



May 2009 Field Report

by Eileen O'Leary,
Executive Field Officer



Children at Qoqolosing Primary School



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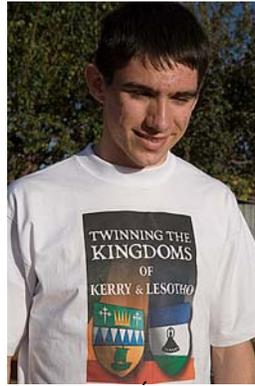
The Linking Programme



Brenda Friel



Sarah Ni Chéilleachair



Liam Antaine ÓCathasaigh



Lisa Ni Mhaonaigh

On Saturday the 4th of April Brenda Friel, three Transition Year students and Eileen O'Leary travelled to Lesotho as part of the linking project between Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, Dingle and Morate Medium High School, Kolonyama. The purpose of the visit was to further the relationships that have been established over the past three years, exchange cultural experiences and for the students to document both the school and Twinning the Kingdoms projects in both photographs and words.



Ntate Isaac



Ntate James



Connor McHugh IA



Eva Creely WW

A prime objective for the students was to observe, listen and bring back information to their peers, parents, teachers, TTK and to take as many media opportunities as possible on their return to further an interest and understanding of the issues for young people in Lesotho. The students had the opportunity to interview 'Mé Matsolo Tsolo as part of their 'Granny' exchange project, attend the launch by the Minister of Education of two TTK suites of classrooms, meet with His Royal Highness King Letsie III and interview His Excellency the Irish Ambassador Paddy Fay.

TWINNING THE KINGDOMS

The student's and their friends Kekeletso, Tefo and Tiisetso, facilitated a party for the 73 children at the Lepoqong Centre and helped with the Malimpo Food Distribution programme. Since returning to Ireland they have had an article published in the national newspaper The African Voice, appeared on Radio Kerry 'In Conversation with Weeshie Fogarty' an hour length programme, launched their 50 piece photographic exhibition and have presented their experience to teachers and students at the Tralee Education Centre. The linking project is supported by Worldwise, an arm of Irish Aid, and representatives from both organisations, Connor McHugh, Irish Aid and Eva Creely, World Wise attended the events and saw for themselves the true value for all students and teachers of the linking programme.



Kekeletso



Tefo



Tiisetso



'Mé Matsolo Tsolo

Irish Aid funded the filming of the student's experience which was facilitated by filmmaker Badru Nsubuga; the aim of which was to produce a 10 minute film documenting the linking experience of PCD Transition Year students and their MMEHS partners in Lesotho in April 2009. It is envisaged that this film will be used as a resource to promote linking with schools and communities in learning partnerships to students, schools and communities in Ireland and Lesotho. It is anticipated that the film will be available to schools for the start of the new school year September 2009.



The Irish students were overwhelmed with the welcome that they received by the staff and pupils of MMEHS it was a true exchange of culture with Basotho & Gaelic songs exchanged. The audience was treated to performances of poetry, traditional dance, songs from the choir and a play performed by ten members of the linking team. The play was written by the students and dealt with the issue of rape. The performance was

dynamic, challenging and thought provoking for everyone.



Matseliso Ramoqele, in her own words, was 'infused with passion' as she described the significance of her culture; dressed in traditional skins she voiced her 'extravagant enthusiasm' for her culture. Montseng Motseki used the metaphor of 'Shell Locked' to speak of her pain, aims, fear and dreams. It was evident that the

TWINNING THE KINGDOMS



linking programme has given an opportunity for students to explore and develop their creativity and to express powerful emotions through the medium of poetry. Liam Antaine's accordion followed the group every where and was the icebreaker in all situations. The students were honoured to receive Basotho names on their first morning which made them feel special it was a true linking in friendship.



Launch of the TTK classrooms

The students attended the launch of the suite of classrooms at St Monica's Primary School and the vocational classrooms at MMEHS. In her address at St Monica's the Minister of Education, Dr. Mamphono Khaketla, said, 'Ireland is one of the shining stars of Europe because of the training and education of their children. We are going to be the shining star here in Lesotho. We are going to train our people and in the not too distant future we will be one of the most successful countries....you will not be disappointed with your partner.' The Minister pointed out that St Monica's is the first primary school in Lesotho to have computers in their classroom thus the children will have the opportunity to avail of technology and look to the future.



