

WWF-Milestone 7: Sixth progress report above including a focus on improving social agency for value chain support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this period, village-based learning groups in KZN (12) and EC (7) respectively, have continued with their prioritized CRA learning and implementation processes. Heavy late season rainfall and flooding, more specifically in KZN has had a very negative effect on crop growth and yields for field cropping and has led to extensive damage of roads and houses. Soaring prices of fuel and inputs, more specifically in the EC, have had a dampening effect on participants' micro poultry production units and implementation. Theft and violence in the communal tenure areas has seen a sharp rise in the last 6 months – something that the participating farmers are hard pressed to protect themselves against. Women owning small businesses and livestock have been a target.

Notwithstanding, participating farmers (305 across EC and KZN) have continued to improve their production and incomes. Average monthly incomes per participant, has been the following: Vegetable production (R441), Broiler production(R936), Egg production (R354). In addition, participants have kept some of their production towards household use. They are saving around R6 600/participant per year in the VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Associations).

Stakeholder engagement in the period has included among others:

- SANBI-LCP_Convenors' workshop – 6-8 April _Gauteng and
- Farming for Climate Justice collaborative action research programme (F4CJ): Cross visit of Zingela Ulwazi farmers from Mpumalanga to the Midlands' site and a Farmers' Open Day outlining all CRA activities and solidarity networks – 25 -26 April 2022.

NARRATIVE REPORT

PROJECT DETAILS

Project No and Title	GT06177_ID315_ Climate Resilient Agriculture in mixed smallholder farming systems allows for sustainable food and nutrition security and local incomes for the rural poor in the lower Drakensberg foothills of KZN and the Eastern Cape.
Date of approval	6 th October 2020
Start and end date	1 st October 2020-30 th August 2022
Project value	R3 000 000
Contractor's name	Mahlathini Development Foundation
Project objectives	Increased productivity and resilience in the mixed smallholder farming system through implementation of a basket of Climate Resilient Agriculture practices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with existing CCA learning groups to scale up production in the short term within the confines of the COVID-19 pandemic 2. Support a range of intensified food production activities; vegetable production, field cropping and livestock integration 3. Improve social agency for value chain support (VSLAs', bulk buying, local farmer centres and local marketing initiatives)
Project outcomes	<p><i>Outcome 1 - Food and nutrition security at household level for poor, rural homesteads with enough farming income to sustainably maintain farming activities in the short term</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activity 1 - Learning group review and planning sessions to prioritize each participant's most appropriate basket of CRA practices to be implemented, within the present confined of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change 2. Activity 2 - Prioritize a basket of appropriate adaptive practices for the individuals and groups involved within different thematic categories: Crops, livestock, water, soil and natural resources

	<p>3. Activity 3 - Provide learning and implementation support for the CRA* practices using a Participatory Innovation Development (PID) approach</p> <p><i>Outcome 2 - Development of social agency for community led local economic development and social safety net Improvement of the natural resource base</i></p> <p>4. Activity 1 - Build social and economic capital within each of the learning groups using approaches such as Village savings and loans associations (VSLAs), farmer centres, small business development and local marketing initiatives</p> <p>5. Activity 2 - Set up a participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) system for monitoring and assessing the impact of the CSA practices on livelihoods and resilience.</p> <p>6. Activity 3 - Use an iterative approach of farmer level experimentation and social learning to build local adaptation and innovation capacity</p>
Reporting period	October 2020- 30 August 2022
Significant approved changes	None
Changes in capacity to deliver outcomes	None

1 PROGRESS PER OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME

The last three months have been focused finalization of Conservation Agriculture experimentation and starting on yield measurements for these. Focus has been provided for fodder supplementation (including cutting and baling of hay). Tunnels and drip kits, learning on agroecological gardening practices and continuation with the poultry production aspects have been given some attention (12 villages in KZN and 7 in EC).

We have continued with local marketing processes where possible, mostly with organic produce market tables at central points, such as pension days, hospitals and taxi ranks.

Table 1: Progress against specific outcomes and activities for the period Mid- March-Mid June 2022

Outcome	Activities	Progress (Milestone 7)
Livelihood security at household level	1. Learning group review and planning sessions	KZN: Ezibomvini, Stulwane, Vimbukhalo, Eqeleni, Emadakaneni, Madzikane, Gobizembe, Mayizekanye, Ozwathini, Spring Valley, Ngongonini, Plainhill EC: Rashule Nkau, Lufefeni, Mngeni, Ned, Mechachaneng, Nchodu CCA introduction workshops held for 4 new villages in the EC
	2. Prioritized baskets of appropriate practises	Gardening: Tunnels, drip irrigation, mixed cropping, natural pest and disease control, trench beds and eco-circles, tower gardens and greywater management Conservation Agriculture: Experimentation with close cropping, inter cropping crop rotation, cover crops, perennial fodder crops, short season maize varieties and 2row tractor drawn no till planters. Livestock integration: Continuation of micro poultry enterprises (broilers and layers). Procurement of brush cutters for more intensive veld grass baling
	3. Learning and implementation support	Conservation Agriculture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Planting and monitoring of CA plantings in 13 villages in KZN and EC. ✓ Late planting of short season maize and cover crops plots in KZN (22 participants) Livestock integration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fodder supplementation experimentation and monitoring in KZN (24 participants) Gardening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tunnel construction training KZN and EC (21 tunnels) ✓ Gardening learning and mentoring in bed design, greywater management, organic soil fertility, natural pest and disease control (98 participants in EC) ✓ Drip kit construction learning workshops in KZN and EC (59 participants)
Social agency for LED and social safety nets	1. VSLAs, business development, farmer centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Monthly farmers market stalls for Midlands KZN ✓ 26 VSLA's in KZN; monthly mentoring and share out meetings. ✓ Continuation with bulk loan fund for two new groups (Ngongonini, Bergville KZN).

2. PM&E system and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local marketing income monitoring ✓ Poultry monitoring ✓ CA crop growth and yield monitoring ✓ Initiation of resilience snapshots
3. Iterative PID approach for improved adaptation and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Case study (MidlandsCalf rearing linked to Conservation Agriculture, fodder production and farmers' association) ✓ F4CJ: Open day and cross visit of Mpumalanga farmers

1. Progress overview.

CRA support for different activities is seasonal. During this period (March- June 2022) the following activities have been undertaken:

- Conservation Agriculture: Measurement of yields, late season planting of winter cover crops, cutting and baling of grass for winter fodder supplementation experimentation for 24 participants in KZN.
- Construction of the remaining tunnels in KZN (Bergville, Midlands and SKZN) and EC, bringing the total tunnels installed to 91, and a focus on construction of the drip kits for a total of 63 participants
- Gardening training and implementation of trench beds, mixed cropping, mulching, liquid manures and tower gardens for 98 participants across 5 villages in the EC (Matatiel), and Pest and disease control management training in 3 villages in Bergville (KZN)
- Consolidation of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) record keeping for 26 VSLAs and training for VSLA committees. Continuation with piloting of the Bulk Loan Fund in Bergville (Stulwane).
- Support for micro poultry enterprises; assistance with procurement, monitoring and training for a total of 118 participants across KZN and EC.
- Monthly market stalls have continued for Ozwathini only. In other areas, farmers have sold produce more informally in their villages.

The table below provides an overview of the number of participants for all activities to date.

Table 2: Overview of participants in the WWF-GT project for all activities undertaken: June 2022

		CA				Tunnels				Broilers		Layers		Fodder supplementation			
Total number of participants in CRA learning groups		Proposed CA	Actual 2020/21	Actual 2021/22	Field cropping ha's	Proposed tunnels	Actual 2020/21	Actual 2021/22	Drip kits	Gardening ha's	Proposed Broilers	Actual 2020/22	Proposed Layers	Actual 2020/22	Proposed Fodder supplementation	Actual 2020/21	Actual 2020/22
2021/22	378	135	172	155	19,1	100	70	21	63	2,3	50	73	18	49	100	19	28
2020/21	360				18,6												
KZN	234		112	125	0,46		59	9	50		64		33		19	28	
	Bergville		73	70			41	1	42		50		17		19	23	
	Midlands		24	33			8	6	8		8		9			5	
	SKZN		15	23			10				6		7				
EC	144		60	30			11	12	13		9		16				
	Mzongwana		48	8			1				5		7				
	Rashule,		10	10			3	4	3		1		3				
	KwaNed							4	4								
	Nkau		2	12			7	2	6		3		4				
	Mechachaneng							1					2				
	Nkasele/ Nchodu						1										

Note: For KZN cropping fields are on average 0,25ha/participant. For EC fields are on average 0,01ha or smaller.

Note: Gardens are small and average 0,025ha per participant.

The proposed number of participants for the programme is 135 per annum (55 from KZN and 80 from EC), thus 270 in total over the 2 years of implementation. At present there are 378 participants in the programme, 234 from KZN and 144 from the EC. If the participants who are undertaking more than one activity, e.g. for example both CA and tunnels are removed, then there is a total of **305 participants** in the programme. In KZN the learning groups are well developed and are expanding every year as more participants come on board. In the EC, the learning groups are new and in the process of being introduced to the various aspects of CRA and working in learning groups.

In terms of expenditure, the budget allocations and use for the various activities is summarized in the small table below.

Table 3: Summary of expenditure on CRA activities: June 2022

Cost break down	Jun-22	Remainder	Budget (2021 and 2022)
Poultry	R184 770,22	-R48 250,22	R80 000,00
Tunnels (90)	R432 849,20	-R2 199,20	R430 650,00
Seedlings, marketing etc	R25 490,14	R69 009,86	R94 500,00
CA (2 seasons)	R102 068,82	-R2 353,82	R127 715,00
Fodder supp	R7 708,31	R15 291,69	R23 000,00
	R752 886,69	R2 978,31	R755 865,00

For all the activities (poultry, seedlings, CA and fodder supplementation) farmers were supported with a proportion of the start-up inputs and have contributed to their own inputs thereafter. MDF is still assisting in procurement and delivery. Due to the combined effects of COVID-19 and the social unrest, many agricultural inputs are still in short supply and are not easy to get hold of. This includes day old chicks, point of lay hens, maize seed, fertilizer and seedlings. Prices have escalated dramatically.

2. Conservation Agriculture 2nd cycle of implementation

This late in the summer season, participants are getting ready to weigh their yields for their CA field crops (maize, beans and summer cover crops). Because of excessive late season rain recently, bean yields have been decimated and drying time for the maize has been increased, with a greater threat of fungal contamination.

This is also the time that fodder supplementation workshops are held to organise the cutting and baling of grass and outline the experiments to be undertaken in winter supplementation. In addition, participants plant winter cover crops between February-April, either as a relay crop or in separate plots.

