

**Project Title:** Agriculture—Our Wisest Pursuit

**Project Location:** eSwatini

**Sponsoring College:** Methodist University

**Project Leader:** Lisa Kasamba, eSwatini, Methodist University, UWC Mostar (2013-2015)

## **Section I: Narrative**

*Agriculture—Our Wisest Pursuit* is an initiative that seeks to improve the standard of living of the members of the Mashobeni community through pig rearing. The project also tackles unemployment by providing a source of income to its beneficiaries by granting them self-employment opportunities that empower them to agents of the change they want to see.

The members of the Mashobeni group already had some fund-raising efforts in place to contribute to the project. For example, one of my contacts, Mr. Malinga had already erected two rooms in which he would rear his pigs. The second contact, Mr. Zwane had a number of cement blocks that were used in the construction of the latter pig farm. The two were also responsible for paying the costs of labour in as far as the construction of the pig farms was concerned. Logs, which were readily available in the area's nature, formed a backbone in the roofing process, thus cutting costs.

It was during the summer of my freshman year in 2016 that I had the opportunity to volunteer at Vulamehlo Primary School, where I taught siSwati, science, and mathematics to the grades 1s and 2s for a month. In the Kingdom of eSwatini, winter runs from May through August, and my volunteer experience was over the course of June. Located in one of the most rural parts of the kingdom, the school is home to about 200 students, most of whom endure poverty. It was my first time seeing eSwatini learners attend school in shorts and some without jerseys during the harshest time of the cold season. I particularly felt for the classes I taught because I spent much time with them and they were the youngest group and consequently most vulnerable. I knew that I wanted to do something to help, though I never knew what exactly. It was through talking to the teachers there that I met Mr. Malinga who then became a reliable contact and that was the creation of *Agriculture—Our Wisest Pursuit*.

I think that poverty, the problem that my project is responding to, exists particularly because of unemployment and one's mindset. Many problems arise when people are unemployed such as crime and depression. In the school that I taught at, I noticed that families did not fundamentally practice family planning, as they would have multiple children all of whom were around the same age. This then later becomes a problem because the unemployed parents will not be able to fund their children through tertiary, leading to high dropout rates. The lucky ones that do complete higher-level education then face the difficulty of a lack of jobs. That is to say, there is a large sector of unemployed youth, both educated and not. Then this becomes a cycle that is hard to break as in turn, the youth will have children that they cannot financially support. Largely, if one would have a change in the way he or she perceived her current situation, then that would be the first step in uprooting poverty as a mentality.

I chose the Mashobeni community as the host site because that is where my contacts are based, in relative close proximity to Vulamehlo Primary School. In other words, some of the children of that community attend the school in which I volunteered. I also wanted to give back in different way, having been touched by the challenges that my fellow citizens there face.

Overall, I enjoyed working at my host site because I love the outdoors, and there are many geographic features in Mashobeni such as mountains and rivers. The project ran from June through mid-September and I would meet with my team of contacts in the mornings; the cold was unbearable, which reminded of the time I volunteered at Vulamehlo. The site is almost an hour away from closest town and two-thirds of

the road leading to Mashobeni is gravel and hilly. Thus, we had to be cautious when transporting the heavy building materials to the site. Throughout the project, we received non-monetary support from Mr. Sibandze, a pig specialist hired by the Ministry of Agriculture in eSwatini. Likewise, Make Sanele Koti Dlamini, certified by Mpisi Farm, sold us government-approved breeds. Beyond that, she shared with us her pig rearing experience and answered our questions openly.

My project faced a number of challenges but never did I feel that it was not going to work. For example, the first meeting comprised of my contacts telling me how they wanted to execute the project. Taken unawares, I eagerly listened to understand them and best meet their needs; I trusted them enough to proceed they in the manner they wished. Mr. Malinga and Mr. Zwane expressed that they sharing the same views as SEDCO (Swaziland Enterprise Development Cooperative), believe that entrepreneurs should run their businesses in the comfort of their homes for easy management, rather than having to travel long distances to a main site. Moreover, members of the group would each own a small pig farm, meaning that none would suffer due to another person's laziness, thereby preventing conflicts. As an association, the pig farmers wish to save some of the proceeds from the pigs and pork sales to start their own abattoir. Thereafter, I then bought into their idea. Again, before any major transaction, we met as a team and went over our budget, got quotations and compared prices. The single concern I had was that I feared we would not complete the project on time as the construction took a while.

I would not say that I had challenges communicating with people. The only thing was that I always met with the team every step of the way to ensure that things went according to plan.

I believe peace deals with people being able to provide for themselves and their families with the necessities of life. On the same note, they should have the serenity to pursue the passions of their hearts' desires. I believe that when a person succeeds in life, he or she should share and enjoy that success with others, with the hope to inspire them in the process to follow their dreams. If there is a discrepancy, those with prosperity will not be able to enjoy it while their neighbours suffer alongside them. Simply put, those who do not have things will cause problems for those who have things. In short, those in power should use their privilege for good.

My project will contribute to peace because the pioneers stated that they would like to have more women benefit from the project. That is, the next phase of two beneficiaries, will each receive two sows from the project's forerunners. These two will then give one sow each to the next recruits joining the association and so on. Henceforth, this project will unite the community even more and encourage its beneficiaries to be in charge of running their own businesses. In the long-term, members of the Mashobeni community will be able to support their families and avoid engaging in illegal activities due to unemployment.

*Agriculture—Our Wisest Pursuit* has refined the way I think about the running a business and my view of the world. For one, I believe that we should predominantly use the resources that we have where we are to solve the problems that we face. The project reminded me that no man is an island; one cannot succeed alone. With that said, we need to reach out to others to help us and be open to helping others as well, to form a mutual relationship. The project also changed me as a person. I learned that communication, time and money management proved to be the most essential skills that I used during the execution of the project, among others. My contacts also inspired me to keep striving, to start whatever endeavour with the little that I may have, because where there is a will there is a way.

"When in a position of privilege, do everything in your power to encourage others to be better versions of themselves because it is through sharing that we are able to combat poverty. Believe in them just as much as you believe in yourself." Lisa Kasamba

## Section II: Photographs



Purchasing and receiving advice on how to care for pigs from farmer Mrs. Sanele Koti Dlamini



Offloading of the second sow on Pig Farm 2



Section of rooms on Pig Farm 1 for pig rearing