

Garden a boon for Marikana orphans

The Maumong Orphanage in Marikana, North West, was established to take care of the many orphaned and vulnerable children in the community and with Shoprite's support, they are hoping to expand their food garden to feed even more neglected children.

The orphanage was started in 2013 by community members who wanted to offer refuge to children, who had no one else to turn to. The tribal chief in the area offered the group a building that wasn't being used and this became their base.

Ester Motse (31), who grew up in the area, became involved in 2019 after community members realised the orphanage needed help. "Because we live in the community, we could see that the orphanage food garden wasn't doing well so we started to assist with the planting," says Ester. The orphanage provides 38 children with three meals a day and the administrators have ambitions to increase the number of children they feed to 300.

Shoprite is providing training, water infrastructure, trees and seedlings for their garden as part of its drive to fight hunger across South Africa. The retailer has since 2015 partnered with 119 community- and 494 home gardens to the benefit of more than 27 000 people.

"We would like to grow enough food for all the needy children in our area. The tools and seeds we received from Shoprite will help us achieve this goal," says Ester. The workshops at Maumong are attended by a team of people who are now working full-time in the garden as well as 30 community members, who are planting their own vegetables at home.

Strict safety protocols are adhered to at the training workshops, and every participant must wear a face mask for the duration of the workshop. Each attendee has their temperature taken upon arrival, with a 1.5-metre distance being maintained between participants during the workshop.

One of the modern farming techniques that resonated with the volunteer gardeners was mulching, which involves covering the ground around the crops with grass cuttings to keep the moisture in the soil.

Access to water in Marikana during winter is challenging and Shoprite supplied a 10,000-litre water tank together with a petrol pump and the necessary piping to ensure a reliable water supply to the garden.

"We learned a lot during the training sessions. It's going to help us grow more food and it's so important that we now have this knowledge," says Ester.

The Shoprite Group's food garden programme is a long-term strategy employed to combat hunger. In the short term, it brings hunger relief to communities

through Shoprite and Checkers supermarkets' surplus food donations, which has exceeded R65 million since the start of the lockdown.

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