

# THE ATAMELANG

## COOPERATIVE



The small rural village of Tweefontein in the Free State could be missed in a blink of an eye if you drive past en route from Thaba Nchu 39km away and Bloemfontein which is approximately 120km away.<sup>1</sup> The village is just over 50 years old and is based on Trust land which belongs to the Free State government. Most of the houses in the village are built with stones. At the entrance to the village is a small pond which is used by animals for drinking water especially during the summer rains. There are also tall trees and a small graveyard on the right side of the village. There is an imposing stone hill at the rear end of the village, overlooking three stone churches, the oldest being the Roman Catholic Church. Further on is the village's only school Poonyane Primary. The last census in 2011 recorded the population of Tweefontein as 247, most of whom are seSotho speakers (79,35%).<sup>2</sup>

The Atamelang Co-operative is an emerging local development agency based in Tweefontein. The organisation was started by community members in response to unemployment, food shortages and the spread of HIV/Aids in the village. The co-operative encourages local youth to participate in their food garden project to foster an interest in subsistence farming and agriculture as possible careers.

The project has just recently been nominated for the Best Emerging Agricultural project in the Free State. They were visited by the provincial minister of Agriculture who gave an undertaking that she would get the Premier of the Free State to visit the project with the aim of funding it. The local Health Clinic is supplied with produce such as spinach, onions and cabbage from their garden. Four households with sick elderly members of the family receive home based care and fresh vegetables from the project. This is in addition to the care and support given to those in the community living with chronic diseases such as HIV/Aids and TB. Between R2 000.00 and R2 500.00 per month is generated from the sale of vegetables from the project.

1. Tweefontein (Main Place, Mangaung / Bloemfontein, South Africa) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location. (2019). Retrieved October 9, 2019, from [https://www.citypopulation.de/en/southafrica/mangaung/499039\\_\\_tweefontein/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/southafrica/mangaung/499039__tweefontein/)
2. Frith, A. (2019). Census 2011: Main Place: Tweefontein. Retrieved October 9, 2019, from <https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/499039>

## FAST FACTS

**NAME:** The Atamelang Cooperative

**LED BY:** Kgoanyape Choane - the current chairperson of the management committee.

**MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY THE COMMUNITY:** Unemployment, poverty and drought

**MAIN ACTIVITIES:** Food security; home-based care

**ADDRESS:** 41 Tweefontein Trust, Thaba Nchu

**CONTACT:** Mmabatho Phandilwe 063 233 4054

# HOW WE TURNED OUR FARMING FAILURES INTO FIELDS OF SUCCESS



Mmabatho Phandilwe - Project leader and founder.



Mmabatho Phandilwe checking the vegetable garden.



Bookie Choane, Sarah Choane and Kgoanyape Choane.



MMABATHO PHANDILWE

**MMABATHO PHANDILWE IS A VEGETABLE FARMER AT ATAMELANG COOPERATIVE. SHE RELATES HOW SHE AND A GROUP OF DETERMINED TWEEFONTEIN WOMEN OVERCAME DROUGHT, ANIMALS EATING CROPS AND STOCK THEFT TO BECOME AN AWARD WINNING AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE.**

I live in a small village called Tweefontein Trust. As you enter our village you come across a river, with blue gum trees growing on its embankments. Above that is an old dilapidated Roman Catholic church. Alongside the church is a school and 138 houses. I am a person who loves church because I love God. I do not talk too much but I like listening to people who talk of things that grow and build you.

My first job was at Vista University as a cleaner but when the contract finished I returned home. That is when I started seeing troubles of poverty because of a lack of employment, with children having nothing at home. A group of women and I decided to do something to feed ourselves, so we started farming in 2007. I knew nothing about farming but I sought and found help from different sectors: the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social Development, SCAT and World Vision. I attended workshops and learnt about farming so that I could get help and support in different ways.

The first person I met at SCAT was Pixie Keteyi in 2012. She came and helped us learn how to work with our community. After that we met SCAT's Programme Director Seth Tladi. He gave us information about different platforms, one of them was about how to work around finances. Our group of women then combined two separate projects to form one project called Atamelang. We help the community with the vegetables we farm. Most importantly we have a soup kitchen once a month for the children that do not have anything at home.

One of the biggest troubles we have encountered is drought when there was no rain for a long period and we were unable to get fresh vegetables. After we met our colleagues from SCAT, we were able to solve this problem. We used to farm using our feet, but now we use a tractor to plough. Water is also no longer a problem as we now have JoJo tanks to store water. Animals used to eat our plants but now we have fences and locked gates to protect our produce.

