

JALA PEO NEWSLETTER

"Plant the Seed"

News from the National Steering Committee

BY ASHLEY MANUELS

If you teach a man to fish, he will have food for the rest of his life!" Such an apt and powerful saying as this teaches us that we should be self-sustaining. This could very well be said of the school food and nutrition gardens (SFNG) initiative. The SFNG Forums multi-stakeholder partnerships invested in school food gardens and community food production and are teaching children and parents how to produce food in their own gardens. Schools are encouraged and inspired to do more, even in the face of adversity.

Some school communities continued to tend their food gardens. They sharpened their knowledge and skills so as to sustain themselves through this period of lockdown. Many times, one does not see tangible results of the work that an initiative produces, but in this case, the results are evident and even edible.

As we end this year filled with uncertainty, one can easily look at all the negative events and be swamped with emotions, but if we have the proverbial faith of a mustard seed, we can move mountains and conquer all obstacles. One of this year's highlights was the first ever virtual Annual Review Workshop (ARW). Due to the excellent participation of stakeholders the ARW was very productive, influential and results-orientated. Anxiety turned into empowerment as the speakers delivered such powerful words of wisdom.

Looking forward to the next chapter that is 2021, the JPI can only grow. Strengthening of the partnerships and lobbying more earnestly with like-minded individuals can only bear good results for the project. The Steering Committee wishes to extend gratitude to all the partners and participants, organisations, companies and institutions that contribute so generously to make the Initiative the success it is becoming. Never forget your own value, as you will see it in another human being.

We hope this last newsletter for 2020 brings hope and "greenery" to your heart. We encourage you to rest well over the upcoming holidays, and to maintain the safety protocols. The wearing of a mask is not because we are scared, it is to protect our fellow humans. May we leave you with this saying "Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu" ("I am, because you are"). MASK UP, SANITIZE and PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING, and may we meet again in a fruitful and green 2021.

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Project highlights

Excerpts from JPI Annual Report (Available on request from zaahedah@jet.org.za)

Gardening is the purest of human pleasures

Francis Bacon

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT PROGRESS TO DATE

The team has been hard at work this year, despite the challenges that the national lockdown brought for the implementation of the initiative. The SFNG Forums persevered and ensured that a majority of the planned objectives were achieved by schools.

To date, the three District Forums have succeeded in reaching a total of 11 508 beneficiaries since 2018. These include 9 986 learners, 664 principals and teachers, and 858 community members (gardeners, food handlers, parents, students and local officials). Since the start of the initiative, 82% of schools (n=54) have had a functioning school food and nutrition garden (SFNG), and at least 16 schools have used a garden for teaching and learning at some point during the initiative. Collaboration of Forum members have leveraged a total of R2.4 million in assets to support SFNGs.

FEZILE DHABI DISTRICT UPDATES



During the 2019/2020 project year, training was conducted for Fezile Dabi Forum, and workshops were conducted for food handlers in school. In addition to this, a workshop on crop production was held for educators, gardeners, and Community Works Programme (CWP) workers. Educational excursions were held for learners and teachers.

Despite the challenges that the lockdown brought, a number of SFNGs continued to be maintained by community members. This was the case at Chris Van Niekerk Primary School, where produce was harvested and vegetable parcels were distributed to 15 families. At Boiphihlelo Secondary School in Vredfort, four community members took over the maintenance of the SFNG during lockdown.



Produce from SFNGs in Fezile Dabi District supplemented meals provided through the National School Nutrition Programme

VHEMBE DISTRICT UPDATES

A number of activities were achieved for the 2019/2020 project year. This included the placement of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) school garden assistants at each of the 29 participating schools in Limpopo. The homestead gardening programme was extended to 200 additional learners supported by the Seriti Foundation and the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve. Training was undertaken for food handlers and garden assistants, and teacher and learner educational excursions were both well-attended. The Vhembe District Forum convened a symposium led by the University of Venda and also organised a curriculum integration competition.

The Forum has supported the establishment and resourcing of four resource schools so that they become resource centres for learning. Resource centres are being established as learning laboratories to share best practice and support curriculum integration, fundraising, local sourcing, sustainable SNFGs and building community partnerships.



Educators' excursion in Vhembe



Symposium winners & prizes in Vhembe



WEST COAST DISTRICT UPDATES

During the project year, gardeners' training on topics like water-wise gardening, soil preparation, and vegetable production was held. Gardeners also promoted the establishment of household food gardens in the communities surrounding schools, and contributed towards the content of the West Coast pamphlets that were distributed during community outreach. During lockdown over 500 seed parcels were donated to learners in an effort to promote homestead gardening, and several communities turned to SFNGs for food. This served as an opportunity to make communities aware of the value of the school food garden and also in starting their own gardens.

