



# rise International

Relationships Inspiring Social Enterprise

## 2025 Annual Report

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# rise International

## Relationships Inspiring Social Enterprise

**rise** International (Relationships Inspiring Social Enterprise) is a US- and Lesotho-registered non-profit social enterprise working in Lesotho and Kenya, with growing partnerships across the region. We exist to:

- Equip young people with practical skills and business support
- Co-create sustainable infrastructure using local materials
- Partner with schools, NGOs, and communities to build inclusive, resilient spaces

**VISION:** *An Africa where vulnerable youth transform from job seekers to job creators*

**MISSION:** *To reduce poverty by supporting entrepreneurship through business incubation, learning by doing and community development*



**rise** International Lesotho team



## OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Our work aligns with the following key SDGs:



**At the heart of our approach is a simple idea: when young people and communities have skills, tools, and trust, they build the futures they want.**



## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

### Dear Friends and Supporters,

When we first started **rise**, our goal was simple but ambitious: to create opportunities for African youth to build their own futures while strengthening the communities around them. Each year, I'm reminded that this vision is not only possible, it is already happening.

Across Lesotho and Kenya this year, we've continued to see what is possible when young people are trusted with responsibility, equipped with practical skills, and supported by strong partnerships. The results go far beyond statistics or completed projects. They can be seen in new businesses launched, infrastructure built by local entrepreneurs, and young people stepping into leadership roles within their own communities.

What inspires me most is how this work continues to grow organically. The Pioneers, artisans, educators, and partners involved in our programs are not simply participants, they are becoming the drivers of change themselves. Many of the young people who once came to **rise** to learn a skill are now running businesses, mentoring others, and contributing to projects that improve everyday life for thousands of people.

This year also reinforced something we have long believed: meaningful development is built through collaboration. Our partnerships with schools, universities, NGOs, and private sector organisations continue to expand the reach and depth of our work.

From hands-on construction training and academic collaborations to youth employability initiatives and environmental education in Kenya, these collaborations allow ideas, knowledge, and opportunity to flow across borders and disciplines.

As an organisation, we are also evolving. Over the past year we have continued strengthening our teams and expanding our regional footprint, while remaining rooted in the same principle that guided us from the beginning: sustainable development must be locally led. Seeing a fully local team drive innovation, mentor young entrepreneurs, and deliver complex projects on the ground is



## LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

one of the achievements I am personally most proud of.

Of course, the year also brought challenges. Funding constraints, particularly with the shutting down of USAID, shifting economic conditions, and operational pressures are realities faced by organisations across our sector. Yet these moments have also reinforced the importance of our model: investing in skills, entrepreneurship, and practical solutions that enable communities to create long-term resilience rather than short-term dependency.

Looking ahead, 2026 is an opportunity for us to re-define our focus. We will continue deepening our entrepreneurship ecosystem, supporting young innovators, and advancing sustainable building practices

that respond to both environmental and social needs. However, at the same time, we are exploring new avenues for growth in particular by expanding through partnerships rather than direct implementation and identifying opportunities to bring the **rise** model to other communities across the sub-Saharan African region.

None of this would be possible without the continued belief and support of our partners, donors, and friends. Your trust allows us to invest in people, experiment with new ideas, and build projects that have lasting impact.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we are helping create a future where young people are not waiting for opportunity, but building it for themselves.

With gratitude,



Co-Founder & Executive Director:  
Daniela Gusman



## LETTER FROM LESOTHO COUNTRY DIRECTOR:

This past year has been one of deep learning, steady growth, and meaningful progress for **rise** International in Lesotho. It has reaffirmed a truth we hold close: when young people and communities are trusted with opportunity, skills, and responsibility, they deliver impact that is both practical and transformative.

Across our programmes, we saw entrepreneurship move from concept to reality. Our Pioneers did more than refine business plans; they built companies, created jobs, and delivered projects that improved everyday life in our cities and schools. From safer sanitation facilities to upgraded learning spaces and public infrastructure, their work demonstrates how local talent, when supported, can lead sustainable development from the ground up.

Education and knowledge exchange remained central to our approach. Through webinars, lectures, international workshops, and academic partnerships, we connected local practitioners with global expertise while keeping learning rooted in Lesotho's context. These exchanges strengthened technical capacity, sparked innovation, and reinforced the importance of collaboration across borders and disciplines.

