



We have returned from Lesotho safe and sound although somewhat sunburnt and tired. We were extremely grateful for the opportunity to go to Lesotho and serve the community there. We want to take this opportunity to say a huge *Thank you* for your support, and to fill you in on what we got up to.

THE SCHOOL



Before

*** Khohlontso Primary School * 8 CLASSROOMS ***

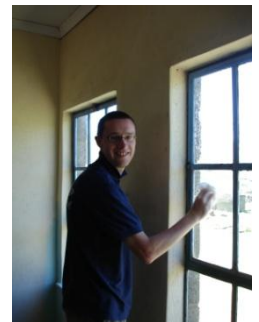
*** 500 PUPILS ***



After



Our typical day started with a two mile walk to the school. Here we spent the mornings scrubbing walls, floors and windows. We painted 5 of the 8 classrooms and replaced the broken windows. One team member also painted a mural for us (see above right). It's amazing what a difference a lick of paint makes.



THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME*



In the afternoon the local kids would turn up for a few hours of activities. At the start of the week we had about 40 children, by the end of it over 100 were attending our programme. Even some of the parents and other adults joined in with us. We'd start off with sports for the older children and a "crèche" for the toddlers. Paul was part of the sports team and had a great time interacting with the kids, playing football, blowing up balloons etc. Aoife took this opportunity to hide from the sun and spend some time with the toddlers. This usually involved playing with small balls and having a child fall asleep on her lap.

This would then be followed by crafts. The children had a great time colouring in doilies (right), drawing, making masks (above), using beads etc. Most of the sports, arts & crafts materials were purchased with the proceeds of our fundraising, so thank you again to all those who contributed. Weight limits meant we couldn't fit everything into our bags, and unfortunately the airline sent one bag containing some craft materials (and a team member's clothes!) to the wrong country. But don't worry we'll find a happy home for them with various projects in Burundi, Kenya and South Africa.



When the craft time was finished it was time for a sing song with all sorts of crazy actions. The kids really enjoyed the "Pia-pia-piano" song which Aoife is still singing in her head. This was followed by Bible stories along with drama.

The kids programme was very important and had real impact with the local community. It gave many of the children a chance to be children and to play games they never played before etc.

THE COMMUNITY



- ***Khohlontso village***
- ***Thaba Tseka District***
- ***Near Katse Dam***
- ***Subsistence farming***
- ***c. 60% HIV positive within 20km radius.***

We were based in a rural community in the mountains. It was a seven hour drive or twelve hour walk to Maseru (the capital). Thankfully we got a ride in a four seater plane that only took thirty minutes. There is high unemployment in the area. Many of the men go to work in the mines in South Africa. The “missing generation” is quite apparent: there are many people from the older generation, many children and very few in between. This is a result of the large percentage of those living with HIV who develop AIDS. 25% of the Lesotho population are orphans.

Many of the boys that came to us for the children’s programmes were herd boys. At the age of about 7 they are sent off to look after the family’s herds. Some return home at night to sleep, others sleep outdoors. They do not get a chance to complete their education nor do they have a chance to play and just be children. Many cannot read or write.

Despite the hardships that the community face they are an extremely open, friendly and welcoming people. They were very grateful for the work we did in the school and with the children and also for the HIV/AIDS awareness programme that we gave.

MORE INFORMATION AND WAYS TO HELP

- ***Learn about the issues facing the Basotho people of Lesotho***
- ***Raise awareness***
- ***Read the BBC's Lesotho AIDS diary:***

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7806225.stm>

- ***Donate to the Samaritan's Purse Lesotho programme***

<http://www.samaritanspurse.ie>

Samaritan's Purse fund local HIV projects. These projects run HIV awareness programmes, train people to become carers, give care, support those living with HIV and run income generation programmes.

Any questions please drop Paul or Aoife an email:

paul.aoife.fundraising@gmail.com

Ke a leboha

(Thank You in Sesotho)

**** We have not included photographs of the children on this newsletter for child protection reasons. We are happy to show you our photos in person.***

Please also note that the views expressed in this newsletter are of that of Paul Gargan and Aoife Lynch and not any organisation.