the progress and impact of Action Lesotho on Basotho craftworkers. We were honoured and privileged by his visit and pleased to have hosted him. He gave us very positive feedback on the outstanding quality & design of craftsmanship. Discussions centred around Action Lesotho's strategic plans to continue its work in supporting new craft businesses and growing markets to enable greater income generation for this sector in Lesotho.



Expanding product lines

In the last quarter of 2016, our craft sector companies introduced 26 new products to the market, guided by Action Lesotho's team.

The companies are motivated to introduce new products to increase their sales. Action Lesotho are delighted that our model of development enables companies to independently design and think through their new product development as this will ensure their sustainability in the future. Our development model passes on research and development skills that assist craftworkers to explore current trends, respond to market demand and draw on their creativity to develop unique and high quality products.



Sales, Purchasing & Distribution –

Thapelo Khasela



Sales, Purchasing & Distribution is a new section of Action Lesotho that came into existence on 1st November 2016. Its mandate is to work with the **Lesotho Mountain Crafts** groups to process orders, distribute products, create pricelists, issue invoices, source raw materials and control stock in our galleries and other outlets. The new coordinator is **Thapelo Khasela** (above right) and he is delighted to be facilitating orders from places such as South Africa and Germany as well as working towards setting up better systems for all aspects of the Action Lesotho Crafts business, including stocktaking in the galleries in Teyateyaneng and Ha Kome.

At the moment, a wholesale pricelist for **Action Lesotho Craft** products is being compiled which will be followed by a retail pricelist with high quality pictures taken by the wonderful volunteer from Ireland, **Antony O'Connor**. If you would like to receive this pricelist and/or order forms, please e-mail: actionlesothothapelo@gmail.com or mantaimpesi@gmail.com

Community Development

Mahlonepho Makirika

Merriment at Ha Magele



The annual Christmas party at **Ha Magele** provided a truly a joyful celebration for the children from both Ha Magele Community Development Centre and Lepoqong, along with their carers, members of the community and Action Lesotho staff.

Children of all ages performed the most wonderfully rehearsed and entertaining dramas, songs, dances and poetry. For the Action Lesotho team, it was a matter of great pride and joy to witness the progress that the children in our programmes have made over the last year, in terms of confidence, health and well-being and also in their ability to motivate themselves. This is particularly evident in the 75 children whom we introduced to a Breakfast Club in January 2016 and we are now seeking donations to extend this to the 53 children in Lepoqong under our outreach programme: <http://actionlesotho.ie/donate/>

The Action Lesotho Tutors, **Mme Mats'ireletso** and **Mme Marethabile** carefully wrapped and labeled parcels with Christmas clothes, food and snacks for each child. They were placed underneath our Christmas tree (right) and the children were full of anticipation when they saw the presents with their names on. The children were happy knowing that they would be enjoying Christmas this year and that they would not go to sleep hungry.

Action Lesotho's In-Country Director, **Ms Pippa Kearon** gave words of appreciation to the tutors for their assistance to children's well-being and education. She praised all the children who had passed their Primary Leaving Certificate and she urged all the children to make good use of the centre and seek assistance in both their personal and academic lives from the staff of Action Lesotho who provide supports for them. She thanked them for all their hard work preparing for the Christmas party performances and praised the high standard of entertainment.

Malimpho Programme – Limakatso Rantoa

Every time we deliver food packages to our clients during our monthly delivery, we constantly see happy faces and improved health. Our staff are proud of the role that they are playing in ensuring that sick and vulnerable people are given hope for a healthy and prosperous future.

Although we do not seek gratitude, it is always heartening to hear words such as these from one client: *"I respect and thank Action Lesotho with all my heart because it picked up my life physically and emotionally and so I am proud of it and hope God will keep it for us until we are able to freshly start to live a new life where we will be able to join hands in order to earn something to raise or care for our families on our own. Thank you."*



However, it's not always good news and very sadly, one of our long-term clients passed away in January at just 22 years old. May her beautiful soul rest in peace.

Apart from delivering nutritious food to our clients, we also provide them with vegetable seeds and encourage them to grow their own fresh food that they would otherwise not be able to afford. They sowed their seeds in August and a few months later were beginning to harvest their produce. Unfortunately, severe hail storms in January destroyed many of the vegetables still growing.

New phone for Nurse Futho – Paul Hanrahan

Nurse Futho (right), who looks after the 40 HIV/AIDS patients in Action Lesotho's Malimpho programme, recently received a smart phone donated by **Jason Burke** of the **Phone Depot** in Tralee/Listowel.

This will enable her to have more regular consultation with Dr Diane Foord who oversees the project on a voluntary basis from Sneem, Co Kerry.



First craft market at Kome Caves - Pippa Kearon



Action Lesotho's Innovation and Entrepreneurship team organized the first Craft Market ever held at Kome Caves in early December. The event was a joint collaboration between **Kome Community Council**, **Kome Community Enterprise**, **Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC)** and **Action Lesotho**. The aim was to provide craftspeople and artisans with the opportunity to:

- ❖ Showcase their talents and sell their products
- ❖ Visit Kome Community Enterprise Gallery shop and observe the quality of products produced by the Lesotho Mountain Crafts groups.
- ❖ Obtain guidance from Action Lesotho Craft Sector Support Services, identify further training needs and to plan for the future.