Our commitment to innovative and climate-resilient building methodologies continued to shape how we work. From Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks to hempcrete prototyping and indigenous stone testing, we pushed boundaries while remaining grounded in practicality



Lesotho Country Director: Reitumetse Nzeku



## LETTER FROM LESOTHO COUNTRY DIRECTOR:

and community participation. Projects delivered for other non-profit partners such as Kick4Life, SolidarMed, and Action Ireland Trust stand as living examples of how sustainability, dignity, and local ownership can coexist.

The year also presented real challenges. Funding constraints, supply chain disruptions, and market barriers tested our systems and resilience. Yet these challenges sharpened our focus, improved our planning, and strengthened our belief in long-term, systems-based solutions rather than short-term fixes.

I am deeply proud of our team, our Pioneers, artisans, educators, and community partners who continue to

show up with commitment, creativity, and courage. Their work reminds us that development is not something delivered to communities, but something built with them.

As we move forward, our focus remains clear: to deepen our impact, strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems, and continue building spaces, enterprises, and opportunities that place people at the centre of progress. We are grateful to our partners and supporters who walk this journey with us. Your trust makes this work possible.

Together, we are not only responding to today's challenges, but laying foundations for a more inclusive, resilient, and opportunity-rich future.

With gratitude and determination,

Reitumetse Nzeku  
Lesotho Country Director  
**rise** International



Reitumetse Nzeku & Daniela Gusman



## 2025 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year, **rise** International continued to grow its impact across Lesotho and Kenya by investing in people, practical solutions, and partnerships that create lasting change. Our work remained grounded in the belief that communities are not passive recipients of development, but active partners in shaping it.

Across our entrepreneurship and incubation programmes, young people turned learning into action. Of the 52 Pioneers supported, 40 are now running active businesses, together creating 281 jobs in the construction and creative sectors. Their work is already making a visible difference. More than 7,015 learners now benefit from safer school sanitation, and a new Early Childhood Care and Development Centre at Makoanyane Primary School has created a safe, nurturing space for young children to learn and grow. What began as skills development is steadily growing into a locally driven economic ecosystem.

Education and knowledge exchange remained central to our approach. Through Creolabs, our after-school creative thinking clubs, more than 1,200 learners engaged in hands-on learning that built confidence, creativity, and early enterprise skills. Webinars, workshops, and academic partnerships also created space for shared learning, connecting local experience with global knowledge and opening new pathways for innovation.

We also continued to advance climate-smart construction through practical projects and applied research. This included piloting Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks, prototyping hempcrete, and testing indigenous stone as sustainable building materials. Partnerships with Kick4Life, SolidarMed, and Action Ireland Trust helped bring these ideas into practice, including Africa's first Forest Steward Council (FSC)-certified timber stadium.



## 2025 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

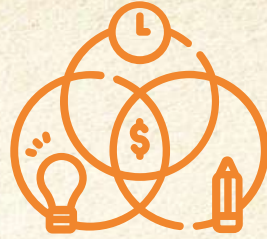
In Kenya, since July 2024, we have run four cohorts of the Employability Training Program, graduating 47 young people. Today, 80% are working, undertaking internships, or self-employed and 11% are continuing their studies. Meanwhile, our Junior Rangers Club reached over 144 children, nurturing early awareness of biodiversity and conservation within a globally significant ecosystem.

The year also brought challenges. Funding constraints, material shortages, and market barriers affected timelines and tested our systems. Yet these pressures also sharpened our planning, strengthened our partnerships, and reinforced the importance of long-term, locally rooted solutions.

Above all, this year showed what is possible when young people lead, communities participate, and partners invest in local capacity. As **rise** International looks ahead, we remain committed to growing entrepreneurial ecosystems, scaling sustainable building practices, and supporting communities to shape more resilient and inclusive futures.



Fellows construct the Seboka Primary School kitchen



**PILLAR 1:**

# **ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS INCUBATION**

# From Skills to Enterprise

The **in loco** Fellowship is a hands-on training programme that gives young people practical skills and real experience in construction and creative work. For many, it is the start of a longer journey. Some move into the three-year Pioneers Business Incubation Programme, where coaching, mentorship, workspace, tools, networking, and project referrals help them build businesses of their own. So far, 40 of the 52 Pioneers have launched businesses, creating 281 jobs across Lesotho's construction and creative sectors.

