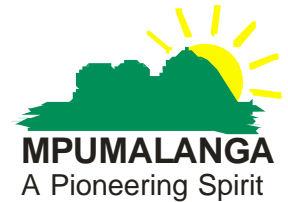




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Department:  
Agriculture, Rural Development  
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**MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**



## **SCHOOL TO PRODUCE ITS OWN FRESH VEGETABLES**

In an effort to encourage learners and communities to take care of their environment and livelihood, the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration (Dardla) has acted steadily to reintroduce the Junior LandCare programme in schools to promote a healthy environment, food security and skills development.

It is estimated that the loss of topsoil in South Africa was approximately 400 million tons per annum. It is believed that the Mpumalanga province is no exception, which was a result of many factors including the climate change and incorrect use of natural resources.

The alarming rate of soil erosion and large-scale degradation in the province has prompted the Dardla, led by the HOD Ms. Nelisiwe Sithole to visit schools taken up under Junior LandCare programme to assess the progress made through the programme.

Following several visits by the HOD to schools in January this year, the department has successfully launched the Junior LandCare Programme at Sindzawonye Primary School on the 09 March 2013. The Coordinator for Junior LandCare programme at Mbombela Municipality organised this informative gathering. Ms Murhandziwani Shivambu said the programme was about encouraging and inspiring young people and parents to play an active role in ensuring the safe future of their environment. During the event representatives from different stakeholders presented on various topics that gave lessons on how to take care of natural resources and promote a healthy style of living. The learners also kept the group on their toes when reciting poems on the role the resources play in lives.

In his opening remarks, Sindzawonye Primary School principal Mr. AM Mabuza explained that the department introduced the programme at the school in 2007 to 2008, but was only launched officially on the day. He said he is expecting learners to take valuable lessons from it and be responsible for their safety and healthy environment. He also stated that the school has benefitted from the programme, with water tanks that were put up in the school, also received horse pipes and other gardening tools, aimed to identify whether the school could be able to start up a vegetable garden.

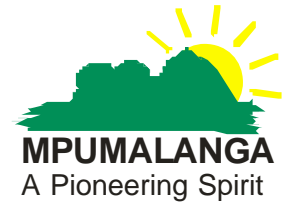
He mentioned that four unemployed parents had been requested to volunteer and assist in the programme to start up food gardens, and they would be receiving a stipend. Mr. Mabuza further indicated that the school was experiencing water problems, and appealed to the department to also assist his school with rainwater harvesting equipment as part of trying to sustain the programme.

In Mpumalanga, 18 schools were actively involved in the Junior LandCare programme, and have begun erecting fence, food gardens, growing trees, fruit and vegetables and other



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plants improving their health, nutrition and that of their neighboring disadvantaged communities.

Addressing the gathering, Department of Education's Sikhulile Circuit Manager Mr. SE Ngobeni said they received the programme with both hands and they strongly believe that the school would learn from it and set an example for other schools. Mr. Ngobeni further added that as the school was part of the school nutrition programme, the Junior LandCare programme would assist it to produce its own fresh vegetables. He appealed to parents to participate effectively and support their children to make the programme work. "This is a great initiative by the department, let's work together and support it. Our learners are learning to manage our natural resources in a sustainable way". said Ngobeni.