

South Africa First Hand Experience – community information

Limpopo Province

Planned commencement date: September 2010

Project Summary

Tshifudi village, in Limpopo province is located 36 km away from local Thohoyandou commercial town. It has a total population of more than 18 000 with children and women constituting the majority. The women who approximately account for 66% of the population are mostly single parents. One of the greatest challenges that these women face is ensuring that their households have access to food and other basic resources, but their efforts to overcome such challenges is hampered by the fact that only few people are working. Those in employment work in big cities like Petersburg, Johannesburg etc, doing menial jobs such as bricklaying, selling vegetables and working as security officers.

The women in Tshifudi village earn their livelihoods through brewing traditional beer, and collecting fire wood from the mountain for resale for household purposes. The fact that the village is located between the big mountains of Mutwari on the North and Luvuvhu River on the East makes it more isolated and vulnerable to poor community developments.

The village is characterised by good fertile soils that would make agriculture including vegetable production a source of livelihoods, but because of poverty people are forced to grow maize seasonally due to the fact that it is basically cheap to venture into maize production relative to other crop enterprises such as vegetables that need more water, seeds, fertilizers and chemicals (herbicides and pesticides) that are expensive.



Picture 1: *Scenic view of Tshifudi village*

Community challenges

The fact that the village lies in a low lying area makes it vulnerable to floods during heavy rains and the poor structures of houses are sometimes destroyed by heavy winds. Such houses, due to poverty are constructed out of mud of which the floor is polished using cow dung. This kind of polishing will only last for few days and this involves a lot of work for the women.



One of the women is seen polishing the floor with cow dug.



Some of the houses in the village

Some of the challenges facing the community are:

- Crime /house breaking is an issue in the area
- Assault
- Negligence of children
- Teenage pregnancy (this is more influenced by child support grant from the government as it is alleged that some of the children have babies so that they get grant from the government)
- HIV/AIDS

Most people brew traditional beer to generate money. This higher than average alcohol intake by villagers leads to difficulties in itself as it affects family responsibilities.

The Planned Structure

Tshifudi village is also characterized by lack of structures for members of the community to discuss issues related to their community development. The community members normally gather at the chief court for any community related issues and discussions but the fact that this court is located in the mountain makes it hard for the women and the elderly to get there.

This project will offer the community a place to meet for community development planning and discussions of other related issues. It has to be noted that lack of space and shelter community discussions had contributed to some members of the community failing to attend the community meetings for some time, a situation that left them isolated from community issues. Sometimes if raining or extremely cold, some of these planned community meetings are cancelled.

Community meeting

It is expected that the new community structure will be fenced so that the pensioners can receive their grants securely. The mini hall to be constructed will have three toilets and six rooms. One of the six rooms will be used by the home based carer as currently they meet under a tree for their meetings, while the other will be used for storage of their equipment. Some of the rooms will also be used to feed children (most are orphans due to HIV/AIDS), and some will be used to accommodate the pre-school children (there are no day care centres in the village). A big room of the mini hall will be used for community meetings, wedding ceremonies, workshops, and other community events.

Project beneficiaries

The Tshifudi community has the highest number of poor people and it lies in the province noted to have 77% of the population falling below the poverty line and this is the highest in South Africa (2004 data). This really justifies the reason for the selection of the community to benefit from the project. The estimated population of more than 18 000 will benefit from the project through sharing of many community issues. It is also expected that the youth will benefit from the same project for discussing issues affecting them such as HIV/AIDS, violence, alcohol and drug abuse etc. Besides the other benefits, community priority is for a day care centre for children for the purpose of learning and eating healthy, nutritious meals in a safe place.



Some for the children who would benefit from the day care centre facilities

Conclusion

Discussions are ongoing with the committee in an effort to facilitate and ensure that this becomes a community driven process. Actionaid staff has held discussions with the Khoro (traditional royal council) to ensure that the Chief makes his commitments for the project to move forward. A site for the project has been identified and allocated to the community project and furthermore, a letter of offer was written, proof that the land for the project has been given to the community. The community and traditional leaders will continue to be involved in planned meetings to come.