



This latest Action Lesotho is the first in a while and it is one with a difference. It was written almost entirely by **Mantai Mpesi**, a graduate from Limkokwing University in Maseru, who is currently doing an internship with Action Lesotho. She has focussed largely on the children's programming and the Malimpho Programme for critically ill patients. We hope you enjoy her articles on the various projects. The next newsletter will focus mainly on the craft enterprise side of our work, which has recently received funding from Irish Aid (see below).

IMPACT visit

IMPACT Trade Union (Ireland) has been a major donor in recent years, especially in relation to funding the agricultural elements of Action Lesotho's projects, as well as contributing to the Malimpho Feeding Programme for critically ill patients and the child-centred activities. In August, the former president of IMPACT **Kevin O'Malley** (above) visited Lesotho on a private trip with his family to see for himself the work of Action Lesotho. Being able to showcase the projects to visitors is always a highlight for the staff in Lesotho and they were very proud to demonstrate the results of all their work, from the Lesotho Mountain Crafts gallery to the Enterprise Centre & Farm at Phukalla and the Community Centre in Ha Maqele, where the children performed a welcoming show.

During his visit, Kevin made a private donation to Action Lesotho and requested it be used for something extra to benefit the children. It was agreed that it would be used to provide breakfast for the children in the new pre-school programme and also for the children of the Women's Empowerment Programme who come to the centre with their mothers.

Dominic Matooane, Action Lesotho's Financial Officer & Enterprise Trainer, thanked Kevin on behalf of all the staff, asking him to 'carry our thanks back to IMPACT Trade Union members for the generous support of our work on an annual basis. The lives of so many have been improved by the generous financial support we receive through the IMPACT membership'.




Irish Aid Funding

Action Lesotho is thrilled to have received funding from **Irish Aid** for the next three years through the Civil Society Fund to help support the innovation and enterprise elements of our work. While these have largely been related to craft enterprises to date, the delivery of innovation & enterprise training to a whole range of groups is very much broadening the scope of income-generating possibilities for participants.

The overall aim of the **Irish Aid** funded project is to break the cycle of poverty in Lesotho, by increasing incomes and employment through the creation of new enterprises and the development of existing ones. This will be done partly through the delivery of pilot programmes of enterprise and innovation training to individuals and businesses in Leribe district, and also through building the capacity of Lesotho government agencies and other stakeholders to implement effective enterprise-creation and business-development practices and policies throughout Lesotho.

Action Lesotho's stated expected outcome is that 'The Government of Lesotho will have a clear economic strategic development plan for Tourism, Arts and Crafts in place. Government agencies will be effective in delivering micro, small 7 medium enterprise (MSME) job creation in 10 Districts of Lesotho. Lesotho Mountain Crafts will have become the national brand for craft marketing. Action Lesotho's pilot training programmes for enterprise start-up and business development will have produced a template for subsequent use by government agencies.



Project News: children's programmes



Some children in Maputsoe are from very vulnerable families. Some are single parented while others are from child-headed families. They have no access to simple, but critical things like pre-school, healthy foods, and places to play & exercise - things that help a child thrive and grow in mind and body. These affect them physically, mentally and psychologically. It makes some of them lose self-confidence and self-esteem, leads to depression and results in low levels of concentration and lethargy. It can mean being unable to see a future outside of poverty.

Action Lesotho is dedicated to creating equal opportunities for all children. After all no-one chooses to be born poor. We see our work as an opportunity to make the world a better place by providing critical health services, educational support, clothing and nutritional assistance to these children who are in need. Every child deserves a chance to have a healthy start. Children are fed at the centre at Ha Masele on weekends. They play together under the supervision of two Action Lesotho staff, **Mats'ireletso** & **Mahlonepho**. They eat, have an opportunity to play together (indoor and outdoor games) and are provided with clothes at intervals throughout the year. We collect funds and donations of new clothing at Christmas in order to provide each child with a beautiful new set of clothes; a tradition at Christmas in Lesotho.

After eating their lunch, they are very happy, active and play with each other. They come to the centre washed, with clean clothes, feeling and looking beautiful. At the end of each day they seem to gain confidence.

