

AMALIMA LOKO BRIEF

HEALTH & NUTRITION

Amalima Loko promotes improved health and nutrition in communities in the Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe —particularly for children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating mothers. Using a multi-pronged and integrated approach, the program supports communities to access higher quantities and quality of nutritious food, promotes uptake of WASH behaviors and development of WASH infrastructure, and educates caregivers on proper feeding practices and ways to easily enrich common local meals. Working through various community actions groups, local actors, and government stakeholders enables the program’s messaging to carry through the entire program area.



Food Distribution. Photo: Amalima Loko

NUTRITIOUS SUPPLEMENTARY FOOD RATIONS

Amalima Loko distributes corn soya blend plus (CSB+) and fortified vegetable oil to pregnant & lactating women and children aged 6-23 months old. CSB+ and vegetable oil are good sources of macro and micronutrients, and rations are simple to prepare and for children to eat and digest. These food distributions are intended to supplement, rather than replace, foods already being consumed. Amalima Loko works closely with medical professionals and clinic staff to identify those who qualify for rations and distributes those rations on a monthly basis at local health centres and other secondary food distribution points.

CARE GROUPS PROMOTE RECOMMENDED MATERNAL, CHILD HEALTH, AND NUTRITION PRACTICES

Amalima Loko trains and supports Care Group Promoters and Lead Mothers to establish and run Care Groups on a voluntary basis. Through Care Groups, current and expectant mothers and caregivers of children under 5 receive training and messaging promoting recommended maternal, infant, and young child nutrition practices. Topics covered include training on breastfeeding and cooking classes that encourage the use of nutritious and locally available foods. Support to Care Groups is in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Blanket Supplementary Food Program
- Care Groups
- WASH facilities rehabilitation
- Household microgardens
- Male Champions
- Community Health Clubs

MICRO-GARDENS FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

Amalima Loko uses Healthy Harvest, a training manual developed by FAO and the government of Zimbabwe, to promote establishment of micro-gardens. These homestead gardens make creative use of available space such as raised beds in old vehicle tires to grow nutritious crops such as leafy green vegetables, tomatoes, pumpkins, butternut, carrots, and legumes. Community members learn growing techniques, complemented by food preparation training and recipe books that stress combining animal-sourced protein with affordable, drought-resistant, indigenous food crops. This approach strengthens the links between nutrition and agriculture, with communities producing nutritious foods using practices promoted by local volunteers (Lead Farmers and Lead Mothers). The micro-gardens utilize basic cost-effective and climate-smart techniques like application of compost and manure.



Didela nutrition garden. Photo: Amalima Loko project staff.

MALE CHAMPIONS PROMOTE MALE PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The Amalima Loko Male Champions campaign promotes increased male involvement in caretaking tasks like infant and young child feeding and domestic activities typically regarded as female roles. Male Champions receive training from Amalima Loko which they cascade to a group of their peers, through activities like trainings, all-male cooking classes, and football matches. Male Champions also encourage male participation in Community Health Clubs, and in Amalima Loko's entrepreneurship and income generation activities. Participation in these initiatives heightens the visibility of Male Champions and works toward the positive transformation of socio-cultural norms.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CLUBS ENCOURAGE HYGIENE AND SANITATION AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

Community Health Clubs (CHC) are a well-established, proven approach for supporting improved hygiene and sanitation at the community or village level. Amalima Loko, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care and Environment Health Technicians, trains club members in the national Participatory Health and Hygiene Education curriculum that covers topics like community mobilization, safe handling and storage of water sources, skin diseases, diarrhea, menstrual hygiene management, malaria, and hand hygiene. The curriculum has motivated many members to construct WASH facilities at their homesteads (latrines, tippy taps, pot racks, and refuse pits). Amalima Loko also trains members to initiate group savings schemes to raise proceeds to finance their efforts.

REHABILITATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF CLINIC WATER AND SANITATION SYSTEMS

Amalima Loko conducted an assessment across health centers in the program area to investigate the existence and status of critical water and sanitation infrastructure. Based on that assessment, Amalima Loko is now constructing or rehabilitating WASH infrastructure such as latrines and handwashing stations at Zenka and Sesemba clinics in Nkayi District, and Binga Hospital, Simatelele clinic, Siabuzuba clinic and Siadindi clinic in Binga District.

COLLABORATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND CHILDCARE

Amalima Loko works closely with Provincial, District and sub-district levels of the Ministry. Amalima Loko also participates in the Food and Nutrition Security Committee and at Water and Sanitation sub-committee meetings at Provincial and District levels.