



Mental Health Awareness Week 9th – 14th June 2025 Quthing, Lesotho

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The purpose of this document is threefold:

1. The first intention is to provide the reader with a general, summarised education:
 - Educate readers with a brief background to the country of Lesotho.
 - Provide an understanding of the current plight of the country, specifically in relation to the precarious of its economic state and the welfare of the population.
 - Give an overview of the potential implications of the recent USA actions regarding trade tariffs and how the halting of foreign aid in the country is having a devastating effect on people's lives today.
2. Secondly, it is to inform you of a planned activity in the Quthing district which is focused on raising awareness of mental health and create more momentum in the area to build a sustainable, supporting environment to help the local people going forward.

This week-long event will engage community leaders, the local population (parents, children, youths), Government and council agencies, and NGOs in a series of events to raise awareness of the issues, promote community-led support systems, providing training and resources, and foster dialogue and empowerment throughout the community.

3. A callout for financial support and sponsorship for the event to ensure we have as best opportunity as possible to meet the objectives of the week and create a sustainable call to action.

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Lesotho

The Facts

Lesotho – ‘Kingdom in the Sky’



Lesotho is an independent country within South Africa. A constitutional monarchy, it is known as the ‘Kingdom in the Sky’ it is the only country totally above 1000m sea level, 1400 at its lowest point. Because of its elevation, the temperature during the winter can fall below -10 degrees. Lesotho is home to the highest ski resort in sub-Saharan Africa.

Formally known as Basutoland, Lesotho gained its independence from the United Kingdom and became the Kingdom of Lesotho in 1966. The population numbers more 2.3 million, and the capital is Maseru which is home to 10% of the population. Lesotho people are known ‘Basotho’ and the main languages in use are Sesotho and English are the official languages.

The mountainous landscape of the country means that little of its land is available for farming. This creates many challenges such as food shortages and limited employment opportunities.

Notwithstanding this, Lesotho is referred to as the ‘denim capital of the world’ exporting \$237m worth of clothes and denim to the USA in 2024. However, the factories are owned by Chinese and Taiwanese entrepreneurs who continue to pay minimal wages, around \$213 per month.

The Challenges Lesotho Faces



HIV/ Aids

Lesotho has the second highest HIV/AIDS prevalence per head in the world. 270,000 (160k women, 100k men) 18% in men*. Much progress made in recent years to reduce contagion but poverty, gender inequality, sexual abuse and HIV stigma continue to undermine the enormous efforts being made.



Youth Unemployment

In 2023, the youth unemployment rate in Lesotho (aged 15 to 24, excl. - long term unemployed and students) was around 24.84 percent**. Manufacturing provides for jobs in urban areas, and there is a high reliance on agriculture in rural areas with some opportunities offered in mining in South Africa. None of which appear to be providing long term solutions.



Corruption

The Transparency International Index noted that Lesotho has a corruption rate of 37/100 – ranking 99/188 countries surveyed and considered high. The problem is perceived to be increasing with the police and business executives cited as the leading culprits (Afrobarometer.org 2024)



Poverty/ Inequality

According to World Bank (2023) estimates, 58% of Lesotho people live under the poverty line. An Afrobarometer survey in 2024 noted 59% of the population had gone without food, medicine, fuel to cook with and income to live on in a 12-month period. It was estimated that 320,000 of the population would face acute food insecurity in 2023.

The Challenges Lesotho Faces (cont.)



Substance Abuse

Substance abuse, particular with youths, has been described as ticking timebomb. In September 2024, Dr. Bulane (Director of the Lesotho Schools Early Detection and Treatment of Addiction Programme), noted that survey found that 68% of learners in school were users of alcohol, cigarettes and cannabis. This near pandemic is leading to more crimes and deaths.



Mental Health Issues

Limited mental health resources, including a lack of qualified personnel, inadequate facilities, and a scarcity of mental health policies and plans have led to the growing number of mental issues going unchecked and undiagnosed across the population. Misinformation and stigma attached to misunderstood behaviour, such as dementia being viewed as witchcraft, and gender abuse, which affects almost 90% of women all contribute to the crisis



Global Warming

A report delivered by the World Bank in 2021 stated that due to the extremes in climate (hot and cold), the mountainous topography of the country, land usage, and water resources, Lesotho is particularly exposed to global warming. Several initiatives have been started to mitigate the problem, but it remains another challenge on top of the crisis.



Suicide Rate

The final headline - **Lesotho has the highest suicide rate in the world.** The unadjusted global average is 9 per 100,000 of population. The Lesotho rate is 87.5 per 100,00 according to WHO (2024). All the issues stated above contribute to this shocking statistic.

The 'Trump Impact'

Donald Trump's second presidency has created chaos around the world and Lesotho is one of the worse hit countries. Both the halting of foreign aid, the suspension of USAID and PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). and the non-sensical increase in tariffs are disastrous for Lesotho. The impacts, already suffered, and anticipated consequences are summarised below.

