

# Southern Africa Food Lab & Western Cape Government

## Food and Nutrition Security Strategy Design Lab I Final Input Note

### Potential of the school food garden as a community hub

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The challenge of realising school food gardens as community hubs really needs to be understood from what we understand by “community” and “community hub”. The assumptions that we may have around the definitions of community and how to engage a successful community hub from a top down approach must be very carefully traversed. The author believes that school food gardens that already exist as community hubs need to be highlighted and supported. It is by no means a given that all school food gardens should now be pushed towards becoming community hubs. There exist school food gardens and there exist community hubs, but to have school food gardens as community hubs may not be the simplest seek and find process. Some school food gardens may not self-identify as community hubs, but upon investigation it becomes clear that that is indeed how they function.

We see school food gardens as complex spaces and to their benefit they have security, land, capacity and, most likely, access to water. On this level, these spaces might be on clinic or church land and thus nothing specific, but schools are spaces of learning and care that are accessible with buildings and areas that may have dual-purpose, particularly outside of learning hours.

So what will it take for school food gardens to become community hubs? Who and where is the community and how does it relate to the school? Often, the learners do not live close to the school, so how then is buy in from the community achieved?

It must be noted that the Western Cape is a space of vast economic, environmental and cultural differences (amongst other things) and the gardens we spoke with exist in different environments and realities and this must be emphasized; each garden is different and on a provincial level this will be made clear if a copy paste approach is taken.

School food gardens are emerging in many schools around the province as schools come to terms with issues of hunger, malnutrition and a need to engage students outside of the classroom. Schools provide a pivotal role within communities as centres of learning, cultural spaces, community centres and safe spaces for learners and other members of society.

We will refer to those working within the garden as “farmer” and “gardener” interchangeably as some people refer to themselves as one or the other, it also is to be noted that most school food gardens are of smallholder capacity.

David Clandfield talks about *Schools as Community Hubs: A Public Alternative to the Neoliberal Threat to Ontario Schools*. He calls for “Schools as Community Hubs in a Critical Moment”<sup>1</sup>, seeing the privatisation of schooling systems, even public schools, through neoliberal systemic engagement as an issue that fundamentally sees schools (learners and the families and communities they belong to) as a market opportunity as opposed to sacred centres of learning.

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[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS\\_Summ](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS_Summ)

To understand what is meant by “community hub” within a school system, we will describe them according to the five-point continuum<sup>2</sup> that Clandfield describes, which recognises the ambiguity of the term, culminating in the ideal “school-community relationship” which places the school space as a “fully integrated” site, inclusive and accessible.

1) *Community use of schools*, with an “extension of school opening hours with additional costs being incurred for the on-site presence of school staff, a caretaker and, in some cases, a school board administrator in a coordinating or managerial role.” This would include using the school for events, workshops, additional classes, meetings and so on. This may or may not follow a formal process such as in hiring out the space or booking a slot for use of the courts or gym for private use or hall for election registrations.

2) *Parallel use and shared use of schools* describe an extension of the above. Instead of single use, it is rather a regular use of services or space. This could be a book club in the library, a dance class in the hall, or night classes held by a continuing education centre.

The above two points are described as “market-driven”, where the school has “unused space at certain times and allows it to be used by outsiders, typically for a fee on a cost-recovery basis” and thus is defined in a limited value, predominantly financial, and where the learners and users of the property are not integrating.

3) *Co-location of community services* is the “efficient use of public space” by targeting local community needs in a single, “mixed-use” site. The school property may house a daycare centre, a public library or a cafe, sites that may not necessarily cater to the learners or school members. Co-location is ultimately the bringing together of commercial enterprises and the school space into one. This may be problematic if “the land is co-owned in a public-private partnership, there will be limits on the room for growth or change in the design and use of the public education facilities. If the land is publicly owned, a business model for the allocation and renting out of private space is usually negotiated on terms sensitive to commercial market pressures. And if the school is located within a retail commercial environment, the school population becomes a target clientele for the businesses themselves.” Thus, the community hub element is merely a facade to accommodate financial gains and move the school away from a centre of learning and nourishment.

4) A *full-service school* moves more towards public-private partnerships which may then begin to “lend itself to corporate sponsorship”<sup>3</sup> again, overriding the needs of the child and school as care and education centre for more corporate needs and centering the learners and their family as key consumers, perhaps through food or health programs.

