



excellence out of poverty

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015

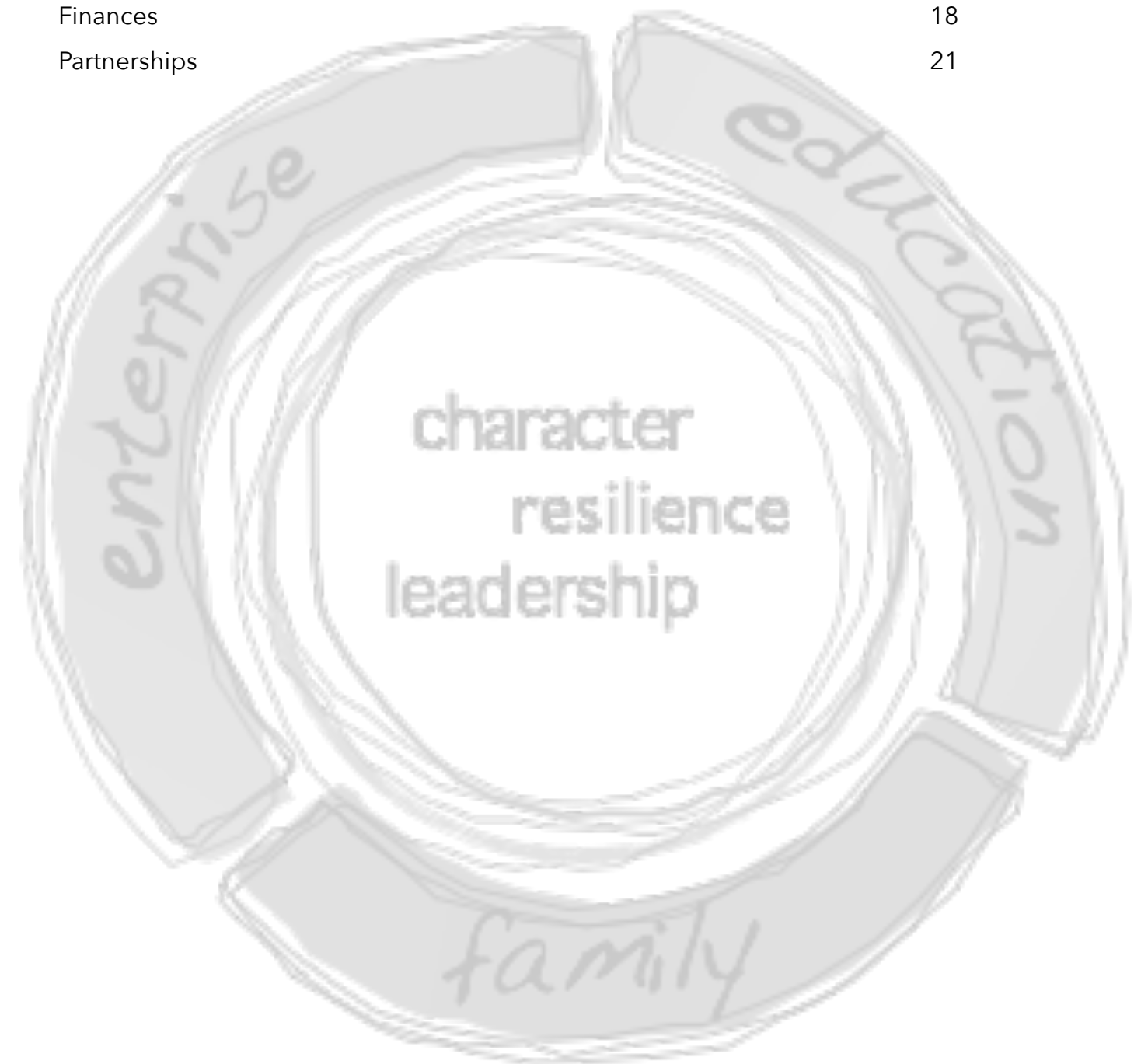
[www.sepheo.org](http://www.sepheo.org)

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## OUR VISION

*excellence out of poverty;  
that Lesotho's poorest will become Lesotho's best*

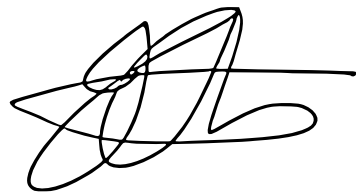


# From the directors

2015 was a year that exceeded all our expectations. Children who were reintegrated in families stayed off the streets. Those in our school transformed before our eyes. More and more hearts have been touched by a desire to serve and help raise those who have no-one, and are bringing whatever they have.