Their work is already changing communities. At Makoanyane Early Childhood Care and Development Centre, Palesa Rapolo an **in loco** alumni from our 1st cohort in 2018 did murals turning the container into a bright learning space for young children at Makoanyane Primary School ECCD Centre. In Maseru, Seabata Motanya and Peter Makhetha upgraded sidewalks, improving public spaces while creating jobs. Mokhele Maretlo continued to deliver quality ceilings and wardrobes for homes and community projects.

The journey also continues through further study. Retsepile joined the highly competitive MASS Design African Design Centre Fellowship after completing his Chevening Master's in Edinburgh. Amonaheng Makhupane is studying Engineering in India, while Mojalefa Hatane and Nkhole Thakhisi are pursuing degrees in Architecture in South Africa.



Makoanyane Primary School ECCD Centre



Seabata Motanya (XYZ) & Peter Makhetha (PRO)



# STRENGTHENING ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH CAFI

To accelerate inclusive economic growth and job creation, **rise** was appointed as an official Entrepreneurship Support Organisation under the World Bank-funded **Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion - CAFI** Incubation Project marked an important step in our enterprise support work. This marks an important step in our enterprise support work and expands our ability to support entrepreneurs in three key sectors: the built environment, sustainable energy, and the circular economy.

From March 2026, ten entrepreneurs will join the 5th-CAFI cohort for a six-month incubation journey. They will receive mentorship from experienced professionals, training in financial management, digital marketing, and fundraising, as well as practical support to test, refine, and strengthen their business models. They will also gain access to networks and market linkages that can help open new opportunities.

Through CAFI, our role is also expanding beyond direct incubation support to helping strengthen the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem by connecting businesses to skills, funding pathways, markets, and trusted local institutions.



10 Enterprises selected for the business incubation program



# ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

Creolabs is an after-school programme where learners are introduced to creative thinking, problem solving, design, production, and enterprise using materials already around them. Across the 5-Hub schools in Lithabaneng, these sessions have become spaces of curiosity, creativity, and growth, where young people are encouraged to try, make, question, and learn. Now in its fifth year, the programme continues to expand its reach and impact.

With support from Action Ireland Trust, and Creolabs in Malta, this programme has grown into a platform where confidence begins to show itself in new ways, in the classroom, in practical work, and in how learners start to imagine their future. This year, the programme reached more than 1,200 learners, with over 80% showing improved academic performance. It also gave rise to school-based enterprises, including barber shops, nail and beauty start-ups, crop production, and crafts, which together generated R12,000 (\$750) in revenue. These earnings were reinvested to support utilities, seeds for the food gardens and other school needs.



