

## Government declaration of an emergency on food security in Lesotho



**Lesotho** is facing severe food shortages over the next 12 months due to the terrible harvest this year. **Prime Minister Motsoahae Thomas Thabane** acknowledged the huge challenges his country faces to feed its people in an open and forthright speech declaring an emergency on food security (reproduced in the box on right). A stark statistic is that food production has decreased by an estimated 77% compared to last year: the resulting yield can only meet 20% of the country's food needs. As a consequence of this the Prime Minister indicated that nearly three quarters of a million people in Lesotho will soon need emergency humanitarian aid.

Our farm team in Lesotho has first hand experience of the problems that farmers are facing in Lesotho in terms of producing adequate crop yields from their fields. There are many factors which have led to declining crop production in Lesotho but the weather extremes during the last year have exacerbated matters for those who are attempting to produce the staple maize. The obvious knock-on effect of home grown maize is increasing food prices as people have to rely more on buying imported grain just to survive. But of course that's only possible if you have the money to buy it. The price of the maize meal we buy for our feeding programmes has increased 65% since January 2011, up from R70 to R116 for a 50kg sack. Meanwhile the average wage for a factory work (one of the main sources of employment in Lesotho) remains at €80(R800)/month.

**Action Lesotho** will be working hard to help reduce food insecurity. Apart from the direct feeding programmes our main aim is to increase self-reliance through our farm and community projects i.e. promoting more reliable farming methods and providing training in homestead gardening. Please help us if you can.



Child with cob © Ciara Walsh

## The Prime Minister's Speech

Fellow Countrymen and Friends, as you will recall, Lesotho has experienced declining levels of food production from 2005/06 to 2008/09. The level of production peaked in 2009/20010 and then started to decline in 2010/11 due to the devastating heavy rains that destroyed infrastructure, crops and housing. This year's cropping season was characterized, among others, by late onset of rains, insufficient rains and early frost. All of these occurrences resulted in low yield per acre and an increase in fallow land. The overall effect of these factors is a very high prevalence of Food Insecurity.

Crop forecasting that was conducted by the Bureau of Statistics indicates that production has decreased by 77% from that of last year to 16, 788 metric tones which comprises only 20 percent of the national food requirements. The Vulnerability Assessment that was conducted by the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) concluded that an estimated 725,519 people will need humanitarian assistance this year, 2012/2013. Both of these assessments confirm a food crisis for 2012/2013 cropping season. In the circumstances, it is worth noting that it is the women, the HIV infected, the orphans & the children under the age of five years who suffer the most. The situation is likely to worsen if some safety nets are not put in place urgently.

In the circumstances, I am obliged to declare a food crisis situation in Lesotho, and to call our Development Partners and all the friends of Lesotho to assist us to address and redress the situation. In doing so, I wish to reiterate the Government resolve to break the vicious circle of hunger and poverty.

In order to address the current food insecurity, the Government has devised some strategies to address the national food security in future

- To implement the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) in which agriculture is one of the key strategies.
- To improve agricultural productivity and food security through maximum use of arable land, subsidized inputs and promotion of drought resistant crops.
- To scale up conservation farming and homestead farming/ gardening;
- To promote nutrition services to both expectant women and mothers of infants and young children.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Government determination to reduce the food crisis situation. In this regard, it is vitally important for me to point out that Government views this declaration of food crisis and appeal for assistance as a short-term measure to alleviate famine among our vulnerable socio-economic groups. As indicated above, Government requires increased assistance from its Development Partners and friends in order to translate into action, plans for addressing the food insecurity situation in the country. In the meantime, we will continue to revitalize agriculture so that we can attain food security for our nation in the medium to long term.



## Project News: the farm & mill

### Ready for the new season

The harvest is in! And unlike many of our neighbours, we had a good harvest with excellent yields from most of our fields. This year has been very different from last year due to the team being able to thresh the maize using the recently purchased thresher – called a 'Slattery' in Lesotho. This threshed the cobs and graded the grain and took a lot of the hard physical labour out of the post harvest operations. The Slattery is operated from the PTO of our well-used Ferguson 135. The grain is stored in our new grain store, which is a big step up from the previous storage arrangements. Our farm manager **Molemo Lethe** is exploring using the Slattery to thresh other farmers' maize either at our site in Phukalla or at their farms. This is in line with our plan to extend our services out into the broader farming community.



