



This has been a year packed full of Paleng People!

All sorts of wonderful people, doing and giving all sorts of things, every single one of which have filled us with encouragement, inspiration, gratitude, delight and joy.

We are still in our little library premises, and still happy to be there. Our work is about children, not about buildings, and although of course we would love to have more library and toy space, and some shelving, and a little more weather-proof furniture, and a place to play when it rains, and ... but we are very happy to be still doing what we do best. We have deepened and strengthened our literacy support activities, our engagement of children in games and activities that promote thinking, taking initiative, self-sufficiency, and resourcefulness.



The needs of our children in this impoverished rural environment are great. They do not have all the food they need, nor all the kinds of food they need. They do not have a health care service that pro-actively works to promote their well being; there is no doctor and no dentist in the valley. They do not have adequate toilet facilities, running water in or near their homes. Many are cold in winter in small, draughty homes. Many of them do not live with their parents for one or other reason, and many are orphans living with wonderfully resilient, but tired and very poor, grandmothers. They do not have schools and teachers in them, where they can be relatively sure of even a good basic education. Their skills, particularly in literacy and mathematics, leave a great deal to be desired, rendering them at a very considerable disadvantage in terms of future schooling, work and employment. Twenty of the 33 children sitting the Grade 7 Primary School

leaving examinations at the school from which most of our children come, failed outright this year.

We know that these are all very pressing needs, but we have stuck to our core aim of literacy support, in the belief that in the long run it will make a difference; that we are planting little seeds that will one day flourish in whichever way our children choose to make them grow.

Our children show us time and time, and over and over again that they are smart, resourceful, creative, sharp-thinkers and problem-solvers, full of spunk and spark, and they have ravenous appetites for what we can give them.

A community member stopped us one day on the road and asked if we were feeding children because we have so many coming to the library so regularly. 'Yes,' we said, 'we are feeding children, but we are feeding their minds.'

We continue to try to support literacy in both Sesotho, as a top priority, and in English, because, as one man told us at the border one day, 'English puts the food on the table in Africa.'

We do this by providing relevant, accessible books for children at different reading levels for them to take home. We know that a book will be read by more than one person at home, and we want that book to work hard 😊 We create and illustrate our own bilingual little storybooks, and scrounge for all sorts of other appropriate books whenever and wherever we can.



We also take every possible opportunity to engage children in meaningful, authentic reading and writing activities. So we read inside, outside under trees, while we wait for our turn for a ride, make bicycle books, create dramas out of stories we read together, illustrate stories ...the sky is really the limit 😊

And we grab with both hands at opportunities to play all sorts of games that will encourage strategising, considering another point of view, thinking through issues that are important to their lives, dealing with challenges, taking personal responsibility.



So who are Paleng's People?

You are many, MANY, batho ba Paleng, and we thank you all for what you have done for, and with us this year! Please look for yourselves in our People Gallery at the end of this story ☺

Visitors

This year some very special visitors graced our doorstep. Many of them came long distances to bring us things for the library, as well as lots of encouragement and support. Visitors help us to keep the library stocked, to enjoy a little break doing different and often unusual activities with the children, to help us reflect on what we are doing and to give us the support and encouragement that we all need.

Organisations

These are groups of people who have truly made a difference to Paleng this year in so many ways. They have been the backbone of support for our library and our work, not only through providing funding, but also showing us that they trust us in our work, believe in what we do, and are prepared to give us the means to do it. They have made running our little satellite library possible, thus reaching more children across the valley who live too far from Paleng to access us there.

These organisations have spread the word in terms of our need for books, they have given us ideas, and skills, and helped us get our little picture storybooks out into Lesotho, into the hands of children where they belong!

Angels

This year we ran a successful crowd funding campaign in order to print two more little books. Crowd funding brings more than money, as very important as that is, because it also connects us with people who have a range of skills, contacts and ideas that are all very helpful.



A very special thanks to Edi Morgan, without whom the campaign would still be languishing in the nearest donga!

Our coffers, our collection of Sesotho Lesotho books and our hearts were given a much-needed boost through the donations in money and in kind from the many, MANY Paleng angels who so generously supported our campaign.