Their academic performance is affected for a variety of complex reasons. Some have been traumatized through the loss of their parents or primary carers, most lack good nutrition, some do not have a school uniform and many have little or no support at home with homework. We support this through our homework club and



also we are increasing our programme during the week to include a breakfast club. The children will come to the centre every morning before they go to school which will ensure that they:

- ❖ Avoid missing critical learning
- ❖ Improve concentration
- ❖ Improve their school performance
- ❖ Avoid falling asleep in classes.

We are asking you to help us hit the target of giving breakfast to 120 vulnerable and orphaned children by supporting a child through Action Lesotho (donation details on back page). Please donate and enable us to respond quickly in areas of greatest need.

Winter holiday programme



This programme ran at the Ha Masele Centre from 1st July - 1st August 2015. It was run by two childcare practitioners at the Centre, **Mats'ireletso Kanetsi** and **Mahlonepho Makirika**. The children came to the Centre Monday to Thursday. This programme was started in order to:

- ❖ Provide children with breakfast & lunch during the school holiday period
- ❖ Provide extra support academically (Maths, English & Sesotho), creatively and recreationally. This was done by applying the four themes of **Aistear** (see page 4) in each activity: 1) exploring & thinking; 2) identity & belonging; 3) communication; and 4) well-being.
- ❖ Keep the children safe. Without the programme they might be left alone at home, become involved in dangerous games or activities, or become vulnerable to abuse. At the centre they are nurtured, supported and protected.
- ❖ Promote good behaviour, respect and personal wellbeing. The children are encouraged to come to the centre clean and to ensure that their clothes have been washed. This is part of our wellbeing programme and helps to raise the self-esteem of the children. They are also encouraged to wash their hands before and after eating and after "dirty" activities. This improves their health and ensures that they enjoy each day.
- ❖ Ensure improved academic work

Breakfast and lunch

Children are given breakfast to start the day with full stomachs, be able to have good concentration during the classes, to improve children's nutrition for their daily lives and to ensure underweight children reach normal weights.

The children commented on how nice it was to have bread and peanut butter for breakfast. Many of the children reported that they didn't normally eat breakfast.



We managed to feed all 47 registered children and 6 more who were not registered. They all looked happier and healthier after just a week on the programme and this was commented on by other Action Lesotho staff and the primary carers. We would highly appreciate more financial support for our holiday programme as

the Winter Programme's success has resulted in many more families approaching us to be included in the next holiday programme.

Academic assistance

Subjects that were covered during this programme were Sesotho, English and Mathematics.

Mathematics: We were delighted to find that the younger children did not struggle as much with maths as the older children. We believe that this is due to our pre-school



morning programme that the younger children had gone through before starting school. This ensured that they were confident and competent learners. They are really showing signs of being able to access school at a much higher level due to having a grounding in the following:

- ❖ Confidence in basic mental arithmetic.
- ❖ Ability to play mathematical games such as morabaraba, line-up-4 and snakes & ladders.
- ❖ Ability to solve basic mathematical problems
- ❖ Ability to work in groups through which they can discuss and share ideas.

At the end of the programme many of the children were able to multiply and this was a real motivation to them because they had previously struggled with this skill. The aim is to improve the ability of all students. What was interesting about the children was that they were able to form discussion groups on their own. Children played mathematical games perfectly which helped them in their exploring & thinking, communication skills and identity & belonging.

The children loved all the games presented to them. Those that improved their understanding of maths (15-20% of students) ended up preferring maths as a subject which was very pleasing. The students reported that their motivation to learn maths increased because they were not afraid to participate in the classes even if they got the answer wrong. This is because we in **Action Lesotho**, unlike in mainstream school, have a policy of no corporal punishment at our centre under our child protection policy. This has had a very positive effect on the children's mental attitude towards learning.

Sesotho: We aim to help children to read and write Sesotho and to know and play various traditional games. We also work to build confidence in performing drama which illustrates traditional Basotho themes. We selected a drama about traditional marriage and how boys and girls were behaving in times gone by. Children definitely need to know their clans and the animal totem which represents them. This will help them improve their identity and belonging within their culture. The children were also encouraged to create Sesotho poems on their own.

