



SOUTH AFRICA PROJECTS

Vegetable gardens in rural
areas of Mpumalanga

Farmers Foundations
in Mpumalanga



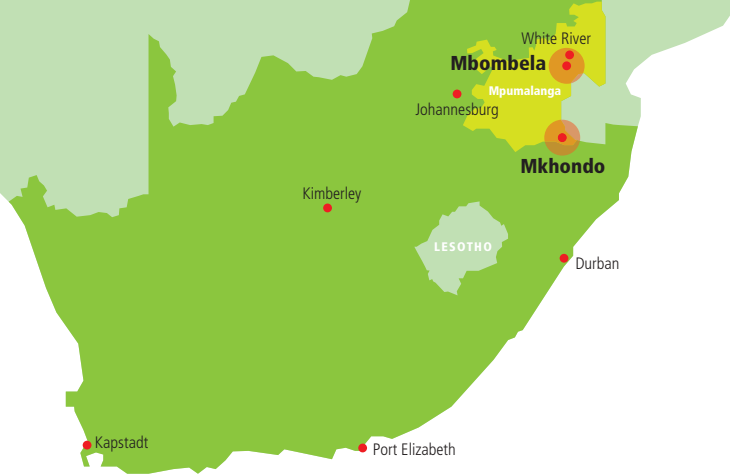
SOUTH AFRICA

A fascinating country with an exceptional history

South Africa is a fascinating country that boasts an exceptional history, breathtaking landscapes, diverse flora and fauna and a rich ethnicity. Perhaps it's the sun, but the vast majority of visitors to South Africa speak in warm tones about South African people being particularly hospitable and kind-hearted.



Post-apartheid South Africa is proud of its claim to being a rainbow nation, a notion that appeals to the broad spectrum of different ethnicities looking to establish a shared democratic future. South Africa boasts one of the world's most modern constitutions – no other nation on earth has 11 official languages. As it emerges from the shadow of apartheid, South Africa looks ahead to its future with the desire to do right by its hugely diverse citizens; no one need deny their origins any longer. This is something that is celebrated every year during Heritage Day. When measured against its own continent, South Africa is certainly among the wealthiest nations there. The country's extensive mineral treasures and booming Gauteng province, and the sprawling metropolises of Johannesburg and Pretoria, are the wind in the country's sails. Tourism has also witnessed a significant increase in recent years, bringing with it a fresh influx of currencies into the country.



But there is, however, another side to South Africa. It is by no means the case that every inhabitant in the continent's southernmost country is able to enjoy the fruits of such change. Many rural regions in South Africa continue to suffer under the blight of poverty. Many people are without work, and accessing education does not always prove to be straightforward. Diseases such as diabetes and AIDS/HIV, which affect huge swathes of the population, must also be taken account of. In cases where parents have died young, older siblings or grandparents endeavour to help young children find their way. But a child of just eight years old is hardly in a position to provide for four or five younger siblings. That is why it is a truly wonderful thing when caring individuals take the initiative and found children's charities, such as Pastor Tony Rankin and his wife Marion from White River in Mpumalanga, who founded Children in Distress in 1998, because 30 children orphaned by AIDS suddenly needed help. Today, more than 3,000 children are provided with a warm meal every day across eight different locations. Now it's Murray, the couple's daughter who has taken up the reins at the aid organisation. Since 2012, four students from the Department of Agriculture (Soest) at the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences have been supporting work efforts at a



Lauren Murray and Prof. Dr. Thomas Weyer



local level. We are attempting to stabilise food security by establishing vegetable gardens in all locations, while also nurturing – among children of all ages – a love of providing for oneself with home-grown foodstuffs. In our second project, "Farmers' Foundation" in Moolman south of Mpumalanga and bordering Kwazulu Natal, we have already gone one step further. Although land ownership has been open to all South Africans since 1994, the ability to grow foodstuff with the desired success rate requires both knowledge and ability. Soil science, humus management, water management, nutrient supply, the cultivation of seedlings, using chickens and pigs as a practical means of preparing the ground – these are all things that we can teach from a small educational facility, in order to foster an interest among participating South Africans in establishing a subsistence economy, and in what lies beyond. Thanks to Johann Engelbrecht from "Thol'ulwazi Thol'impilo" we have a strong partner in place at local level. Every year also sees us visit this place with four students. We kindly ask you to support our projects in the fight against poverty and to establish food security in South Africa. Your donations are most gratefully received and make an immediate difference to people there.