You all made it possible for us to print the new picture storybooks, 'Thoko's Fanta Pine Seed' and the traditional tale 'Naoa le Leshala' (illustrated by our children). You can find them both on the African Storybook website. There are other angels too, our designer Lydia and our printers, Mario and Barry, who made the printing of the books possible. This has now become one of our core activities.

Donors

There is nothing so small that it cannot make a difference, and many people have given us small (and not so small) things that keep us afloat. One dinky car can keep a child happy for many afternoons. One secondhand phone can help us keep in touch with the outside world. Pens and pencils keep children functioning at school for many months. And all of it keeps Paleng running, our children happy and our spirits up!

Lesotho 'Locals'

People who live and work with us here on the ground are very important to us. They give us support, but above all help us build a network that is crucial in helping us to think about, and be continually aware of how our work can resonate and engage meaningfully with children within this particular context. They help us to develop and try out new ideas, to meet other people and in getting our books out into the hands of children in Lesotho.

A very special thanks to **'M'e Mapaballo**, our apprentice librarian who runs our satellite village library in Khorong, walking 30 minutes each way twice a week to do so!

Educators

We are clear at Paleng that we are not teachers, we do not run a school, we do not teach reading or writing, we do not engage with a syllabus, and our business is not in the classroom.

For a variety of reasons we make sure that our children do not see us in any way as an educational institution. Our work with them is informal, entirely voluntary and non-punitive, and encourages them to engage with the world in ways that we hope offers them alternatives and opportunities that are otherwise absent in their lives.

So, for example, if you want to ride a bike, you make a bicycle book where you write down rules, draw your bicycle, learn the parts of a bicycle in English. You can enter a checkers competition, and learn how to strategise, to have the confidence to test yourself against other players, and maybe to win a little prize (our winner this year was Limpho who could not believe that she beat all the boys!)

You learn to resolve conflicts without physical violence, by talking and negotiating and participating in group decisions as regards consequences, and to apologise with sincerity.

You learn to take care of books and toys and games, to use them constructively, to keep them tidy and in their places, and to keep them clean. Having said that, we have engaged with people who are in the business of

supporting children's education learning, who have helped our Paleng and other children along in this regard, and we are very grateful to them.

Children

Paleng would quite simply not be, without our children.

They are our number one, top of the list, important Paleng people. They are our reason to exist, our source of pride, our greatest joy and our greatest challenge. Thank you children of Paleng for being the amazing, inspiring little people that you are ☺

Ithuteng village library



The same enthusiasm, eagerness to participate and hunger for books, toys and games comes from the children of Khorong and surrounding villages. Despite the challenges involved in setting up this little satellite library in a remote village, it is most certainly up and running now, and we look forward to a very industrious, and happy 2017 in it ☺

Eaton Bray Academy (EBA)

The Deer Class of Eaton Bray Academy, England, are our English friends in our Leseli la Thutano ('light that helps us to learn') pen pal project, and we love the letters, gifts and information about their lives that they send us

regularly. You are the reason our group is so motivated to learn English, and we are so happy to have friends from other places, thank you!

Leseli la Thutano



Our self-selected group of Grade 5, 6 and 7's work with us on our pen pal project with the children of EBA. Through rain and shine they come each week to read, write, play language games, make gifts for friends, learn new English, and work with stories. They performed a story in both English and Sesotho at our Christmas party, making their families hearts burst with pride. Khothatso in particular has become an important role model in their lives. Some of these children will be moving on to Secondary school next year, tsamaeang hantle bana ba rona ☺

And what about BOOKS!

We now have a total of five little bilingual picture storybooks created, illustrated, printed and distributed by Paleng (all at different reading levels) and we are about to print one more thanks to the Rahula Trust in England. We are also pleased to be able to tell you that these books have travelled far and wide.

Most importantly of all, they have travelled into the hands of Basotho children; to our two libraries in Malea-lea, to eight primary schools in our valley, to two primary schools in Leribe in northern Lesotho, to an orphanage and pre-school in Mohale's Hoek in southern Lesotho, to two primary schools in Morija, to two local pre-schools and one in Berea district and to The Hub computer centre in Morija. Some have even travelled overseas as gifts to England and America.

