

BET Newsletter

Greetings to our supporters

Life is getting tough in Lesotho at present as you will see from the article Khotso, Pula, Nala reproduced with kind permission from the Lesotho Diocesan Association. A troubled political situation and severe drought are both having an effect and of course this also affects our sponsored students. Despite the troubles however students remain optimistic as you will see from information gathered through our end of course surveys. We are pleased, thanks to your support, that we can maintain the numbers of sponsored students at 50 for the coming academic year which starts in July.

Only a small number of supporters currently gift aid their contributions. Some have in the past but the rules have changed and everyone who wishes to gift aid should complete and return the enclosed form. This will enable us to increase your gift by 25% with the tax reclaimed. We can also claim for four years prior to you signing the form. If you pay tax to the value of your gift or more, this is a simple way of making your support go further and enabling us to keep on supporting impoverished young people in Lesotho. Thank you if you are able to increase your support in this way.

Please remember Lesotho and our students in your prayers as they go through a difficult time. Hopefully the motto Khotso, Pula, Nala (peace, rain and prosperity) will soon be true again.

Philippa Bird

Chair of Trustees

News from Lesotho

Khotso, Pula, Nala

Many of our readers will recognise the heading as the national motto of Lesotho, often shouted at the end of the national anthem. In English, it becomes "Peace, Rain, Prosperity". However, those who have been following news from the Mountain Kingdom in recent months will know that the country is rather lacking in these three areas at this time. Last year's general election was conducted against a background of an alleged coup in which, it was said, the military were involved. After the election, the leaders of the opposition parties fled to South Africa claiming that they were afraid for their lives. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) carried out a Commission of Inquiry into matters and has made recommendations. Among others, the Commission recommended a review of the country's constitution, the removal of army commander Lieutenant-General Tlali Kamoli "in the interest of restoring trust and acceptance of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) to the Basotho nation", government ensures criminal investigations into the death of former army commander Lt-Gen Maaparankoe Mahao be pursued vigorously and that the police are empowered and resourced accordingly. The Commission also recommended that the government should ensure the safe return of opposition leaders who fled to South Africa in May last year after claiming some members of the LDF were plotting to kill them. The Lesotho government has been slow to respond to the report although it has now made a commitment to give the SADC a written progress report during April. Last year's rains failed to materialise in time for the planting of the maize crop and this will have an enormous impact on a country where so many depend on growing their own maize. The government has declared a national



News from Lesotho



AIDS Update



New from Lesotho Committee

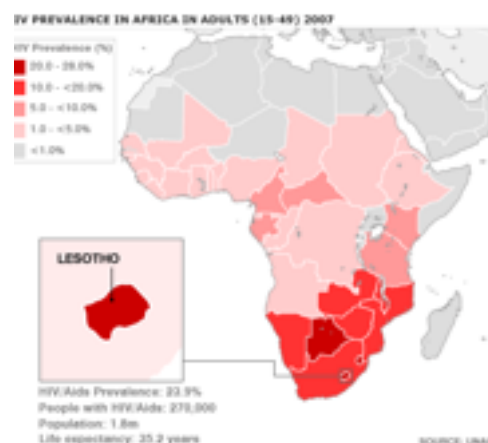


emergency. It estimates that over M500 million will be needed and has already set aside M155 million. Aid agencies are also contributing, with a donation from the EU of M35 million. A bag of maize flour that cost M70 a few years ago now costs M400. Problems in South Africa are also having a knock-on effect on Lesotho. With the threat of a recession, companies and farmers are retrenching thousands of workers, including Basotho. This will have a double impact as the remittances from South Africa-based workers diminish and there are reduced earnings for Lesotho from the Southern Africa Customs Union.

This article is used by kind permission of the Lesotho Diocesan Association.

AIDS Update

Lesotho now has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in the world, just behind Swaziland, with more than 23 % of people living with HIV. Over half of the 260,000 adults living with HIV in Lesotho are women. The AIDS epidemic has had a devastating impact on the country, its economy, social structure. Crippling poverty combined with AIDS has caused average life expectancy to drop to 49 years. The impact on individuals, families and the whole nation is being felt as adults become too sick to work and children orphaned by AIDS are left to run households. There are currently more than 200,000 orphans in Lesotho, most of whom are AIDS orphans.



Lesotho BET Committee

The BET Committee in Lesotho is a vital organ of the whole operation. It is they who interview, and then select candidates for sponsorship. They also try to visit some of the students during their courses, and keep in touch with them, to check how they are managing.

One of the members of this committee is the current Provincial Superior of the Community of the Holy Name in Lesotho. Sister Julia was the Provincial for 9 years from 2007 - 2016. She was a great help as she is an experienced driver and could help Committee members getting to the various Trade Schools or Colleges as some of them are in fairly remote areas of the country and public transport would take a very long time.

She found it interesting to see the different institutions, and to talk with the students, encouraging them, and finding out more about their courses. These trips up and down the country, taking quite some time make us realise in the UK that our partners in Lesotho give generously of themselves to help these young people and encourage them to learn a trade or a skill. I must in this write-up also mention Motselisi who, during the whole lifetime of BET has looked after the money which is sent for school fees and has kept careful account of money received and every sum which is paid out to the schools in fees, and charges for books and tools. Her careful accounting and book-keeping makes auditing more straightforward, and assures the committee here that donations do indeed go to the purpose for which they are intended.

Sister Julia has left the Committee and the new Provincial Sister Malineo will take her place, we hope she too will be able to help the Committee and will herself find it interesting, meeting prospective candidates for bursaries, and perhaps having the opportunity to see the School or College where they are studying.

42 Ridley Avenue, Ealing, London W13 9XW
Charity Number: 285451
www.basothoeducationaltrust.org

