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KRCC LEARNING JOURNEY TO BOMME DINATLA PROJECT IN RUSTENBERG



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1. INTRODUCTION

The report describes the learning journey that was organised by the (South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) in North West Province and the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) - NATIONAL for the KRCC group working on Children and Environment Project in the context of water and food security project. The learning journey happened mainly in Bomme Dinatla Home Based Care (BDHBC) project located in Meriting High School premises in Rustenburg. More than 50 people participated in this event. The list includes 5 KRCC women who are directly involved in the project, DWA staff, Department of Social Development – North West, BDHBC Project beneficiaries and caregivers, the school representative, Operation Hunger and many other important delegates whose work is around poverty alleviation, water, women and children.

The purpose of the journey was more than exposing KRCC delegation to alternatives to green water tanks that are used for rain water harvesting. Apart from that, the visit was also aiming at the following;

- Learning about community based ways to access clean and healthy water
- The role of women in improving nutrition and food security for households
- To strengthen organisational development with an aim of improving the quality of planning, implementation and monitoring processes.
- Sharing new economic and community development models used by unemployed women at KRCC.

2. BACKGROUND

The visit is the product of the quarterly National Steering Committee (NSC) meetings held in Johannesburg on the 24th of August 2011. NSC is the national structure of 15 organisations working on water issues supported by DWA. KRCC is one the member organisations representing the faith sector. It was in one of the NSC meetings where I was personally struck by the achievements SANGOCO achieved in the context of rain water harvesting and food security. More striking was the involvement of women in the construction of tanks than to buy the readily available ones from business sector. KRCC learned that buying tanks doesn't leave the project with any skill. Also, there is no sense of ownership. Worse, the relationship is reduced to a transaction of the buyer and the seller. The irrigation techniques were also impressive. If we regard water as a scarce resource, there was no way that KRCC could ignore water conserving techniques used by SANGOCO projects.

Few days before the NSC meeting, Mxolisi Nyuswa from KRCC had a conversation with the executive of the NSC about KRCC's intention to send KRCC delegation to SANGOCO to learn about women-made tanks and more about food security. All what I was negotiating was to be afforded a 5 minute slot in the following NSC to present reasons why KRCC wants to expose its beneficiaries to SANGOCO projects in the North West. Instead, I was afforded 10 minutes to state KRCC case for support to learn about envisaged tanks and gardens. I used the platform to share what the current plastic tanks are not doing against what we hope the community

built tanks will do in terms of ownership, skills and sustainability of the project. The reason for KRCC to take this to the NSC was mainly because we wanted DWA to provide both technical and financial support to this initiative. Indeed, the DWA staff present and NSC members were happy with KRCC case and they gave it blessings right there.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. KZN participants

Participating in this visit were women from Nkanini village near Eshowe. (Northern KZN). They are involved in the vegetable tunnels project which produces fresh vegetables for neighbouring schools and soup kitchen project. Although they are actively involved in the project, but they also facilitate the activities of 17 groups of unemployed women in the area. These groups of 15 – 20 people are engaged in activities like arts and craft, making of blocks, home based care, soup kitchen, vegetables and a number of other income generating activities. Going to BDHBC project gave them an opportunity to learn how to better coordinate the activities of the groups.

3.2. Why them?

No other people from KRCC were most relevant than these five women. They have regular contact with other groups of women. They see each group at least once a week. It goes without saying that lessons learnt from the visit will be spread as many times as possible. These are women who help other women on best practices in terms of rain water harvesting and vegetable gardens. If you give them information to share, the greatest proportion of the unemployed women in the village can be reached. More important, they have success stories to share to the host organisation.

3.3. Major highlights of the visit

Most important is to mention that these highlights come from the briefing that the KRCC delegation had after the learning. .

Apart from the excellent logistical arrangements by the DWA, it was clear that the host organisation was ready and prepared to give a warm welcome to KZN delegation. This was evident during the orientation session which was facilitated by Cynthia on the eve of the project visit. It helped the group to understand what will be happening and what is expected of them as well. There was no guessing as to what will happen since the programme of the day had been discussed. In a nutshell, the reception was excellent. The group felt accommodated. For instance, that they were not speaking Tswana and with limited English didn't deprive them of the learning. There was somebody who was allocated to do **translation for them**. He did his part extremely well.

Visit to the gardens was a brilliant idea for the group in that it gave them the exposure that affirms the work they are doing in KZN. They had an opportunity of asking about those practices they are not familiar with. This is what Mama Dlungwe from KRCC said about her experience in this regard;

“Being there makes a huge difference. This is not the kind of learning that needs to happen in class or workshop. But you have to go there to the garden. You see how water is drawn from the taps and tanks into plants. The irrigation pipe with small holes will save not only time and energy, but water as well”.

For her this was one of the major highlights. But common to all was seeing and touching the **tank made up of concrete, fiber, plastic and other materials**. When asked how do they feel about these new tanks if compared to the common green tanks. These are some of the things they said;

- *“They look durable”.*
- *“They will be built by us “.*
- *“We can build them for the families for a small fee”.*
- *“They don’t burn like the green ones”.*
- *“Stealing of tanks will come to a stop as this is built from the concrete foundation”.*
- *“Water from these tanks tastes better”.*
- *“Water stays clean inside”.*
- *“Water is kept cool even if it is hot”.*
- *“They portray the image of the Zulu calabash”.*

Working with the school was another highlight. The deputy principal from the Meriting was quoted saying they have a *‘total relationship’* with the project. The project is housed within the school premises. Most needy learners benefit in terms of uniform and meals from the project. The school has two tanks built by this project. The project supplies the school with vegetables. This is to show that the relationship is reciprocal. This is essential for project sustainability.

As the day was drawing to an end, the group thought that they have learnt enough. But the session with Cynthia and some of the caregivers which was focusing on record keeping was critically important. This was an eye-opener for the group. They have realized that recording enables them to see the difference they make. It allows them to compare. This session taught them how to better manage and administer home based care in general and soup kitchen project in particular.

Lastly, they didn’t only learn, but they had **an opportunity to share**. For instance, the idea of working with women in organised groups was exciting for BDHBC group. They shared how they recruit them, how they are structured, how regular they meet and what keeps the groups together and most important, how do they address MDG no 1, poverty. It was during this session when they shared how they R2 per week per person enabled women to build and extend houses for their families. They also offered to share more of this should Sangoco gets an opportunity to visit KZN.

3.4. Lessons learnt

Little will be said under this as most of the lesson has been covered under highlights. However, the also pointed out the following in addition to the highlights above;

- “For monitoring purposes, records need to be kept”.
- “You don’t know how much you have done to impact the lives of others until you share with others”.
- “There are many opportunities ahead of us, as long as we make best use of the community resources available”.
- “Water is core of everything we do. Think about the absence of it, you will realize how important it is”.

4. WAY FORWARD

- To share lessons learnt with all 17 groups of women in Eshowe.
- To bring trainers from SANGOCO and Operation Hunger to train KRCC women on tanks construction.
- To mobilize startup capital for women to start the production of tanks.

5. CONCLUSION

Having learnt all the above, more important is to implement the lessons learnt for the benefit of rural unemployed women and children. If that happens, we will see unemployed women in the village playing a major role in the fight against poverty as well as other social ills in the community.

6. ATTACHMENTS



**KRCC team learning about record keeping with Cynthia from SANGOCO –
BDHBC Project**



Learning about water saving irrigation system

One of the lessons KRCC shared with SANGOCO



(Tanja Funkenberg from Tdh- Germany standing with the camera on the left, visited this project mid -September)

The picture above shows one of the activities which R2 does to change the lives of women and children from Nkanini village in Eshowe.

They are part of Self Help Groups. They save R2 per week in a group and earn interest that allows them to build blocks for the extension of existing houses. Although they have no house building skills, but they make blocks them. They also help with concrete mixing, removing of rubble and so on.