Winter cover crops consist of a mixture of Saia oats, fodder radish and fodder rye. The small table below outlines the participants interested in planting (19) and those who actually managed to plant (12). Participants were interested in providing some nutritious early winter fodder for their livestock and in improving their soil health. Excessive rain meant participants could not manage the pre plant spraying and that fields were too wet to do planting.

Table 2: Participants who planted winter cover crops.

Midlands

In the Midlands, a demonstration plot was planted at Mrs Xulu from Ozwathini and seed was provided to a further 5 participants. She bought and fenced a new site just outside her homestead to plant different fodder species for her 5 cattle. The land that

Village	Famer's Name & Surname	Planted	Area Planted (m ²)
Ozwathini	Mariam Xulu	Yes	960
	Thokozile Hlophe	No	-
	Mr Sikhakhane	No	-
Gobizembe	Mr Zuma	No	-
	Rita Ngobese	No	-
Stulwane	Thulani Dlamini	Yes	700
	Khulekani Dladla	Yes	200
	Nothile Zondi	Yes	300
Eqeleni	Sithabiso Manyathi	Yes	115
	Thulani Dlamini	Yes	350
	Lungile Dladla	Yes	286
	Talente Mdluli	No	-
Vimbukhalo	Sibongile Mpulo	Yes	300
	Sizwe Hlongwane	Yes	-
	Zibonele Sithole	Yes	300
	Gebezi Zondo	No	-
	Sulubha Mkhwanazi	Yes	300
Ezibomvini	Phumelele Hlongwane	Yes	500
	Ntombenhle Hlongwane	No	-

was used to plant WCC was previously not used for farming. She sprayed with Roundup prior to planting the WCC using a Haraka planter. Germination was around 95%.

Figure 1: Right: After spraying herbicide rows were marked for planting. Note new fencing for this plot. Far -right: Winter cover crops germinating and growing in the grass stubble around 3-4 weeks later.



Other farmers whom we intended to assist with planting the WCC were unable to plant in time. The heavy rainfalls prevented farmers from spraying the herbicides and also preparing the fields. Most of these have not been planted before and are either filled with grass or heavily infested with weeds that need clearing – none of which could be done

Bergville

We have conducted WCC workshops for farmers in Bergville and planted for a few using a Haraka planter in the presence of other participants with an interest of planting WCC. Here a combination of relay cropping and planting in separate plots were used as strategies. In addition, farmers chose between broadcasting, planting the cover crops in rows and using the Haraka planter.

Figure 2: right and far right Sithabiso Manyathi (Eqeleni) and Nothile Zondi (Stulwane) practising with the Haraka planter



In the learning sessions a number of different farmers tried out the Haraka wheel planter for planting the cover crop mix.

Sibongile Mpulo (Vimbukhalo) used the Haraka planter in two plots of M+B (maize and bean intercropped plots – after beans were harvested) and planted the cover crops in rows in a further plot using the furrow method to observe the difference. Phumelele Hlongwane (Ezibomvini) experimented with both broadcasting and the Haraka planter in her fields. However, on monitoring it was discovered that she pruned the top part of her maize to speed up drying and that this process covered and trampled her cover crop seed.

Figure 3: Winter cover crops relay cropped in between maturing maize. Right: for Sibongile Mpulo (Vimbukhalo and Far-right: for Nothile Zondi (Stulwane)



For most of the other participants who tried really cropping germination was very poor, mostly due to their free range chickens feeding on the seed and germinating plants.

Thulani Dlamini (Eqeleni) has planted 350 m² down at the bottom end of his fields near the stream using a Haraka planter and obtained 95% seed germination. He currently wants to expand from the planted area as he is slashing weeds in a 250 m² area adjacent to his planted plot with intension of spraying gramoxone when he is done with clearing weeds. He also plans to irrigate his planted area, by pumping water from the nearby stream and in future he wishes to keep seeds so that he can be self-sufficient during every planting season. Sithabiso Manyathi (Eqeleni) also planted his separated plots further away from his homestead and has two small plots (one where seed was broadcast and one where it was planted in furrows). Germination was fairly good from his both plots.

Figure 4: Above left: Thulani Dlamini in his WCC plot Above Centre Sithabiso Manyathi's WCC plot planted in furrows and Above Right: His plot where WCC seed was broadcast.

Winter Fodder Supplementation



In March of 2022 workshops were conducted in Bergville across 4 villages to encourage the participants to cut the grass early in preparation for dry season while it is still nutritious for baling. The group in Stulwane now has access to a group brush cutter and one that Nelisiwe Msele bought using her bulk loan fund finances. Both however needed some repairs. Some of the farmers who cut early could not dry their grass properly and are forced to cut again. Most farmers have waited until end April-beginning May to cut their grass. However, we had an issue with the brush cutter as the starter was broken but was fixed immediately within that week for farmers to get going with baling. The brush cutter was left at Nelisiwe Msele after repairs and made available for each farmer to use on request to field workers.

The small table below lists the learning group participants who have undertaken to cut grass for baling in Bergville.

Table 3: Bergville participants volunteering for cutting and baling of veld grass for winter fodder supplementation April 2022

Vimbukhalo	Stulwane	Ezibomvini	Eqeleni
Zibonele Sithole	Nothile Zondi	Phumelele Hlongwane	Thulile Zikode
Sulubha Mkhwanazi	Danger Buthelezi	Dlamini	Lungile Dladla
Bongani Msele	Khulekani Dladla	Ntombenhle Hlongwane	Thulani Dlamini
Nosipho Msimango	Khethabahle Miya		Sithabiso Manyathi
Sibongile Mpulo	Kholiwe Dlamini		Simephi Hlatshwayo
Tshitshana Ndaba	Dombolo Buthelezi		Talent Mdluli
Gebezi Zondo			
Sizwe Hlongwane			

In the **Midlands**, we attended the monthly meeting held by the livestock association on the 11th of April 2022 to provide a small presentation on winter fodder supplementation.

Figure 5: Right: Winter fodder supplementation workshop in Ozwathini (Midlands), April 2022

The livestock association members were encouraged to participate on this experiment as it will benefit their livestock during the dry season. Other members of the association have been intensively rearing and selling calves and the supplementation may assist them as well. The association members are currently rearing 10 calves which were recently bought from Creighton.



Table 4: List of farmers from Ozwathini interested in winter fodder supplementation.

Farmers Name & Surname	Cattle herd
Doris Chamane	1
Philani Ngcobo	4
Mariam Xulu	5
Thokozile Hlophe	Calves only
Mama Dube	4

Calf Rearing interest group in Ozwathini

The calf group in Ozwathini has been meeting consistently for more than two years now. This is one project the farmers grabbed with both hands and never looked back despite challenges with procuring calves. In 2021 the group was largely inactive in terms of getting new calves as they could not find suppliers, and only bought them twice. Nonetheless they still continued to meet monthly and are currently in the process of drafting a constitution. The group recently bought another 10 friesland x angus crossbred calves from Creighton with the help of Brigid from INR. Unfortunately, this was the last group of calves from Creighton. The farmers have decided to continue buying calves from Escourt which cost between R 850.00 and R 1500.00 each rather than not buying at all as prices for the PMB suppliers are much too high. The reason is that the long periods between calf purchases makes them feel stagnant, as they rear the calves and sell them off before the new batch arrives. They would rather continue more consistently with a lower profit.

Due to the high level of interest in calves and the ever-increasing number of people joining the group (now at around 45 members), the farmers developed criteria for selecting those who will receive calves. The deciding factors were; monthly payments, meeting attendance, no of times the person has received calves.

Farmers seem to have mastered the calf feeding program and the farmers who have been rearing calves for longer provide support to the newer farmers. However, they seem to have stopped buying colostrum and rather mix the calf milk with raw egg. The calves are fed milk twice a day and calf meal is slowly introduced and quantity gradually increased over time.

Some farmers have not sold the older calves and decided to establish a herd with them, and some have kept one or two calves and sold the rest. The latest batch of 8 calves was bought in April 2022. In general the cross bred calves (e.g., Friesland x Nguni) do better than the pure bred dairy calves.

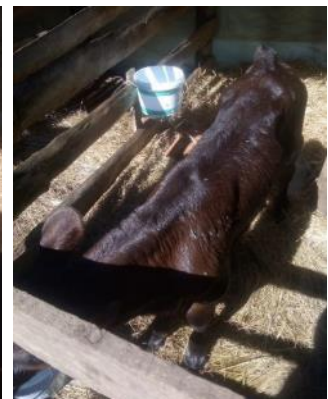
Figure 6: Right: Mrs Xulu's cross bred calves doing very tweek. And Far-right: Mrs Mdiande's newly acquired 6-week-old calf, which she is still keeping inside.



Philani Ngcobo's case study

Mr Ngcobo is an active member of the livestock association from Ozwathini. He assists the livestock association with scouting and liaison with the sellers of calves. He also volunteered his transport to deliver the calves to members. He is active in providing advice to farmer members regarding calf rearing. He said that he has raised over 20 calves, suffered not more than 2% mortality since joining the association and has kept 1 of the cows, with the majority sold to abattoirs. He sells the calves to the abattoir at 6months of age for around R3 000.00 per calf. He has thus made an income of around R51 000 from calf rearing. Costs incurred can be high if calves aren't cared for carefully.

Figure 7: Mr Philani Ngcobo with the most recent calf her has procured for hand rearing and sale.



Small calves are procured from farms in different areas, depending on availability and price. This supply is

something that needs to be continually monitored, as it is not constant and new options appear and disappear frequently. The table below outlines the most reliable options. Mr Ngcobo prefers the calves supplied directly from the dairy farm in Creighton as those have been stronger and healthier than other sources.

Table 5: The different locations where calves have been procured by the Ozwathini Farmers' Association.

Farm Location	Type of Breed	Gender	Price
Creighton	Angus x Friesland	Bull calf	R400
		Heifers	R400
Vainer	Jersey cross breed	Bull calf	R850
		Heifer	R1500
Estcourt	Friesland pure breed	Bull Calf	R400
		Heifer	R650
	Friesland cross breed	Bull Calf	R700
		Heifers	R800

The KZNDARD extension officers assist in diagnosing any diseases in the calves and also have access to veterinary services for post-mortems if calves die. In this way it is possible to buy and keep healthy calves with good weight gain potential

Mr Ngcobo said that they have also been advised about feeding the calves. As an example, the young calves are provided 2L of milk twice a day at regular times. They cannot be overfed, as their second stomach is not well developed and if milk overflows into that, it rots there and can cause diarrhoea and potentially death. They were also trained to clean the holding pens daily so that the calves are not exposed to bacteria. Vaccination is required 1 month after arrival, followed by another injection after 3 months.

