Dear Friends,

I have returned to my home in Lesotho. It is wonderful to be back, to see the mountains in their finery, the greenery of summer and our wonderful Help Lesotho family, which seems to grow daily.

I confess to frightful feelings of pride at the incredible accomplishments our dedicated staff have wrought here, knowing full well how difficult this work is. I see our centre literally blooming - from the roses we planted two years ago; the trees we planted four years ago; and the seeds of community care for children, youth and grannies we planted eight and a half years ago!

 Everywhere there are sounds and sights of productivity and purpose. After school, the centre erupts with children playing games, using the library, and chatting. Such visible signs that they feel safe and welcome are a joy. The sounds of recorders, bouncing balls, skipping, chattering and laughing truly drown out the gnawing din of suffering and worry.

Yesterday was bursting with energy and new participants. Just as school starts again in January for a new year, so do our programs.
This month begins a new group of 250 grannies, as they are called here, for our Grandmother Support Program, who will be with us for 2.5 years. There are four area groups, three of 50 and one of 100. Yesterday was the first meeting of the Hlotse area group. Although the program did not start until 9am, grannies started trickling in about 7:30, waiting patiently in the lappa, filled with anticipation of what this new adventure would bring to their lives. When the plenary started at … oh about 9:20 … I told them about the incredible individual grandmother sponsors and our special grandmother groups who work so hard to fund the program. They were visibly touched as they smiled and clapped for a long time, knowing they were thought of so dearly.

Yesterday, we started a new group of 60 Youth Leaders in Training. This is an intensive three month program followed by six weeks of community engagement and volunteering. The room was packed with expectant faces. I told them they are the reason we exist - to help them create a future for themselves, their families and their country. I look forward to getting to know them as I do some training with them over the weeks I am here.

The centre was so busy that we had to hold the second day of our Young Mothers' Program in our tent in the field. This is a new initiative to reach 50 pregnant girls and young mothers with health information, child development education and psychosocial support. Wherever they meet, there are always two mattresses placed on the ground/floor so that they can put their little ones to sleep. My heart goes out to these young girls and mothers nursing their babies. It is so important that they have this quality of support. Life will be incredibly difficult for them and this kind of program at the very beginning of their motherhood will give them two months of solid help. They will learn about HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and build support networks in their villages to provide on-going camaraderie as they raise these little ones.

Won't it be fun to follow these new groups and see lives changed!

Pat Foreman, a retired school principal from B.C., has been volunteering here for several months helping build our staff capacity. We all appreciate how carefully, respectfully and professionally she is supporting our work.
As I close, you might be surprised at how much I think of our donors here. Throughout all these years and each solid building block of our organization, the interest, encouragement and financial support of different people and groups has allowed these programs to exist. We never forget your generosity.

**Winter-Spring 2013 – Letter #2**

Lumelang (hello),

Today is the fifth day our little town has been without water. We have a little bit at the Centre, but everyone uses it sparingly.

You will have heard how important it is for our sustainability and long-term planning for donors to give monthly. WELL - the most amazing thing happened this week. A man came on Saturday to donate. The office was closed. He took time off his job as a primary school teacher on Monday to make the long walk back to our office, asking to donate M200 (about CAD $24) direct withdrawal monthly from his bank account. This is the first time a local individual has offered to donate. I would have hugged him had he not been so humble and shy! He heard about us in 2008 and has been following our work since. He came to personally thank us for helping his country so much and share what he could for our work. He has children of his own to support on his very modest salary as well. His pledge of sacrifice was one of the greatest I have ever witnessed. What incredible generosity!

Yesterday the granny day in Pitseng was awesome as usual. The mountains there are spectacular. There was a rondavel pre-school in the nearby village for about ten tiny children and a young 'teacher' with a grade seven education. She was proud to show me her classroom, lit by one tiny window, and her one education resource - a poster. The sweetest little babe was asleep under a tree ... life goes on.
Later, I held a young girl while she wept. She so wants to go to school. She is working in the fields for $3/day to save for her tuition. She did not have enough for this year and so has to put in another year working her fingers to the bone. It was all I could do not to cry with her. I think her feet tell the whole story. She is a double orphan, both parents are dead, and lives with an aunt who neither wants her nor can look after her properly. I so admire this girl. She goes to the Pitseng Centre every spare minute to read and be with our centre staff. It has been her 'home' since it opened five years ago. I cannot imagine where the children, youth and grandmothers in that community would be without the Centre.

