LIFESKILLS
Psychological and social abilities and strategies for positive, adaptive behaviour to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of daily life: Knowledge and mental skills for using information and making good decisions; Personal skills for empowerment and self-management; Inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.

EDUCATION
Child Sponsorship; Education Fund, Schools Helping Schools; Anti-AIDS Clubs

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Leaders-in-Training; Youth Leader Volunteers; Leadership Camp; BGLC; Gender Conferences; Teacher Training

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT
Seotlong Centres; Grandmother Support; Grandmother Relief Fund; Orphan Relief Fund; Youth Mothers Support

BUILDING RESILIENCE

LEARNING SELF-MANAGEMENT
TAKING ACTION

Vulnerable Populations
Vulnerable children, girls, youth, grandmothers

GENDER EQUITY

HIV/AIDS
MPACT MEASUREMENT MODEL

VISION: Every child and youth in Lesotho is supported to become empowered and socially responsible.

MISSION: Help Lesotho empowers vulnerable children, youth and grandmothers through its education, leadership development and psychosocial support programs and partnerships. Help Lesotho is committed to gender equity and the alleviation of HIV/AIDS and poverty in Lesotho.

PROGRAM OUTCOME BY 2016: A critical mass of children and youth who have the knowledge, strategies and resilience to make healthy decisions and take action for the benefit of others.

OVERALL OUTCOME INDICATORS*

% female/male children/youth and grandmothers reporting greater resilience
% female/male children/youth and grandmothers reporting improved self-management
% female/male children/youth and grandmothers taking actions for the benefit of others

*These indicators apply to all programs within the three core focus areas listed below.

EDUCATION

OUTCOME: Participants are confident, educated, autonomous decision-makers and problem solvers who will positively influence the development of Lesotho.

PROGRAMS*
• Anti-AIDS Clubs
• Child Sponsorship
• Education Fund
• Schools Helping School

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

OUTCOME: Participants take positive action toward individual or social change.

PROGRAMS*
• BGLC Residential Program
• BGLC Village Program
• Gender Conferences
• Leaders in Training
• Leadership Camp
• Youth Leader Volunteers
• Teacher Training

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

OUTCOME: Participants are hopeful, resilient and able to contribute to and strengthen their families and communities.

PROGRAMS*
• Grandmother Support
• Grandmother Relief Fund
• Orphan Relief Fund
• Seotlong Centres
• Young Mothers Support

*Each program also has a unique set of program-specific indicators to measure and evaluate its impact.
GOAL: To foster HIV prevention and living positively with HIV/AIDS through increased understanding, knowledge, commitment to personal behaviour change and effective advocacy.

DESCRIPTION: HIV/AIDS is one of two cross-cutting themes embedded in every program. Help Lesotho provides a safe, non-judgmental environment to question and openly discuss issues related to HIV/AIDS with psychosocial support. Programs focus on the importance of knowing one’s status, information about resources available locally, and HIV/AIDS education on transmission, protection, stigma and living positively.

RATIONALE: Lesotho has the world’s 3rd highest rate of HIV/AIDS – over 23% of the population is infected. Thousands of people have died, and many thousands continue to contract the virus. HIV/AIDS affects every aspect of life in Lesotho. Given the rural nature of Lesotho and the persistence of myths and fear, there is an added need for education and information about HIV/AIDS.

All of Help Lesotho’s programs include information and discussions about HIV/AIDS to equip children, youth and grandmothers with the perspectives, strategies, and resources to make healthy decisions for themselves and as members of their communities. Help Lesotho does not deliver medical services or treatment, other than making arrangements with local partners for opportunities to test to determine one’s HIV status. Rather, the focus is on education as one of the key strategies to preventing the spread of HIV and supporting an AIDS-free generation.

APPROACH: Help Lesotho is committed to education and open communication as effective tools to foster behavioural change. Participants learn to critically assess unhealthy myths, erroneous information and debilitating attitudes. They learn about HIV prevention and transmission through open discussion, personal reflection and carefully sequenced learning opportunities to understand their personal risk factors and options for behavioural change. Programs deal squarely and compassionately with issues related to intimacy, sexuality, and physiology in an atmosphere of trust and growth.

Programs address cultural norms that often limit how difficult topics are addressed at the family or peer level. Help Lesotho programs teach children, youth and grandmothers how to become role models and agents of change in their own communities as all participants in Help Lesotho’s programs are expected to return home and share what they have learned with others.

Link to Gender Equity: An array of economic, socio-cultural, legal, medical and physiological factors mean that gender equity and HIV/AIDS are inseparable in Lesotho. Both women and men face a unique set of cultural practices that can increase their risks for contracting HIV. Unequal power distribution, poverty and biology increase risks for women, while alcohol abuse and multiple concurrent partners are high risk behaviours in men. Curbing the spread of the disease requires a radical change in sexual behavior and the implementation of gender equity practices.
GOAL: To promote gender equity through increased understanding, knowledge, commitment to behaviour change and effective advocacy.