The Minister thanked the family of Dr. Bill Mangan for their support and generosity, 'In Lesotho it is not the size of the gift that counts but the heart that goes behind the gift; we so much appreciate what Dr. Mangan's family have done for the school their gift will benefit so many families here in Maputsoe.'

At Morate English Medium High School His Excellency Ambassador Paddy Fay outlined the achievements of TTK over the past three years and the significance of their projects in Maputsoe and Kolonyama and the benefits to the community, and in particular the linking of the two secondary schools.

The Minister of Forestry, Ntate Ralechate Mokose congratulated TTK and Waterville Friends of Lesotho for creating opportunities for students who have practical skills so that they will have an opportunity of employment in the future thus enabling them to support their families. For both schools it was a day to remember; it was the first time that Honourable Ministers had visited the schools. An enormous amount of preparation had taken place by teachers and parents to make the events the success that they were, there was a real sense of celebration. Waterville Friends of Lesotho marked the day by planting two trees near the classrooms.



Students from PCD & MMEHS together with TTK volunteers and local TTK staff were graciously received by His Royal Highness King Letsie III in the Royal Palace. Liam Antaine Ó Cathasaigh and Ntate Manqoe, TTK Project Co-ordinator were given the opportunity to address the King. His Highness listened attentively to Ntate Mankoe describe the TTK Malimpo Feeding Project in Mapotsoe and encouraged TTK to formally invite him to view their projects on the ground. The visit was facilitated by His Excellency Paddy Fay, the Irish Ambassador; his wife Dee Fay invited all participants to an elegant reception at the Ambassador's Residency following the visit with the King.

Volunteer Support

Pippa Kearon, a Director on the Board of TTK, spent a month in Lesotho focusing on the development of Setsoto Designs weaving company and 'Mé Matsepo's craft group; as a result tremendous developments have taken place.



'Mé Mary's sewing group, Tsoha Ui Iketsitse has been disbanded and the remaining 5 members have been absorbed into 'Mé Matsepo's group Itekeng Bomme. Polo neck shirts, school uniforms and scarves were purchased from 'Mé Mary's group and were distributed by Lepoqong Caregivers for needy children in the



feeding programme. The sewing machines used by the group have been returned for future use at the Itekeng Bomme Community Development Centre when it is complete.



‘Mé Matsepo’s group have changed their name from Lebohang Morena to Itekeng Bomme, have drafted a Constitution and will be registering their company. A site at the cost of R8,000 has been provisionally earmarked for the Community Development Centre to be built by Waterville Friends of Lesotho.

20 ladies in the group were sponsored by WFOL to have eye tests for spectacles; the prescriptions will be sent to Ireland and sponsorship will be sought from opticians in the county to make up the spectacles.

TTK has recruited a Sales Representative, Soso Mantso, for Itekeng Bomme; her first task is to try and secure outlets for the blankets and crib figures. Response from outlets such as Malealea Lodge has been very favourable. Pippa has now trained the group to make sheep and has produced a prototype of a Basotho Shepherd Boy that the women are also working on at the moment. The group have had business cards/blanket labels and box labels printed and are eager to market their products in Lesotho. The enthusiasm of the group is palpable, the quality of their products is increasing and the input that Pippa has made has given the group new skills, confidence and a vision for the future that will enable the women to provide for their families. The group has strong leadership with ‘Mé Matsepo, all they now require is a building in which to work and the space to display and sell their products at a roadside location. School hats and scarves have been ordered from the group for the Lepoqong Caregivers children’s project to ensure that the children have something warm during this winter season.



Setsoto Designs

Pippa Kearon worked with the owners and staff of Setsoto Designs on a strategic business plan. The company now has a clear management and staff structure with defined and agreed roles. The vision for the future includes the recruitment of; an assistant for ‘Mé Matota, the designer, who will be trained as her stand in enabling ‘Mé Matota to undertake more research and new product development; a Sales and Marketing Officer who will travel throughout Lesotho and to Trade Fairs bringing back



to the company orders, client feedback and analysis of product trends. It is anticipated that the company will employ a young trainee designer in the future.