After completing this programme the children were able to read and write basic Sesotho, perform drama, fully access all aspects of their clan heritage and present their clan poem and totem. For the future we will concentrate on:

- ❖ Reading practice
- ❖ Better punctuation
- ❖ Creative writing
- ❖ Traditional dances, games, drama and clans.

English: Children need to learn to read & write in English, which is the main teaching language in schools in Lesotho. We encourage them to write poems in English and to play English word/picture matching games in order help them learn different nouns through pictures. Most of them struggled to read & write but at the end there was a big improvement. The children were able to read basic English at the end of the programme, with 50% of the children confident in comprehension and all children showing a marked improvement even though they struggled at times. They managed to create English poems and two of them performed one of their poems during their end of winter programme party.

Activities: The juniors played in the sand pit in order to explore and develop their learning and communication through play. They played with teddy bears, hula hoops, swings, & slides. Seniors played netball and football, both boys and girls. They performed drama and played music after lunch as this helped them to rehearse for their party and to sing both English and Sesotho songs.



'It is very nice to have bread and peanut butter for breakfast. I did not normally eat breakfast and it felt really good to have a full stomach in the morning. It was very nice to be able to get seconds. I enjoy coming to the centre and playing with others.'

Personal overview from 'Mats'ireletso

Mats'ireletso is one of the coordinators of the children's programmes. **Pippa Kearon**, Action Lesotho's In-Country Director talked to her about her work and how she feels the programme is progressing.

Pippa Kearon (PK): How do you feel about this programme?

'Mats'ireletso (M): It was a big success to us and was our first time to do it. The four Aistear themes (see box below right) helped a lot especially in delivering maths. At the end of the programme, there was an improvement in this subject.

PK: What did you like most about running the Winter Programme?

M: The children were lovely; they showed respect to us, and one of the children even told me that I am her role model.

PK: This was a large group of 53 children. How did you control them?

M: It was a big group but we were able to divide them into groups according to their grades at school. We agreed on rules at the beginning of the programme and the children understood how to behave. We really didn't have many discipline issues during the programme as the children knew their timetable, were fully engaged in activities and communicated well between themselves & with the staff.



PK: What did you learn?

M: I have learned that the children are not a problem to work with, especially if the carers respect and trust their ideas allowing them to talk and share their thoughts, opinions and feelings freely.

PK: What were the challenges?

M: There were problems we encountered here and there but I think they will help us as they are our ladder to success.

PK: What would you like to share with our readership?

M: I realize that working with teenagers can be quite challenging and that as a practitioner it is important that I receive training on how to communicate effectively with this age group. They can be quite frustrating at times and I now know that it is best to talk calmly to all children especially



the teenagers. If they have done something wrong, I have learned to talk to them without shouting so that they will not feel like I am angry. In this way we can help to resolve the issues as they arise. I am really motivated by what I have done together with the children through love and respect. I have learned from this programme that the more I spend my time with the children either academically or recreationally, the more confident and happier children become. This also results in a strong communication from staff to children. I hope to get further training on how to assist children in doing mental arithmetic as this is a stumbling block for most of our clients.



What is Aistear? Aistear is the new early childhood curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland. Because early childhood marks the beginning of children's lifelong learning journeys, this framework is called Aistear, the Irish word for journey. It provides information to help practitioners, including infant teachers and Early Start teachers, to plan for and provide enjoyable and appropriately challenging learning experiences that will allow all children grow and develop as competent and confident learners. Aistear describes the types of learning experiences that are important for children in early childhood, and offers lots of practical ideas & suggestions.

For our Action Lesotho staff this has been a solid framework from which to learn how to develop positive communication, constructive educational play activities, expose children to exploring & thinking learning opportunities and ensure that the wellbeing & self-esteem of children is boosted through our activities. The programme began in June this year and has transformed our children's programming for all age groups and given enormous confidence to our staff. We are sharing our learning with other practitioners and hope to be able to offer workshops & training to other educationalists early next year.



