

Release date: 7 May 2020

## **Covid 19 lockdown: Lessons emerging from Waterdal**

By Mduduzi Tshabalala

Since the national lockdown began, many people face severe hunger as they struggle to make ends meet. So even though the food supply chain has not been affected according to Mrs. Thoko Didiza (Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development), many in our community are struggling to put food on the table.

Serapeng sa Basadi is a women-led organisation that seeks to promote food security in communities in the Sebokeng area in Gauteng. *Karibu!* spoke to Mamosweu Tsoabi, one of the leaders of this organisation. “The COVID-19 lockdown made people realise that most of the things we invested in were not that important.” Tsoabi said. “Only now do we realise how much we neglected things that matter the most. We got used to depending on the grid. We get our food from the supermarkets instead of producing our own. We get our energy from ESKOM instead of producing our own renewable energy. All this costs us money, and to get that money we need to work. Now that we’re in lockdown, we can’t go to work and there is no money. This means we have to starve and stay in the dark. We can’t afford to buy food and electricity”.

Tsoabi and the Serapeng sa Basadi team are working hard to fulfill their goals, and the COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed for them the importance of their work for the community. “In Waterdal, Serapeng sa Basadi project donated winter vegetable seeds to 50 out of 75 households, Many people in Waterdal realised that they have only their land left,” she says, emphasising the issue of self employment to be self sufficient as the only option they have. “People started by removing their lawns. Then we came and demonstrated how to design their food gardens. This is to promote agricultural villages where each household will be able to produce their own vegetables. On 17 April 2020, the Sebokeng community asked the Serapeng sa Basadi team to transfer plant production skills to those who started. This will also address the issue of movement during lockdown. People will have their food garden in their yards, so this will reduce traveling for food. This will also address the issue of unemployment since people won’t have to leave their homes to seek employment”, she said.

“Serapeng sa Basadi’s long term goal is to establish a market and sustain our village,” Tsoabi said. “We do not depend much on the Department of Agriculture as our experience with them is that things take forever, and we did not want to create unnecessary hope in our community. With this project, we aim to raise a culture of independence where people will build their skills, and have the confidence in their ability to do for themselves.”

With regards to the relief fund announced by Minister Didiza in her press conference, Tsoabi said, “We rely best on NGO support work, and through the Horticulture Network platforms we have been exposed to, we have been able to survive thus far.”

*This article was submitted on 24 April 2020. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online ([www.Karibu.org.za](http://www.Karibu.org.za)), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.*