The new crop drying: L-R Molemo Lethe, Molemo, Nt Mankwa, Pileletso, Incauti, O'Riordan & Molemo Lethe

Over the last few months – the winter months – the team has completed the tool store and the machinery storage shed (pictured below). This simply built shed provides protection from the elements and protects the machinery. It allows repairs and maintenance to be carried out in relative comfort and protection from both the heat in summer and the intense cold of winter.



Molemo and Molemo Lethe in the new machinery

In September the farm team purchased a Massey Ferguson 440 tractor (above right) for R159, 600 along with a three-furrow plough and a trailer. We plan to grow 40 - 50 acres of maize for the coming season and the bigger tractor, plough and bigger disc harrow which we also purchased, are necessary for the increased acreage which will be farmed.



To ensure all the equipment is operating optimally, the team has also modified their sprayer by welding a frame to raise the boom and putting on stay-wires to reduce the 'bounce effect' of the boom during operation

The team is again working for the forthcoming season with **Hans Taljaard** our agricultural advisor from South Africa. In addition, **Brian Flaherty**, one of our Board Members, will visit Lesotho in November to monitor the progress of the further expansion plans and endeavour to ensure that all the different aspects of the ploughing, tilling, sowing and weed control of the crop are planned for and carried out in a timely and efficient fashion. In particular he will draw up a plan to ensure that the necessary seeds, fertiliser and sprays are to hand for use at the appropriate times to maximise the opportunities afforded by the weather.

Ideally tilling and sowing will take place during fine weather after some rain and spraying will take place in fine weather followed by a period of relatively light rain – the weather is important everywhere, not just in Ireland!!

**Molemo** our farm manager (pictured right using the Slattery) will be coming to Ireland for three months from mid-February 2013 and Brian Flaherty has arranged for his placement on various farms. This period during spring in Ireland should be of benefit to Molemo and it will cover the spring sowing season. He is really looking forward to seeing different farming methods & learning as much as he can about farming.



The overall project is funded primarily by **Irish Aid** whilst the purchase of the tractor and the building works were funded by **IMPACT Trade Union**. Many thanks are due to these organisations for their support of Action Lesotho.

The official opening of the centre at Phukalla which includes the farm complex and enterprise centre, will be taking place in April 2013, and it is hoped that representatives from Irish Aid and IMPACT Trade Union will be in attendance.

**IMPACT**

Trade Union

**Irish Aid**  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha



## Project News: the community centre

Words & photos: Mojalefa Oliphant

### Homestead project chickens start to lay

**Action Lesotho** has a long & good working relationship with **Loants'ang Support Group**, which is a voluntary group delivering a Weekend Feeding Programme on behalf of Action Lesotho. The support group made an application to Action Lesotho for funding to set up a homestead chicken project to produce eggs for their families & to sell.



Action Lesotho promptly acceded to their request and set them up with a manageable number

of chickens each. In June this year 40 hens & 10 cockerels were bought and each member got 4 hens & a cockerel.

The aims of the project were:

- ❖ To provide eggs (food rich in protein) for the family.
- ❖ Raise eggs to sell.
- ❖ Breed chickens to sell.
- ❖ Expand the project by helping other people set up with chickens

The project is progressing well and chickens have starting laying good numbers of eggs.

### Train the Trainers English Course



On Monday 8th October 2012 **Theresa Moriarty** (see p5) embarked on her Train the Trainers English Course. All ten participants turned up in good time for the start of the course and everyone enjoyed their first day.

The course has been developed by a team of people in Ireland, including **Eileen & Brian Coates**. Theresa has produced a manual which she hopes will take the first group of trainees to a level whereby they can train students up to intermediate level.