Over the course of the next 2-3 years Setsoto Design plan to employ a number of apprentices; the first has been employed and is currently training with the dyers.

A difficulty was identified by Ntate Saeed with sourcing good quality and plentiful sources of mohair. Pippa and the Irish Ambassador's wife Dee Fay has facilitated a link between a project in Mokhotlong run by Save the Children which will provide a business, training and an income for two Shepherd boys and product for Setsoto Designs. Setsoto Designs will provide training for the boys in carding and spinning; they will take the skills back to their village and train other members of the community it is a valuable business link for both areas.



A work experience programme has been initiated for students of Morate Medium English High School at Setsoto Designs to encourage future employment opportunities for the students. Six pupils will attend the studio on Friday afternoons each term and will be given the skills of carding, spinning, dyeing and weaving. This is a major step forward for both Morate and Setsoto Designs. Materials costs for the programme will be provided by TTK via the 10% scheme initiated by TTK and Setsoto Designs. This scheme will give TTK 10% of the final price of any tapestry produced to support projects on the ground in Lesotho; Setsoto Designs are eager to partner TTK in their efforts to alleviate poverty in any way they can.



Setsotho Designs, plans for the future;

-Setsoto Design weavers are busy reproducing Irish art tapestries for the exhibition in Dublin in mid September. 'Mé Matota will be visiting Ireland for a period of 6 weeks to assist with the exhibition and spend time researching the interior design market and expanding her skills.

-Pippa has initiated computer training with 'Mé Ntebaleng and 'Mé Matota to ensure regular communication between TTK and between Sesotho designs and potential clients; further training to be accessed in August with a TTK volunteer.

-Ntate Meshu and Setsoto Designs are working together to promote a tapestry design for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa it is hoped that this will generate extra sales for the company with a unique Meshu image.

-The company are working on new product designs together with a new bag design and new designs for floor rugs thus extending their product range for the future.



Qoqolosing Developments



The village of Qoqolosing is sited in the district of Leribe; the village is dominated by a cone shaped mountain; a rural paradise the surrounding land is fertile with opportunities for fruit farming, aloe production and food production. Currently the village provides no employment opportunities for its residents; children and teachers walk up to ten kilometres to the nearest primary and secondary school and villager's access water from a mountain spring a kilometre from their homes.

The village council have been in negotiations with the District Council over a ten year period to try and access a main stream water supply; currently it would seem that the earliest opportunity for a government water scheme would be in three years time.



Following visits by the Minister of Forestry, the Honourable Lincoln R. 'Mokose and Topollo Joseph Lephatsoe, the Director of the Poverty Reduction Programme together with the Twinning the Kingdoms Executive Field Officer in February and April 2009, Qoqolosing has been identified as a prime area for the development of fruit trees, forestry products and aloe production. The developments would mean employment for villagers giving them the means to feed their families, send children to school, access medical clinics in Leribe for essential services and most importantly give them the dignity of having the means to a regular income. In order for the plans to become a reality the village

needs to access water.



It is essential that water, which is after all a basic human right, should be provided to the village of Qoqolosing and the children who live there. Many of those children now have no parents and are looking after their younger siblings; they are hungry and in a mountain village they are often cold. There is no transportation to get them access to the clinic in Leribe that would provide them with anti-retroviral drugs, there is no support for the children who have disabilities to get them assessed and elderly grandmothers are feeling the strain of providing food when they have no income.



It is recommended that TTK make a formal approach to Brian Crowley, European MEP with all haste with a view to making an application for funding from the European Commission for the water project in Qoqolosing. Estimates for the project have been procured both from Lesotho Rural Water Supply 160,000 Euro and also from a private contractor 100,000 Euro.



Malimpo Feeding Programme



Khotso Mothabei & his keyhole garden

The monthly food programme has been in operation since December 2008 thus after six months in operation it has been an opportune time to evaluate its success. The programme is currently catering for 25 people in 8 different villages, men, women and children ranging from 13 years to 70 years of age. During the six month period four people have died and one child is currently very sick with little hope of recovery. Three people have been replaced on the programme because they are well enough to work and have accessed jobs locally or in South Africa.



