

MOLETE Reading Club

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MOLETE is a combination of names: my name Monica, my Son's name Teboho, and our surname Letsoha. It is also a name of a resilient beautiful bird in Lesotho which is caring and loving. I love the bird and how this combination of our names matches very well with its name. I named the Club MOLETE because both me and my son love reading.

MOLETE Reading Club is located in Lesotho, home of the Basotho people. Our small country of 2.3 million is surrounded by South Africa. We rely on and import everything from South Africa.

The Reading Club is found in Khubetsoana on the outskirts of Maseru. Did you know that 75% of the population of Lesotho are children and youth who are at school? These children need a place to study, read and play. Many of these children are heads of families as their parents died due to HIV/AIDS pandemic. There are no community libraries nor parks in Lesotho leading to high rates of killings, drug abuse and theft.

MOLETE Reading Club came into being during lockdown in April 2020, when the schools were closed for a year. I started the club because I was very concerned to see children being overwhelmed with family/household chores while others were forced to work as nannies or shepherd boys. The situation became worse for vulnerable children who are orphans and poor because the girls became sex slaves or

teenage mothers while boys end up in drugs and substance abuse.

The Club's intention is not only to read or give books to children but to be a hub of intellectual curiosity where children will explore new ideas and gain deep understanding of the world by empowering them with tools that will help them to think critically about written materials and engage with literature in meaningful way. MOLETE's vision is to improve learning and literacy skills in Lesotho by instilling the culture of reading to Basotho's children at the early age.

The Club started with 20 children who were my neighbors at my residential place Khubetsoana. Most of my neighbors survived on hand to mouth jobs such as gardening, cleaning or washing clothes to people who are working, so during



A story book is read to the students



Students are reading grouped and each table is given a book to read

COVID-19 these people were jobless and obviously had no food. In 2020-2021, I read, tell stories, feed the children and their families. By 2021 the number increased to 100, and in 2022 the number increased to over 200.

MOLETE Reading Club now has more than 400 children who are aged 8-16, that is primary and high school. The children are from Khubetsoana and surrounding areas. We are now meeting at Mejametalana and Mabote Primary Schools. The meeting goes from 1000 to 1300, with a snack break 11:30-12:00. Since we are growing I now have four graduate volunteers who are also helping me with sports, music, drama/poetry, and dance.

I see MOLETE growing and turning into a pioneer of a community library in Lesotho by joining hands in partnership.