



SCHOOLS HELPING SCHOOLS

Introductory Package

Engaging Students as Global Citizens



*“Education is a human right with immense power to transform.
On its foundation rests the cornerstone of freedom, democracy
and sustainable human development.”*

Kofi Annan



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Introduction to Help Lesotho

Help Lesotho is an Ottawa-based international development organization working exclusively in the AIDS-ravaged country of Lesotho.

Founded in 2004 by former University of Ottawa professor **Dr. Peg Herbert**, Help Lesotho has grown organically from a small one-woman project to a full-fledged international development organization recognized around the world for delivering sustainable programming in Africa.



Help Lesotho supports the next generation of young people and the network that nurtures and sustains them, especially their grandmothers and teachers. Working quietly in the rural areas of this tiny mountain kingdom in southern Africa, we have identified locally appropriate solutions to mitigate the devastating effects of staggering poverty and AIDS.

Our work fosters hope and motivation in those who are most in need by targeting root causes and community priorities. Our unique approach restores dignity and hope while empowering those who are most in need of support to overcome their considerable challenges and work together to build a better future for themselves and their communities. Everyone who benefits from our programs is expected to share what they learn with others to multiply the impact of these vital lessons.

With a budget of only CAD 1.5M, Help Lesotho is a lean charity that maximizes the impact of every dollar spent. Our small Canadian staff is based out of our donated office space at REMAX Hallmark in Ottawa. In Lesotho, we are committed to building local capacity through our entirely Basotho staff, led by our African Country Director, Ntate Shadrack Mutembei. Our Canadian Board of Directors and Lesotho Advisory Committee ensure that the organization maintains high governance and accountability standards while meeting locally defined needs.

On May 27, 2014, Help Lesotho became one of the first 100 Canadian charities to achieve accreditation through the **Imagine Canada Standards Program**. Accreditation is a testimony to Help Lesotho's transparency, accountability, and effective governance. With over 86,000 charities in Canada, less than 0.13% have been recognized with this gold standard for operational excellence.

Help Lesotho's Vision: Every child and youth in Lesotho is supported to become empowered and socially responsible.

Help Lesotho's Mission: We develop and deliver holistic, innovative programs that help people heal, learn new skills and strategies, and ultimately take action for the benefit of others. We are empowering a critical mass of children and youth with the knowledge and support needed for them to lead a movement that: advocates for social justice, particularly the rights of girls and women in pursuit of gender equity; promotes the prevention of HIV transmission; and champions and challenges all involved to make healthy decisions and be socially responsible.



Overview of Lesotho



Known as ‘the tiny mountain Kingdom of Lesotho’ (*pronounced Ley-soo-too*), Lesotho is a small country landlocked within South Africa. A constitutional monarchy and a member of the Commonwealth, Lesotho is a beautiful, safe country with a stable democratic government committed to respecting human rights and financial accountability.

It is the third highest country in the world with one of the most homogeneous populations in Africa. Its roughly two million people are predominantly Christian, speaking Sesotho and English, and are from the same ethnic tribes and traditions. The country’s paucity of resources gives little reason for in-migration.

Lesotho does not then have the kind of ethnic and religious conflicts that plague many African countries. This homogeneity, relative peacefulness, small population and geographic size are compelling factors in making it possible to facilitate substantial and sustainable change.

Over 75% of the population live in remote villages scattered over the mountains. Most Basotho survive on produce from subsistence farming. Isolated villagers, particularly in the rural areas, struggle desperately to access food, health care, transportation and education. Isolation and lack of access to resources compound the challenges that impoverished communities face on a daily basis. Help Lesotho chooses to be the only organization of size with its head office in the field – a true commitment to working in these rural, remote areas.

QUICK FACTS

AREA: 11,583 square miles (30,300 square kilometer’s)

LOCATION: Landlocked within the Republic of South Africa

POPULATION: Approx. 2 million

CAPITAL: Maseru

LANGUAGE: English and Sesotho

RESOURCES: Water, Textiles, Diamonds

RELIGION: Christianity (80-90%)

POLITICS: Democratic, constitutional monarchy

CLIMATE: Varies considerably from region to region

Summer months (December—March) are hot (up to 30 degrees) and experience the greatest rainfall.

Winter months (June-August) are dry and cold, with temperatures dropping below freezing.



Lesotho has the world’s 2nd highest rate of HIV/AIDS at 25% - ¼ of the population is infected.

Over 200,000 children have been orphaned by AIDS, most of whom are now being raised by their poor, rural grandmothers who still grieve the loss of their own children. Most children are growing up without role models or parental guidance to help them learn to make healthy decisions.

