



LESOTHO EVALUATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**BASED UPON A PROGRAMME REVIEW
CONDUCTED FROM 7TH – 18TH DECEMBER, 2008**

**by
Erwin Kinsey, Global Service Corps – Tanzania Director, Team Leader
Ida Hadoto, Send a Cow – UK**

Lesotho Evaluation – Executive Summary

A external evaluation was conducted between 7th – 18th December 2008 by a facilitation team consisting of two evaluators, one external and one from Send a Cow - UK, to determine the appropriateness of the Send a Cow (SAC) interventions in Lesotho, and to advise on improvements in all aspects of the programme, both organizationally as well as programmatically. The week long assessment was done in a participatory manner using 'appreciative inquiry', and the results were shared for the purpose of obtaining additional feedback among a wide number of stakeholders including participating farmers, peer farmer leaders, national extension staff, partner NGO staff and government ministry officials, as well as the Send a Cow Lesotho (SACL) team. The following are the major findings and recommendations:

SACL has started what might be called a 'movement' in Lesotho through its successful promotion of keyhole gardens and double-dug trenches for which it has gained a positive national reputation. The government has encouraged its extension officers and different NGOs to promote this in other areas. There is a potential for SACL to have a higher level of collaboration with these and other stakeholders to more effectively promote these innovations toward food security and to arrest inappropriate approaches of some NGOs (such as World Vision Lesotho) in keyhole design. It is notable that the support from FAO has enabled the promotion of keyhole gardens and double-dug trenches to occur outside the Morija area. This has shown the potential for SACL to expand its direct influence to other parts of the country, further widening its national impact on household food security and poverty alleviation.

It is very significant to note SACL Outputs over the first eight years of the programme summarized to date as follows:

- 36 community groups established, led by committees
- 24 peer farmers trainers actively preparing and monitoring groups
- integrated home gardens among 2,300+ families [11 groups near Morija - 400+ households among 25 groups with Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO) – Orphan & Vulnerable Children's (OVC) project - 1,916 households many with OVCs]
- tip taps and fuel-efficient stoves in project villages
- pilot projects with poultry, rabbits and dairy goats using in-kind loan schemes to spread benefits
- groups trained in social development, group cohesion, mutual responsibility, marketing of produce
- groups who augment safety nets and reduce vulnerability of poor by re-enforcing the culture of sharing and caring
- improved nutrition and knowledge of balanced diets of participants at the home level
- raised awareness and adoption by community of intensive farming methods, environment-improving husbandry, marketing skills, hygiene, HIV/AIDS prevention, of energy conserving technologies
- Increased confidence of Peer farmers to provide needed services from local human resources

While lack of baseline data limits quantitative measurement of impact of the programme, one can extrapolate that these outputs are having a significant effect upon the families who have participated in the programme. These effects have been touched upon in human impact stories in the Appendix 4, but also are mentioned in the following changes both for individuals, groups and the SACL organization itself. Evaluators are more interested in outcomes than outputs. More significant than the outputs above are the changes they have created. A summary below lists of these outcomes resulting from the above outputs:

- increased dignity and status of women – giving gifts of produce to poor neighbours, training, livestock
- increased cooperation among family members, reduced under-employment (people are busy)
- groups planning for and evaluating their own progress; some leadership skills and changes in attitudes
- passing on the gift of knowledge – the groups are training their neighbouring communities

In addition, the organization has matured, which can be described through the following Organizational outcomes:



