



NEW YEAR IN THE VILLAGE OF
HA MAQELE, MAPUTSOE, LESOTHO
BY EILEEN O'LEARY



Maseabata, Lefunyane & Kamohelo

Loantsang community group comprises of ten volunteers; they are determined in 2009 to continue to visit the sick and needy in their village so that they can continue to provide much needed care and medication. Their chief concern is for the amount of sick people on anti retroviral drugs that do not have anything to eat. Another source of concern is the 271 orphans in the village who are struggling to get food and attend school.

Two of the volunteers took me to visit a family of 4 children in the village whose parents died in 2007. The oldest daughter Mamello, aged 18, left school to work in a factory to earn money for food and school fees for her thirteen year old brother Kamohelo. Each day she and her brother leave the two younger children at home and the eight year old girl, Maseabata, looks after two year old Lefunyane; both of the younger children are HIV positive and Lefunyane was recently hospitalised with TB. Loantsang volunteers visited the family and took some food. It was an important visit; Loantsang are committed to supporting the family. Kamohelo and his younger sister need to be able to attend school; Lefunyane needs to be cared for during the day and all of the family need regular meals and the comfort of being together in their own home.

HA MAQELE

Loantsang group members feel that a feeding programme with a monthly food basket and keyhole garden would make a huge difference to their priority patients. As rain came late to Lesotho in 2008, it delayed the vital period of ploughing. The drought meant that in December maize that is usually waist high at this stage was disappointingly low in the ground. The state of the weather means that fewer fields have been planted and thus there will be a low yield this year. The group were anxious about their ability to hoe the fields; many of the volunteers are elderly and hungry themselves.



Maseabata

The community in Ha Maqele are surviving on little but they are caring for one another. Child headed families are increasing and children are not getting an opportunity for full time education; they have responsibilities to look after younger siblings or to earn a living where they can. Poverty means that diseases such as Tuberculosis are on the increase; many of the villagers cannot get to a clinic because they are too sick to go or they cannot afford

the cost of transport. And yet the New Year has been met with optimism because the entire community is working together; the youth of the village are getting involved with Loantsang visiting homes to highlight anyone in need. Whatever the challenges are in the village of Ha Maqele the strength of the community and their determination is going to ensure that 2009 is a better year.



Lefunyane & Kamohelo

For more information about Lesotho please visit www.twinningkingdoms.ie info@eileenoleary.com

All photographs by Eileen O'Leary

HA MAQELE