

ABALIMI BEZEKHAYA – THE FOOD BASKET THAT KEEPS ON GIVING IN KHAYELITSHA



The community of Khayelitsha have lauded the services and products provided by Abalimi Bezekhaya, a nonprofit organisation established in 1982. The organisation combats poverty by growing food sustainably, using organic methods. It furthermore assists community members to set up home and community gardens whilst providing support in production planning, soil infrastructure, planning harvests, access to seeds and seedlings, vegetable transportation and financial services to be able to run urban micro farms.

“I grew up and live in Khayelitsha. Four years ago, I googled a nursery close to my home and Abalimi Bezekhaya popped up. I have been buying here since! The products are fresh and the service is great – I love that all their produce is organic too. In the past, I used to travel to Somerset-West to buy seedlings. I now save on transport and get the products I need right at my doorstep. Their compost and fertiliser are great for the soil and I have a healthy and productive garden at home. Gardening is an activity I now enjoy very much”, says Mrs Alice Minnie.

The organisation began as a greenery project in response to the lack of trees in Khayelitsha at the time. Urban farmers saw the potential to generate income growing food crops from household food gardens, supported by Abalimi Bezekhaya. Today, Abalimi Bezekhaya maintain 52 community gardens and over 3000 household gardens feeding families and generating income.

Ms Babalwa Mpayipeli, the Project Manager at Abalimi said, “We have now even established a market for our home farmers at Harvest of Hope (HOH). HOH markets and sells the vegetables on behalf of the farmers within all our townships, from Khayelitsha through to Nyanga.

That way our farmers not only have enough to eat but the surplus can be sold for an income.” She further explained that the crops are grown according to a demand seasonal plan, in that way they are growing the vegetables and herbs that are in demand. This ensures consistent generation of income.

“We provide training at very affordable rates thanks to our contributors, who fund and subsidise the trainings and start up food garden packs,” she says. One such contributor is the National Development Agency (NDA), a poverty eradication agency of government, who have funded us over a period. Recently, the funding of R311 623,57 has supported 5 community gardens in Khayelitsha to improve their sustainability through increasing productivity and income through sales. This has benefited the livelihoods of 32 farmers.

At an oversight visit to the project the Department of Social Development’s Acting Director General, Mr Peter Netshipale, commented: “We are pleased to see the passion displayed by the organisation, its beneficiaries and what they have managed to achieve with the funds provided to them by government. The NDA grants that are intended for development”.

“The NDA funding model supports organisations with the capability to manage community development projects that lead to job creation and income generation opportunities. Organisations like Abalimi Bezekhaya and communities are already doing the work, our role is to contribute to their growth and sustainability,” says Mr Thabani Buthelezi, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the NDA.

Another customer who purchased a wheelbarrow of plants, vegetables and herbs says she relies on Abalimi to sustain her garden at the beginning of

every year from which she provides fresh produce for her home.

Over the years, Abalimi has also become a beacon of hope for students who need practical skills in various agricultural fields including Agronomy, Food Production and Soil Science courses. Asinathi Ntsondwa, holds an advanced Diploma in Horticulture from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). She began her 2-year Graduate Programme, arranged by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, in 2023 and is due to finish this year at Abalimi.

Another graduate, Sinovuyo Sobopha, who studied Agronomy says, “I did not know anything when I arrived here, I have now learnt so much including growing organic vegetables. I admire this organisation. Not only do they assist us, but they also do a phenomenal job of producing farming entrepreneurs in townships at grassroots level. It is incredible to watch the growth of the farmers from the time they first receive their training. They also source funds for underprivileged farmers giving them a lease on life. This has been rewarding to experience”.

Abalimi also partakes in international exchange programmes with countries like Germany, bringing in students to gain experience including learning about how crops grow in different climates and how to integrate plants and gardens into communities.

The project demonstrates that investing in the production of food crops has the potential to contribute to the eradication of poverty. It also demonstrates the importance of nonprofit organisations working in partnership with government. This model aligns with the NDA’s integrated, collaborative approach to development.

Say “No” to Gender Based Violence #Kwanele