Warmest regards,
Thomas Weyer

PROJECT

Vegetable gardens in rural areas of Mpumalanga/ South Africa

Background

Prof. Dr. Weyer has been collaborating with the South African partner organisation Children in Distress (CID) from White River / Mpumalanga since 2011.

Project Manager Lauren Murray established direct contact with Prof. Dr. Weyer in 2011, with an enquiry about whether the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences would consider supporting the CID. CID works closely with structurally weak rural areas along the western border with the Kruger National Park between White River and Hazyview, and has made it its mission to improve the living conditions of AIDS orphans, abused or abandoned children. In the purpose-built centres in Kabokweni, Jerusalem, Phelandaba, Mcogbaneni, Mganduzweni, Cho Cho Cho, Chweni and Dayenzai children are welcomed and supervised after school hours. Many of the children live in so-called child-headed households.



The centres offer:

- a warm meal everyday
- socio-pedagogical and caring supervision
- computer courses and after-school tuition

Every centre is run by a person from the surrounding area. These so-called Point or Peer People have also received ecclesiastical-religious training, and hold a church service every Sunday that adheres to the teachings of the Charismatic Church. CID is also part of the Manna Church in White River and thus a member of the Charismatic Church. Each and every Centre leader has several caregivers at their side, who support the centre in a number of ways such as by cooking, doing gardening work, cleaning and maintaining the facilities. Today, their collective efforts ensure that approximately 3,000 children and young adults aged anywhere between a few months and 20 years are looked after every day (please visit www.childrenindistress.co.za). Food retailers in the Mbombela region donate basic foodstuffs, while the Manna Church rounds off the support offering with financial donations.

Project objectives

The objectives are subject to ongoing development every year as part of a dialogue with CID. These can be categorised into the following four areas:

1. Agricultural education
2. Technical support
3. Leisure equipment
4. Miscellaneous



1. Agricultural education

This area is broken down into the following sub-areas:

1. German Tyre Project (GTP)

Even very young children (2-7 years) can gather some initial experience in a small nursery bed, which is sectioned off by brightly coloured tyres. Here, 1-4 types of vegetable crops are planted and monitored during their development. The children discover the miracle of rapid plant growth and harvest.

2. Vegetable Contest (VC)

The next age group up (7-14 years) can participate in a crop cultivation competition. Every child has the chance to plant a host of vegetables. They take charge of the raking and watering, and can see who among their peers has the "greenest fingers", e.g. who can harvest the largest beetroot? The learning process also gives the children valuable insight into soil and water management during cultivation. Participating children also enjoy a sense of belonging.



3. Child Headed Home Gardens (CHHG)

Adolescents aged between 15 and 20 years, who are interested in cultivating a small vegetable garden on their own plot of land, are chosen for these small-scale projects.

Together with the young South Africans, students from the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences first prepare a garden area of around 10-15 m². If the students are motivated and the gardens develop well, they are expanded in the second year. The adolescents are visited each week. They experience growth, horticulture and harvest, and help increase their own food security.

They also enjoy a wonderful experience for the senses, while often discovering a more deep-seated interest in the subject that leads some to decide to take professional training or even an agricultural sciences degree. As part of efforts to develop a university degree network, contact was established with the Ehlanzeni Agricultural College in Dayzenzai as well as the University of Mbombela.





2. Technical Support

This area focuses on the fencing-in of plant crops that have been cultivated in the gardens in every centre, in order to protect them and to grow fresh vegetables on site to ensure food security. These gardens also act as a model for other people in the area. Given that the region's climate ranges between seasonally humid subtropical and tropical conditions, and that between April and September there is no precipitation, and that the bored well is also not available, the process of water harvesting contributes significantly to garden irrigation at the centres. Water tanks can be purchased and installed thanks to project donations. Installing the roof guttering is also made possible. The collected water ensures that the gardens remain irrigated.

3. Leisure Equipment

The vast majority of Centre children have been orphaned or abandoned by their parents. Sport and recreational options are very limited. This is why every year students from the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences organise events such as football and basketball tournaments, and put together see-saws and swings – much to the delight of the children. The state-run schools offer nothing in the way of sport or music lessons.