The course is being held over 8 weeks and each course participant will receive Action Lesotho certification on completion of the course. The participants were chosen because they are proficient in English and are also involved already in community projects in their villages. It is hoped that they will provide English classes free of charge to the unemployed and those in need whilst also offering paid courses to those who can afford it.

### Start & Improve Your Own Business Course

The first SIYB training programme to be delivered by the **Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sport & Recreation** at our centre in Ha Masele got underway on 8th October 2012.

A group of 13 young people from the village of Ha Masele who wish to start a vegetable business are being trained through the **International Labour Organisation** programme sponsored by **UNDP**.

The progress of the course participants will be monitored by Action Lesotho's Centre Manager, **Mojalefa Oliphant**, in the hope of following their development and ultimately their success.

There are a further 7 groups already registered to take up this training on future courses.



### MCA Training

On the 20th September 2012 **Millennium Challenge Account** held a one-day workshop for Small Business Enterprise Cooperatives and Support Groups in Phukalla Enterprise Centre. The groups in attendance were mainly those drawn from Enterprise Development Training programmes run from the **Action Lesotho Community Development Centre** in Ha Masele. The objective of the workshop was to have a discussion on the following issues: gender based violence, HIV & AIDS and human rights and talk about how these issues affect the economy, how they can lead to poverty, and how the workshop participants can overcome the above mentioned challenges.

The workshop elaborated on where human rights emanate from, how they are protected, their importance & why people should be enlightened and educated about them. There was a special focus on the rights of the children and women in Lesotho as they are the ones most vulnerable and marginalised.

The workshop presenter was **Limpho Maema** who is Project Coordinator of MCA Lesotho. The participants were drawn from 8 different cooperatives and 3 support groups.

#### Workshop outcomes

The participants said they now understand how the issues discussed affect the economy, lead to poverty & displacement and why it's important to raise awareness in their communities on these issues. They also know the various stakeholders & authorities they need to approach to address things like violence.

### Book launch



One of Action Lesotho's Board Members, **Dr Rosarii Griffin**, is the editor of a new book: *Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. It was recently launched in Dublin by Minister of State in the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, **Joe Costello**. Another Board Member, **Dr Jacqui O'Riordan**, is one of the contributing authors to a chapter in the book focussing on educational provision for children with special needs in Lesotho.

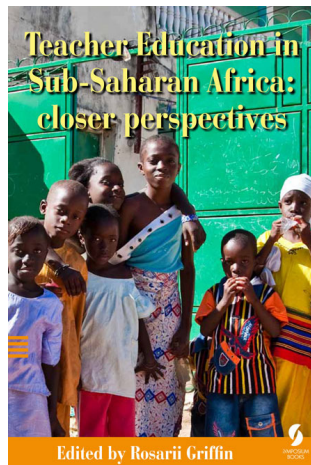
The publishers, Symposium Books, say 'In the drive to achieve universal primary education as one of the Millennium Development Goals, there is an increasing recognition of the urgency of focusing on teacher education to both meet the demand for more than one million qualified teachers required to achieve this goal within sub-Saharan Africa, as well as to combat the sometimes poor quality educational experience reported in the school. Currently, approximately only one third of teachers are qualified to teach. This dearth in qualified teachers also means that secondary and tertiary education need to be improved upon to provide an educated cohort of graduates. This in turn will ensure that the quality of teacher trained and retained within the profession is of a sufficiently high standard to ensure sustainable progress.

This volume focuses on the various aspects of teacher education which need to be addressed in order for the wider Millennium Goals to be achieved, but more importantly, so that each African child living within sub-Saharan Africa will have the right to a quality education: ensuring they too experience their right and entitlement as children to reach their full potential - often taken for granted in Western countries - giving African children the necessary tools to build a better future for themselves.

This volume goes from the global to the local and examines teacher educator teaching, learning and reflective practice issues within different contexts, as well as exploring alternative pre-service experiences for western teachers who wish to work within the sub-Saharan context as well as some teacher educator exchange programmes between the South and North. Case countries explored include Lesotho, South Africa, Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Madagascar, to mention but a few. Of particular value to the education researcher and policy maker, this book provides a timely resource focusing on an area of neglect, highlighting the central role of the teacher and teacher education towards sustainable development within the sub-Saharan African context.'