Creolabs participants' exhibits at Innovation Day in March 2025



## PILLAR 2

# EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

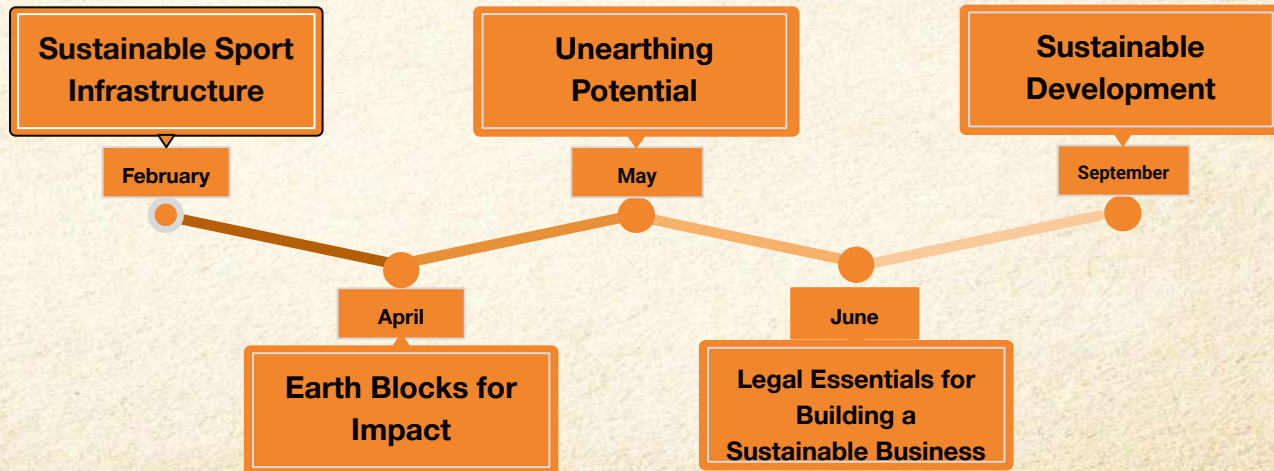


# WEBINAR & SERIES:

## Building Capacity Through Knowledge Sharing

Our webinar series brought together young entrepreneurs and professionals with experts shaping sustainable development locally and globally. Across five sessions, participants explored practical ways to grow businesses, strengthen sustainable construction, and respond to real challenges in their communities. These were not just conversations. They were spaces where ideas turned into possibilities, and where knowledge became a tool for action.

**“These webinars bridged knowledge gaps and connected us to real opportunities for impact.”** — Lirontso Motlalepula, Participant



NB: Click the title to watch.



# Spotlight Lectures:

## Building Knowledge for Sustainable Design

Our guest lecture series connected global expertise with local practice, giving students, fellows, and practitioners practical insight into how architecture and engineering can advance sustainability and community well-being

### ❖ Inspiring Lectures on Holistic Sustainability

**Speaker:** Nafeesa Clarke (UIC Barcelona)

**Host Partner:** Limkokwing University of Creative Technology

**Focus:** How architecture can drive environmental responsibility, social inclusion, and community empowerment, with a strong focus on what sustainability means in the Lesotho context.



Lecture by Nafeesa Clarke at Limkokwing University



Lecture by Laura Marcheggiano, Senior Designer at ARUP (UK).

### ❖ Materials and Design Specifications for Sustainable Construction

**Speaker:** Laura Marcheggiano (Senior Designer, ARUP – UK)

**Context:** International Workshop session

**Focus:** How sustainable choices in materials and design specifications can improve both structural performance and environmental impact, and how thoughtful design can bridge innovation and sustainability in construction.



# ACADEMIC COLLABORATION:

## Building For Impact

Global academic partnerships were strengthened through a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programme, connecting students from **Nottingham Trent University** (UK), **Lerotholi Polytechnic**, and the **National University of Lesotho**.

Working in multidisciplinary teams, students explored sustainable housing materials suited to Lesotho's context, considering environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social impact.

The programme culminated in a virtual showcase of design proposals, laying a foundation for practical, affordable housing solutions while strengthening long-term collaboration between institutions in Lesotho and the UK.

In parallel, the partnership with **University College London** (UCL) continued to translate learning into practice. Architecture students developed housing concepts for both urban Maseru and rural Mokhotlong, integrating eco-friendly technologies, local materials, and community-centred design approaches. These designs move beyond theory. They reflect what is possible when global knowledge meets local context.

*“Through **rise**, our designs are not just theory; they are real solutions for real people”.*- UCL Architecture Student, Design Cohort 2025



# THE SEBATATSO CONFERENCE

The Sebatatso Youth and Entrepreneurship Conference, hosted by the Government of Lesotho and United Nations Development Programme, created an opportunity for **rise** to showcase its sustainable construction solutions to a national audience of innovators and changemakers.

Featured solutions included hempcrete blocks, recycled plastic bricks, and Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks (ICEBs). These approaches sparked strong interest, highlighting how circular design and resource efficiency can contribute to both environmental sustainability and economic opportunity. The platform also enabled the introduction of our Employability and Fundraising Programme, designed to equip young entrepreneurs and professionals with the skills, networks, and confidence to turn ideas into viable ventures. This engagement demonstrated the value of creating spaces where local innovation can be seen, shared, and strengthened, reinforcing the role of young entrepreneurs in driving solutions that are both practical and scalable.



**rise** Exhibition at the Sebatatso initiative



# INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

## Learning, Innovation and Hands-On Construction

Emerging professionals and global experts came together to explore sustainable design and practical construction methods. With technical guidance from the international group **ARUP, UIC Barcelona and RMIT University Australia**, participants gained both knowledge and hands-on experience in climate-responsive building.