Sector	Support	Known Actions	Anticipated impact if funds/ aid/workers not reinstated
Health (HIV/AIDS)	Lesotho receives significant assistance through PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief). USAID support for HIV/AIDS.	17 th March USAID noted that 40% of support had been terminated. European Aids Treatment Group reported 1500 USAID health workers sent home.	ZAR1.2 billion required to meet shortfall. Rise in infections, health system strain, deaths.
Economic Development	Lesotho has been a recipient of aid (\$300m) through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) , which focuses on infrastructure, health, and private sector development.	Centre for Global Development stated that the programme would be suspended (22 nd April 2025). 10% tariff immediate hit on exports (mainly textiles and minerals)	Closure, stalling of infrastructure projects (e.g. clean water and roads) projects, job losses.
Education, Youth Empowerment, LBQTI awareness	U.S.-backed initiatives sometimes support education access, especially for girls and marginalized communities	Cancellation of \$8m fund.	Increased drop-out, youth unemployment, victimisation, reduced female education opportunities.
Environment	Environmental assistance projects that promote sustainable agricultural practices, renewable energy development, and climate-smart agriculture.	Suspension of specific projects and agencies e.g. MCC	Reduction in ability to adapt to climate change, affecting agricultural sector and water supply.

Mental Health Awareness Week: Building Resilient Minds for a Sustainable Future

Overview

As the previous section noted, Lesotho is at a critical moment in its story with a tsunami of worldwide events challenging the nation and its people to the brink. Where progress was being made on a number of fronts, increased diagnosis of HIV and a reduction in HIV deaths, the implementation of environmental projects to counteract climate change, and more certainty in the country's governance this has now been massively challenged by the sweeping away of funding and support from the USA following the recent decisions of the Trump Administration.

To shore up the barriers, agencies such as USAID are working with the Government and there are ongoing discussions with USAID and PEPFAR to maintain some levels of support, financially and practically. However, there is much to be done, and local communities and individuals will be key to providing additional support the many vulnerable people.

With this in mind, an event is being arranged within the Quthing area focused on mental wellness, named the Mental Awareness Week and centred on the theme of 'Community'. During the second week of June 2025 (admittedly, a month later than the internationally recognised week), several events, workshops, training sessions, and mindful and play activities to raise awareness, promote community-driven mental health support, and provide practical tools for managing mental health in the context of Lesotho's unique challenges, such as environmental concerns, poverty, and limited mental health infrastructure.

The Objectives



1. Increase Awareness:

- ✓ Educate the public on the importance of mental health and its intersections with environmental factors such as pollution and climate change.
- ✓ Address the stigma surrounding mental health and encourage open conversations within communities.

2. Promote Community-Led Support Systems:

- ✓ Showcase local mental health programs, organizations, and professionals to promote accessible support services.
- ✓ Encourage collaboration between local stakeholders, including community leaders, families, and mental health experts, to create sustainable mental health support systems.

3. Provide Practical Tools/ Resources:

- ✓ Offer workshops, creative therapy sessions, and wellness activities that teach practical coping strategies for managing mental health and promoting overall well-being.
- ✓ Distribute resources on mental health care, stress management, and the benefits of environmental wellness (e.g., nature therapy, eco-friendly activities).

4. Foster Dialogue and Empowerment:

- ✓ Organize sustainable community dialogues and panel discussions that empower individuals to share their mental health experiences and seek help.

The Area and the Audience

Background - Quthing

Quthing (also known as Moyeni) is located in the south-west Lesotho, around 170km from the capital Maseru in the north, is the constituency and the administrative capital city of Quthing District in Lesotho. The population of the district area is 27,000. There are 128 Community Councils, and 10 District Councils. Quthing is culturally diverse with 4 languages actively in use: Sesotho, English, Spehuthi and IsiXhosa.

The local economy depends predominantly on agriculture (with subsistence farming of wheat, corn [maize], and sorghum) and pastoral. Livestock (sheep, cattle, and goats) raised in the area produce wool and mohair for export. The area is vulnerable to droughts in the summer and freezing weather during the cold winter months which lead to food shortages and SOS Children's Villages has highlighted the issue of child malnutrition which they estimate is around 33% in the area. This leads to problems of physical growth and brain development and hence mental wellness problems for the children and the parents. There are minimal employment opportunities.

The Audiences

- Given this background and the objectives of the week, the intention is to provide the **local district leaders** with knowledge and information to take back to their respective populations to further educate – 30 to 40 people.
- There will be open invitations to the **local population** to get involved in wider activities such as walks and play sessions, art therapy.
- Other **health care service** agencies will be invited to create awareness of the support they can offer and how to access them via a health care fair.
- Local community members will be invited to open sessions to create sustainable activities for the future led by the people themselves.



Contributors

To be able to provide the ambitious set of events and activities during the week, assistance will be required from a range of interested parties including:

- ✓ **Community Leaders** - Family groups, parents, youth groups, specific interest group representatives.
- ✓ **Mental health professionals:** Psychologists, counselors, social workers.
- ✓ **Local organizations and NGOs:** Partner organisations focused on mental health and community development.
- ✓ **Government officials and policymakers:** Decision-makers in health and community development sectors.
- ✓ **General public:** All individuals interested in learning more about mental health and environmental wellness.