The book can be ordered online from Symposium Books:

<http://www.symposium-books.co.uk/books/bookdetails.asp?bid=79>



### Malimpho programme expands

**Dr Diane Malone**, a GP living in Co. Kerry, is our medical advisor on the Board of Directors in Ireland. She has regular contact with our **Nurse M'e Futho** via a Skype link where they can discuss difficult cases and other issues. Diane and M'e Futho are currently collaborating on ways to increase the effectiveness of the **Malimpho Programme**, which provides food and regular health visits for very sick people living at home. As a result of the Declaration of Emergency on Food Security recently announced by the Prime Minister of Lesotho, it is likely that we will have many more people needing our services in 2013 and beyond.



Diane reports, 'During the months of June, July and August this year, our staff in Lesotho identified eleven new clients in need of support and they are now receiving monthly food deliveries and visits from our nurse, 'M'e Futho.

This brings the number of our Malimpho clients to 39. They are all poor and sick with HIV and have no family or other means to support themselves. Most of the clients have additional health problems, especially tuberculosis, and many have disabilities pre-existing their HIV illness. Many are also trying to care for orphans of other family members who have died.

We hope that our new clients will now have a chance to eventually get strong enough to work again or go to school again and learn and get jobs, as has already happened with a lot of our previous clients.

Now that people in Lesotho have the opportunities for testing and treatment of HIV we are hopeful that more and more people, with the necessary supports, will achieve productive futures.



Our feeding programme provides most of the nutrition required for those suffering from HIV to get the maximum benefit, and minimum side effects, from their ARV treatment regimes. Our visiting nurse not only supplies food, medicines and nursing advice but counsels the clients on all aspects of their care and supports and encourages them through the often difficult processes with great empathy, cheerfulness and compassion.'





## People

### Puseletso visits Ireland



One of our key staff members in Lesotho, **Puseletso Raselimo**, visited Ireland for three weeks in August. Whilst there she met with the Action Lesotho Board of Directors, making a presentation on the progress of the projects in Lesotho and the challenges faced into the future. She also visited local Action Lesotho groups, including Bantry Friends of Lesotho and the Action Lesotho bookshop in Tralee (pictured p7).

Puseletso wrote the following about her impressions of Ireland: 'I haven't been to any other countries except Lesotho and South Africa; however, I felt that I could actually stay in a country like Ireland. I loved the green environment; it felt like therapy on my brain. Everything I saw was so different from here, for example, lifestyles and the culture. The way normal people live in Ireland would be luxury life in Lesotho for most of our population.'

I met a lot of welcoming people with highly appreciative manners. I got a lot of "thank yous" for things I didn't understand why. In Lesotho, we don't have a lot of that, not because people aren't appreciative but just because it is something that we are not used to. A "thank you" is something that Basotho say, but not on a high note like I experienced with the Irish people. I found that really nice. I am sure people felt that I didn't appreciate everything because I did not show as much gratitude as the Irish people, but deep down I really did. I appreciate all that the Irish people do for our country. I was very impressed to have seen the Action Lesotho book sale in Bantry and the bookshop in The Mall, Tralee. I was humbled by all the activities done by the Irish people to raise funds for Lesotho. To all people who help make Action Lesotho project a success, we are forever grateful.

I will certainly go to Ireland again if I can because I really loved it as a country!!!!



Puseletso Raselimo with Action Lesotho board members in Ireland. L-R Paul Hanrahan, Mossie Angland, Dermot Walsh, Rita Kelly, Brian Flaherty, Colleen O'Kane, Diane Malone, Clare Heardman & Rosarii Griffin.

### New staff member

Congratulations and welcome to **Ausi 'Mapule Radebe** (below right) who recently joined the team as a part-time administrator. She is quickly getting to grips with Action Lesotho's reporting and accounting systems and her role in taking on paperwork will make life much easier for the other staff. She has a Diploma in Education and gained practical experience by working as an intern at Boniface High School and by working at Laura Vicuna Pre-school. In her free time she loves watching sport and TV.



