

## **Meet the township where homestead gardens thrive**

Started in Munsieville township outside Krugersdorp, The Thoughtful Path project is focused on creating a healthier and safer community for children to grow up and thrive in.

One of the most important ways in which this is being done, is by providing training for women – the mothers, grandmothers and carers of the children – to grow their own vegetables at home.

These training sessions are all conducted at Hope Park, the project's centre, which is home to a communal food garden. Since 2010, it has led to the establishment of home food gardens throughout the community, which produce an array of vegetables and even herbs.

"Many of the women thought things like broccoli and green pepper wouldn't grow here, but now they're growing these veggies in their own gardens," says operations director, Betty Nkoana.

Having these vegetables readily available in their own gardens, the women are able to keep their families healthy and save money at the same time.

As far as herbs are concerned, Nkoana says that a number of the homestead gardens are now also producing their own mint and rosemary – herbs that were considered luxury items by many before.

"We are drinking rosemary tea, we are drinking mint tea," she laughs. "So, we are encouraging the women to stay away from things like coffee and normal tea and drink herbal teas instead."

A few of the women have also started selling their produce, generating a much-needed income and one has even launched a roaring business specialising in the sale of Rosemary sticks!

"That is our main aim – that people should be able to produce food for themselves and have an income from their food gardens," says Nkoana.

Upon hearing about The Thoughtful Path's amazing work, Checkers decided to partner with these remarkable women. Through its implementation partner, Foods & Trees for Africa, Checkers arranged for the project members and an additional 398 women from the Munsieville community to receive ongoing permaculture training.

Community members often share tools and don't always have seed saved from the previous season. As such, they were also equipped with a few gardening essentials, including watering cans, seedlings and seeds.

"Many of the beneficiaries broke into tears of joy, some ululating and others sang songs. The excitement and joy on their faces was unbelievable," explains Tim Abaa from Food & Trees for Africa.

Three permaculture training workshops have taken place so far this year, with another 15 scheduled over the next few months.

"This kind of support makes our people realise that even if South Africa is facing poverty, there is still hope," adds Nkoana.

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CAPTION: Betty Nkoane shows off the vegetables grown in NGO the Thoughtful Path's food garden in Munsieville - the childhood home of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu.