



## Starting their New Life - 60 vulnerable returnees and youth graduated from St. Mary Mazzarello VTC



**Maputsoe - Leribe, May 1 2021:** IOM has been implementing the regional projects funded by UK-Aid titled ‘*Humanitarian response to vulnerable and stranded migrants in Southern Africa region*’ as part of the COVID-19 response. The countries which are implementing are South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Lesotho. IOM Lesotho has been working closely with Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), DISCOSEC (District COVID-19 Secretariat) and District Disaster Management Team (DDMT) to identify vulnerable returnees and their family members, as well as other extreme vulnerable youth in Mophale Hoek, Quthing and Quthing’s Nek districts and provide skills training to restore their livelihood.

Among the 180 beneficiaries who received skills training by the project, 60 of them have already graduated from College of Cooperative Entrepreneurship and Business Studies (CCBES) in February and March 2021 and started their own business in their respective districts. On 1 May 2021, another 60 beneficiaries have graduated from St. Mary Mazzarello Vocational Training Centre (VTC). 17 beneficiaries learned catering and decoration, 13 beneficiaries learned computer, 13 learned sawing / fashion design, and 17 learned hairdressing and manicure. Graduates are from Quthing’s Nek (17 persons), Quthing (18 person), Mophale Hoek (21 persons) and Mafeteng (4 persons) districts.

In her remarks, **The Principal of the St. Mary Mazzarello, Sister Cecillia Motanya** stated, “*St. Mary Mazzarello VTC was established in early 1990’s when women had no access to secondary education and women’s rights were not recognized in the society. Our objective is to empower women through skills training and transform them to be a woman of honour, a woman who can stand for their rights and bring positive changes to their community.*” She further stated; “*We are happy for our partnership with IOM in this project as the empowerment of young women and men is what we believe is our mission*”.

In her remarks, **Head of Office IOM Lesotho, Ms. Eriko Nishimura** acknowledged the students’ commitment and tireless efforts to gain new skills at St. Mary Mazzarello VTC and congratulated on their successful completion of their skills training. She stated, “*Money can be consumed even today and it will be gone. Skills you have gained will not disappear and it will remain with you forever. Skills training have transformed you completely. When you came here, you were vulnerable youth, but now, you are a confident and empowered youth who can bring positive changes to your community where you are coming from*”.



Speaking on behalf of the **Ministry of Education, TVET, Mr. Thabang Mokotjo** said; *“Leadership is influence. When you go back to your community, you are young community leaders as you now have a skill. So you can influence your community and market your products”*. He also said; *“Hairdressing and manicure is one of the skills in demand. I am happy that St. Mazarello VTC is among the first VTCs to offer this training”*. Lastly, he commented that the Ministry of Education is always ready to support the growth of VTCs, reduce the skills mismatch between the VTC and industrial needs, and once again congratulated students and St. Mary Mazarello VTC on the successful completion of the skills training.

Speaking on behalf of the entire beneficiaries, **Ms. Mammopa Masiloane, Student representative**, thanked UK Aid and the Government of Japan for availing the skills training opportunity. She stated; *“What we have learned here in the past three months will not go to waste. We have become leaders in our own right and we shall demonstrate this in our communities to empower other young people. Our dreams have become a reality because of this opportunity and we are forever indebted to UK Aid and the Government of Japan for their support.”*

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