

Water harvesting and conservation – TRAINING THE TRAINERS

A comprehensive learning materials package developed for facilitators, resource-poor gardeners and farmers on water harvesting and conservation is now available from the Water Research Commission (WRC).

Lani van Vuuren takes a look at these tools aimed at improving food security in South Africa.

Water harvesting and conservation (WH&C) has supported communities around the world for at least 3 000 years, but in South Africa in modern times its popularity has only started to rise in the last decade or so. WH&C is a highly productive and sustainable practice and, today, it is used by small producers and commercial farmers alike.

The WRC has supported research into WH&C for more than 15 years, however, benefits have mostly accrued to the communities where the research has been undertaken. “The potential of rainwater harvesting to contribute to food security has been well proven, not only in South Africa, but around the world,” reports WRC Research Manager, Dr Andrew Sanewe. “The time has come to roll out these practices in South Africa, and attack hunger on a large scale.”

While many resource poor farmers and gardeners express an interest in learning WH&C practices, facilitators, such as extension officers, are not always equipped to provide the necessary training and support. To fulfil this need the WRC funded the compilation of a comprehensive WH&C learning materials package. The materials were developed by Umhlaba Consulting Group over a period of four years.

COMPREHENSIVE TOOL

The learning materials were developed within a ‘training of trainers’ framework and target



Manxaba Zipho

three user groups, namely learners and training organisations (including agricultural extension officers and rural development fieldworkers); facilitators at training operations responsible for teaching the WH&C course; and resource poor

gardeners and farmers who are the end users of water conservation techniques.

While the first part of the package is focused specifically on the technical aspects of improving water availability in homesteads,

A healthy garden can lead to a healthy life.

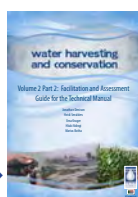
MATERIALS AVAILABLE IN THE COMPREHENSIVE LEARNING PACKAGE

Water Harvesting and Conservation Volume 1: Development of a comprehensive learning package for education and the application of water harvesting and conservation (**Report No. TT 492/11**) ➡



Water Harvesting and Conservation Volume 2, Part 1: Technical manual and farmer handouts (**Report No. TT 493/11**) ➡

Water Harvesting and Conservation Volume 2, Part 2: Facilitation and assessment guide for the technical manual (**Report No. TT 494/11**) ➡



Water Harvesting and Conservation Volume 2, Part 3: Facilitation manual (**Report No. TT 495/11**) ➡

Water Harvesting and Conservation Volume 2, Part 4: Facilitation and assessment guide for the facilitation manual (**Report No. TT 496/11**) ➡



- To order any of the materials contact Publications at Tel: (012) 330-0340; Fax: (012) 331-2565 or Email: orders@wrc.org.za. The materials can also be downloaded for free from the WRC website, www.wrc.org.za

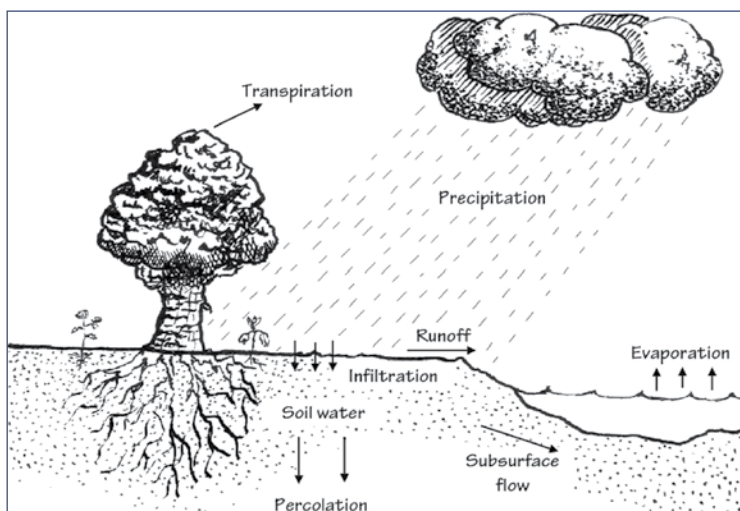
gardens and fields WH&C; the second part aims to equip fieldworkers and extension officers with the facilitation skills needed to transfer the knowledge of these techniques and practices. The latter part includes a technical module covering soils and WH&C methods, a facilitation module covering facilitation techniques, as well as a set of farmer handouts with illustrated steps on how to implement the methods.

