



## Keyhole Gardens in practice

### Mpho's story



Mpho (Mm-poh) is a four-year-old boy who lives in a tiny African country called Lesotho – known as ‘the kingdom in the sky’ because it is so mountainous. He lives on the side of one of the mountains with his mum, grandma and next door to his friend Rafiri in a small village called Ha Maphathe (Ha-ma-patay). Mpho loves spending time with his grandma, staying by her side and watching her do the gardening and cook – her name is Mamatseliso (Mamat-say-leeso) Moji.



Ha Maphathe is a typical village in Lesotho, it is very rocky and mountainous and the temperature can get very cold at night. Mpho and Rafiri stay warm by wearing blankets, which is the national dress in Lesotho. You can see all sorts of colourful blankets with food designs being worn by locals there. In the daytime, however, it is usually sunny and sometimes it doesn't rain for months. When it does, it can be very heavy with thunder and lightning and giant hailstones fall from the sky. In the highest areas people even have to put car tyres on their roofs to protect them from the lightning!

The people in Mpho's village try to grow their own food in small gardens, but with all the rocks, hailstones and months without rain this can be very difficult. Villagers in Ha Maphathe sometimes go very hungry and some even die when they can't grow enough food. So, being able to grow as much food as possible in your garden is very important.

Luckily, Mpho's grandma was given help by the charity Send a Cow. You may think from the name of the charity that Mpho's grandma was given a cow - but she wasn't. In fact, she wasn't given any animals at all! That's because cows and other livestock can be difficult to look after on the mountains of Lesotho. Instead, Mpho's grandma needed help to grow more food in her small garden and to save rainwater.

Send a Cow taught her how to make special gardens that grow lots of food, called Key Hole gardens, good compost for her plants, a natural pesticide to kill insects and a pit to collect rainwater in. Everything they need to grow vegetables can be found where they live; they use old washing up water to water the plants, vegetable peelings to make compost, ash from the fire which is good for the soil and special leaves that grow locally can be mixed together to kill insects.

Since Mpho's grandma started to use her training the garden is full of plants growing really well like spinach, tomatoes, beetroot, peppers, onions, lettuce and cabbage. The family can go to the garden and pick food whenever they want to eat; they have so much food now that they can give some away to their neighbours, including Rafiri. A hailstorm won't ruin their lovely garden either because they have been given a net that protects it – the hailstones just bounce off! When it does rain, the family collects the water in a dam that their friends helped them to dig, meaning that they can still water the plants when they have had months of sun and everywhere else is dry.

Now the family and neighbours very rarely get ill. Mpho has a really healthy diet with lots of good food from the garden like spinach, tomatoes and his favourite, beetroot. He often eats his meals with his friend Rafiri – who also loves beetroot! They play together on the rocky ground and have lots of energy thanks to all the vegetables.

The people in the village often come and visit the family after seeing their garden and how healthy Mpho is. They ask how to grow such amazing vegetables and Mpho's grandma tells them about Send a Cow and offers to teach them what she learnt on her training. Now that many people in the village are starting to use the techniques taught by Send a Cow they can be confident that there will be enough food all year round - and Mpho can help more friends like Rafiri to have some healthy food too!