The identity shift in children has been profound. No longer beggars. Not even just receivers. Our children now know that they are precious, created for a purpose; that that they are needed and have something important to contribute to friends, family and their neighbours. We hear testimony after testimony of this transformation as we walk through villages, often to work on completely unrelated cases. Neighbours and villagers stop us to comment on the incredible change that has occurred in children who were previously outcast and considered wild and uncontrollable. Now, these same children are a positive influence on other children in the village.

Thank you enabling us to help these beautiful children.



**Josh Groves**



**Belinda Groves**

## Tankiso

Tankiso was 11 years old when we spotted him on the side of a main road into Maseru. Not recognising him, we stopped to enquire why he was not in school and where he was going. Incredibly, we had interrupted him walking in for his very first night on the street. We immediately took him home to uncover the full story. Over the next few months we traced his mother, who moved back to live with her son for the first time in 6 years. He and several of his cousins then re-enrolled in school, and the local police and chief stepped in to secure financial support from his absent father. The entire family is unrecognisable from just 6 months earlier.

PRINCIPLE 1: Our regular presence on the street means that new children are identified immediately.

PRINCIPLE 2: Sepheo uses existing community structures as the first point of call for meeting the needs of Lesotho's children.

## Mohale

Mohale was older when we first met him on the street. We spent a long time building a relationship, but drug abuse and the length of time he had been on his own made real connection very difficult. It was more than a year before we had our first conversation with him sober. On that day we planted a seed: if he had any desire to finish school we would give him the opportunity. But first, he must let us find his family. One year later and he has completely transformed and is no longer on drugs. When we walk through his village now, complete strangers comment on what a positive influence he is on others.

PRINCIPLE 3: Children will take extraordinary steps when they are guided by an adult they trust.

PRINCIPLE 4: Sepheo School provides the incentive children need to stay off the streets.

# Why are children on the streets?

Children who come to the street are poor, but money alone does not usually cause a child to end up on the streets.

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## **Social factors are the biggest cause of children coming to the streets in Lesotho.**

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Approximately 60% of children/youth that Sepheo moved off the streets initially came in response to social factors, the most common being:

- **Lack of supervision:** No one at home pays attention to where the child is, whether they are in school or what time they arrive home. This is either because the caregiver is frequently not at home (working late or in a different district) or are present but not engaged in parenting the child.
- **Poor relationships between children and their caregivers:** There is no real attachment between the child and their caregiver. While this does happen with biological mothers and/or fathers, poor relationships are most often found when a child is being cared for by extended family who already feel burdened by other responsibilities.
- **Family chaos:** The child's home is unstable. Caregivers are drinking heavily, refusing to share food, constantly fighting with one another or speaking abusively to and about the child. They are physically or mentally ill or emotionally unwell. Frequently a child's biological parents are not together and the parent's new partner does not want a child from a previous relationship, rejects the child, excludes the child from family activities or forces them to leave.
- **Boredom:** A child is disinterested in school or cannot speak English enough to understand what is taught. As a result he starts missing classes, joining with other children who do not enjoy school and eventually dropping out altogether. Many children are brought to the streets for the first time by their out-of-school friends.
- **Poor coping skills:** Occasionally the reason a child comes to the street is minor (e.g. they have been disobedient and are too scared to return home on their own). Sometimes there has been a conflict and the child has overreacted, running away instead of choosing another, healthier response.

While cases do exist, only a small number of children came to the streets because they are expected to contribute financially to the family (10%) or because no family member took responsibility for them after the death of their parent(s) (15%). 15% of children/youth came by their own choice, without a compelling reason.

Most of the time when a child runs away to the streets they are left there by their relatives. Rarely do relatives (even biological mothers or fathers) come to look for the child. As a result, what could have been a temporary situation had an intervention occurred quickly goes on for weeks and months before finally becoming permanent. The longer children are on the streets the more comfortable they become, the more negative behaviours they pick up and the harder it is to convince them to leave. They begin enjoying the freedoms the street brings and grow used to doing whatever they feel like, without authority. It is this process that leads to "street children" as we know them.