5) The *school as community hub* means that “children’s learning activities within the school contribute to community development, and [that] community activities contribute to and enrich children’s learning within the school.” The fluidity of this model ultimately changes the paradigm of learning and also teaching, creating a mutual model which is enriching and elevates the role of the school to include other community members, not just children or teachers. Teachers “will have a duty to understand their pupils not only as potential producers of knowledge rather than vessels to be filled, but also as community mediators providing the actual means by which school and community can work more closely together.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As described in: Aboites et al. *The School as Community Hub - Beyond Education’s Iron Cage*. Volume 19, Number 4, Issue #100, Our Schools/Our Selves.. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. P15. 2010.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS\\_Summer10\\_Preview.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS_Summer10_Preview.pdf) p18

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS\\_Summer10\\_Preview.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS_Summer10_Preview.pdf) p20

Placing a community hub within the school is of utmost importance as it centres the child as the key role of community gathering. Spacing it within the school food garden points to the important connection between the self and land, establishing “childhood connections to the land and to nature” particularly important in spaces which lack safe natural space for children. In Lila Kelly’s Honours assessment of wild food knowledge in Gansbaai, she notes that “the reflections from childhood by the participants indicate that a relationship with the land manifested organically in previous years [and] seeking ways of facilitating the process whereby children can feel connected to nature will enable not only increased food security, but also break cultural misperceptions about what it means to ‘eat well’ in modern society.”<sup>5</sup> She highlights the importance of play to secure knowledge about food.

School community hubs are attributed to raising the standard of education. Pukekohe North School in Pukekohe, New Zealand, placed their hub in the library and included a health clinic with the potential to encourage other community support services to “come here so our community do not have to hunt for them. The idea is that if you make the family healthy, then the kids will be healthy as a result.”<sup>6</sup> The introduction of the community hub came from a need to encourage the children to improve their average and this was effected within five years with the children exceeding the standard for their levels.

Literature on the improvement of livelihoods through school community hubs also shows the potential to influence policy around the intersections of education, health and social services.<sup>7</sup>

But what do we mean when we say community? We cannot assume that children are educated in the same area in which they live. In some instances, children are travelling far to get to school, not really even associating with children in the school vicinity. The “assumption is that the geographical area surrounding the school, its neighbourhood, contains the community. In other words, the community is thought of as local, a word rich in associations that need to be unpacked rather than swallowed whole.”<sup>8</sup>

Community hubs exist in many ways, from libraries, sports halls, parks and playing fields and public spaces, but placing the potential on the food garden within the school, becomes a more nuanced focus to which a whole other set of criteria may be applied. Using the food garden as a classroom space as inspiration for curricula work, and also the potential cultural effect can be a very powerful and enriching way of working. This sees food as the central point and encourages food to be the interface with which education, culture, recreation, health, geography, history, ecology, employment and many other facets may be dealt.

Creating a school food garden also provides the potential to see the food garden as a multicultural space<sup>9</sup>, a focal space where food is grown, taught, cooked, consumed and shared, working towards creating a connected community. The Gould Group, an environmental education group in Australia, created the Multicultural School Gardens Program as they recognised the difficulty of schools with low resources to get their food gardens flourishing to be able to plug in to various programs and be a viable and productive garden. One of their solutions was to insert the school garden into the schools curriculum to create a sense of ownership across the age groups and the broader community. The research they conducted went along the following objectives:

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<sup>5</sup> <http://bio-economy.org.za/2016/11/22/veldkos-imifino-assessing-knowledge-about-wild-edible-plants-in-gansbaai-western-cape/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/69252921/schools-new-community-hub-seen-as-a-positive-step>

<sup>7</sup> <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED544497.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS\\_Summer10\\_Preview.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS_Summer10_Preview.pdf) p21

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.kitchengardens.det.nsw.edu.au/kg/assets/MSG\\_Report2007.pdf](http://www.kitchengardens.det.nsw.edu.au/kg/assets/MSG_Report2007.pdf) p 124

- celebrating cultural diversity and demonstrating the benefits of multiculturalism;
- creating multicultural garden and cooking projects within the school;
- helping to develop strong local communities and school communities; and
- fostering healthy eating habits.<sup>10</sup>

To ensure success of this programme, “gardening buddies” were elected and implemented and were usually members outside of the school alumni, staff or learners, thereby continually pulling community members into the school food garden and subsequent programmes.

Of interest, this programme also notes the key importance of children’s inherent knowledge and cites children as researchers towards realising multicultural school gardens.

Within many parts of the Western Cape, culture is, by nature, multicultural, and this is no different within schools. It must be noted that many schools are spaces where a multitude of cultures meet, play, intermingle and engage in learning and exchange. The school food garden may be a connection or space to hold these differences through food cultivation.

### **Community Kitchens**

Schools as community hubs may open a space for interest and engagement by children on their way to becoming well informed adults able to access and maintain their own good health. Schools as community hubs may be connected to school feeding schemes and programmes by working towards Community Kitchens. These Community Kitchens would target learners who arrive at school hungry, first and foremost, and then other staff members or community members.