The books we created for the African Storybook project and which are up on their website have also travelled, digitally this time! This is an Africa-wide project; so quite a few have been translated into other African languages (all are in at least English and Lesotho Sesotho) including French (for use in countries in northern Africa).

We also have funding through the African Storybook project to print some of the other stories up on the website, thus swelling the numbers in the (still) little boxes of Sesotho books in our two libraries.

Looking ahead

At Paleng we take one step at a time, funding is not easy to come by, and in the coming year we hope to be devoting much more time to fundraising and networking, here, there and everywhere!

And all of us are looking forward to some good, solid, bookish afternoons in the libraries, with lots of other interesting things to do as well.

You are all, of course, very welcome to join us!

SO ...

Our work is our work; we know what we are all about at Paleng, and all of us, librarians and children alike, try our absolute best to do it.

But without our Paleng People there would be no resource for our children here who, not least because of where and how they live, deserve the very best we can give them. The best chance to practice reading, the best books and stories we can find and create ourselves for them to read, the best intellectually stimulating and challenging activities, games and toys, and the best chance for little minds to feed and grow.

So thank you, thank you all for helping us in so many ways to work towards this Best. We wish you all a peaceful, joyful and restful festive season, however it is that you celebrate it. And of course a truly excellent 2017 in which we look forward to seeing you all again, in person, through e-mail (palenglesotho@gmail.com) or on FaceBook, and our web-site <http://paleng.weebly.com/>



Salang hantle batho ba Paleng!
Marion and Khothatso

Paleng People Gallery

Visitors

Our very special visitors this year were:

☺ **Camille, Nick, Paul and Trilby** from Little Libraries (<https://www.facebook.com/Littlelibraries>) who drove a long, long road from Cape Town TWICE to bring us carloads of books and games and even a new bicycle!

☺ **Sheila**, our in-country manager for the African Storybook Project. She is always supportive and very good at helping us with our ongoing work as a Hub site in Lesotho

☺ **Miranda, Debbie and David** from England who fund raised on our behalf, and brought a mountain of things with them, including English language games and teaching ideas that will keep us going for months to come and

many fun and interesting things for us to play with. They also joined us for our party, and brought things to make decorations with. Many happy hours were spent making paper chains, crackers, personal calendars, and many other happy hours were spent learning songs, playing games and generally running our visitors off their feet! David took the most beautiful photographs ever, of Paleng and all within it; you will be seeing some of them on FaceBook when you visit us there.

Bernhardt from Austria also visited, a faithful annual visitor was also at our doorstep with his quiet, consistent support, some Lego and wonder of wonders, a set of binoculars!

Chris Bradshaw and **Isabelle Mussard** from the African Library Project paid a brief visit as well. They donated some books and games.

Visitors who popped in while on holiday in the valley were **Ann, Margaret, MaryAnn, Gill and family and Darren**, all bought a book or two to take home, and gave us lots of encouragement. **Mick Jones**, owner of the Malealea Lodge brought a guest or two, and as did **Christine** from France.

Organisations

Rahula Trust in England who gave us yet another grant for printing another book or two next year, and supporting the running of the library. They are also funding the stipend for the librarian at our Lthuteng satellite village library

The African Storybook Project and SAIDE

We get unfailing support and resources from this project for which we are a Hub site in Lesotho. Special thanks to Sheila, Tessa, Lisa and Jenny for always being there for us, for nudging us into more and more little storybooks and for unwavering support for what we are trying to do here!

