



The HPSA Jozini Agricultural Model Project is funded the European Union

Youth Seizing Opportunities as Community Animal Health Workers



CAHW Makhosi Sangweni shows off her vet kit

SOMETIMES it's a phone call. Mostly, though, it's a child who comes running to ask Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) Makhosi Sangweni for help with an animal. She's always on call, and when she gets a summons she shoulders her veterinary kit and walks. And walks: through the bush and over the mountains. In this part of the world it can be a sweaty business, as temperatures sometimes top 40 degrees Celsius in summer. And then there are snakes too.

But Ms Sangweni wouldn't have it any other way. Jobs are scarce, and being a CAHW gives her a way of being helpful in the community as well as of setting up her own small business through selling farmers medicine from her veterinary kit. It's a small step, but one she hopes will grow her prospects and make the future of her three-year-old son rosier. She says, "The project has brought huge

change ... especially to women who have lost their husbands.” She’s proud to be part of this change. “I’m known now as the person to go to get help for sick

animals. Now people don’t have to waste their money to go to town to buy medicine. They just call me.”

There are 15 goat farmers she ministers to in her ward, and five chicken farmers. It’s a big area, and on some days she’s already on her way at six in the morning, only to come home after four in the afternoon. She’s proud of the progress that her farmers have made, and she singles out MaMthethwa’s goat herd as a shining example of successful practice.

Ms Sangweni, who is now 29 years old and ready to seize any opportunity to improve her lot, was one of the first CAHWs to be recruited, in 2015, when she went to a community meeting organised by HPSA, and she hasn’t looked back since.



CAHW Makhosi Sangweni

Currently, there are 58 CAHWs working in the Jozini Agricultural Model Project, funded by the European Union, 28 of whom were recruited in Year 2. The experienced CAHWs are servicing the farmers’ livestock in the dip tanks and are fully trained at this stage. CAHWs are specially trained young local community members, mostly women, who help farmers to

raise healthy animals to get the best production possible. They have a wide range of responsibilities, including providing basic preventive health care, training and advisory services. They do regular household visits, providing a critical link between farmers, livestock associations, local government offices and state veterinarians. The primary purpose of a CAHW programme is to help prevent animal mortality and disease outbreak while increasing productivity.

Heifer Project South Africa (HPSA) works to identify, train and support CAHWs in its projects with a total of 53 youth (40 in KwaZulu-Natal and 13 in Limpopo) actively participating and helping rural farmers.

CAHWs are chosen through a process of community meetings called by the Livestock Association. Local, interested, energetic, literate, preferably female, young persons are nominated to be trained as prospective CAHWs. A letter of appointment is signed by the Livestock Association to approve the candidate for a training process. Traditional authorities and other civic bodies are used to appoint someone in the same way to represent women farmers in the area. In this way, HPSA has two CAHWs per dip in all the dip tanks where they are active. After training in CAHW principles and census taking, the CAHW is deployed to count the livestock of the dip tank area they represent. These census details are captured by the NGO project staff and are made accessible to local and provincial vet and production staff.

Recently, intensive training has been carried out in HPSA's Jozini Agricultural Model project. This project is funded by the European Union and started in May 2015. The goal is to work with 2100 farmers by the end of three years. The CAHWs are instrumental in supporting farmers' livestock productivity.

CAHWs have been trained in goat production and the basics of primary animal health care. They are also trained in winter feed processing and supplement production to help mitigate the effects of drought. CAHWs have up to now been mixing protein blocks and selling them as well as helping farmers build enclosures for their kid goats. More recently CAHWs have been issued with vet kits to treat farmers' animals, and which offer them an entrepreneurial opportunity to make an income from small profits on the medicines. CAHWs were assessed by the Department of Agriculture Vet and Livestock Production units and HPSA staff to

ensure they were competent before getting a vet kit. Vet kits were handed out in May 2017 to all trained CAHWs, who provide basic veterinary advice, process stover for feeding livestock and have been selling nutritional blocks for the livestock to farmers for extra income.

SIPHAMANDLA Nxumalo has her sights set on the figure of R500 per month. That's how much this enterprising CAHW hopes the vet kits will generate for her. It may not be much by city standards, but it would take care of airtime for her cellphone and some essential groceries.



CAHW Siphamandla Nxumalo

Every bit helps in this area. Ms Nxumalo is single, with four children, and she lives together with 15 members of her extended family. There are no jobs to go round, and so the eight child grants and one old age pension are what everyone depends on. The 2016 drought wiped out their cattle and chickens, and now the only extra income comes from the family maize crop, which gets sold to other

members of the community as chicken feed.

Ms Nxumalo received her vet kit in June, and the farmers have been very happy, she says, at the added convenience and ready service. She sells medicines according to a fixed price list, which the farmers are satisfied with, but which she thinks is too low at the moment for reasonable profits. She understands that the prices are low to get the system going, and is hopeful that once everyone sees the benefits they will be happy to pay just that little bit more to make it worthwhile for the CAHWs. She also recognises that her options are few, since her only other jobs have been unpaid voluntary work at the local schools and clinic. She pins her hopes on a bright future from her vet kit, all the more important since her mother is getting old and her need for care is increasing. And, like the other CAHWs, Ms Nxumalo is proud that she's making changes happen, for herself and for the farmers