When I returned to the office, Ntate Shadrack, our Country Director, was bursting to tell me what happened that morning. In 2012, the United Nations Population Fund gave us a grant to train 50 young male offenders right in the prison on gender equity, HIV/AIDS, leadership and becoming responsible citizens. We knew it was hugely successful by the various testimonials from the participants and security guards. Yesterday, one of these young convicts was released from prison after serving a two year sentence. The FIRST thing he did was to come directly to our office to thank us, to tell us that our training has changed his life and to pledge his commitment to reform. The SECOND thing he did was to seek advice on how to reconcile with his employer from whom he stole money and with his wife and family members whose lives he had ruined. The THIRD thing he was determined to do was to go to the local hospital and get tested for AIDS. Our staff helped him make a plan and locate available resources. They gave him a gift of a book written by a former prisoner on redemption. He said his sister will read for him since he cannot read it.

Another life changed!
I spend an afternoon with our Basotho Girls Leader Corps. What fine young women they are becoming. They got outstanding results on their yearend exams and continue to work hard. As usual, we talked about how to show leadership in their classes at school, church youth groups, villages and in the centre. They danced, did dramas and recited poetry - it was great fun.

Our staff here works tirelessly, building a ‘Professional Learning Community’ so they can continually improve our services, giving their hearts and energy to our beneficiaries and their loyalty to Help Lesotho. You would be so proud of them!

Here’s hoping the water comes back soon!

**Winter-Spring 2013 – Letter #3**

*Lumelang,*

When grandmothers come into Help Lesotho’s Grandmother Support program, they have often given up and are living poorly on many dimensions. The two-year program helps grandmothers develop strategies for coping with grief and loss, communicating with the orphans in their care and managing stress, as well as teaches basic health, hygiene, home care for people living with AIDS, and nutrition.

While visiting some grannies and their children in the mountains, it occurred to me you might be interested in the domestic aspect of village life. Families have a bit of land, traditionally assigned to them by the local chief. Sizes vary; the closer to shops, the smaller the piece of land, as you would expect. Our grannies have been living in their stone and mud huts most of their lives. Once selected for the program by the local chiefs and councils, their huts are assessed for safety, security and weather-related vulnerability. When funds allow, repairs are made to the holes in the thatched roofs and to broken doors, windows and locks. Some families sleep in one tiny rondavel and have another one for cooking. This is a good idea as the cooking fuels used in the unventilated huts are all toxic: paraffin, cow dung or kerosene.

One of the widowed grandmothers told us that just before her daughter died of AIDS, she confided that her newborn baby had the disease. The child is now three years old and so tiny I thought she might be 18 – 20 months. The grandmother is too weak to take the little one to the clinic for treatment – a fair walk on difficult terrain. When asked, she said she has no one who will help her. The baby didn’t look well and seemed despondent. How to help? Each one has such challenges and sorrows. Hopefully this granny’s village network, once established, will provide both the physical and emotional support she needs. The look on the baby’s face haunts me.

I thought several times of the grandmother groups and individual grandmother sponsors who fund this program as I looked at the signs of neglect and despair in this new group of grannies. Over the next couple years, we will see such a difference – in hope, health, family strengthening and the relationship these dear “heroes of Lesotho” have with their grandchildren.
On Saturday I visited some sponsored children at their high school. Some lived too far away to come; others were attending funerals – such is their lives. We talked for an hour about this wonderful opportunity to go to school and how they can make the best of it. It means the world!

In the afternoon, a young man came to see me at the Centre. Bolae, now 31, was a 26-year-old youth when he took our three-month intensive youth training program. Truly, it transformed his life. He and I laughed about the morning, five years ago, when I did a session on gender equity with them. Bolae was ardent that men were the only ones to make decisions and that they must have the power in relationships and in families. In one morning, I watched this young man’s life change. Through discussions and exercises, he figured out why gender inequity is bad for men and became one of our most passionate advocates for equal rights and power sharing with women. He went on to become our Pitseng Centre Supervisor for a year and a half or so. Today, he is in the final two terms of his university degree to become a math teacher. He spent 20 minutes telling me how the training and being part of the Help Lesotho family changed his life. When he meets other Help Lesotho sponsored students and youth trainees at university or in the villages, they all talk about how much they learned here. Clearly, Bolae made my day. He went to so much effort to come to the Centre and spend some time with me. What a fine example of a young leader in Lesotho!

Each day brings new possibilities for people, new avenues of encouragement and support.

Thank you to all those who are reaching out to help.