(www.africanstorybook.org/)

Biblioref

Jean Williams never gives up on trying to get books to us, and helping us find ways of distributing books inside Lesotho (www.biblioref.org.za/)

Little Libraries

from Cape Town (<https://www.facebook.com/Littlelibraries>) whose Director Camille Quine has the best nose for appropriate books for rural children in the business

Book Dash

(www.bookdash.org/) managed to get a number of copies each of five of their beautiful Sesotho, Lesotho books to us through Camille from Little Libraries

Clare Hanbury and Children For Health

We collaborated on the development of a children's book on diarrhoea, which has also been translated into Sesotho. It addresses an important health issue in Southern Africa (www.childrenforhealth.org/)

Subhas Shah and the Thundafund team

Helped us get and stay on our feet in order to run our successful crowd funding campaign (<https://www.thundafund.com/>)

Jetline, Wits

Mario, Barry and the team print our books for us at a discount, for which we are eternally grateful

Enquiring Minds, Ireland

This group of pre-schools' Director Clare Venter gives us unfailing ongoing support, and she and her parents made a wonderful contribution to our crowd funding campaign 'Hare Baleng! (Let's Read) These teachers and children are in the throes of sending us a story from Ireland about their village

KitAid

sent us all sorts of football 'goodies' for the Christmas party (www.kitaid.net/)

Clowns Without Borders

The very skilled and clownish Jayne Batzofin who welcomed Khothatso onto her workshop and made his time so productive and happy ☺ They do amazing work around the world (Facebook, and www.cwbsa.org/)

Angels

Lydia Ovenden

skillfully and beautifully designs our picture storybooks, and gets them print-ready for us. We absolutely could not do without her!

Edi (Edward) Morgan

Without Edi, our crowd funding campaign would not have happened. He patiently and persistently guided us from his home in Spain, and probably grew a few grey hairs as a result!

Fred, Amy, Nyana and Chandwen

This wonderful little family raised enough money for us to print our third book, as well as more copies of our first two, bless you all!

Julia Childs

is a devoted Paleng angel, liaising with KitAid and giving us clever advice and consistent encouragement

Donors

Ruth and Ora Morgan, Heather Barclay, Lou Jones, Liz Parry and Bertel Bjørvik, Megan Hart, Lesley Flax, Katy Alexander, Jocelyn, Clare and Richard Drew, Emme Reyneke, Abuti Thabo and Sandy Wagner

Lesotho 'Locals'

Pieter, Keila, Jon and Jaime Mierke

give us constant support, encouragement, advice, visitor accommodation and many prayers in true missionary style ☺

Teboho Lenyora

who runs a lovely children's bicycle/HIV project in Maseru (Future Stars, check them on FaceBook) gave us a bicycle and four helmets, and repaired and maintained our bicycles free of charge!

Linda Henry and The Lesotho Connection with the St. Camillus Orphanage in Mohale's Hoek

invited us to run a workshop on how to set up and run a library in the orphanage for use by their, and other local, children. Another 25 of our storybooks taking flight into children's lives!

Julie Dawjee and the Catholic Institute of Education literacy project in Leribe

whose teachers from St. Charles and 'Mutlanyana Primary schools accepted 50 of our storybooks each, for use in their classrooms and soon-to-be-set up school libraries

'M'e Masello Sello of Ts'eanku village

helped us to develop our postcard series of Lesotho indigenous healing plants that we are using for fundraising

Ntate Mabele

from the local primary health care clinic gives us advice and support

'M'e Masechaba

continues to allow us to be on her school grounds

Educators

Mamatete and the children from the local Ts'eanku pre-school

visited us regularly through this school year. We read stories to the children, helped her do it herself, and gave her big books, ideas and materials to try out in her school

Rekha Slatter

the teacher of Deer Class at Eaton Bray Academy in England who very skillfully facilitates our 'pen pal' project with our Grade 5,6 and 7 children from Leseli la Thutano. The parents of this school also donated funds for us to buy dictionaries for Leseli la Thutano, and some others, which are in general use in the library.

Meri Hyoky

from The Hub at Morija (www.morija.co.ls/arts-and-culture/the-hub/) gave us wonderful support by providing a venue in her computer lab there to run a workshop with teachers from 2 local schools on how to access and use stories from the African Storybook Project web site. She continues to encourage teachers to bring children there to read and work with stories

Teachers and Principals

from Morija Primary School and Morija English Medium School in Morija who attended our workshop and who do ongoing work with children and Meri at The Hub

Children

Thank you to the many children we haven't met, who through their teachers, parents and others, have made donations to our Paleng children. We wish that we could meet you all someday, who knows!