'Malimpho feeding programme



HIV/AIDS in Lesotho leaves many families destitute and without any regular income or means of caring for themselves. **Action Lesotho's Malimpho Programme** identifies critically ill patients and supports them with monthly groceries, medical assistance and counselling. 'Me Futho, our nurse, visits the patients weekly and encourages them to adhere to their medication regime and to ensure that they have a good daily nutritional intake. As the patients

recover they are encouraged to think of the future and whether they will seek employment or become self-employed. **Limakatso** and **Mampoi**, who run the programme from Ha Mapele, work with the recovering patients mentoring them towards a time when they will exit the programme and stand on their own two feet again. When they exit the programme they will be employed or self-employed in micro businesses and are supervised for 3 months to ensure that they remain healthy and are able to support themselves adequately. We have approximately 9 recovering patients annually which allows us to absorb new clients into the programme. At the time of writing this newsletter all our Malimpho clients are responding well to medication and counselling. Two clients recovered and left the programme in July.

Case study 1: Thabo is a 45 year old Mosotho. He lives in Leribe at Ha Mapele. He was working at the South African mines to feed and support his 5 children of which two were in high school and three in primary.

His wife is not working; she stays at home taking care of their animals and garden. When he was working his children were all attending school despite the cost of secondary school fees. In 2013, Thabo got sick and could not go to work. He went to the clinic and tested HIV positive. He was badly sick and the case became worse when there was nothing to eat, the children went to school hungry, the secondary school fees could not be paid and the children's performance dropped.

Thabo was brought to the attention of Action Lesotho by a local healthcare support group. He was registered under our Malimpho Programme. We were able to give Thabo monthly groceries and he was also attended to by the nurse. The food helped him regain his strength and his health

began to improve. Through good nutrition he was able to reap the full benefits of ARV medication. Their only struggle was for the school fees. After 2 years of being under supervision, he has fully recovered and went back to his old job at the mines. His family is very happy. This has been a major success for the Malimpho Programme team. 'M'e Futho commented, "We are so happy that someone who has been so critically ill has recovered enough to resume work at the mines. This is a wonderful achievement for everyone involved."

Case study 2: Another client is a 55 year old woman from Ha Motlalehi who has been on our programme for about 3 months. She was referred to us by the Lepoqong support group. On assessment she wasn't critically ill but was showing signs of becoming seriously ill due to her positive status. 'M'e Futho asked to admit her onto the programme for a short period to regain health and counsel her into employment and being able to support herself. She was therefore given the monthly delivery, nursing and counselling and assisted with entrepreneurial support to start a small business and we are happy to say that she has reached a level of health and strength that has enabled her to leave the programme.

Monthly Malimpho delivery

This month, we were able to increase our monthly deliveries for each patient. The food provided to each client increased by an additional 12.5kg of maize meal, 2 kg sorghum meal and 1 kg sugar. The original package of maize meal could not sustain the clients adequately for the whole month which is why it was increased. Each client now receives 25kg maize meal, 2 kg sorghum meal (for breakfast), sugar, beans, salt, cooking oil, a bar of soap, paraffin, vaseline, matches and fresh milk and vegetables (both from our farm). They are very happy and so thankful.

Gifts: Each client received a blanket for this winter because it is very cold. In the winter months the temperatures can dip below minus 12°C at night and remain very cold during the day. The blankets will provide warmth for our bedridden and inactive patients and that will help them to save the paraffin that we provide them with for cooking. They all happily received the blankets and said winter will never be the same.

We were also extremely grateful for a food donation from U-Save in Maputsoe. The clients were so excited and grateful for the extra support.

We currently have two vacant spaces which will soon be filled as two potential clients have been referred to us by local community members. Research and follow ups on those potential clients are in progress.



Project news: enterprise & innovation



Most of the families in Lesotho live below poverty line (\$1.25 per day). **Action Lesotho**, working together with **BEDCO** (the government business development organization), help unemployed people to start micro and small businesses. They are encouraged to start with the little they have rather than waiting for the government to fund them. We have realised that there is a need to train people to generate innovative ideas and start entrepreneurial businesses.

Action Lesotho's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Programme has been designed to break the cycle of poverty by moving away from theoretical business skills training and towards a practical and implementable training programme.