4. Miscellaneous

A small library was built at the Centre in Chweni in 2014. In 2017, thanks to resources provided by Engagement Global and the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences, a loan library was established in Cho Cho Cho.

A calm learning atmosphere permeates the solid brick building, offering students a pleasant learning environment, especially before their examinations. Many of the available books come from private donations. Larger water tanks are planned to be installed for water harvesting in future, since during the heavy rains the large run-off cannot be captured by the tanks currently available.

The absence of municipal refuse collection continues to be a problem for all Centres. Any waste is simply burnt in trenches that have been dug on the Centre grounds.

The organisation of refuse collection and separation services is planned for the future. The creation of a mobile clinic is also envisaged to offer better healthcare to the region's children and adults. This would allow medicine to be distributed, medical assistance to be provided locally, and a nurse to be on hand offering helpful advice.



PROJECT

Farmers' Foundations in Mpumalanga, South Africa

Background

Since 2006 the South Africa Forum NRW has facilitated collaboration between the Department of Agriculture at the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences, represented by Prof. Dr. Thomas Weyer, and the project partner Johann Engelbrecht, Filter Farms, Mkhondo in Mpumalanga. Significant time and effort was dedicated to supporting the project "Thol'ulwazi Thol'impilo", which shouldered responsibility for combating AIDS/HIV in rural regions, and educating people of its disastrous consequences. In the first ten years of the project and thanks to the use of so-called mobile clinics, several of which were donated by the German federal state of NRW, 50,000 people could be reached. This success translates into longer lifetimes for those infected, and an improved life perspective. 2016 marked the dawn of the "Farmers' Foundations" project in collaboration with Johann Engelbrecht, which was set up on August 3, 2017 in Moolman.

Objective

Establish a farm academy with the aim of providing young South Africans living in the Moolman/Mkhondo region with agricultural management training. The skills and insight gained here should enable the growth of a subsistence economy, which over time would also facilitate commercial expansion. The project is twofold in that it serves to create food security and promote rural development in a peripheral region in South Africa with high unemployment.



Foundations and concept

There are two key work areas on an area spanning 7 ha in Moolman. Vegetable gardens have already been developed here, where leaf beet, white cabbage, beetroot, leeks, onions, beans, peas and maize have all been cultivated. Furthermore, strawberries and other produce including citrus fruits and mangoes – as well as nuts – have all been cultivated in accordance with certain ecological criteria, i.e. without synthetic crop protection and soil fertilisation. The farm's own compost serves as the soil's nutrient base. The so-called "Bela-Bela" principle is applied when working on large expanses of ground. Bela-Bela is an approach to organic life-cycle management in Africa. Using a rotation and portioning system, free range pigs and chickens help prepare the ground. Once the animals have left the area, new plants can grow from the leftover seeds from the food waste fed to the animals, which then later serve as a feed source during a cyclical rotation. Alternatively, vegetables can also be cultivated on the deserted ground, once the soil has been enriched with nutrients deposited by the animals. The pork, chicken, eggs and vegetables are all used.





Educational offer

The project is aimed at all individuals looking to gain access to rural land and agriculture, to let them better provide for themselves with foodstuffs or establish a commercial foothold in crop cultivation later on. This could entail, for example, vegetable boxes or the sale of meat, once several animals are ready for slaughter. Eggs could also be sold. The project is being implemented in a structurally weak region with a high AIDS/HIV infection rate and widespread diabetes mellitus. Unemployment has far surpassed 50%. Agriculture offers an excellent opportunity to enable sustainable living and improve the availability of nutritional food sources.



Implementation

The project is permanently monitored by the South African farmer Johann Engelbrecht. The young Pastor Shabangu is tasked with working at local level to ensure the transfer into the communities. The South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences is offering initial assistance by setting up teaching facilities with the help of volunteers, who spend at least three months a year working there. Later on – and after everything has been successfully set up – students will also be tasked with teaching the course content. Participatory efforts from Germany are supervised and headed up by Prof. Dr. Thomas Weyer, who also bears responsibility for preparing students for their international deployment.





Prof. Dr. Thomas Weyer, Pastor Sibusiso Shabangu, students at the South Westphalia University of Applied Sciences and Johann Engelbrecht (f.l.t.r.)

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