Children are not generally on the street because no family members exist. Lesotho's family/community structures are incredibly strong, and finding a child with no relatives willing to stay with them is extremely rare.

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**For nearly every child/youth on the street, Sepheo has found at least one relative prepared to live with them.**

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# Children off the streets

When a child comes to the street for the first time, we know about it very quickly. This is because we have spent years building a presence and genuine relationships. Our team is trusted; we are welcome and safe at the major hangouts in town.

Getting children off the streets involves **family reintegration**, overseeing the **transition period** and **continued monitoring**.

## Family reintegration

Reintegrating a child back into a family is a combination of:

- **Counselling and planning with the child.** Because children have usually experienced multiple, traumatic family separations or sustained abuse prior to coming to the streets, it often takes time for them to contemplate another attempt at joining a family. Much of the preparation work occurs on the street, understanding a child's wishes and family structures and preparing them emotionally to rejoin a family.
- **Tracing and coordination with the family.** Each child usually has a network of extended family. These can be close family or relatives they have only heard about or haven't seen in some time. Using whatever information the child can remember, we trace and identify all available relatives and begin negotiating a permanent placement for the child. Previous teachers, chiefs and the Ministry of Social Development are often involved in the process of advising which family member is most likely to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for the child.

## Transition period

Once a child is off the street, there is usually a period of transition and adjustment. Sometimes a child will bounce back and forth between home and the street. It can often take months for a child to settle. During this transition period, Sepheo staff support both the child and their caregivers to address issues as they arise. We are available on the phone and in person to help with conflicts or discipline, to advise caregivers on appropriate responses to a child's behaviour, and to ensure the caregiver is able to appropriately monitor the child's whereabouts and arrival home.



## Continued monitoring

We maintain regular contact with every child/youth who has left the streets. Once they have successfully transitioned, our regular calls and occasional visits help them stay on track with school and good choices. Having someone call to learn about their school friends, test results, and life in the village provides enormous incentive for children to do their best.

Even those not in Sepheo School are passing regular primary school, and we are excited that they have been able to return to normal lives in communities without ongoing intensive supports.

### OUR OTHER WORK ON THE STREET

- **Mentoring.** Sometimes, after years on the streets, some youth are tired of the streets and want something better. For those over 18, we help with the process of planning, job identification and transitioning into their own home.
- **Street clinics.** Children on the street rarely seek out medical attention. Our street clinic ensures they get the treatment they need.
- **Police interventions.** We make sure children are treated fairly and lawfully when taken into custody.

### Intensive, but not expensive

Getting children off the streets requires a lot of time building relationships and trust.

Hours upon hours are spent on the street, on the phone, tracing family and community networks, visiting homes and negotiating to pave the way for family reintegration.

All of this means we never have to offer financial incentives for families to accept a child. They do it willingly.

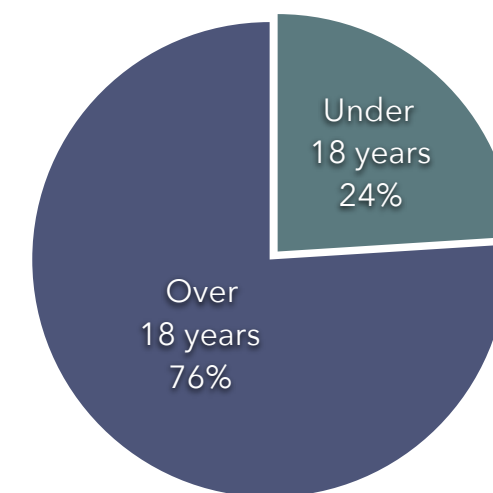
The rate of children/youth coming back to the streets is less than 10%. All of this has been achieved with just one full-time social worker.

## Remaining children/youth on the streets

Generally, children and youth currently living on the streets are either brand new (arriving in the last few months) or have been there long-term (more than three years). This is because Sepheo has identified and removed almost every new child arriving on the streets since we started in November 2013.

