



Sustained Rehabilitation of Rural Women ex-offenders and reintegration in their communities

CLOSING REPORT

MAIN AUTHOR: T MZAKU



Project Cycle: April 2021 - March 2022

INTRODUCTION



*Makhadzi Mudau in her homestead:
Tshikhudini Site - Vhembe, Limpopo*

Since towards the end of 2018 The National Movement of Rural Women has been generous in its support for our violence prevention work. This work started in correctional centres based in rural areas of Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Free State and accordingly targeted rural women. 146 of these women received both rehabilitation and psychosocial support, and were also prepared for reintegration in their communities. We furthermore provided individual reintegration attention to each of the 15 women after they were released back to their respective communities.

We realised however that our work could not be complete if efforts to address drivers of violence such as poverty remain absent. Therefore we expanded our reintegration work by incorporating food farming. To remain within our ethos of nonviolence we opted for agroecology (interchangeably also referred to as permaculture) as a farming method so as not to harm the environment, but to instead contribute towards its restoration.

For such self-reliance methodology to be sustained, our participants were also conscientised on circular economy and cooperative enterprise. Thus our ex-inmates got other local women in their communities involved. Currently 23 women of Vhembe, Mokopane, Tzaneen, Kroonstad and Botshabelo are growing their own food and feeding at least 193 family members. This has drastically decreased the food expenditure in their respective households. Some of these women have already begun to earn an extra income through the selling of surplus crops. They earn an extra income of between R1800 and R4500 per month.

In addition, these ex-inmates and some of the women trained as mentors are now mentoring more than 309 young women in schools and other organised groups. This further prevents violence – something which sets the stage for vigorous rural economic development interventions that this projects is ready for in the next cycle.

This report shares with the stakeholders the outcomes and activities of this project in the 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 cycle.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships and Youth Mentorship Set up

In this cycle we were motivated, in the main, by the aim to sustain the impact of the project and organisation beyond the NMRW funding support. Therefore our stakeholder engagement activities were geared towards this aim.

We identified and held several partnership oriented engagements with the organisations and individuals with a national and international footprint such as African Marmalade, Community Works Programme (CWP), Gavin Andersson and Mac Maharaj Project, UNDP's Global Environment Facility (GEF), Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET) department, University of Venda and Anglo American Mining Company.



Meeting with LEDET Director, TVC & Phaphama

The following results were thusfar achieved:

- MOU entered into with African Marmalade to have participants surplus produce accessing relevant markets, and skilling on grading and expansion, and appointing at least 1 M2M coordinator in each site
- Small Grant awarded by GEF for expansion in the Vhembe area
- MOU entered into with Institute for Rural Development to partner in M&E, and explore rural based tourism and outreach rural development academy
- Expression of intent entered into with Anglo American to partner in GBV work in selected rural mining communities

Activities & Results



Mentorship Pilot at Tshikhudini Primary School led by our trained mentor: Anastasia

Tshikhudini (Vhembe)

In the months of November 2021 and March 2022 we engaged the leadership of Tshikhudini Primary and Azwifarwi High schools. We also mapped the local business activities of this area. So far we have achieved the following results:

- Mentorship was piloted on 8 April 2022 at Tshikhudini School. 4 of our mentors explored the subject of violence against women and children with 72 (39 girls and 33 boys) grade 7 learners. The school has since scheduled a regular programme for grade 6 and 7 learner to begin in the third term of the 2022 academic year.

Ha-Budeli (Vhembe)

Between October 2021 and March 2022 we met and engaged Lekwarani Primary School, Ward Clr and Thulamela Local Council Speaker and Dzomo la Mupo Project with the view to facilitate long-term partnerships between local stakeholders and our participants. The following results have thus far been attained:

- The Speaker committed to be the ambassador of the project in the Thulamela local municipality
- Lekwarani School agreed in writing to avail grade 6-7 girls for mentorship sessions when the third term begins in 2022
- Action plan drafted with Dzomo La Mupo to explore a tourism and environment business collaboration. A proper business plan has to be drawn up.