We begin by establishing the participants' existing knowledge base and assumptions on starting and running a business. We explain all the options available to the potential entrepreneurs for business registration and we also establish realistic targets for income generation. We develop innovation and entrepreneurial thinking skills in the participants to help them recognize gaps in the market where they might create a niche for themselves.

The course then takes the participants through the customer discovery and segmentation, marketing, communication and business management skills that will enable them to establish and sustain profitable micro and small businesses. The training is tailored to the needs of each training group and the length of time we will be able to have with each group.

The **Special Support Group for Lesotho Orphans** in our area is embarking on an agricultural project and requested a one week training from Action Lesotho. We therefore designed a 4 day training for this group from 10th to 13th August 2015. This group is a non-profit making association of 20 members who joined together to support local orphans and their families through farming. They aim to provide support to more orphans ensuring that all children in the community get equal opportunities. This is the reason they asked Action Lesotho to train them so that they can turn their farming activities into a profitable business.

The 4 day course was conducted by our team of trainers; **Dominic Matooane**, **Mantai Mpesi** and **Carl von Maltitz** and was appreciated and enjoyed by all. At the end of the training the group had created a strong focus towards establishing a business for their association. They have elected to form a cooperative which will ensure that they have support from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing. They have also been given a commitment of support from the Ministry of Agriculture (who attended the course with them). They will begin this year with planting

potatoes, butternut squash and cabbages. They further requested ongoing support and mentoring and further training from Action Lesotho.

'We did not know where to start until we visited Action Lesotho to advise us on potato planting. What we got there was far more than we hoped for. We did not regret all the days we spent at the centre because what we got there worth it. We were very welcomed, to an extent of a very delicious lunch. This is the time we have been waiting for. Special thanks to Action Lesotho as we are looking forward to more trainings and follow-ups. If any other groups have the same dream, please do not hesitate to contact the friendly Action Lesotho team; their trainings are free and enlightening'. Quote from a participant.

Action Lesotho is greatly encouraged by the response to our training initiative and would like to thank **Irish Aid** for funding our work in this area. We were thanked by the chairperson and members. They were very happy with our trainers and the course content and we found them a very dynamic and interesting group to work with.

Computer training course

The computer training programme started some 4 years ago and has seen many students graduate during that time. The courses this year restarted in May following an time when we did not have a tutor. **Thapelo Khasela** joined us at the end of May and has graduated 8 individuals from the Beginners Computer Skills Course which covers Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Powerpoint & internet. Seven students graduated with Distinction and one with Merit.

The students attended the centre each day for 8 weeks where they were tutored for 2 hours by Thapelo. They were very excited and thanked Action Lesotho for the opportunity. They mentioned that they will now be able to look for jobs as computer literates. Some of them are already working whilst others are not. Those who are employed in different fields found that without computer skills they did not meet all their jobs requirements and could not progress in their companies. They are looking forward to new opportunities now that they have gained computer literacy skills. A new course is beginning in September.



Project news: agriculture

Brian Flaherty, a member of the Board of Directors in Ireland, visited Lesotho in May to assess progress on the agricultural projects. A report from his visit can be viewed on the Action Lesotho website: <http://actionlesotho.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Agriculture-Report-on-Visit-to-Lesotho-May-2015.pdf>

The maize harvest in 2014 was excellent and the grain has been sold to various parties. 19.00 tonnes was sold to the World Food Programme (WFP). Some was sold to the Malimpho Food Programme project and some was sold in small quantities to local purchasers. Most of this was also milled at the site in Pukhalla. There is still some maize stock on hand and this will be sold soon.



Potatoes

1.2 ha of potatoes were planted and have been harvested and sold. The eating potatoes were bagged in 10kg bags and sold for R25/10kg and it is planned to sell the small ones as seed potatoes for R250/10kg. A small quantity has also been used for animal feed. For the forthcoming season, the farm team plan to expand the potato acreage and grow some cabbage. **Molemo**, the Farm Manager, appreciates the need for a consumer led demand for products. The potatoes – variety Darius – are in demand. Having cooked and tested the potatoes myself, they are excellent quality. The potatoes that are for sale either in the shops or in roadside stalls are imported from South Africa.



During the **Action Lesotho Ploughing Championship** (see page 8), the farm team had a display of their potatoes for sale.