Winter-Spring 2013 – Letter #4
Khotsong from the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho!

Our trip to Thaba Tseka was eventful; the journey up the mountains is always breathtaking. We had over 3,000 beneficiaries in this area alone last year. Our work has grown to the point that we rented part of an office building from the Red Cross. It has a tiny office and a suitable training room at the back – for which we are grateful as there are almost no options for rental buildings in the area.
I was happy to see one of our youth who has been with us since his first training in Thaba Tseka in 2006; he helps at our camps, is a youth leader in this rural community and now helps with our school-based Anti-AIDS Clubs where 2,600 youth were trained last year. Masheane is a very fine young man, kind and committed to working toward a better future for his country. At Katlehong Primary, I watched close to 400 children pile into one classroom for the weekly Anti-AIDS Club meeting!!! Corpus Christi Elementary in Ottawa, ON, Katlehong’s twin, financed the refurbishing of the school last year. How proud they would be to see these children crammed in – so keen for knowledge to help them understand their lives – but with freshly painted walls and no leaks in the ceilings! Masheane and a lovely young woman named Mathabo impressively conducted the class, holding the attention of each child as they facilitated a lively discussion on the topic of the week: AIDS and what constitutes healthy relationships. For orphans who have few role models and no one to talk to, this club is a lifeline and a blessing. Knowing these meetings are conducted in so many schools by our carefully trained and mentored youth peer role models is a great joy.

As I drove over the mountains to Sefapanong Primary School, twinned with Turnbull School in Ottawa since 2006, I took this photo to try to show you how isolated this school is. This year, some of the funds raised by Turnbull were used to fix the toilets for the close to 400 children. The old latrines were entirely blocked and corroded. Toilet paper is so dear in Lesotho that the children use stones and such, which dries with the contents of the latrines to the consistency of concrete and is impossible to empty. The school is trying to provide small scraps of used school papers for such purposes. Nothing is easy!

We started an additional group of 50 grandmothers in this area in January as there are so many orphans and such immense poverty in the villages around the school. Our staff declare this group of grannies to be the most needy and destitute they have ever seen.

Upon returning to Hlotse, three of us attended the tombstone unveiling ceremony of our former staff member Palesa, whom we all loved. I hired her in 2007, a determined but painfully shy young woman. We all walked with her through her many challenges to see her emerge as a strong, competent and well-loved young woman. She was just 30 years old when she died on August 1, 2012. Culturally, when the family pulls
together the funds for a tombstone, there is a dedication at the grave site and a celebration feast. Help Lesotho was part of her family and we were honoured to have a table especially marked for us. We each said a few words, as is the custom. It was impossible not to shed tears for this young life taken at its peak and for her beautiful wee son who is left behind and was the love of her every moment.

The 30 people at the grave site and the 100 people at the feast showed a care for Palesa that honoured her fine character and loving nature. It was in sharp contrast to this handwritten sign so close to Palesa’s plot on this crowded grave site for a five week old baby. One imagines the young mother who wrote this sign and wonders if she has any support at all. Lesotho is one of only five countries in the world with a rising infant mortality rate, for a combination of factors, one of which is the number of young girls having children, orphaned and without adult guidance, who momentary seek comfort or are victims of rape. How could they know how to care for these precious babies? This is one of our motivations in starting our Young Mother’s Support Group in both centres (more on this in my next letter).

The suffering here is indescribable on so many levels!

Thank you for caring.

P.S. We have water this week, for which we are grateful!

Winter-Spring 2013 – Letter #5
As I leave Lesotho – yet again, I want to thank each and every member of our team here for their hard work and dedication. It is no mean feat to change lives every day and it is because of their love for our beneficiaries, commitment to Help Lesotho, and their professional skills that it happens.

The staff had a wonderful going-away party for Gillian Walker who has been with us for 4.5 years in Lesotho. Gillian will work in Canada this year on program related projects. The staff took great pains to show her how loved and appreciated she is – they presented her with a new
seshoeshoe shirt and matching head scarf and sang with such beauty it brought tears to my eyes. Such speeches and demonstrations of appreciation only happen a few times in one’s life – Gillian should feel very proud!

We also said good-bye to Pat Foreman who has been with us for four months as a professional principal-volunteer. Pat will return in September for another six months to continue her important work in capacity building.

It is exactly three years since the formal opening of the GRAFF Leadership Centre. It is everything we imagined…. a sanctuary for those who are broken-hearted, a place of learning and sharing of ideas, a place to grow and renew. Physically, it is an imposing structure but dwarfed by the enormous eucalyptus tree in front!

