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## FARMING METHODS FOR NEW GROWTH

In the middle of last year, a man from the Kotyana area came to the Jabulani office asking for John. Kotyana is approximately a 30 minute drive from Zithulele, and he was in Zithulele accompanying one of the members of the small church he pastors, on his hospital visit. When he arrived in Zithulele Village, he wanted to find out what was happening in the area and he was directed to the Jabulani office. Just outside the office, he bumped into one of Jabulani's managers, Riaan, and they got chatting.

Riaan ended up telling Pastor Sikhokho about the Farming God's Way (FGW) method of small-scale agriculture in which he has received training for the past three years (and is now one of 76 accredited trainers in the world after graduating last month - well done Riaan!). He has been running small trial groups with Jabulani's youth development gap year programmes for the past few years in preparation for launching a larger programme.

Pastor Sikhokho was very excited to hear about this method and the way the training is delivered. Jabulani has been preparing to roll out small-scale agricultural training on a larger scale for a long time now. The land around here is incredibly arable but much of it is unfarmed, either because the skills and knowledge

have been lost, the younger generations believe there is no dignity in working the land, or households have very young and old members and no one strong and healthy enough to farm even for subsistence only. However, the land here is an incredible asset and people's ability to work the land creates such potential for them to influence their own quality of life and livelihood, without needing to rely on handouts.

While Riaan has been managing our Building Services and Healthy Village Project teams, he has been studying for his full FGW accreditation, training a few groups each year, as well as maintaining his own garden using this method, in order to use it as a demonstration garden. When Pastor Sikhokho saw Riaan and his wife Ilze's garden, he was very enthusiastic to learn more.

In October last year, more than 30 people had squeezed themselves into a small, mud rondavel in Kotyana to learn about Farming God's Way. The mood was one of excitement! While we have run a few smaller courses over the preceding years, this was quite a momentous moment for Jabulani as well - it was officially the start of us rolling out small-scale agricultural training as part of our Livelihoods Programme, utilising this method, Farming God's Way.

Despite the Christian roots of the foundation, this was the first time we were implementing a programme that has an large Christian element to the content, as the principles used in the farming method echo the principles and ways in which God speaks to and protects his people in the bible (although the programme itself is not focussed on proselytising).





Pastor Sikhokho not only translated for Riaan. He followed his every move, displaying as much excitement and passion as Riaan did, as he shared new ways to farm, how to manage one's farm, and how to change one's life spiritually. Rural training isn't complete without livestock participation, and ours came in the form of a chicken who popped in to join us for a few sessions now and again!

The training has both theoretical and practical elements, but as the garden planted by each training group starts to develop, it is easy to see how the new method they have been taught is more effective than the old conventional ways. With the Kotyana garden's first harvest, the members of the group were able to eat from the produce, give to those from their church community who were in need, as well as sell some produce in order to buy seeds for the next season!

The group has already had their second planting season where they practised crop rotation, and while the initial group working in the church garden has dwindled to a core of approximately 10 committed

members, the main objective of the training was to teach everyone the skills they need to be able to go home and start their own garden. Anyone who would like a mentoring visit to their homestead for advice with their individual garden is welcome to request this.

There are plans to continue extending the garden at Pastor Sikhokho's church and to make it a top quality show garden in order to attract more people to be trained. We also have plans to plant maize according to the Farming God's Way model, alongside the church's existing maize garden, to show the difference in yield that is possible when following the different methods. With maize being a staple diet, as well as something that nearly everyone spends a lot of money on, we are convinced this will make a big difference to people's livelihoods.

We are looking forward to running this training with more enthusiastic groups during 2023 when Riaan moves over to working fulltime on small-scale agricultural training with Jabulani.



## ANOTHER FAREWELL BUT NOT GOODBYE

Hot on the heels of the Gaunt's farewell, that we spoke about in our previous issue, came that of Drs. Karl and Sally Le Roux, in December 2022. The Le Rouxs were the other founding couple of Jabulani and the second doctor couple who began their tenure at Zithulele Hospital in November 2006, forming part of the long term "sticky core" with Ben and Taryn that made it easier for others to come and join what was being done. With their arrival in Zithulele, they brought varied medical experience, both South African and international, and a headstart on further qualifications that would aid the team's management of what they would come across in this deeply rural hospital.

