

## **Garden puts fresh vegetables on the menu for orphanage**

Situated outside Polokwane in Mankweng, Phela O Phedisa is a co-op and its 16 members have big ambitions.

The co-op was started in 2009 and comprises a 10 hectare site. Its members struggled as they had to provide seedlings and supplies at their own expense. On top of that, they also faced the challenge of a water shortage.

Shoprite, through its implementation partner Food and Trees for Africa, stepped in by providing infrastructure support and training. The retailer ensured the vegetable garden was upgraded and provided equipment and tools. The co-op also benefited from planting materials and resources.

*“People are happier since Shoprite came to our assistance. We are growing more vegetables now and we are always in the garden.”*

- Selina Kwena Bopape, secretary, Phela O Phedisa Co-op

Each member works their own piece of land. The positioning of 100 orange trees in between the vegetable patches, enabling deep penetration of excess water, has been of great benefit to the orange crop. As a result co-op members have started to make orange marmalade and they are currently looking at other ways of processing oranges as a value-add.

Vegetables such as spinach, beetroot and onions are produced, with indigenous crops like cow peas, maize and peanuts being grown in the rainy season. The co-op sells vegetables locally, and also donates a portion of its produce to a local orphanage. In this way it gives back to the community and the local leadership, who provided the land for the garden. Members of the co-op are currently in talks with companies that specialise in drilling for underground water to address the ongoing water shortage.

The co-op members are aiming high and sees Phela O Phedisa, which is Pedi for “live and let live”, as a future supplier to Shoprite stores.

*“We hope that Shoprite will help us so that we can one day produce enough vegetables to supply to their stores.”*

- Selina Kwena Bopape, secretary, Phela O Phedisa Co-op

END

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