

QHOLAQHOE MOUNTAIN CONNECTIONS



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DECEMBER 2016

Report on September 2016 Trip to Qholaqhoe Mountain

Lynn Minderman

Kevin Koryto, formerly a Peace Corps Volunteer teacher at Qholaqhoe High School and QMC's newest board member, and I traveled to Lesotho in September to assess the impact of the food crisis and food supply for the orphans in Likoting Orphan Village. In addition, we wished to visit our first three college scholarship students to introduce ourselves to college staff and to pay their tuition and fees. It was a short visit, fast-paced and emotionally draining, yet proved to be the surest way of validating that our programs are working as intended.

What we found was that after a multi-year relationship with Likoting Orphan Village and the grandmothers who created and managed the Garden, we can no longer support their efforts to provide food for orphans. Following our principle of supporting sustainable food, water and educational projects, the Likoting community group had, over the years, proposed a water storage tank, laying hens, dairy cows, rabbits, pigs and potato farming projects, all with complete financial plans including timelines for when they would become self-sustaining. With donor support, QMC funded each of these proposals. Three of the projects, the water storage tank, the laying hens and the dairy cows, did thrive and benefitted the orphans for a number of years. The Garden itself had been maintained with seed kept from each crop for planting the following spring, supplemented by seeds donated through QMC.

Then, three years of severe drought. No food and water for the villagers, little or none for animals, diminished, then failed crops and seeds consumed for winter food.

With the natural disaster drought came life changes that contributed to the end of Likoting Orphan Garden. A grandfather who cared for the animals died of an infection in his hand; one of the grandmother's son, a university graduate with an agriculture degree and a designer of food projects, left for a teaching position in South Africa; that same grandmother, an intelligent, hard working woman, was elected Counselor for Qholaqhoe, her focus and energy now directed to other priorities. Finally, villagers who were original founders of the Garden could no longer manage working in Likoting as well as in their own maize fields and gardens.

The pigs and chickens are gone, the cow barely surviving, the water tank virtually empty, the garden barren. No children gather on Saturdays to work in the garden and receive a much needed meal and food staples to take home. So, with sadness, QMC must now find other avenues to get food and support to the children of Qholaqhoe.

One other food source is through the school lunch programs, which also have come under pressure due to drought and rising food costs. Though the Lesotho government has long since declared a “food crisis” and promised relief, no food or other help has been forthcoming. In fact, the opposite has been the case. Due to rising costs, for instance, QHS was forced to reduce lunch portions and cut totally Friday lunch for students. However, when QMC learned this, its donors enabled us to supplement the school food supply, restore full portions and add back the Friday lunch for all students, many of whom are the orphans who previously had counted on the Orphan garden.

We will continue to provide food for QHS students, currently 13, who live alone and have no food at home. These students depend on the school lunch as their only meal of the day. A math teacher at the school, with the help of staff, purchase food supplies (maize meal, fresh vegetables, eggs) and deliver it once a month to the student’s village home.

Education, our other project, continues to be truly sustainable. The Qholaqhoe High School Scholarship Program is in its ninth year with 73 students and 70 sponsors whose donations pay for tuition, exams, uniforms and supplies.

This year three graduates of QHS are registered and attending college as the recipients of the new *Qholaqhoe Community College Scholarship Program*. Two of them have matriculated at the National University of Lesotho and one is studying at the National Health Training Center.

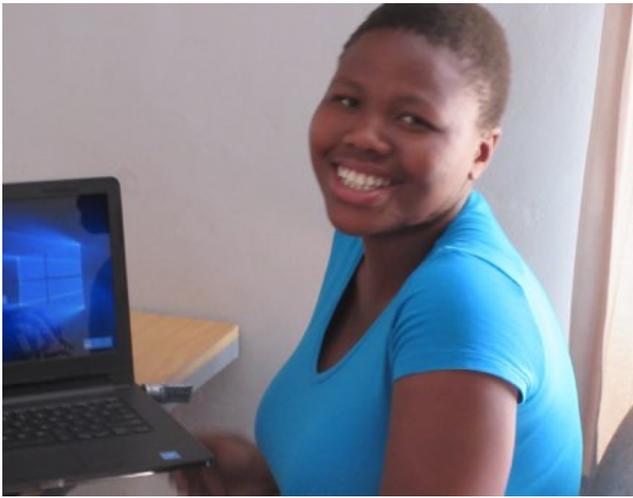
This program has been a work in progress for over three years and everyone from QMC, local chiefs, community elders, teachers, administrators and villagers has helped in its design and its implementation. QMC pays for each student’s registrations fees, tuition, room, board, books and a small amount for personal items. Community members help with college application fees, clothing, shoes, taxi fare and personal items. If the student attends classes regularly, passes the courses and progresses toward a degree, QMC will raise funds to continue their education for another year.

We have been reluctant in the past to actively solicit funds from donors. We have preferred to talk to interested groups, telling the story and letting our first hand visits and close relationships with the people of Qholaqhoe speak for itself. However, the reality of the food crisis, the true hunger being experienced by children and families demands a new focus by QMC. There are no food stamp programs or food pantries in Qholaqhoe and if there are no crops or garden produce, there is nothing to eat. We would appreciate your support in raising funds for food supplies for the high school students which needs to continue until drought conditions ease and school and community gardens begin to produce food. We also welcome any donations that allow us to continue supporting our three college students. A donation form can be found at the end of this email.

We would be happy to answer any questions, provide further information or speak to any groups you think may be interested in helping. The needs are desperate and we are determined to help.

Thank you.

QMC's First Three Qholaqhoe Community College Scholarship Students



National University of Lesotho Students Ntsebo Balimo (Faculty of Social Sciences for Bachelor of Social Work) and Remaketse Molisana (Faculty of Social Sciences for Commerce in Accounting)



Ntsebo's parents Matipi & Sefele Balimo & son Lebohng with QHS Assoc. Principal Andreas Kakane. Remaketse's parents Malipolelo and Mabese Molisana



Ts'epo Qamo, Auxilliary Social Work Program at the National Health Training College in Masuru. Ts'epo's mother and grandfather Makopano Qamo & Daniel Phenya

QHOLAQHOE MOUNTAIN CONNECTIONS

(A registered 501c3 non-profit organization)

P.O. Box 405 Honeoye Falls, NY 14472

2016 - 2017 DONATION FORM

Please indicate how you would like your donation to QMC to be applied.

Qholaqhoe High School Programs

\$ _____

QHS Scholarship Fund (for returning sponsors only) \$250 to provide one year's tuition and testing fees for my student.

QHS Emergency Food Fund

\$50 provides food for a child for 10 months. Currently there are 13 students who have no food at home and otherwise depend on the school lunch program as their only meal of the day.

QHS School lunch program

\$200 provides daily increased helpings for lunch for one week for 400+ students. We will continue this through the 2017 school year as the drought conditions continue to be severe.

Qholaqhoe Community College Scholarship Program

\$ _____

\$100 provides personal start up needs for one student (clothing, shoes, bedding, toiletries)

\$150 provides books for one semester

\$325 provides residence fees for one semester

\$350 provides food for one semester

Tuition at National University of Lesotho for one year, approx. \$3,000

Tuition at National Health Training College for one year, approx. \$1,000

Tuition at National Agricultural College for one year, approx. \$1,000

Donation to the General Fund (Support for current food crisis)

\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

email address _____

Please make checks payable to:

Qholaqhoe Mountain Connection, P.O. Box 405, Honeoye Falls, New York 14472

www.qmconnect.org 518-732-4279