

# LESEDI SCHOOLS & CLINIC

## August 2022

Most of our Lesedi updates are provided through trip reports after visits to Lesedi by Graeme and Fiona. However, as we will not be at Lesedi again until November, we asked the Primary, Secondary and Clinic to write their own reports on developments. A big thank you to Sister Irene, Miss Ncube and Mr Moyo for taking the time to compile reports when they are so busy doing their “day jobs”. Their reports and our comments have been merged together below, along with photos provided by Mr Masusela.

For once let’s start with the Lesedi Clinic.

### LESEDI CLINIC

As a quick summary, Lesedi Clinic serves the villages of Chidobe, Monde, Ntabayengwe and Sizinda. In addition to looking after the needs of Lesedi Primary and Secondary Schools, the catchment area includes the neighbouring Monde Primary School. The clinic team comprises a mid-wife, a primary care nurse, two nurse-aides, a general hand and a village health worker. The clinic is privately funded through the charity, with no external assistance. It is operated on a not-for-profit basis.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the clinic, patients from the catchment communities are charged US\$2 per adult and US\$1 per child for consultations, with free consultations for those over 65 years of age. Patients coming from outside the catchment area are charged US\$5 per adult and US\$3 per child. Medication is charged at market cost plus a small percentage mark-up.

Opening the clinic at the start of the pandemic meant that patient numbers were initially much lower than anticipated. This situation was exacerbated by a reluctance (or inability) in the community to pay any fees for medical services. However, we are now seeing a steady rise in patient numbers as the community are starting to appreciate the quality of service at Lesedi, and the availability of medicines. In addition, some patients are now travelling to Lesedi Clinic from Victoria Falls town as word is beginning to spread further afield. Although we charge higher fees for patients attending from outside of our catchment area, Lesedi Clinic is a far more affordable option than medical services in town.

Sister Irene provided an interesting breakdown of the patients attended to so far this year:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Total patients seen	61	72	183	80	122	102	153
- Adults	55	63	173	65	116	92	135
- Children	6	9	10	15	6	10	18
Antenatal care (ANC) booking	0	1	2	0	2	1	1
ANC follow up visits	1	1	1	3	2	5	5
HIV test	1	7	8	6	4	6	12
Malaria test	0	3	8	7	8	6	4
Growth monitoring	15	22	28	30	36	30	29
Family planning	0	17	2	0	1	1	22
Doctor’s review	22	14	24	11	24	14	34
Covid tests	4	1	19	1	3	3	9
Covid vaccination	29	46	220	94	165	57	6

Dr Gwenhamo continues to provide a surgery at Lesedi Clinic every Saturday morning, something that makes Lesedi Clinic stand apart from most rural clinics in Zimbabwe.



*Dr Gwenhamo's surgery*



*Blood pressure monitoring*

We mentioned in our last report that Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccinations had been provided by China, and the roll-out of covid vaccinations continued in March, with a campaign targeting all 12- to 80-year-olds. All Lesedi students from 12 years of age upwards were vaccinated, with the exception of one child in Grade 7 whose parents refused to consent on religious grounds. All of our teachers and support staff have also been vaccinated, apart from one teacher who has a medical exemption. The government recently announced that vaccinations will soon be offered to 3- to 11-year-olds. We are waiting for further details, but this is likely to happen before the end of the year.



*Form 1 learners queuing for COVID vaccination*



*Being very brave!*

All children enrolled at Lesedi Primary and Secondary Schools continue to be attended to at the clinic, for cases that can be managed at clinic level, making a huge difference to the welfare of our learners.

The Expanded Program of Immunisations we mentioned in our December 2021 report is continuing from the clinic. The Amalima Loko feeding program also continues on a monthly basis, with pregnant mothers, breastfeeding mothers and children under two years of age receiving soya porridge and cooking oil. This vital program assists in preventing malnutrition in the first 1,000 days of life.

The clinic has also become the base for other external projects, with the Ministry of Health and Child Care in partnership with Plan International distributing long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets throughout the entire Hwange District. Lesedi Clinic was selected to be a storage and distribution centre for Chidobe Ward, and the nets have now been distributed to the respective areas.

Population Services Zimbabwe based themselves at Lesedi Clinic for a day last month to offer free family planning services, something that proved very popular with many of the mothers!



*Free family planning*



*Village Health Worker*

As Lesedi Clinic doesn't have its own Village Health Worker (VHW), we have officially "borrowed" one from Chisuma Clinic. The VHW resides in Ntabayengwe village, and she links the community with the health facility. Growth monitoring is done at her homestead. This is a voluntary role but VHWs normally receive a small incentive at the end of each quarter as a thank you for their valuable services.

