

CAN CONSULTATIONS – AN EXAMPLE OF IDEAS DISSEMINATED BY CAN TO OTHER COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS TO BENEFIT MORE CHILDREN

During the initial stages of CAN when the research across 4 countries was carried out, learning was a two-way process. The CAN founder learnt about the many inspirational ideas, innovative methods and projects which had been developed to enable orphans and other needy children's needs to be met with their extended families and communities and for them to be protected from abuse. She also learnt about initiatives for empowering children, families and whole communities economically, which was often essential to enable them to ensure the needs of all were met. However, communities, CBOs and NGOs also requested consultations with the founder to ask her advice on how they could develop their services for children further.

During these consultations, it was often possible to disseminate successful ideas and innovative methods which had proved successful in meeting children's needs elsewhere. Often the organisations then utilised these methods to develop their programmes and so to benefit more children in their area.

An example of such a method is Keyhole gardens. In Lesotho, this very successful method of growing vegetables even in drought conditions, using only wastewater from washing, cooking etc, had been developed and taught to selected villages. In remote rural areas, where people relied on collecting water from rivers and so was in short supply when there was no rain for their crops, this was a life saver. It enabled them to continue to be self-sufficient for food, even in drought conditions and even sell vegetables to surrounding villages. This empowered them further to meet the needs of children in their community. Catholic Relief Services in Lesotho had developed a comprehensive manual on implementing this method, which they kindly let CAN disseminate to other areas and countries.

On visiting Eswatini (then called Swaziland) the following year, the CAN founder found that eastern areas of the country had suffered drought for many years in succession and had needed food aid for survival. Furthermore, in consultations with groups of villagers working to protect children from abuse in the innovation community development child protection programmes developed in Eswatini, she heard them lament that, if only families could be economically empowered, then they would be in a position to protect their children from abuse and to meet their needs. However, in persistent annual droughts, vegetable crops failed, and children and families were often economically desperate. At times this resulted in them having to resort to suffering abuse in an desperate attempt to eat to survive.

The CAN founder was surprised to discover that neither the grass root workers nor the NGOs they worked for knew of the keyhole garden method. It was requested by them that they needed knowledge of this method, as it could make a great difference in empowering families to grow enough food and to protect and meet the needs of their children. So the founder used CAN funds raised by the annual sponsored walk to print copies of the Keyhole garden method manual, which she distributed widely to them and to as many CBOs and NGOs as was possible.

She also visited the Ministry of Agriculture in Eswatini and learnt of their comprehensive community development programme using their outreach workers to teach whole communities permaculture methods. Asked if they also taught about Keyhole gardens, the CAN founder was even more surprised to learn that they also had never heard of the method and considered it could be invaluable particularly in the drought stricken east of the country.

The CAN founder supplied them with manuals in the method, and it was resolved that it would be included in the outreach workers' brief of what to teach to communities around Eswatini.

Visiting in later years supplied evidence of Keyhole gardens constructed in Eswatini, particularly in the east, combating potential famine caused by regular annual droughts in the area.