

**WORKSHOP URBAN MICRO-FARMING AND HIV-AIDS
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**URBAN GARDENING PILOT PROJECT OF
AMICAALL-MBABANE**

By

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INTRODUCTION

The city of Mbabane has a population of about 57,992 people of which 43% is young people within the age bracket 15-34 years. (CSO, 1997) The city is divided into 12 wards, which comprise of formal and informal settlements. Informal settlements tend to be densely populated.

It being the country's administrative city, most of the governmental and none governmental organizations are housed in Mbabane and many people migrate to this city in search for jobs. The migration contributes to the spread of HIV infection, poverty, prostitution, malnutrition, homelessness and overcrowding.

Seeing the threat of HIV/AIDS to the urban population African mayors formed an Alliance to deal with HIV/AIDS issues within municipalities, known as the Alliance of Mayors Initiative for Community Action on AIDS at the local level (AMICAALL).

The Swaziland AMICAALL programme was formally launched in August 2005. AMICAALL's mission is to improve the capacity of local government and urban communities to identify and resolve problems associated with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to mobilize a comprehensive, community based, effective and sustainable multi-sectoral urban response for the reduction of infection and effects of the epidemic on urban residents and

As part of these efforts AMICAALL-Swaziland implemented an urban gardening pilot project, with the following objectives

1. To promote trench gardening as a strategy for urban food security
2. To mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on vulnerable families
3. To promote consumption of micro nutrients

A total of six families were identified in Emncitsini area, is a mountainous informal settlement in the outskirts of the Municipal Council of Mbabane. Selected families were those, which either had an elderly person as the breadwinner, child headed or where the breadwinner was sick. These were poverty stricken families, due to inability to provide for self as a result of the reasons highlighted above.

A radio show was conducted to sensitize targeted population and local authorities and a series of informal meetings were convened for target families and project partners, including as consultation meeting with the community HIV/AIDS team where volunteers from the community were identified. This was done to ensure continuation and sustainability of the project, post implementation by the change group.

A two day training on trench gardening was provided to the beneficiaries and seedlings were procured with funding from UNDP. HIV-AIDS Community volunteers provided digging tools and manpower to dig the trenches and planting of seedlings.

To ensure follow up at community level, the community action committees and the health motivator were entrusted with follow up visits to the project site and monitoring progress.

LESSONS LEARNT

- The project was well received by target population and other stakeholders as a mitigation strategy.

- There is need to designate a full time coordinator for this kind of projects to ensure sustainability and support from the Municipal Council.
- Urban agriculture needs to be institutionalized within Municipal council to ensure access to resources such as a budget line for urban farming projects.
- There is need to network with the Ministry of Agriculture and cooperatives so as to ensure technical support. A two day training is too short and the participating families and community development officers lacked sufficient farming skills and knowledge.
- Due to illness some participating families did not have a person who could look after the garden; hence its viability is at stake. More group solidarity and mutual assistance is needed.
- Other problems encountered are: Lack of water to water the garden, chickens from neighbouring homes entered the gardens and spoiled the plants (and hence the need to provide fencing for the gardens)