



NEWLANDS MASHU
Permaculture Learning Centre

Khuluma konke

NEWSLETTER AND PROGRESS REPORT

Number 1 May 2002 – February 2003

Message from the office

Dear friends

Welcome to the first issue of Khuluma konke – ‘speak about everything’. We have had a busy but interesting first year (10 months) since we got off the ground. The buildings were finally completed in August 2002 whilst the gardens have been developing well with help and guidance from Chatelaine Tayler (our permaculture design consultant).

By October 2002 we felt we were ready for the official opening, and with a lot of frantic organising finally

officially opened on the 22nd. This past year saw NMPLC assist in the development of 16 community garden projects. There have been many more applications for assistance this year leading us to believe that there exists a real need for training in sustainable and holistic agricultural development.

It is heartening to see the progress of the few groups that we have been able to assist in our first year and we believe that NMPLC, along with other established grass roots

development based organisations, can make a small but significant and positive contribution to community and environmental well-being in KwaZulu Natal.

We look forward to the challenges ahead and trust that this year will bring forth more success stories.

Regards and best wishes for 2003.

Walter

Walter Coughlan

What is Permaculture?

Permaculture or permanent agriculture seeks to manage the earth's resources in sustainable ways through enhancing and maintaining bio-diversity of resources and in so doing provide sufficient and healthy foods, thereby contributing to healthy societies.

NMPLC has incorporated permaculture in its philosophy and approach and actively subscribes to its principles namely earth care, people care and fair share. We believe that healthy soil results in healthy crops and encourage soil health through easy to understand natural farming principles. Permaculture includes using organic methods in cultivation and pest management, promotes the use of compost, mulching, rainwater harvesting techniques, seed saving, and sharing of resources amongst others.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF NMPLC

1990+ *Idea of a community development project perceived by Father Wigbert Lange – Parish Priest, Holy Family Parish – Newlands East*

1995 *Registration of Section 21 Co.*

Nov 2000 *Conceptualisation of NMPLC by Andre Duvenage, Simon Bundy and Buzz Gori*

Feb 2001 *Purchase of 2Ha land in Newlands East, KZN*

March - July 2001 *Clearing of alien vegetation and garden planning*

July 2001 *Tree planting ceremony*

Aug 2001 – 2002 *Construction of training centre and garden development*

May 2002 *First training begins*

October 2002 *Official opening*

HOW NMPLC IS ASSISTING

As a registered and audited section 21 company (*not for profit*), we find that we are perfectly placed as a learning centre within an urban environment, able to deliver valuable skills through permaculture. The urban planning policies have given rise to unique environmental and social challenges. We feel confident that we can assist together



with other similar organisations including state and church initiatives in tackling these challenges evident in so many of our sprawling cities with a healing, sharing and caring approach.

OUR DIRECTORS

(Left to right) Doug Christmas, Cllr Trevor Bonhomme, Cllr Colin Gaillard, Father Wigbert Lange, Walter Petersen (*not pictured*)



OUR PATRON



Cardinal Wilfrid Napier

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SvDP)

Mr Eugene Payne the co-ordinator for the SvDP in Newlands East, together with NMPLC has been developing a pilot training programme for those persons normally receiving free weekly food parcels.

SvDP wanted to find a healthy alternative to assisting those most in need, and avoid encouraging a handout mentality. Volunteers



wishing to help themselves were given an opportunity to learn about growing their own food at the centre and at the same time contribute to the development of the gardens. In return for their effort each receives a healthy food parcel.

The result has seen a steady growth in the self-confidence amongst those receiving assistance in not only food aid but skills too.

SCHOOLS PROJECT

Five Schools in the Newlands area were invited to attend weekly workshops at our centre over the last three months of 2002. The aim was to expose learners and educators to environmental issues and permaculture practice.

Two Community Development students from the University of Natal Durban helped develop a programme. The kids and teachers from their respective schools participated in a number of short and practical courses, which included recycling, waste management (through the Keep Durban Beautiful Association), composting, seedbed development and alien plant identification. A river cleanup was conducted in October and a



competition run with the schools to find innovative uses for waste. Prizes included garden tools and seeds.

There will be some exciting developments happening this year with more schools getting involved. We hope to increase the numbers of KZN entrants in the national environmental competitions and run a number of educators workshops for teachers.

Our Volunteers:

We have been fortunate to make some good friends in and around Newlands East. The ladies freely donate their time and effort at the centre. Our gardens have been developed with their help. For their contribution and determination to grow using permaculture methods they are each allocated a small part of land on the premises which they work. All the produce they grow is their own. Barbara Baker (below) shows some of her days takings



Cato Manor Development Association (CMDA)

CMDA through EU funds, funded the training of nine garden clubs from the Cato Manor area. Since last year the clubs have received training in permaculture and sustainable agriculture including composting, mulching, companion planting, garden design, medicinal plant propagation and small livestock integration. The development of most of the gardens and the clubs has been phenomenal with the groups wholeheartedly embracing the permaculture ethic.