Within the walls of the Graff Centre, hundreds of youth, grandmothers and children annually are shown respect, given support to heal, and prepared to move forward with their lives through programs, fun, and comfort. The library stands at the ready with its wonderful African books, newspapers and resources.

This year we added the Young Mothers’ Program and the Pre-school Literacy Program, bringing much younger children to the Centres than before. The babies and toddlers are absolutely adorable! They are so cute that there is a competition to look after them!

The stories of their young mothers are difficult to listen to:

My boyfriend forced me into having sex with him, promising to marry me if I get pregnant. When I told him I was pregnant, he left for initiation school. I was left with shame and it was difficult in the family as I am a double orphan. My guardian claimed I was lying about him being the father. She told me to go and stay in his family. It was really difficult not knowing what to do, I wish my mother was alive, she would understand. I felt like committing suicide but with Help Lesotho training, my self-worth is being restored, I have people and a support group that cares. I can see a future now – just now. (aged 17)
Another young mother, a double orphan too, shared during the pre- and post-natal depression discussion:

> It seemed to me that being a young mother nobody loves you any more; your family, friends and even the father of your child whom you thought loved you so dearly. The pain of seeing him with other girls living as if I never existed nor even his child, tears my heart apart. I felt like the whole world has turned against me. With this training, the pain is going away and I am getting rejuvenated. (aged 16)

We are delighted to help young mothers and pregnant girls and their little ones at the Centres. Whether for the grandmother days, after school programs or during the pre-school or young mothers’ program, we have a whole new population to serve. These little ones need our help too. They need the stimulation, the play and story times and the happy, safe environment.

My request in closing this letter on another trip to Lesotho is for donations to buy playground equipment for them. We need really sturdy equipment - a climbing structure, swings and slides - knowing the older children and youth will use them too. They will be the first real playground equipment I have seen here. All children and youth in Lesotho want a few moments of sheer childhood, free from the concerns and fears in their lives.

The estimate for steel structures to withstand this number of children is about $3,500. If you can help - please click here to donate online. On behalf of the children – thank you!

Thank you for joining me on this journey. As I head to London, Guelph, Peterborough/Lakefield, Victoria and Vancouver in the next couple of months, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. In the fall, I will be in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Toronto and New Brunswick.

Salang hantle (stay well)
It is good to be back! Lesotho is draped in the multi-shades of the bronze and beige of winter. The cold is lifting daily; afternoons are warm and lovely. I have gone from sleeping with two enormous blankets and a quilt, to only one blanket and a quilt. I am counting the signs of spring and celebrating each one: bold flowers rising from the aloe plant; tentative peach blossoms; tiny, vivid green buds on the eucalyptus trees. I have seen two baby calves and one ever so small lamb. Unfortunately, there was very little snow this winter and the ground is as arid as can be. Last September, the World Food Program and the UN put out a food crisis statement for Lesotho fearful of the starvation of rural people. The lack of precipitation this year will only deepen the problem. Draught is the ever-present monster threatening to subsume the efforts of progress.

It is wonderful to be back with our staff. One of my first privileges was to honour two wonderful employees with an Award for Service over five years (L: ‘M’e Mahlompho Motsoasele, Office Administrator; R: ‘M’e ‘Mampaka Kunene, Orphan and Schools Officer). The contribution these two remarkable women have made to the organization and its growing pains has been constant, professional, loving and meaningful.

At our first full staff meeting, the staff wore traditional dresses over their work clothes to perform songs and traditional dances of welcome – it was so much fun. They are a great team. We welcomed two fine young women volunteers. Jessica Detrio, Masters in Social Work from Michigan, will be with us for two years from the American Peace Corps working on psychosocial support and our Centre programs. Marie-Claire Klassen, Masters in Global Studies from Vancouver, is an intern through CIDA’s International Youth Internship Program (through ICAD); she will work and live in rural Thaba Tseka for one year on our programs there. Our beneficiaries will love them and they will be such a help in many ways.

(As usual, electricity, water and internet are precarious and we must work around these challenges. The strength of the broadband has improved over time but the frequency of interruption has increased so please bear with me.)
If I may boast, three members of our Basotho Girls Leadership Corps program have won awards this week: top marks in Form C (grade 10), top marks in Form D (grade 11), and one has been chosen to represent Lesotho in the southern African sporting competition in Namibia over the next couple of weeks. What accomplishments! All our sponsored students have their heads down studying for final exams as they go into their last term of the year. We are rooting for them.

