



## LESEDI NEWS & UPDATE AUGUST 2023



### Introduction

Our June report included comments from some of our primary school teachers about what Lesedi means to them. This time we welcome a short report from Mrs Muturi about what motivated her to first take a teaching position at Lesedi, and her views on the difference we are making to the local communities. Some of our secondary teachers have also shared their thoughts on Lesedi. Then we have the first contribution from the Lesedi Photography Club. After such a comprehensive update in our last report, we will restrict our other comments to a few brief updates.

We would like to take this opportunity to give a big thank you to those of you who made donations after our appeal for funds to help us through this challenging period of growth

at Lesedi. Although the financial pressure will continue as we navigate our way through the next couple of years, we are thrilled to have received specific donations to support Mr Nyere's agriculture projects.

We were delighted to receive an immensely generous single donation, which is funding the school desks and chairs for Form 3 next year, whilst also covering the substantial balance remaining on the purchase of another 15 desktop computers. We have also received some additional support towards our monthly operating costs – although we continue to have a fairly large shortfall.

Without further ado, we pass you over to Mrs Muturi and some of Lesedi Secondary teachers, along with the first of hopefully many contributions from our Lesedi Photography Club...



### Mrs A Muturi Headteacher

I started at **Lesedi Primary** in January 2016 and was assigned to the Pioneer class in Grade 2. My objective was and continues to be to lessen or close the gap between rural and urban children. It was a difficult task because the children were still at grade 1 and Kindergarten level, even though they were in grade 2.

This situation was not because the teachers were not trying their best; rather, it was because no one recognized the value of education. The kids would go to school one or two days per week. Thank you to Benson for not giving up on such a community. He kept holding the light, searching for the children and urging their parents to let them go. They would provide no assistance. It was

a great mountain to ask them to aid their own children.

Over time, I watched a gradual shift as the children at Lesedi were cared for like a family, with food, sponsorship, and care provided. Children who would otherwise have left school before Grade 7 now persevered. The same parents who had been in the dark now saw the light and began hunting for relatives to bring their children to Lesedi. People would withdraw their children from higher grades in neighbouring schools in order for them to fit in at Lesedi. With the learning materials offered, several youngsters who were formerly labelled as unteachable are now gleaming since Lesedi gave them hope and provided for them.

**Lesedi Clinic** was yet another wonderful effort that has already saved certain mishaps that may have harmed many youngsters.



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*Mrs Mutori's Grade 2 class in 2016*

If a kid became ill, the parents' answer was to keep the child at home and let fate take its course. Lesedi Clinic now exists and serves as a lifeline for children and the community as a whole. Our hyperactive, adventurous youngsters who sometimes get injured while playing are getting help from nurses and doctors before it's too late, and they are back on track in no time. Our chronically ill children, whose parents were on the verge of giving up, have found a helping hand at the clinic.

**Lesedi Secondary School** became the next project, as we decided that it was not possible to abandon the kids at Grade 7 level; otherwise the Lesedi growth would have turned cancerous. Since many of the kids

would not have continued after their primary education, secondary education was introduced.

Since our children's abilities differ, providing vocational training does not exclude any of them. Because they will have acquired a skill or skills to live by when they leave Lesedi, at least everyone is smiling. I'm happy that this will transform our neighbourhood from those that chase after moonshine into a busy, hardworking, and productive one.

Words cannot express my gratitude to the entire Lesedi family, which includes the directors, sponsors, supporters, staff, parents, and last but not least, the most crucial members, the kids.



*Local kids in 2013, sitting in our very first Lesedi classroom which was under construction! The birth of Lesedi...*





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Many thanks to Mrs Mutori for this write-up, and for her dedication to the Lesedi project. Let's hear now from a few of the secondary teachers.



**Mr R Nyereyemhuka**  
**Agriculture & Science**  
**Teacher**

It has been an eye-opening experience being at Lesedi. The school has a comprehensive curriculum that includes core subjects, vocational training as well as extra-curricular activities. This ensures that the learners receive a balanced education that prepares them for future endeavours, whether it be education, entering the workforce or self sustenance.

