

## **Centre for abused men seeks to alleviate trauma through garden therapy**

*A partnership with Shoprite enables South Africa's only centre for abused and trafficked men to offer hope and recovery through gardening.*

Established in 2000 by Rev. T.Z. Motaung, the Carroll Shaw Memorial Centre in Braamvlei, Randfontein acts as a halfway house for men who have survived human trafficking and violent crime. The centre also assists the perpetrators of abuse, and is named after an American missionary, who greatly influenced the founder.

Moses Mlotywa (62) has been cultivating the centre's five-hectare vegetable garden for eight years. He was referred to the centre by a concerned social worker in 2010 when he became abusive toward his family.

"I lost my job and my car. I almost lost my house. I abused my wife and children. When I arrived at the centre I was skeptical. I was a good man, but could no longer recognise who I had become. I found myself again through gardening," says Moses.

His commitment to becoming a better man motivated the centre's director, Oupa Bila, to hire him as a supervisor.

The aim with the garden was to provide fresh vegetables to the 150 people living on the 67-hectare farm, which houses the centre. Spinach, cabbage and potatoes are among the vegetables grown there.

When Shoprite came on board in May 2018, garden productivity was given a significant boost. Soon it expanded its operations to include an additional five hectares.

"Working with Shoprite automatically lifts you to another level," explains Oupa. "You begin to shift things into another gear. It motivates the workers and provides them with a purpose. They become dedicated. Even on a weekend they are watering the plants and making sure that the vegetables are fine."

Shoprite and its implementation partner, Food and Trees for Africa, further assisted the Carroll Shaw Memorial Centre by repairing critical infrastructure such as the garden's borehole and irrigation system and installing a new diesel pump. The 13 workers tending the garden receive ongoing mentorship and training in permaculture gardening techniques. To help them achieve their goals, they were also supplied with seedlings, compost and gardening tools.

"Our ultimate aim is to reduce the number of people going to bed without food," says Oupa.

END

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