It is fabulous to see Lesedi Clinic becoming embedded within the local communities and developing into the valuable resource we always knew it would be. Our only frustration is that we haven't yet received approval to distribute anti-retrovirals from the clinic, but we remain hopeful that this will happen one day.

Moving across to the educational side of things, let us start with an update on our enrolment numbers at the primary and secondary schools:

### LESEDI SCHOOLS ENROLMENT

#### LESEDI PRIMARY

	Boys	Girls	Total
ECD A	16	15	31
ECD B	17	12	29
GRADE 1	18	15	33
GRADE 2	15	14	29
GRADE 3	13	21	34
GRADE 4	16	19	35
GRADE 5	14	20	34
GRADE 6	20	13	33
GRADE 7	18	15	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>291</b>
	51%	49%	

#### LESEDI SECONDARY

	Boys	Girls	Total
FORM 1	33	34	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>67</b>
	49%	51%	

Our total enrolment is currently 358 children. We have regrettably lost a few children from Lesedi this term, generally as a result of relocation of families or parental break-ups. However, we also enrol new children as they relocate from other areas, so it tends to keep numbers fairly steady.

### FINANCIAL & SPONSORSHIP

Finances have become increasingly tight over the last 12 months. We had our best year ever on donations in 2021, but we have been steadily eating through our financial reserves with the completion

costs of the vocational training blocks in January and equipping the secondary school. Our ongoing operational running costs of both schools and the clinic are now up to nearly US\$15k per month, comprising the salaries of 36 staff, daily feeding of almost 400 children and employees plus general day to day expenses. The team does a great job economising where they can but the inflationary pressures we are all seeing in our home countries are even more acute in Africa for basic food, fuel and other living costs. The local Zimbabwe Dollar has also halved in value from ZW\$350/\$1US to ZW\$700/1 in the last seven months alone.

The sponsorship program remains our essential funding lifeline covering c\$10k of these costs per month. When we wrote our last trip report in March, 309 of our Lesedi children were sponsored. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of our supporters, and a few new additions to the Lesedi family, we are delighted to report that 332 of our learners are now sponsored, over 92% of the total. We still have 22 children waiting to find sponsors, and we are hoping to match all of them with sponsors before the year-end, as in January another 70+ children will enrol at Lesedi mostly needing sponsorship. So please keep spreading the word to family, friends and anyone else who isn't yet bored of hearing about Lesedi! Without our groups visiting Lesedi we have very little opportunity to widen our support base, so are very reliant on you guys to spread the word for us.

Financial constraints mean that no major construction projects are possible for the foreseeable future, but we are very aware that as the secondary school grows more buildings will be required. Over the Nov 22 - Mar 23 period we ideally need to construct at least one more double classroom block, along with a couple of additional teacher's cottages but we will only be able to do this if funds permit (\$60k-\$100k+). We are also very keen to have a dedicated science block completed by the end of 2023 in time for the key Form 3 year when the children start to specialise for their main "O" level exams in Form 4. However, this would cost us at least \$100k-\$150k so remains on the "dream" list for now but hopefully, funds permitting, we can build and equip this at some point in the not-too-distant future. These are all big numbers and if anyone can contribute to these costs, however small, we would be extremely grateful.

Over to the schools now to see what has been happening in Term 2.

## **LESEDI PRIMARY SCHOOL**

We have a total of 11 dedicated teachers at Lesedi Primary, supported by nine ancillary staff from the local community who are employed to prepare the school meals, tend the gardens and provide security. The school is also thankful to our four volunteer helpers who provide valuable assistance, enabling the teachers to focus on their duties.

One of our teacher's, Ms Joyce Tholanah, decided to move on to new challenges at the start of this term, relocating to Bulawayo. She was replaced by Mr Innocent Nkomo who took over our Grade 6 class to prepare the students for exams next year. We extend a very warm Lesedi welcome to Mr Nkomo. Our teaching line up for this year is shown on the [team page](#) of the Lesedi website.

With the Grade 7 exams looming once again, all the teachers are working together to help prepare the students for their examinations later this year. So much schooling has been missed during the pandemic that it really is a team effort to cover lost ground.

This term was the first time in two years we managed a full term without any disruption which enabled the teachers to settle into the task of helping the children to recap on learning they may have missed. Additional time was allocated to reading, helping learners revamp their skills. As this is winter in Zimbabwe, and the days somewhat cooler, it enabled the teachers to extend the school day to finish at

3:30pm, providing extra time for learning. At the end of the term learners wrote tests to assess their performance. Most performed fairly well, with a few needing more attention.