An example of a Community Kitchen is the one at Isikhokhelo Primary School in Site C, Khayelitsha (the school food garden described below). The school kitchen is close to the entrance of the school and sees 7 big stove burners with 100l pots and kitchen tools ideal for a feeding scheme. This kitchen services the schools, events the school may have and outside events, such as Disco Soups held by the Slow Food Youth Network outside of school hours. The kitchen may also be let out to those hiring the hall for private events as an income stream.

An important part of cooking together is the “notion of community exchange. People cooking together introduce each other to their diverse techniques and food lore from within their family traditions, but also as an expression of their regional or ethnocultural identities. Out of such encounters, strong communities are formed and sustained.”<sup>11</sup> This ties into the idea of celebrating multicultural realities within the school community, using food as a tool to highlight the importance of diversity. Community Kitchens tie into the National School Nutrition Programme, discussed below.

Tapping into the existing Clubs and Societies that exist within some schools might be a powerful tool to support the gardens without adding pressure to the school as a body, or on parents or learners. An example of this would be to plug into the Environmental Club to ensure that the composting or vermicomposting is maintained, or to ensure that recycling centres are established to support the gardens financially.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.kitchengardens.det.nsw.edu.au/kg/assets/MSG\\_Report2007.pdf](http://www.kitchengardens.det.nsw.edu.au/kg/assets/MSG_Report2007.pdf) p 125

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS\\_Summer10\\_Preview.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/ourselves/docs/OSOS_Summer10_Preview.pdf) p50

## **Examples of Existing School Gardens**<sup>12</sup>

### **Beacon Organic Learning Centre at Beacon School for Learners with Special Education Needs**

This garden is at the Beacon School for Learners with Special Education Needs (L.S.E.N.) in Beacon Valley, Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town. It is run by Magda Campbell, a local community member who saw that the school could only cater to the children up until they are 18 years old, thereafter the school is unable to provide a learning centre or support. Magda grew concerned by this and wanted to offer practical life skills to the children as well as their potential use in employment.

The garden has been supported by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in supplying water tanks, pumps, well points and production input which has seen the garden well on its way. This garden is also the focus of the Soil for Life Agri-Hub, supplying some of the garden inputs (seeds, seedlings, compost) to the Soil for Life home food gardening programme in and around Mitchell's Plain and is also used as a training venue for learners at the school. They are being taught how to grow, harvest and sell vegetables, herbs and seedlings and how to produce compost and maintain a garden and plant nursery. All of these skills represent potential income generating opportunities for the learners once they leave the school.

It will also serve as a community-based training space, an inspiration to the surrounding community, an information centre and a stress free place of peace and tranquillity. The garden will also represent an example of the many ways to recycle and reuse waste whilst growing healthy organic vegetables and creating a green and growing place of beauty in the community.

The children at this school have learning disabilities and this means that when they finish school, they very often are alienated from the work environment. It is critically important to support them with resources to encourage further learning and the school garden offers this. This garden is soon to input an indigenous food garden run initially as research to test its viability but also to connect with existing indigenous food gardens and to indigenous peoples movements such as the KhoiSan Active Awareness Group and local active spaces within Mitchell's Plain.

Soil for Life support this garden and in 2016 trained 728 new gardeners and provided support to 650 gardeners trained since 2013. This training and support has provided the potential for approximately 8 268 people (the gardeners, their families, friends and neighbours) to benefit from having access to healthy nutritious vegetables. It has also enabled the home gardeners to create small "green" patches of salvation in their communities and given many a sense of purpose, joy and pride. Soil for Life is a non-profit public benefit organisation that teaches people in township communities in the Western Cape how to grow their own nutritious food, improve their health and wellbeing and generate income through garden-related activities.

Contact Magda Campbell at 079 5432649 and <[magda.adonis61@gmail.com](mailto:magda.adonis61@gmail.com)>

### **Klipfontein Primary School, Bonnievale**

This food garden was initiated by the school's principal as a way to broaden the school's reach within the local community. The garden focuses on vegetable production to supplement the school's intake and is managed by local community members living around the school, including the parents of the learners. They wish to highlight the area as a local centre for agroecology and have approached NGO Surplus People Project to support them in this endeavour. Crime is high in Bonnievale and they wish to encourage the garden to be a

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<sup>12</sup> please note these are mostly in the City of Cape Town and due to time constraints I have been unable to venture further out, but it must be noted that other examples exist outside of the district.

community space of learning. Through agroecology, they wish to diversify the garden to include local medicinal plants and flowers, encouraging the garden to be a space for biodiversity as well as a safe space for children and community members. The biodiversity focus of the garden is used to teach children about ecology and ecosystems, the different life cycles such as hydro and nutrient cycles. An objective of the garden is to build towards agro-processing for local household food security.

