

Lesotho



The Kingdom of Lesotho is a small country about the size of the State of Maryland. Lesotho's population is about a third of Maryland's. Lesotho is an enclaved country, which means that it is totally surrounded by another country and has no coastline or territorial waters. Although it is an independent nation, Lesotho lies within the country of South Africa. Its capital city is Maseru. The name of the country translates roughly into '*the land of the people who speak Sesotho*', which is the official national language.



A typical village in Lesotho

More than half of the citizens of Lesotho are very poor and live below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day. Most people are subsistence farmers, which means they grow what they eat.

Most Basotho (the plural name for people who live in Lesotho) are Christian. Half of these are Roman Catholic.

Lesotho has the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection with 25% of the population living with the virus. This puts a tremendous strain on the already struggling healthcare system. There are only five doctors for every 100,000 people in the country. Infant, child, and maternal mortality rates remain high and have even been climbing over the last ten years.

Education is one area where Lesotho shines. According to recent surveys, over 80% of people over the age of fourteen are literate. Unlike many other developing countries, female literacy outpaces male literacy. Despite all this, only 3.4% of the population has access to the internet which makes attaining higher education more difficult.

MCA in Lesotho

While most people in the city have access to running water, many people who live in the rural areas do not. Also, regardless of where they live, almost 70% of all Basotho do not have improved sanitation service in their homes—no proper bathrooms or sewer systems. This leads to expose to many kinds of water borne and bacterial diseases. Without access to local healthcare, many suffer, especially children. Ten percent of the children of Lesotho are underweight and malnourished.

At Sacred Heart Parish in a small village outside of Maseru, Salesian Missionary Fathers are working to make a difference in the lives of children and Missionary

Childhood is there to partner with them.

The local children see the community's house, blessed by their Archbishop in 2012, as a place to learn, pray, and play. While soccer is their favorite game, the children are also taught chess and checkers. Both activities teach them discipline and concentration. The soccer team also serves as the parish altar servers—they play hard and pray hard as well!

Northeast of Maseru near the town of Ficksburg is the Saint Luke Salesian Mission. This is a border town and sees many people cross to South Africa for employment every day. It used to be mostly men who did this, but now, because of the HIV/AIDS crisis, it has become more common to see women crossing the border to work as they care for their families after the illness or death of their husband.

Saint Luke's parish has stepped in to help these families. The Salesian Fathers run one of the largest educational systems in the Diocese of Leribe at this parish—it runs from pre-school through high school. Salesian Sisters are there as well working to run the schools and help in the town as social workers and nurses.

The Mazzarello Craft Center is also a part of the parish. The Center is a vocational training school for those students who are not prepared to go on to any kind of higher education. They will learn a trade that will help them support themselves one day.

At last report, Missionary Childhood members from around the world sent \$66,600 to help improve the lives of the children of Lesotho through the help of missionaries. Of these funds, \$18,000 went to the Salesian Fathers at Sacred Heart Parish to improve their health care services and \$20,000 to the Salesian Fathers and Sisters at Saint Luke Parish to build their new pre-school.

In return, the Missionary Childhood members of Lesotho sacrificed \$2,300 of their own funds to help children around the world who are in need of the help of missionaries.



Photo Credit: Salesian Fathers

Missionary Childhood Association

66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184 | Tel: 617.779.3871 | Fax: 617.542.1778

www.propfaithboston.org | mheil@propfaithboston.org