

‘MASENTLE GLADYS MAKARA

**M**ASERU - Help Lesotho (HL) is actively addressing the unemployment crisis through its “Get a Job” programme which is designed to empower young individuals from higher education institutions with the necessary skills to increase their chances of securing employment.

The programme encompasses various essential elements, including crafting an effective curriculum vitae, excelling in interviews, and preparing participants for the demands of the workplace.

According to Hlalefo Sengoai, the Program Operations Officer at Help Lesotho, the “Get a Job” workshop is a week-long event dedicated to assisting both HL alumni and non-alumni in their quest for employment. She emphasizes that the training’s primary goal is to equip young people with strategies that significantly enhance their employability prospects.

As part of another strategic initiative, HL hosted the Computer and Life Skills programme graduation ceremony on September 21. This program is a two-month initiative that provides learners with training in life skills education and basic computer skills. This programme aims to enhance youth employability and their potential to become positive role models in their respective communities. This effort aligns with Help Lesotho’s broader vision of empowering the youth of Lesotho to develop resilience in challenging life situations, enabling them to build healthy and self-sustaining futures.

Every quarter, Help Lesotho admits approximately 60 boys and girls and 20 adult men and women participants into the program. In this particular quarter, there were approximately 70 learners, with the majority being youth and a smaller number of adults from its two centers: Pitseng and Hlotse.

Addressing the program graduates, the staff at Help Lesotho expressed their appreciation, saying, “We have had the privilege of witnessing your journey of healing, learning, and growth. Today is your special day, and we want you to know that we are always here to support you and your endeavors. Remember that without applying what you have learned, it may not be fully utilized.”

Many of the graduates were amazed by the positive impact of life skills education on their lives. Some of them admitted that they lacked confidence, even in simple tasks like speaking in front of people.

However, after completing the program, they found themselves capable of doing so.

In an interview Phomolo Lekhanya, a 21-year-old from Ha-Makhoa Leribe, said she initially had no interest in the programme as she was compelled by her family to participate. Nevertheless, she now appreciates

# Help Lesotho innovates to counter high unemployment



her family’s decision, recognizing it as a life-changing opportunity.

“I am currently an entrepreneur, and I’ve come to realize that I had been approaching client communication all wrong. I learned valuable communication skills that involve talking to people and persuading them, which is a skill in itself. I used to resort to coercive tactics, using pity-inducing statements to manipulate people into buying, but that’s not the right way,” she said.

Lekhanya also said that applying these newfound skills at home has greatly improved family communication. They no longer make assumptions or issue orders without proper communication and agreements in place.

One of the Life Skills teachers, Makamohelo Thoala, explained that the course consists of three modules, namely; PSS, Health, and Leadership.

She said they start with the PSS module to help students warm up and boost their confidence. Following that, they delve into decision-making. Many students initially lack confidence but through emotional support, they come to understand that life is a journey filled with challenges. They learn not to blame themselves for situations they can’t change and to move

forward.

When asked about her definition of confidence, she said: “Confidence is believing in myself. It means closing my ears to what others say. I see myself as unique, unlike anyone else. When I believe in myself, I can pursue my goals regardless of others’ opinions.”

Thoala mentioned that working with youth is easier because most of them are already part of the HL school programme. Through community engagement, they inform others about the programmes they offer.

In the leadership modules, they teach that leadership is a skill that can be acquired as one grows. Leaders should set an example because someone may be watching and inspired by them. They can learn from community leaders how to be effective leaders.

These lessons are covered in the role model module, which emphasizes that a good leader listens, sets goals, and works hard to achieve them.

This aligns with Help Lesotho’s motto: “We take action for the benefit of others.”

Thoala said many alumni return to express gratitude, saying that learning life skills before university helped them avoid temptations and challenges. Some initially joined the program

feeling hopeless but left inspired, equipped to use their talents and skills.

She said: “We empower youth through cognitive development so they can think for themselves and challenge the idea that success only comes from specific qualifications. Our role is to guide, support, encourage, and revive their dormant innovative spirit.”

During her speech at the graduation ceremony, Mamoletsane Khati, the Country Director of Help Lesotho, expressed the organization’s vision, emphasizing the importance of instilling resilience and a sense of urgency in the youth.

She explained that this resilience would enable young people to withstand and recover from various challenges and traumas they may have encountered. Khati also highlighted the significance of life skills, not just for young individuals but also for adults, as these skills help people cope with changes, challenges, losses, and grief while fostering meaningful connections with others.

Furthermore, Khati discussed the value of forming healthy relationships, which can help graduates identify and avoid toxic relationships or toxicity within existing ones. She encouraged everyone to seek help when needed and emphasized that life skills teach individuals how to ask for assistance effectively.

Additionally, these skills promote optimism, discourage dwelling on the past or difficulties, and stress the importance of self-care, as caring for oneself is a prerequisite for caring for others.

Acknowledging the modern, technology-driven world, Khati highlighted Help Lesotho’s commitment to addressing current needs and trends.

The organisation has introduced computer and life skills training to empower graduates, whether they aspire to become entrepreneurs or enter the workforce. Khati encouraged graduates to face the future with optimism, urging them to always turn toward the “sunshine” of opportunities rather than dwelling in the shadows of the past.

Khati also stressed that resilience would enable graduates to apply what they’ve learned without hesitation, looking forwards instead of backwards. She reminded the audience that the youth are not just leaders of tomorrow but leaders of today, encouraging them to blaze new trails and make a difference in uncharted territory.

Khati expressed her gratitude for Help Lesotho’s dedicated team, whose efforts ensured the success of the graduation ceremony.

Help Lesotho is a nonprofit organization founded in 2004, whose inception can be traced back to Alice Mputsoe, who went to Canada to pursue her studies. While working on her thesis, her supervisor, Peg Herbert, recognized the pressing issues in Lesotho, including high HIV and AIDS mortality rates, poor leadership, and gender-based violence, all stemming from a lack of knowledge.

In 2004, Help Lesotho was established after Peg Herbert visited Lesotho and witnessed these issues firsthand during her 2003 trip.

Upon her return to Canada, Herbert shared her experiences, inspiring friends and family to contribute in addition to her personal savings to kickstart Help Lesotho.

Help Lesotho focuses on four main areas: HIV and AIDS, gender issues, formal education (including child sponsorship programs), and informal education with life skills integrated into their programmes.

Leadership development is another crucial aspect, with the motto “Leaders never give up,” as they aim to mold individuals into leaders, wherever life takes them. The organization also provides psychosocial support, positively impacting individuals across these key areas.

Help Lesotho operates approximately 26 programs across five districts: Berea, Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Thaba-Tseka, and recently Quthing.

The decision to work in Quthing was influenced by research conducted by the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders, revealing high rates of teenage pregnancy in the district.

Many children in Quthing are part of boarding schools or child-headed families, making them vulnerable to various challenges, including exploitation by taxi drivers, landlords, community leaders, and teachers.

UNFPA funded Help Lesotho’s programme “Ending early and unintended pregnancies,” which successfully educated and empowered the community to combat teenage pregnancy.

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