Matatiele

Despite the learning sessions and demonstration plantings for Conservation Agriculture undertaken in both Nkau and Rashule villages for this cropping season and provision of inputs to 30 participants to undertake their experimentation, uptake of the CA methodology has still been extremely low.

CA is a process, initially quite labour intensive, and only shows positive results after 2-3 seasons as the soil health and fertility starts to build. Generally however, if positive results are not seen after the first season, participants revert to the traditional local practice, consisting of ploughing and broadcasting seed. This is despite being supported with the inputs for the CA experimentation, to reduce the opportunity costs of trying out something different. The traditional broadcasting method is a minimal input, minimal output system, but is preferred in the area. It has meant that we have started with new participants every season and have been unable to build up any traction in CA implementation in Matatiele. The soils in the area are depleted, compacted and very infertile and the remedial efforts required to bring the condition of the soil up to a standard where CA can be effective is mostly prohibitive. Thus only a few farmers, who already have been looking after their



soils have found the CA advantageous for their production. This season, the heavy rainfall had a further negative impact, with beans largely rotting before harvesting and high weed pressure. Weeds could not be removed in time due to ongoing rain. Below are a few indicative pictures.

Figure 8: Above: Examples from Nkau. Left: Malebone Bobore's CA plot, looking reasonably healthy. Maize however was heavily infested with stalk borer and yellowing towards the edge of her field due to competition with a stand of Wattle trees. Right; Matumelo Tamane's field. She has been doing CA for around 6 seasons and with her husband have embraced this implementation approach due to better productivity in her fields. This season however has been disappointing with beans destroyed and high levels of weed infestation, reducing her potential maize yield.

3. ***CRA implementation in EC, Matatiele update***

Work continued in Matatiele to support intensive homestead food production: gardening and poultry (98 participants, across 5 villages). The groups for Nkasela/Nchodu and Mechachaneng were provided further training and support, in conjunction with the eco champs supporting the newly formed learning groups; Phumla Nyembezi and Katileho Tsokele respectively.

Learning workshops have been undertaken in the CRA practices:

- CCA introduction (Ned, Mechachaneng, Rashule, Nkasela)
- Greywater management and tower gardens (Rashule, Nkau, Ned)
- Bed design: trench beds and eco-circles (Ned, Rashule, Nkau, Mechachaneng, Nkasela)
- Soil fertility: Composting and liquid manures (Rashule, Nkau, Mechachaneng, Nkasela)
- Tunnel installation and (Nkau, Ned, Rashule, Mechachaneng, Nkasela),
- Drip kit construction (Nkau, Rashule, Mechachaneng, Nkasela, Ned)
- Mixed cropping and Natural pest and disease control (Nkau, Rashule) and
- Poultry production and management (Ned, Rashule, Nkau, Mechachaneng, Nkasela).

Trenchbeds (Ned, Mechachaneng and Nkasela)

- Trench beds are introduced as intensive organic vegetable production beds. They are designed to fit into a tunnel with 3 1x5m beds inside the tunnel and 1x5m bed outside the tunnel for comparative purposes. A trench bed is a way to increase soil fertility and water holding in your beds and garden. It is an intensive way of providing good soil for vegetable production on a small scale, which involves digging a hole and filling it with organic matter, so that the bed can be fertile for a long time. Materials needed to fill the trench bed, which need to be collected by farmers are the following:
 - Used tins (mostly fish – not aluminum; for provision of aeration, water holding, iron and for cleaning the environment)
 - Old bones (for provision of organic version of phosphate)
 - Dry grass (source of carbon)
 - Wet green materials (source of nutrients such as nitrogen)
 - Manure and
 - Topsoil (soil with good structure and organic matter)

The process is that a demonstration and training is held at one homestead and participants go home to complete their own trench beds thereafter. They choose to work independently or in small groups for this activity. The trenches need to be completed and planted before the tunnels can be constructed.

In Ned, 10 participants have now completed their trench beds, At Nchodu 6 participants have completed theirs and at Mechachaneng 4. Some people are not willing to try having trenches in their household as they look like graves, but others are keen to try them.



Figure 9: Above Left to right: Construction and filling of trench beds, prior to construction of the tunnel by the CRA learning group members in Nchodu, at Phumla Nyembezi's homestead.

At Mechachaneng a similar process was undertaken at Paulo Potlo's homestead. Here the process took a little longer, as participants misjudged the amount of materials and organic matter required to fill the trenches.

Figure 10: Right and Far Right: Mr Potlo and the Mechachaneng learning group members work on digging the trench beds and filling the bottom with used tins, prior to further collection of organic materials.



The following seeds were provided to participants to grow out: that were shared with farmers are as follows; Broccoli, cabbage, rape, carrots, coriander, leeks and turnips. These are all crops that can withstand the cold winters in this area

The 12 new tunnels have now all been constructed. Most farmers were very enthusiastic about learning the skill of constructing these tunnels and the demand for more tunnels is high. At present there are more than 30 participants who are hopeful of receiving tunnels in the future.

The small table below lists the latest beneficiaries of tunnels (Feb-April 2022).

Village	No of tunnels	Name of individual
Nkau	2	MaKamohelo Dyantyana
		Malebone Bobore
Rhashule	4	Nothazamile Papiyana
		Noncebo Zulu
		Ntombovuyo Sekhulumu
		Busisiwe Zitha
Ned	4	Caiphus Mochoba
		Tshepang Kutwana
		Sfiso Shozi
		John Thefani
Nchodu/ Nkasela	1	Phumla Nyembezi
Mechachaneng	1	Paulos Potlo



In some of the villages, the learning group participants clubbed together to order and pay for seedlings for their tunnels. The picture on the right shows the participants from Naku distributing their procured seedlings

Below are some pictures of gardens and tunnel construction Ned village as an example.

Figure 11: Right and far right: S'fiso Shozi's tunnel and a view of his garden as well as his maize field in the background



Figure 12: Right and Far-right: Caphius Machoba's tunnel under construction and a view of his vegetable garden.



Figure 13: Right and far right: John Tefani's tunnel under construction and a view of his garden, with his maize field in the background.



Drip kits (Nkau, Rashule, Mechachaneng, Nkasela, Ned)

Drip kit installation workshops were held in 5 villages and participants supported to continue their drip kit installations thereafter. Below are a few indicative photographs.

Figure 14: Right Nkau: Two group members putting the small spaghetti lines into the drip pipe – the drippers. The bucket with it's gravel and sand filter for use of grey water and the drip kit installed on one bed in a tunnel.



Figure 15: Above Left and Right: Drip kit workshop and installation in Ned, at Sfiso Shoji's homestead.

Greywater management and tower gardens (Rashule, Nkau, Ned)

Workshops on greywater management and tower garden construction have been undertaken in three villages. Tower gardens that were installed in February at Nkau were looking very good and further towers were installed at Rashule and Ned. During these workshops attention is also given to mixed cropping and introduction of new vegetable types and varieties for the area. For those interested to take on this practise, shade cloth is provided. They source the poles, ash, gravel and manure for constructing the beds. Below are a few indicative pictures.



Figure 16: Above Left: Two view of Malebone Bohore's tower garden in Nkau, started in February 2022. Swiss chard, Chinese cabbage and beetroot are flourishing. Above right: Construction of a tower garden at Andiswa Malunga's homestead in Ned (May 2022)

4. CRA implementation in KZN

Bergville

Another 5 tunnels have been installed recently, bringing the total number in Bergville to 41 tunnels. The demands has been high as participants see the tunnels as an option for production in winter and also for making a small income from selling produce. Below are a few indicative photographs. The enviro champ team of 8 youths assisted in construction.



Figure 17: Above: Tunnels in Ezibomvini: Left: Sdudla Sibiya's tunnel. She is an ageing pensioner, who is reasonably active but struggles due to being the only adult in the household. Above centre: filling trench beds for Nonhlanhla Zikode, prior to constructing the tunnel over the beds and Above Right: A completed tunnel for Hlulekhile Dlangisa a new member of the learning group who was very active in the marketing sub-group and is increasing her production capabilities.

Table 6: the list of tunnel beneficiaries for Bergville _2021-2022

NAME AND SURNAME	VILLAGE	TUNNEL AND DRIP
1. HLULEKILE DLANGISA	Ezibomvini	Tunnel
2. SDUDLA SIBIYA	Ezibomvini	Tunnel
3. NONHLAHLA ZIKODE	Ezibomvini	Tunnel and drip
4. CABANGANI HLONGWANE	Ezibomvini	Tunnel
5. LANDIWE DLAMINI	Ezibomvini	Tunnel and drip
6. PHUMELELE GUMEDE	Ezibomvini	Tunnel
7. NONHLANHLA GUMEDE	Ezibomvini	Tunnel
8. PHUMELELE HLONGWANE	Ezibomvini	Tunnel and drip
9. ZODWA ZIKODE	Ezibomvini	Tunnel and drip
10. NOMBONO DLADLA	Ezibomvini	Tunnel and drip
11. MANTOMBI MABIZELA	Ezibomvini	Tunnel
12. SIMEPHI HLATHSWAYO	Eqeleni	Tunnel and drip
13. NOMAVILA NDABA	Eqeleni	Tunnel
14. THOLWEPHI MABASO	Eqeleni	Tunnel

15.	STHABISO MANYATHI	Eqeleni	Tunnel
16.	TALENT KHUMALO	Eqeleni	Tunnel
17.	NTOMBAKHE ZIKODE	Eqeleni	Tunnel and drip
18.	NA KHUMALO	Eqeleni	Tunnel
19.	SIZENI DLAMINI	Eqeleni	Tunnel
20.	MAKHOSONKE MABIZELA	Eqeleni	Tunnel
21.	THULILE ZIKODE	Eqeleni	Tunnel
22.	LINDIWE DLADLA	Eqeleni	Tunnel
23.	SLINNDILE MPINGA	Stulwane	Tunnel
24.	UINICE MKHIZE	Stulwane	Tunnel and drip
25.	NELISIWE MSELE	Stulwane	Tunnel and drip
26.	NOKWALIWA HLONGWANE	Stulwane	Tunnel
27.	NOTHILE ZONDI	Stulwane	Tunnel and drip
28.	KHULEKANI DLAMINI	Stulwane	Tunnel and drip
29.	NOKWANDA ZONDO	Stulwane	Tunnel and drip
30.	THULANI DLAMINI	Stulwane	Tunnel and drip
31.	DOMBOLO DLAMINI	Stulwane	Tunnel
32.	BANGENI DLAMINI	Stulwane	Tunnel
33.	SBONGILE MPULO	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
34.	GEBEZI ZONDO	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
35.	ZIBONELE STHOLE	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
36.	NOMUSA ZIKODE	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
37.	MTOBHO DLODLO	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
38.	BUKISILE MPULO	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
39.	BUYISILE NDABA	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel and drip
40.	PHUMELELE ZIMBA	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel
41.	MSHOSHA GUMEDE	Vimbukhalo	Tunnel

A further 13 drip kits have been installed during this period in Eqeleni, Ezibovmini and Stulwane, in participants' tunnels, to prepare for winter planting. In addition, orders were taken for seedlings.



