

Timely support makes a huge difference to Kimberley community gardeners

Community activists across the Northern Cape continue to fight against hunger, which remains a fact of life among disadvantaged people throughout the country.

Six years ago, for example, Thabiso Moses Mokoena joined forces with his colleagues Ophelia Makita, Winnie Mokoena and Lizzy Nkqayi to set up the Readira Development Centre in Kimberley, where they started a food garden on a patch of land they owned. Their vision: to provide healthy daily meals for members of their community, many of them elderly and most of them struggling to feed themselves.

With limited resources, the four gardeners faced tough challenges in their early days. Although the Readira community food garden was producing crops, it was not as productive as it could be. Members of the community sometimes had to use their own funds to supplement soup kitchen provisions.

That's when Shoprite and its implementation partner, Food & Trees for Africa, stepped in and made infrastructure improvements so that the garden could realise its full potential. Shoprite's support also included a series of training workshops, where the Readira team were taught how to establish a diverse production system: this know-how has enabled them to produce cash crops and raw ingredients for the soup kitchen.

Shoprite's assistance has made a huge difference and today produce from the garden is used to make 170 meals a week. The well-resourced food garden produces a consistently reliable supply of quality crops for the soup kitchen and a surplus that is generating an income. Given how much progress the garden has achieved in such a short time, it seems fitting that Readira means 'we are making'.

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