### **Spurwing Primary School, Eerste Rivier, Cape Town**

The food garden at Spurwing links up with SoulBuddy Camp, a personal leadership programme for the learners. The school incorporates lessons and discussions about ecology and biodiversity through the school, focusing on soil fertility. SoulBuddy has a focus on recycling and reusing materials and this is evident throughout the garden. This element of repurposing and giving new life to waste is a theme that transforms the learners thinking, looking at life in terms of potential and possibility, particularly through the act of creation. The garden was started to improve and contribute to the community particularly in sharing the story of food, where it comes from and how it grows. They will expand to include a market that can hold an event to welcome the local community within the space.

### **Ikhaya Garden, at Isikhokhelo Primary School, Khayelitsha**

Ikhaya Garden is run by Xolisa Bangani, who saw an opportunity to use the garden to share stories. There are few trees in Khayelitsha and youth don't often have the opportunity to leave Khayelitsha to see broader ecosystems at play. Bangani saw the need to grow plants and build an ecosystem within Site C and partnered with Isikhokhelo Primary School, farming a piece of land at the front entrance, visible from the street. Bangani's audience consists first and foremost of learners and, using art, poetry, dance and hip-hop, he engages the children and community through this cultural lens. Poetry about food, farming, trees, seeds and environmental issues in general in English and isiXhosa are what set this garden apart from other school gardens. The farm grew through various networks within the Cape such as the Slow Food Network and Abalimi Bezekhaya.

A particular success of this garden is the constant events that take place within the parking alongside the garden space and within the school hall, right next door to the garden. Events around food, music and biodiversity attract community members as well as people from outside the community in various networks around the city and beyond. This garden also utilises tour companies attracted to seeing what is happening in Khayelitsha and is able to broaden the network through this.

The garden has a newly planted indigenous food garden along its fence which attracts new visitors and has become a centre of learning around these indigenous foods. This is perhaps one of the most important steps for this garden as these plants are heritage plants whose use is not well known, but which are acclimatised to Cape flats sandy soils and natural rainfall rhythms. An objective of the garden is to always plant different varieties than what the children see being sold at the local supermarket and hawkers, so their curiosity is always piqued and agrobiodiversity is at the forefront of the work they are doing.

Ikhaya Garden was the subject of a Master's research that culminated in the launch of the Impilo Market which happens each month end. Local market holders gather to sell their wares such as food, traditional and contemporary, and seedlings, clothing and so on. Each market is also coupled with an Open Mic session which is a big draw card to local musicians, poets or those who have something they wish to share. Ikhaya Garden is now supported by a full team of Xolisa Bnagani, Athenkosi Ndulula, Unathi Nzama and Nomasande Skade.

Contact: Xolisa Bangani at <[soiluture@gmail.com](mailto:soiluture@gmail.com)> and 0814148411

### **Ekasi Project Green at Vuzamanzi Primary School, Khayelitsha**

This school garden was inspired by Ikhaya Garden and the Slow Food Youth Network, connecting healthy eating to the township. A big issue that was identified amongst the four founding members (Sizwe Nyuka, Lonwabo Mfenguza, Loyiso Hulushe, Abonga Tom) was that healthy eating was largely sacrificed within the townships due to unaffordability and inaccessibility. Coupled with low biodiversity, the Ekasi Project Green team aims to green up the township and bring biodiversity back through farming by “making gardening cool”, reminiscent of the Eastern Cape they remember as young children. The team went to Vuzamanzi Primary School<sup>13</sup> and so thought it was fitting to approach the principal to start a garden on the fallow land along the side of the school. Their belief is that even though it will take a lot to fix the situation, two things are crucial, “food education and genuinely engaging in the production of food.”<sup>14</sup> They were able to start with the help of other organisations and a seed fund from the National Youth Development Agency.

Both Ekasi Project Green and Ikhaya Garden use Thunderbolt Kids Living and non-living things<sup>15</sup> programmes to engage in an education curriculum and attract the children to the garden everyday. Both these gardens are also connected to the global Slow Food Network, both as part of the Slow Food Youth Network and also as part of the 10, 000 Gardens in Africa project. These spaces offer a sense of support outside of financial gains, a network into which to plug and engage, accessing international communities of people who are doing similar things and can offer ideas, host similar events or ideas around new events. Events are an important part of the success of both these gardens, Ikhaya Culture and Ekasi Project Green have worked together creating The Eat-In, which is similar to a pot luck, but where each cook or chef presents the meal they have cooked, why they chose to make that and what its benefits are. This becomes important as it gives the opportunity for producers to present their food on the plate and not the crate, describing the way they farm and the kinds of things they are growing. Usually the Eat-Ins happen at the schools themselves, but can also travel to other venues. When the schools are hosting, the event is always attended by many local children.