Help Lesotho's Schools Helping Schools Program

Introduction

Help Lesotho values education as a main component in alleviating poverty and creating an AIDS-free generation in Lesotho. By supporting the formal education system and delivering educational programs of excellence in informal settings, vulnerable children, youth and adults acquire the information and practical tools to deal with their formidable challenges. As people learn to think for themselves, they become more autonomous, confident and responsible, and more able to take on leadership roles in their communities.

The **Schools Helping Schools Program** was one of the first programs launched when Help Lesotho was founded. Since 2004, thousands of children and youth have benefitted from such support as classroom construction/repair, uniforms and shoes, classroom supplies, textbooks, rain barrels, blankets and toothbrushes! For many Basotho students, the friendship and tangible support they receive from their 'Canadian friends' reminds them that they have not been forgotten. While the provision of desks, books and uniforms is critical, it is the restoration of hope for a brighter future that makes the biggest difference.

Help Lesotho works with 17 partner schools in Lesotho (11 primary and 6 high schools), all of whom are in desperate need of support. Partner schools are chosen on the basis of leadership and commitment to providing children with the safest and most effective learning environments and strategies.

The Context and Challenges of Lesotho Schools

Students in Lesotho face numerous challenges related to their education. In the rural areas in which Help Lesotho works, schools and students have little access to resources. Many school facilities are in a terrible state of disrepair, with broken windows and leaking roofs and inadequate sanitation facilities (some schools are entirely lacking latrines). Many teachers in these rural areas are unqualified or poorly qualified, despite their best efforts to help students learn. Culturally, children work very hard in Lesotho at such tasks as fetching water, domestic chores, tending gardens or animals, caring for ill family members, and raising younger siblings, which compromises their opportunities to learn or study. For children who are orphaned or abandoned, the combination of their responsibilities and grief is often too much to handle.

Primary School: In 2000, the Lesotho government made primary education free and compulsory for students between age 6 and 13. While it is encouraging to see that almost all eligible students are now attending school, issues remain with the quality and quantity of the educational experiences and physical school buildings. Many primary classrooms are literally bursting at the seams with hundreds of eager children who want the opportunity to learn.

High School: In Lesotho, high school is a 5 year program (Form A – Form E), starting in Grade 8. Students are faced with prohibitive fees which prevent thousands of youth from attending high school. Fees are levied for school fees, exam fees, textbooks, uniforms, and school supplies. With over 70% of families in Lesotho living well below the poverty line, it is next to impossible to ensure that everyone eats at least one meal each day, let alone

pay the required school fees. Students who do attend face an antiquated and largely irrelevant curriculum in their second language of English (Sesotho is the national language throughout the country).

How to Get Involved – Fundraising and Learning Opportunities

There are many opportunities for Canadian schools to get involved with the Schools Helping Schools program. Whether through a one-time project or an ongoing partnership, **IT IS POSSIBLE** to make a difference for students in Lesotho.

Below is a list from which you might choose one or more ways to get involved. Each opportunity can be customized to fit your goals and desired student outcomes. Help Lesotho provides resources specifically related to your projects of choice, including access to our huge digital photo library, Basotho activity books (primary level), slide shows and PowerPoint presentations on various topics. Communication between students in Lesotho and Canada is an important element of all Schools Helping Schools programs because it helps build a community of students committed to global learning and taking action for the benefit of others.

School Communities

Overview: It is widely recognized that community models of development offer a holistic and sustainable opportunity to positively impact vulnerable populations. Help Lesotho works in 5 rural areas in Lesotho; Hlotse, Butha Buthe, Pitseng, Berea, and Thaba Tseka. Through the School Communities Program, Canadian schools can support primary and high schools in Lesotho through annual themes and projects. Canadian schools are paired with one of the communities in Lesotho where thousands of students are in need of support.



Communication with Lesotho: Canadian schools are encouraged to send age-appropriate learning materials to schools in Lesotho. Examples include flashcards for math and spelling, rulers, maps, and animal photos. Lesotho schools will provide regular thank you letters from students, teachers and principals.

Ensuring Graduation

Overview: Through the 'Ensuring Graduation' initiative, Canadian schools can ensure high performing Basotho students have the opportunity to graduate from high school. Due to the prohibitive fees associated with high school, many students are not able to complete their high school education. The last year of high school (Form E) is the most expensive as students are expected to pay their regular school fees in addition to exam fees which are compulsory to qualify for graduation. This program supports girls and boys who would not otherwise be forced to abandon high school in their last year.



