

# Project gives more than just food

**NKULULEKO NENE**

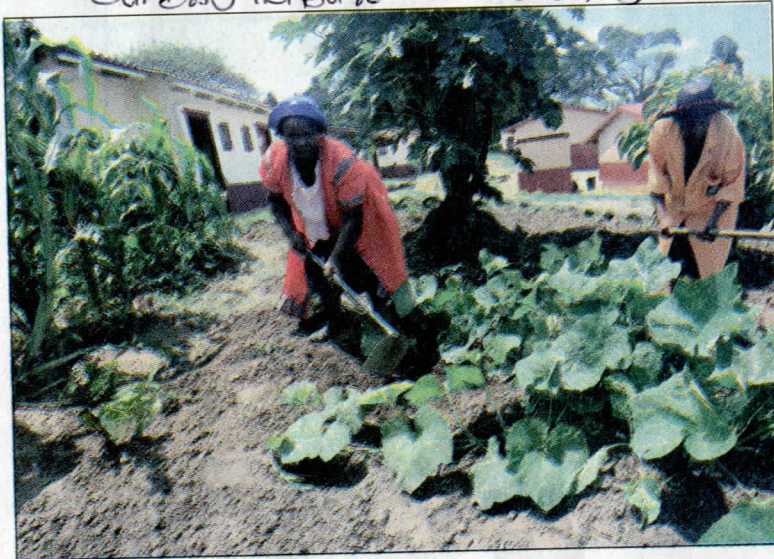
KHANYANJALO Primary School has long embraced the garden project with a mission to impart agricultural skills to pupils at a tender age.

The principal, Thembekile Ndlovu, prides himself on opening job opportunities in the community of Emachobeni in Inanda through the Masisizane project, which includes gardening.

“Our aim is to uplift the community by empowering their minds. I have a wonderful programme for parents to come and work at the school without pay. But they are allowed to sell a portion of the harvest to retailers and the community. The rest goes towards the child feeding scheme at the school.”

Ndlovu said projects helped to sustain the school which had 1 500 pupils. He said he did not support lazy parents whose children were at the school which was the heart of the community and needed to be sustained at all costs.

“Our belief is that if they cannot afford to pay school fees, they should come and work for no pay at the school instead of loafing at home thinking that opportunities



Gugu Mthembu and Nompumelelo Sibisi tending the garden at Khanyanjalo Primary school in Inanda.

will come to them. There is a lot of work. If I see someone with potential and skills, I recruit that person to a different project where she can earn some money. There is no free lunch here. People need to work to feed their families. Our responsibility is not only to teach children but to use our network to see how we can improve the community.”

Mfundo Msomi, 10, told the Sunday Tribune he had a small vegetable garden at home and cabbage, spinach and maize were his favourite veggies.

“I enjoy planting green pepper seeds and spinach because they are quick to harvest. We need compost to keep the soil fertile and use lots of water. The best part comes when

the crop is ready to pick.”

But it is not just the harvest that is important. Gardening also introduces children to insects that form part of the growing environment, from worms and caterpillars to bees and certain flies. Mfundo was amazed to learn that growing onions next to carrots kept the carrot flies away from the plants, without the need for insecticides.

“We have taught them about evaporation, condensation and photosynthesis. They understand the role of pollination,” Ndlovu said.

He knows that having a school garden takes hard work, and in a sense that work never stops. And whatever effort is put in is rewarded with a bountiful crop.

# Principal keen to revive the beauty of ploughing

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AMID drought challenges that have threatened the food supply, some KwaZulu-Natal schools have embarked on gardening projects to feed pupils and the community.

The headmaster of Inanda Day Primary, Mziwenhlanhla Ngobese, said the garden project was run by a group of community members who worked closely with the pupils. The school gets a portion of each harvest to feed vulnerable children. He said the school had a high number of orphans who arrived without having eaten breakfast, which affected their performance in class.

Ngobese said the gardening project also promoted agriculture in the community.

“Most of the learners are from impoverished households and they benefit immensely from harvesting vegetables. They get to eat healthy food. They also learn the importance of food preservation. This project really puts food on the table and supplies families with a

steady income. The idea is that after each harvest, vegetables are sold to big retailers and spaza shops,” he said.

During the walkabout at the school, an enthusiastic community member, Goodman Ndlovu, was inspecting the crop which comprised mealies, madumbis, sweat potatoes, spinach and beetroot. He said he needed more farming advice and equipment to be able to supply big retailers.

“If I can get a tractor and seeds I will be able to create more job opportunities for the locals. I started with a team of 12 but now that number has decreased to six because this is voluntary and people find it difficult to survive without pay.

“Food prices have gone up because of the drought but getting involved in this project has helped many families to save money on vegetables. We do not go to bed on empty stomachs. We hope to inculcate skills in the youth, and revive the beauty of ploughing.”

Watch a three-part documentary compiled by Durban's organic gardening guru, Brett Muller. Search for “Talking to earthworms” on YouTube.  
 Part 1: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_NfDfnruOgl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NfDfnruOgl)  
 Part 2: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZX8cVbCOhM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZX8cVbCOhM)  
 Part 3: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7wqt92s45o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7wqt92s45o)