Contact: Sizwe Nyuke at 0214485616

### **SEED at Rocklands Primary School, Mitchell’s Plain, Cape Town**

SEED is a permaculture centre within Rocklands Primary School, in Rocklands Mitchells Plain. Called the Rocklands Urban Abundance Centre, it focuses on food security, climate adaptation, social cohesion and prosperity through young people to transform under-resourced neighbourhoods. From this line of thinking, SEED has developed different programs to achieve its goals.

#### The Schools Programme

Here SEED utilises the Outdoor Classroom as effective environmental education, tapping into Food/Ecoliteracy. As described on their website, “Our Outdoor Classrooms provide resource-scarce schools with an enriching space for school goers to learn about the environment and engage with core school curriculum. We train teachers on how to use the outdoor space for an enriching learning experience, and have published five textbooks to support teachers in delivering core curriculum and ecological literacy.

As permaculture hubs, Outdoor Classrooms also act as a central location where individuals and families from the surrounding community can easily access the resources they need to grow their own food.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> From the website: <http://seed.org.za>

<sup>14</sup> <http://molewaskitchen.com/reviews/cape-town/ekasi-project-green/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.thunderboltkids.co.za/Grade4/01-life-and-living/chapter1.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://seed.org.za/schools-education/>

SEED also run youth programmes outside of Rocklands Primary but based within their Urban Abundance Centre to do core Accredited Permaculture Training, specialising in the design, implementation and management of systems.

Leigh Brown describes the difficulty in rolling out the school education programme due to lack of available funding. She has done much ground work to be able to implement this as a programme within the areas in which they work. SEED has much experience in what is needed to mainstream Edible Education and she notes that it requires specific knowledge and planning to implement effectively.

Another project of interest is how SEED have created a Community Hub with the school food garden through the Food Freedom Mitchell's Plain Project. Using the school food garden as a training ground, households surrounding the school have begun implementing their own household food gardens and connecting with various trainings around sustainable living, from growing food, agro-processing, creating home cleaning products and home grown medicines and toiletries. Through their Home Gardeners Network, households are able to access continuing support and mentoring as well as staying connected to the other households and events that may occur.

Contact: Leigh Brown, [leigh@seed.org.za](mailto:leigh@seed.org.za) and [www.seed.org.za](http://www.seed.org.za)

### **Conclusions and Highlights**

Common points of each of these examples are the approach they have, namely;

- including civil society;
- calling on local government to offer support;
- creating spaces for accessible markets; and
- incorporating indigenous plants, whether food or medicine.

It is imperative to find a way for these school food gardens to intersect within the appropriate government departments in order to transition them to flourishing community hubs. These gardens may be independent from the schools in that they are not run by school staff or parents of learners, they may sit within the school grounds and intersect with the learners, staff and parents, as well as engage in the curriculum at certain stages or fully. It is important to note the Driver (be they the farmer or gardener or a manager) and the role they have ensuring the success of the garden as a community hub.

It is suggested that offering support to transition from a school food garden to become a flourishing community hub becomes the role of civil society as well as government and most likely government sits as an umbrella body supporting the networks of school food gardens as community hubs.

### **Economic Viability**

It is important to note that these gardens are economically viable to some point, either through:

- Sale of produce
- Holding trainings on site
- Holding workshops on site
- Event hire
- Civil Society support
- Government support
- Markets
- Research

...and so on.

Due to the vast differences between each garden and the potentials of future gardens, it must be noted that viability must be seen as broader than just economic (the cash economy). It might be that the farmer or gardener has alternative income streams to support their lifestyle. We must be mindful of how economising works and to what extent it allows for nuanced approaches and independence for the schools and, more specifically, the farmers or gardeners who are caring for these food gardens. Harnessing the knowledge that exists within each farmer so that there is less dependency on extension service.

### **Integrating existing government programmes or programmes already working with government**

**We must see School Food Gardens as Community Hubs as a potential end game, currently the way it is situated is one of the three ways:**

- 1. SCHOOL GARDENS**
- 2. COMMUNITY HUBS**
- 3. SCHOOL FOOD GARDENS AS COMMUNITY HUBS**

Embarking on this research, it is clear that there are many government departments and programmes that are working with gardens, but not a lot of cohesion or communication laterally to see where a common focus can be met or supported. There are also programmes that work towards community hubs, but not around school food gardens and could potentially be a part of a greater collaborative possibility.

### **The Mass participation; Opportunity and access; Development and growth (MOD) Programme**

The MOD programme operates around a hub where sports, recreation, culture and arts activities may take place specifically for learners within a community. Thus far they are not working with gardens but understand community hubs.

These hubs usually exist within a school and service the entire community. For learners there exists a structured development curriculum which may be extended to the broader community. The centre operates post school time, until about 18h00 in the evening.