Having received the results of the special needs assessment from earlier in the year, we are now actively searching for a suitable special needs teacher to join our Lesedi team. Learners remain in mainstream classes up to Grade 3, with the benefit of an Individual Education Plan, as they may just be late developers. From Grades 4 – 7 learners with special needs can be taught separately to ensure they get the additional support needed. We have at least 20 children who should ideally be moved to a special needs class, so it is vital that we appoint a specialist teacher in the near future in order to give these children every opportunity to reach their full potential. A couple of comments from the Grade 5 sponsor letters reinforced this urgency:

*We have already written end of term exams. It is so sad because I know I did not do well. I try and try to learn to read but I fail. It is making me feel like I am useless. I cannot remember what has been taught. I am dreaming of becoming a better person but it is difficult. Maybe I will need to try a practical subject.*  
Priscilla, Grade 5

*I have been trying my best to improve, especially reading and remembering what I had already been taught. [Not managing to do so] really is a set back for me. I wanted to have a better future than my mother. I will keep working hard.*  
Ayanda, Grade 5

We now have an Eco-Club at the primary school and about 20 of the club members visited the Wild Horizon's elephant sanctuary to learn more about these majestic creatures. On World Environment Day, the children recited poems on the importance of protecting our environment. They also planted two trees, Moringa and Bird Plum - which they named 'D.J. and Prince'. The Grade 3 to 6 classes also participated in planting and nurturing trees at the sports fields and around the school grounds.

Learning about conservation presents some challenges for the children as they become motivated to make changes to their own lives.

*I have now joined the Eco Club at school. It is a club that teaches about the environment and the importance of not cutting down trees and conserving nature. It is very educational but we also need firewood from the trees. It is hard to tell my parents not to cut down trees.*  
Nozwelo, Grade 5

The school garden has been lovingly tended by Mr Egias Zinhu in recent years and he recently harvested tomatoes, cabbages and green peppers, which were a welcome addition to the school meals.

One issue that has taken the trustees by surprise this year has been the exam fees charged by Zimsec for the Grade 7 exams. Normally in Zimbabwe Dollars, this year the fees have been quoted in US Dollars (although payable in Zimbabwe Dollars at a pre-determined exchange rate). The cost is US\$66 per child, payable in instalments. The Grade 6 learners must pay US\$11 per term for six terms until they write their final exams. The Grade 7 learners pay US\$22 per term for three terms.

Although the primary school did an amazing job of getting many parents and guardians to pay the first instalment at very short notice, the charity did need to step in to assist those who were struggling. All of our learners have now been registered. However, setting the exam fees in US Dollars will make them unaffordable for many learners across the country, as few people have earnings pegged to the USD.

Although government schools receive a subsidized rate, learners will still need to find the equivalent of US\$30 per child for the Grade 7 exams.



*Meeting with parents encouraging them to pay exam fees*



*Tomatoes from the school garden*



*Mr Zinhu and home-grown cabbages*

Some readers may remember a chicken project we mentioned in previous reports. As a reminder, we had supported a lady who approached us from the community with impressive plans to involve vulnerable members of the community in income generating projects. She started with a chicken project, funded by the charity (largely thanks to a specific donation). Unfortunately, the project was not a success, despite her best endeavours. We are pleased to report that the structure we built for the chickens is now being utilised by the Lesedi team, as they have clubbed together to start their own chicken project as the first of their planned income generating initiatives. We wish them success with their endeavours!

With all construction energies (and funds) focussed on the secondary school, there has been little in the way of development at the primary school. The only recent construction was a project to enlarge the cooking area and facilities, as the secondary learners receive one meal a day from the primary school kitchen. The primary learners continue to receive two meals each day. This year the feeding program is of paramount importance as sporadic rains meant most families didn't manage to harvest much from the fields.



After our previous internet service gradually become less and less reliable, and eventually stopped working altogether, the schools and clinic have gone through two years without any internet. Communication has mostly been by WhatsApp using mobile data, with the learners having no access to online learning. Now that we have a secondary school it was more important than ever to find a solution to provide suitable Wi-Fi.

After discussions and quotations from all possible suppliers, we eventually opted for a Satellite connection with Tel-One as installation of Fibre broadband was way out of our budget range. We started by connecting the primary school only in order to trial the service but unfortunately although it is working, the coverage and bandwidth is not what we were promised. It seems that we may need to go back to the drawing board on this!

## LESEDI SECONDARY SCHOOL

Upon opening schools for the second term, our secondary school learners were greeted by the appearance of a giant colourful gate, with the features speaking volumes about the Lesedi project. The sheer size of the gate resonates with the enormous dreams of what the project sets to achieve for the community. The cascading wheels on the top beam tell a story of small, beautiful beginnings of the Lesedi dream and its gradual realisation and growth, whilst the green arrow on the last wheel reflects the future trajectory whose end is beyond the skies.



As the learners returned for the second term, one could not help but notice the enthusiasm that was written all over their faces as school resumed for the first 'normal' term since the start of the pandemic. All the learners returned on time, save for one boy whose guardian had opted to transfer him to a school in Bulawayo, but later revoked the decision and the boy joined us a couple of weeks later.