DESCRIPTION: Gender equity is one of two cross-cutting themes embedded in every program. Help Lesotho provides a safe, non-judgmental environment to question and openly discuss issues related to gender equity in an atmosphere of psychosocial support to foster understanding by boys, girls and women. Discussions on gender challenge harmful practices, rigid social norms, gender-based violence, abuse and unhealthy relationships.

Gender Equity vs. Gender Equality: Gender equity implies fair treatment of women and men; gender equality refers to equal access and opportunities for women and men. Gender equity serves to empower both women and men to achieve social justice.

RATIONALE: Establishing gender equity is essential to creating sustainable social change. Despite significant legislative changes promoting gender equity and the rights of women, cultural barriers and limited enforcement continue to limit the implementation of these changes at the family, peer and community levels. Gender inequity severely impacts the opportunities of girls and women to make decisions for themselves. Abuse, sexual violence and HIV transmission are common issues that stem from power imbalances between men and women.

Help Lesotho places special emphasis on programs for girls and women because they are the key stabilizers and agents of change in families and communities. Mothers and grandmothers who are empowered to make decisions do so for the benefit of the whole family, and especially for the children. Girls who are educated are more likely to delay marriage, stay healthier, keep their future children in school and increase their income.

APPROACH: Help Lesotho is committed to education, compassionate support and open communication as the most effective tools to foster behavioural change. Understanding gender equity requires ongoing discussion and strategy acquisition for participants to incorporate it into their lives. Participants analyze gender roles in their families, schools and communities. Emphasis is placed on change starting with the individual. Participants are equipped with the tools and skills to become agents of change in their communities.

It is a unique feature that Help Lesotho’s gender equity programs are offered to both young men and women who explore how gender equity benefits everyone. Programs address these challenges by fostering doubt about unhealthy myths and beliefs, enhancing the cognitive skills required for analysis and healthy decision making, and understanding self-esteem and self-protective behaviours and strategies.

Link to HIV/AIDS: economic, socio-cultural, legal, medical and physiological factors necessitate the consideration of the link between gender equity and HIV/AIDS in Lesotho, where over 23% of the population is infected. Women and men face cultural practices that can increase their risks for contracting HIV. Unequal power distribution, poverty and biology increase risks for women, while alcohol abuse and unsafe sexual practices are high risk behaviours in men. It is impossible to address one without the other.
**GOAL:** To ensure that citizens of Lesotho are educated, literate, autonomous decision-makers and problem-solvers who will positively influence the development of Lesotho.

**DEFINITION:** Education encompasses more than the acquisition of knowledge; education should allow children to reach their fullest potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacities (UNESCO\(^1\)).

**DESCRIPTION:** At its core, Help Lesotho is an educational organization. All programs are carefully designed to foster cognitive development, problem solving and decision making. Programs are delivered either through formal or informal education modalities, reaching over 9,500 beneficiaries each year.

**Formal Education:** Help Lesotho does not own or operate schools, but rather supports formal education in Lesotho through partnerships with the Ministry of Education in Lesotho, Lesotho and Canadian schools, child sponsorship and improving school learning environments. School-based programs are age and context specific at the primary and high school levels (no preschool or tertiary). Examples include the Schools Helping Schools Program, Child Sponsorship and the Education Support Fund.

**Informal Education:** Help Lesotho develops and delivers reiterative educational programs and learning opportunities that promote life skills and literacy for students, out of school youth, educators, and adults.

Life skills education refers to participatory learning that leads to positive attitude and behaviour change\(^2\). Topics include communication, self-esteem, goal setting, anger, forgiveness and peer pressure.

**RATIONALE:** Education is the most meaningful way to impact individuals, communities and Lesotho as a whole. Education is a critical component to overall physical, mental, psychological and social well-being. Children who are educated grow up to become influential community members who can be role models for their peers. Youth and adults who gain life-transforming education can change their lives and make better decisions. Education leads to greater income-earning potential and opportunities to make a positive change in the development of Lesotho.

In cultures where children lack regular safety and support, their intellectual or cognitive development does not reach its fullest potential. Through the support of both formal and informal education, participants have a chance to develop the cognitive structures and knowledge that will guide them for life. Informal education with vulnerable populations needs to deal directly and practically with the challenges they are facing daily in order to help build individual autonomy.

**APPROACH:** Help Lesotho values education as a main component in alleviating poverty and creating an AIDS-free generation in Lesotho. By supporting the formal education system and delivering educational programs of excellence in informal settings, vulnerable children, youth and adults acquire the information and practical tools to deal with their formidable challenges. As people learn to think for themselves, they become more autonomous, confident and responsible, and more able to take on leadership roles in their communities.

Help Lesotho is especially committed to educating girls and women. Not only does every extra year of school decrease the chance of pregnancy and risk of HIV infection, but girls are most likely to support their families and communities with the knowledge they gain.