**Our team has been extremely successful in finding families for children and helping them establish new habits.**

Ages of Children/Youth Remaining on the Streets



Most of those still remaining on the streets are young adults. The strategies and interventions for helping them off the streets are much different than for children. These young adults came to the street as children years ago, spending their childhood and adolescence without families. They have not grown up or been supported to assume normal adult responsibilities. While we have helped some long-term street youth to successfully transition off the streets, a remnant has not succeeded in leaving the streets.

In 2015, we conducted character development training and individual mentoring for those still remaining on the streets.

# The Sepheo approach and why it's working

Sepheo staff have spent more than three years building relationships with every child on the street. We have researched and documented their family situations. We have traced and visited relatives of every child/youth who expressed a desire to leave the streets or who was too young to make this decision on their own (< 18 years old). This has led to a thorough understanding of the causes of child homelessness in Maseru. Everything we do is targeted to address these causes.

There are four main ways we help children/youth on the streets:

- **Relationship.** We have a weekly presence on the streets, looking for new children and checking on those who remain. It is through our continued presence and repeated positive interactions that we have built trust with children/youth on the streets and can influence their choices.
- **Family Tracing.** Our team is expert at building networks across the country in order to find relatives. Using established structures such as chiefs, community counsellors, police stations, and teachers as well as informal networks such as neighbours and taxi drivers, we can usually identify a child's relatives within two to three weeks.
- **Sepheo School.** This has been, by far, the most effective solution. Sepheo School was designed to fulfil the social and emotional needs of children not met by their caregivers. More than half of our students only left the streets because it was a requirement to attend Sepheo School. For the rest, this requirement has kept them in homes through the conflict, boredom or chaos that would have ordinarily driven them back to the streets. Extended relatives are far more willing to live with a child whose educational needs are taken care of at no cost to them. Enrolment in Sepheo School has enabled us to negotiate with numerous families that were initially hesitant to accept a child back from the street.
- **Love.** We genuinely love them. We believe they were created for a purpose. We refuse to run programs that pity them or reinforce helplessness. Every interaction seeks to build their identity as someone who has something to contribute, who cares for others, who can overcome and who is going somewhere.

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**Sepheo will never incentivise the street over a home, or handouts over hard work.**

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# School

Children whose home lives are chaotic often need stronger social supports to stay in school. Sepheo School has been designed around the specific needs of vulnerable children. Kids are shaped and transformed here. Children and youth come in with one academic goal: to pass Standard 7 (primary school). They are supported to do this at their own pace. Classes run four days a week in a caring but disciplined environment.

While Sepheo School was designed for children leaving the streets, we also admit students who have struggled to consistently attend school over many years or who have been out of school long-term. Every child in Sepheo School remains off the streets.

Children love coming to Sepheo School. It's a place they belong and are celebrated.

## PURPOSE

Every day, at the start of class, every child and member of staff says the same thing, one after another:

lebitso la ka ke \_\_\_\_, ke bopuo e ka sepheo  
my name is \_\_\_\_, and I was created for a purpose

This underlying belief in each child makes Sepheo School a special place to be. It's a strange statement for some kids to make at first, but over time they develop a picture of their future selves. They have something to live for and something to do well.

This is how we bring *Excellence out of Poverty*.



## FOR EVERY CHILD IN SEPHEO SCHOOL



### HOMES

Every child is off the streets and in a home.



### CURRICULUM

An international standard primary curriculum.



### TRANSPORT

Free transport to and from their village each day.



### NUTRITION

A healthy and filling meal before class.



### ACCELERATED

No grades. Kids complete primary school as fast as they are able.



### BI-LINGUAL

Instruction in both English and Sesotho.



### TECHNOLOGY

Complementing class work with the latest technology.



### ONE-ON-ONE

Weekly individual tuition.



### SOCIAL WORK

A dedicated liaison between home and school.



### COUNSELLING

Time to heal is part of the schedule.



### CHARACTER

Trained for success and team work.



### MEDICAL

Checkups and treatment.

## THE IMPACT OF A UNIFORM

When they were on the street or in their villages, our kids would see others their age leaving for school in their uniforms. Their exclusion was not just personally felt, it was seen by everyone around them. Going to school meant more than getting an education; it meant looking and feeling like everyone else.

At Sepheo School, we provide beautiful school uniforms to our students free-of-charge, but they have to earn it. They are required to attend school consistently and sleep in their homes for months.

