



MY DISTRICT TODAY

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Outcome 7: Vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities and food security for all

Women doing it for themselves

Nomzamo Zondi, GCIS KwaZulu-Natal

One of the aims of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is to ensure that opportunities are created that encourage South African citizens to participate in agriculture to reduce food insecurity in the country. The department has initiated a number of programmes that are meant to contribute positively to food security.

Mr Ngcoye, a community member from Smozomeni in Richmond, saw that there was potential for women to work in the agricultural sector. He recruited some women by going door to door and encouraged them to work

together to make their lives better.

The group was formed in 2003 and is made up of seven women. The women call themselves the Masizethembe ("believe in ourselves").



Two members of the Masizethembe group picking their crops.

Through the Food Safety and Security Programme of the Department of Social Development, Agriculture and Environment Affairs in KwaZulu-Natal, the group was assisted with seedlings, fencing and infrastructure for poultry.

The women were empowered with agricultural skills to sustain their project and were taught how to sell and market their produce to the community and big supermarkets such as Spar and Boxer stores. "Life changed for us as widows after we started the agriculture and poultry farming project," said one of the members of the group.



Harvesting moment for the Masizethembe.



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Outcome 9: A responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government

Government brings services closer to Paul Roux community

Ntombi Mhlambi, GCIS Free State

Thusong service centres are government’s one-stop service centres, providing information and services to communities through the development of an integrated communication approach.

One such centre was launched at Fateng Tse Ntsho Community Hall in Paul Roux on 23 August – the first in the Thabo Mofutsanyana district of the Free State. Through these centres, communities get access to services that they were unable to obtain in the past and receive information closer to where they live. It also allows for participatory communication between government and the people.

The Thusong service centres provide information about community participation events, campaigns, exhibition and road shows, which can be used to improve people’s lives and develop the community.

According to Dr Sarita Wentzel, the Free State Department of Health’s local area manager in Dihlabeng, this is a fantastic platform from where to offer primary health care services. “Through this, as many people as possible can be reached. We are very glad to be associated with such an innovative and people-oriented programme,” said Wentzel.



Community members waiting to be served at the centre.

Mr Leche from the Department of Home Affairs, who said this government initiative is good, since it ensures that the very disadvantaged communities can access basic and essential services at convenient times without additional transportation costs, also lauded the centre. “It is important to ensure that the programme does not only cover this area but that it is extended to other towns that are faced with similar socio-economic challenges,” Leche said.

Various other entities, such as the South African Social Security Agency, Legal Aid Board and the Independent Police Investigations Directorate, were also on site to deal with the community’s concerns.

Outcome 10: Environmental assets and natural resources are well protected and continually enhanced

Ekurhuleni serious about greening the city and food security

Jacob Molete, Gauteng

Duduza Thusong Centre and the City of Ekurhuleni celebrated National Arbour Week in Masetjhaba, Duduza. Arbour Week affords the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and other stakeholders the opportunity to undertake a major national awareness programme reiterating the value of trees and creating awareness of tree species that are threatened by extinction.

The campaign promotes awareness for the need to plant and maintain trees throughout South Africa, especially for the many disadvantaged communities who often live in barren and water-stressed areas. It further intends to raise awareness of South Africa's urban and rural greening initiatives.

Greening refers to an integrated approach to the planting, care and management of all vegetation in urban and rural areas to secure multiple benefits for communities. Greening in the South African context takes place in towns, townships and informal settlements, specifically because in the past the latter areas were disadvantaged in terms of planning for parks as well as tree planting in streets and open spaces.

Rand Water, in partnership with the City of Ekurhuleni, donated tools and starter packs.

Ms Takatso Lebone and 27 members of the Tornado Community Food Garden could not contain their joy when they received the garden tools and starter packs for their food garden. She thanked the City

of Ekurhuleni and Rand Water for the donation by saying, "On behalf of the Tornado Community Food Garden, we would like to thank Ekurhuleni and Rand Water for the donation. This will go a long way in ensuring that we plant enough to feed ourselves and the community at large." Ms Lebone is the chairperson of the Tornado Community Food Garden Project.

Speaking on behalf of Rand Water, stakeholder relations manager Ms Maggie Letsoalo encouraged the community to plant trees and start food gardens. "Gardening is important to preserve the environment and ensure food security. Rand Water is supporting food garden projects by donating starter packs, gardening tools and Jojo tanks," she said.

Member of the Mayoral Committee, Vuyelwa Mabena urged community members to start food gardens to ensure food security and avoid high food prices. "I urge you to start food gardens like Tornado. This will ensure that you provide healthy

food for your children and save money, as you would not be buying everything from stores at high prices," Cllr Mabena advised.

She also discouraged community members from illegal dumping, and encouraged them to work with the city under the Cleaner and Greener Ekurhuleni Campaign to ensure that the city is clean and green. "You should take charge of your environment, report any illegal dumping and avoid littering. You should work with the city to preserve and protect the environment."



Ekurhuleni MEC for Environmental Affairs, Cllr Vuyelwa Mabena, planting a tree to commemorate and mark National Arbour Week and to officially launch the Tornado Community Park.



Above: Takatso Lebone and members of the Tornado Community Food Garden receive garden tools from MEC Mabena to work in their food garden. The tools were donated by the City of Ekurhuleni Municipality and Rand Water.



Outcome 1: Improved quality of basic education

Education is power

Government has prioritised education to ensure that skilled labour is produced. To ensure that this goal is achieved, stakeholders based at the Mabatlane Thusong Service Centre in Limpopo held an open day at the centre.

The purpose of the event was to inform learners from Meetsetshehla and Leseding high schools of career opportunities and bursaries offered by the Government.

Mr Lambert from the Department of Agriculture encouraged young people to pursue professional careers in agriculture and so boost the ageing farmer population (particularly among rural farmers). Learners were urged to grab the available opportunities offered by government.

He further encouraged learners to study for a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural/Civil Engineering, Agricultural Economics and Soil Science, as these are scarce-skills fields.

In order for learners to study these courses, they are required to have Maths Higher Grade (HG), Physical Science HG, Agricultural Science HG or Biology HG. Mr Selepe from the Department of Social Development motivated learners to study Social Work, as it is also a scarce skill.

They were also made aware that all 13 social workers based at the Mabatlane Thusong Centre are from outside Mabatlane – some as far as the Vhembe district.

Barriers to effective learning include, among others, substance and drug abuse, dropouts, early sexual activity leading to teenage pregnancies and HIV infections, and poverty caused by the socio-economic conditions of the households.

Learners were therefore encouraged to focus on their dreams and achieve them through education.

Education is the key to unlocking a brighter tomorrow.



Learners from Meetsetshehla and Leseding high schools attending a career information session at the Mabatlane Thusong Centre.