



Komeho Namibia Development Agency

The Kalahari Garden Project Annual Report July 2007-08



The Kalahari Garden Project began in July 2007, with the aim of assisting the San population in the Omaheke region in improving their food security and nutrition through the development of home gardens. The project also set out to help promote and preserve traditional environmental knowledge, and contribute to building the skills and opportunities necessary for creating a renewed sense of self reliance within the community. The Global Diversity Foundation's partners in this project include local NGOs, Komeho Namibia and WIMSA, and support from the Eden Project (UK).

Over the year, the project has assisted the San with the development and maintenance of twenty nine gardens spread throughout three villages. Eighteen of these gardens have produced harvests, while the others have only recently been constructed and are either awaiting the germination of winter vegetables, or the next sowing season in August/September 08. We have recorded harvest data and foods eaten from the gardens during this period, which suggests that diets have been improved with the addition of these foods to the daily consumption of maize porridge. Furthermore, some of the food crops grown, such as watermelons and pumpkins, have been sold locally, bringing in extra household income.



Gardens

The gardens are 10 x 14 meters and have strong, livestock proof fencing and eight rows of tilled sand improved with dung and ash. Vegetables sown during spring and summer include tomatoes, maize, kale, *morogo* (Amaranth sp.), chilli pepper, pumpkin, butternut squash, beetroot, carrots, watermelon, onions and Swiss chard. Clementine, pomegranate and fig trees were also planted, with each garden receiving two fruit trees. Vegetables grown over the colder winter months include chard, kale, onions, cauliflower, cabbage, turnips, carrots and beetroot. Where water pressure is sufficient, the gardens are equipped with drip irrigation systems.

These gardens were collaboratively designed by our horticultural technician Ian Martin (Curator of the Dry Tropics Biome at the UK Eden Project), the project team and San beneficiaries. Ian provided training in building gardens and sowing seeds during a three week visit in September 2007. Additional training was given to garden owners in two villages in December and April. These two workshops each had approximately thirty trainees and training focused on sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings, natural pest control and seasonal harvesting. The second workshop included information on the marketing of vegetables in the area. These workshops were coordinated by Komeho staff from the Ben Hur Rural Development Centre.

Water



Due to gardens requiring a reliable water supply, the project has also focused its attention and resources on water delivery systems in each of the villages. We have made improvements to these systems in two villages and are currently working in a third village. These improvements include; a) installing a new solar pump, panels and generator in one village; b) installing new 10,000L water tanks on raised stands to improve the water pressure and increase control over water delivery to the gardens; c) laying new pipelines to all of the beneficiary households and installing new taps (many of the households didn't previously own taps); d) fixing leaks in the existing lines

and assisting with engine repairs; and e) facilitating water point committee meetings and community based management of water in the area. The systems we have put in place continue to work well and we are providing ongoing support to the management of these systems.

The team

The garden project team was initiated with a team that included project coordinator - Hattie Wells, assistant coordinator - Abraham Motlhaping, horticultural technician – Ian Martin, and volunteers Megan Glore and Fredi Devas. In November 2007, Joseph Bessa, a Nharo speaking San, joined the team as a trainee. He has recently been offered full time employment with the project as a field technician. Fredi Devas left the project in January and Megan Glore in April 2008. Our new horticultural volunteer, Simon Stronach, will arrive in September 2008 and stay for six months.



Bethel Kazapua and Abraham Motlhaping

As part of our bid for sustainability and capacity building we have spent the last three months facilitating the election and training of San representatives for the gardens in each village. There are currently four elected representatives, two of whom have been mentored and given extensive training in gardening, water management and project supervision since April/May 2008. The other two will be receiving their training in the coming months. The representatives will form a garden committee and are responsible for conveying feedback between the beneficiaries and the project team and assisting the beneficiaries in finding solutions to technical and/or social problems associated with the project.