Annual Review Workshop highlights

ZAAHEDAH VALLY, JET EDUCATION SERVICES



BACKGROUND

The Annual Review Workshop (ARW) provides opportunities to collaborate within and across the District Forums and add depth to the Initiative's objectives, share lessons across provinces and Forums, and importantly find collective solutions to common challenges that districts experience. The ARW provides a channel for stakeholders to give input on the strategic direction of the project at the coalface.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was decided to conduct the ARW remotely via Microsoft Teams over two days, with each day comprising a three-and-a-half hour session. Due to connectivity and data challenges experienced in the Free State and Limpopo provinces, central venues were set up from which small groups of stakeholders could engage.

The hybrid format of the meeting enabled participants who would not normally be able to attend the ARW because of the cost implications to attend the workshop in person. Stakeholders included principals, deputy principals, teachers, local farmers, and Community Works Programme (CWP) coordinators. Various government departments were represented and participants also included representatives from the National Steering Committee

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

In early 2020, a School Food and Nutrition Garden Information Day (SFNGID) was held in the West Coast District with the theme of SFNG curriculum integration. The event hosted speakers from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) curriculum division who presented on sensory learning, Life Skills in the food garden and schools sharing best practice. There was also a demonstration of practical lesson ideas from schools. Following this SFNGID, the WCED Curriculum Coordinator for the Foundation Phase developed an interactive curriculum integration infographic with linked teacher resources that can be used in the classroom. The infographic adopts an integrated thematic approach, with specific topics in the curriculum linked to the gardens and resources provided in order to deliver the curriculum effectively. These resources can be accessed by clicking on a specific topic on the infographic.

The importance of the outdoor classroom cannot be overstated. School gardens are effective resources to be used to teach key curriculum content effectively.

CAPS topics that can be linked to school gardens to encourage the use of the outdoor classroom. Click on a topic for ideas and resources.

Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3
Weather	What we need to live.	Healthy eating
Pets	Seasons	Insects
Plants & seeds	Healthy living	Life Cycles
Food	Animals	Pollution
Water	Creatures in water	Recycling – making compost
	Animal homes	Products & processes
	Soil	Animals & creatures that helps us.
	People who help us.	

The interactive infographic developed by the WCED curriculum coordinator

SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

One of the focus areas of the 2020 ARW was discussions around scale and sustainability in supporting SFNGs.

Each stakeholder needs to see how the SFNG initiative will contribute directly as well as indirectly to their respective mandates in order to ensure sustainability of the project. The importance of aligning government policy, practice and budgets at all levels so as to contribute to food security was also highlighted.

In planning for in-district scaling it was recommended that scale plans should be developed by each Forum. As part of these plans, Forums will identify key resource needs, and further note targets for scaling in iterative cycles. It is expected that scaling will be different in different contexts, and may also require different amounts of support depending on factors intrinsic to each District and Forum.



Follow this link to see the amazing work being carried out in Limpopo under the homestead gardening programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIDgYzsj9Ek>

Curriculum integration resources

GREYWATER USAGE

(Source: Bakker, E., & Boelee, E. (2013). *Greywater reuse interventions: Keyhole and vertical gardens*. IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre).

Greywater refers to any water that has been used in homes for the washing of clothing or dishes, as well as water from baths, showers or basins in the bathroom or kitchen, but importantly does not contain any faecal matter. This water often looks dirty, however it is a very beneficial source of irrigation especially for home gardens.

Often, greywater is not used widely because of the perception that it is dirty and watering household crops that are for (sometimes raw) consumption with soapy water is unsafe and unacceptable. This negative view of greywater can be mitigated by adopting simple filtration techniques to remove bigger particles, chemicals and other contaminants from the water. Two methods for reusing greywater have proven to be quite effective across different regions of Ethiopia, and could be implemented across regions in South Africa. These methods include keyhole gardens and vertical gardens.

KEYHOLE GARDENS

A keyhole garden is a waist height garden bed surrounded by rocks and stones, with a walkway ('keyhole') to allow easy access. Keyhole gardens also have a basket in the centre of the structure through which kitchen scraps, manure and greywater can be fed. The scraps and manure assist in keeping the soil nourished and the basket assists in filtering out the soap and other contaminants from the recycled greywater. The bed of a keyhole garden is comprised of layers of various organic materials that add nutrients to the soil and help retain moisture. This makes this method exceptionally well-suited for arid conditions and where good soil is scarce. The surrounding stone structure also assists in keeping the soil warm by retaining heat which encourages root growth.



Example of a keyhole garden (source: <https://www.concernusa.org/>)

VERTICAL GARDENS

A vertical garden is made from a bag or other vessel, filled with a mixture of soil, ash and compost. Leafy greens are cultivated in holes, cut in the side of the bag, and on top. Some designs include a gravel column at the centre of the bag to allow filtration of particles and other contaminants that might be found in greywater. These structures are useful in areas where space is scarce.



Above and below: Examples of vertical gardens (source: <https://www.researchgate.net/>)



Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/>



Source: <https://www.huffpost.com/>