I am often asked what people can help with. If you have used DVDs for various ages (educational, non-western/ culturally neutral – on animals, values, nature, sports, math, science, spelling, literacy, faith-based, veggie-tales, etc.) we would love to have them in our Centres. We were given a TV monitor at the Pitseng Centre and are able to show DVDs there and we have a projector in Hlotse with the wall as our screen. The staff also asks for knitting and sewing needles and crochet hooks please for our women’s craft group. During weekly meetings, these women learn about AIDS and helpful strategies for their lives while doing crafts. These suggestions are light and easy to transport. Please just drop off or send to the office.

On a trip to the capital, Maseru, with our Country Director, Ntate Shadrack Mutembei, whom many of you know, we met with UNICEF. Shadrack has built outstanding partnerships and obtained funding from UNFPA, USAID, EU/Skillshare as part of our sustainability initiatives. It is essential that we work with all those with common goals here. I also met with a young man I trained in 2006 named Setloke. He went on to overcome great obstacles, gain a university degree, complete an internship with the US Embassy here, and is now working for Foreign Affairs. He frequently tells me that without Help Lesotho he could never have accomplished all he has. Once part of our family – one remains so.

On Sunday I leave to take Marie-Claire up to Thaba Tseka and meet with some schools there. I confess I am glad there is no snow for this trip as it would have made the journey really treacherous with such steep ascents.

I wish you all a lovely weekend and look forward to sharing the impact of your support during the next few weeks.

Fall 2013 – Letter #2
As I write on this early Sunday morning, the mist is lifting off the mountains and I hear the singing of our girls. The Basotho are taught to sing in harmonies from birth I think and the results are sounds that lift and touch the earth itself. It is the sound of Africa, the longing for life and hope. It is the breath of the nation and the gift of its people.

Today, throughout the land, people will go to church to sing and they will pray for rain. As I drive up and down the mountains, especially to Thaba Tseka, I am struck by the juxtaposition of the staggering beauty of spring creeping over the land and the shocking, worrisome draught. There is only a trickle of spring water running off the mountain where gushing streams should be cascading. Rivers are running dry. The water level in the famous Katse dam is at least three metres below normal. The gardens are parched. The past few years have been among the worst ever. Every day we look for signs of rain. Each day passes in resignation.
It is the windy season where roofs are ripped from their moorings and soil blows away to forsake the homestead gardens. The ever available rocks are placed on the tin roofs to hold them down. One grandmother I visited had a massive rock tied to the roof in her attempted. I wondered who had helped her with such a project.

At the house of one girl from our Young Mother’s Program, I could not stop myself from comparing the health and stage of development of her eighteen month old baby, so thin and obviously malnourished, to my own grandson who is exactly the same age and who is twice the size and so much further in his development. These wee ones suffer the most – from malnutrition, dehydration, all forms of poverty and from having mothers who lost their own mothers and guides years ago. Our program is their life-line.

As I went from village to village this week, the tiny signs of life tell the story: the tiniest bar of soap to do the whole family washing or the first tools of drawing I have seen in a village.

As usual, we are busy. Friday was the graduation from our every more popular Computer and Life Skills Class. Each day, students spent an hour learning computers and an hour learning about such life skills as HIV/AIDS, goal setting, gender equity, communication and career guidance. A donation of used computers from a local partner allowed us to start this. The waiting list for the month long program consists of hand-written applications several inches high.
Saturdays, the centre is community. People come to sit on the benches. Students use the libraries and study outside to prepare for the impending final exams. Girls do their laundry. Children play the recorders, skip rope or enjoy the new wonderful playground equipment from generous donors.

Because of your support and care, we are indeed a family for those who so desperately need it.

**Fall 2013 – Letter #3**

**Khotsong (hello to you all),**

You just have to love them!!!!

Grandmother Days are always wonderful. I love the grannies who come hours too early for these monthly sessions – they don’t want to miss a moment! Throughout the morning, we hear them singing. I dropped in several times – the dancing is the best! Everyone here loves that program – it is just perfect.
My meeting with His Majesty, King Letsie III was a real pleasure, as always. As Help Lesotho’s Patron, he has been unfailingly interested and supportive of our work. When the Queen heard that he was meeting with me, she came in to say hello, which was so thoughtful. They are a really lovely couple. This past July 17 was the King’s 50th birthday and there were great celebrations across the nation. He is dearly loved and is a great role model for young men in his dedication to his wife and children and helping his people. We discussed the situation of girls and women in Lesotho and how urgent it is. We also discussed Help Lesotho’s 10th Anniversary Celebrations in Canada in November/December 2014 and in Lesotho in March 2015. There is so much to look forward to. We will share our plans as they are confirmed.

