



LESEDI SCHOOLS & CLINIC

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Profile For Foundations



Lesedi Schools and Clinic (Lesedi) is a donor-funded private school and clinic that is elevating the life prospects of hundreds of Zimbabwean children. With additional funding, we will complete the build-out of our Secondary School, add more specialized training, admit more students, and hire more teachers to ensure that our students become the best that they can be.

Background - Lesedi is located in a rural area 15 minutes' drive from Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The local communities mostly survive by cattle raising and subsistence farming on the dry, infertile Kalahari soils. Poverty has persisted for generations, with poor education, low aspiration levels and limited role models.

When Benson Siyawareva, a professional safari guide, built a homestead in the area, he noticed that many children weren't going to school. Having grown up in similar circumstances, he pledged to make a difference. He began the Lesedi project in 2014 with a simple hut, a handful of youngsters and one trainee teacher.

In 2015, Fiona and Graeme Thompson and Benson established a UK registered charity, Ngoko Charitable Trust, to fund the project. Fiona and Graeme are UK-based, and both trained as chartered accountants. Benson and Fiona ran a successful safari company together for 17 years. Graeme had a diverse corporate career, including two CFO roles in multi-billion pound companies.

Our Mission - The objective of the Ngoko Charitable Trust (NCT) is the relief of poverty in Zimbabwe by providing education, training, healthcare projects and all the necessary support to enable individuals to generate a sustainable income and to be self-sufficient. Lesedi Schools & Clinic is the sole project supported by NCT. Our ambition is that Lesedi is a community-based centre of excellence – in both education and health - transforming the lives of young and old alike.

Present Day Lesedi - Lesedi has a strong local team that is responsible for ongoing operations. Our staff is comprised of 24 teachers, 2 nurses, 2 nurse aides and 18 support staff. We also employ a doctor for a weekly clinic. All Lesedi support staff - cooks, gardeners, teaching assistants and security - are from the local community, providing valuable local jobs. School Development Committees, elected by and comprised of parents, are also actively involved with running the schools. The ongoing construction over 10 years has provided vital local employment for skilled and unskilled labour. A local Board of Administration is being developed from the senior team at Lesedi. We envisage that this will include the two headteachers and deputy-heads, the clinic sister and Benson.

Lesedi comprises a Pre-School (49 students), a Primary School (235 students), a Secondary School (174 students, Forms 1-3 only) for a total of 458 students. Form 4 will be added to the Secondary School in 2025, subject to funding. There are also Agricultural Projects and a Clinic (see below).

Lesedi students are taught traditional roles at home from a young age, with the boys herding goats and the girls being taught to cook and clean. These stereotypes are challenged at Lesedi. We now have boys enrolled in Food Tech and girls choosing to learn Metal and Wood Tech. Our aim is that each student graduates from Lesedi Secondary with either sufficient academic qualifications to take them to the next stage of learning, or with a vocational skill that will serve them in the future. All Secondary students learn at least one subject from Agriculture, Food Tech, Metal Tech, or Wood Tech. Subject to funding, we will introduce Textiles by next year.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are taught from Pre-School onwards. Our teachers embrace technology in the classroom and encourage students to learn STEM subjects. We have ICT labs at both schools and fast internet. The Pre-school and Primary students use Amazon Fire Tablets and basic Lenovo Ideapads. The Secondary lab is equipped with 35 HP desktop computers. We are keen to invest in more tablets/laptops and educational software but are limited by existing funding.

A Science Block has just been completed, with two labs (chemistry and biology) and a prep room. Lesedi is the only rural school in the District with a science lab, and only the second of any schools in the Victoria Falls area. We expect to offer A levels at Lesedi. As such, the labs are essential.



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All Lesedi students receive free school meals twice daily, ensuring they aren't learning on an empty stomach. Breakfast is a traditional corn maize porridge. Lunch is sadza or rice with vegetables, meat, soya chunks or beans. All meals – over 150,000 a year - are funded by NCT. With additional funding we could improve the quality, such as adding nutritious peanut butter at breakfast.

We avoid any issues of period poverty by providing free sanitary products to the older girls as needed. Most have also been supplied with re-useable [Days for Girls](#) hygiene kits.

Lesedi has been committed to environmental stewardship from its founding. There has been extensive planting of vegetation, providing shade throughout the campus and an inspiring learning environment. Each school has an Eco-Club and the students regularly collect litter within the community. We encourage school trips to local wildlife projects. The photography club at Secondary is run by WildHub <https://lesediphotographyclubzim.com>. We are developing a respect for nature in our students.

Agriculture Projects - The Agriculture Department at Lesedi Secondary is multi-faceted. It comprises a vegetable garden with drip irrigation and shading, a broiler chicken project, and a piggery project. A chicken layers project and a mushroom project are just starting. Subject to funding, we are keen to drill a borehole to provide a dedicated water supply. The Agriculture Projects provide food for our free meals programme. Any surplus is sold to the local community at an affordable price to improve nutritional standards. They are also a great learning opportunity for our students. Once we have fully established working crop and animal production, the Agriculture Projects will be utilised for training within the local communities, improving food security and climate resilience.

Lesedi Clinic - Lesedi Clinic is a vital resource for both the school and the local communities, providing quality and affordable healthcare. We ensure that all Lesedi students receive medical care as needed. For some this involves long-term ongoing treatment. Through a partnership with the [Eye Institute](#), all students and teachers have annual eye tests and NCT funds spectacles as needed. The Clinic is also part of the UNICEF funded Expanded Programme for Immunisation (EPI), providing vaccinations to under-5s. The Amalima Loko USAID-funded program visits Lesedi Clinic monthly to distribute porridge mix and cooking oil to pregnant ladies and new mothers. Population Services Zimbabwe offer free family planning clinics from Lesedi twice yearly. The Clinic was also part of the nationwide Polio Vaccination Campaign earlier this year, and was a COVID vaccination centre.

Funding Issues – NCT/Lesedi is 100% funded by private donations. As a private school we are not allocated any government teachers, nor do we receive any government funding of any kind. With the addition of Lesedi Secondary, our resources are stretched, and our lack of funds means that Lesedi is constrained from reaching its full potential.

Over ten years we have managed to fund the growth and development of Lesedi through the generosity of private donors, many of whom visited Lesedi whilst on safari. Virtually all of our students are sponsored through a Lesedi Sponsorship Program run by NCT. The Sponsorship Program helps maintain personal connections between donors and students. Our constant progress has also kept our donors engaged. However, our rapidly increasing operating costs have now become a challenge to cover from private donations alone. We are holding back the potential of Lesedi by limiting the number of teachers we can employ, and restricting the breadth of subjects we can offer. For example, we need to offer A levels from 2026 but cannot financially commit to this given our current funding base.

We urgently need to grow our fundraising capabilities to ensure that Lesedi can be the best version of itself. For the first time we are reaching out to foundations with whom we share common goals, with the aim of increasing our basic, ongoing funding to a sustainable level. We are also working on improving our existing fundraising efforts through more frequent outreach to our existing donors and the recruitment of others similarly disposed.



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