Khopotso Khacha

Teboho Letsoko

Maneo Litabe

Mamkopoi Molapo

Khotso Mothabei is feeling strong, he used to work in South Africa mining for gold; in 2006 he was retrenched from work and suffers from poor hearing as a result of the work in the mines, he has been unable to find work. Khotso rebuilt the keyhole garden himself and the spinach is growing well.

Khopotso Khacha is thirteen years old and just wants to get back to school to her friends but she has been very unwell and in May was admitted to Dr Ghazi's clinic where she received a blood transfusion and vital medication. Khopotso is looked after by her elderly grandmother. Khopotso was released from the clinic into the care of her uncle who lives in Ha Mapele and will be responsible for giving her daily injections for the next two months.

Teboho Letsoko is thirteen years old and caring for his very sick mother; Teboho was constantly in trouble because he was stealing food for his mother who was literally starving. Teboho, his mother and their elderly sick landlady are all now on the feeding programme. Teboho is back attending school and visiting the Lepoqong Community Development Centre at the weekends. As I write I have just heard from our Project



Co-ordinator that Teboho's mother has died, through the local police we will be trying to trace any other relatives who can take care of Teboho.

Maneo Litabe had moved to her daughter's house as she was too sick to live on her own, there her daughter and small granddaughter were caring for each other; this month her daughter, a security guard, passed away leaving two very vulnerable people who will be assessed by Lepoqong Caregivers this week for additional assistance.

Mamkopoi Molapo lives in the village of Ha Chonapase and is now feeling strong and well from the additional food received on the programme, now she has the strength to go and carry water herself.



Charta



Johannes Moholisa

Charta is a grandson of Mamotintolo; Mamotintolo is blind, her son is sick and there are three members of the family with a disability. Khauta is 14 years old, has a physical disability and has never had the opportunity to go to school; he is a very bright boy and crawls to see his friends in the village on his knees. Dr Gyasi supplied him with a wheel chair this month from the Ficksburg Rotary Association. It is important that sponsorship is accessed so that Khauta can go to boarding school in Leribe.

Johannes Moholisa is new to the Malimpo programme. He lives on his own and is on regular medication he walks with the aid of two sticks; in order to help sustain himself he is looking after his neighbour's cattle half a kilometre away from his home.



Manapo Lethea



Maseabata

'Mé Manapo is living in the village of Ha Nyenye and is improving each month with regular food enabling her to take her daily medication; her daughter has returned from South Africa to take care of her.

Maseabata is one of a family of four in Ha Maqele, her parents have passed away. Her eighteen year old sister, Mamello is working locally in a factory to ensure that her 13



year old brother Kamohelo can go to school. Maseabata has not been able to go to school, she is eight years old but looks after two year old Lefunyane during the day. It is important that the family are supported with food and funds to go to school.

Update on other projects

Reikhemotse Disability Group, Ha Chonapase

The group are currently finalising their Constitution. Ntate Mankoe has arranged to pick up the child with a disability and take her to school in the Jeep each morning as the child is now 10 years old and too heavy for her mother to wheel the wheel barrow to school; the child is in Standard 2. The group are planning a schedule for the Jeep and working out who is licensed to drive it. The priority for the use of the Jeep is for people with disabilities to access schools, clinics and hospitals but it is also planned to provide school trips to earn revenue to cover the cost of diesel and servicing the Jeep. Currently TTK are paying for the use of the Jeep for food deliveries.

The group will be arranging a meeting with the community to introduce the concept of the transport service and to outline a schedule. The group would like to plan to trade in the vehicle and buy another locally so that parts will not be an issue in the future. The group are currently preparing a roster, rental chart, delivery rates and emergency service rates together with advertising material.

During April the Jeep was rented by Brenda Friel for the Transition Year Programme.

Ha Chonapase Pig Project

Ntate Mankoe has been guiding the group this month on the formulation of a Constitution for the group; there is a meeting this week with 'Mé Pulane and the group to look at the training supports required for the group. As a result of the meeting 'Mé Pulane will formulate a proposal for a training programme.

In April one of the sows had 11 piglets, 9 lived. Ntate Anton's sow also had 11 piglets and two other sows are pregnant. Currently 11 pigs are still being fattened for market and will be ready to be sold in May at that stage the group will no longer need money for feed.