As is stated on the MOD website, the programme “is central to the vision of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, namely, to create a socially inclusive, creative and active Western Cape.” While this programme does not deal with food security specifically, the overlaps are of interest and the opportunity to connect may present itself with the right stakeholders present.

Contact: <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/mod-programme>

### **After School Game Changer Programme**

Another opportunity that falls in line with the MOD Programme but is connected with Department of Education (WCED), Department of Social Development, The Year Beyond Programme, various NGOs and local government authorities, is the After School Game Changer Programme.

This encourages learners to stay engaged in after school activities. It arises from a need for learners to engage in unsafe spaces after school time. The objective of this programme is to provide a no fee learning or recreational space for learners They do not work in any way with food security or school food gardens and the seeing a school food garden as a community hub could potentially work in a future instance, or expertise could be called upon from this programme to understand how to enliven youth and community hubs.

Contact: Jackie Boulle at the After School Game Changer Programme on 0214836545 and [jacqueline.boulle@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:jacqueline.boulle@westerncape.gov.za)

### **Community Work Programme**

This programme is part of the Department of Cooperative Governance and was implemented to mitigate unemployment for people in working age. The major opportunity the CWP has provided is predictable income streams through a minimum number of regular days work. Unemployed and underemployed community members are employed in marginalised economic areas, and “communities are actively involved in identifying ‘useful work’ needed in local areas.”<sup>17</sup>

It must be understood that the community works programme aims to provide a buffer while sustainable work is sought out. ‘Useful work’ is work that improves the quality of life for the worker, but also towards the creation and maintenance of community assets and services. In this way, school food gardens as community hubs fit perfectly. In fact, this has been a focus for the WC provincial CWP, “The CWP has become an instrument of community development by improving the quality of life through planting and cultivating food gardens at clinics, schools, churches and in household plots for neglected elderly people and orphans; home-based care; developing recreational spaces; general maintenance work including cleaning of schools and other tasks to support schools and community safety.”<sup>18</sup>

Speaking with Mr Naym Daniels, the Provincial Manager of the CWP through the Dhladhla Foundation, agricultural gardens have been a main focus for the past period and the work started by focusing on school gardens because of the direct link with feeding schemes within the schools to which they are connected. The idea is for the school food garden to supplement or override the feeding scheme to include other schools. They are also partnering with organisations to input this work. The food gardens also extended (as described above) to established gardens outside of the school context, such as the (roughly) 50 food gardens in the Greyton area, from public health food gardens to elderly care facilities and so on. The idea to start with these gardens in these sites (clinics, schools, churches and so on) has been first and foremost because of security and access to land and water. Mr Daniels made it clear that the biggest issue they have faced by far has been the drought and thus have invested their budget in water harvesting tanks and so on. Mr Daniels made it clear that the CWP target where the need is most high as resources are limited. Amongst the programmes the CWP offer, those of relevance that fit school food gardens as potential for community hubs are:

- Skills development (Educational institutions and programmes);
- Environmental issues (relevant programme);
- Water harvesting and purification (relevant programme);
- Food Security with agricultural programme sector (relevant programme)

Contact Naym Daniels at +27 729272096 and <daniels.naym@gmail.com>. Mr Daniels has shared a document entitled “Community Work Programme - Food Gardens” which is available upon request (via the author or Mr Daniels).

### **Meals For Children**

#### **Lima Rural Development Foundation**

Lima Rural Development Foundation is a non-governmental, not for profit organisation engaged in various developmental programs nationwide focusing on implementation. From ag-

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.dta.gov.za/cwp/?page\\_id=31](http://www.dta.gov.za/cwp/?page_id=31)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.dta.gov.za/cwp/?cat=1>

riculture, community based training, civil engineering to food security and public health and have much experience working with government departments.

Lima have Food Security as a focus, along with Agriculture, Education, Engineering, Food Security, Social Development and Land Reform. Their food security focus is on the household level mostly in the implementation of food gardens. They are a lead agent for the Community Work Programme (CWP) and already works at linking Early Childhood Development with CWP.

More at: <http://lima.org.za> and contact Jackie Saaiman at <[jackie@lima.org.za](mailto:jackie@lima.org.za)>

### **National School Nutrition Programme**

This programme forms part of the Department of Basic Education. A nutritious meal is provided per learner per school day, along with education about hygiene, what nutritious food is and why it is important as well as potentially growing food at home (or in the school grounds depending).

From their website:

“The NSNP aims to enhance the learning capacity of learners through the provision of a healthy meal at schools. Where it is implemented, the programme has shown to improve punctuality, regular school attendance, concentration and the general wellbeing of participating learners.

