

CONSTITUTION FOR THE HOME GARDENS PROJECT  
MATE-TYHUME VALLEY PARTNERSHIP - 2012

**1. VISION**

In 2000 The Macfarlan Presbyterian Church [MPC] established a Partnership relationship with Mission at the Eastward [MATE], located in Farmington, Maine, USA. MATE is a group of eight rural Presbyterian Churches. What started as a church-to-church relationship has grown to where we are now jointly reaching out to many people in the villages of the Tyhume Valley, and not just where the Macfarlan Church has an Outstation church. The vision of the Partnership is three-fold: to alleviate the legacies of apartheid in regards to hunger, poverty and disease. We plan to address these through jointly-approved projects in each of these three areas. This Home Gardens Project is designed to address primarily the first objective – hunger. While the people of the Tyhume Valley have little in the way of resources, they have been blessed with an ample supply of land. This gift from God, therefore, needs to be accepted and properly cared for – to provide food for those who are hungry.

**2. MISSION STATEMENT**

A large percentage of the Tyhume Valley – as MATE members have noticed from traveling the villages and attending worship services – is comprised of pensioners and other elderly people, many of whom are also caring for other members of their extended families. With the presence of the HIV virus and the AIDS pandemic, there are also many households whose financial resources are stretched even further. And with the arrival of a new class of children – AIDS orphans – there is even more stress put on the backs of pensioners and the elderly. The mission of this project is to provide assistance to those families in real need to improve the productivity of their home gardens to enable them to feed themselves, their sick [and hopefully recovering] family members, the young orphans in their care, and maybe even earn some rand by selling excess produce.

**3. OBJECTIVES**

Principally by word of mouth, residents of homes needing assistance – women and men alike – need to self-identify themselves for consideration to join this project. MATE is willing to work with the Village Home Gardens Committees to assist those in real need with fencing repairs [or new if needed], tilling of the soil, providing gardening tools, hose pipes, seeds, seedlings and other plants as needed. The people trained in the methods of natural farming, both directly from Tim Wigley in February, 2007 and from others who were trained by him, can provide the additional training to new members to show them how to maximize the use of the land and also properly care for the land so it remains strong and healthy.

#### **4. GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE HOME GARDEN COMMITTEE**

The Tyhume Valley Home Gardens Committees will work with a senior committee comprised of Mrs. Winnie Maneli [Convener], Mrs. Rose Xuza [treasurer], Mrs. Nothemba Joseph [Asst. Treasurer], Patiswa Jwambi [secretary], Mr. Ernest Jwambi – Master Farmer, and the treasurer of each of the Home Garden Committees.

Each village or collection of villages will form a “VILLAGE” HOME GARDENS COMMITTEE, with the village name inserted for “VILLAGE.” The criteria for membership are delineated below. While the new committee will still look to Ernest and other farmers for their help in doing many of the more physically demanding work, this project will also seek other people in the villages who can volunteer their time [and muscles] to help the elderly, the disabled and those too weak from sickness and hunger.

There will need to be a Convener for each committee, who can coordinate the village committee meetings to address the needs of this project. Each village will need a treasurer and secretary – and at the minimum, one of these MUST be able to write in English and communicate with both the senior committee and with MATE. The MATE address in the USA will be on the listing of committee members; and the local address of the committee person selected to correspond with MATE should also be on that list.

#### **5. CRITERIA FOR BECOMING A MEMBER OF THIS PROJECT**

It is envisioned that there will be several levels of assistance, based on true need. For discussion purposes, the following is an example of how this might be structured.

1. Critical to the success of this project is the willingness of people – men and women alike - who are competent in operating Home Gardens to ‘volunteer’ and help organize their community and to provide what teaching they can to others.
2. Additionally, there will be a need for helping your neighbor with tasks such as fencing, soil preparation, planting and harvesting that may be difficult for the elderly, frail, sick or disabled people to do – this project needs these kind of members too.
3. Anyone, regardless of age or income, can participate in the training that may be provided from time to time, with the stipulation that they must help others once trained themselves.
4. Anyone 60 years or older and are receiving only an Old Age pension can apply for assistance for any aspect of the Home Garden program.

CONSTITUTION FOR THE HOME GARDENS PROJECT  
MATE-TYHUME VALLEY PARTNERSHIP - 2012

5. Anyone family currently receiving no income from any source can apply for any aspect of the Home Gardening program.
6. Widows currently too young to receive an Old Age Pension and who have little or no income [similar to pensioners mentioned above] similarly qualify.
7. Elderly women [and men] who need assistance [because of their frailty or other physical conditions] with such items as fencing, tilling of the soil, planting or harvesting but who have income in excess of the Old Age Pension amount can ask for labor assistance from other younger members or members more physically able to assist. A nominal wage rate of R\_\_\_ should be established to partially compensate the laborer for their work, but it should also be a rate that is low enough for the elderly to afford. This rate should be established by each village committee.
8. To summarize – To qualify to join the Home Gardens Project:
  - a. Elderly [>60 years of age]
  - b. Widow or widower or single with limited or no income
  - c. Frail or sick from whatever causes
  - d. A family with limited income caring for orphaned children or a granny caring for grandchildren [or any small children]
  - e. Any person who is helping others in the project as a volunteer can also be a member without regard to the list above.
  - f. Committee membership is up to each village committee to enforce – the group strictly controls and decides what is best for them. If a member does not work well with the group, he or she can be asked to leave.