The result of the work on the keyhole gardens by April was that the group had built four keyholes; two in Ha Maputsoe, one in Ha Chonapase and one in Ha Molise the result is that their loan has gone from R62,210.74 to R57,922.42 as a result of their work. Thus the outstanding loan to be repaid is 4,826.86 Euro.

Lepoqong Caregivers, Ha Maputsoe

The committee have had very positive feedback from the community with regard to the Malimpo Feeding Programme. Members of the committee were at pains to stress that currently the situations for families with orphans and vulnerable children is really bad and that the Centre is very important to these families.



TTK suggested that Lepoqong cover holiday weekends by preparing food parcels for families if the Centre is going to be closed for Easter/Christmas; this will ensure that children are fed and that Lepoqong volunteers can have a well earned break themselves.

The group identified that it would be good to identify some nearby land that was large enough for football, volley ball and basket ball as the frontage to the Centre is so cramped and ball games are causing issues for the neighbours.

Ntate Clifford has promised to go to the social welfare office in Leribe with a letter from the chief and a death certificate for Lydia Kompfi who died at the age of 26 leaving Sekake and Lepekola without a parent; the purpose of the visit is to access government funding to support their situation.

Recommendations for youth programme with Willing Hearts. The group of nine young people are eager to participate in keyhole garden projects but need some regular supervision and leadership. TTK has suggested that Ntate Mankoe's son get involved with the group on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are supported with their projects. One of the TTK August volunteers will be able to spend a month with the group and then regular weekends during his Save the Children placement in Maseru to support the development of the group.

Popa's computer project for five young people at the Centre is being very successful. Popa passed his computer exams very well and has started on the next computer course at St. Rose in Peka. TTK & Popa would like to thank Una Martin and Anne Delaney for their support in funding the course for Popa; he is a very dedicated student and is making a significant contribution to the work of TTK in Maputsoe.

Sponsorships



The Tau family are well; Fusi's grandmother is now working with 'Mé Matsepo's group and sewing while she is selling in front of St. Luke's each day. Fusi and brother and sisters have produced an outstanding vegetable garden and have been able to supply produce for the feeding programme. All have been working hard at school and send warmest regards to Ntate Paddy and 'Mé Fíona



Sekake and Lepekola Kompfi are well and enjoying school; Lepekola last seen high up on a swing at St Luke's Preschool; both boys growing fast. Lepekola sends good wishes to Bernadette Parte and family and Sekake likewise to Theresa Moriarty and Chuchie Theresa's dog.



Greetings to Carmel from Tumelo Masitha and family; Tumelo seen here proudly wearing his Kerry jersey and pictured at the Community Development Centre in Ha Maputsoe where he and his brother attended a children's party for the first time.



Pobetsi, aged seven, and his mother Theresia Mokhonatsi send greetings and thanks to Eva Smith for the opportunity to go to school with his friends. Pobetsi is also attending the Lepoqong Feeding Programme and activities at weekends.



Ntebohelong Mokoane aged 6 and her grandmother would like to thank Theresa Griffin for her support and giving Lebohang the opportunity to get her uniform and go to school for the first time.



Khopotso Khacha would like to thank Ruth Griffin and her family for their help; Khopotso has been sick for a while but is leaving hospital today and looking forward to feeling better and being able to help her grandmother at home and go back to school with her friends.



Lebohang Mosola is five years old; both she and her mother are sick, they live with her grandmother who has been helping them to grow some vegetables. The family would like to thank the members of the Kenmare Photographic Society for their support which has enabled Lebohang to go to St. Luke's Preschool for the first time.



Maseabata is one of a family of four in Ha Maqele, her parents have passed away. Her eighteen year old sister, Mamello is working locally in a factory to ensure that her 13 year old brother Kamohelo can go to school. Maseabata has not been able to go to school, she is eight years old but looks after two year old Lefunyane during the day. TTK would like to thank the Kenmare Photographic Society for making it possible for Maseabata to go to school.



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If you would like to volunteer your time in Lesotho or work within your community to raise awareness and funds to support one of these projects, please email Eileen O'Leary at info@eileenoleary.com or phone her at 00353 87 9213084. We appreciate your interest and your help. Thank you.