I have also come to appreciate the dedicated and passionate educators that the school has. These educators possess a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that come with teaching in a rural setting. The school integrates local culture and values of the community it serves. It incorporates relevant aspects of the community's heritage into its curriculum, activities and events and this has created a sense of unity and support for the school and its students.

Unlike most rural schools, Lesedi strives to provide access to necessary materials and technologies. These include updated textbooks, computer lab, internet connectivity, practical workshops and highly qualified educators. Ultimately, Lesedi is a good school located in a rural setup, surrounded by vulnerable groups, where learners feel supported, inspired and empowered to reach their full potential, regardless of their location and background.



**Mr TS Masusela**  
**ICT & Metal Technology**  
**Teacher**

Being a city boy, I was reluctant to attend an interview at Lesedi Secondary School once I discovered it was in a rural area. I only attended as a matter of courtesy. After a grilling interview, within an hour Benson had inspired me to see the bigger picture beyond my personal needs. Hearing how the school started with the simple aim of feeding hungry kids and seeing the joy of accomplishment and fulfilment on Benson's face, I was keen to experience these same emotions.

Being a pioneer teacher came with its challenges, especially working much harder to get systems in place and correct flaws as we go. The learners were eager to learn despite having different ability levels. This challenges every teacher out of their comfort zone and calls for innovation. Many of my friends still can't comprehend why I settled for a school in a rural village which is not financially rewarding enough to afford the luxuries we grew up with.

I quickly learnt when I saw the first learners at the secondary school that Lesedi means light and that I am one of the lights leading them to a brighter future. With the minimal resources we have at Lesedi, we make it work and the learners are appreciative of all the help they receive. We have even established a photography club for learners, with tutors from Wildlife Encounter. I look forward to every morning at Lesedi and I even took a few pennies from my pocket to sponsor prizes for an Africa Day dress competition. Pockets are empty but the heart is full of the joy of making a difference in a child's life. Soon I hope I will be carrying Benson's smile of accomplishment.



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**Mr J Dube**  
**Mathematics and**  
**Science Teacher**

It was a very new experience for me to be one of the pioneers of a rural secondary school, but Lesedi was a different school altogether. Located near the Zambezi National Park, the community's main income source was limited to selling curios and entertaining tourists. This was the only future our boys and girls saw for themselves.

Lesedi has brought a light to this community as it has given young people a chance to learn. At Lesedi all learners have an equal chance of propelling to greater heights, as the sponsorship program has empowered all to realize their potential through education. Vocational education and sporting activities have brought about inclusive development and community transformation. Learners that are slow in academic subjects may concentrate on practical subjects such as Agriculture, or Food, Wood and Metal Technologies. Or they may perfect their sporting skills and follow this pathway, perhaps even to the world stage!

The provision of food to all learners eases the burden on most parents, as they no longer have the stress of providing their children with lunches and breakfasts during term time. They only have to worry about weekends and school holidays. As the saying goes, "a hungry man is an angry man" but in this case we can say, "a hungry child is an unteachable child".

The sponsorship program has brought hope and life to the Ntabayengwe community. I just pray they understand the blessing that the sponsorship program has brought to their doorstep. Education is only a dream for some rural communities, but it is now a reality for the Ntabayengwe community thanks to Lesedi.



**Ms B Luphahla**  
**English and History**  
**Teacher**

As a member of the Lesedi family, seeing the impact of the generosity of our international friends towards the empowerment of our rural Zimbabwean children has made me greatly appreciate the power of giving. I have also learnt that a gift, no matter how small or big really does go a long way. Lesedi Schools and Clinic have brought light not only to the learners but also to the community and beyond. A huge thank you to everyone who has shown kindness and support to the Lesedi cause in cash or kind.



**Mr L Dube**  
**Ndebele and History**  
**Teacher**

I joined the Lesedi teaching staff this year in January. The school is very beautiful with good teaching equipment. Besides academic subjects, the school offers practical subjects which are helping those who are not academically gifted to learn practical skills. The sponsorship program is giving learners who are financially challenged a chance to learn and better their future. I am glad to be part of Lesedi, a trust school with a good heart to uplift young ones. Lesedi is not only assisting learners from the community, but it is also creating employment. I give many thanks to the directors and supporters for the wonderful work they are doing at Lesedi. By assisting learners, they are building a tomorrow with a bright future. Also, they are helping to instil a good role model to learners, teachers and the people of Ntabayengwe community that we have to uplift each other.





