

The Oaks Itireleng Care Group Irrigation Project

Limpopo, South Africa

Chapter SACRAMENTO VALLEY PROFESSION CHAPTER

Background

Itireleng Care group is a community farming project based at The Oaks Village in Maruleng Municipality of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Itireleng was started by a group of women in 1996 at The Oaks Clinic. This was after they identified a growing number of children and adults suffering from the effects of poverty, hunger and malnutrition in The Oaks and neighboring communities. The women in the group farm seasonal crops and vegetables including: spinach, tomatoes, beet root, cabbage, morogo, butter nut squash, peppers, onions, and paw paws. The crops are then harvested and given to The Oaks Clinic to feed those suffering from AIDS and TB. The project is currently providing vegetables and fruits for 23 families identified by The Oaks clinic.



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The Need

The Oaks Itireleng care group (TOICG) currently farms 5 hectares. They have access to 3 additional hectares of land and would like to expand the project so that they can invite additional women to join the co-operative and so that they can provide more food resources to those in need. They are struggling to keep the current fields productive due to a weak irrigation system.

Despite being within close proximity to a river that flows year round, TOICG has struggled to supply their fields with enough water to keep them productive. The fields are currently supplied with water from a bore hole and water from a nearby farm. This has not provided enough water and plans to expand the project can not be executed until an adequate and reliable supply of water is secured. TOICG is a five minute walk from the river but they do not have the ability to use this water to irrigate the fields.

Currently they pump water from the bore hole and distribute it to the crops through hose pipe placed in the irrigation ditches. The hose pipe must be moved from section to section in order to irrigate. This system is time consuming and fails to provide enough water to the crops. During the dry season, which is most of the year, there is not enough water from the bore hole to keep the fields productive and farming efforts have to be halted. The large scale farms nearby, which have irrigation systems that tap into the river water, remain productive year

round. They have attempted to store water in a tank to supply the fields but this has not provided enough water. TOICG wants to improve their farming productivity and expand their community garden by developing an improved irrigation system.

The garden is located close to a river and the group would like to start pumping water from the river to irrigate the fields. The project would require the development of an irrigation plan for 8 hectares of land. The group would like to install a pump to move water from the river to the fields and a reservoir to store water.

Beneficiary Information The co-op is currently providing vegetables and fruits for families that reside in The Oaks and Finale, a small community 6km from The Oaks. Surplus crops are sold to the community at stands in the market place. The revenue from the sales of the crops goes to support the families of the 9 women and 1 man involved in the project in the community. By improving the irrigation system they hope to expand the fields to provide food for an additional 40 families, including families in The Willows, a village 6km from The Oaks, and to employ an additional 10 women from the community. Successful implementation of this project will impact 2000-3000 people in The Oaks, Finale, and The Willows.