I have been on a long journey with our farming project. If I remember well it took me five years of failing before I won an agricultural competition and went to represent the Free State province in East London. We were awarded the best emerging agriculture project in the Free State Province. We achieved this with the help of SCAT, World Vision and the departments of Agriculture and Social Development. I am now at the point where I can help others start farming projects of their own. For this, I would like to say thank you to SCAT, there is no word above thank you.



## RE JALA PEO YA BOKAMOSO BA RONA

Ke Mmabatho Phandliwe ke ngwana wa matsibolo wa mme le ntate Phandliwe baneng ba bararo. Ke tswa mo motseng o monyane o bitswang Tweefotein trust e e leng 30km hoya toropong ya Thaba Nchu. Ha o kena ka motse o kopana le molatswana le difate tsa boloukomo, ho na le leralla hodima lona, hona hapele kereke ya kgale e bitswang Roman Catholic le tse ding tse tharo tsa molao. E be sekolo ka thoko ho motse, matlo a teng a kaba 138.

Ke motho ya ratang kereke hobane ke rata Modimo. Ke motho ya senang puo e telele empa ke rata ho mamela batho ba buwang dintho tse ahang. Ke simolotse mosebetsi Vista University ke le mohlwekisi, ha mosebetsi o fela ke ha ke tla kgutlela mo hae. Ke mo ke simolotseng ho bona mathata le tlala ka lebaka la tlhokeho ya mosebetsi le bana ba senang letho malapeng a bona. Yaba ke qala temo ka 2007 le bomme ba bang. Ke ne ke sa tsebe letho ka temo. Ke fumane thuso ho tswa mafapheng a fapafapaneng, mohlala Agriculture, Social Development, SCAT le World Vision. Le ho tsamaya dikopanong tse batho ba rutwang teng (workshops) dithuto tse tsamaelang le kgwebo yaka.

Ke fumane tshehetso ka tsela tse fapaneng mabapi le ntho e ke e etsang. Motho e ke kopaneng le ena pele ho SCAT ke Mme Pixie ka 2012. O fihlile a re thusa hore re ka sebetsa jwang le community ya rona. Ka morao ra kopana le ntate Tladi le ena a fihla a refa tsebo ya hae. Afana ka dithupelo tse fapafapaneng, e nngwe ya tsona ke ho sebetsa ka chelete. Re kopane re le diporojeke tse pedi e leng Mmabatho le Kgoanyape, ra etsa mokgatlo o bitswang Atamelang. Re thusa sechaba sa rona ka merogo e re e jalang haholo maqeku le bana ba senang letho malapeng a bona, re nale supu kitchen e thusang kliniki e motseng wa rona ka dijo ha nngwe mo kgwedding.

Mathata a re neng re kopana le ona haholo ke komello ha pula e le siyo. Lebaka ke hore ha re kgone ho ntsha dikuno tse atlehileng. Pele re kopana le SCAT hone ho le that haholo, re kgonne ho bona tsela ha e fihla ho rona. Re ne re lema ka maoto empa hona jwale re tseba ho kenya terekere hore e leme. Metsi le o na e ne e le bothata, empa hona joale re na ra thuseha ra fumana tanka tsa dijojo hore re tsebe ho boloka metsi. Le diphoofole di ne di ja dijalo hona jwale re ke ntse fense re kgona ho notlela diheke tsa rona.

Ke tsamaile leeto le letelele ke ntse ke kena ditlhodisanong tsa temo, ha ke hopola hantle ke nkile dilemo tse hlano ke ntse ke feila, sa botshelela ke ha ke hlola ke be ke le emela provinsi ya Free State ko East London ka thuso ya mafapha a ke seng ke a boletes e leng SCAT, Agriculture, Social Development and World vision.

Ke ithutle hore ho mamella nthong ye onang le tumelo ho yona o ka kgona, ha fela o na le boitshepo. Hona jwale ke ikutlwa ke le mafofolo ho fana ka thupelo ho ba batlang tsebo ka temo. Ya bofelo taba ke rata ho leboha SCAT ka workshop e na le mme ya neng a re ruta o ne a re ruta ka tsela e bobebe hore re utlwisise ntho ye a buwang ka yona. Ke rata ho re ke ya leboha haholo ho feta lentswe teboho.