Dumasi (Vhembe)

Although Tshilala and Tshilivho schools were engaged and had ultimately agreed to partner with our mentors in the edification work of violence prevention and sustainable farming for their grade 6 to 8 learners, the local Headman (vhoMusanda) demanded an anomalous payment as a condition for a continued work in this village. We found this demand to be irregular and did not comply, which meant we had to unfortunately suspend our intervention in this village.

Mahwelereng (Mokopane)

In November 2021 we embarked on a series of engagement meetings with Nesta Foods (fast food restaurant), Mahwelereng Victim Support Centre, Mahwelereng SAPS station commander, and Nonchimudi Senior Primary, Gojela and DG Tsebe High schools. These engagements resulted in the following:

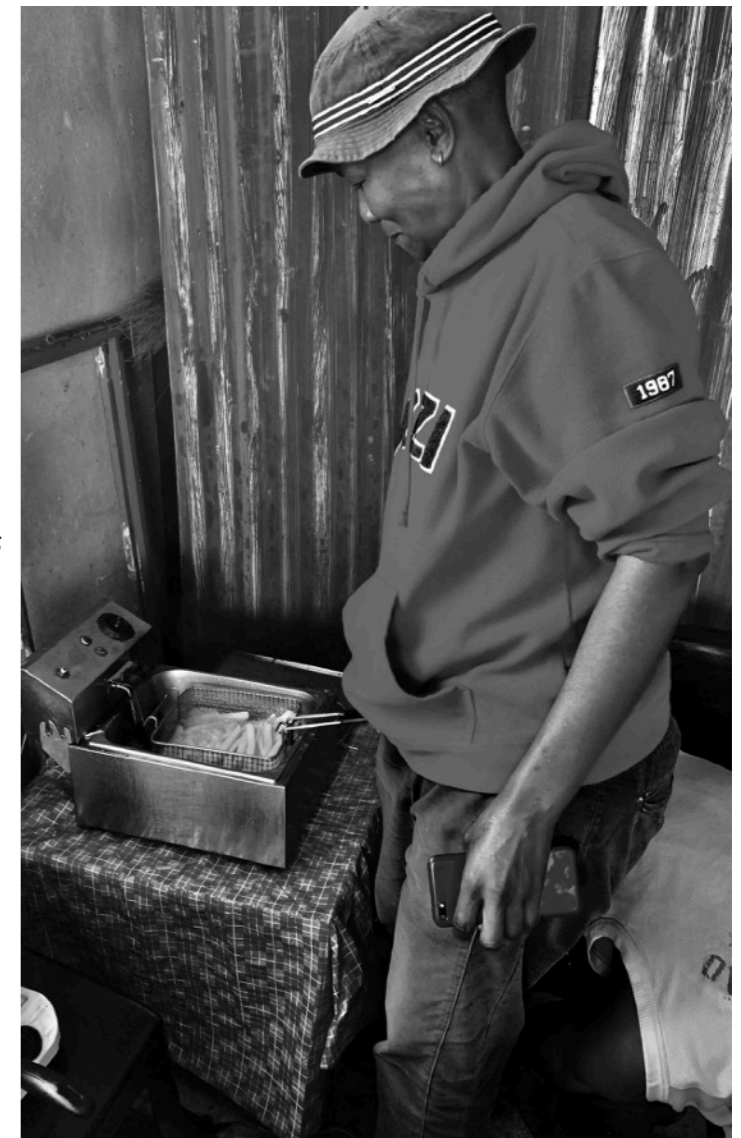
- Mr Kagiso Lishilo the manager of Nesta donated a used mini-fryer and committed to provide fast food model skills to our ex-inmate and mentor, Ms Comfort Moreba. Since February 2022, Comfort is currently running her own fast food outlet in her community. Her store attends to about 75 customers daily. This translates to at least R1120 turnover per day.
- Comfort has provided mentorship 4 sessions between January and February 2022 for 22 GBV survivors at Mahwelereng SAPS station based Victim Support Centre.

