

Food Gardens Improve the Livelihoods of Visually Impaired People of Grahamstown

With support from the Southern Africa Trust, and through the Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA) project, ten (10) visually impaired individuals were trained in agricultural practices such as mulching, fertilization, planting and harvesting. Ten (10) gardens were established that directly benefit up to a total of 52 individuals (*breakdown of members of households in table*). In addition, water taps were installed at the homes of the visually impaired to help with watering the gardens and fences erected to protect the produce from being destroyed by cows and goats.

This has enabled at least half of the beneficiaries to earn an income by selling some of their produce. Five (5) of the households sell their produce and earn between R100 to R200 extra income per month. The beneficiaries are now suppliers to the Fruit and Veg City (one of South Africa’s largest fresh produce market). The gardens have also helped them to meet their nutritional needs, especially for those who have HIV. In addition, the project has played a role in building the self esteem of these beneficiaries. In July 2010, a soup kitchen was started that provides food once a week to approximately 30 individuals who are on ARV treatment.

Apart from the skills training in gardening, GADRA also provides other skills and activities for the visually impaired including beekeeping, sewing, computer literacy, current affairs sessions, and musical bands sessions.

Breakdown of the total number of beneficiaries

| Gardener / Beneficiary: | Family residing in Household: |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Vuyiseka | Mother, sister and 5 children |
| 2. Colin | Mother and father |
| 3. Zweli | Mother and 3 children |
| 4. Bongani | Wife and 3 children |
| 5. Richard | Wife and 2 children |
| 6. Madoda | Wife and 4 children |
| 7. Michael | Wife and 2 children |
| 8. Thobela | 2 sisters |
| 9. Martha | Husband, 2 adult children and 2 grandchildren |
| 10. Guest House for the Blind | Manager, husband, 2 children and 4 blind guests |

Voices of Beneficiaries

“Because I am doing something I love and enjoy, working in the garden is relaxing and soothing for myself and mind. I find myself singing and humming hymns as I work. My food garden saves my family money because we are a big family and we can eat healthy and fresh vegetables from the garden everyday”.

Vuyeseka

“I enjoy learning how to garden and picking vegetables when they have grown. I want to teach my family so we can make our own garden at home”.

Lucy

“Gardening is wonderful, working in the garden is my passion. I have green fingers and my vegetables grow quickly. Since we are not a very big family, we sell some of the vegetables meaning we make an extra income for us”.

Bongani

“I love trying out new challenging things and maintaining a garden is challenging to some of us blind persons but for me its just another learning. It’s wonderful to have fresh vegetables; it gives me pleasure to harvest my own vegetables”.

Richard