

Unemployed youth find purpose in gardening

A small but keen group of formerly jobless young people is gardening up a storm in Mpumalanga.

Linneth Ngobeni, at 46 the oldest member of the Khomanani Vhanu Community Project in Bushbuckridge, tells how despondent the young job seekers were before they joined the gardening venture: “They were looking for work but nowadays there are no jobs. When the young people work in the garden they are gainfully occupied.”

Food & Trees for Africa spotted the garden’s potential and Shoprite stepped in to give them a big boost.

A water tank, tools, educational material and seedlings were provided. Project members received extensive training in organic farming methods over a 12-month period.

Khomanani Vanu means ‘come together as people’ in Tsonga and the other six members of the group are delighted at how they have benefited from the garden. Instead of having no income, they are now able to put food on the table and feed their families.

Tomatoes, spinach, beetroot, onions, green peppers and cabbage grow in the garden, enabling the group to participate in two of the Market Days hosted by the Shoprite Group. This initiative sees food gardens supported by the retail group given the opportunity to sell fresh produce at their nearest supermarket.

Today the Khomanani Vhanu Community Project is making a name for itself among locals. “Shoprite helped to promote us and many people now know about our garden. We are happy and proud to sell vegetables to our community,” says Linneth.

It doesn’t stop there either - they want to go big and have long-term plans to expand the garden into a proper commercial farming venture.

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CAPTION: From left Linneth and Auriel Ngobeni with Khisozo Ngwenya in the food garden they have established with the help from the Shoprite Group.

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