

Community organisation's long-term partnership with retailer bears much fruit

"It puts my mind at ease to know my organisation can depend on the Shoprite Group for help whether we're in a pandemic or not."

These are the words of Lydia Hlophe, founder of the Yenzanathi Community Development Project in Kwanyuswa in KwaZulu-Natal, whose partnership with the Group started in 2016 with an 18-month investment in the food garden that continues to supply fresh vegetables to the soup kitchen run by Hlophe.

Recently a brand new Shoprite Mobile Soup Kitchen served its first meals of fortified soup and bread to the Kwanyuswa community. The newly branded soup kitchen sports images of beneficiaries of the VUSA Rugby & Learning Academy, a Cape Town-based upliftment programme that, like Yenzanathi, receives help from Shoprite.

The KwaZulu-Natal organisation supports 65 households with elderly, orphaned and vulnerable persons. "That's a total of 255 individuals and it was with the support of long-term partners like Shoprite that we continue to serve our beneficiaries despite the lockdown," says Hlophe.

The food garden gets worked by elderly people from the community. The older folks also mentor children, who care for their siblings following the death of both parents. The organisation offers computer training and also runs an internet cafe from its premises, which also houses a preschool.

"We make sure there is a meal for our beneficiaries to collect every day of the week. The produce of the food garden helps us achieve this goal. The organisation is my life's work and the realisation of a dream. I can't imagine doing anything else," concludes Hlophe.

Hunger relief is a major focus for the Group, who has since the start of the lockdown distributed food to the value of R50 million through surplus food donations and the Shoprite Mobile Soup Kitchens, which have provided over 2 million meals to more than 2 400 community organisations across the country.

The Group's food garden programme has seen it partner with 119 community- and 494 home gardens and in the process supporting some 27 000 beneficiaries.

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CAPTION: The Kwanyuswa community benefited from the new Shoprite Mobile Soup Kitchen serving its first meals of fortified soup and bread to its residents.

