

Alliance Française de Maseru (Lesotho)
Handover of the French textbooks to the Ministry of Education

Thursday 9 February, 2012 by Mr. Guy de la Chevalerie, Counsellor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs at the French Embassy in South Africa and Lesotho

This is my very first visit to the Kingdom of Lesotho and I am very happy to be with you at this special event organized by our dynamic Alliance Française in Maseru in partnership with the Cooperation and Cultural Office of our Embassy in Pretoria and the Ministry of Education of Lesotho.

As a matter of fact, I have especially come to handover 3000 French textbooks meant to be given to secondary school students learning French in Lesotho at the beginning of this new school year.

This textbook named "Et toi" from French publisher Didier is designed and meant for these students. It is a colourful and up-to-date teaching material based on the proficiency levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, abbreviated as CEFRL.

CEFRL is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries worldwide. For example in South Africa, it is used within the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation in the teaching of foreign languages not only to the diplomats but also to all officials and civil servants in the South African public sector. It is also a recognized reference among high schools and universities offering French and the matric examination is based on the competence levels of the CEFRL.

These French textbooks "Et toi?" will give Lesotho learners the opportunity to study the language through the latest methods & most modern techniques which will validate them for entry to write international recognized certifications such as DELF Junior, which is offered at the Alliance Française.

Most of you attending this ceremony know that this handover of French textbooks is the result of a long cooperation process. In February 2009, a French Master Degree student specializing in the teaching of French as a foreign language, was appointed as an intern within the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) to draft a French curriculum for the secondary schools with a team of expert teachers of French in Lesotho.

Our Embassy, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Lesotho, contributed to a first workshop which took place in Maseru in February 2010. This was followed by a linguistic and capacity building course on the French island of La Réunion in July 2010. Both workshops provided training in interactive foreign language teaching techniques to panel members, more specifically within the CEFRL.

In November last year, our French Ambassador officially closed the 3rd workshop which took place here at the Alliance Française in Maseru with 15 teachers and which was facilitated by a French expert from CIEP (International Centre for Pedagogical Studies) in La Reunion.

This last workshop focused, during a whole week, on the new French curriculum support material that I have the honor and pleasure to hand over to the officials of the Ministry of Education.

With these new textbooks, the kingdom of Lesotho is strengthening the existing links with our network of Alliance Française in the region and especially the one in Maseru which is particularly present and active in offering French classes and international examinations in that field and offering a variety of cultural programs during the year.

We can all witness here, in Maseru, the commitment of this Alliance Française and its director, Mr. Carnino, who gives us great support in implementing the French Embassy cooperation projects in areas such as police, defense, culture and of course, French language.

Various grants have made it possible for us to purchase these 3000 books that are being donated today, as well as financing the mission of the French expert from La Réunion Island.

Apart from the 6000 euro contribution made by the French Embassy, I would like to note the grants made by the Regional Cooperation Fund of La Reunion for the amount of 3 000 euros and from Institut Français in Paris for the amount of 12 550 euros.

The Institut Français in Paris is the newly created institution which is implementing the cultural policies of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, particularly in promoting the French language globally.

On his last visit to Lesotho, the French Ambassador also awarded scholarships to four teachers who were selected to enjoy a two week linguistic stay in France. In December, 3 of these

teachers departed to France, among them, the devoted president of the new association of teachers of French, Mrs. Itumeleng Mokhele. The fourth teacher who couldn't travel in December will attend the same course this July.

I would further like to stress the strong commitment and invaluable contribution of the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Lesotho. By securing grants for pilot schools, the Ministry supports the recruitment of teachers of French and, by the allocation of funds, facilitated the workshops which have taken place thus far.

The French Embassy, through the Alliance Française in Maseru, has appointed a permanent expert in French to the NCDC which I am honoured to name as Mrs. Haingonirina. She expresses her appreciation to the Ministry of Education for providing her with accommodation in town. Thanks to her availability and competencies, the implementation of our project will be under sharp monitoring which is the condition for its success.

I would also wish to acknowledge and salute the eminent role played by all stakeholders in the teaching of French in Lesotho, both at the campus of the Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho, where we are proud to have the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Mr Jomary Mulumedi, who is a French lecturer. In 2009, the University especially created a new position, occupied by Mr Andrew Manyawu at the Faculty of Education for a French lecturer who is dedicated to train students to become teachers of French. This indeed is a strategic post for the sustainability of our project.

Finally all conditions are put together to make 2012 a great year for the teaching of French in Lesotho by the allocation of these new textbooks to students and a special grant from the French Embassy for the registration of 5 teachers to the World Congress of Teachers in French, which will take place in July 2012 in Durban. We look forward to their contribution to the promotion of the French language in Lesotho!

Now, it is my pleasure to officially hand over these French textbooks to the Ministry of Education.