

LEPHEPHANE – COMMUNITY ACTION TO HARNESS DELIVERY

Building a strong relationship with the local municipality has been one of the key factors in the Community Work Programme's ability to improve life for the people of Lephephane.

Since the Community Work Programme (CWP) first began in July 2009, it has created 1 600 part-time positions, resulting in a real improvement in people's lives. Building on this, a council resolution that will integrate the CWP into the Greater Tzaneen Municipality (GTM) will mean that the people of Lephephane have ongoing access to local skills and services.

Almost 80% of households within the Gtm live in 125 rural villages surrounding the town of Tzaneen and Nkowankowa township in Limpopo province. Lephephane is one of the more remote villages, 20 kilometers east of Tzaneen, in the foothills of the Northern Drakensberg mountains. It is historically poor and marginalised, home to about 40 000 people, most of whom are under the age of 35 years. Distances are long, jobs are scarce and infrastructure scant. Subsistence farming provides some means of support for those who are not working on the region's commercial farms.

Life in Lephephane is characterised by unemployment, a lack of transport infrastructure, and limited access to medical and social welfare resources. Over the past two years the CWP has gone some way in changing that. Extending into neighbouring villages like Kujwana, Thabina and Mhlaba Cross, the CWP's work has been a multi-sectoral mix of activities ranging from maintenance and environmental services to home-based medical care and social interventions on behalf of poor and vulnerable households.

The CWP has created food gardens, community parks and communal gardens. It has rallied communities to clean up villages, clear roadsides, fix potholes and improve roads. It has built churches, provided housing for the poorest of poor, and assisted people in getting ID books and birth certificates. It has helped people with HIV/AIDS to get treatment, fed people, and it has helped children get admitted to schools.

"The CWP's strength is that it crosses over every part of life – education, social welfare, health, transport and safety," says Joshua Nkgapele, who is

co-manger of CWP Lephephane together with Simon Matholi. "And the reason for this strength is that the CWP is built on partnerships. Since we started we have forged relationships with the municipality, the local police, provincial government, and various departments like Home Affairs, Health, Social Development and Agriculture."

The CWP partnership with the Greater Tzaneen Municipality has been especially important, says Nkgapele. "Building a relationship with the municipality was initially difficult because their offices are so far away. But we managed to organise an initial meeting and a letter of support, which we then had to turn into action."

Six months later, the first partnership with the Greater Tzaneen Municipality was the re-surfacing of a road at Lephephane. This year, the municipality is building a new road between Lephephane and Thabina villages, and has helped out on different CWP projects ranging from the provision of lashers for road clearing in Mhlaba Cross, to the grading of land for new houses and churches in Kujwana and Thabina. The municipality has also helped with social welfare issues, and along with social workers the CWP has been able to help families gain access to social grants, and get IDs and birth certificates.

"When the CWP is integrated into the GTM" says Nkgapele, "it will make the relationship permanent and secure. How it works at the moment is that the municipality is represented at our local CWP Reference Committee, which is made up of the community, councilors and tribal chiefs, respected leaders, and this where we identify needs and projects. Then we attend monthly meetings at the GTM, so that our needs are heard there. We also have a good relationship with the local economic development structures within the municipality".

This spirit of partnership underlies all CWP projects in Lephephane and the surrounding area. "Last year we had a successful Sports Against Crime event," says Mathole. "This saw us partner with communities, the



Changing perceptions about growing food

“I love gardening and agriculture with all my heart,” says Dollen Ndove. “Ever since I was a child I have been interested in growing things”.

Dollen, who is 34 years old, is the site co-ordinator at the CWP food garden at Mathlari High School in Mhlaba Cross, a rural village about 15 kms from Tzaneen. Dollen applied for the CWP project at the beginning of last year and was trained in vegetable gardening. She regularly attends training courses and works alongside the local department of agriculture’s Young Agricultural Rural Development (YARD) project. “I feel empowered now”, she says, “I have knowledge and skills. My dream is to expand the food garden, establish a nursery, create a greenhouse and teach people about food security.”



There has been a “big improvement” at the high school since the food garden was established, says Dollen. The Mathlari High School garden feeds not only the learners at the school, but children in nearby crèches and poor and vulnerable households. Food gardens have been a major part of CWP’s work she says, almost every school has one now, although water supply remains a problem. Dollen manages a team of 32 people, mainly women, who spread out their work days so that the garden is tended daily. “That’s what gardens need”, says Dollen. “We use organic farming and grow spinach, tomato, pepper, carrots, Swiss chard, beetroot.”

“The food garden has taught learners about the importance of good nutrition, increased their awareness of food production, and given them practical knowledge. It’s also been important for younger people to change their perception about farming, which is that it is the work of old people”. Dollen is also passionate about environmental issues, and aims to educate people about sustainable practices in agriculture. One of her goals is to establish an indigenous tree nursery so that the appropriate trees can be planted. She also aims to build a greenhouse nursery so that she can grow vegetable seedlings to sell to the community and encourage them to grow their own food. “There is a strong knowledge base in the area” she says, “many people here have worked on farms or been involved in subsistence farming, and together with the local department of agriculture, we can harness that and add further training and skills.”

municipality, the police, the traffic cops, the churches and schools to raise awareness and bring down crime. We ran a Puza Wise campaign in the shebeens where we spoke about responsible drinking and the dangers of under-age drinking. We got the Ritavi police station to patrol crime hotspots, we got the traffic department to help with school road patrols and crossings, and to talk to the kids about road safety. It’s turned into an ongoing relationship and has made a big difference to people’s sense of security”.

At Mathlari High School in Mhlaba Cross village, the CWP has rallied learners in a clean-up campaign, in partnership with the GTM, which provided rubbish bags, refuse removal and a talk on the importance of a clean green environment. The local department of agriculture has also been important in the CWP’s work. It organised workshops that trained 32 people, mainly women, to establish and tend the CWP food garden, which feeds Mathlari High School learners, nearby crèches and poor and vulnerable households.

In Lephephane the CWP also created a food garden at the Leseka Primary School, which the headmaster

says has resulted in better nutrition for learners and improved performance. Down the road from the school, the CWP has helped expand a community food garden, which also provides food for local crèches and vulnerable households. Here too, the local department of agriculture has run training workshops and helps with skills and resources.

In nearby Thabina village, the CWP is involved in the building of two new houses for poor families living in one room shacks. In both cases, the municipality graded the land and a local business donated the window and door frames and roofing. In Kujwana village, a team of more than 20 CWP workers is busy building a new church that will play a central role in Kujwana village’s social and spiritual life. Local business has donated building materials and social workers from the GTM assist in the church’s Drop-In Centre, where food is provided for 75 poor schoolchildren every day during the week.

“Our biggest challenge remains resources,” says Nkgapele, “but people are beginning to understand how the CWP works and how it can benefit them.”

This profile is part of a series that looks at local innovation in the South African government’s Community Work Programme (CWP). It was produced by Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) for the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG). For more information about the CWP go to www.cogta.gov.za/cwp.