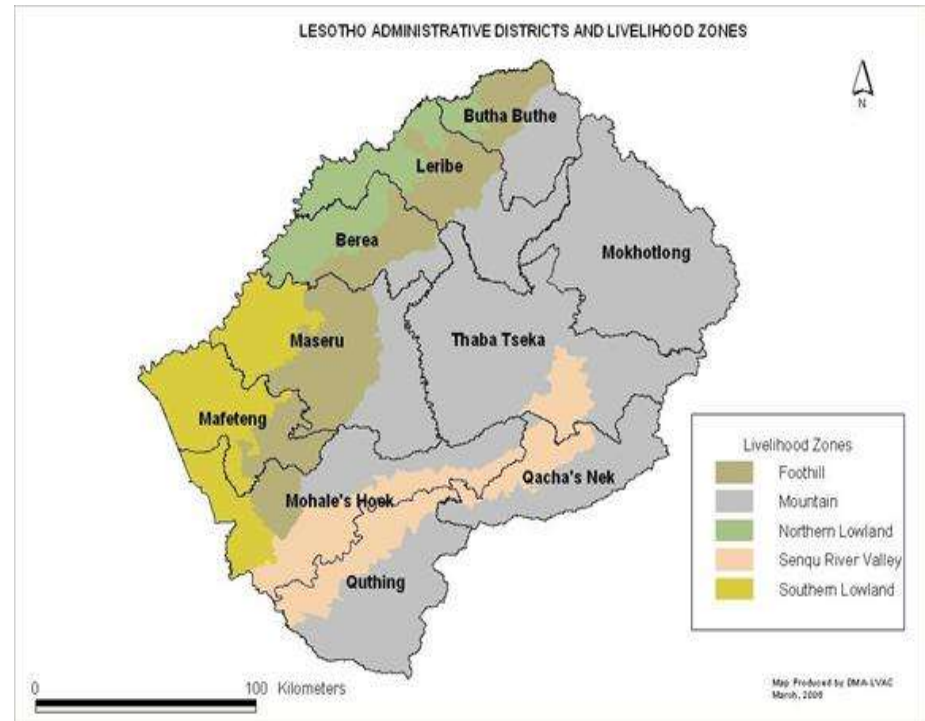


“MANTLOANE”: Lesotho’s Joined-Up Approach To Keyhole Gardens



Linking Issues of Hunger, Nutrition
and Poverty

Lesotho Background and Context

- Lesotho is a small landlocked country completely surrounded by a larger and wealthier South Africa
- There is 23% HIV prevalence across all ages, of which 60% are women and children
- During the past decade drought has become common, undermining rural agricultural production and eroding rural households'

Lesotho Background and Context (contd.)

- Staple crops (maize and sorghum) production has consistently declined since 2004-2005 with a slight improvement in 2009- 2010. But 2010-2011 brought floods, followed by a severe drought in 2012.
- In August 2012, the Prime Minister declared a food security emergency.
- The 2013 harvest has been better, but many people still struggle to feed themselves.

Nutrition Challenges in Lesotho

- Stunting prevalence is at 39% (LDHS 2009) a slight improvement from 42% (LNNS, 2007) and 15% of children under five are severely stunted. The prevalence of stunting in Lesotho is categorized as “very high” in accordance with the WHO Criteria (1995) prompting need for emergency Intervention. The most affected districts with a rate higher than the national average of 41.9 % are Thaba-Tseka, Mokhotlong, Qacha’s Nek and Berea
- Nationally, 4% of children < five years old are wasted, with children age 6-8 months (11%) suffering the highest rates i.e. during the early weaning period when they are also more likely to be affected by food loss due to gastric/diarrhoeal problems.

Nutrition Challenges in Lesotho(contd.)

- The percentage of children underweight is 13%, a slight decline from the 16% in 2004.
- It is important to note that 42% of women are overweight and 17% of them are obese. Among the wealthiest quintile 56% of women of child-bearing age are overweight, including 26% obese .

The C-Safe Programme

- As a result of these nutrition challenges, the keyhole gardens were started in Lesotho in the mid 90's.
- Lesotho's inclusion in the Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency (C-Safe) programme provided a bases for the expansion on this initiative
- C-Safe was led by both international and local NGOs, starting in the mid 2000s

Keyhole Gardening through C-Safe

- Lesotho's approach in C-Safe uses "keyhole gardens" as a strategy to integrate, or 'join up' support for food security, nutrition, education, income generation, savings and community development
- The approach focused on helping vulnerable households affected by HIV and AIDS, in addition to households with elderly or chronically ill people and with orphaned children.

But WAIT : What Is a “Keyhole Garden”??



