

**WORKSHOP URBAN MICRO-FARMING AND HIV-AIDS
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**EMERGING FARMERS PROJECTS, WES-KAAP
UBUNTU FARMERS' UNION**

By

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INTRODUCTION TO WEKUFU

WEKUFU is not for profit farmers' organization established in 2002.

The mission of WEKUFU is to develop a strong, democratic capable of representing, promoting and supporting the interests of the emerging, previously disadvantaged farmers and addressing the imbalances of the past.

Its main objectives are to assist the establishment of local farmers' associations & groups, to train members on organizational systems and procedures, to co-ordinate the setting up of savings and credit schemes, to resolve problems and conflicts, to negotiate on behalf of its members in order to remove constraints in terms of land, water, financial and other resource issues and to assist emerging farmers with Phase 1 of the Land Reform process and act as observer during further phases.

WEKUFU receives funding from the European Union, the Belgium Government and the Department of Social Services and Poverty alleviation. Members pay membership fees which are kept at a minimum

WEKUFU has initiated with different parties in March 2005 a process, to establish as a pilot in the West Coast District Municipal Area, two clusters of emerging small producer groups who have gained access to land in one form or another (Pelrivat and Klaver projects). These two projects were started in March 2005 and scheduled for completion for both these projects is 31 May, 2006.

The Pelrivat project is being implemented in the south of the West Coast. Beneficiaries here already have gained access to land and water and the main challenge for these producers is their lack of basic capacity and reduced access to relevant support structures for development. In the northern part of the West Coast, where the Klaver project is in progress, there are the added difficulties concerning access to land and water WEKUFU is negotiating with large commercial farmers and is elaborating with the District office for the Department of Social Services on a plan to acquire land and to establish food gardens in this area for growing vegetables.

The purpose of the trial program with the 2 clusters is:

- a. to build the capacity of the local producers in production of foodstuffs through improved structures of community co-operatives,
- b. to develop the health and wealth of local communities, including households affected by HIV/Aids, who are dependent on agricultural production for their food and income.

A project team has been established to manage the two projects simultaneously. The entire project has been divided into three phases:

Phase 1 – Planning stage: Consultation with Beneficiaries and Role players, Drawing up of Business Plans, Soil Sampling, Market Scooping, etcetera

Phase 2 – Preparing stage: Establishment of Mechanisation centre, Preparations for the formation of Co-operatives; Training of participants; Negotiations with markets; Planting preparations

Phase 3 - Implementation stage: Start up of co-operatives; Planting and growing of vegetables; Harvesting and supplying the market

With help of the Department of Agriculture we managed to do soil analysis as a basis for planning the most optimal use of the land available. We also take into account the advice of the HIV/Aids network regarding nutritious crops for people living with HIV-AIDS.

On behalf of its members, WEKUFU buys inputs and feed in bulk. In this way we secure the best prices for our members.

To make tools and equipment accessible for those who need it, we have established mechanization centres with the support of municipalities in specific areas. Our current cluster projects make provision for tools and other equipment to be shared amongst members.

LESSONS LEARNT

WEKUFU has experienced that for urban agriculture projects to be successful it is important to:

- **To assist members in the lobby for access to land and water** for agriculture. WEKUFU members partner with churches, municipalities and other institutions to gain access to land for the purposes of establishing food gardens or other micro farming projects. In the past we lobbied government, and will continue to do so, to provide land. In some cases we negotiate with commercial farmers to make land available in some form or enter into BEE partnerships with our members. In some areas where WEKUFU is active, creating access to water is a major issue. Often our members have to resolve to water saving measures such as channelling kitchen and bath water into tanks from where it is used for irrigation. Methods for retaining moisture in the ground are also being employed. In areas where there are limited quantities of water, members are also focusing on the production of meat which requires less water than the production of vegetables.
- **Ensure participation, capacity building and planning for sustainability** Beneficiaries and those affected should be consulted during the planning phase of a project for subsequent implementation. Capacity building through training should be conducted once such needs have been identified. Planning for sustainability needs to be of a high priority and adequate mentoring should be provided once funding has been procured. To ensure sustainability, our members have access to our services and assistance on a permanent basis. We have dedicated field workers in the different municipal areas to service people in those areas. Mentoring is provided continuously even if projects are concluded. Because WEKUFU choose not to provide assistance in the form of cash to beneficiaries, we have eliminated much of the problems generally associated with providing such a service. Instead, funding is utilized to establish an infrastructure, acquire inputs, tools and equipment as inexpensive as possible, etcetera.
- **Establish strategic and active partnerships.** This positively influences the implementation of projects and helps to ensure sustainability of such projects. Developing and encouraging working partnerships with departments and organizations across all sectors, has proven to be of great value to this organization as well as to its members. WEKUFU managed to align itself with the following organizations: Dept. Social services and Poverty alleviation provides funding, Dept. Agriculture and Land affairs regularly assist with technical support, Municipalities have provided much of the land we acquired in the past; Agri-business sectors supplies inputs, feed etc, at reduced prices; HIV/Aids action groups partner with us in the planning and implementation of projects to address the issues of nutrition and income in the larger community; with Surplus People's Project (SPP) we undertake collective action and share resources; Goedgedacht Agricultural Resource Centre (GARC) consistently share their technical knowledge and experience to the benefit of our members; West Coast Community Foundation (WCCF) provides much needed capacity building for the organisation; Other civil society organizations ensure a market for our produce.