



The Latest News from August and Anita Basson

July 2009

Challenging times

The last few months have probably been the most difficult and challenging during our whole ministry in Lesotho.



We feel like clowns trying to keep too many balls in the air. We know what we want to do and accomplish, but we are not able to spend our energy on those things.

Instead we need a house to live in, planning needs to be done, proposals written, etc. We realize we need to do all these things, but it is challenging to keep a clear vision of where we are going. Anita has been so gracious and brave to put up with a lot of stuff. Between visitors, home schooling and acting as our building inspector



she has still found the time to start a ministry with a group of women, recently holding her first Bible study.

August really feels overwhelmed some days with all the demands, but in spite of this there has been amazing progress. Without the wonderful team God has given to us it would not have been possible.

Jaap Knot has taken over the responsibility for the team in Tebellong and John McCartney continues to look after the finances, IT and general administration. They are really doing an amazing job to establish the work and support us. Stefan and Chrisna have recently decided not to come and work with us at Maphutseng but they are still playing a vital role in our work and ministry and we are so grateful for that.

Agriculture News

Over the past 6 months mixed messages have been coming from the government and aid agencies in Lesotho.

World Vision reported a complete crop failure in Lesotho in 2009 with the people desperate for aid whilst the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) stated "the ongoing drought



in the lowlands and foothills" of Lesotho has now resulted in a "total failure of winter crops and vastly reduced summer crop yields." They confirmed that an increase their presence in Lesotho" would be required, with many farmers facing yet another season of high food insecurity and dependancy on food aid. The UN estimated that the numbers of those who will require food aid will increase from 375,000 to 600,000.

However in May 2009 The Lesotho Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Lesole Mokoma, is reported to have said the country was looking forward to a better yield considering good crops this winter. He said he was expecting at least 6.4 tons per hectare and said there would be a good harvest compared to the previous seasons, where only 0.5 tons per hectare was harvested.

He also believed that block farming could improve harvesting and, based on feasibility studies, it was the best method to increase crop production, focusing on assisting established farmers with farming inputs and machinery.



Block Farming fields near Mphaki showing signs of soil erosion - March 2009

'We are convinced that under this block farming system, farmers could pay back their loans and even make profits based on crop costs at market prices,' he added.

He stated they had encountered some problems such as unreliable weather, a sharp increase of farming inputs, lack of passionate hard working farmers, unfaithful farmers who do not pay back their loans, crop theft and livestock damage.

"we harvested 1 ton of beans per hectare....the highest bean yield I have ever seen"

August Basson

So what is the truth? Well here is what August had to say:

"I wish I can see their 6.4 tons. Maybe there was one field with so much on. The biggest issue with all of this is that none of the farmers lives have changed. They know nothing more about Agriculture. They are just more dependent on non sustainable agriculture that will get them nowhere. So there we have it more dependency. You can never change somebody's life in one season.

Just maybe they will be able to pay off their loans but the government last year had to throw in M50 million (US\$6.5m) just to repay all the unpaid loans.

We had a great training session in Maseru recently and had some of these commercial block farmers there as well. Not one has been able to make a profit yet. One farmer planted 40 hectares of cabbages, but still could not make a profit.

The message is keep it small and grow from there. Everybody wants to fix things quickly. The poor minister has got to change the whole country in 4 years. I am glad I am not in his shoes."

August continued, "In Maphutseng we harvested 1 ton of beans per hectare which was the highest bean yield I have ever seen.



Bumper bean harvest at Maphutseng - March 2009.

In addition our maize should hit the 2 - 3 ton per hectare mark. The country average is still around 0.4 ton per hectare and nobody in our area harvested even 20% of what we produced. So the Conservation Agriculture (CA) has yet again outperformed the conventional tillage by far.



CA maize fields at Maphutseng - March 2009.

Tebellong was a different story. The CA and conventional did not differ that much. There where the exceptions of outstanding people, but on average the people got discouraged with the drought and did not do the weeding faithfully. So they had bigger failures".

With Jaap on board now overseeing and encouraging the work in Tebellong we pray that CA productivity will return to 2008 levels next year.

Maphutseng Developments

A cause for celebration

For the last year we have been working very hard on a project proposal with IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and during June we were able to sign this proposal. We are so grateful to God for this. The grant is for \$200,000 over two years and this will allow us to get the training program under way, develop the curriculum and pay our staff costs for the next two years. We are also working on other proposals with CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) which, if successful, would provide beyond this period.



August demonstrating the advantages of CA to a delegation from IFAD at Maphutseng - June 2008.

The money can't be used for the infrastructure but when our house is complete this will free up the new building we are currently living in to be used for its original purpose, as the farmer training facility. We are grateful for the help of the Francis family from the UK, who have recently returned home after 9 months with us, who helped us to renovate several houses in the village, which will provide accommodation for visitors and farmers.

Infrastructure

The farmers training facility was completed in January and, as planned, we moved from rooms in the pastors house into the new building.

Whilst we knew the move was only temporary until our house was completed, it has provided us with our own space and improved cooking & bathroom facilities.



This move has freed up rooms in the pastors house for the new pastor who has recently arrived at Maphutseng but thankfully we are still able to use a couple of the empty rooms as project offices.

The rondavel at the end of the building has also been renovated and transformed into a guest room to help us accommodate some of our many visitors

A lot of hard work saw us cap a spring in the mountains several km away and lay pipes down to the Maphutseng site. This has given us access to a constant supply of pure spring water which flows 24/7.

We are still busy with the overall planning of the development at Maphutseng with plans drawn up for the restoration of a building which will become the new pastors house and some other infrastructure which will be required.

Training

We would like you to pray that God will send us the right farmers to train. In each community there are about 10% innovators, 10% early adaptors, 60% mid adaptors and 20% laggards. We need to find the first two groups to work with and initially we will be focusing on pastors, young people and farmers. For the young people we would like to host about 15 with us here at Maphutseng to teach and disciple them for 6 months or longer.



We feel this could become a key part of our training program to impact communities. It is envisaged that the pastors will come to us at regular intervals for training a few days at a time whilst we will travel out on motorbikes to reach the farmers in their villages to provide them with training.

During May we did some training with farmers for the government and to get the message across that farming is a sustainable business, we played a game with them. It was amazing to see that none of them are actually making a profit from their farms. During the game the lights started coming on for them and it was encouraging to see that our new teaching methods were working well.

Farming God's Way

Farming God's Way (FGW) is CA with an evangelical input and part of our Discipleship through agriculture work is to influence key people who will be able to take the message further.

"Why did you take this long to get to us?"

Andrew and Sue Faber are working in Kenya and have started the first demo plot at the Rift Valley Academy (RVA) where our boys are schooling. We are excited about people like the Faber's and also Tim and Dianne Banister who are working with the African Brotherhood Church. It seems like it will become the key focus in these people's ministries to teach and promote Farming God's Way.



Andrew and Sue Faber with their daughter standing next to their CA crops.

We recently equipped a group of 20 farmers in Kenya alongside Tim Banister and after three days of teaching we took these people to Brakenhurst where Craig Sorely is doing FGW.

The example spoke for itself and the people got very excited about this way of farming. It was amazing to see how they taught each other.



At RVA August also taught a group of the staff. The question that comes to us always is "Why did you take this long to get to us?". At this point we always encourage them not to wait at all, but to take the message to their people immediately. It is one of the most satisfying things to see when someone starts to live with dignity again and where his farm becomes a testimony to the people around him. Last year in a very bad year in Kenya a group of farmers who are practicing FGW achieved 2.5 tons of maize from 1 acre of land while people around them only got 300 kg per acre. The testimony of this was overwhelming.



God is really providing openings for us to teach FGW in many new countries, with us visiting Kenya and Chad so far this year.