The basic keyhole garden is a circular, raised bed made up of layers of soil, ash, manure and other organic material.

But WAIT : What Is a “Keyhole Garden”?? (contd.)



The keyhole garden retains moisture and nourishes the soil, making it more productive than a conventional garden, even during dry or cold months.

But WAIT : What Is a “Keyhole Garden”?? (contd.)

- The raised structure also makes access easier for the chronically ill or elderly. Size can vary, but the basic garden measures 1m high and 2m in diameter.
- **The keyhole-like cut-out, or walkway, design gives growers arms-length access across the garden.** ‘Grey’ water from household washing is added through a central composting basket, watering the garden and continuously infusing the soil with nutrients.
- Once built, the garden requires little maintenance and, if cared for appropriately, can produce food for up to five years before the garden’s organic layer needs replenishing.

But WAIT : What Is a “Keyhole Garden”?? (contd.)

- The gardens can produce vegetables year round for a family of five
- In Lesotho, the keyhole garden is usually walled with local stone or brick, that retains daytime heat, alleviating low night time temperatures.

C-Safe Project Aim # 1 Improved Nutrition:

- The keyhole gardens aim to help households grow more varied produce such as spinach, onions, carrots, rape and beetroot
- The produce can also be added to complementary feeds for 6-24 month old children during the critical growth stage when stunting can be reversed

C-Safe Project Aim # 2 Improved Food & Nutrition Security:

- Keyhole gardens improve household food and nutrition security year-round, producing vegetables even in winter. In Lesotho, night-time frosts are common, but the gardens' stone-walled design and mulching helps retain heat.
- The dietary improvement is of particular benefit to vulnerable groups (HIV & AIDs affectd, elderly, OVCs and young children)

C-Safe Project Aim # 3: Climate Resilience

- Watering through a compost container using household 'grey' water from washing helps plants cope with drought.

C-Safe Project Aim # 4: Income and Savings

- Households with gardens save money used for food purchases and also generate income by selling surplus produce thus supporting other household needs.
- These savings can pay for children's school fees.

C-Safe Project Aim # 5: Community Development

- Creating the gardens has helped reinstate “Matsema” (a form of social cohesion) groups based on local cultural norms of unity and cooperation.
- These help vulnerable households work with neighbors to build keyhole gardens throughout the community.

Joining Up To Ensure Sustainability

- The keyhole gardens are an integrated development approach, working closely through Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security extension workers with community and district stakeholders, including local authorities, traditional leaders, faith-based organizations, teachers and health workers.
- The approach has allowed training and technical support to be introduced at district level community centers, schools and health centers
- The approach is popular and self-supporting. Data collected suggests that as many as 15% of non-project households in intervention areas replicate the technology for themselves with the help of project participants.
- One assessment study of 13,000 C-Safe project beneficiaries found that 91 per cent were still maintaining and caring for their gardens two years into the project.

Innovations

- Local knowledge and participants' accumulated experience has led to adaptations over the years, for example by using manure and manure 'tea', and using chilli peppers, garlic and intercropping with marigolds to help pest control.
- Participants also share their experiences and skills with other community groups at agricultural field days.

Main Achievements

- Collaboration with government officials and advocacy to members of parliament has ensured a place for homestead gardening (including keyholes) in the strategic plans of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office and the Ministry of Health.
- Since the project began in 2006, 23,150 keyhole gardens have been built across the country, in eight of the ten districts, reaching an estimated total of 111,590 people (about 5% of the population)

Challenges

- The project found fear of the stigma associated with HIV infection reduced uptake, so criteria for participation was dropped, and now all households within a target village are eligible.
- There were also difficulties in ensuring maintenance or renovation for retaining walls and for the central compost and watering basket.
- Not all communities had access to the same materials and so the strategy was adapted to use suitable local materials.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Demonstrable success and joined-up involvement from a wide-range of expertise gave the project a large ripple effect, in this case acting both at the local level, where community groups have spread the technology, and at international level where the keyhole garden approach has spread to other countries.
- The integrated approach linked issues and organizations. In Lesotho, keyhole gardens link the issues of food security, nutrition, health, education, income generation, savings and community development; drawing support and action from NGOs, community groups and government officials.

LESSONS LEARNT (contd.)

- An integrated approach also benefits from joining up with traditional knowledge and thinking, for example incorporating local pest control techniques and building on traditional values and institutions (through Matsema).
- Stigma and targeting: given the stigma of HIV& AIDS targeting in production-based interventions, the beneficiaries are HIV infected household
- **Not everyone is a farmer:** not all beneficiaries are farmers but are still vulnerable households. Some have little land and not enough space for a keyhole garden next to the homestead.

Kea Leboha!