Figure 18: Above left to right: Drip irrigation being installed at Nomavila Ndaba (Stulwane), Sthabiso Manyathi (Eqeleni), Makhosonkhe Mabizela (Eqeleni) and Mshosho Gumedede (Ezibomvini).

Although most participants are only now starting to plant in their tunnels again, having focused on their field crops for the summer season, a few have well planted tunnels.

Figure 19: Right: Phumelele Gumedede (Ezibomvini) in her tunnel at the beginning of April, showing plantings of spinach, beetroot and cabbage and Far right: Planted tunnel for Nombuyiselo Shozi from Madzikane in SKZN.



Southern KZN

A total of five tunnels have been installed in **Ngongonini**, with the last two for Edna Nzimande and Thandekile Mvemve respectively, being finalized in April 2022. These ladies were not confident enough to bend their own poles and thus needed to be assisted to contract their tunnels. One more tunnel was also finalized in **Madzikane** for Nombuyiselo Shozi, who a longstanding member of learning group. She

Table 7: Tunnels installed in SKZN between 2021-2022

Name and surname	Village	Date installed
Nombuyiselo Shozi	Madzikane	31 March 2022
Mandla Mkhize	Ngongonini	07 October 2021
Sylvina Kheswa	Ngongonini	20 October 2021
Samson Chiya	Ngongonini	04 November 2021
Thandekile Mvemve	Ngongonini	06 April 2022
Edna Nzimande	Ngongonini	29 April 2022
Mavis Ndlovu	Plainhill	07 October 2021
Zamekile Dlamini	Plainhill	21 October 2021
Khonzeni Chonco	Plainhill	29 October 2021
Gabisile Phungula	Springvalley	19 May 2021
Mzikayifani Sosibo	Springvalley	28 September 2021
Bonginhlanhla Dlamini	Springvalley	18 May 2022

5. Poultry production monitoring: KZN and EC

Participants have continued with their micro-poultry production units and a few new participants have been brought on board over time. Some constraints have included the unrest, which reduced availability of feed and chickens after July 2021, as well as cold winters in both Bergville and the EC.

After the first batch of both broilers and layers, which was subsidised, participants continued by paying for their own birds and feed. In most cases MDF supported the orders and assisted with transport. In Bergville and the EC options for local purchasing exist, although those can be quite expensive. For SKZN and Midlands the main centre is Pietermaritzburg, making transport rather exorbitant. The table below outlines payments farmers have made.

Table 8: Farmers' payments towards their micro-poultry production businesses

Area	Month	Layers	Broilers	Own Contribution	Subtotal per area
Midlands (17 participants)	Apr-21	50	140	R5 760,00	
	Jun-21	60	390	R11 140,00	
	Aug-21	50	390	R11 100,00	
	Oct-21	40	170	R7 040,00	
	Nov-21	0	400	R3 350,00	
	Feb-22	10	303	R5 658,00	
	Mar-22	60	100	R6 300,00	R50 348,00
SKZN (7 participants)	Apr-21	71	120	R1 430,00	
	May-21	10	45	R1 050,00	
	Jun-21	26	35	R2 250,00	
	Oct-21	10		R550,00	
	Jan-22		15	R430,00	R5 710,00
EC (25 participants)	Apr-21	54	30	R2 800,00	
	May-21	40	147	R3 400,00	
	Jul-21	20	40	R4 140,00	
	Sep-21	31		R1 870,00	
	Oct-21	5		R550,00	R12 760,00
Bergville (63 participants)	Apr-21	70		R3 300,00	
	May-21		400	R2 500,00	
	Jun-21		337	R2 000,00	
	Jul-21	120	265	R2 550,00	

	Nov-21		870	R8 580,00	
	Feb-22		1450	R5 500,00	R24 430,00
TOTALS		727	5647	R93 248,00	

A second round of poultry production monitoring has been undertaken, for a total of 70 participants across KZN and the EC. Monitoring has now been done for 83 of the total of 122 participants. Below is a table summarizing the monitoring information. The full data sheet is provided in Annexure 2.

Table 9: Poultry monitoring summary: May 2022

Poultry monitoring summary: May 2022		
Participant information	No of participants monitored	83
	Percentage female	81%
	Average age	54 years
	Percentage youth	11%
	Percentage pensioners	16%
	Percentage in VSLAs	54%
	Average monthly income	R2 102,40
Broiler information	No of participants monitored	60
	Average no of birds/farmer	35
	% Mortality	11%
	Overall input costs	R135 521,84
	Overall sales	R222 060,00
	Overall profit	R84 248,16
	Ave income per farmer/batch	R1 404,14
	Average monthly income	R936,09
	Percentage who made a loss	30%
Layer information	No of participants monitored	38
	Average no of birds/farmer	20
	% Mortality	11%
	Overall input costs	R38 589,00
	Overall sales	R75 108,00
	Overall profit	R40 306,92
	Average monthly income	R353,57
	Percentage who made a loss	21%

For broilers the average no of birds per farmer has increased from 27 to 35 per farmer between August 2021 and May 2022. Average monthly incomes have decreased somewhat from August 2021 from R1113 to R936. Mortality rates have been high for a few individuals, mostly due to unhygienic conditions and diseases in the poultry houses and income is lower as costs for inputs has increased by around 16% between August 2021 and May 2022. Generally, however, participants have improved their feeding and hygiene regimes in the poultry houses and are farming more efficiently than before.

For layers, participants are still receiving eggs from their first batch of layers. Monthly incomes for sale of eggs have decreased from R928 in August 2021 to R354 in May 2022. This is primarily due to farmers using eggs for own consumption instead of selling them and also due to loss of sales due to markets becoming unavailable in KZN after the unrest in 2021. It is also as a result of a decrease in laying form hens where feed was changed, which was necessitated due to substantial increase in price of Layers mash and also in the better brands not being available from local towns. This is particularly problematic in Matatiele.

Below are a few indicative pictures of poultry production



Figure 20: Above Left to Right: Ozwathini- Mrs Zulu young broilers. Ozwathini-Mrs Sibiya layers. Ozwathini-Mr Zuma- mature broilers

6. Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)

For the two prospective new groups in **Ozwathini (Midlands) induction meetings** have been held. These outline the rules and processes of the VSLA groups.

Records are kept by the bookkeepers and groups on a monthly basis and summarized into a database. As groups start their annual savings cycles at different times the monthly summary provides as running total, but not the total amount saved annually. There are presently 26 VSLAs being supported. A rule of thumb showing annual savings per VSLA to be around R120 000, indicates that the overall savings for all 26 VSLAs per annum is around R3,1million. As there are 470 VSLA members, this amounts to an average of R6 600 saved per participant per annum.

Right: The Masakhane VSLA in Ngongonini during their annual share out session, where they distributed a total of R138 854 between the 22 members. Individual members received between R526 and R7889 at the share out as the annual savings. The low amounts are due to loan owings being subtracted from the member's share out.



Table 10: VSLA updated summary for 26 groups; April 2022

VSLA summary													Apr-22	
No.	AREA	GROUP NAME	NO. OF PEOPLE	START Date	lastmth of records	# SHARES BOUGHT TODAY	VALUE OF SHARES (TODAY)	CUM # OF SHARES	VALUE OF TOTAL SHARES	LOAN REPAYED TODAY	NEW LOAN TAKEN	MONEY IN BOX	NEW BALANCE	
1	Ezibomvini	Ezibomvini	19	November	Dec-21	39	R3 900,00	39	R3 900,00	R0,00	R3 900,00	R0,00	R3 900,00	
2	Ezibomvini	Ukuzama	13	August	Mar-22	45	R4 500,00	302	R30 200,00	R4 500,00	R9 900,00	R440,00	R35 140,00	
3	Emazimbeni	Nyonyana	23	October	Apr-22	54	R5 400,00	372	R37 200,00	R3 880,00	R5 500,00	R4 440,00	R45 520,00	
4	Emabunzini	Isibonelo	19	November	Nov-21	64	R6 400,00	113	R11 300,00	R0,00	R6 400,00	R0,00	R11 300,00	
5	Eqeleni	Masibambane	20	October	Mar-22	49	R4 900,00	287	R28 700,00	R2 140,00	R6 100,00	R5 760,00	R36 600,00	
6	Eqeleni	Masithuthuke	19	November	Mar-22	64	R6 400,00	311	R31 100,00	R2 310,00	R8 000,00	R720,00	R34 130,00	
7	Stulwane	Mbalenhle	20	November	Mar-22	36	R3 600,00	143	R14 300,00	R2 020,00	R4 300,00	R1 680,00	R18 000,00	
8	Ndunwane	Mphelandaba	15	October	Jan-22	21	R2 100,00	50	R5 000,00	R730,00	R1 800,00	R2 200,00	R7 930,00	
9	Emabunzini	Sakhokuhle	19	November	Oct-21	69	R6 900,00	719	R71 900,00	R13 830,00	R0,00	R20 630,00	R106 360,00	
10	Vimbukhalo	Ukhamba	20	November	Feb-22	86	R8 600,00	259	R25 900,00	R2 850,00	R11 500,00	R10,00	R28 760,00	
11	Stulwane	Vukuzenzele	17	December	Apr-22	52	R5 200,00	255	R25 500,00	R255,00	R25 500,00	R6 810,00	R32 565,00	
12	Stulwane	Umtwana 2	16	December	Apr-22	36	R3 600,00	160	R16 000,00	R980,00	R4 500,00	R210,00	R17 190,00	
13	Stulwane	Umtwana 1	16	December	Apr-22	48	R4 800,00			R1 940,00	R4 600,00	R2 140,00	R4 080,00	
14	Emadakeneneni	Azam	14	January	Apr-22	19	R1 900,00	83	R8 300,00	R660,00	R2 500,00		R8 960,00	
15	Stulwane	Ithembalethu	19	January	Apr-22	63	R6 300,00	222	R22 200,00	R1 950,00	R8 200,00	R80,00	R24 230,00	
16	Stulwane	Zebra	14	January	Apr-22	47	R4 700,00	181	R18 100,00	R1 030,00	R5 700,00	R30,00	R19 160,00	
17	Emahlathini	Sizakahle	36	March	Apr-22	62	R6 200,00		R6 200,00	R0,00	R6 200,00	R0,00	R6 200,00	
18	Stulwane	Sondelani	14	November	Apr-22	50	R5 000,00	258	R25 800,00	R3 520,00	R2 000,00	R80,00	R29 400,00	
19	Stulwane	Mzizi	18	November	Mar-22	70	R7 000,00	266	R26 600,00	R1 420,00	R8 400,00	R110,00	R28 130,00	
20	Emabunzini	Qhubekani	19	November	Oct-21	57	R 5 700,00	675	R 67 500,00	R 12 240,00	R0,00	R 17 940,00	R97 680,00	
21	Emahlathini	Masiphumule	10	March	Apr-22	29	R2 900,00	59	R5 900,00	R200,00	R3 200,00	R6,00	R6 106,00	
22	Stulwane	Thuthukani	19	December	Apr-22	2	R200,00	256	R25 600,00	R1 970,00	R2 000,00	R495,00	R28 065,00	
23	Stulwane	Inkanyezi	19	December	Apr-22	48	R4 800,00	202	R20 200,00	R1 900,00	R6 700,00	R30,00	R22 130,00	
24	Ngongonini	Masakhane	22	February	Apr-22	95	R9 500,00	192	R19 200,00	R10 720,00	R2 500,00	R10 090,00	R38 200,00	
25	Madzikane	Madzikane	15	March	Feb-22	41	R8 200,00	499	R99 800,00	R16 400,00	R0,00	R74 570,00	R116 200,00	
26	Madzikane	Senzokuhle	15	May	Oct-21				R29 800,00	R1 500,00			R31 300,00	
	TOTAL		470			1246	R128 700,00	5903	R676 200,00	R88 945,00	R139 400,00	R148 471,00	R837 236,00	