For many, receiving a uniform is the first time they have earned or achieved

anything. And they are so proud of themselves.

There is a difference between a child who simply receives and a child who feels responsible for their success. It always represents a vital shift in their identity.

The first group that received a uniform requested a visit to the mall. This was a place that they were previously reluctant to beg in front of, let alone enter. As they walked through, their heads were held high as they felt they belonged. No longer excluded; no longer beggars; no longer yelled at or spat upon.



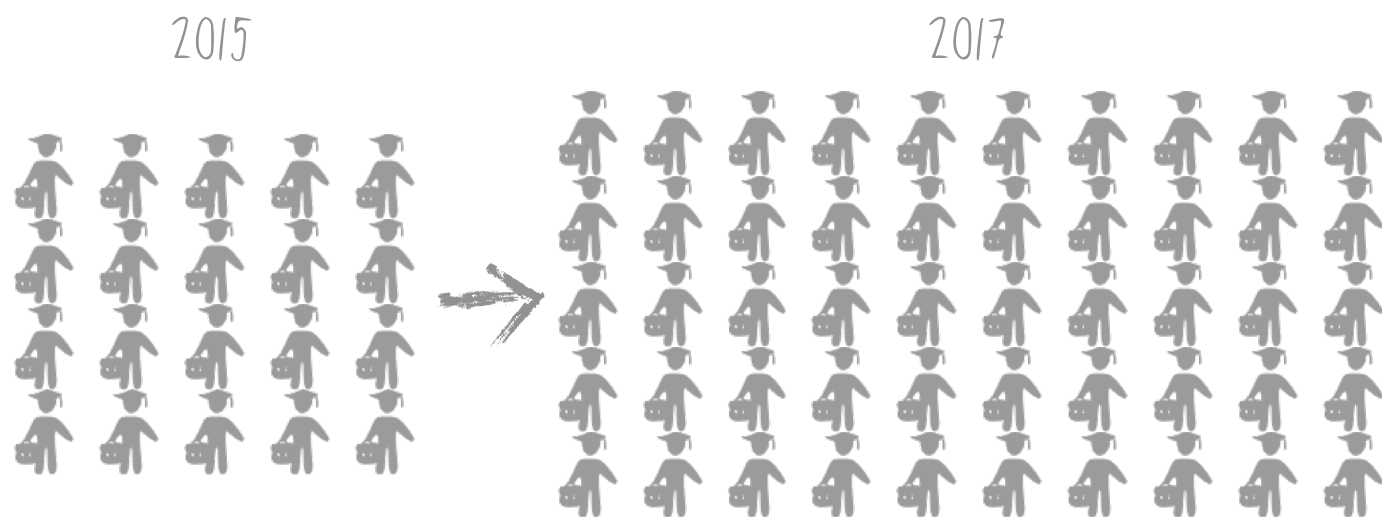
# Australian Government Direct Aid Program

The Australian High Commission in South Africa has awarded Sepheo a \$A56,000 grant to increase the number of positions at school to 50 students. This grant covers:



- Furniture
- Stationery
- Uniforms
- Sports equipment
- A significant enhancement in technology to catch children up faster.
- Intensive, on-the-job teacher training to improve the skills of Sepheo's teaching and tutoring staff
- Curriculum development, including the integration of online platforms

The project period commences in January 2016 and will conclude in June 2017.



# Land

Maseru City Council has donated 6,500m<sup>2</sup> of land to Sepheo in Motimposo, Maseru. The site is in the centre of the residential community from which most children on the streets originate. Our school will relocate to the site, enabling us to immediately increase our student numbers and to broaden our support for children in villages experiencing severe abuse and neglect.

Our new site is a greenfield, divided into two parts by a flowing creek. From 2016, we plan to develop the site further, including:

- 2 classrooms
- Foundations for 2 additional classrooms
- A toilet block, including on-site sewage treatment and biogas production
- Storage facilities
- Connection of services, including water and electricity
- Security fencing

As we continue to grow, we plan to continue development to meet the needs of the community, including:

- Additional classrooms
- A publicly accessible soccer field and playground
- A multi-purpose facility to house meeting rooms, library, offices and a public gathering space

# Finances

## Operating budget

We are proud of our responsible use of resources. Monthly operating expenditure remained at about 90% of income in 2015.

