



WOMEN'S FOOD GARDENS

Lambertsbaai

Vukani Makhosikhazi - “the Women who are Standing up” - is the name of a women’s food garden project launched in the coastal town of Lamberts Bay. The project aims to empower the women of the community, while facilitating financial and food security.

bad weather of the past fishing season did not help improve our situation either. We are only just surviving hand to mouth,” says Salome Horn, a mother of three, a grandmother of one who is the chairperson and a founding member of Vukani Makhosikhazi.

Project objectives:

- Access land and water.
- Produce fresh vegetables.
- Provide fresh food to members, aged, sick and needy.
- Provide opportunity for employment.

Project Timeframe

12 Months

Long term goals:

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

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The West Coast town of Lamberts Bay is a fishing community, largely dependent on marine resources, such as snoek (barracuda) and crayfish (rock lobster). “There are a lot of women and pensioners in Lamberts Bay.

In 2000, Horn was part of a group of 34 women who, out of desperation, started growing vegetables in the available spaces of their backyards. Later, in 2005, they managed to access some ground from the Cederberg Municipality for the purpose of small-scale agriculture. According to Horn, they were allocated 30 hectares, but this was later withdrawn and they

Most men are unemployed, even though we are surrounded by wealthy potato farms. The





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were given access to 2.5 hectares on a 5 year lease. The group is paying a monthly rent of R125 for the piece of land. “We are negotiating for a longer term contract and would prefer to pay the rent on an annual basis,” Horn said. “We will prove to them that our project is sustainable.”

In the short term, the women of Vukani Makhosikhazi plan to not only grow organic vegetables for themselves, but aim to supply vegetables to old age homes, HIV care centres and school soup kitchens.

In the longer term, the group wishes to access a larger piece of land and increase their production to a commercial scale. “This will bring about employment and a stable income for the women. I want the women to be more goal-orientated,” Horn says. “They must strive for something more – greener pastures.”

But the Vukani Makhosikhazi women are facing a big obstacle - water shortage. Horn explains: “The main source of water for the municipality is the Wadrif aquifer, a groundwater source that is dependent on rainfall for recharge. This place is bone dry and the hot South-Easter wind bites us. The fact that Lamberts Bay is a tourism destination doesn’t help us either. The large numbers of tourists place a burden on the available water. As a result the whole town is placed on water restrictions during summer. The water we use, we have to pay for and it is very expensive. In the near future we will have to drill our own borehole.”

The group recently applied to DWAF’s Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) programme for assistance to purchase drip-irrigation systems and shade-cloth netting. “This will help save water and protect the crops from dry summer winds. If all goes well, our first big harvest will be around October - November this year,” Horn says. “An ideal time to sell vegetables is Christmas as people have some money and tend to buy a bit more than usual.”