### From Theory to Practice

A key highlight was hands-on training in **Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks (ICEBs)**, a sustainable building material made by compressing a mixture of soil and stabiliser into durable, interlocking blocks that reduce the need for cement and mortar. Delivered in collaboration with ARUP and a lecturer from UIC & RMIT University, the training marked an important milestone as international experts joined participants on the ground in Lesotho. Working alongside the **rise** team, participants learned each stage of the process, from soil selection and mixing to block pressing and quality control, building practical skills and confidence to apply these methods in future projects.

### Learning Through Collaboration

Through site-based exercises and collaborative design tasks, participants explored how sustainable construction techniques can respond to local context and community needs. This hands-on approach strengthened not only technical capacity, but also the ability to design solutions that are practical, relevant, and rooted in place.





# HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

## Healthcare Equipment Donation

With support from **Action Ireland Trust**, **rise** facilitated the donation of essential medical equipment, including hospital beds, crutches, and wheelchairs, to Starlight Oasis of Hope Hospice and Intellectual Disability and Autism Lesotho (IDAL). This support is strengthening care for some of Lesotho's most vulnerable patients

“This donation will help us serve our patients with dignity and care.”

- **Managing Director, Starlight Oasis of Hope Hospice**



Action Ireland Trust - AIT donates essential medical equipment to non-profits in Lesotho



# Environmental Education

## Jacaranda Community Library in Kenya

In April 2025, the Jacaranda Community Library was launched as part of efforts to strengthen youth empowerment and address gaps in overcrowded schools with limited access to library resources.

With support from KWEST (Kenya Watamu Educational Support Trust), the library has provided a safe and consistent space for children to build foundational reading and writing skills. Volunteers lead sessions every Saturday and throughout school holidays, supporting learning in English, a critical need in a system where all subjects are examined in the language. Since opening, 495 children from 87 schools have accessed the library. Attendance continues to grow, with an average of 50 children on Saturdays and 80–140 during school holidays, reflecting strong community demand. Beyond literacy, the library has become a hub for exploration and creativity, introducing children to activities such as art, music, yoga, taekwondo, and language classes.



Jacaranda Community Library - Kenya



# Environmental Education

## Junior Rangers Program in Kenya

### Inspiring Environmental Stewardship: Junior Rangers Club

Building on this foundation, the Junior Rangers Club was launched at the library in partnership with Friends of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Now reaching over **144 children**, the club introduces young learners to biodiversity, forest ecosystems, and conservation through engaging, community-led activities.

Located within the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Biosphere Reserve, the programme connects children to one of Africa's most important ecological zones, helping them understand their role in protecting both local and global environments.



Launch of the Junior Rangers Program - Kenya



# EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAM

The Employability Training Programme in Kenya supports young people aged 18–25 to build the skills, confidence, and networks needed to enter the workforce.

Over the past year, two cohorts (28 participants) completed an intensive five-day training focused on career readiness, workplace communication, and financial and digital literacy. Participants then transitioned into three-month internships, often their first formal work experience, through placements supported by local partners, including Jacaranda Beach Resort and many other corporate and individual donors.

The programme is delivering strong results:

- **77%** of graduates have secured employment, are self-employed, or are completing internships
- **11%** have progressed to tertiary education

This programme continues to act as a critical bridge between education and employment, equipping young people with practical skills and opening pathways to sustainable livelihoods.



Kenya's Employability Program graduates



PILLAR 3

# INNOVATIVE BUILDING METHODOLOGIES



## Youth & Health Centre for Mokhotlong, Lesotho

A shipping container has been transformed into a youth-focused health hub, offering accessible health services alongside structured youth programs.

Developed for SolidarMed, a health INGO, and built by BEEK Projects, one of our Pioneers, the Youth & Health Centre provides a safe, supportive space where young people can learn, seek care, and connect with peers.

By combining practical design with locally relevant services, the centre demonstrates how simple, context-appropriate solutions can strengthen wellbeing and expand opportunities for youth, even in remote mountainous districts like Mokhotlong.



SolidaMed Youth & Health Centre in Mokhotlong



# BUILD SMART, BUILD LOCAL

## Empowering Artisans

Local artisans and Pioneers strengthened both their technical and business skills through a focused capacity-building workshop. Our site manager Ramarou Tsoho led hands-on training in Interlocking Compressed Earth Block (ICEB) production, while Maneo Seekane facilitated business development sessions on costing, pricing, and managing small construction enterprises.