The Proposed Activities

Activity	Topics	Contributors	Expected Outcomes
Educational Workshops	Mental wellness, trauma identification, team building, physical health and nutrition, respiratory health	Specialists and professionals, local experts, community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness ✓ Enhanced Community Support ✓ Empowered Individuals ✓ Sustainability
Health Awareness Fair	Stalls and activities, delivery of wellness kits and support resources	Local health agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness ✓ Enhanced Community Support
Mindful Walk	Community walk(s)	Local leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness
Clean-up Drive	Clean up exercise of local environment	Local leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness
Arts Therapy	Workshop involving recycling	Local artists and mental health expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness
Group Storytelling	Small group therapy talk for sharing experiences	Local experts and facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness ✓ Enhanced Community Support ✓ Sustainability
Game and wellbeing activities	Board games, sports, tea sipping	Local leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased Awareness ✓ Sustainability

The Collaboration of Coordinators

About Us – The Connection

The Mental Health Awareness is being facilitated by a collaboration of three like-minded individuals, Mabakuena Mokhantso and Lindiwe Nameko, local residents, and Peter Loadman from the UK. Mabakuena and Lindiwe recently met through their work in the charitable and training initiatives in the area. Peter and Lindiwe met when Lindiwe joined an on-line training program provided by Peter during lockdown in October 2020. Since then, Peter has been mentoring Lindiwe and earlier this year she supported him in Kampala, Uganda delivering a training programme to Congolese urban refugees. The collaboration was a great success, and it makes sense to use the partnership closer to Lindiwe's home.

Over the past few months, Mabakuena, Lindiwe and Peter and been in discussions on how they can work together to support the local folk in Quthing. The Mental Health Week is the result of these discussions which they believe can be used to raise the awareness of the issues, and while working with like-minded people and organisations in the area, start a joined-up movement to create a sustainable set of training programmes and regular events to provide greater support in a variety of ways.

About Us – Summary Biographies



Mabakuena Lieketso Mokhants'o is a social worker, youth advocate, entrepreneur, and Executive Director of Boloka Waste Management, a social enterprise she founded in 2023 to address environmental, mental, and respiratory health challenges. With over five years of experience in social work and a BA from the National University of Lesotho, she has worked with vulnerable populations with roles in the Ministry of Justice & Law and the Ministry of Social Development. She has attended and completed several leadership programmes, social, community welfare and mental health initiatives. Through her work she has received recognition from the African Impact Challenge, UNDP STEAM Innovator cohort, and SME Growth Lab Accelerator. She serves with local NGOs including GEM Institute and Sentebale Children's Foundation.



Lindiwe Nameko holds a BSc Agriculture from the National University of Lesotho, and an Advanced Diploma in Ministry from Calvary Academics. She is a passionate mental health advocate and the founder of both Sports Coalition Lesotho and Unstuck Mindsets Hub. With a commitment to empowering young people, Lindiwe dedicates her career to leadership development, team building, mentoring youth and promoting mental well-being. Lindiwe has collaborated with churches, schools, organizations, and local leaders to create supportive environments that foster resilience and personal growth. Through her initiatives, Lindiwe aims to inspire and uplift her community and youth, helping them navigate challenges and unlock their full potential.



Peter Loadman (MBA) is a qualified personal and corporate coach, and NLP practitioner. Following a long, distinguished career as an operational and project specialist in wealth management, Peter has been making frequent visits, initially to Ethiopia (15 visits) and in the post covid years to Uganda (6), to provide his coaching, training and consultancy services to individuals, start-up and established companies, NGOs, the US Embassy (Addis), mental health and well-being organisations. Peter founded his organisation LYFT – 'Live Your Future Today' in 2009 and recently converted it to a recognised Community Interest Company (CIC) in recognition of the worldwide non-profit making activities of the organisation supporting those who do not normally have free access to the services he offers.

The Financials

The Budget and How to Donate

Forecast Budget

During the Mental Health Week, it is anticipated that around 200 people will attend the series of events.

There will be a variety of speakers, trainers and experts to lead these activities which will be held a selection of indoor and outdoor venues

Below is a price list for the various facilities and support required.

1. Venues: Indoors (hall): M800.00 Outdoors: M100.00
2. Speakers: M200.00 each
3. Marketing/ Promotional material M600
4. Logistics and Event Set up M2000
5. Catering and Refreshments M10,000

Total Estimated Cost: M50 000.00/ £2,000

(Please note: The organisers costs, including Peter's travel expenses from the UK are personally financed and not included in this forecast).

How to Donate

To assist with the costs of providing this vitally important week-long event we would very much welcome donations, financial or other support.

A 'justgiving page has been set up to facilitate donations. Please use this link: <http://justgiving.com/crowdfunding/lyftukcic>

For all other information, please contact us:

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**Organisers of the
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