

Building Kitchens to Strengthen Basotho Youth



Located just outside of Ts’ehlanyane National Park in the district of Butha-Buthe, Lesotho, **Makhobalo High School** has approximately 470 students. Though the school is surrounded by tremendous natural beauty, it faces many challenges providing a good quality education to Basotho youth.

Lesotho has a population of about two million people. Of these, over 350,000 are orphans. Fortunately, the government supports orphans who have lost both parents by paying their school fees so they are able to attend secondary school. Single orphans and the majority of the other children are not so lucky so their families struggle to make ends meet to pay their school fees. For most of the children in this rural area, paying for other necessities like food is even more difficult, so many of the students will have only one meal per day, if at all.

Makhobalo High School recognized the importance of ensuring that its students had at least one good meal per day. After learning about the U.S. funding opportunities available from U.S. Embassy Maseru, Principal Ferdinand Kitayimbwa applied and received a **U.S. Ambassador’s Special Self-Help Fund** grant for **\$5,400** in 2013 to build a permanent kitchen and storeroom for the school.

Today the school and students benefit greatly from the newly finished kitchen and storeroom. Teachers and cooks are sheltered from the extreme cold temperatures the region faces as they prepare the meals and students get their food on time when it used to cut into valuable class time. Being able to effectively store food supplies in a dry and secure environment has also helped to ensure they always have meals on hand.

Having access to a good meal each day is not only improving students’ overall health, but it is increasing their capacity to learn and pay attention which in turn maximizes the school fees their families make great efforts to pay each quarter and gives them peace of mind.



“We are so grateful to U.S. Embassy Maseru for making Makhobalo High School’s dream of having a permanent kitchen and storeroom come true. Students’ meals are now prepared in a secure and clean place and students get their meals on time. Their overall enjoyment has even increased as the samp and beans and other meals are better prepared”

Makhobalo High School Principal Ferdinand B. Kitayimbwa

The U.S. Ambassador’s Special Self-Help Fund provides grants to community groups in Lesotho that are working to improve the basic economic and social conditions of their villages or communities. Grants are awarded once each year to projects which demonstrate local initiative and self-sustainability. Each year the Ambassador will consider a wide variety of projects, but typical projects in Lesotho include classroom construction, classroom roofing, construction of community facilities like health clinics and community centers, and boreholes that provide safe drinking water to communities. For more information about this and other small grants, please contact the Special Projects Office on +266 2231 2666 x4119 or by email at GrantsMaseru@state.gov