A bookkeeper's committee training was held on 22nd April 2022 in Bergville (29 participants from 14 VSLAs) to remind committee members of their roles and responsibilities. Groups need to be reminded of the rules every so often to avoid unaccountable behaviours creeping in. Handouts in isiZulu were prepared that committee members could provide to their group members when these are reviewed in each of the 26 VSLAs. One of the practices that is most concerning and also quite common is forced lending for members, to increase the income of the group through interest on these loans. This puts the poorer members of the groups at a disadvantage and needs to be reduced to a minimum. See Annexure1 for notes on this meeting.

In addition, regular monthly meetings have been held with the one **farmer Bulk Loan Fund (BLF) group, called Qalasha**, that is operational in Stulwane Bergville. This group has total of (12) twelve members. The first meeting of Qalabusha BLF was held on the 17th of December 2021 in Stulwane. This group was established by 12 members who contributed R2 000 each to establish the group/loan fund. The total loan fund stands at R24 000. All members have taken out loans.

The closing balances at the close of the meeting that was held on the 20th of May 2022 were as follows:

□ Total amount paid in today:	R 6 440
□ New loans taken out:	R 8 200
□ Money remaining in the box:	R 240
□ Loans unpaid excluding interest:	R23 760

The interest is 15% over 6 months. This works to 2.5% per month. We can safely conclude that members have seen the benefit of low interest and longer loan repayment periods as the group fund is being extensively used.

Although there was some reluctance to disclose the use of loans the following information was provided at this meeting.

Use of loans: R12 400 (51.7%) has been used for enterprise development. R7 600 (31.7%) has been used for non-productive consumption and R4 000 (16.7%) has been used to settle debts outside the BLF. This means that half of the borrowers are using loans for income generation, however not for farming activities besides one borrower who bought a cow. In this instance, a brush cutter and microloan venture. The young lady explained unapologetically that she borrows at 15% and charges 25% interest per month. This means that she is making 22.5% interest per month from her clients. MDF does not condone use of this loan fund to settle other debts or for use in a loan shark venture. The community members, however, appear to be quite

comfortable with these actions. An in-depth monitoring process for the performance and opinions of each individual member will be undertaken to ensure that this process is in fact working and to strongly advise against present debt activities.

1. **Local marketing**

The small table below provides a running total of sales from the market stalls between April 2021 and March 2022.

Table 11: Sales records for local market stalls in Ozwathini: June 2021-May 2022

Summary of market incomes for Ozwathini Market Stall: June-2021-May 2022					
Date	No of farmers	Villages	Amount	Market	Produce; in order of sales
2021/06/04	16	4	R11 527,50	Bamshela - Ozwathini	Eggs, pork, sweet potato, mealie cake, broilers, beans, vegetables
2021/08/04	8	4	R3 866,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini	Pork, buns, slaughtered chickens, eggs, amadumbe, potatoes, cabbage, swt potato, carrots, spinach, avocado, pumpkins
2021/09/03,06,07	12	5	R5 448,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini	Eggs, spinach, chillies, green peppers, carrots, tomatoes avocados, beans, pumpkins, bananas, lettuce, herbs, sweet potato, amadumbe, potatoes, maize and potato seed
2021/10/05,06	12	5	R3 354,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Eggs, slaughtered chickens, beans, cabbage, spinach, beetroot, lettuce, amadumbe, green peppers, carrots, onions,, tomatoes, avocados, lemons
2021/11/03,04	9	4	R2 964,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Potatoes, pork, eggs, spinach, cabbage, dry beans, lettuce, red cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, onions, green peppers, chillies, herbs
2021/12/02,03	10	4	R2 964,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, carrots, beetroot, cabbage, potatoes, onions, pumpkin.
2021/12/03	10	4	R1 400,00	Ozwathini-social media	Combo packs - via social media in Pietermaritbrug
2022/01/05,06	6	3	R2 610,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Potatoes, carrots, eggs, chillies, onions, cabbage (half and chopped), green beans, beetroot, avocado, brinjals, green peppers, chopped mixed veg.
2022/02/05,12,19	8	4	R3 010,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Eggs, chicken, potatoes, green mealies, green peppers, brinjals, chillies, ...
2022/03/11	6	4	R1 216,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Potaotes, green pepper, amaranthus, onion, green mealies, eggs
2022/05/03,04	7	3	R2 565,00	Bamshela - Ozwathini (taxi rank)	Cabbages, eggs, spinach, carrots, butternut, green maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, green pepper, chillie, onions, amadumbe
	9	4	R39 708,50		



Figure 21: Above Left and Centre: View of produce sold at the March 2022 market stall in Bamshela by the Ozwathini learning group members. Visible is Amaranthus, potatoes and eggs. Above Right: Setting up the marketing table for the May 2022 market stall.

A total of R 39708,50 has been made across the 10 markets held thus far. On average the monthly earnings for each participant is R441.

The farmers in Midlands had a number of climate related setbacks in the season and at least two plantings of vegetables including crops such as broccoli, purple cabbage, cauliflower and spinach were completely destroyed by storms and hail. Roads have also been washed away, which has made transport of produce to and from the market stall very difficult. In addition, ongoing challenges with social grant payments has meant that the expected clientele at the markets have not always been there. Lately the grant pay out dates are changed with little to no notice or the officials only arrive very late in the day to disburse the grants. There has been a slow attrition of the numbers of farmers involved in these markets. Farmers have also managed to build local relationships in their villages in this time and a larger proportion of produce is now sold directly from their homes.

For Ozwathini, the marketing group now manages the whole process of marketing independently, and MDF only supports on rare occasions when transport shortages are unavoidable. They also keep their own records and provide copies for MDF for reporting purposes. Farmers have learnt which produce has high demand at the market stall and can now estimate the quantities needed for each market reasonably accurately. They still sell out, however, but no longer have large quantities of unsold produce to take home again. They have also built a reputation among buyers, as they have been careful to be there regularly. They provide social support to each other and if individuals have family emergencies, others in the group will take their produce to the market and do the sales for them.

It has not been possible to secure a regular market outlet in Bergville and thus farmers have resorted to selling individually at farmgate. For SKZN and Matatiele, the local politics and group dynamics have not been conducive to setting up these local market stalls. Individuals sell informally from the farm gate. This has been especially for very fragile produce such as spinach and eggs, as these are easier to sell directly.

2. ***Strengthening of Innovation platforms and networks***

The table below summarizes stakeholder interactions for the period (March- May 2022).

Table 12: Stakeholder interactions summary. March 2022-June 2022

Activity	Description	Dates
Okhahlamba Local Municipality (OLM)	Fresh produce market, planting support, materials provision. Visit to Stulwane spring protection project	12 th May 2022
F4CJ	Farmers open day and cross visit from farmer in Mpumalanga (Zingela Ulwazi)	10,11 April 2022
ESS research - WRC	UKZN research in ecosystem services mapping supported by MDF: water walks, focus group discussions, planning, eco-champs, spring protection work in Stulwane	Ongoing
uThukela Water	Visit by team to the Uthukela District Municipality followed by invitations to officials to join the water access work in Stulwane – to date unsuccessfully	Ongoing
WWF- Water Source Area focus	WWF team visit to the area, with subsequent joint funding proposal development in volumetric water benefit accounting	16 March-13 May 2022
SANBI- Living Catchment Programme	Planning for the next multistakeholder platform meeting to be held on 14 th June 2022	April-May 2022
SANBI LCP- catchment convenors workshop	Capacity strengthening workshop for convenors across all WSA areas- held in Gauteng	11-12 April 2022

Below are a few photographs of the Stulwane spring protection activity, supported through the WRC UKZN research team with wet equity and collection of monies from the 23 households participating in the project. The v-box with header tanks, pipes and 4 taps were installed between February and May 2022 and is now fully operational.



Figure 22: Above Left to Right: The v-box under construction for protection of the spring. The two header tanks installed and connected to the spring – they have filled up and water is flowing, and one of the 4 taps installed for the 23 households to collect water from. All households are within 200-400 m of a tap.

The F4CJ (Farming for Climate Justice) action research process in collaboration with Coventry University in the UK and Zingela Ulwazi, an NGO from Mpumalanga has served to highlight the importance of solidarity networks at the community level and their intrinsic role in development of social and economic agency for women living in rural areas. The farmers' day and exchange held at the end of April was a well-attended event. Participants were very excited and eager to share their experiences across KZN and Mpumalanga. Below are a few indicative photographs. The full report is attached in Annexure 3.



Figure 23: Above left: MDF participants brought their produce and livestock including rabbits to showcase. Centre: Zingela Ulwazi participants showcased their value-adding and beauty products made from traditional medicinal plants and Right: The participants worked in smaller groups to undertake a SWOT analysis of solidarity networks in their regions

2 GAPS AND CONSTRAINTS

Work has been hampered by ongoing high levels of rainfall, which has caused flooding, made roads impassable and has slowed down field work. This has caused difficulties in the yield calculations undertaken for the field crops. In addition, livestock owners have forced their livestock into the villages early, disregarding the need for more time for the harvest to dry before harvesting, forcing the crop producers to harvest maize that is still wet.

