

Thabang Mpokathe's continuing story

An update

January is the month in which many people write down their new year's resolutions. I wasn't an exception as I entered 2013. I couldn't wait for great achievements that I had anticipated.

On my laptop, I wrote the following goals: transform borehole with an electric pump, build a greenhouse, and purchase small truck. (I put a question mark behind the last one.) I am also motivated by saying, "shoot for the moon, so that if you miss, at least you land among the stars." So my goals were demanding. This compelled me to push my limits and work hard.

I thought I would achieve these things through cabbage sales. Having applied for loans from the government and from banks several times and failed, I decided to go back to my land and dig out that gold as much as I could. I worked hard and produced very bountifully.

As I was about to venture into market, some of the folks from neighbouring country came and sold the same commodities for half the price of what I was selling my cabbage. This really destroyed my sales to the extent that majority of my customers bought the under-priced cabbages.

We always share everything with Elmer. He told me that such things happen and it is called dumping. So I had to come with mitigating strategy. I ended up selling my cabbage just to cover the costs of production.

The business was on stress me and my family. I had so many feelings and I saw quitting farming as an option. I even distributed my resume to potential employers, but I felt that finding a job was not my solution. Farming is my calling.

I talked with Elmer about this and asked for him to look for loan for me – not a donation. I know it was not an easy task for my friend Elmer who always said, "Thabang I want you to get help (a loan) within your country," so that local people will not see outside help as solution, but should believe in ourselves. Unfortunately, local help didn't work. I made a plea to Elmer. He tried as much as he could, though not an easy task and found me a loan with usual terms like any other loans: paying back with interest and pay it with-in a specified time frame.

Personally, I like the loan because this will encourage me to work hard and see to it that I repay the loan. I like it because it does not take away my dignity, like a donation does. I am in debt to the investors that have confidence in me and provided me with a loan, above all to Elmer Stobbe who took his time, made all the sacrifice for me.

My farm has taken new shape. The electric pump on the farm has reduced my variable operating costs by 80%, because my major operating costs pay for the city water I had been using. The greenhouse (10 x 30 m) is now operational, growing cabbage, tomato, and pepper transplants for my farm and for organizations and individual farmers in southwest Lesotho.

The greenhouse is a vital asset on my farm. It's amazing how government agencies want to invest on my farm; non-governmental organisations are paying attention to any ideas I put on the table; and individual farmers have confidence in Thabang.

This new role in my life will be a steep learning curve for me. Everybody who reads this document, pray for me that God gives me strength and heart to serve my community according to his plan.

Special thanks to Elmer & Wilma Stobbe, Murray & Cheryl Siemens, Sophie Tiessen-Eigbike, the Veers, Herman & Martha Siemens, Frank & Agnes DeFehr, and CANADA for helping me to be the person I am today.