The package has been structured as a 30-credit short course. The materials cover, not only rainwater harvesting techniques research by the WRC, but any WH&C method in

“The time has come to roll out these practices in South Africa, and attack hunger on a large scale.”

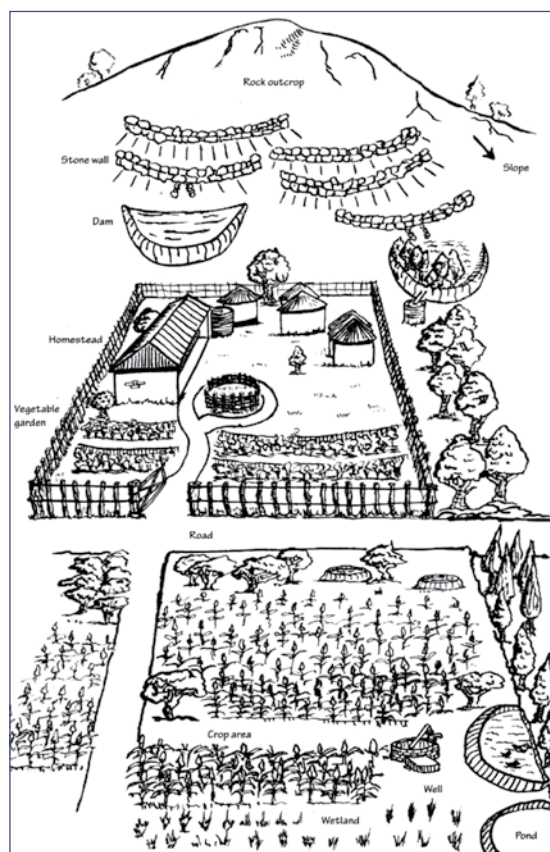
the public domain that was found to be applicable in local circumstances. Once they have completed this course, rural development fieldworkers and agricultural college graduates will be equipped with both the technical and facilitation skills to effectively take water harvesting and conservation technologies and approaches to farmers and food gardeners.

All the material was developed in close consultation with key



Above: An illustration is used to explain the movement of water through the soil.

Right: An illustration of the Maseko family homestead in Zimbabwe where rainwater harvesting has been practiced successfully.





Lubabalo Ntsokontoko

stakeholders to ensure its relevance. According to the project team, there was a marked positive interest in water harvesting and general enthusiasm to have this new material embedded in existing curricula at agricultural colleges and higher education organisations. “The agricultural colleges in particular expressed specific and immediate need, such that some were willing to use the draft materials in their curricula.”

During a pilot process lasting six months 14 learners received training at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Adult Education. In a spin-off from the project, 68 students from the Walter Sisulu University Fine Art Department were financially supported through fieldwork exposure and competition funding, to provide illustrations for the course materials.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The learning materials package has been structured to comply

with both the Unit Standard and the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations accreditation frameworks. Accreditation has proved to be a lengthy and complicated process, and the WRC remains in talks with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) to ensure the accreditation of the material.

It is now up to the trainer community to ensure the material reaches as many fieldworkers and farmers as possible. “We believe in the potential of this learning package to make a real difference in the lives of people,” notes Dr Sanewe. The materials fit in squarely with the DAFF's Zero Hunger Campaign, aimed at eradicating hunger and food insecurity in South Africa

through the production of affordable, good quality food.

“The materials will hopefully not only be used in the training courses of agricultural colleges, but also by community and non-governmental organisations,” adds Dr Sanewe. Workshops are being planned for different parts of the country to expand awareness of the learning package among potential disseminators. Extension officers and other fieldworkers will also be taken briefly through the material.

In the end, it is all about ensuring that no-one in South Africa goes to bed hungry at night. If you have the power to make a difference it is your duty to make a difference. ■

Above: An artist's impression of rainwater harvesting.

Top right: Water harvesting gives you food.

Top right: Water is wealth.



Bonga Siumba



NY Bonkolo