In addition, the situation in the villages has become a lot more volatile. As a result of job losses in the cities, many people return home to the rural areas, which has resulted in increased competition for livelihoods. For example, in Bergville there has been an increase in livestock theft in the Emmaus area and in the last month alone livestock has been stolen from Phumelele Hlongwane, Mantombi Mabizela, Sdudla Sbiya, and Thalete Mabaso, all female members of our learning groups. Women-headed households are targeted in a brazen manner in broad daylight and the owners are either fired at or pelted with stones. These events have prompted other woman livestock owners to send away their goats to households where there are men. In addition to the above events, there have been five murders in the six months in the area and in the Eqeleni Area, there is a serial rapist, making the deployment of our female field staff problematic. A similar situation of increased theft and violence has been reported in the Midlands area of KZN.

This is generally seen as an outcome of deepening poverty and vulnerability brought on by COIV-19, the unrest in the province in 2021 and crop and livelihoods losses brought on by the high levels of rain and flooding. MDF has initiated a small emergency relief fund from our very limited savings to try and support affected learning group members. In addition, female staff members are now accompanied when working in the field.

3 COMMENT ON FINANCIAL REPORT

NOTES ON EXPENDITURE

Expenditure has been compiled up until the end of May 2022

1. Staff cost: Staff costs are somewhat higher than the budgeted amount for this period. This was compensated for by reducing the external evaluation fees for this period.
2. Operating expenses- Materials: This budget item is on target according to the budget.
3. Overall expenditure for the period of March-May 2022 has been 15% higher than the allocated funds. As the programme is nearing closure, it is expected that field activities will wind down and that costs for the final Milestone will be proportionally lower.

Below is a summary of the Financial report.

4 TWO COPIES OF ANY PUBLICATIONS

Presentation of a paper: *CbCCA in central Drakensberg improves resilience of smallholder farmers.* (E Kruger, M Toucher and R Henriksson) at the Southern African Mountain Conference 14–17 March 2022.

The presentation is attached to this report.

5 FINANCIAL REPORT

The financial report excel sheet is attached as a separate document: WWF_Financial report_GT06177_ID315_CRA KZN-EC_20220530. Documentation for explaining full expenditure summaries is available on request.

WWF: GT06177 Financial report		ESTIMATES		Date:30 May 2022		ACTUALS		Milestone 7	
Code	Description	Project Budget	Full Year 2nd	Previously Reported Actuals	This quarter YTD Actuals (March-May 2022)	Year-to-Date (YTD) Actuals	Forecast minus YTD Actuals (=Variance)		
		Oct 2020-August 2022	Oct 2020-March 2022						
	A - OPENING BALANCE	R3 000 000,00	R2 222 500,00						
	Cash received	R1 847 500,00							
	Other income (interest, FX gains/loss)	n/a							
	B - TOTAL income + o/balance	R1 847 500,00	R2 222 500,00						
	EXPENDITURE by code								
	Staff costs	R1 210 066,50	R624 466,50	R1 032 073,58	R167 277,00	R1 199 350,58	R10 715,92		
1	Third party fees	R458 919,00	R237 219,00	R213 426,32	R117 177,00	R330 603,32	R128 315,68		
2	Travel and Subsistence	R446 809,50	R230 959,50	R333 294,28	R93 518,43	R426 812,71	R19 996,79		
3	Capital Asset costs	R0,00							
4	Operating expenses; materials	R755 865,00	R181 523,00	R692 910,35	R27 893,82	R720 804,17	R35 060,83		
5	Meetings / Education / Training	R0,00							R0,00
6	Project Promotion / Communication/ Printing / Publication	R37 260,00	R19 260,00	R12 500,00	R12 000,00	R24 500,00	R12 760,00		
7	Project Evaluation by 3 rd party	R91 080,00	R47 080,00	R44 635,00		R44 635,00	R46 445,00		
8	C - TOTAL EXPENDITURE	R3 000 000,00	R1 340 508,00	R2 328 839,53	R417 866,25	R2 746 705,78	R253 294,22		
	D - CLOSING BALANCE	R0,00	R1 659 492,00	R0,00	R0,00	R0,00	-R777 500,00		

7 SIGNIFICANT PLANNED ACTIONS FOR THE FINAL REPORT

Outcome	Activities	Planned actions (Milestone 8)
Livelihood security at household level	1. Learning group planning and seasonal review sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ KZN: Ezibomvini, Stulwane, Vimbukhalo, Eqeleni. Madzikane, Gobizembe Mayizekanye, Ozwathini, Spring Valley, Ngongonini, Plainhill ✓ EC: Nkau, Rashule, Ned, Nkasele, Mechachaneng, Mngeni
	2. Prioritized baskets of appropriate practises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Write up of final results in terms of yield, growth, learning, experimentation ✓ Section on challenges and successes with recommendations for future actions
	3. Learning and implementation support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Winter fodder supplementation progress report ✓ Continuation of gardening training and support in the EC
Social agency for LED and social safety nets	1. VSLAs, business development, farmer centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 26 VSLA's in KZN; monthly mentoring and progress with bulk loan funds ✓ Summary of marketing strategies and approaches, income and livelihood benefits for participants
	2. PM&E system and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Finalization of resilience impact assessments (x3) and snapshots (min 30)
	3. Iterative PID approach for improved adaptation and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discussion and recommendations

8. LIST OF ANNEXURES

Complementary information, including photographs.

ANNEXURES:

Annexure 1: Notes on VSLA bookkeepers' training – 22 April 2022

Annexure 2: Poultry monitoring data sheet_ May 2022

Annexure 3: F4CJ cross pollination workshop and Farmers open day_ 25,26 April 2022

ANNEXURE 1: NOTES OF EMMAUS VSLA BOOKKEEPER WORKSHOP 22 APRIL 2022

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to share strategic discussions that took place during the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) workshop for the group leaders and mainly the chairpersons and the bookkeepers. Recommendations are presented towards the end of the workshop. At least a minimum of two representatives from each VSLA were invited to this workshop.

Attendance

This workshop was attended by 29 representatives from 14 VSLAs in Emmaus, Bergville. These VSLAs were Mbalenhle, Vukuzenzele, Thuthukani, Ithembaletu, Zebra, Sondelani, Mzizi, Umntwana 1 & 2, Senzakahle, Masiphumelele, Mphelandaba, Ukhamba and Inyonyana.

A key highlight is that the workshop was attended by the secretary of the ward councillor. The secretary demonstrated interest in understanding how VSLAs work and how they benefit villagers in the ward. She was more interested on expanding Mahlathini programme to the entire ward.

Purpose of the workshop

The purpose of the workshop was three-fold;

- First, to assess the proficiency of the bookkeepers regarding recording VSLAs' transactions and records,
- Second, to present a platform for the leaders of the VSLAs (record keepers and chairpersons) to share their experiences with regards to the governance and operation of their respective VSLAs, and
- Lastly, to identify key areas which require adjustments for improved functionality and record keeping of the VSLAs

Structure of the workshop

A participatory approach was adopted in facilitating the discussions during the workshop. Besides the usual protocol, this workshop was structured in the following way;

- What members of the VSLAs have learnt in operating their groups
- Key resolvable challenges facing the VSLAs
- Non-negotiable rules of the VSLAs
- Next steps
- Short presentation of the BLF

Challenges facing the VSLAs

The following are main challenges raised by participants during the workshop:

- Forced lending (or forced borrowing) leading to over-indebtedness and delinquency
- Too much money towards sunset
- Granting of loans to borrowers who do not qualify based on the total value of their shares
- Borrowers do not want to declare what they use their loans for
- Delinquency leading to delayed group fund dissolution meetings
- Holding a first savings meeting immediately after a share-out meeting tend to plant seeds of delinquency

Challenges facing leaders of the VSLAs

The workshop confirmed that record keepers are recording transactions clearly and in transparent ways. However, group leaders and in particular record keepers raised the following challenges:

- There is pressure to grant loans in instances where shares bought by a borrower do not justify a loan. In some instances, refusal to grant a loan maybe personalised. Again, chairpersons tend to betray record keepers by siding with applicant borrowers.
- Ownership of a VSLA is shifted to group leaders. In some instances, record keepers are seen as gatekeepers for members to access loans.

Discussion

The following observations were made during the workshop.

The institutional make-up of VSLAs is tilted on using them as vehicles of improving access to cash and consequently making money for members. This is manifested by reluctance of some members in the VSLAs to accept loan terms that seek curb the levying of exorbitant interest on loans. Currently, interest is charged on *decreasing balances* at 10% per month. The loan term is 3 months but can be extended to 4 months. A rule that interest should be limited to 4 months is grossly ignored.

However, our programme faces a bigger problem than this. Borrowers are charged the minimum of 30% interest over a period of 3 months. Those borrowers who stretch loan repayment up to 6 months may end up paying over 60% interest per loan. This may result the poorer members to finance the group elites who are able to pay-off their bigger loans quicker. The question is: what can be done to:

1. *Curb exorbitant interest – as this practice may be responsible to discouraging enterprise development*
2. *Protect the interest of non-borrowers and those only eyeing for lump-sum cash payouts at share-outs*
3. *Maximise financial returns based on interest on loan. In other words, a financial reward in the form of a service and/or product must be developed for the borrowers to see that they are getting more from the interest they are paying.*

There is competition of loans at the start of a saving cycle. This is the main reason members take small but non-productive loans. This tails-off as the loan fund grows. The growth of the loan fund is the main trigger for forced lending. The desire that all members of a VSLA must borrow remains the painful reality of most VSLAs.

Borrowers hardly declare the use of their loans and/or lump-sum payout at the end of saving cycles. This is a clear indication that most cash drawings are used for consumption smoothing and less on enterprise development or productive activities. This may be the manifestation of the burden micro-savers bear resulting from financial exclusion. Technically, VSLA are used as a form of insurance against irregular incomes and shocks that many households face. This was made clearer by the defenders of non-borrowers.

Too much money towards sunset is one of the major challenges VSLAs face. This tends to complicate both governance and operation of a VSLA. First, is the issue of security of the group funds. Box keepers confirmed that they live in fear once there is too much money in the box. The issue of operating a bank account was discussed. Second, there is less time (or no time) for borrowers to service their loans. Third, bigger loans tend to trigger to delinquency.

However, few major positive experiences that can be augmented to enhance the VSLA and enterprise development programme have been registered.

