

## **Against all odds: how a small food garden feeds a whole community**

Started by five local women from the Tumahole township on the outskirts of Parys, Phahamang Basadi food garden has been providing fresh and affordable vegetables to the community since 2017.

The garden has been a real game-changer for the people of Tumahole – many of whom are unemployed – as they no longer have to spend money on travelling long distances to stock up on healthy food.

As is the case with most good things, however, getting Phahamang Basadi to where it is today has been no mean feat. Fortunately, with support from Shoprite and a team of strong and dedicated women driving the project, none of the challenges were too big to overcome.

According to founder, Meriam Mokgatla, the women visited a variety of institutions – including schools and a local clinic – to present their proposal of using a patch of earth to create a garden that could help feed the community. They were turned down time and again, but never gave up hope.

They finally ended up at Boitlamo Secondary School, which allowed them to use part of the property for the garden.

“We needed a tractor to clean up the land so that we could start planting, but when we couldn’t find one, we decided to clean the place on our own,” recalls Mokgatla. “There is a borehole, but is not working so we used buckets to water our plants.”

Two years later and against all odds, the women’s hard work is paying off and the garden is thriving. Phahamang Basadi for the first time participated in Market Day at Checkers Parys in April 2019.

“It was a scary moment to sell our produce at a well-known store such as Checkers but we received a warm welcome and the setup was beautiful,” says Mokgatla.

To support the good work Mokgatla and her team have been doing, Shoprite through its partner, Food and Trees for Africa (FTFA), supplied them with gardening tools and seedlings. The retailer and FTFA are in the process of installing rain tanks and assisting in the replacement of the broken borehole pump.

END

CAPTION: Meriam Mokgatla (centre) and garden volunteers harvesting the vegetables growing in the Phahamang Basadi garden.