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Couple's Food Gardens Bring Hope to Phuthaditjhaba Town

BY ASHLEIGH NEFDT [@GOODTHINGSUY](#) JANUARY 15, 2024



Photo Credit: Supplied

In the town of Phuthaditjhaba, employment, hope and food are growing in more abundance thanks to two community heroes who have made food gardens their mission:

Phuthaditjhaba, South Africa (15 January 2024) — In the Free State's Phuthaditjhaba, where unemployment and poverty can be seen in great numbers, two university graduates, a commitment to community and farm gardens are making a difference.

This town is the seat of the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality near Harrismith. It's home to more than 300,000 residents, many of whom do not have work.

"Most people finish their education, and they leave," shares one of the community heroes, Phillimon Molingane, of the area's brain drain. Phillimon adds that the area does have land going for it and through establishing farm garden projects, there is the opportunity to circulate money in the community.

"We are trying to build something for ourselves, our kids, and our families."

Along with Matsae Tsotesti, Phillimon helps operate seven small-scale farm gardens. This has created employment for 75 people, with 35 being employed by the Social Employment Fund and the remaining 40 working on a volunteer basis. Together, they share the farms' surplus crops.

The SEF (which falls within the Presidential Employment Stimulus) is a big part of the farm gardens' success as it helps people not only undertake projects for the common good but also helps them receive a minimum wage.

Teaming up with the projects are the African Conservation Trust—an organisation dedicated to alleviating food insecurity—who have taken this mission amongst others under their wing as part of their Free State Food Security Initiative.

For Matsae and Phillimon, every bit of help to build their community from the literal ground up, counts. So, having the African Conservation Trust's helping hands means that there's more knowledge accessible (permaculture principles, seed saving techniques and other Agro-Ecological Farming Practices).

And, the growth is admirable.

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"I started with four people, and I was paying them with the SEF stipend money I was getting myself. Then a lot of people came asking for work, and I convinced them to volunteer, and we sold the surplus produce so I could pay them," Matsae, who was a SEF programme participant herself once, shares.

The farms are growing a variety of crops, and now the vegetables are also beginning their production phase into other products, like organic spinach, kale juices and even gummy bears (made with honey).

Not only are they uplifting their community with work and food, but they're also using proceeds to donate to other elements of their social ecosystem. Early Childhood Development Centres, Schools, Churches, child-headed households and other vulnerable sectors are all helped out where possible.

“Small-scale farming is beneficial to impoverished homesteads and communities because participants see the value added to their household income, even when farming in a small area. Although they might not sell their household produce and it is all consumed by their families; through our projects and community engagement, we continuously highlight the crop value. It is conceivable that a homestead can grow R1500 worth of monthly consumption crops,” Carl Grossmann, ACT Chairman notes.

The growing success in this town is just another case in point that when the community comes together, the ripple effect of good becomes unavoidable.



Sources: Sandy Woods

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