### Lesedi Photography Club

Opportunities come rarely in lifetime, grabbing those that come your way is the best solution. As one of the students who is benefitting from such opportunities, my fellow students and I are learning photography.

The Photography Club was established with the help of Mr Benson Siyawareva, Mr Masusela and their friends at Wildlife Encounter - Hannah and Tay - in May this year. This club has already helped us learn a few skills, especially how to operate a camera. It is facilitated by a safari company from Victoria Falls named Wildlife Encounter. Some of the employees and guests volunteer to teach us photography on a weekly basis. We graduated this week from the first level of photography, after 14 weeks. Eventually we hope to be established wildlife photographers.

We are 15 learners in the club and currently share the four cameras donated to Wildlife Encounter. We hope to be able to cover all school events when we have cameras of our own. Well, they say a picture says a thousand words. Let me share with you some of our work.



*The Africa Day dress competition winners with Mrs Mutori and Mr Masusela, the donor of the winner's prize*





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We end our report with a brief update of what has been happening at Lesedi over the past couple of months.

### Agriculture Projects

The Lesedi garden continues to impress and is now supplying veggies once a week to the school kitchen. A huge well done to all involved. There is amazement from the kids that it is possible for the Kalahari sand to be so productive. I am sure they will pass on the skills they are learning to their parents.



A donation towards extending the veggie garden enabled Mr Nyere and his agriculture class to erect a water tank for the garden. This was a learning project for the class, and we congratulate them on a job well done!



Plans for the chicken project were fully supported by donations, and the renovations of the chicken run have been completed. Our first 200 chicks will be purchased before the start of Term 3.



Much to our delight, the majority of the piggery project is now funded, with the piggery to be named Rosie's Piggery, in memory of the mother of the project's main donor. Construction of the piggery will start this month.

### Chess Champion

Lesedi Primary recently took part in the Umdala Wethu Chess Festival, and we are thrilled to report that one of our Grade 6 boys, Thamsanqa Sibanda, won the over 9s primary school category, having beaten all five of his opponents. The over 9s category included 85 competitors from more than 10 schools. Thamsanqa won a gold medal and USD\$15 in prize money. An amazing result and we are all incredibly proud of him!







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## Teachers' Cottages

Construction continues on the two new teachers' cottages that will be needed for the additional secondary teachers who will join us from January. A huge thank you to the donors who are making this possible.

Hopefully this will be the last major construction for a while...unless we receive funding for a science block or library...then the builders will be straight back to work!



## Charity Christmas Gifts

We know that it is much too early to mention Christmas, but we will need to make some significant purchases of textbooks and equipment in advance of Form 3 starting in January. Our plan is to bundle books, science equipment and vocational equipment into gift packages at various budget levels. These gifts will be available for purchase using the usual donation methods, with the recipient receiving a personalised e-card - and the satisfaction of knowing their gift will help change lives. We will post details on Facebook later in the year, but if you would like details to be sent directly to you once ready, please drop an email to Fiona ([fiona@ngoko.com](mailto:fiona@ngoko.com)). Please consider giving Lesedi gifts to your loved ones for Christmas - or even give as a gift to yourself!

All that remains is to give heartfelt thanks to all our supporters for your amazing generosity since the project began. We are nearing the 10 year anniversary of Lesedi and some of you have walked alongside us every step of the way. With so many worthwhile causes across the globe, it really is humbling that Lesedi is the chosen charity for so many of you to support.

Graeme and Fiona will be travelling to Lesedi again in mid-November and will distribute another update upon their return.

Until then, with thanks,

*Fiona, Graeme and Benson x*

## How to Donate

### USA/Canada/Other non-UK countries

(via Network for Good)

<https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/lesedischoolsandclinic>

### United Kingdom

(via CAF)

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/17921>