The current on-site field team, with whom the trainees are working, includes Abraham Motlhaping (Assistant Coordinator) and Joseph Bessa (field technician). This team are supervised by GDF's regional coordinator Hattie Wells and Komeho staff, Gabriel Hangara,

Bethel Kazapua and Sylvester Radiphuti. Komeho staff are now playing a more active role in project coordination and management and are hoping to use this project as a model for other areas in the future.



The beneficiaries

The San involved in the project have been enthusiastic from the start. Of all the San households in the villages in which we are working, only one house didn't sign up for the project. Of the 18 producing gardens, 16 of them remain well maintained. Only 2 gardens have suffered during the winter months, due to their owners having to leave the gardens to search for work, and not having

family members to tend the garden while they are away. Children have been actively involved in some of the gardens, helping to sow the seeds and learning about the gardens when they come home from boarding school. Garden owners have expressed that the gardens are helping them to feed themselves and their families.

Ida Gei//amses reported,

“ Before the project we had no food and finding food was difficult. Now we can go into the garden and feed ourselves and our children and we are no longer just sitting and waiting for the government to deliver food aid.”

Monitoring, evaluation and research

We have completed livelihood assessments, food security surveys and community mapping in three villages and are now moving into a fourth village to collect baseline data on livelihoods and food security. The data collected will be compiled into a report once the surveys have been conducted in all of the villages we are working in. We have received our plant collecting permit from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, allowing us to begin the ethnobotanical data collection on San knowledge of wild food plants. However, the wild food plant research was postponed until the second year of the project due to limited staff capacity.

Setbacks

The development of the school garden has not yet begun due to the delayed drilling of a new borehole at Motsomi primary school. Since we began designing this project in 2006 the school has suffered from an insecure and unreliable water supply. The government have had the drilling of a new borehole for the school on their agenda for some years but as of yet nothing has been done. Unfortunately we do not have the funds to drill, nor maintain the borehole ourselves. We are therefore dependent on the progress of Ministry of Works, who have maintained that they will drill a new borehole this year. However, as of yet, there is action planned confirmed.

Namibia was fortunate to have good rains this year, but the heavy rains brought with them an increased number of garden pests. As we are promoting organic gardening, the variety and density of the pests was a concern. We tried various techniques, such as soap sprays, garlic and chilli sprays, tobacco and some commercial organic pesticides. Overall, the pests were kept under control and everybody had decent harvests, but with greater preparation, we will attempt to have greater control over this in the second year. We are planning a garden workshop in September with Ian Martin, during which all the pests we have encountered over the year and associated control techniques will be discussed.

We also had an early frost in April, which wiped out a number of young plants that we were expecting to harvest in May. This meant that some gardens had a barren period while new seeds were sown in place of these crops. This was unforeseeable, but for next year we will make sure that we have a number of seedlings ready to transplant during April, that are kept in our seedling house and are therefore more protected from the frost.

We have also had a problem with birds during the winter months this year (May – August), and some gardens have struggled with getting plants to mature as a result. We will make provisions for this during the next sowing season by laying down mini tunnels made from shade netting as protection for young seedlings.

Plans for the second year

- Construction of at least 16 more gardens – reaching 43 in total
- Construction and development of school garden at Motsomi primary school
- Garden development and training for beneficiaries in posts 2, 4 and 15
- Improvements to water delivery systems for beneficiaries in posts 2, 4 and 15
- Maintenance and ongoing supervision of gardens in all villages
- Health and nutrition workshop for beneficiaries
- Training and support in marketing of crops
- Continued monitoring and evaluation of project – collection of baseline data in posts 2, 4, and 13
- Research on San knowledge of wild food plants
- Construction of indigenous vegetation garden in community campsite
- Publication of 2 booklets: ‘San knowledge of wild food and medicinal plants’, and ‘Vegetable gardening in the Kalahari’
- Raising more funds to support the continuation this project, and its expansion to other areas

On behalf of the Kalahari Garden Project team, we would like to give particular thanks to the donor organisations and individuals who make our work possible. We will remain in contact with regular progress reports and project feedback.

For further information please visit our website, www.globaldiversity.org.uk and our blog, <http://kalaharigardens.blogspot.com/>