**6. COMMUNAL GARDENS**

Most villages may also have a communal garden that is worked and shared by many members who also have a home garden. It is MATE's request that every village also consider establishing communal gardens as a means of helping others who do not have an adequate home garden – until such time as resources permit getting home gardens established for everyone who needs one. MATE would advise any Communal Garden to be formally set up using guidelines attached to this Constitution as Attachment A.

## **7. TRAINING**

Training in Natural Farming techniques for Home Gardens can be organized for villages where no one is trained in this subject. Tim Wigley, who has provided this training in the past, has moved away from this area. MATE has identified new resources through the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition who can assist with additional training, monitoring and regular visiting and consulting. The agricultural expert can be retained to do regular monitoring during each planting season and provide advice and expertise to each committee. Copies of the Tim Wigley Natural Farming Home Gardening training [in Xhosa] are also available to new members.

## **8. FUNDING**

1. MATE will expect each village committee to send a detailed list of their needs annually by July 1.
2. Based on the amount of money MATE has available, it will forward to the Partnership Treasurer a total amount, with our decisions as to how much money goes to each village.
3. Each village committee can then decide for themselves the best way to utilize the funding received, and report their decision to MATE with details of expenditures.
4. The above process clearly recognizes the fact that your needs will be greatly in excess of what MATE can send to you. Hopefully over a span of several years we can address all the needs – but that may be wishful thinking. The group should consider setting up a small fund to meet emergency needs, like transport and repairs.
5. Anyone not receiving adequate support should appeal to their committee to perhaps be able to share a joint garden with another neighbor or obtain a plot in a communal garden until their own home garden can be established.

## **9. REPORTING AND RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

1. Each Village Committee treasurer will keep track of all expenditures and any income that might be received, including funding from MATE, contributions from project members, and any sales of vegetables.
2. A record of expenditures for each family receiving assistance must be kept. This will prevent supplying of the same item repeatedly to someone who does not properly protect and care for their tools and equipment. Any item lost should be replaced by the member, and broken tools must be repaired at the owner's cost.

CONSTITUTION FOR THE HOME GARDENS PROJECT  
MATE-TYHUME VALLEY PARTNERSHIP - 2012

3. An annual report of the income and expenditures must be prepared and sent to Mrs. Maneli by July 1 of each year. It can be handwritten, and can be in Xhosa or English. An English translation of the report should also be forwarded to MATE in the USA, either by postal mail or by email. MATE feels strongly that this minimal reporting must be done, and it must be timely. Failure to keep MATE informed can lead to delays in funding, and if it becomes severe, it may lead to termination of the project.
4. The report should also contain a written narrative [by the secretary] describing any problems, any un-seen needs that should be reviewed, and also include good news regarding the health of gardens, impact on the family's health, and similar information.

**10. GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

It is expected that all aspects of business and personal conduct be conducted utilizing the Heifer International Cornerstones for Just and Sustainable Development. These include:

- **Passing on the Gift** – this will be accomplished by sharing of the knowledge obtained with others. It can also be done on a regular basis by helping others in need in your committee, either helping with their garden or sharing the vegetables from yours. It is also recommended the village group should contribute a small amount towards some POG as a gesture of goodwill.
- **Accountability** – Done through rigorous recording of transactions and events and regularly reporting to the senior committee and MATE.
- **Sharing and Caring** – Help your neighbor in need – and do not wait to be asked.
- **Sustainability and Self Reliance** – It is expected that Home Gardening will become a family endeavor, with little or no assistance after the first year or so.
- **Improved Animal Management** – The only animals involved directly in this project are the worms and bugs in the gardens [and the chickens, goats, sheep, pigs, cattle and dogs that must be kept OUT of the garden]! To protect the worms and other organisms that are vital to good soil health, the bare ground must be kept covered AT ALL TIMES WITH MULCH. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT FOR ALL HOME GARDENS!
- **Nutrition and Income** – the goal of this project is to feed your immediate family during all seasons, and to help others in need around you. Secondary but no less important is any excess produce, after helping others in need, can be sold to earn income.
- **Gender and Family Focus** – it is expected that the entire family will be involved in the family home garden – a good opportunity for all to work together. Vegetables do not

CONSTITUTION FOR THE HOME GARDENS PROJECT  
MATE-TYHUME VALLEY PARTNERSHIP - 2012

care whether a man or woman, adult or child – weeds, feeds and waters them – because all will definitely eat them!

- **Genuine Need and Justice** – All who apply for assistance should make their own determination as to their genuine need. The convener and other leaders of the Home Garden project still have the final authority as to the extent of assistance each applicant will receive.
- **Improving the Environment** – The goal is to employ farming practices that improve the soil rather than depleting it, and in using methods that do not pollute land, water or air.
- **Full Participation** – Each member is expected to “carry his or her full burden – as best as they are able” to achieve the objectives of the project.
- **Training and Education** – As part of the POG, members must share knowledge gained freely with others in your community.
- **Spirituality** – Accept this gift from God, and be good stewards of it. Do not give up in times of adversity; do not slack off in times of abundance.

**11. CHANGES TO THIS CONSTITUTION:**

Any village committee can recommend changes to this constitution by presenting a written request to the senior committee described in section 4. Changes will be adopted if both MATE and this committee agree to the changes.

**12. ADDING NEW VILLAGES:**

Adding additional new villages will also be done by mutual agreement between MATE and the senior committee.

**13. TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION:**

At any time, any participating village committee may end this relationship with MATE. Similarly, MATE reserves the right to end its participation at any time.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Communal Garden Constitution Guidelines

Attachment B – Cultivator Ownership Guidelines

Attachment C – Current list of Home Garden Committees

Associated Documents – Detail list for each Village Committee showing the convener, secretary, treasurer and all members