- Some groups have been in operation for more than 5 years. Their membership has not changed that much. This is manifestation of social capital and the strength of collaboration. Some VSLAs are ready to move next levels such as the BLF and new products/services.
- Members of the VSLAs appreciate the work of Mahlathini. They want more services and want to keep Mahlathini the longest in their communities. This appreciation provides Mahlathini with opportunities to develop and test innovative products and services that are most likely to enhance the CRA agenda.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made;

1. Non-negotiable rules in IsiZulu be developed and given to VSLA
2. BLF must be promoted. BLF carries some benefits, and mainly, reduced interest rates, longer loan repayment period and flexible options to start (and to operate) a business enterprise. BLF promises to discourage forced lending, excessive money in the box, insecurity, etc. However, BLF must be made to support specific enterprises.
3. Development of innovative products and/or services. Mahlathini must find ways to balance consumption smoothing and enterprise development. VSLAs goals must be made much clearer and very specific. For instance, a target saving for seeds and fertilisers, fencing, water, vegetable vending, etc. The same way members save for end-year groceries maybe explored to promote bulk buying of farming inputs.
4. Discourage VSLAs to hold first savings meetings on the same day as share-out meetings. This is because many members do not stay for the duration of the meeting. This is when some members use the opportunity to take huge loans that are not proportional to their shares.
5. Develop simple constitution framework in preparation for VSLAs to operate bank accounts with reputable local banks. Banks need "stokvel constitutions" for similar groups like VSLAs to open bank accounts.
6. Promote record keepers and chairperson (and some group elites) to take on specific enterprise development ventures which support Mahlathini's development agenda. This may need a re-look at the concept and experiences of our farmer centres.

Next steps

The following actions must be implemented in the next 2 months:

1. Presentation of non-negotiable rules to VSLAs during their savings meetings. These must be signed by all members of a VSLA.
2. Printing of final individual savings books which include key non-negotiable rules.
3. Prepare VSLAs for establishing BLF immediately after their share-out meetings.
4. Present simplified version for opening and operating a VSLA bank account.

Conclusion

This report has shown that record keepers have the necessary experience (and capacity) to keep clear and transparent records. However, more people in the group should be trained in record keeping to reduce dependency on one person. The report also demonstrates readiness of VSLAs to take on new products and services such as BLF.

ANNEXURE 3: F4CJ CROSS POLLINATION WORKSHOP AND FARMERS OPEN DAY

1. Introduction

On the 25th and 26th of April a cross pollination Open Day and Focus Group Workshop was carried out in Swidi (Ward 14) Ozwathini, KwaZulu-Natal where women farmers from Bushbckridge, Mpumalanga visited farmers in KwaZulu-Natal. The workshop was organised by MDF staff namely Nkanyiso, Lungelo and Tema and was facilitated by Tema and Agnes. The workshop also included 30 farmers from Swayimane who also travelled to be part of the discussions. A total of 103 farmers were in attendance on the Open Day and 76 farmers were present on the second day, which was the focus group workshop. Also in attendance was the Local Councillor and the Extension Officer from the Department of Agriculture. The cross pollination workshop was a follow up to the focus group workshops that took place in February this year in the respective areas. The purpose of the cross pollination workshop was to share findings from the focus group discussions and it was also meant to be a platform for cross learning and sharing around solidarity networks and the role they play in supporting agro ecology.

2. Open Day

The open day started on a sombre note as it took place at a time where the Ozwathini community was shaken up by a recent murder where a body was exhumed from an abandoned pit latrine not far from where the hall. Also, the recent floods in Durban affected quite a number of farmers some who could not attend due to losing loved ones in the floods. Bab Skhakhane from Ozwathini, Nondabula welcomed all those who were present and the session then opened with a prayer which was led by Mrs Chamane from Gobinsimbi for all those who lost their loved ones. Thereafter introductions of the farmers from the different areas followed where a representative from each area briefly explained who they were and the activities they were involved in, after which Tema explained the purpose of the day and gave a background to the research and how it tied to the event. The cross pollination workshop was an opportunity for the two farmer groups to gain insights into each other's networks and activities within those networks. The workshop also sought to explore what enables and hinders these networks and also how the two farmer groups can collaborate to promote agro ecology initiatives and promote sustainable farming in their areas. A video was pre-recorded by Dr Mudimu from the F4CJ Team which was meant to be played in the workshop but could as there was no electricity on both days.

Display stalls of some of the different farmer groups were set up which included: livestock, conservation agriculture, marketing group, Swayimane Gobizembe Group from Mahlathini and the Mpumalanga Group stall which had a wide variety of products including Tupperware, soaps, powders and teas and shoes. Mayizekanye farmers were not able to bring any produce to the event as it was raining when they left and they had not dug any of the tubers. Farmers from both organizations gave presentations on their networks and how they function. The images below depict some of the produce that was brought to the event.



Presentation on F4CJ Solidarity Group Research

Tema gave a presentation on the findings of the Farming for Climate Justice Research on solidarity networks where she explained that groups/networks are often formed in response to a shock or a threat that compromises the stability of communities. According to literature, events such as wars, famines and even crime often give rise to solidarity networks as people form groups to collectively overcome the challenges that stand before them. These networks however are not only centred on what is wrong but many times are formed as a way to include marginalised groups in the allocation of resources and also for capacity building amongst other things. It was explained to the group that the Open Day was mainly a day of getting to know one another, the focus group would take place the following day which will have a more in depth focus on the networks.

MDF Solidarity Networks: Tema

Tema explained to the group that the first focus group revealed that there are indeed a number of solidarity networks within the different villages, most of which centre on food production and savings. These groups include but aren't limited to the farmers associations, conservation agriculture, livestock production, mushroom and savings groups amongst others and though there may be elements of agro ecology within these groups, many are still largely dependent on conventional ways of producing food. The farmers' associations managed by the Department of Agriculture which are the oldest groups having started in 2013 and are still operational. These groups mainly focus on the conventional farming of grain crops, namely maize and beans. Potatoes are also a major commodity within this group. Garden workshops are conducted but at a much smaller scale. The Conservation Agriculture learning networks are another example of a solidarity network in the KZN groups. This network promotes the growing of field crops under no till, ensuring permanent cover and integrating crop diversification in the production system. MDF has also introduced intensive gardening through the installation of tunnels, with trench beds inside and drip irrigation kits. In these tunnels farmers practiced mixed cropping of various vegetables including kale, mustard spinach, beetroot, spinach, cabbage and herbs. It was also explained to the group that MDF supports savings groups to save towards agricultural inputs, of which two have been set up in Ozwathini. In Swayimane, farmers were already part of savings groups and stokvels. These groups play a bigger role in supplementing household income than going towards agricultural initiatives although the farmers did say they joined the groups using funds made from farming.

Zingela Ulwazi: Agnes

Agness from Zingela Ulwazi also gave a presentation and explained to the group that ZU women are involved in wide variety of activities which include agro-ecology, permaculture, arts and craft and also processing amongst others. She emphasized that the women from Mpumalanga are passionate about agro ecology and do not use chemicals at all. She explained to the group that the farmers make use of manure and grass to increase organic matter in soil. For chemical control she described one of the remedies they use which include chillies, garlic and onions to kill insects. The women grow vegetables such as spinach, beetroot, lettuce, cabbage, onions, green pepper, chillies, pumpkin and herbs. The herbs include lemon grass, basil, curry leaves and moringa amongst others. Agnes also shared that the group practices seed saving for vegetables and moringa and the also trade seed amongst themselves. She also shared that they grow rose geranium which they use to make perfumes. Apart from food production, the ZU group is also involved in processing which includes soaps, perfumes, dried herbs, dried fruit and powders. The ZU stand was very popular at the event with most farmers flocking to it to ask about the products and some even purchased some for themselves.

Figure 24: Agnes explaining products to a group of Local Farmers



Local Extension Officer: Sbu Mkhize on behalf of DARD Farmers' Associations

Sbu Mkhize, the local extension officer addressed the farmers and explained some of the work they do across the Midlands areas. He gave a background on the farmers associations which are: Estezi, Baxoleleni and Mathulini Farmers associations which were all established by his colleague Wiseman Ndlovu who has been supporting these groups since their inception. The farmers have received extensive training on maize and bean production, including varieties, planting times, spraying programs and even market access. With the assistance of Mr

Ndlovu the farmers were able to venture into the green mealies market and supply bakkie traders from nearby Pietermaritzburg and also from Durban areas. Furthermore, the farmers have also been trained on potato production, with a trial currently running with support from Cedara that assesses the performance of mondial, sifra and panamera varieties under different treatments. Sbu also explained to farmers that they have been working with MDF for a number of years, in fact Mahlathini started working in Ozwathini as per request of the local extension officer who had a keen interest in conservation agriculture.

Presentations from Farmers

The farmers also had an opportunity to present on their different networks and explain what the commodities on display were and their uses.


		
<p>Ms Chamane and Ms Zondi : Marketing and Farmers' Association</p>	<p>Ms Hlophe and Mr Skhakhane: Livestock, savings</p>	<p>Bab Myeza: MDF Marketing and Farmers' Association</p>
		
<p>Mrs Majola: Mushrooms</p>	<p>Mrs Xulu: Conservation Agriculture</p>	<p>Mrs Mpele: Swaymane Group</p>

Table 1: A summary of farmer presentations at the Open Day

• MDF	• Zingela Ulwazi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Agriculture learning group: no till, soil cover, diversification • Intensive garden production (organic): trench beds, drip kits, tunnels, smaller scale • Marketing Group (once a month, vegetables, fruit, meat and eggs) • Farmers Associations: Oldest Group, Field Experimentation, conventional farming practices, chemical application, potato trials • Savings Group: Meet once a month, save between R 100 to R1000. Take out loans, mainly for businesses • Livestock Group: Calf rearing, from 1 week to 6-8 months then sell, winter supplementation for lactating sick and weak cattle, cover crops as part of livestock integration • Mushroom Group: oyster mushrooms, obtained stock from Cedara, Sold to neighbours, very high demand, did not plant them this year due to not receiving stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic food production (vegetables and herbs): spinach, beetroot, onions, green pepper, pumpkin, lemon grass, herbs • Natural pest control methods and techniques used and NO chemicals • Stokvel groups (stokvels and savings groups) • Art and craft (pottery, mat making etc) • Seed saving (saving of seed and trading between farmers) • Permaculture • Processing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soap (African potato mixed with oil, turmeric – grated and dried) - Curry leaves (dried and used as preservative for meat, also used as a spice) - Lemon grass (good for BP. Diabetes, sinus, ulcers) - Moringa (used in soft porridge, spice, bread, yoghurt-overall health boost) - Mpesu (traditional Viagra)

Table 2: Differences and similarities between the Mpumalanga and KZN groups.