Action Lesotho staff members in Lesotho. L-R Malefestane, Puseletso, Mojalefa, M'e Futho, Molemo and Mapule with Nt Mankoe (seated).

### Board Members & volunteers visit Lesotho

Several Board Members & volunteers will be working on the projects in Lesotho during Oct-Dec.

- ❖ **Jacqui O'Riordan:** Jacqui is on sabbatical from University College Cork. She spent time in Lesotho in August/Sept and is going back again in Nov/Dec. She is working with the Basotho staff and project committees on monitoring and evaluation. She will be running a series of workshops aimed at identifying indicators regarding the important work of the projects.
- ❖ **Colleen O'Kane & Brian Donovan:** Colleen recently resigned as Treasurer of Action Lesotho in order to take a year off to work abroad with her partner Brian. However, the first stop on their travels was Lesotho where Colleen is spending three weeks carrying out an internal audit of the finances in Lesotho and also providing any book-keeping advice the team need. Meanwhile Brian is helping out at the Ha Maqele Community Centre which he helped build in 2009.
- ❖ **Brian Flaherty:** Brian was in Lesotho in May to witness the harvest and examine the machinery requirements for the farm as well as making numerous contacts with people in the farming world. He is returning in November to look at procedures relating to the soil preparation and planting season. He also hopes to be involved in assessing additional land to expand the Action Lesotho farm.
- ❖ **Theresa Moriarty:** Kerry-based Theresa has been involved with fundraising for Action Lesotho for many years. She previously volunteered in Lesotho working with the groups to develop a child protection policy. This time she will be working for two months to train a group how to teach English (see p3).





## Lesotho Mountain Crafts



Following on from the creative skills workshops that Pippa has been running at Ha Maqele, the group members, who represent artisans from all over Lesotho, formed an umbrella group called **Lesotho Mountain Crafts**. The recently elected executive committee is pictured above. The group has registered their name and is working on a constitution.

The first trade outing for the group will be a stand at the Cherry Festival in Ficksburg, November 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. The group has already developed new labels for their products to indicate the Lesotho Mountain Crafts brand. The companies will also have their own tags thus retaining their individual identity. Nyenye Crafts, whose bags and felt figures are featured on this page, is one of the participating groups.



## Wedding



Many congratulations from everyone in **Action Lesotho** to **Pippa Kearon**, our Irish management advisor in Lesotho, who recently married South African **Dave Moffet** at a fairytale wedding in Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry. The wedding ceremony was conducted by **Fr Tim Wrenn** (below centre). Many people in Lesotho have fond memories of Fr Tim as a result of his years spent working in the community through St Luke's Mission, Maputsoe. Pippa & Dave are setting up home in South Africa but Pippa will continue to work for Action Lesotho. We wish Pippa and Dave a very long & happy life together.



## \* \* \* CHRISTMAS CARDS \* \* \*

Please help us deliver support to some of the poorest people in Lesotho this winter by buying some of our **Action Lesotho** Christmas cards via our website [www.actionlesotho.ie](http://www.actionlesotho.ie). One pack of six cards costs €3.99 but there are special offers for larger orders!



Our **CHRISTMAS CARDS** feature one of the crib sets made by Nyenye Crafts, the women's craft co-operative supported by Action Lesotho. Please buy some of these cards so that we can help more groups become as successful as the women of Nyenye Crafts: these grandmothers have gone from being unemployed and impoverished to running a thriving little business that supports them and their families. The cards, which come in packs of 6 and have a seasonal greeting inside, in both English and Sesotho, can be bought online at [www.actionlesotho.ie](http://www.actionlesotho.ie). Visit the website for full details of prices and methods of purchasing the cards.