Despite the best endeavours of teachers during the pandemic, it is clear that two years of school closures and disturbances has left an indelible scar on the education of our learners. On the academic side we are generally impressed by the gradual progress we see in the learners, although it is not something that can be celebrated at this stage. Considerable effort is still needed to get a good number of our learners to catch up, although we have a few learners who are very competitive which is a good sign for us. Without being drawn to statistics, an estimated 40% of our learners demonstrated remarkable improvement in their academic performance relative to last terms marks.

Early into the term learners were presented with an opportunity to showcase their creativity through a cultural diversity /Africa Day celebration. At a combined event with Lesedi Primary, the students treated their audience to mind-blowing poetry, drama and music in our school hall. The performances made us appreciate that the children have talents that need to be encouraged through specific programmes. To that end, we have introduced a variety of school clubs to nurture identified talents.



*Drama group sobbing at departure of the king*



*Music time*

Something that sets Lesedi Secondary apart from most rural schools is the provision of technical vocational subjects, empowering learners with industrial skills. The second term offered ample time for

learners to gain practical skills. In Wood Technology & Design, the students designed and started making broom and bag racks - a project that will be concluded next term. In Metal Technology & Design, learners have designed and made key holders. In Food Technology & Design the major focus this term was confectionery. At the end of term, the class made twenty plus sponge cakes for the whole Lesedi family to celebrate all birthdays within the term. We are immensely grateful to our sponsors for funding the ingredients and baking equipment, and hope to continue this new tradition each term. Our Agriculture class has horticultural projects running and a perimeter fence was erected recently to protect their crops from goats that intrude into the school grounds.



*Metal fabrication, a girl engineering a scribe*



*Sawing in Wood Technology*



*Agriculture class*



*Design work*



*Baking time*



*A few of the completed birthday cakes*



The lifting of the pandemic ban on sport lit our sporting fields with ball games action in volleyball, soccer, netball, tag rugby, basketball and tennis. Inter-school competitions are slowly resuming, and this term we competed at tag rugby, hosting the competition at Lesedi.



*Team Lesedi in action at a tag rugby tournament*



*Netball and volleyball training side by side*

We were excited to receive a visit from two of our UK supporters, Elaine and Graham, for a few days during the term. They filled our hearts by volunteering to bring with them two additional suitcases packed full of equipment, textbooks, laminated posters and maps that are a priceless addition to our school. During their visit, Graham did a great job teaching the accounting classes. Meanwhile Elaine took to the Food Tech kitchen, emerging later with freshly baked bread for our tea break. Over and above the memorable class time, we requested them to share their experiences of growing up in the UK and other important life skills with the learners. The impact of those chats was quite phenomenal judging from the reactions and questions from our students.

Although construction projects have largely paused at the secondary, a traditional open kitchen had been requested by the Food Tech department earlier in the year. We are now blessed with an eye-catching steel and mortar structure that not only includes a traditional open fire and food preparation area but also a pizza smoker. A covered deck above the cooking area provides a seating area, ideal for a Lesedi restaurant one day. We are very grateful to those donors who made this project possible. With funds under pressure Benson kept costs to a minimum by utilising an assortment of steel and other building materials that he has collected over the years. When you care to inquire how the idea for this unique structure came about, Benson just smiles and tells you it was somewhere in his head.



We will end with a huge thank you to our supporters, sponsors, partners and the Lesedi team. Remarkably, since 2015 we have raised nearly \$1.7m for Lesedi through your incredible support. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Each and every \$, £ and € given over the years has been fully maximised through a combination of Benson's tireless hands-on project management and our determination not to make any deductions for overheads or admin costs. Consequently we hope you

will agree that the \$1.7m has already achieved a very impressive amount, and will continue to do so for generations to come. The Lesedi journey is still in its infancy and we are excited to discover what the future will bring.

Until next time. Take care and stay happy and healthy,

*Fiona & Graeme x*

As usual, a few extra photos to finish, plus a couple of sweet excerpts from the children's sponsor letters...

*This term was very cold and I wanted to remain in the blankets every day. My mother would wake me up and help me bath then she gives me warm clothes. At school we were not allowed to keep windows closed and we would feel cold. One day when the teacher was not looking we closed all the windows and it was warm.*

*Patricia, Grade 3*

*We have always thought you may visit us in one of the holidays, so we keep our home clean.*

*Theminkosi, Grade 4*



*Form 1 South Class*



*Form 1 North Class – more happy smiles next time please!*



*Wood Technology & Design*



*Metal Technology & Design*



*Agriculture students*



*Football (soccer) training in action*



*ICT lesson*



*Cultural Day*



*Primary class at work*



*Clearing litter from the local communities*



*Assembly in the School Hall*