Mpumalanga (ZU)	KZN (MDF)
Organic Vegetable production, permaculture	Field crop production, conservation agriculture, Oyster Mushrooms (Gobizembe) Organic vegetable production, micro-tunnels
Herbs (lemon grass, geranium, curry leaves, coriander, parsley etc), moringa	Herbs (parsley, coriander, basil, rocket, thyme)
Market: soaps, spices, dried herbs, powders, tea, dried fruit, Tupperware, shoes	Market: green mealies, sweet potatoes, amadumbe, vegetables, Ileembe enterprise)
Art and craft	Livestock (rabbits, layers, broilers)
Savings/stokvel groups	Savings/stokvel groups

The discussions were very fruitful and sparked a lot of interest between the two groups about each other's farming and other activities, mainly because they are so different in terms of their approaches to food production. What sparked the greatest interest were the various products the ZU women had brought and also some of the organic practices they shared. Furthermore, the ZU women's advanced knowledge on the different types of herbs was quite interesting for the MDF group. The ZU were also interested in local pumpkins which they said were much larger than those they grow back home. There was also a keen interest around amadumbe and sweet potatoes, for which the local farmers save seed. There was also a keen interest on the rabbits which were also on display, and Ozwathini farmers gave a brief explanation on why they keep rabbits, adding that they use their urine and manure to boost their crops and they also sell them to neighbours. The day ended with further interactions around the stand and demonstration of the no till haracca planter and the baler. The group also spent time going around the different stands and even purchased some of the products on display.



Figure 26: Mpumalanga farmers shared that they loved how big the pumpkins were as theirs are significantly smaller



Day 2: Focus Group Discussion

The second day, which was the focus group workshop had a significantly lower number of farmers, with an attendance total of 76 farmers. The focus group workshop aimed at zooming into the existing solidarity networks and how these survive through challenges, discuss ways in which groups are formed and why some of them don't make it and also conscientize the group on the need to continuously stretch yourself in order to progress and go forward.

The workshop opened with Bab Myeza welcoming all who were present and leading the group in prayer. Thereafter, Tema gave a reflection on what was discussed at the Open day and the purpose of the focus group. Before we could get into the business of the day, ZU women shared a warming up exercise to kick start the session which got everyone energized and excited.

Introductions

The facilitators observed that despite the success of the Open Day, people were seated according to their respective areas, and the demarcations were quite clear. In order to make the focus group more interactive, they asked the farmers to all switch seats and seat next to someone they do not know, even if the person does not speak their mother tongue. Thereafter a short exercise was carried out where each farmer was given a piece of paper and instructed to write their name but not with the hand they're used to. In other words if they are left handed, they had to use their right hand and vice versa. Initially the group was surprised but they attempted to do the exercise and all wrote their names. When reading out the names, some were clear and some were hard to make out. Even the names that could be read out clearly, had a shaky handwriting. Subsequent to this exercise, farmers had to have a five minute chat with their neighbour and then each person introduce the person they were seating next to. Although this exercise took some time, it was useful as the farmers became much more relaxed and open thereafter.

Opening Discussion

To introduce the purpose of the day, Tema used the "Comfort, Stretch, Panic" model by Ryan and Markova which is a tool for learning to move out of your comfort zone. This model places the comfort zone at the centre, where everything is secure and unchallenged until something comes and causes a disruption in the system. This in some ways infuses new energy and new life but also pushes one towards the panic zone as they try to navigate uncharted waters. If one successfully overcomes feelings of doubt and fear they become open to acquiring a new skill which will then propel them to grow. Tema explained that the previous exercise was meant to challenge the farmers' perceptions about themselves and the space they were in at the time where everyone naturally sat next to who they felt the most comfortable and probably expected a similar introduction to the previous day. When asked how the exercise made them feel, most responded that at first they were in disbelief, some laughed and others thought it was crazy.



It was further explained to the group that in order to grow one permanently move out of the heard about solidarity networks and care blocks around which people organize and manage their lives and resources. Within these networks how confident can we be that the way we cultivate our land is in harmony with nature and will be sustainable for years to come? What makes this

the needs to be stretched enough to comfort zone. Everyone (in the group) had economies and how these often form the building

networks work and what hinders them? Is there any potential to form a new solidarity network around agro ecology? For new ideas to become entrenched, the old way of thinking has to become obsolete, and for old ideas to die, something has to disrupt the system in such a way that carrying on with business as usual will now be costly. Case in point, the heavy rains in KZN during the summer months had knock on effects on farmers, in that by worsening soil erosion on ploughed fields, yields dropped and so did their income which all coincided with ever rising food prices.

Understanding the Nature of Groups: Role Play

There was a short presentation on how groups are formed and the different stages of group development. Using the Tuckman's model of group development, the facilitators explained to that groups go through various stages starting with formation where everyone is new and is just getting to know one another. At this stage nobody wants to step on toes and people are generally polite. From here on the groups go to the storming stage where friction begins to take place and conflicts emerge as people try to find themselves within the group. If the groups survive this stage they generally proceed to form ground rules, or some form of a system of operation which is then following by performing stage where they put their plans into action. As the farmers have identified their various solidarity networks, these have gone and are still going through these various stages. Some groups develop to maturity while others dissolve along the way. There are various factors that influence whether groups stick together and the following section by Agnes sought to bring to light some of these factors.

A Practical Demonstration of Solidarity: Role Play

Agnes facilitated the session which was a role play depicting two scenarios. The first scenario was about an organisation that ran a soup kitchen and was efficient because everyone worked together. **SCENARIO 1:**

- Group opened with a meeting to discuss plan for the week
- Various tasks were delegated to relevant departments
- Feedback was provided based on tasks performed
- Follow up meeting to review progress
- Recording of what was discussed at meeting
- Proceeded to order necessary goods for the kitchen to keep running

This scenario depicted how good communication and feedback as well as transparency led to smooth operations and progress within the organisation.

SCENARIO 2:

- Farmers work in individual fields, some advanced in age
- When they ask their neighbours for assistance e.g. seed, the neighbour refuses
- Truck collecting produce comes to individual farms, when finds produce is not enough, farmer tells driver to come back rather than recommended others
- Lack of cooperation between the farmers
- Ultimately truck leaves without taking any produce from them.

The second scenario depicted individual farmers who refused to work together, and when an opportunity to supply the market came they all lost as they would not assist each other for various reasons.

The farmers were asked to give feedback on what they observed and what this exercise taught them about groups. The role play gave a clear depiction of how the success of any group/network is dependent on a variety of factors, most important one being solidarity, transparency and respect. This exercise also gave the groups an opportunity to reflect on their own groups and whether these are functional or not. Below were farmers' observations:



Figure 27: Role Playing Session

SCENARIO 1: Soup Kitchen

SCENARIO 2: Individual Farmers refusing to work together

Good management style Agreement Transparency Respect Proper planning Record taking Trust Knowledgeable Love Unity Progress Compassion Strategy Communication	No management Disagreement Secrecy No mutual respect No collective planning Jealousy Lack of trust Division Competition No Progress Breakdown in communication Nobody wins
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Group Exercise around Solidarity Networks

The last exercise for the day was on the solidarity networks identified by both the KZN and Mpumalanga farmers in the previous workshops. The group was broken up into six groups of between 11 and 13 members and each group had a particular network they needed to sit and discuss. The main aim of this exercise was to identify factors that hinder these networks from functioning well, and come up with solutions. Each group had to randomly select a network from a basket and then hold a discussion around it. The six networks that were chosen from the basket were:

1. Stokvels
2. Organic Farming Group
3. Art and Craft
4. Farmers' Association
5. Processing/value adding
6. Church



The Table below gives a summary of what the farmers discussed in their respective groups

Group 1: Savings Group/Stokvel	
Challenges	Solutions
Lack of trust	More transparency
Non/irregular payment of loans	Dialogue with the owing party

Group division	Draft and follow the constitution
Lack of planning	Meet and work on group plan
Abseentism	Impose fines
Group 2: Organic Farming	
Challenges	Solutions
Insect damage and disease spread	Natural remedies/teas, mixed cropping: e.g onion and cabbage, spinach and chillies, rotating crops to prevent spread of diseases
Dry soil	Add compost, rabbit wee, mulch, raised beds
Unsupported seed	Use certified seed
Livestock damage to crops	Cover crops with netting or fence area
Lack of water	Plant on raised beds, store water in tanks, mulch, plant crops that require less water
High cost of organic fertiliser	Use animal manure
Group 3: Farmers' Association	
Challenges	Solutions
Climate change	Introduce practices that protect crops from climate change
Lack of money for inputs/High input costs	Save up towards inputs as a group
Insufficient land	Approach local chief and ask for more land
Limited access to market	Approach big supermarkets (Pick n pay, Spar, Boxer, Game, Checkers) and write up agreement to supply them
Lack of water	Request borehole from department
Lack of local farm workers	Get more workers from the community, sit down and sort out differences
Group 4: Art and Craft	
Challenges	Solutions
No designated venue	Request for a venue from local induna, propose to work there on weekends as a start
Hard to get working equipment	Get donations to purchase equipment
Raw materials not always easy to find e.g. thatch grass, twine, beads, wool etc.	Find reliable suppliers

Lack of skills	Get training from local people who have already started doing art and craft
Sewing: not enough sewing machines, lack of material, thread, needles and scissors	Ask local businessmen to sponsor the purchase of washing machines and scissors from experienced tailors
Group 5: Processing	
Challenges	Solutions
Unhealthy preservatives	Organic preservatives
Low shelf life of produce	Drying, e.g. mangoes, make achar, for tomatoes make jam, canned tomatoes and sell seedlings
Insects	Use of organic sprays
Lack of knowledge on processing/value adding	Get training
Group 6: Church	
Challenges	Solutions
Infighting	Encourage members to love one another
Gossiping	Confront gossipers and end gossiping
Starving members	Donation of food and clothes
Sick members	Taking care of the sick and providing food for them
Unemployed pastors	Provide for them through church offerings
Youth loving the world	Youth services addressing challenges plaguing the youth
Women who get married then run away	
Lack of infrastructure maintenance	Church committees should meet with congregation and raise this issue
Pastors who drink and smoke	They should be expelled from the church

Farmer Presentations

In closing, Mpumalanga farmers gave a short on organic practices using the three legged pot: water, soil fertility and sustainability. They explained the importance of farming in a sustainable manner that does not deplete soil nutrients and conserves water thus promoting sustainability and resilience to climate change. They used the tower garden and eco circle as examples of organic practices that protect and enrich the soil. Mrs Sibisi from Ozwathini also gave a presentation on a chayote, a crop she grows which she explained that it lowers cholesterol levels in the body, protects against free radicals and helps prevent the onset of diabetes. She circulated the vegetable amongst them for them to see and also some farmers took it home. Two farmers from Swaymane have already planted it.



Field Visit

After the workshop, the team visited Mrs Xulu's household where they saw the various activities she does including rabbit production, broiler and layer production, piggery as well as the winter cover crops which she had planted to feed her cattle in winter.



Figure 28: Mrs Xulu's household, Swidi Ozwathini