

News for Friends of Fusi Secondary School in Lesotho

Lesotho is beset with many problems, but the most significant of these is AIDS. Official figures say that around one in four adults are HIV positive - although unofficial estimates reach as much as double that in some parts of the population. Can you imagine the impact it has?

For many people, Saturdays are routinely spent in attending funerals. Tradition demands a good funeral with lots of food for everyone in your village - a tradition which is now hastening poverty in families that are seeing a generation dying and leaving an increasing population of orphans.

Primary education is free in Lesotho and villages often have their own primary school. But secondary schools charge fees, which are often beyond the means of people in a poor village like Ha Fusi. The government will pay the fees of orphans, but not the cost of travel to the school which often makes it impossible for children to attend.

When Andy Uglow spent a gap year at Ha Fusi he resolved to raise the funds to build a secondary school for the village which would be affordable for the local children. Despite problems along the way, his vision is already seeing children educated at a purpose-built school, with a well-respected local man as Principal and staffed by qualified teachers. The school is recognised by and registered with the Ministry of Education who are paying the salaries of some of the staff. In due course, it is expected that they will pay all the teachers' salaries and the school will be fully viable financially. In the meantime, the school relies on donations to fund salaries - just £1,000 per month, not much by UK standards but a fortune to the local people.

Last year, the school introduced school lunches for all the students - a boon for children who often went hungry. The annual fees - for tuition and all meals - are just £100.



Continuing To Grow

January 2011 saw the start of another school year for Fusi Secondary School, and with it another increase in the number of students. Back in 2009 there were just 25 students, but this year over sixty children registered for Form A alone, bringing the total school numbers to nearly one hundred and twenty.

In fact, the Form A was so large that it was split into two classes. Since the school has only three classrooms, the (comparatively small) Form C is being taught in the small room next to the kitchen in the building pictured above; the kitchen itself first saw service at the school leaving ceremony at the end of 2010. The school is now well placed to meet its target of 150 students (three classes of fifty) in 2012.

Twelve students passed their Junior Certificate - the national examinations taken at the end of Form C - last year. They have all now progressed to High School for two years' further study. Some of them are now boarding, while others have a very long journey every day. We wish them well in their future studies and careers.

All the students study agriculture as part of the curriculum. Each student has their own vegetable patch which is examined as part of the Junior Certificate. Animal husbandry is also studied. At the beginning of this year, the students built two pigsties, bought a few piglets, and fed and cared for the animals. Sadly, two of the pigs were stolen, although the thieves were later caught. A nightwatchman is employed, but there are not enough funds for daytime supervision at weekends or during the school holidays. A fat pig must be a very tempting sight for a hungry herdboys.

School Trip

People in Lesotho don't go on holidays. During the long school breaks, children may go to stay with relatives, perhaps in some remote village, but there is no concept of a family holiday.

That is why the school trip is so important and so exciting. It gives the children the opportunity to see something of their fascinating, mountainous country (so high that the whole country - including the "lowlands" around Ha Fusi are situated above the height of the top of Ben Nevis.)

This year the Fusi school trip was to Katse Dam. In April, fifty students took the five hour coach trip along the vertiginous road up through beautiful scenery into the mountains.

Katse Dam is the second largest dam in Africa and forms a key part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. Previously the rain that fell on the mountains of Lesotho had flowed



down southwards into South Africa. But the Project - paid for by South Africa who also pays Lesotho a royalty for the water it produces - now ensures that the water flows north towards Johannesburg. Before it leaves Lesotho, the water flows through a 45 km, 4 metre diameter tunnel to a hydroelectric station providing an important source of electricity to the country.

Future Developments?

If you have read our previous Newsletters, you may recall the school's plans - or, perhaps, dreams - of further building works. The most ambitious of these was to be undertaken by the Japanese government as part of their school building programme in Lesotho. Following the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, we were expecting to hear of the cancellation or, at least, delay of this project. But, for the time being at least, we understand that it is expected to go ahead as planned.

If it does go ahead, Fusi Secondary School is scheduled to benefit from the building of seven new classrooms. This will provide the scope for it to develop into a fully-fledged High School - adding a Form D and Form E and increasing the number of classes at Forms A to C.

The Japanese are also offering to build a science laboratory. But there is a condition. The school must first ensure that there is a fully-pumped water supply to the laboratory building. Although there is no mains water in the area (at

either school or village), three years ago a borehole was drilled at the school down to the water table. The first quotation for a pump (powered by a generator - as there is no mains electricity in the area, either) - was for £3,000, but the Rural Water Supply is now offering to do the work for £1,300. So we are hoping that donations will be forthcoming from our supporters so that the school does not miss out on this wonderful opportunity.

Another possibility, just being discussed, is that the Japanese may build two houses for teachers on the site. If so, they would be a huge asset - not only providing an incentive when recruiting teachers but also improving the security on the site.

Of course, if all this building work does go ahead it will bring further problems of raising funds to buy desks and laboratory equipment. But these would be marvellous problems to have!

Thanks For Your Donations

Your donations are continuing to make a huge difference to the lives of young people in Ha Fusi and surrounding villages.

The Ministry of Education has now agreed to pay the salary of a third teacher and we expect that they will eventually pay the salaries of all the teachers. But until they do, the school depends on your donations to pay the remaining three teachers.

The school is supported by the Rafiki Thabo Foundation - a registered charity which is able to reclaim tax on your gift aided donations to the further benefit of the school.

If you would like to make a donation through the Foundation please visit www.fusischool.org/howtodonate.htm