If you choose to sponsor a girl - why girls? Help Lesotho is especially committed to educating girls and women. Since its inception, 75% of all beneficiaries are girls and women annually. Not only does every extra year of school decrease the chance of pregnancy and risk of HIV infection, but girls are most likely to support their families and communities with the knowledge they gain.

Fundraising: For every \$575 raised, one student in Lesotho will graduate from high school and attend Help Lesotho's 5-day Leadership Camp. These funds cover the cost of school fees, textbooks, exam fees, uniform, and leadership camp.

Learning Opportunities: Canadian students will explore the barriers to education in developing countries such as Lesotho, especially for girls and young women. Students will also explore why the benefits of educating girls and women are known to have better results for their families and communities. Gender equity will be a key topic.

Communication with Lesotho: Canadian students can write encourage notes and letters to students in Lesotho who are working towards completing high school. Each student who completes high school in Lesotho because of the 'Ensuring Graduation' program will write a letter to the school who covered their costs.

Education Support Fund

Overview: Poverty, family illness and prohibitive school fees leave an increasing number of children unable to complete high school. The **Education Support Fund (ESF)** supports outstanding students who are identified as strong leaders with the ability to affect change in their communities. Funds directed to the ESF provide one-time support to students who require assistance with school-related costs such as school fees, exam fees, textbooks, shoes or uniforms. The ESF is not a sponsorship program.



Fundraising: Any funds directed to the ESF support high school students to progress through high school. Each year, hundreds of students request one-time support to allow them to continue their education. Canadian schools can set individual goals for supporting the ESF.

Learning Opportunities: Canadian students will learn about the important of education in developing countries such as Lesotho. They will explore the barriers to education, including issues such as home responsibilities, lack of electricity, illness and poverty.

Communication: Canadian students can write encouraging notes and letters to students receiving Education Fund Support; in return, students in Lesotho who receive support through the ESF will write thank you letters.

Leadership Camp

Overview: High school students who attend the 5-day Leadership Camp enjoy meaningful learning opportunities, receive nutritious meals and snacks, make new friends and have fun in a safe place. The Camp is an opportunity for high school students to escape the pressures and challenges they face at home in order for them to learn, reflect and open their minds to new ideas and opportunities. Creating a healthy environment gives children the opportunity for meaningful multi-day support and promotes youth leadership and community responsibility.



Fundraising: It only costs \$80 to send a student to Leadership Camp for the full 5-day program.

Learning Opportunities: Students learn why Leadership Camp so valuable to students in Lesotho. They explore some of the same topics covered at Leadership Camp, including self-esteem, peer pressure, and leadership.

Communication: Leadership Camp occurs in December every year, once the Lesotho schools close for the holiday break. Therefore, communication is dependent on timing of a given project. If possible, a letter or postcard from students in Lesotho who are supported to attend Camp will be provided.

Teacher Training

Overview: Teachers in Lesotho have very few opportunities to access formal training. The more rural the school, the more difficult it is to attract qualified teachers. Teachers are also dealing with such challenges as grief and loss, corporal punishment, sexual abuse, AIDS, peer pressure, alcohol abuse, etc. Help Lesotho Teacher Training helps teachers overcome personal barriers, increase their skills to support students, foster confidence in taking leadership in their schools and develop subject matter expertise. Teachers are taught to provide mentorship in their schools and share what they learn with other educators.



Fundraising: Schools can fundraise to provide resources for teachers and to cover the cost of hosting teacher training conferences.

Learning Opportunities: Students are exposed to the challenges that teachers in Lesotho face. This is an often forgotten subject as many campaigns focus solely on the challenges of students.

Communication: Canadian schools are encouraged to send teacher materials and encouraging notes/letters to teachers. Lesotho teachers who benefit from support will write letters.

Other Opportunities

Parent Engagement: An important element of Help Lesotho's Schools Helping School Program is the opportunity to get parents involved. By reinforcing what children are exposed to at school through the program, parents can help their children better understand the challenges faced by students in Lesotho (issues related to poverty, HIV/AIDS, social justice, gender inequity, etc.) as a step to becoming a global citizen. Parents also have the opportunity to support Help Lesotho independently from the school commitment; examples include: Child Sponsorship, Grandmother Sponsorship, Young Mother Sponsorship, and hosting Pearl Parties (home/business sales for the Pearls 4 Girls jewellery collection).

Resources and Ideas

Help Lesotho can support your campaigns/events with such elements as:

- Traditional Basotho items (blankets, crafts, art, etc.)
- School uniforms and shoes from Lesotho (ripped and ruined pieces that have since been replaced)
- 1-minute monologues of students in Lesotho
- Slide shows and PowerPoint presentations on various topics
- Presentations by Help Lesotho staff on various topics (location dependent)
- A huge digital photo library