Ploughing Championship



The inaugural **Action Lesotho Ploughing Championship** was held on the outskirts of Maputsoe on the 8th May on a slightly overcast day that brightened up later.

Action Lesotho staff and **Ministry of Agriculture** staff did an excellent job in organising it and securing GWK as main sponsor. **De Vaal Fourie** from Ficksburg and **Koos Rosslee** of GWK were the judges. **Mr. Makau**, the District Agricultural Officer of Leribe District and his staff were very helpful in supporting the event.



Fourteen contestants took part with various tractor sizes and with three and four furrow ploughs. The ground was hard by Irish standards. Dust was rising during the ploughing! The competition rules were based more on everyday ploughing compared to competition ploughing in Ireland.

The overall winner was **Rachakane Rachakane** using a Ford 6610 and a three furrow Safim plough achieving a score of 54. He was presented with the **Flaherty Cup** and he also received first prize in the private sector category. **Moeketsi Mafosa** was the winner of first prize in the Government category with a score of 51.

The prizes, which included GWK vouchers, engine oil and a trip to the ploughing championships in South Africa, were sponsored by **GWK** and the trophy was donated by **Brian Flaherty**.



Arrabawn
Co-op

Events

Children's party



A party was held to celebrate the end of the winter programme, with performances from the children. Everyone was very impressed and commented that the show far exceeded their expectations. The attendance was the highest turnout **Action Lesotho** have had for any event at the centre and this was extremely motivating for both the staff and the children. This was the first time that many of the children's primary carers had attended the centre and we see this as very positive progress towards forming a strong working relationship with families.

As part of the identity and belonging theme the centre's staff purchased performance uniforms for the children.



They were so delighted and proud to be able to present themselves as a group and thanked Action Lesotho for helping them to look so smart and attractive whilst they were performing. The girls have skirts & t-shirts and the boys have shorts & t-shirts. The uniforms are kept at the centre and the children take responsibility for keeping them pristine for occasions throughout the year.

Event calendar

- ❖ **Each Month:** Last Thursday to Sunday of the month – exhibition of crafts at Pioneer Mall, Maseru, Lesotho
- ❖ **1st Friday of every month:** Moonlight Fair 5pm – 9pm at Living Life, Ladybrand, Free State, South Africa
- ❖ **19th-21st November 2015:** LMC to exhibit at Cherry Festival Ficksburg, Free State, South Africa.

Action Lesotho Staff

Mantai Mpesi is a graduate from Limkokwing University with a BSc (Hons) Degree in Business Information Technology. She has a particular interest in marketing, computer support, management and learning from diverse areas. She joined Action Lesotho as a volunteer in July this year under a new internship programme. This newsletter is largely her work.



People

Thabo Philmon Tsiki works for the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation in Lesotho as a Senior Sports and Recreation Officer. He is currently undertaking a Masters Degree in Tralee IT (Ireland) titled "The development of occupational standards for use by NGOs pertaining to the inclusion of people with disabilities in sports programmes in the developing countries". Whilst in Ireland, he met with Action Lesotho Board Members, Paul Hanrahan and David Buttimer (pictured with Thabo) and found out about our projects in Lesotho.



On a trip home earlier this year, Thabo visited Action Lesotho's projects. These are some of his comments:

'The most important thing about this project is its bottom up strategy towards poverty reduction in the country. All the people that are on the ground and leading sections of the project are all Basotho that have been capacitated with skills and technical know-how. I was also overwhelmed by their commitment to the project. I believe that even if Action Lesotho decides to leave one day, the project will be left in the right hands that will continuously advocate for sustainable development in the region.

I think the initiative should expand in order to bring in more Basotho so that they as well acquire such wonderful skill for self-reliance.'

Donations

Action Lesotho is currently looking for additional funds for the breakfast club (see pages 2-3). Mantai says, 'We are asking you to help us hit the target of giving breakfast to 120 vulnerable and orphaned children by supporting a child through Action Lesotho. Please donate and enable us to respond quickly in areas of greatest need'. **€30 will feed a child for a school term and €100 will provide food for one year.**

DONATE NOW: <http://actionlesotho.ie/donate/>