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SOUTH AFRICA

SUCCESS STORY

Garden Competition Inspires Boy

A garden competition cultivates a boy's entrepreneurial spirit



Fourth grader Lukhanyo Matshebelele tends to his award-winning garden in Phillippi, South Africa.

“If any crop is ripe, my Grandmother will harvest it for our meal of the day,” says Lukhanyo Matshebelele, a fourth grader with an award-winning garden.

Lukhanyo Matshebelele, a fourth grade student at Zanemfundo Primary School in the Cape Flats township of Phillippi, South Africa, is turning his passion for gardening into a small business. In February 2006, Lukhanyo emerged as a winner in a USAID-supported Home Garden Competition.

The Home Garden Competition is part of a USAID project that incorporates teacher training with teaching children how to cultivate a garden. At first, this sounds like a funny combination. But the Cape Flats townships are built on unstable and infertile sand dunes, where most of the natural vegetation has been removed. The projects helps teachers and students contribute to strengthening that fragile environment.

In addition, the project helps school communities learn how to ensure their own food security. For the competition, classes get a small bag of fertilizer and a couple of multi-harvesting plants. Students then keep a record of their plant production. They report their progress to the teachers, who visit and judge the contestants. The winners win garden-related prizes, such as watering cans, herbs, and worm bins.

The project was born out of the need to create a healthy learning environment for the children. As teachers transform the school grounds and enhance their teaching skills, school communities come to life with vegetable gardens, animal husbandry projects, and models of income generation. Moreover, the children learn income-generating skills that, for many of them, will someday be critical to their livelihoods.

The home garden competition sparked an entrepreneurial spirit in Lukhanyo, who sold his tomato crop and invested the money back into his garden. He is now growing another crop of tomatoes as well as butternut squash, which he plans to sell for a pretty penny.

Telling Our Story
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