



Namibia

Unique New Schools Change One Life at a Time

When asked what she knows about HIV and AIDS, 13-year old Tresia Hayambo responds simply: "My father and mother have died of it." That tragedy left Tresia and her four siblings in the charge of their elderly grandparents.

Tresia was instructed by her grandmother to join the Ondobe Junior Farmer Field and Life School (JFFLS) in January 2006. "Initially I was taken to the JFFLS without knowing what it means and what benefits there are in joining this afternoon school without any buildings."

"We didn't know exactly what the school would offer," said Tresia's grandmother of the decision. "We just felt sure that our children would learn something to assist us in the future." And the grandmother has good reason to look for help wherever she can find it. At 70 years of age, with a blind husband, she is the matriarch of a 29-person homestead.

Most of the members of this extended family are children, dozens of whom have been left in this rural home with their grandparents while the parents try to make a living working in urban centers. Tresia's grandmother says that she feels obliged to care for all the grandchildren despite the fact that she and her husband earn a combined pension of 700 Namibian Dollars (about US\$100) and survive by farming.

The Ondobe JFFLS in Ohangwena Region is one of eight such schools in Namibia (four in Caprivi region and four in Ohangwena region). The JFFLS programme aims to empower children like Tresia who are orphaned or otherwise vulnerable through imparting agricultural skills and teaching them about HIV and AIDS and essential life skills. Nine members of the community comprise a Management Committee that is responsible for overseeing the daily activities of the school. They are joined by community volunteers who act as JFFLS facilitators.

Tresia attended JFFLS three times a week, after conventional school had ended for the day. She found herself among thirty other students, evenly split between boys and girls. Upon arrival each day, the children were given lunch. Soon they were themselves growing tomatoes, cabbage, spinach, chillies, sweet potatoes, maize, guavas, pawpaw, and carrots.

"Before joining JFFLS," explained Tresia, "I knew nothing about vegetable cultivation or nutrition issues. I felt so lonely being an orphan from a very poor family. The facilitators taught us how to grow and eat vegetables and fruits, some of which have never been part of our diet before."

FAO in collaboration with the Government, other UN agencies, and NGOs introduced JFFLS in Namibia to empower and assist the rapidly growing population of orphans and vulnerable children to have a better ability of facing day-to-day challenges.

FAO is the programme's lead agency and provides financial and technical support for JFFLS activities. WFP supplies food for the programme. Other

JFFLS partners include UNICEF, Namibia Red Cross, US Peace Corps, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health.

Tresia graduated from the Ondobe JFFLS in May 2007 and has confirmed her grandmother's belief that the programme would bring benefits. "My granddaughter is now very different from other children," boasts the elderly woman. "She is more responsible and ready to help me with my domestic work." And now one of Tresia's siblings has begun attending JFFLS for the 2007-2008 season. "I wish all my children could get an opportunity to attend this afternoon school," says Tresia's grandmother.

The JFFLS experience doesn't end upon graduation. Since completing the programme, Tresia has been asked to return periodically to the school to act as a co-facilitator for new batches of students. Facilitators also visit the homesteads of former participants to assist them with agricultural activities and to hold discussions with the parents about how to improve this innovative new programme.



Tresia learned how to grow and irrigate vegetables at Ondobe JFFLS.

Namibia at a Glance

Population:

Total population:	1,830,330 (Census 2001)
Female:	942,572
Male:	887,721
Population growth rate:	2.6%
Urban population:	33%
Rural population:	67%
Fertility:	4.1%
Life expectancy of male at birth:	48
Life expectancy of female at birth:	50

Land:

Total land area:	824,116 square kms
Population density:	2.1 persons per square kilometre
Contribution of agriculture to GDP:	5%

Source of Household Income:

Wages and salaries:	41%
Farming:	28%
Pension:	11%
Business, non-farming:	9%
Cash remittance:	6%
Other:	5%

Total area planted with main food crops (2003)

Mahangu (Pearl millet)	258,651 ha
Maize	25,006 ha
Sorghum	6,595 ha

Livestock Census (2005):

Cattle	2,219,330
Sheep	2,663,795
Goats	2,043,479
Horses	47,429
Donkeys	140,291
Pigs	55,931
Poultry	998,278
Dogs	141,522
Camels	63
Ostriches	11,762

HIV / AIDS:

Prevalence among pregnant women (2004):	19.7%
Prevalence among 13 to 19 year-old pregnant girls:	11%
Prevalence among 20 to 24 year-old pregnant women:	22%
Projected no. of orphans:	155,000
Projected no. AIDS orphans among orphans under age of 15:	71%

FAO'S PARTNERS IN NAMIBIA

Government Agencies: Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Directorate of Emergencies in the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare

UN Agencies: WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNDP

International Organisations: Africare, CLUSA, Namibia Red Cross Society, US Peace Corps, WWF

FAO in Namibia

In Namibia, FAO disseminates knowledge and information to help improve the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Special attention is paid to reaching the rural and urban poor in the fight against poverty and hunger. The organization has made concerted efforts to assist HIV and AIDS affected and infected people by providing knowledge on nutrition and production and processing of appropriate food items. The work of FAO in Namibia reaches over 400,000 people, through the following activities:

Conservation Agriculture: In collaboration with WWF, extensive work on conservation agriculture has been established in Salambala, Mashi, Mayuni and Kwandu Conservancies in the Caprivi region. 444 farmers are direct beneficiaries of this programme.

Gardening: The Litusane gardening project in the Caprivi region demonstrates new techniques in vegetable and mushroom production. Eight poor families have started to see the results of their hard work and other farmers from inside and outside the region have started to learn from the example of the Litusane project.

Ogongo Dairy Projects: A Dairy Training Unit has been established at Ogongo Agricultural College. The unit has trained more than 300 farmers, students, and agricultural extension technicians across the country in milk hygiene, handling, processing, and marketing. Parallel to this initiative, the Ambuga Ekoto Dairy Cooperative Society was established and is assisting about 80 farmers from the Ogongo community to improve their life through milk production, processing, and marketing.

Trans-boundary Animal Diseases Surveillance: FAO works side by side with the Veterinary Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry in combating animal diseases in the country. All veterinary stations in northern Namibia are equipped with digital pen technology that is used to monitor animal diseases in an efficient way. This programme helps more than 400,000 livestock keepers in Caprivi, Kavango, Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Oshana and Omusati regions.

Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS): These are schools without walls where orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV/AIDS are empowered during a one-year education programme that follows an agricultural season cycle. The aim of the programme is to develop a strategy for the delivery of agricultural skills and life skills to in-school and out-of-school youth between the ages of 12 and 17. The programme is implemented in Endola, Ondobe, Oshandi and Etomba in Ohangwena region and in Lusese, Mubiza, Lizauli and Secheke in Caprivi region. About 330 children are taking part in these schools.

For more
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