Nkowankowa (Tzaneen)

In the week of 15 to 19 November 2021 we had intense engagements with Banana Primary School and the Ward Clr. We also did mapping of local business activities. The results of these engagements are as follows:

- Ancy our ex-inmate and mentor has so far reached 88 grade 7 girls of Banana Primary School since February 2022. She mentored them on areas of hygiene and food gardening.

Comfort preparing fries in her fast food outlet





Pricilla's Mentorship Session at Phomolong Public School - Maokeng Site, FS

Maokeng (Kroonstad)

The stakeholder engagements in Maokeng happened between April 2021 and January 2022. We held partnership oriented conversations with the office of the premier, CWP, Phomolong Public and Boitiko Primary schools and Buzzy Corner Chesa Nama & Car Wash. Through these engagements we attained the following results:

- The office of the premier dedicated the local community development worker (CDW) to support the project. An action plan to mobilise government and private sector support has since been developed in partnership with the CDW.
- Since March 2022 Ms Pricilla Dabi our most recent mentor conducts bi-weekly mentorship sessions at Phomolong Public School, reaching 127 grade 6 to 7 learners (72 girls and 55 boys). Her sessions deal with subjects of GBV, peer pressure, bullying, healthy living and agroecology.



Engaging the MEC for Agriculture & Rural Development with Gloria our ex-inmate Mentor

Botshabelo

Between May and December 2021 we engaged Bernina Bloemfontein, Mahlohonolo, Kgauho and Senakangwedi schools, the Rural & Rural Development MEC and the Community Corrections department. The following have been achieved:

- Our mentor, Gloria an ex-inmate signed an SLA with the Rural & Rural Development MEC to partner in provincial tour to provide mentorship and motivation to the youth during youth month outreach in 2022
- Ms Minkie Khathi Gloria's recruitee has entered into an MOU with Bernina Bloemfontein to receive sewing equipments at a discounted rate and payable in interest fee instalments. She has since supplied 468 civvies T-shirts for 2 schools.

Food Security Aftercare Support

On a monthly basis during the project cycle under review, Ukuvuna and Phaphama facilitators conducted visitations to all the sites, both in Limpopo and Free State provinces. During these visitations, farmers were given guidance on how to improve and sustain their permaculture gardens. Our facilitators recorded varying successes in these sites. For instance:

Ancy of Nkowankowa has since added chickens in her household farm as she begins to improve biodiversity.

Keaikatseng's garden of Botshabelo was able to produce healthier herbs and vegetables than in any other time. She was then able to supply vegetables in her family funeral and thus saving them money.

Hadio of Botshabelo has managed to cultivate her spinach seamlessly as it has become her great source of income. The surplus spinach she grows is in great demand in her community. Her monthly income from the surplus produce averages on R1 800.

Still in Botshabelo, Nomakholwa harvests rain water through creative yet aesthetic means.

Agnes in Budeli has started a Sunday morning market in the COE. She generates income from seeds, seedlings, herbs, medicinal plants, fruits and vegetables she harvests regularly. In a good month Agnes earns up to R4500 in profits.



Keaikatseng showing off one of the healthy pumpkins she supplied in her family funeral



Creative Rain Water Harvesting at Nomkholwa's near Botshabelo FS

Centre of Excellence

In the week of 6- 10 September 20221 Ukuvuna led us in the establishment of a centre of excellence (COE) in the Botshabelo area. This became the second one besides the one established in the Vhembe area in the previous project cycle.

As per the Phaphama-Ukuvuna partnership, the setting up of this COE was in a form of experiential training. In this regard participants were taken through permaculture and agroecology methods of farming. 13 women from Botshabelo, Kroontand and elsewhere near

Bloemfontein; plus 1 from Tzaneen benefited in this training.

