

Crime Prevention, Land And Food Security

Since the beginning of the lockdown in South Africa, -while the main issue is the pandemic, there has been a buzz around the food crisis. This has made the government initiate things such as the Social Relief of Distress Grant to alleviate the pressure that the lockdown has had on livelihoods. However, putting the pandemic aside, the issues that are being raised have existed for decades and are now being brought to the surface, including reports of corruption in the food distribution programme.

The people of Sebokeng Zone 12, a township located 40 kilometers South of Johannesburg, have always been aware of the poor conditions in the community and the crime that comes with it. The Zone 12 Crime Prevention Committee was formed in 2016 by the community to respond to the rising crime. The Committee has done well to reduce the level of crime in the community but they are now also looking to address its main causes and to stop treating the symptoms.

“We cannot continue to chase and beat the youth every time they steal something because they are hungry,” says Zwelakhe Gumbi, an activist and elder in the community. “It is time that we focus on the solutions. The youth are hungry and we have a responsibility to feed them as parents but it is hard. Many of us are unemployed and we cannot afford to buy groceries for them. Instead, we will create a food garden that will help to feed them when they are hungry. Through this they will learn to grow their own food and feed themselves, without robbing anyone or stealing.” said Gumbi.

This success comes after a long struggle to obtain a piece of land that can be used for a food garden. The space is located at the old Ntabankulu Primary School, now a multi-purpose centre that serves the community. The School was closed down due to poor administration and the low numbers of learners attending the school. The Committee has already started cleaning and fencing the area and plans to meet the community, not only to share the news but to stress the fact that the food garden is a community project and belongs to the community. The community must therefore participate and contribute to use the space to feed, develop and transform themselves. “This is a huge win for the community of Zone 12, and the beginning of many great things in Sebokeng.” said Gumbi, who leads the Committee.

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