Right - learners and course instructor Chatelaine Tayler during lectures and proudly displaying their course certificates and T-Shirts.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Last year NMPLC offered free training to 13 garden clubs in KwaMashu. After attending the introductory course at the centre and determined to develop their garden further, Vukusakhe garden club approached NMPLC for further assistance in developing their business plan and sourcing funding for further training. The German Development Service (DED) has since offered to assist Vukusakhe with training at NMPLC as well as with limited tools, equipment and plant material. We would like to take this opportunity to thank DED for their belief in both Vukusakhe and ourselves.

The Launch

Our official opening on October 22, 2002 saw over 100 guests and dignitaries converge on NMPLC. Cardinal Wilfrid Napier, (our Patron) along with Father Wigbert Lange (Director) and Councillor Nomusa Dube (Speaker-eThekweni Unicity) officially unveiled the plaque after a lengthy tour of the gardens and nursery.

Councillor Dube gave an inspiring speech and wholeheartedly endorsed our efforts. In partnership with local government initiatives and poverty alleviation funding, we soon hope to deliver genuine skills to those sectors of society wishing to be involved in agriculture. Ladies from the Catholic Woman's League kindly assisted with teas and cakes on the day.

The event was captured by the press and articles appeared in the Daily News and Metro Beat amongst others. Thank you once again to all who made the day a success. (see pic)



Urban Agriculture Developments in the Durban Metro



Last year saw the formation of the eThekweni Urban Agriculture Development Forum. Members included representatives from local government departments including Agriculture, Health, Parks and Gardens, Planning, Social welfare and Development as well as the Keep Durban Beautiful Association and NMPLC. A number of meetings were held, issues debated and field trips undertaken to determine the extent and scope of UA in eThekweni. Sbu Mkwanazi (Parks and Gardens) chaired the forum. This year we hope

to see the Forum actively participating in the planning and developing of UA within the Unicity. NMPLC along with the Durban Botanic Gardens will be conducting a series of five five day sponsored environmental workshops aimed at small scale growers. The workshop includes two days at the Botanic Gardens and three days at NMPLC and covers issues from understanding biodiversity and the role of trees to permaculture and organic food production.



Christian Childrens Fund

Christian Childrens Fund, an international care based organisation, approached NMPLC for assistance in developing community homestead gardens. 12 homestead gardeners were involved in the 3 day workshop. The learners and have improved a small existing community garden and started developing

their own home gardens. The group also received training in indigenous medicinal plant identification, propagation and use, with special emphasis being placed on HIV related treatments. NMPLC will be involved in training a further 60 interested growers at Nkobongo later this year.

PAETA

PAETA the national agriculture SETA visited NMPLC late last year. The visit assisted us in understanding the complex registration requirements.

NMPLC is developing its curriculum and modules in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and hopes to be officially recognised as a training provider by PAETA before the end of the year.



More about the centre...



NMPLC is managed by four full-time staff and assisted by consultants. The property is located in Newlands East, KwaZulu Natal and borders on Siyanda and KwaMashu. The building structures cleverly house the refurbished containers which serve as an office, resource centre /library, video and store room. The ablution block houses toilets and showers as well as a small kitchen. The area is suitable for wheelchairs. The gardens display an array of organic foods and herbs grown using

permaculture principles and have been carefully planned to demonstrate water harvesting and erosion control techniques. The large dam receives runoff water from the driveway and is pumped up to where it can be used to irrigate when needed. The learners spend their practical hours in the gardens developing and practicing their skills. On-site implementation is usually conducted at the learners site towards the end of the course. Start-up plant material is provided. The

courses offered are flexible and are tailored to each groups needs with help from our facilitators. Mentoring, marketing, business plan development and extension services are also offered. Currently, low income, donor assisted community growers are being trained, NMPLC hopes soon to offer more advanced permaculture courses to smaller groups over weekends. Further information on course availability and costs is available from the centre.

Special wish list this year includes an air conditioning system for our resource library and office, Irrigation equipment for the centre gardens and a dedicated photostat, fax machine, computer and printer for our resource centre.



DONORS WELCOME

2003 sees a new and more rigorous funding drive by NMPLC with a view to sourcing desperately needed bridging finance to assist the centre through the next three years.

Audited annual financial statements for the 2001-2002 period, business plans and financial forecasts are available to all parties wishing to support our initiative in assisting development of permaculture and urban agriculture in eThekweni.

Special word of thanks

Mrs Maciejewski (donation of fridge), Pierre - Mayford Seeds, Iona Laing - Donation of overhead projector, Rob de Broize - untiring general handyman assistance. Sustainable Development Projects, for referring us. Catholic Woman's League - who smoothed the

launch day. Nataly Rowles and Rob Hill for their assistance and training inputs. All our friends and clients and consultants for support.

Special mention and sincere thanks

To all the friends of Father Wigbert Lange, OFM both foreign and local, especially the Franciscan Friars who through their

kind donations funded the establishment of the centre. - Thank you.

If you would like to receive further issues of the NMPLC newsletter - Khuluma konke please complete and mail the attached document or email us requesting to be added to the future mailing list.