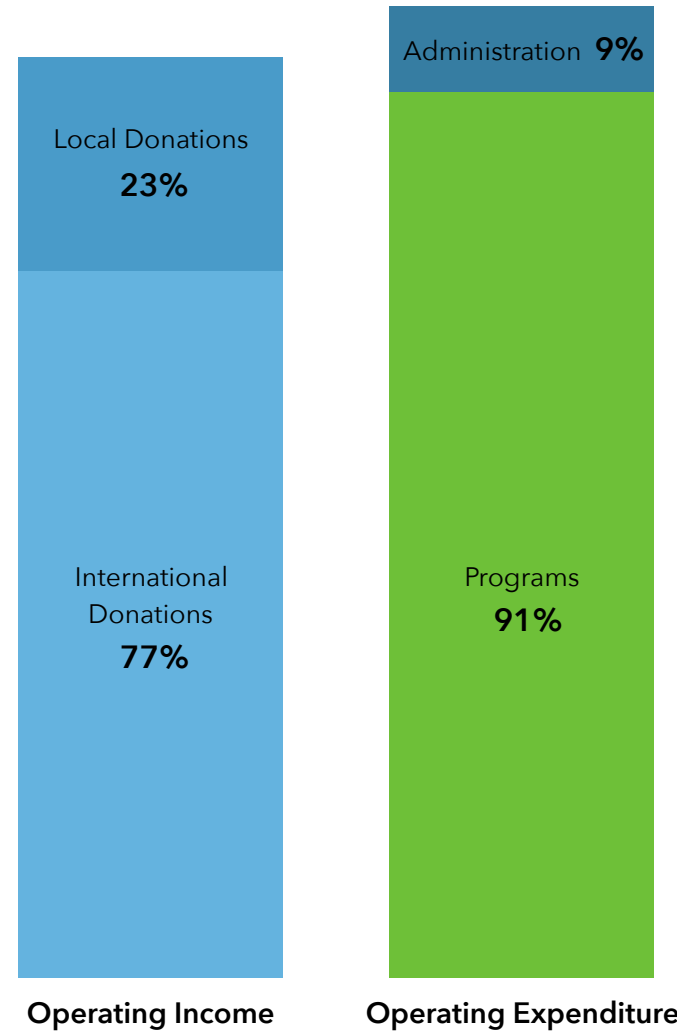
Overall expenditure in 2015 was 5% above income, but still within our financial means. This is directly attributable to:

- The purchase of much needed assets early in the year, being: the construction of our mobile classroom and the purchase of classroom furniture. These assets will continue to serve Sepheo for many years to come.
- Boundary marking and topographical survey of our newly donated site. It was necessary for Sepheo to bear this cost in order to effect the free transfer of land from Maseru City Council.

This additional expenditure was funded from both savings in monthly expenditure in 2015 and savings carried over from the previous year (2014). These investments were carefully considered and calculated, ensuring that there is still sufficient cash to carry over into 2016.

Not only have we ensured monthly operating expenditure remains below income, but we are careful in allocating budget to programs and activities that produce actual change and outcomes in the lives of children.

Our largest single costs in 2015 were staff, fuel for school transport, uniforms and food, totalling 66% of expenditure. The balance (34%) supported our other social work, character development and school expenses.



Administration expenses are relatively low, at less than 9% of overall expenditure. These are made of mostly bank fees and internet connection. These essentials are disproportionately expensive services in Lesotho. Also included in our administrative costs are a small amount for staff development and office supplies.

## Staff

Both founding Directors were unpaid by Sepheo in 2015. These are the only two foreign staff.

The rest of the Sepheo team comprised:

- 1 Full time Social Worker
- 1 Full time teacher
- 6 volunteer tutors
- 1 volunteer cook

## Assets

The following major assets are held by Sepheo:

- 6,500m<sup>2</sup> greenfield property in Maseru
- 2000 Toyota Grand Hiace (130,000km)
- Student iPads and server
- Mobile classroom
- Library books and text books
- Classroom furniture

## Deductible Gift Receipt Status

In December 2015, Sepheo commenced a strategic partnership with ACCI Relief. ACCI Relief's World Relief Fund is an approved Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) under the Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme (OAGDS) classification in Australia. This status has been extended to Sepheo.

