



Qoqolosing Mountain

Qoqolosing

**a village in the mountains
of Lesotho**

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The village of Qoqolosing is sited in the district of Leribe in the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. 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.

Lesotho is a small landlocked country in southern Africa, the population is 1.8 million; once a British protectorate it has been an independent country since 1966. Lesotho has the third highest adult HIV prevalence in the world at 23.2%. There are an estimated 62 new HIV infections and about 50 deaths due to AIDS each day. There are an estimated 270,273 people living with HIV in Lesotho at the end of 2007. Of these there are 11,801 infected children.



Children at Qoqolosing Primary School

Twinning the Kingdoms a small Kerry based NGO has been working with voluntary groups in the Leribe district for the past three years; TTK's mandate is to ensure that the work that it engages in on the ground in Lesotho is framed by the Millennium Development Goals; the basis of all of the projects that it has been working on for the past three years with partners in Maputsoe are to help alleviate extreme poverty.

TTK's Project Co-ordinator, the Executive Field Officer and its volunteers all experience the reality of the stark statistics on a daily basis. Six of the MDGs relate to the welfare of children and that is of prime concern to TTK. 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; often 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.

The production of fruit trees and aloe would enable villagers to change their lives and look to the future with hope. Ntate Topollo Joseph Lephatsoe defines poverty as 'a lack of knowledge;' the children of Qoqolosing have the right to go to school; many of them cannot as they are looking after a sick parent or small siblings.

Joseph Chaka is a young Basotho who has experienced the loss of his family; he is a musician and composer who through his lyrics poignantly described the situation for children in Lesotho.

"A thunderstorm has happened to us but we are on the way to move forward and we are going where a thunderstorm cannot find us. The orphans they will live and survive and God will take care of them."

TTK would like to ensure that practical support in the form of a water system for the village is provided with all haste, it is incumbent upon us to put out a hand of friendship. The Irish government has succinctly given the answer as to why we should provide aid...'because it is right to help those in greatest need...we are bound by a shared humanity. The fate of others is a concern to us.' The children of Qoqolosing need our help and they need it now. At this time of electioneering and political campaigning in Ireland the question to ask your candidate is: what is their commitment to and plan for ensuring that the Millennium Development Goals turn into achievements by the year 2015.



Hon. Minister Mokose greets children in the village



Nearest water supply is one kilometer from the village