

University of Michigan School of Social Work Peace Corps Master's International

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PCV 2013-2015



Demographics

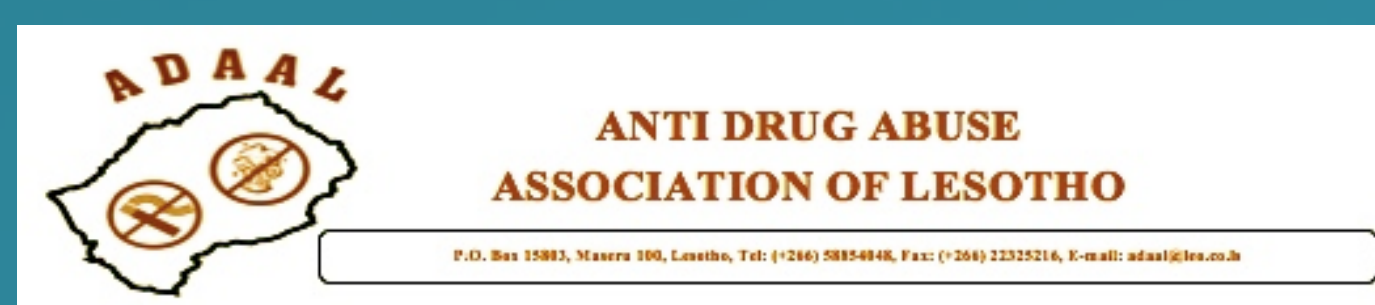
Lesotho is a land-locked country surrounded by South Africa with a population of just over two million. Also referred to as "The Kingdom in the Sky", Lesotho has mountainous terrain and overall high elevation in rural areas, where about three quarters of the population lives. More than 85% of the labor force works off the land, as Lesotho is an agrarian economy. According to the CIA fact book, unemployment is approximately 30%, life expectancy is 52 years of age, and 23.6% of the country is living with HIV/AIDS - the second highest HIV prevalence rate in the world.

Framework for Youth Development Volunteers in Lesotho

1. Educate youth about HIV/AIDS and sexual health
2. Support HIV+ peoples
3. Mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS

Host Country Partner

I was assigned to the community-based organization the Anti-Drug Abuse Association of Lesotho (ADAAL) in the town of Mafeteng, Lesotho. The goal of ADAAL is to prepare youth, especially orphans and vulnerable children, with life skills and healthy practices that will guide them in the future. ADAAL also supports children and their families with education- and needs-based financial assistance.



Project Activities

A list of my primary activities in my two years of service included:

- Planning and facilitating summer and winter camps for 60+ youth at a time who attend primary and secondary school
- Facilitating youth activities in and out of schools throughout the community including after-school meetings, creative writing competitions, Grassroot Soccer (GRS) interventions, career planning sessions, and a youth sports club
- Capacity-building through the creation of partnerships in the community with local business, organizations, and volunteers to share ideas and resources for improved collaboration and service delivery
- Assembling a group of eight women in my village for economic empowerment through needs assessment, proposal writing, and business skills development to start an income-generating project for women who are affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and/or take care of orphaned and vulnerable children.



Top Left: Teaching high school students about risky behaviors through the GRS curriculum at summer camp. Above: Girls playing basketball at a youth sports day tournament. Far Left: Partnering with local and international NGOs to teach about substance abuse at a girls leadership camp. Near Left: The start of a women's sewing group in my village.

Skills Development

- Cross-cultural communication
- Utilizing assessment in all parts of program development
- Group facilitation
- Improvisation

Lessons Learned

- Good relationships are the foundation of organizing work
- Development work takes time; 2 years is little time!
- NGOs in developing countries have unique challenges and barriers that need to be understood before giving money to and developing their programs

Classroom Connections

SW651 – Planning for Community Change

I learned about how to enter a community and build respectful relationships as an "outsider"

SW513 – Community Empowerment Through the Arts

This class taught me how to incorporate creativity into my practice with youth.

Career Connections

The skills I gained in a cross-cultural context will be invaluable to my career. I have further developed the capacity to empathize with others, account for cultural considerations in planning programs and projects, work across differences, and be resourceful when materials and spaces are not available for use.

Advice

- Research before going abroad to mentally prepare. Look at blogs, talk to those who have visited/lived there, and watch videos if you can. But still go in with an open mind – culture is fluid!
- Everyone has a different experience. Don't compare yours to others' and make the most of it.
- Say 'yes' to new things, you never know what might come of it!



Acknowledgments

Thank You to the Office of Global Activities for your constant support before, during, and after my service. Your words and chocolates of encouragement always arrived just when I needed them most. To Peace Corps Lesotho staff, I appreciate you putting my safety above all else, and for providing me with support and kindness throughout my service. Shout-out to the wonderful women who also pursued this crazy program with me, and have helped to reaffirm my weird habits while transitioning back to the U.S. And finally to my friends and family – I would not have made it without you.