



# LAMATZICARE FOOD GARDENS

Vanrhynsdorp

## Project objectives:

- Produce fresh vegetables.
- Provide the opportunity for employment through cash crops.
- Provide fresh food to the aged, sick and needy.

## Project Timeframe

12 Months

## Long term goals:

- Diversify their farming activities.
- Establish financial security for their members.
- Purchase own land.

## Contact:

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Vanrhynsdorp is a small town in southern Namaqualand. Vanrhynsdorp is home to unique succulent floral diversity found on the surrounding Knersvlakte (roughly translated as “Teeth Grinding Plains”). This flora attracts botanical scientists and pharmaceutical companies from across the world.

Very much a farmer’s community, Vanrhynsdorp suffers all the ailments common to most small rural communities, namely poverty, unemployment and limited opportunities for growth. To Catherine Frans and a small group of women, this was not acceptable, and they decided to embark on an action to help their community to “help themselves”. But not just any action - they had a different idea. Theirs was to be a project which would aim to empower the women of the area. The motivation for this was based on the fact that most men, being the traditional breadwinners, are employed on farms and are thus away from home for long periods of time. This left the women and children at home feeling vulnerable and insecure.

Catherine, like most of the women in the group, was born on a farm and has a basic understanding of what farming is and can be. In 2004, twelve local women decided to start a project which would put food on their tables. They started growing fresh vegetables in the limited space of their own backyards. This proved costly, since they had to make use and pay for expensive municipal water. However, the seed was sown, and even though a few of the women have since left, the Lamatzicare Food Garden Project now rents a hectare of land from the local Matzikama municipality. The ladies are ambitious and recently managed to secure funding to expand their project. The funding enabled them to erect a proper fence around the vegetable garden and install a water efficient drip-irrigation system.

One of the lessons their group learnt was that when it comes to accessing finances the “red tape can be very de-motivating”. Catherine explains, “The money allocated to our project was paid into the local municipality’s bank





## Water for Health and Food Security



account, thus making it very difficult to access the funds and as a result slowed down the project's implementation. In addition, the municipality procurement policy only allowed the project to make use of "approved service providers registered on a database". While this helps ensure the finances are spent correctly, it did very little to speed up implementation. Three of these "approved" workers took nearly a year to complete the fence around the garden." These minor setbacks did not deter these motivated women from achieving their goals.

In the immediate future the project aims to continue planting cash crops of tomatoes and onions. These crops are quick and seasonal, thus creating a fast return on investment.

In the longer term, the group aims to diversify their farming activities, create employment opportunities, put food on the table and continue to empower themselves and their community through self-reliance. "We wish to sell to supermarkets and obtain more land for agriculture," Catherine says. "Our lease agreement with the municipality lapses after three years, which is not enough to make a decent success of a project like this. We are currently re-negotiating the contract and are trying to obtain access to the land for at least 10 years. Ultimately, however we would like to own our land."

