

Food garden ensures nutritious meals for 170 children during lockdown

(11 November 2020) The impact of Covid-19 will be felt for a long time, particularly in rural communities such as Mulima in Limpopo, where the St Scholastica Food Garden had to stretch their meagre resources in recent months to help those who were returning home after losing their jobs during the lockdown in Johannesburg.

“Our Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) centre at the school was hit hard by Covid because the lockdown meant that the OVCs weren’t getting that one meal a day that they relied on,” says Chris Babona, manager of the OVC centre and creche at the St Scholastica School.

“We had to make a plan during lockdown to help the OVCs. We also had to help those families who were now destitute because the breadwinners had lost their jobs in Joburg and had to come back home. We barely manage to provide for our OVCs, the children in the creche and those at the school, and we now had to help even more families. It’s been tough,” explains Chris.

The food garden at the school was started in 2013 by Chris and the OVC caregivers to supplement the food parcels they were giving to OVCs and children from impoverished homes. The unemployment rate in Mulima is over 60% and there are many families in need of financial assistance, and food parcels.

“We didn’t really know how to garden or grow vegetables, so last year, we asked Shoprite for support with the garden because the school had given us land, but we weren’t using it properly,” says Chris.

In November 2019, Shoprite arranged for the installation of a borehole with rainwater harvesting infrastructure, donated seedlings and tools, and has been running monthly workshops to teach the caregivers how to extend their growing season.

Permaculture techniques such as mulching, composting and companion planting have assisted the caregivers to come up with useful solutions, for example planting onions to ward off the worms that were eating some crops.

The St Scholastica OVC centre provides food and parcels for 170 children, who now enjoy fresh produce including tomatoes, green peppers, beetroot, cabbage, bananas and spinach from the food garden.

“I’m very grateful for our eight caregivers. They do so much for the children here and they earn just R1,400 per month. I’m also grateful to the Mamas Alliance for their ongoing support and to Shoprite because our children are now enjoying nutritious meals.”

The Shoprite Group is [committed to fighting hunger](#) across South Africa and has since 2015 partnered with 119 community food gardens and 475 home gardens, benefitting over 28 000 people.

To date the Group has partnered with 119 community food gardens and 475 home gardens. This brings to over 28 000, the total number of people benefitting from this initiative.

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