

TOMS Shoes “One-for-One” Hits Home with Ottawa-based Charity

20,000 pairs of shoes have been gifted to orphaned and vulnerable children through the organization ‘Help Lesotho’

By now, most of us are familiar with the blue and white label on the back of the heel of the popular brand ‘TOMS Shoes’. Even if you don’t own a pair, you have likely heard of their ‘One-for-One’ model which matches every pair of shoes purchased with a pair of shoes given to a child in need. The model sounds great – maybe even good enough to make your shoe purchase totally guilt-free. But how do you really know if a child in need somewhere in the world actually receives a pair of shoes? Help Lesotho, an Ottawa-based charity working in the AIDS-ravaged country of Lesotho (southern Africa) recently found out – and there are 20,000 students who walked away with smiles on their faces and TOMS Shoes on their feet.



Help Lesotho’s partnership with TOMS Shoes (through a local partnership with MSH/USAID), coincided with International Youth Day (August 12). Help Lesotho hosted a large-scale community event to celebrate youth and the impact they can have in their families, schools and communities. Thousands of children sang and danced as they lined up to receive their very own pair of TOMS Shoes. For many children, this was the first pair of new shoes they have ever owned – and for others, this was the first pair of shoes they have ever worn, period. The black TOMS given to the children will serve many purposes, but most importantly they meet the uniform requirement of wearing black shoes to school. In Lesotho, also known as ‘The Mountain Kingdom’, the shoes will protect children’s feet as they walk many hours on rocky paths carved into the mountainsides.

Lesotho is a little-known country, landlocked within the Republic of South Africa. The population of approximately 2 million is plagued by high levels of poverty, devastating gender inequity, and the 2nd highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world. Help Lesotho, founded in 2004, has supported thousands of orphaned and vulnerable children over the last decade through education, leadership development, and psychosocial support. helplesotho.org

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