



# School Aid Reading Clubs

Lesotho: 2018 Annual Report



*Anticipation mounts: children at St Bernadette Primary School can't wait for their reading club to start*

## INTRODUCTION

As the second year of School Aid's reading club programme in Lesotho drew to a close, it became clear that this was a year of two halves. While attendance was high at clubs throughout the year, the successes of the first term – from January to June – were offset by ongoing problems with teacher strikes during the latter half of the year.

## THE CLUBS

The format of our reading clubs, established in 2017, continued into 2018, with each club run for about an hour after school for children from years 3 and 4 – so about 8–11 years old. Bookmarks with stars for attendance; a simple story (usually from Usborne's *Illustrated Stories from Around the World*) read aloud; opportunities to re-enact the story and time to draw pictures from their imagination: these are the attractions that bring children flocking to our clubs week on week. One-to-one reading gives them a much-needed chance to improve their skills, too, including enhancing their understanding and knowledge of the English language. This last is particularly valuable in Lesotho, where the language of education at secondary school is exclusively in English.



*Illustrating the week's story at Moshoeshoe II Primary School is an important part of each reading club session*

## THE FACTS

The year saw a total of 12 primary schools around Maseru running reading clubs. These included five new schools that came on board for the second term, each under the auspices of School Aid leaders. With each club expanded during the second term to take 15 children, a total of 264 children were introduced for the first time to the fun of reading for pleasure.

### Summary of attendance, progress and achievement January–June 2018

SCHOOL	AVERAGE						IMPROVEMENT					
	No students in club	No sessions	Attendance	Enthusiasm	Participation	Reading confidence	Reading fluency	Enthusiasm	Participation	Reading confidence	Reading fluency	
Get Together Primary	12	10	100%	3.2	2.9	2.3	2.1	0.2	-0.8	0.3	2.2	
Legetsoana Primary	12	6	97%	2.6	2.6	2.0	1.9	0.8	0.1	0.9	1.1	
Lesia Primary	12	10	89%	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.3	-0.3	-0.1	0.0	0.0	
Lithabaneng Primary	12	5	95%	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	
Mazenod Primary	12	10	89%	3.2	3.1	2.9	2.6	-1.8	-1.8	-0.3	-0.5	
Thabana Ts'ooana Primary	12	10	98%	2.7	2.6	2.1	1.9	-1.0	-0.7	2.0	1.7	
Tseka LECSA Primary	12	6	88%	3.0	2.8	2.2	2.0	-0.3	0.3	1.8	1.4	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>57</b>										
<b>AVERAGES</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>	

### Summary of attendance, progress and achievement in new clubs, July–November 2018

SCHOOL	AVERAGE						IMPROVEMENT					
	No students in club	No sessions	Attendance	Enthusiasm	Participation	Reading confidence	Reading fluency	Enthusiasm	Participation	Reading confidence	Reading fluency	
Maseru LEC Primary	15	8	100%	3.1	3.5	3.8	3.8	0	0.7		0.1	
Moshoeshoe II PS	15	7	93%	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	
St Bernadette Primary	15	10	79%	3.1	3	3.1	3.1	-0.9	0.2	0.5	0.5	
Sekete Primary	15	10	100%	3.5	3	3	3	-0.7	0	-0.5	-0.5	
Tsoelo-pele 'Moho PS	15	8	88%	3	3	3.3	3.2	-0.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>43</b>										
<b>AVERAGES</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.22</b>	



**Meet Refiloe** Early in 2018, our energetic Project and Reading Club Officer in Lesotho, Moso Ranoosi, was joined part time by Refiloe Khau. A qualified primary-school teacher, Refiloe is no stranger to the world of reading, and her enthusiasm in the reading clubs – from energisers to one-to-one reading – is enabling us to help yet more children discover a whole new world of reading.

Feedback from six participant schools during the year was almost unanimously positive, pointing to improvements in reading, greater participation in reading out of school, and a wish to see a greater number of children involved in the clubs. Assessment of improvement, however, remains a challenge that is being addressed by our leaders.



*Happy recipients of end-of-term reading club awards at Sekete Primary School, where attendance during the term was 100%*

## **THE HOLIDAYS**

Despite the freezing temperatures of Lesotho's winter, outdoor reading clubs at the Future Stars trail-bike club continued to attract children up to secondary level to listen to stories during their school holidays. Simple squares of carpet help to keep children warm when they're sitting on the ground between sessions on the track – thus encouraging their concentration – and enjoyment.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

### **Teachers' strikes**

Teacher strikes in Lesotho's schools caused real disruption for the reading clubs during the second term of the year, and the situation had not been resolved by early 2019. As a result, and despite the best efforts of Moso and Refiloe, many of the original reading clubs, which have 'graduated' from weekly leadership by School Aid staff, have been sidelined. To help address this, these clubs are now being mentored on a regular basis to ensure that club sessions continue to be held whenever possible, and led to a high standard. Clubs at the 'new' schools, where leadership was in the hands of School Aid staff, were not affected.

On the plus side, we have been told that our core reading club book was being read to the children during lesson time, and in one school, reading clubs were being held twice a week.

### **After the clubs: what next?**

Case studies in 2017 and 2018 of four children who benefited from our first reading clubs in Lesotho have given us considerable food for thought. Despite their introduction through the clubs to the joy of reading, the end of their ten-week session has for some proved the

end of their reading opportunities. Although one child said that her teacher sometimes read to them in class, we are looking at ways to ensure ongoing support with reading for pleasure among children who have completed a term in one of our clubs, so that their new-found enthusiasm can be maintained and nurtured into the future.

### **NEW YEAR, NEW PLANS**

As our reading club programme continues to gain ground, more schools came on board in early 2019 – with the ongoing support of Usborne Books at Home. During the year, Moso and Refiloe will between them host ten new clubs, while mentoring the existing 20 clubs – potentially unlocking the magic of books to another 450 children.

Building on the success of our reading clubs, School Aid is working with the authorities to construct, resource and support a primary-school library just outside Maseru. While we have several years' experience of setting up libraries in South Africa, this is our first in Lesotho and we are excited at the opportunity to see more children in this mountain kingdom gain access to attractive, stimulating and enjoyable books.

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