## \* \* \* SESHOSHIE BAGS \* \* \*

Beautiful bags made with traditional Seshoshie fabric by **Nyenye Crafts** in Lesotho are available to buy from Bantry Friends of Lesotho for €16.50 (including P&P). The roomy bags measure approx 30 cm x 40cm, are lined and are reversible with contrasting patch pockets. Please send a cheque or postal order payable to **Bantry Friends of Lesotho** c/o Dromclough East, Bantry, Co. Cork. Please state your design choice. Most are one-offs so please also state a 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> choice. For postage rates outside Ireland & any other queries about the bags please e-mail: [info@actionlesotho.ie](mailto:info@actionlesotho.ie)



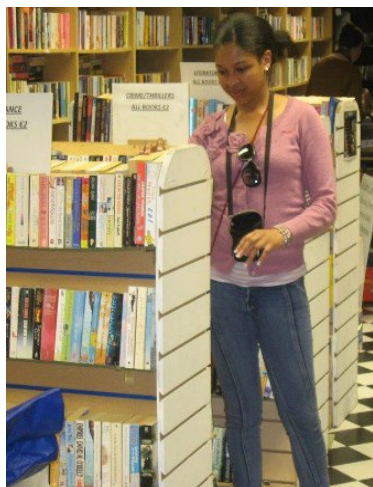
**Bag colours & designs** L-R: blue circles, red patchwork, blue dot, red cross, blue centre, red dot, blue swirl, red star flower & blue/yellow scallop. Main picture: blue dot scallop



## Fundraising news

Over the last three months there have been some great fundraising efforts & some very generous donations:

- ❖ **Bantry Friends of Lesotho:** the Bantry group raised a fantastic €3220 at their annual two-week long book sale. They would like to thank all the volunteers who staffed the shop and all those who donated and/or bought books. Thanks too to the O'Leary family who provide the premises and West Cork Music & O'Keeffes for lending fixtures & fittings.



- ❖ **Tralee Bookshop (left):** despite the recession, the volunteer staff at Action Lesotho's bookshop in Tralee has managed to significantly increase weekly profits from the shop. A huge thanks to them for their ongoing hard work and dedication.

- ❖ **Ashton School, Cork:** massive thanks to the children and teachers of Ashton School who donated €2000 to Action Lesotho from their annual fundraising efforts.
- ❖ **Tralee flag day:** well done to all the volunteers who gave up time on a sunny Saturday in September to shake a can for Action Lesotho.
- ❖ **Rosarii Griffin:** Action Lesotho Board member, Rosarii, launched her new book in September (see page 3) and very kindly donated 50% of the sales of the first batch of books to Action Lesotho.
- ❖ **Donors:** as always we send our very many thanks to our individual donors. Without your support we could not exist. If you are interested in becoming a donor, you can donate via our website [www.actionlesotho.ie](http://www.actionlesotho.ie) or fill in the Standing Order Form on this page.
- ❖ **Increase the benefit of your donation:** don't forget that if you are a PAYE worker who donates €250 or more a year, then Action Lesotho can claim the tax back if you complete the relevant form (CHY2 or 'tax relief form'. It's painless way to increase the benefit of your donation. To get a form contact Action Lesotho's Treasurer, David Buttimer [djbuttimer@eircom.net](mailto:djbuttimer@eircom.net)



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## Standing Order Donation Form

### Your banking details:

Bank name & address:

Sort code:

### Your details:

Name:

Address:

Email:

Telephone:

### Please debit my account no:

Account name:

Amount:

€

Monthly

Beginning (ddmmyy)

### Beneficiary account:

Action Lesotho, A/C No: 27016723

Bank of Ireland, Castle Street, Tralee, Co Kerry.

Sort Code: 90-58-38

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(authorised signature / account holder)

Please send this form to the address below or directly to your bank (if the latter please send us your name and address so we can acknowledge your donation):

David Buttimer, Treasurer, Action Lesotho, 12 The Mall, Tralee, Co. Kerry

Tax free donating: if you donate €22 or more per month to charity you or your charity may be eligible to reclaim tax. Details at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal/charities.html>

Action Lesotho, 32 The Mall, Tralee, Co. Kerry. [www.actionlesotho.ie](http://www.actionlesotho.ie)

Charitable Status Number: 17838