

Opening Doors for Students in Remote Lesotho



Far off the main road in the remote Lesotho district of Mohale's Hoek, students huddle together closely in class on shared benches. As their teacher presents the daily topic, they strain to focus over the voices of a second teacher and students from the grade above who share the same small space.



Sadly, many of the schools in the little Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho are overcrowded, understaffed and poorly funded resulting in conditions like this. Too often, schools will have only a few old buildings to accommodate up to seven grades and more than 100 students. Students often arrive at school tired from the long distances they travel, inappropriately dressed due to lack of money, and hungry as a result of poor nutrition, so being faced with overcrowded conditions due to a simple lack of space makes learning even more difficult.



Fika-La-Ts'oene Primary School is one school that faced a space challenge like this, so when they learned about the **U.S. Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund** they applied immediately. In 2013 their project was one of eight selected from over 100 applications and they received a grant for **\$5,400** (approximately M64,000) to construct an additional classroom building.



The school, together with U.S. Ambassador Matthew Harrington and important local government officials, held an inaugural classroom opening event to celebrate its completion. The Ambassador thanked the school and community for their involvement as it couldn't have been done without their continued support. He further emphasized to all "to nurture and protect the children at this school. Teach them not only about reading and math, but about life skills, prevention of HIV/AIDS, and civic responsibility. These children represent the future of Lesotho and we must cherish both what they are, and who they will become."

"We are forever indebted to U.S. Embassy Maseru for making teaching and learning easier at Fika-La-Ts'oene Primary School. We know that this will encourage both teachers and learners to work hard to improve school performance especially in Standard 7 who will now have a much more conducive and safe learning space for lessons."

Fika-La-Ts'oene Primary School Principal 'Maletsie Ellen Shoaepane

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