Whilst learners are being provided with nutritious meals, they are also taught to establish and maintain good eating and lifestyle habits for life. Nutrition Education also provides educators with resource materials to support curriculum and to make every school a healthy school. Schools are also encouraged to establish food gardens from which they obtain fresh produce (vegetables/fruit) to supplement the menu in line with South African Food Based Dietary Guidelines. Learners, teachers & parents are provided with skills to grow their own food contributing towards long-term household food security. The gardens are also used as a teaching and learning resource and to beautify the environment.”

There are many resources they have created, from a recipe book to a horticultural manual for growing and sustaining a food garden, pest control guides, provincial menus, health and safety guidelines, guidelines for tuckshop operators and so on. This department may be the best link to integrate the school food garden into a working feeding programme.

Contact: The WCED National School Nutrition Programme food garden coordinator, Mr. Makholwa Xotyeni. 021 467 9245, email: [makholwa.xotyeni@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:makholwa.xotyeni@westerncape.gov.za) and online <http://www.education.gov.za/Programmes/NationalSchoolNutritionProgramme.aspx>

### **EcoLiteracy and Food Literacy**

Schools as centres of learning must extend to the school food garden. Involvement of the children in these food gardens must be emphasised. This, as various research shows<sup>19</sup> through working examples from around the world that including learners in the entire process is transformative. The Edible Schoolyard project has pioneered a school food garden and various curricula attached to the garden, centering the garden as the main place of learning while able to build resources from all aspects around the garden. Their website contains vast resources in many different types, from academic, to business, advocacy work, recipes, fundraising, all school subjects of all grades and according to season too, available for free online<sup>20</sup>. As is expressed on their website, the Edible Schoolyard Project “involves students in all aspects of farming the garden and preparing, serving, and eating food as a means of

<sup>19</sup> Blackwell, Booth et al (2013), RHS Campaign for School Gardening a

<sup>20</sup> <http://edibleschoolyard.org/resources-tools>

awakening their senses and encouraging awareness and appreciation of the transformative values of nourishment, community, and stewardship of the land.”<sup>21</sup>

These are the supporting knowledge systems that go hand-in-hand with the implementation of school food gardens. It is, of course, vital that food education forms part of the food garden, linking the gardening to food, seed and biodiversity but through play.

The Royal Horticultural Society outlined three aims for their school gardening program<sup>22</sup>:

1. To encourage all schools to use gardening as a teaching tool.
2. To show how gardening can enrich the curriculum, teach children life skills, and contribute to their emotional and physical health.
3. To demonstrate the pivotal role of gardening in developing active citizens of the future.

The potential to link this thinking with local clinics, libraries and other provincial institutions should not be overlooked as these are direct access points in much the same way schools are.

An excerpt from “Teaching in Nature’s Classroom” reads as follows:

“The beauty of the garden environment is that in addition to serving as a deeply textured, dynamic classroom for students, it can serve as an engaging teacher as well. The garden provides young people with the valuable opportunity to learn through direct observation, exploration, and experimentation. Thus, we optimise the learning power of the garden when our lesson plans and activities support students in exploring and experiencing the garden classroom through their direct experience.”<sup>23</sup>

There are many online evidence-based resources that outline methods and established pedagogies to engage in school food gardens as community hubs. The empowering of children through this work is the proven agency it provides for children to make decisions about nutritious food by choice. They are more likely to choose nutritious fruits and vegetables once becoming accustomed to understanding the very nature of this produce, either via growing it themselves or choosing it from a supermarket.

In *City Farmer*, author Lorraine Johnson explores the way solutions to food production issues are sprouting up within cities across North America and Canada. She interviews Cam Collyer, director of the Canadian Learning Grounds program. Collyer sees school food gardens as “the place where a constellation of benefits comes together to make children’s educational experience - and more broadly, children’s lives - better.” From actively working against childhood obesity, “food gardens encourage physical activity... gardening is an activity that can become habit-forming”, to nutrition, “kids who grow vegetables, eat vegetables,” says Collyer.

### **Extension Service**

It is important that appropriate extension services exist for these gardens who all work in terms of agroecological or sustainable farming methods and should not only be trained in large-scale, industrial farming techniques.

### **Considerations, Recommendations and Questions**

As was mentioned, “not replicability but transferability”, this is very true for School Food Gardens as Community Hubs. While there are many models for how a school food garden may work, it is imperative that local conditions and realities are taken into consideration for the school to have a successful functioning school food garden and programme, with buy-in from the school, learners and local community.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://edibleschoolyard.org>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.growingschools.org.uk/Resources/Downloads/RHS-Gardening-in-Schools.pdf> P4

<sup>23</sup> <http://edibleschoolyard.org/resource/evidence-based-practice-let-garden-be-teacher>

In terms of physical properties, it is noted that for a school food garden to be successful, it needs (in no particular order):

Adequate space to allow for biodiverse crop production, crop rotation, and ideally seed production.

