

Case Study

Leadership through Community Engagement

Lentegeur Hospital (South Africa)

GGHH Agenda Goals

- Leadership
- Food

Hospital Goals

- Engaging stigmatized patients to become green ambassadors through tree planting, garden development and fruit production.

Progress Achieved

- *Human and Environmental health benefit:* Mentally ill patients always find it difficult to re-integrate themselves into the society. This project gives them a sense of connection, hope and empowerment. They learn how to grow food crops and become sustainable members of the society. This would in-turn restore the way they feel about themselves causing a sensory healing feeling. The garden and trees produce restore fresh oxygen into the environment of the hospital.
- *Financial benefit:* A recent survey carried out in 2008 around the hospital community showed that 89% of households in kuyasa, khayelitsha were severely food insecure. These gardens don't just provide foods, but serve as a source of employment and income to for in-patients and out-patients as well as the hospital.

The Issue

Mental illness is increasingly being recognized as one of the leading causes of global burden of disease and the communities served by the hospital, particularly those in the areas surrounding it, are characterized by high levels of poverty, drug abuse, criminality and social fragmentation all of which drive mental ill-health. Although climate change may not be a major concern within these communities, it is clear that its consequences, and particularly that of food-price inflation, will affect them most directly and may already be doing so.



Sustainability Strategy Implemented

The sustainability strategy was aimed at re-designing what the Lentegeur psychiatric hospital looks and feels like, bringing alive the metaphor inherent in the name “Lentegeur” which means “aroma of spring”. The powerful symbolism of spring, as a time of rebirth, growth can equally refer to regeneration of the hospital in the eyes of the community, the regeneration of hope and passion for work amongst hospital staff, the greening of the hospital to reduce its carbon footprint and the regeneration of surrounding communities from historical oppression and impoverishment. In this context, Lentegeur



hospital has transformed itself to be a force of greater healing, through the provision of care to patients, community and the environment that sustains us all.

Implementation process

Initially conceived in 2010, the process involved getting community members as well as patients on the board. The objective is to let nature into the hospital by creating beautiful gardens. The implementation process involves a much organised system and an opportunity for members of the private sector to work in partnership with the hospital, for example, Landfill consult is providing shredded garden waste which is a great source of mulch and compost, whilst Kelpak is supplying the gardens with kelp products. The hospital is also in partnership with the department of Agriculture that offers training of long term patients and allows them to develop their own farming cooperatives.



Tracking Progress

Success was measured through the beautiful garden within the hospital and the experience from patients within the hospital. Both community and patients would provide an insight as to how they see the hospital. Our aim is to make people see Lentegeur Hospital as a place of sanctuary, a place that would provide an environment to heal and feel better. This project also provides an empowerment platform through employment for patients.

Challenges and lessons learned

The powerful symbolism of spring, as a time of rebirth and regrowth can equally refer to the regeneration of the hospital in the eyes of the community, the regeneration and passion for work amongst hospital staff, the greening of the hospital to reduce its carbon footprint and the regeneration of the surrounding communities from historical oppression and impoverishment.

Next Steps

The Western Cape department of Agriculture has provided funding towards the establishment of a food garden cooperative for long-stay forensic patients, who have been allocated 2-hectare plot of land in the hospital grounds. A further agreement is the commitment of hospital private partners to support the garden work and to purchase fresh produce from gardens for use in hospital kitchen. The operational plan to make the spring project a reality would include a full environmental assessment of the hospital and the site it occupies, including a comprehensive analysis of its resource utilization, efficiency and wastage.



Demographic information

Originally commissioned in 1984, the Lentegeur hospital is one of the three major psychiatric hospitals in the Western Cape and it serves as a referral center for one third of the Province's population. With a total of 788 beds in two sections: Psychiatry, and Intellectual Disability, the hospital admits and successfully discharges 100-200 individuals, from all sectors of the population every month.

Links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaeTq7ne0Pw>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmNoreSgn_Y&feature=youtu.be

Main contact person information:

Contact Person: Dr. John Parker

Email: John.Parker@westerncape.gov.za

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Quotes

One of the patients confessed that "I have never felt so important in my whole life" during the Spring Project organized by the John Parker at Lentegeur Hospital.

Submission date: February 2015