The event was a tremendous success and we are sure that the next event will draw even more artisans and visitors to this beautiful venue. We anticipate that those who attended will spread the word that they made good sales and are now looking forward to training with Action Lesotho's **Dominic Matooane** during the course of 2017. This will help them to gain business knowledge and develop their craft skills both in design and quality, ultimately increasing sales and providing better incomes.

Apart from the crafts on display, visitors were also enthralled by top quality displays of traditional dancing from several local community groups. It is extremely heartening to witness the communities around the Kome Caves centre responding well to the encouragement from Action Lesotho and LTDC to develop regular events, displays, excursion activities & cultural interaction for visitors to the area.



TYEP breaking the cycle of poverty – Mampoi Nyenye

2016 was a very good year for the **Textile Youth Employment Programme (TYEP)**. 260 men and women were trained in machine skills and 72% of these were successfully placed in permanent employment. It costs Action Lesotho only €30 (R400) to get each trainee through our programme and into employment. We are very happy to say that 180 trainees who were unable to put food on the table when they first met us are now able to support their families and send their children to school.

20 people who were trained in sewing machine skills by us last year were keen to undertake start your own business training. An Innovation and Entrepreneurship training course was delivered to them by **Dominic Matooane** in February. Business ideas explored included catering, agriculture and dress design. The participants hoped that Action Lesotho would provide grant aid but we explained that this is not the way we work. Rather Ntate Matooane showed them that if they could identify their costs they could either find innovative ways to generate the start-up capital needed or aim towards saving this money themselves through employment. The majority have sought employment in the factories but with a new motivation to save money each month in order to become self-employed within the next 12-18 months.



We still have some trainees from last year's intake who are looking for work. Together with the two textile trainers, I have been knocking on the doors of several factories in the hope of securing positions for them. I am hopeful that two factories will come up trumps within the next 2 weeks. These factories are expanding their businesses and will be urgently needing new skilled employees.

We are extremely grateful to all our donors who assist us financially and with raw materials. We would like to thank Basotho Leisure Wear in particular for the regular donation of off-cut panels & sewing threads. In 2017 we hope to train a further 150 textile machinists along with 10 sewing machine mechanics. We will keep you posted on our progress.

2016 Financial Summary –

David Buttimer (Treasurer)

Income

Donations from Individuals	€16,400
Tralee Bookshop (net of rent, elect, etc.)	€30,700
Bantry Friends of Lesotho	€10,000
Tax Refunds on 2015 donations	€2,100
Citywire (UK) Ltd.	€6,300
Arrabawn Co-op	€5,000
Dochas Drama Group, Killarney	€3,500
IMPACT Trade Union	€50,000
Irish Aid	€70,000

Total Income €194,000

Total Expenditure €190,000

Surplus for Year € 4,000

Expenditure in Lesotho

Enterprise Development Project	€110,000
Malimpho Nursing & Home-Care	€26,000
Children's Nutrition & life-skills activities	€21,000
Agriculture	€10,000
Youth Training for Employment	€5,000
Other Community Support	€3,000
Capital Expenditure	€5,000
Total Expenditure in Lesotho	€180,000

Expenditure in Ireland

Audit and Insurance	€3,200
Flights	€2,800
Employer's PRSI	€2,800
Bank Charges & Admin. Costs	€1,200
Total Expenditure in Ireland	€10,000

Notes: (1) The above figures are rounded and unaudited. Our accounts are independently audited in both Ireland and Lesotho, and the 2016 audited accounts will be published on our website in May.

(2) The Enterprise Development project was mainly funded by Grant-aid of €70,000 from Irish Aid, and €6,300 from Citywire (UK) Ltd.

Tralee Information Night – Paul Hanrahan



L-R: Kevin O'Malley (IMPACT), Anna Gervin (former Patron, Lesotho Mountain Crafts), Gerry Gervin (former Irish Ambassador to Lesotho), Paul Hanrahan (Chairman of Action Lesotho), Pippa Kearon (In-country Director of Action Lesotho), Pauline Carroll (Board Member, Action Lesotho) & Anthony O'Connor (volunteer, Action Lesotho © Kerry's Eye)

Double the numbers expected on the night turned up for Action Lesotho's information evening in the Rose Hotel, Tralee in February. Among the guests were **former Irish Ambassador to Lesotho Mr Gerry Gervin** and his wife Anna.

On a visit from Lesotho, was **In-Country Director, Pippa Kearon**, who presented with great clarity the wide range of projects operated by Action Lesotho from the Children's Breakfast Programmes to craft sector small businesses support. **Dr Diane Foord** of Kenmare, a volunteer Member of the Board of Directors, gave a moving case study of the difficulties experienced by a HIV/Aids client. A wonderful series of short videos of the projects made by another local volunteer, photographer and audio-visual expert **Anthony O Connor**, gave a sense of the wonderful people we have the privilege of supporting.

A comment from the floor at the end of the presentation from **Mary Murphy** of Killarney gave great encouragement to all present when she praised the fact that all this can be operated in Ireland on a completely voluntary basis. She said this is the reason she is such an admirer and supporter of Action Lesotho.

As well as being an information evening, it was also a fundraiser. A raffle, donations and craft sales raised nearly €1000. The evening was organised by Action Lesotho Board Member, **Pauline Carroll**.



Action Lesotho Enterprise Team L-R: Saskia Czimenga, Thapelo Khaselo, Mantai Mpesi, Mphoko Molatsa, Dominic Matooane & Pippa Kearon.