- The school must provide an outdoor classroom space and encourage the curriculum or learning programmes to utilise this space as well as for other events.
- Protected areas for growing are encouraged, noting that most schools have built-in security fencing and the like. Food tunnels would be a bonus with correct training to sustain them.
- Water accessibility, with the drought the Western Cape continues to face, rainwater harvesting is needed first and foremost, as well as potential to sink well points or access water in alternate ways.
- Renewable Energy would release the burden from the school in the long run, implementing items like solar panels for alternative energy streams to power garden electrical needs.
- Renewable inputs: Water and green compost. The households from which the learners come may be seen as harvesting spaces for grey water and compost, such as is done at schools like S.A.C.S in Rondebosch, Cape Town.
- Suitable inputs for smallholder agroecological production, not inputs created for large scale monoculture production. School food gardens should always be agroecological, organic, permaculture, biodynamic, or something similar as the maintenance of pesticides, fertilisers and so on should not inhibit the children and community from engaging in the garden. The garden should work towards being a beacon of diversity and inclusivity. This is true for the seed, compost and other inputs as well.

The garden should have a sense of marketing along with it, whether it is external such as the work of SEED or Ikhaya Garden or internal like with Beacon Organic Garden where market days are held for the school and learners family. The garden must be open to financing or sponsorship and a marketing understanding is required to get this going.

Coupled with the above points and looking at what already exists (school food gardens listed above as well as work already happening within government contexts), a lot of the work has already been done. There are many examples around the province and the world where school food gardens have had an immense positive effect on the school and also the communities. By linking in with the existing various government or non-governmental agencies, it is possible to knit together a cohesive community hub within school food gardens around the province.

It must be noted that the Department of Health and Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries have committed budget to fund 100 school gardens. There is a big budget of R120,000 to establish these gardens but only one person to manage this which must be clarified as part of research.

Through the Western Cape School Feeding Programme there is provision made supporting school gardens, and where this has been done, it has been quite effective. Where there have been linkages between ECD and school feeding education, this builds on success and is something to include in the initial research.

We must think about linking at risk pregnant women, disabled persons and those struggling to find employment, to the development of community gardens as hubs, also to link into multiple systems – food, waste, water, compost, community kitchens.

This is a cross-cutting issue that involves many departments including DoE, DoA, DoH, and PWD, and also deals with community evolution, with broad benefits but needs to be held in central place.

Adraain Conradie from local DAFF mentioned, “Mentorship is important with 6 – 12 months at least. We lack the extension and mentorship and need to partner with NGOs on this. We are in support of the organics approach and are training extension workers in organics. We have good successes in food gardens, high in schools (93%), lower in communities (82%) and lowest in backyard (63%). Chemicals in small gardens are not sustainable and we are only able to support where community buy-in is committed to.”

Community hubs need to be driven externally and create a stakeholder group to rollout, as per experience.

Creating a school food garden that is a potential community hub is by no means a simple thing to map, it is dependent on the people and environment in which it operates and adequate support must be given in order to elevate it into a successful venture.

A mapping of sorts would need to be done internally to vouch where the overlaps exist, and in which directions these need to be channeled. The complexities might well be made smoother if the possibility to work together is garnered in a way that does not create more work for the departments but instead allows for easier implementation and cohesive action.

Using the examples of school gardens given above, clues as to what may be rolled out provincially might well take shape. The gardeners, directors and management at each of these school food gardens have enough experience to be able to share and would appreciate being part of the next process as they may provide much needed guidance.

We must research where the existing organisations and programmes stand to build onto, such as Food and Trees for Africa instead of trying to embark on this from scratch, rather build onto what already exists to ensure the “community hub” element is successful.

### **Questions**

What is the role on business or industry within School Food Gardens as Community Hubs? Is the role of Woolworths My School fundraiser programme to allocate funds towards this programme, or is it about linking surplus or food waste into schools where the need exists as part of the feeding scheme or establishing Community Kitchens? School leadership needs to buy-in for these programmes to be successful. Who are the central people who will manage and implement this? Who is the driver of this? What are the successful aspects of these gardens? How do they work?

This work already exists in some or other ways within government departments and scattered institutions such as Department of Social Development, Department of Water and Sanitation, Department of Public Works, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, Department of Education and so on - how do we link these sectors together? Where are the champions and how do we identify them?

It is of the opinion of the team that the driver needs to be civil society, as is mostly the case in the above gardens.

### **Situational analysis**

1. **How many gardens are there?** A casting needs to be done to see which government departments, civil society and non-governmental organisations are already working within school food gardens.
2. **Who funds them?** [e.g. DWA supports irrigation/water pumps etc; DAFF supports tools & inputs etc; CSO/NGO’s support farmer exchange/access to market etc; private funding]
3. **Map them agroecologically** to ensure that one area is not more saturated than another.

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**Author:**  
Zayaan Khan