In being accepted as a strategic partner, Sepheo was deemed compliant with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct which defines minimum standards of governance, management and accountability of development for non-government organisations.

## Partnerships

In addition to the local and international individuals who support Sepheo every month through generous contributions, the following government, organisation and business partners joined with Sepheo in 2015:

### Lesotho

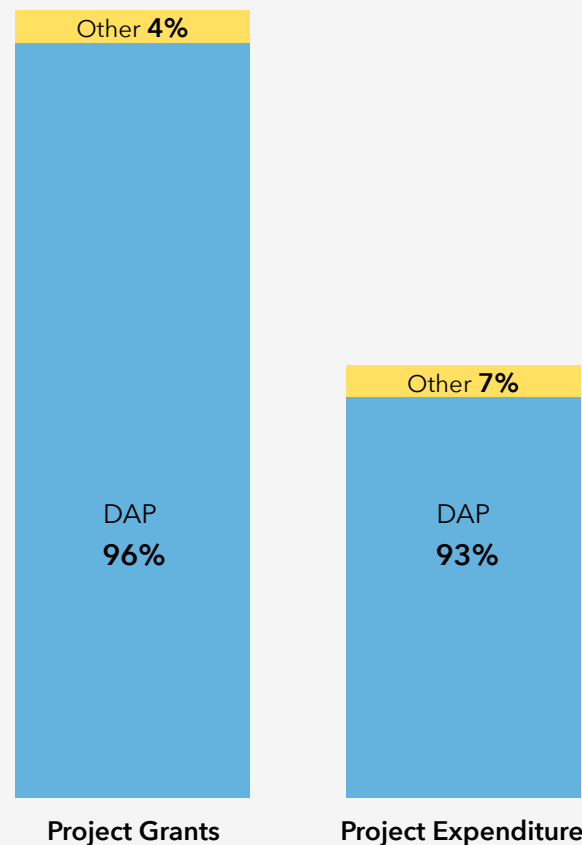
Lesotho Ministry of Social Development	Magnificent Interiors
Word of Life Maseru	Office National Maseru
Catholic Relief Services	Debonairs Pizza, NRH Mall
Lapis Lazuli Shoes	

### Grants

In 2015, Sepheo received grants for:

- The purchase of the Cambridge Primary English curriculum
- The purchase of the Cambridge Primary Mathematics curriculum
- The purchase Student chairs
- The purchase of school shoes
- Creating 30 additional places at Sepheo School through the Direct Aid Program from January 2016. 50% of funding was awarded in November 2015, with the remainder due to be paid in June 2016. Some of these funds were expended in 2015 in preparation for project commencement in January.

We do not apply administrative costs to grants received.



With the exception of the DAP grant, which is due to be expended in 2016/17, all funds awarded were fully expended in 2015 in accordance with their expressed purpose.

### International

Australian High Commission, Pretoria (AUS)	Gold Coast Chapel (AUS)
Australian Christian Churches International Relief (AUS)	Figtree Anglican Church (AUS)
Kinected (AUS)	Adfin Loans and Leasing (AUS)
	Media Teknician (USA)

### **Mohau**

Mohau (13) arrived at school unexpectedly one morning in mid-2015. He used to spend his days at home while other children went to school, often doing jobs for neighbours or being sent on errands to town without pay. He'd heard about a school that took children who'd been out of school for a long time, and decided to hop on the school bus with the other kids. He cried during his enrolment interview, worried that this would be another rejection. Since being accepted at Sepheo School, he is the happiest child we know and the most popular child in class.

PRINCIPLE 5: Sepheo School is a safe place for children who are well behind in their education.

### **Kananelo**

Kananelo was perhaps the most recognised child on the street. He had been there so long that everyone knew him as a beggar and he himself was completely comfortable with this identity. Unsure of how he would respond, Sepheo contacted his grandmother to offer Kananelo a position at school. We never had the chance to talk to him about it before he appeared at the bus stop one day. He had seen other kids coming to school, had heard all the stories and wasn't going to miss his chance. Eight months on, school is his favourite place to be and he is our star striker on the soccer team. His identity is slowly being replaced as he discovers his purpose.

PRINCIPLE 6: Children transform in an environment of consistent love, discipline and purpose.