Over the years, both Karl and Sally's roles diversified in ways that neither of them had expected when they first arrived. By 2010, Sally was working part time at the hospital and home-schooling her children, and from March 2013, Karl also took up a sessional post at the hospital in order to divide his time between clinical



work and conducting research, when the Zithulele Research and Training Centre opened as a collaboration between the hospital and Philani Nutrition Trust. In September of that year, to the end of January 2014, Karl took up a visiting Research Scholar and lecturer position at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy at Princeton University; the first of what ended up being three sabbaticals from Zithulele (the second being in 2015 and the third in 2017). During their last visit, Sally also took up a co-teaching position (on a course exploring maternal and child health in developing countries, with a specific focus on SA) - perhaps the experience and skills she had gained as the founding teacher of the Zithulele Independent School (that opened its doors in 2016) had given her the confidence to join the teaching team, despite the slight age gap in the student cohort! While Sally continued in her sessional post at the hospital, she had moved from home-schooling her own children to teaching the founding class of the Zithulele Independent School that was started partly in recognition of the fact that there was a growing cohort of hospital and NGO employees who were not going to be able to stay living and working in Zithulele long term without a viable schooling option.

Although Sally continued to passionately give her valuable experience in paediatric HIV to the community's children and teens via the hospital each week, she also poured her heart and soul into growing the school into a place where learning is fun and kids are challenged but not unnecessarily pressured to perform. As the school grew grade by grade, so too did Karl's list of research papers, as he dedicated himself to exploring TB, the role of Community Health Workers, the importance of good supervision for Community Health Workers, and of course his first love, maternal and child health outcomes; all while also maintaining his involvement in clinical work at the hospital - particularly lending his skills and experience to the maternity department where the hospital has worked hard to improve maternal and child mortality rates over all the years that the Le Rouxs have been at Zithulele.

A bridge that they had not really expected to cross when they had planned to be here long term, especially when they had invested in being here by building an additional home unit onto their hospital-allocated accommodation in order to make living here with a family possible, needed to be crossed last year when two big gremlins reared their head. The first was that their children were needing to access high school options that weren't available here, and the second that the Eastern Cape Department of Health was no longer offering or renewing sessional positions, and as both Sally and Karl had been in annually renewed sessional posts since 2010 and 2013 respectively, this meant that when their posts were up for renewal, they were out of a job. Fifteen years commitment, dedication and service, and barely a cursory nod of recognition given by the administration.

Those of us who have lived and worked alongside the Le Rouxs for many years, were a lot more heartbroken to see them go. From their enthusiastic involvement in frisbee to their championing of the Saturday morning Zithulele "park run" down to the local Lubanzi beach, to many baked chocolate cakes, apple puddings, chicken and broccoli bakes, lots of coffee, communal sports watching, pancake breakfasts, hosting of Princeton University students or Swedish volunteers, there are many experiences that had become synonymous with the Le Roux family. While some of those may continue in their absence, most will unfortunately leave with them when they and their removal truck drive out of the village for the last time. The incredible people they are - their steadfastness, their integrity, enthusiasm, loyalty, generosity and passion for seeing the people of this community being lifted up and freed from the brokenness this area still suffers as a result of its previous homeland status, will also be sorely missed. But while we had to say farewell to them as they move on to new shores and new adventures, we know that they will visit at some point...Zithulele is too hard to leave for long, and therefore we know that it is not goodbye forever.

## AT A GLANCE

### APPRECIATING EDUCATION

The end of the year is always a time for celebration for the preschools, as we mark the progress that our little learners have made. It's easy to question why such a song and dance is made for people moving on from the lowest level of education, especially in a country where it is not even compulsory (yet) for children to attend school until they are seven years old. However, to see these kids graduate from preschool, many of them wearing gowns that are often associated with secondary or even only tertiary education, is a good reminder that education - no matter what level - should never be taken for granted. We live in a country where 40% of learners drop out of school between grade 1 and grade 12, and in our deeply rural area, only 10% complete grade 12 or a higher qualification. In some countries, people are still fighting for the right to an education. Early education is crucial and it's worth celebrating!

