

PRAYING FOR RAIN

The Basotho like to give names which might refer to a specific event, a personal characteristic, a longed-for opportunity. For many years Rob Bianchi (current joint EO with wife Margaret) was called Ntate Motlalepule which means bringer of rain, solely on the basis that almost invariably his visits coincided with the first rainfall Lesotho had seen for a long time. The drought had been long and severe when Rob and Margaret paid their annual November visit. This time Margaret was asked to open the LINK management board meeting with prayer, during which she prayed that God would send rain. Less than five minutes later an almighty prolonged storm broke with torrential rain – her name is now M'e Mapula – mother of rain!

Amusing as that was, the situation continues to be anything but funny. By the end of December the devastating drought in Lesotho had left more than half a million people facing severe food shortages, with tens of thousands being described as “one step away from famine”. Rural areas are particularly vulnerable because more than 70 percent of the population in rural Lesotho is engaged in subsistence farming. Productivity has been deteriorating since the early 1990s because of unpredictable weather conditions, including inconsistent rains and persistent and recurring droughts.

This latest major food security crisis is a result of the El-Niño induced drought. The situation has been made worse by successive years of crop failures, low incomes and high food prices which means that 41 percent of rural families are spending over half their income on food. It is anticipated that over 30% of the Lesotho population across all 10 districts will face high levels of acute food insecurity until March 2020.

The 2018/2019 planting season was badly affected by late rains and scorching temperatures. And with forecasts indicating that Lesotho will receive below-average rainfall during the current 2019/2020 season – October to March - communities now face three back-to-back failed harvests.

There have been some recent torrential down-pours, which have been a mixed blessing as now some green shoots are appearing, but the intensity of the rain has washed away more of the very limited fertile topsoil. The situation continues to be dire, so, please continue to pray for all the drought-stricken areas of Africa, and in particular for our brothers and sisters in Lesotho.



Rain returns to the LINK

PLEASE PRAY

Remember in prayer those who will be choosing the new Bishop of Lesotho, that their ears will be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and for humility for the candidates to know when the right time is to withdraw from the process.

Please pray for the people of Lesotho as they struggle to cope with the continuing severe drought, and for those organisations such as World Food Programme which are working to alleviate the situation.

Give thanks for the recent visit by Rock UK which has inspired and enthused the LINK staff and has had effective ministry to CHH children and local villagers.

Give thanks for the successful diabetes & hypertension workshops LINK staff have been running and pray that more people will take up this opportunity to learn more about their own healthcare.

HOW TO CHOOSE A BISHOP – LESOTHO STYLE

This year the Anglican church in Lesotho will choose a new bishop. The process is a far cry from the somewhat stately and remote selection process in the Church of England. In fact, it more resembles choosing party political leaders in the UK!

In Lesotho any priest in the diocese (and outside!) can stand for election. They ask other priests to support their candidacy and then voting is done by the Elective Assembly which is made up of all licensed and active clergy plus 2 representatives from each parish. This is done by a process of elimination, depending on the number of votes. Also, if there is proof that there are issues around a candidate (e.g. not in good standing) they get eliminated. Unlike the political process, there are no hustings.

The process will not begin until the outgoing bishop (Bishop Adam) has had his final retirement “do” at the end of January. Candidates must submit their names by the deadline of February 19th and so far, there are between 7 and 10 prospective candidates. The vote takes place from April 25th -26th and the new bishop will be enthroned on August 20th. To date there have been 6 bishops of Lesotho, including Desmond Tutu for three years in the 1970s.

We will delay posting the April edition of e-Moho to the end of the month, until after the vote and the Bishop has been chosen.

HOW MUCH SUGAR AND SALT DID YOU SAY?!

It is unusual to get heated discussion about dietary advice in Lesotho, but that is what happened at a recent teaching event run by the LINK! An imaginative three-day workshop for guardians and caregivers of Child Headed Households (CHH) was delivered at the LINK’s Ha Mohatlane rural site by LINK staff at the end of November. Arranged by Mpho, the LINK staff member who is seconded to work specifically with these groups, the programme benefitted from input by representatives from the relevant government departments. Over the first two days participants learned about their responsibilities and the resources available to them and the children. The third day enabled the LINK staff to put into practice the training in diabetes and hypertension that they had received earlier from Elisabeth Bryant. The aim was to teach the CHH caregivers how to take care of themselves and the children they care for, and also to spread the word about these two medical issues in their villages. Attendance was excellent - out of 50 anticipated participants, 46 attended the morning session and 49 the afternoon. It was interesting to note that 5 of those participants are diabetic and 15 have hypertension. It was also impressive to see some quite elderly group members participating in the exercises! The workshop stimulated a great number of questions – and some lively disputes about the daily recommended level of salt and sugar intake! It was a stimulating and challenging opportunity for the participants, most of whom only speak Sesotho and have limited educational background. The LINK staff were very encouraged but, because of these limitations, realise the need to allow more time for future workshops.



Training at Mohatlane



Inter—active training!

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