To date 13 of these 14 participants are now practising permaculture in their own household gardens and community projects.



Biodiversity in progress

MOVING TO MARKET (M2M)

Market Entry Exploration

For this project cycle, we explored a number of points of entry into the market on behalf of our participants. As indicated elsewhere in this report, we engaged relevant stakeholders such as African Marmalade.

With African Marmalade we set up to explore two types of markets, which remain true to our sustainable farming ethics that circumvent exploitation of the people and environment. Firstly we needed to ensure that the surplus produce of those participants with minimal access to land be marketed to local hospitality businesses. Secondly, those with more access to land would avail their produce to organised buyers such OneFarm Share and other large scale buyers marketed by African Marmalade.

Given the fact that none of our participants have enough produce to individually supply buyers in the market, collaborations formed the core part of our strategic approach. Each site or cluster needed a coordinator who would collate all the produce in that site or cluster in order to meet the demand of a related buyer. Accordingly:

- In partnership with African Marmalade we conducted 2 market management workshops in each site or cluster.
- In partnership with Ukuvuna, we conducted onsite visits to assess the quality of crops and provide basic grading mechanism.



Graded and Packaged Pumpkins ready for Market at the African Marmalade base

Thus 3 coordinators were appointed and are operational in their respective clusters or sites of Botshabelo, Maokeng and Vhembe. All 3 are making significant inroads into the identified markets.

We also explored the formation of cooperatives to gradually move our participants into the formal supply within the buy local and invest rural principles of the district development model.

In this market exploration process we have learnt that, contrary to a popular assumption, commercial

farming is not a sustainable solution to food insecurity. It is these kinds of subsistence farming that provides a real solution. For instance, commercial farmers produce only what they think is suitable for the market and thus control the diet of those who depend on their supplies. Whereas subsistence farmers can produce what is in demand within and around their communities.

CONCLUSION

Holistic Rural Women Development is Paramount

Over the last four years, we had been gaining valuable experience in the important work of rural development. Our entry into this work was through our rehabilitation and reintegration work – based on violence prevention methods – in correctional centres that house rural women inmates. We soon learnt though that a rehabilitated rural woman would struggle to fully reintegrate back in her community if her economic challenges, especially property, are not addressed. On the other hand her economic challenges cannot be addressed when the mindset and environment driven by violence characterised mainly by annihilation of women and children prevails.

We therefore adopted a holistic approach into the question of developing rural women. We worked on the development of a woman who can catalyse the change towards a nonviolent community that strive for gender equity and reconciliation, promotes women led food security and climate change interventions, and drive circular economy and rural investment. We have been making gradual and yet crucial progress in this work in all our Limpopo and Free State sites.

We are however not yet at a stage where we can claim sustainability. The progress made can easily be reversed since both us as the facilitating organisation and our participants have not yet established a solid income base. As a facilitator organisation, we are still reliant on donor funding and grants such as that of the National Movement of Rural Women for survival.

Thus, we intended to dedicate the next cycle, 2022/23 for work towards the sustainability of both our participants and Phaphama. Hence our funding proposal to the NMRW was in two-folds so as to strengthen the self-sustainability of our participants on the one hand and build our own as the facilitating organisation on the other. At this point the NMWR has approved

the one fold that enables us to work on the sustainability projects of our participants in the next cycle. We are grateful for this and for the fact that the NMRW is open to discussing the other fold further.

We furthermore acknowledge that our newly developed programme of holistic development of rural women, which is a key segment of our flagship programme, Making a Living would not have achieved the great heights it has if it was not for the unrelenting support of the NMRW. We are grateful for this support and commit to create self reliant and sustainability goals in the rural sites on which we operate in line with the NMRW developmental mission. We intend to continue having meaning conversations with the NMWR that will demonstrate the value of supporting the Phaphama sustainability proposal as it already has with that of the rural women participants of Making a Living in the next cycle.