



School Aid Reading Clubs

Lesotho: Half-yearly Report January to June 2018



Reading clubs become more informal, here at Get Together Primary School, with PRO Moso Ranoosi

INTRODUCTION

The second year of School Aid's reading clubs in Lesotho got under way in January 2018 with seven schools in the Maseru area, all of which had taken part in the previous year's programme. The number of participants per club was limited to 12 this term, in order to give leaders more chance to focus on individual reading and development.

The appointment at the end of 2017 of Refiloe Khau as a part-time Project and Reading Club Assistant has been instrumental in the development of our reading club programme in Lesotho, giving much-needed assistance to PRO Moso Ranoosi. While it remains challenging to fit the reading clubs into the busy curriculum of the seven schools, it is encouraging that – with the help of Moso and Refiloe – four of the schools completed the full ten-week term, with the remaining schools having five or six sessions each.



New Project & Reading Club Assistant Refiloe Khau enthuses children at Lesia Primary School

There has also been a move towards greater informality within the clubs, encouraging the concept of reading for pleasure rather than formal study.

READING CLUB PARTICIPANTS

Group sizes were reduced slightly further this term, to 12 participants per club, reaching 84 children overall. These smaller groups were designed to give club leaders improved opportunities for individual attention and one-to-one reading sessions, though moving forward, it was felt that we

could revert to 15 members per club. Participants range from 7 to 12 in age, though most fall into the 8–9 age group.

RECORDS AND OUTCOMES

Of the 84 children attending reading clubs this term, attendance averaged nearly 95%. As last year, each participant was graded for enthusiasm and participation at the individual sessions, as well as for reading confidence and fluency during one-to-one reading sessions.

School feedback

In a new initiative, participant schools were asked to review the reading clubs in their schools. Of the six schools that contributed feedback, the response 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 participants. In the face of such enthusiasm, it remains to be seen how these schools will cope with the challenges of running their own clubs without the weekly support of School Aid personnel.

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
TOTAL	84	57									
AVERAGES	12	8	94%	3.1	3.0	2.6	2.4	-0.3	-0.4	0.7	0.9

While the statistics are encouraging, they also suggest ways in which we can improve our assessment procedure. In particular, our PRO has identified the need to work on assessment criteria for the more subjective areas of enthusiasm and participation. With this in mind, he has proposed a review of lead teachers' evaluations after each session with a view to creating a more consistent framework going forward.

CASE STUDIES

During 2017, Moso established case studies with four children from the first term's reading clubs – two boys and two girls. These were followed up during 2018 by interviews with both the students and his/her teachers. Of the four:

1. One boy, despite a lack of uniform and other practical support, considers himself the brightest student in the class – and this is backed up by his teacher. His self-esteem seems justified.
2. The second boy, while looking better cared for and happier than last year, still has to miss school sometimes to help at home. Sadly, 'The last time I read a book was when I was in the

reading club last year.’ This alone highlights the challenge of maintaining the momentum of the clubs once an individual’s session is complete.

3. One of the girls also said that the last time she read a book was when she was in the reading club last year. She says that home life has become challenging, with lack of food becoming a regular problem.
4. The final student said that although she was struggling with English, her teacher sometimes reads to them in class – though they are not allowed to take books home with them.

Taken in isolation, these reports are little more than a snapshot, but with regular interviews over the remainder of the children’s time in primary school, we hope that we may begin to build up a picture of the lives of these individual children, and the challenges they face, and whether we will be able to address at least some of these challenges.

NEXT STEPS

While the number of reading clubs during the first term of 2018 was consolidated at seven, a further five schools will be added to the mix after the holidays, starting in August 2018. At this stage, each club will host 15 children, or a total of 180 children between them, bringing the total number of children benefiting from the clubs during the year to 264.

In addition, as in 2017, Moso will be hosting holiday reading clubs during July for children and young people in Maseru – thus extending the joy of reading to even more youngsters in the city.

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