“This workshop taught us how to build smarter and think like business people.”

— Teboho Mphatsoane, Workshop Participant, Maseru



rise equips local masons on ICEB production



# PROJECT MILESTONES

## 5 HUB SCHOOL PROGRAM

Since 2019, **in loco** Pioneers have been at the forefront of upgrading sanitation and infrastructure for over 5,500 learners across five schools in the Lithabaneng area, about 20 minutes from Lesotho's capital of Maseru.

At Makoanyane and Leqele Primary Schools, new running-water toilet blocks have replaced outdated pit latrines, giving more than 1,500 learners, especially girls, access to safer, cleaner, and more dignified facilities. This change goes far beyond bricks and pipes; it restores confidence, protects health, and opens doors to better learning experiences.

Led by Pioneers PRO Construction and XYZ Collaborative, these youth-driven, community-based projects are not just building infrastructure, they are building brighter, more hopeful futures for every child in Lithabaneng.



Before and After: Makoanyane Primary Schools toilet blocks



Before and After: Leqele Primary School Toilets blocks



# MAKOANYANE ECCD CENTRE

The new ECCD (Early Childhood Care & Development) Centre at Makoanyane Primary School in Maseru was officially handed over to the school community, opening doors to a safe, nurturing, and inspiring space for young learners. Designed to spark curiosity, confidence, and growth, the centre offers children an environment where learning begins with joy and possibility.

Supported by Action Ireland Trust (AIT) under the 5-Hub Schools Project, the initiative goes beyond bricks and mortar, strengthening early learning, improving infrastructure, and equipping teachers to provide the best start for every child. The ECCD Centre stands as a testament to investing in children's futures, creating a foundation where education is engaging, inclusive, and full of potential.



ECCD Centre handover ceremony at Makoanyane PS.



# MOTIMPOSO PRIMARY CELEBRATES NEW URINALS

At Motimposo Primary School, nearly 900 boys gained access to safe, modern sanitation through the 2025 International Workshop Project. New urinals were built using eco-friendly Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks (ICEBs), a collaborative effort between ARUP, UIC Barcelona, local volunteers, and the rise International team.

The project replaced inadequate facilities with hygienic, durable infrastructure, addressing a longstanding need for safety, dignity, and well-being.

Principal Mabokang Lehoeleha noted, *“These new facilities will change the daily lives of our boys.”* The upgrade stands as a testament to the power of innovation and collaboration in creating meaningful community impact.



Motimposo Primary School Boys



# KICK4LIFE - A PARTNERSHIP IN IMPACT

In partnership with the non-profit Kick4Life, three transformative projects were completed in 2025, expanding opportunities and driving positive community change.

## 1. Stadium of Life

The Kick4Life Stadium of Life continues to set the benchmark for sustainable construction in Lesotho, reaffirmed by its Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification in November. This certification ensures that all wood materials used come from responsibly managed forests, supporting both climate resilience and social equity.

More than a place to play, the stadium is a living example of regenerative infrastructure, putting people and the planet first. It stands as the first FSC-certified project in Southern Africa and a beacon for climate-smart, locally rooted design.



Stadium of Life - Kick4Life



Participants at the Stadium of Life - Kick4Life



# KICK4LIFE - A PARTNERSHIP IN IMPACT

## 2. Biodiversity Stand and Theatre of Life

The Biodiversity Stand and Theatre of Life at the Stadium of Life is now complete and ready for planting. This distinctive space combines green infrastructure with education, featuring indigenous plants, trees, and shrubs. Designed as an amphitheatre, it provides a vibrant venue for performances, workshops, and community events, promoting both environmental awareness and cultural expression.

Adding to this momentum, the Biodiversity Stand was featured in SA **Landscape Magazine** highlighting how the timber amphitheatre, designed by **Park Associati** (Milan, Italy) on a pro bono basis and constructed by **rise**, merges sport, art, education, and nature into a dynamic example of environmental design.



Participants at the Biodiversity Stand - Kick4Life



# KICK4LIFE - A PARTNERSHIP IN IMPACT

## 3. Bophelo Gymnasium and Health Gym

A state-of-the-art gym became the latest addition to Kick4Life's social enterprise infrastructure, constructed from four repurposed shipping containers.