- 8 years of experience in Lesotho developing and supporting community groups
- well established office, small capable and dynamic team, well facilitated with transport, training packages, systems
- focus on impoverished and vulnerable households, mostly through women who apply and fulfil requirements prior to assistance
- 3 years experience targeting orphans, vulnerable children and those affected with HIV/AIDS
- integrated stepped approach - home gardens, fuel efficient stoves, home hygiene, water harvesting -> livestock provided after thorough training and farmer preparations -> marketing
- limited dependence on external inputs (organic farming, self-reliance)
- livestock credit system (not cash loans), with sustainable pass-on of animals and knowledge to new members and new groups
- pioneering individuals and groups have demonstrated what can be done with minimum inputs
- facilitated procurement of quality livestock and distributed to targeted poor
- created a high demand for interventions with many groups keen to collaborate
- recognition of SACL's contribution from government, FAO, and other INGOs who are prepared to augment resources - finance and associated staff
- solid reputation which has secured a budget support from SAC UK for SACL office and programme; supported by a SAC Africa team with 20 years experience
- shortened the time to project implementation from 3yrs to 2yrs using a small core staff; the planned exit strategy implemented by 5th year
- appropriate approach exactly aligns with Government Food Security strategy for households living with AIDS – “promotion of more intensive homestead food production...and small livestock production”
- recognised need of empowering groups toward maximizing their effectiveness and sustainability through training



From this summary, the first recommendation can be concluded below. Subsequent recommendations are focused on improving the programme which has significant importance for the people of Lesotho:

1. SACL approach is appropriate, its impact is far-reaching, effective, and efficient. Based upon the country's needs and aggressive poverty, the approach should be expanded.
2. SACL's new social development approach is affirmed: a gender policy and strategy are still needed. Certain gender aspects of social development and SACL Cornerstones need wider adoption. Many cite group unity as the major help obtained from the SACL intervention, but few men are currently involved in projects. Wife-beating is cited repeatedly as one indicator of a lack of cooperation within the home. Groups and women in particular are beset with challenges, erosion in group numbers and declining enthusiasm in groups over time. Groups requested more knowledge in basic leadership and organization skills which are part of the SACL SD curriculum. The use of the SACL Cornerstones should be used on a wider scale to address community issues such as guiding the youth who attend circumcision schools, and efforts should be made to involve spouses, especially husbands, and those who live away from home, in trainings in Cornerstones, especially human rights and cooperation in the home.
3. SACL recognizes the need to emphasize increased production in home-gardens and backyard livestock to promote group access to markets: Marketing emphasis is not achieving results because project participants are not producing surpluses of the scale to access local demand. The marketing coordinator should take on this role, giving more emphasis on agronomic aspects to augment production economies of scale to the point that there is something significant for individuals or groups to market, as well as appropriate processing. The training thus far has succeeded in imparting necessary skills on how to market their produce, but not enough on how to plan their production cycle and volumes so that they have diverse products of significant quantities from their keyholes and trenches.
4. An improved monitoring system which measures a few key indicators to be followed periodically would assist to produce a quantitative impact assessment which is not now possible. Furthermore, baseline data for key indicators of project impact is not available on the groups, and therefore precludes doing meaningful analysis of changes by these selected indicators. As a result, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is more qualitative than quantitative, and the programme needs to include some measurable impact indicators to improve credibility for future donors in a competitive world.
5. In the face of the severe impact HIV/AIDS is having in the country, misinformation prevalent in rural areas, and the wide network SACL has of rural partnering groups, SACL should consider a more targeted HIV/AIDS approach toward training and offering the opportunity of voluntary counseling and testing of project groups.
6. SACL should produce a comprehensive annual report with an audited statement of accounts to reduce some of the needs of individual stakeholders for separate reports, especially as stakeholders may increase in the future, and to attract new investments.
7. Participating families need compost and nutrition sooner. A renewed effort needs to be given on compost making in the older projects. At many homesteads no composting was evident. This is a significant input required for spreading the organic methods to larger fields.
8. Related to this, the sequence of farmers moving from one step to the next until they receive livestock works well, but the time it takes needs to be minimized in order to encourage people to complete the preparations and to see more rapid results. Ideally they should not be delayed longer than the first year and at a maximum before the 18th month. More livestock is anticipated and needed in some [FAO] projects; many families did not receive any livestock, yet had clear expectations of livestock.
9. Signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) or Letters of Agreement (LoAs) should be made with each group, if not with each farmer, so that expectations are clearly established and understood. In lieu of a contract with each farmer and the project, signed ledgers within the

groups would formalize what assistance had been received by each family and what Pass on of a Gift (POG) is required of each family.