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2. UNICEF: [http://unicef.org/lifeskills/index_7308.html](http://unicef.org/lifeskills/index_7308.html)
GOAL: To empower participants to become role models, socially responsible citizens and leaders who take positive action for individual and social change.

DEFINITION: The concept of “leadership” can broadly apply to social, political, corporate and education milieus. In the context of its programs, Help Lesotho defines leadership as “taking action for positive individual and social change,” believing that each individual can inspire meaningful change in others. Community contributions can and will vary enormously, in magnitude and impact, depending on age and ability. Leadership development refers to a progressive acquisition of skills, abilities, experiences and attitudes that foster responsibility and decision making in social contexts. Leadership, whether in formal or informal settings, develops over time with mentorship and opportunities to lead. Key components of leadership development include self-esteem, self-worth, goal orientation, communication skills, facilitation, listening, compassion, and a sense of social responsibility.

DESCRIPTION: As well as delivering leadership-specific programs, various elements of leadership development and training are integrated into all Help Lesotho programs, wherever relevant, to create a critical mass of young people who will take on leadership roles in their families, communities and society.

Leadership programs vary from intensive opportunities for carefully selected youths, to short-term training focused on equipping children and youth with essential skills and knowledge. All of Help Lesotho’s programs include regular references to the value of community contribution and inspiring positive change in their communities. Participants are expected, coached and encouraged to share what they learn and take on leadership roles wherever possible.

RATIONALE: Good leadership is the key to the future of Lesotho society. Lesotho has suffered an enormous loss of productivity and leadership due to high rates of death and illness related to AIDS. There are few parents and role models to guide young people on how to grow up as socially responsible citizens. Given that people learn by example, intentionally or not, building positive role models is a powerful tool in encouraging attitudinal and behaviour change in others. In Lesotho, the devastation of HIV/AIDS and poverty deprive many of hope for the future. By developing youth leaders, entire communities are revitalized. Knowing their communities and their country need them brings new meaning to young lives. Conversely, without support, disenfranchised youth are prone to alcohol and drug abuse, sexual violence and depression. Our leadership motto is LEADERS NEVER GIVE UP!

APPROACH: Help Lesotho focuses on youth leadership programming as a crucial component to the future of Lesotho. With so many adults ill or suffering from HIV/AIDS, youth already act as important role models in their families and communities. By targeting youth with leadership development, Help Lesotho’s programs indirectly impact far more people than those who directly attend programs or activities.

Positive acts of outreach, no matter how small, contribute to the welfare of others. Although Help Lesotho encourages community contribution that impacts social and political outcomes, small contributions are equally valued and supported.
GOAL: To enable vulnerable populations to cope and become socially responsible citizens with restored hope for the future.

DEFINITION: The term “psychosocial” is defined by UNICEF1 as the inter-connection between psychological and social processes and their mutual and continual influence on each other2.

“Psychosocial support” (PSS) refers to a continuum of care and efforts to meet ongoing emotional, social and spiritual needs of individuals as they cope with life’s challenges3. In the context of Help Lesotho’s programs, psychosocial support refers to any action or education, not necessarily individual counseling, that increases the resilience of an individual.

DESCRIPTION: Psychosocial support is multifaceted and can be expressed through such basic approaches as kindness, care, respect, understanding, tolerance and acceptance, dignity, and acknowledging feelings. Help Lesotho’s programs enable vulnerable individuals to rise above suffering, to deal, grow, work and lead, and to become responsible citizens. Discussion groups, reflection journals and role playing help participants to integrate and process new and more helpful coping strategies for dealing with challenges.

RATIONALE: Any human being, especially a child, who suffers great loss, violence, deprecation, isolation or separation from family members can experience fractures in their sense of social and emotional well-being, often with long-term consequences. The psychosocial support approach in a context like Lesotho is to involve children, youth and adults as active agents in their own lives and to increase the protective factors in the child’s external environment with services that build strength and resilience.

APPROACH: Help Lesotho’s unique contribution in Lesotho lies in the depth, sensitivity and effectiveness of our psychosocial support approach. First, our programs are modeled on the understanding that real and lasting transformation is achieved through reiterative programming that addresses core causes, deals with emotional realities and provides practical, locally relevant strategies. Such an approach needs to be embedded within Basotho culture and traditions. Programs need to promote sound child/human development and age-appropriate physical, cognitive and emotional competencies in a safe and stable environment. Second, building peer to peer support and group support networks strengthen families or care-giving structures for children and youth, giving them a voice to their pain and scaffolding their development. Help Lesotho programs are specifically designed to build on internal and external factors to nurture self-reliance and resilience in the orphans and vulnerable children of Lesotho, based on the three recognized fundamental components of psychosocial interventions4: 1) skills and knowledge; 2) social well-being; and 3) emotional well-being. Program components involve staying with the same child, youth or grandmother over time rather than one-time interventions, and providing sustainable support systems or networks. Training session topics include grief and loss, dealing with anger, the imbalance of power in relationships, stigmatization, isolation, loneliness, violence, sexual abuse, etc.

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