

Two Years in Lesotho

A few years ago, I felt God was calling me to give up my teaching job here and volunteer in Africa. After some searching, I found myself drawn to the country of Lesotho, a small country in Southern Africa. We have just returned after two years there, so now it is time for reflection. Was it worth it? What did we do? What did we achieve?

The main purpose of the project was to help establish a secondary school in the village of Ha Fusi where I (Elizabeth) spent my time teaching Maths while I wasn't badgering government officials to honour their commitment to developing education in the country. There were times of elation, times of frustration, but never boredom. It was an amazing experience in every way.

When we visited Fusi Secondary School in 2008, there were 15 students at the school, in a building of 3 classrooms. That was all.



At the beginning of 2009 there were 25 students so it was clear that some serious work needed to be done if Fusi school was going to become a viable institution. Firstly we bought them some desks...



...then if we were to increase the roll, we needed better facilities. A water pump and a staffroom were now on site...



but the current toilets were woefully inadequate, so a new block was the next building project...



Then, I suggested we hold an Open Day for all the local primary schools - it was a great success...



...and helped to increase the roll to 80 students.



Meanwhile, we had to persuade the Lesotho government to support the project by registering the school, and paying the teachers' salaries. After many visits to the capital, and lobbying by the Anglican schools' secretary on our behalf, we achieved our registration and held a big party to celebrate alongside the visit of the bishop to bless and dedicate the buildings. It was an amazing day, attended by all the local people.



In January 2010, we were beginning to feel like a real school, but I was still aware that many of the students were constantly hungry. I decided to launch a feeding programme, but with no cooking facilities on site, the food had to be cooked in the village and wheeled up to school - a good 20 minutes walk...

The food was immensely popular with the students, but it was clear that proper cooking facilities were needed on site, so we set about building a kitchen...



...and it was completed just in time for the farewell end-of-year celebration.



Phew! When I look back, it has been a tremendously busy two years. I have not mentioned the computers, the library, entrance gates (all acquired for nothing), generator, sports equipment, garden tools, more desks and lots more, generously donated by friends.

The great news is that at the beginning of this year, 2011, there are nearly 120 students and the school is going well.

The bad news is that the Lesotho government have not paid the teachers as promised, so the school still needs a lot of financial support while appeals are constantly made to honour their commitment.

We are extremely grateful to the people of St Giles for their generous and continuing support.

Elizabeth & David Dunford
www.thedunfords.org