10. SACL needs to introduce strategies to improve livestock health and productivity, particularly in the areas where project participants are living in close quarters on extremely small plots of land. Health of these project animals is in some instances wanting, and as a result, reproduction is compromised, the pass-ons have not occurred and the livestock become a burden. More frequent field visits by extension would likely help to address this issue, to consider which species of livestock are appropriate for such homesteads, more fodder being established at the outset. The project might also consider alternative means of availing fodder to participants' animals such as hay and crop residues.
11. Peer educators should come from participating communities to enhance on-going follow-up even after assistance ends. This constraint was noted in the FAO funded projects. While SACL is to be commended for assisting so many families with Keyhole gardens within a short space of time, by using peer farmers from neighboring communities, once groups are established, there is no systemized follow-up and this is especially needed for livestock projects.
12. SACL has already recognized that there should be connection of home garden practices and field practices, and a stronger approach toward conservation of soil, water and carbon. Therefore, explorations are needed such as to introduce a pilot conservation farming project (zero or minimum tillage) and to promote agro-forestry, including fodder trees on contours. A number of fodder trees are suggested. Conservation farming might succeed to make the connection between home gardens and field practices and can reduce labour requirement especially for families affected with HIV/AIDS. By zero tillage and use of cover crops, incremental increases in soil fertility and decreased need for chemical fertilizers and herbicides feature over time, while creating more respectable yields. The multiple impacts should be (a) expansion of compost-making to enable field crops to benefit, (b) reduced labour requirement through [zero-tillage] agriculture, (c) improved renewable fuel sources from backyard tree planting, or agro-forestry on field contours, or ravine recovery over entire watersheds; (d) improved potential for SACL to access funding for carbon offsets secured through trading of carbon, a potential source of finance for the projects themselves. Constraints to this are cultural and historical which the report mentions.
13. A renewed effort needs to be given on compost making in the older projects. The team saw very few compost piles in those projects except within the keyhole gardens. The Evaluation Lead Facilitator left some suggestions for improving the productivity of the trench gardens.
14. Government extension staff might be sought for attachment to the programme to obtain the SACL staff mentoring, provided with motorbike transport and allowances, in order to provide a higher level of farmer follow-up and to deal with livestock and horticultural aspects among SACL farmers. The government should be approached for this collaboration. It would be appropriate to have additional female social development facilitators in the field given the current group demographics and women's reluctance to speak openly and freely in the presence of men. Other NGOs benefit from such attachments and provide motorbikes for field officers in Lesotho.
15. Moving the office to Maseru will enhance the needed access to both local and international finance, reduce some costs of staff travel, and empower SACL to widen its national influence. The Evaluation team recommends that SACL should move its office to Maseru soon to enhance financial resource acquisition, efficiency and networking, while maintaining a small office near project areas. This will also broaden the SACL influence in the country and safeguard the existing programme.
16. The SACL Team Leader is commended for the many inroads he has made to augment finance; they should be pursued aggressively. SACL should encourage donor collaborators to commit to a minimum of three years investment for adequate follow-up, preferably five years with livestock-based projects. Less than that is a disservice to the groups and resembles relief whereas a development approach is needed.



17. Relating to this, SACL should increase partnerships with other NGOs to promote the SACL model to increase effectiveness, efficiency and expansion of impact without having to augment staff, recognizing current limited resources. Partner NGOs especially should target poorer areas in the South and Mountain regions. What may seem a compromise in quality to SACL is justified in order to more widely disseminate the technologies which SACL is effectively promoting in the current confined area.
18. SACL would benefit from wider local participation on its advisory board who can help open doors to local grants and help to establish a higher profile nationally.
19. The SACL Team Leader is challenged to adopt a time management tool among his entire team to assist them to cope with increasing work pressure, to delegate, and to focus less on urgent tasks and more on important tasks, to manage more strategically.
20. SACL should consider additional approaches: (a) livestock interventions: draught power and improved pigs (b) agronomic interventions: conservation farming (pilot), agro-forestry or backyard forestry, foot pumps or drip irrigation, fodder bunds, catchment conservation (forests, water sources), and (c) credit and savings mobilization.