We have also started working at Mants'ase Children's Home near Mohale's Hoek, working with orphans who are too old to stay in the home, teaching them FGW methods. This will provide the young adults with the farming skills they need to farm not only their own fields but the fields at Mants'ase too, providing them with an income and helping them to be more self sufficient in future.

Our New Home

Our house, is almost there! From the cutting of the first stone in June last year, the end is almost in sight and Anita can't wait to move in.



The finishing of any building project always takes a lot time and ours is no exception. After working flat out on the proposals and agricultural training August is at last able to spend some intensive time on the building project.

We hope to have it finished within this month. It will be a miracle, but we think it is possible. There will be some finishing left over, but that should not be too much of a problem.

We are currently putting in the windows, wooden floors and bathroom before we turn our attention to the living room and kitchen.



Thankfully my experimental roof and ceiling have worked really well and it will be interesting to see if the insulation is sufficient in our extreme conditions.

Family Life



The Basson Family - March 2009.

Our boys, August & Gustav are doing very well at the RVA in Kenya, continuing to get great grades. After a tough first term and a half they have now settled in to life there and it is so good to see how they are developing and learning.



We are also excited to see how they are growing spiritually. The things they really miss are the freedom and wide open spaces of Lesotho so the first thing they do when they get home for the holidays is jump on their motorcycles and disappear into the mountains!

Anné misses her brothers when they are away and cannot wait for them to come and visit during their holidays. She continues to do well with her schooling and worked with a vet for a week last month an experience she really enjoyed.

She is still keen to become a vet though, even after being asked to check whether a cow was pregnant. The vet could not believe that this dainty girl did not have a problem putting on the glove and doing what most people would cringe at.



On a personal level we are extremely grateful for all your continued financial support. We know the global financial crisis has affected many people and this is starting to filter through to us, with the level of our personal giving beginning to drop. The period from August to November is typically when we have a bad patch financially so we would really appreciate your prayers that God will provide for us during this period.

Prayer Requests

We would once again like to take the opportunity to thank you all, organisations, churches and individuals for your continued spiritual and financial support.

We would value your prayers for the work of Growing Nations over the coming weeks and months as the project continues to develop, especially for:

Thanks -

- To the Lord for the amazing opportunities that he has provided to us over the past few months.
- For the IFAD grant which will help us take the project to the next level.
- For providing the right people at the right time, helping us to further the work of Growing Nations.
- To God for the amazing witness that we have through another outstanding harvest this autumn/winter.
- Praise God for the tangible impact that Growing Nations has had on peoples lives.
- For the physical and emotional strength to cope with the building project on top of the demands of the Project.

The Project -

- People's lives would be touched and changed as a result of FGW. Pray also for perseverance for the farmers to continue with FGW methods in times of hardship, particularly in Tebellow and Kenya.
- For us to be able to find the best farmers and pastors to train. Those who will be faithful to God, see the benefits of FGW and ultimately be able to communicate it to others within their own communities.

- Rain and optimum weather conditions in the spring (October-December) to enable the crops to be planted and for them to develop into strong and health plants.
- With so many demands on our time and resources, wisdom to use the opportunities we have in the best way and to focus on the things that are truly important, without being overwhelmed.
- The team as they write project proposals and meet with funding organisations such as CIDA and others. Pray that the organisations will be able to see the long term benefits of the work.
- Good relationships in the team and that we continue to gel together and work as a team.
- The Daltons who are preparing to join us later this year.
- The health of our team.
- Safety as August and the team travel in Lesotho and other parts of Africa continuing to support and train.

Personally for the family -

- For strength during such a challenging and busy time. Pray that we will have discernment about what we take on so that we won't 'burn out'.
- For the family to enjoy the holidays and to be able to spend time together without a constant influx of visitors.
- For our kids, for protection and a closer walk with God and for Anne' currently at home with us in Lesotho as we think about her future education needs.
- For Anita and myself for a great relationship between us and for spiritual and emotional growth. These have been stressful times but we continue to do OK.

That's all for now!
God Bless

August and Anita Basson, Growing Nations

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Images

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