Designed by **rise** and constructed by 11-0-6 Construct, the facility blends innovation and sustainability, providing a welcoming space that supports community fitness and wellbeing. Built for longevity and functionality, the gym demonstrates how creative, climate-conscious construction can deliver efficient, modern infrastructure without compromising quality or purpose.



Participants at the Bophelo Gymnasium - Kick4Life



# KICK4LIFE - A PARTNERSHIP IN IMPACT

## Celebrating International Partnerships

The launch of a club twinning partnership between Kick4Life and Wrexham AFC (Wales, UK) was celebrated at the newly built Stadium of Life. Designed and constructed by **rise**, the stadium is Africa's first FSC-certified timber football venue. This collaboration goes beyond sports, fostering community empowerment and creating new opportunities for local youth.





# RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

## Hempcrete Prototyping

Innovation in sustainable building advances with the development of hempcrete blocks made from clay and medicinal cannabis shiv a by-product of medicinal cannabis production. While the optimal formula is still being refined, each experiment reveals new possibilities for stronger, eco-friendly construction. These ongoing trials are laying the foundation for greener, more sustainable building practices in future projects.

## Indigenous Rock Testing for Sustainable Construction

**rise** International has collaborated with the Ministry of Mining and the National University of Lesotho to explore how local basalt and dolerite can be used in construction. The research aimed to assess their strength, durability, and suitability for climate-resilient buildings.

This work created a knowledge base for stronger, more sustainable structures that leverages local materials, will reduce dependence on imported products, and expand opportunities for community-led, resource-efficient construction.



Hempcrete Block



## VENTURING INTO ZAMBIA

Partnership with **Play It Forward** (PIF), a Zambian non-profit that empowers youth through sport and education, enabled the co-creation of a masterplan and concept design for a new four-acre community hub in Livingstone, Zambia.

As part of a participatory design process, Retsepile Ramoko and Tumelo Lerata, two of our Pioneers, travelled from Lesotho to Zambia train the PIF team and facilitate community workshops. Target beneficiaries and project partners collaborated to shape a vision and layout for a centre designed by and for the community it will serve.

With the masterplan and concept design complete, a Zambian architecture firm, Leaf Studio Architects, is leading the next phase, translating the shared ideas into a tangible, built reality.





## KEY CHALLENGES:

- **Limited Funding & Financial Constraints:** While fundraising efforts have been successful, some projects require more substantial investment to scale effectively and ensure long-term sustainability.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions & Material Shortages:** Global and local supply chain challenges and inflation have made it difficult and costly to source essential building materials. These pressures have caused delays in key construction projects, including the climate-resilient housing initiative and the youth centres
- **Market Access for ICEB Blocks:** The Introduction of Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks (ICEBs) faces difficulties penetrating formal markets and generating consistent demand for the product because local artisans do not have the financial capabilities to purchase the ICEB machine. This limits the potential for broader adoption of ICEBs as a sustainable building solution.



## LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Close Supervision Ensures Quality Outcomes:** Through the SolidarMed project, we learned that Pioneers require careful supervision at all times, particularly when it comes to finishes and the accuracy of their work. Providing consistent guidance and oversight ensures high-quality results and strengthens skill development.
- **Proactive Supply Chain Management is Crucial:** Budgeting for price fluctuations, inflation, and potential material shortages helps projects stay on track even under economic uncertainty.
- **Business Support Must Extend Beyond Initial Funding:** Startups and social enterprises need more than seed capital; connecting them with clients, investors, and distributors strengthens market positioning and supports long-term sustainability.



# 2025 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR LESOTHO

Expenses	LSL	% of Total Cost	USD
Administration costs	16,510.22	0.36	1,039
Bank/Mobile Money Fees	19,532.57	0.43	1,229
Construction Material	1,891,251.98	41	119,022
Health and Safety	17,161.93	0.38	1,080
Labour	1,917,389.73	42	120,666
Other	370,961.93	7.8	23,346
Tools & Equipment	68,942.39	1.5	4,334
Transport	87,861.96	1.9	5,529
Rent	87,000.00	1.9	5,475
Depreciation	94,911.01	2	5,973
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>4,571,523.72</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>287,647</b>



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