

## Action Lesotho and Volunteering

### 1. Introduction

Action Lesotho works in four main areas: skills & training, enterprise development, agriculture and delivery of humanitarian aid.

We are committed to ensuring that volunteer placements are a useful, rewarding and enjoyable experience for both the volunteer and the group they are working with. Action Lesotho will also ensure that placements are planned and resourced e.g. money allocated in annual budgets. Safety of volunteers and the people they are working with is of utmost importance. Action Lesotho is a signatory to the Comhlamh Code of Good Practise for Volunteer Sending Agencies and this guides our approach to working with volunteers.

### 2. Who does what?

Action Lesotho's work is funded almost exclusively from Ireland with the Board of Directors in Ireland being ultimately responsible for directing the programmes and ensuring accountability in relation to use of the funds. However, the work on the ground is delivered primarily by our staff in Lesotho and our In-Country Director, Pippa Kearon. The involvement of volunteers is encouraged where there is a specific role that has been identified that meets local needs and where a volunteer from Lesotho or overseas can be found that has the required set of skills.

### 3. The role of volunteers

Our basic requirement is that volunteers have a skill/s which are relevant to one of our programmes and that they have the experience and ability to pass those skills onto local people in Lesotho. This could either be training/mentoring one of our own staff members or running a course for students drawn from the community or one of our supported groups e.g. Nyenye Crafts. Typically, our volunteers, who have come from Ireland, UK, USA, Lesotho and South Africa, are either professionals or post-graduate students. All have specific relevant expertise which they are able to pass on. These are the type of skills which may be useful: transferable skills in the areas of crafts, trades, agriculture, health, business, management, computers/IT or teaching English.

#### These are examples of volunteer placements from the last three years:

A business woman and accounting technician from Ireland who trained our staff in book-keeping.

A retired prison officer and TEFL teacher from Ireland who ran a 6-week 'Train the Trainers' course to train a group to teach English to other members of their community.

An unemployed IT postgraduate from Lesotho who developed a computer course which she is delivering at Ha Majele on an ongoing basis.

A retired teacher and dressmaker from England who spent 4 weeks working with Nyenye Crafts on product designs & development plus training in the use of electric sewing machines

An International Development Masters student from Ireland, who had previous experience of volunteering in Lesotho, who mentored our Centre Manager in Ha Majele for 6 weeks.

A carpenter from Ireland who has delivered three annual wood work courses to a small group at Ha Majele.

#### **4. Recruitment & selection**

Generally, we will advertise for volunteers if we have a specific positions/roles which we have available. However, queries about volunteering for Action Lesotho can also be directed to Pippa Kearon who is the Volunteer Coordinator & Supervisor in Lesotho at [actionlesothopippa@gmail.com](mailto:actionlesothopippa@gmail.com)

Volunteers will be selected based on the skills & experience they can bring to the position. Almost all roles we have for volunteers require specific skills and experience of working in overseas development is an advantage.

Action Lesotho has a Diversity and Equality policy which applies to recruitment i.e. all applicants will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated upon in relation to their gender, race, religious beliefs or age.

Action Lesotho is committed to ensuring volunteers are effectively screened and trained in order to protect any vulnerable children or adults they may be working with.

#### **5. Volunteer placement: before, during, after**

***NB:** For volunteers based in Ireland, the organisation Comhlámh offers advice and support at all stages of volunteering for a development organisation overseas, from before leaving to post-placement [www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org) <http://www.comhlamh.org/>*

##### **5.1 Before:**

Exact details of placements are agreed with the Volunteer Coordinator/Supervisor in Lesotho Pippa Kearon and any relevant member of staff or partner organisation in Lesotho. Depending on the placement, Board members in Ireland may also be directly involved e.g. pre-visit briefing. Working together with the volunteer, clear objectives, timeframe, etc. will be set so that the volunteer is clear about what to expect from us and what is expected of them.

Volunteers must complete & sign the application form, get medical clearance (if necessary) and obtain references. They must also read and sign the following documents: Codes & Ethics, Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and the Comhlámh Volunteer Charter.

A Volunteer Manual is provided which includes FAQs about volunteering in Lesotho, country facts, details of our projects, practicalities, health & safety information, incident reporting form, copies of all our codes & policies and an application form.

Induction training based on the manual and tailored to the particular role of each volunteer will be provided by Pippa and the staff in Lesotho.

##### **5.2 During:**

Supervision, support & mentoring will be provided by Pippa Kearon in conjunction with the Action Lesotho staff members or partner organisation staff in Lesotho. Placements will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and adapted as necessary to ensure the best experience and outcomes for everyone involved.

Action Lesotho normally requires volunteers to meet all their own expenses, including travel to Lesotho, insurance and in-country expenses. However, Action Lesotho will usually provide basic self-catering accommodation.

Any issues that cannot be resolved at a local level should be referred to the Board In Ireland i.e. Paul Hanarahan, Chairman [paulbhanran@gmail.com](mailto:paulbhanran@gmail.com) or the Company Secretary David Buttimer [djbuttimer@eircom.net](mailto:djbuttimer@eircom.net)

### **5.3 After:**

At the end of each placement, a feedback session with Pippa and relevant staff/group members in Lesotho will take place. This is a two way process which helps everyone learn from the experience so future placements can be adapted as necessary. Volunteers usually find this a very useful in terms of having their voice heard.

Back in Ireland, debriefing is on offer in a variety of forms. Volunteers can meet with two Board Members at a time/place of mutual agreement, meet the whole Board at one of the monthly meetings in Killarney and/or go for independent debriefing which is offered by Comhlámh <http://www.comhlamh.org/>

Volunteers who feel they need counselling you should contact Paul Hanarahan, Chairman of the Board in Ireland [paulbhanran@gmail.com](mailto:paulbhanran@gmail.com) for information about counselling services. If volunteers prefer not to involve Action Lesotho they can contact Comhlámh <http://www.comhlamh.org/>

## **6. Ongoing**

Volunteers are encouraged to stay involved with Action Lesotho. Options include giving talks to schools or local groups, volunteering in the Tralee bookshop, setting up a local group, organising fundraising events and joining one of the policy & planning subcommittees.

## **7. Recognition**

Action Lesotho recognises the commitment given by each volunteer and the valuable contribution made. Action Lesotho is happy to provide written and verbal references for volunteers.

We also recognise volunteers' work through photographs & articles our newsletter, on our website and on our Facebook page.

## **8. Monitoring & Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation 'are an important means of measuring the effectiveness of any programme that feed into programme improvements and organisational learning' (Comhlámh). Action Lesotho will carry out monitoring and evaluation of all placements, including feedback from volunteers and partners, and ensure this learning is reflected in future programmes. Action Lesotho recognises that it is important to ensure that any volunteer placements are appropriate, useful and achievable.