Celebrating success: We are honoured that two of our trained youth, Sello Matsoso and Tekiso Nkhabeng, were selected by the UNFPA regional panel of experts to represent Lesotho in Addis Ababa this month. Our youth are outstanding representatives of our programs and they are being nationally recognized to represent the country at this prestigious African Youth Conference. It is remarkable that both Lesotho representatives were from Help Lesotho!

At the Graff Leadership Centre this week, we hosted a meeting for 65 members of the Phelisanong Support Group for people living with AIDS.

One in four people in Lesotho continue to live with AIDS, struggling with the side effects of the medications and vulnerability to opportunistic disease. It was one in three when I first came here. Despite the great strides in making treatment available and affordable, it is a daily struggle for everyone.

One of our staff told me of an orphaned girl in our Young Mother’s Program who has no one. When she got pregnant, she was rejected by the family with whom she was staying. She went into the hospital near us to have her baby and ended up staying for three weeks. She has no money to pay the hospital fees, so they won’t let her out nor does she have any place to go with the baby once she does get out. Bless their hearts; three of our staff has gone to try to help. ‘M’e Mampaka took the baby kit we provide to pregnant sponsored girls; ‘M’e Maseretse went to the social welfare to advocate for them to wave the fees; ‘M’e Mahlompho went to counsel the girl. As I leave Lesotho, she and her baby are now in a tiny crowded room not knowing what will happen to them.

Lesotho newspapers have recently squarely addressed the issue of maternal mortality and newborn deaths. Lesotho is one of only five countries in the world with a rising infant mortality rate and the Ministry of Health affirms that it continues to rise. Mothers are too young, often unaware of how to look after their health and the health of their babies. Mothers in labour often do not make it to the hospital in time, coming long distances on horseback, donkeys, or on foot. Too many babies are born in their huts with no help. Our programs are filled with frightened, lonely pregnant girls and young mothers who have never known the compassion, support and guidance of a mature mother themselves.
We want to raise more funds for our pregnant girls and young mothers so if you know of anyone or any organization that will help, please let me know – the need is overwhelming.

Help Lesotho has a three year agreement with USAID/MSH and an approved project in Thaba Tseka. We learned last week that USAID has decided to withdraw their funds from committed projects in Lesotho this year. Twelve projects with organizations in the country are affected and only a couple of small ones will proceed. The loss of this funding is significant for us.

This week was bitter sweet. We welcome Pat Foreman who is returning to Lesotho to volunteer for another six months. She will work on program modules and staff development again and is a huge help. We also welcome our second ICAD/CIDA intern Emily Neilson, from Toronto, who will live and work at our dear Pitseng Centre helping with programs for a year. One the other side, we are sorry to say good-bye to our Leadership Program Manager, ‘M’e Malehana Mafisa, our most senior program manager, who is returning to her family who live about 5 hours away. We wish her all the best. There are always so many changes!

Also this week, the Second Annual World Happiness Report came out listing Canada as #6 and Lesotho as #98 out of 156 countries. Our measure of our psychosocial support programs is the concept of resilience. It is a truly remarkable testimonial to the Basotho people that they can find happiness among their poverty and suffering. [http://issuu.com/earthinstitute/docs/worldhappinessreport2013_online](http://issuu.com/earthinstitute/docs/worldhappinessreport2013_online)

Speaking of happiness, the new play structures really are quite the gift. Day after day, I watch children playing with new friends or on their own, pensively swinging, sliding, and climbing - a brief time of joy in their day of worry. Even the youth in their twenties use them – we can’t keep them off. If we can get enough money, we will build the same ones at the Centre in Pitseng – I can imagine it completely!

As I leave Lesotho again, my mind struggles to find the words to convey the impact of your generosity and faithful support all these years. From the King and Queen, the teachers, schools, little ones, our girls, youth and grannies ..... each and everyone is so very grateful and will never forget this kind of generosity from the heart.

Rea leboha haholo (we thank you all so very much)

PS. Our young athlete who went to Namibia, Mafrances, from our girls leadership program’s team, got a Gold Medal in the under 17 in netball!!!!!