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Lesedi la Batho

My Second Period as a Volunteer Consultant at Lesedi la Batho

Summary

During my second period as a consultant at Lesedi la Batho in Pretoria / Mabopane the activity-managers and I documented the timeline of Lesedi la Batho's more than 4 years of history with many impressive achievements like 200 graduates placed in jobs in 2014, more computer training courses or the reduction of teenage pregnancies by 60% at Mabopane's High Schools. This timeline-history was the starting point for an exciting outlook and promising next steps to make Lesedi la Batho further grow and increase the outreach in Mabopane. This success story now is the baseline for a marketing initiative to promote Lesedi la Batho and these new steps. The most important initiatives are to find land for the community centre to finally settle down and to get the new enGin-training-programme started. enGin – the German Initiative for Engineering – was developed by Rays of Hope, a Germany-based NGO and one of the steady sponsors of Lesedi la Batho. It aims at basic trainings for young people of Mabopane in the automotive sector to empower them to get jobs in this industry.

Coming back to Lesedi la Batho (LLB) in Pretoria / Mabopane for my second period as a consultant at the beginning of August 2015 felt almost like coming home again. After my first 9 weeks with this NGO in April and May 2014 I had expected quite a lot of changes and progress not only because I had followed LLB's development from far away Germany but also because I had not yet seen LLB's new home for the community centre at Bafiti School in Mabopane.

The progress actually achieved is very impressive as became obvious during the team building workshop I had prepared for this year.

During the first day of the workshop the activity managers proudly presented their achievements. In the course of collecting all high lights and low lights that had happened during the four and a half years along the timeline since LLB was founded I learned that:

- In 2014 about 200 graduates of the Sizani Training Programme could find jobs or start their own business
- A second computer lab opened in 2015 offering now better access for public use without disturbing the trainings which are now fully booked all day long
- The sewing group offers now additional training classes, too
- First a second and then a third day care group could be opened for children so that there are now three groups for different ages; the children of each group get an age-specific education
- The Lesedi Strikers won the season's soccer tournament and again promoted to the next league; talents identified by the soccer coaches of both the Lesedi Strikers and the Lesedi Legends could be placed with teams in higher leagues
- The Baswa Mama-Project has achieved a reduction of pregnancies of teenagers by 60% since the training had started in 2011 at the seven high schools of Mabopane; the LLB-social-workers have extended their activities to the primary schools.

The activity managers realized that all these improvements could only be achieved as a team, by co-operation and by exchange of experience under the common headline of LLB's Mission (see below).

These success stories were of course accompanied also by low lights such as the end of the sponsoring for the health programme by USAID in 2015 according to the limited contract or the necessary move to Bafiti School in Mabopane as an interim home within very short notice – a drastic change and a masterpiece of good organization.

At the end of the team building workshops we also developed the outlook and next steps that each activity team has in mind and wants to achieve. Thus – out of the history of LLB along the timeline - an exciting story of how to make LLB further grow became visible.

Good progress after just 14 months since my first time with Lesedi la Batho in April and May 2014. Then I had come to LLB as a volunteer sent out by Rays of Hope, a Germany-based NGO that supports Lesedi la Batho, to develop a masterplan for the next 5 years. After nine weeks the LLB-Masterplan was documented and accepted by Chrisna Groenewald, the Managing Director, as well as by the LLB-Board. One of the strategic next steps of the masterplan was to start a training programme in a technical subject like car repair to reach young men as well as young women, who have been in the focus of so far.

At the end of May 2014, I left knighted a Lesedi - and addicted to the LLB-team and its cause: *“inspire, empower, motivate, engage and equip the youth and communities through projects that focus on development, social enterprise development and the provision of social services” (Mission of LLB).*

Being now also a board member of Rays of Hope encouraged me strongly to go back to Lesedi la Batho with the tasks of team building and to bring forward Rays of Hope's new initiative enGin – The German Initiative for Engineering. enGin comprises a technical training programme. It aims at the young people of Mabopane interested in the automotive sector to get a basic training as a pre-condition to apply for apprenticeships or jobs in the automotive industry.

Are there any limits for LLB to grow and to increase the outreach in the community of Mabopane? No, but of course there are and always will be challenges, one of them is marketing.

Towards the end of the team building workshop it became more and more obvious that LLB has to invest heavily into marketing and promotion. The purpose is to get a more steady and reliable income, to get financing for investments in further growth as well as stable conditions, e.g.:

- Lesedi la Batho needs its own land and premises without being under permanent pressure that the lease could end again with just short notice
- The existing training programmes have to achieve official South African accreditation to get the full acceptance in society, politics and economy
- The training programme enGin has to be developed in detail, streamlined upon the needs of the automotive industry in South Africa

Chrisna and I already have used the success story of LLB and the new enGin-programme to promote LLB's demand for a piece of land in Mabopane to build a new community centre as a good example for the whole area. Thus we won the support of the City of Tshwane. The contact with the German Chamber of Commerce could be established to align enGin with the needs especially of the German Automotive Industry and last but not least we could present

the story to the RMI (Retail Motor Industry Organization) and the AIDC (Automotive Industry Development Centre) at the Winterveld Hub to get their co-operation.

Lesedi la Batho – Light for the people: it gets brighter!

If you want to support Lesedi la Batho:

www.rays-of-hope.de