

ON THE FRONT LINES



Mantombi Madondo: A Guiding Light in Free State

Add up "green fingers" and a compassionate spirit, and you have Mantombi Madona, INMED's co-ordinator in the Free State.

In a few years, this feisty farmer has gone from tending a small community vegetable patch in Bloemfontein to managing three disabled farming co-ops – in Wesselsbron, Hennenman and Kroonstad – that produce enough tomatoes and lettuce to sustain nearby communities, and even turn a small profit.

"I am a farm girl. My parents still live on a farm. That's why I have a love and a passion for farming. After matric, I told myself that I want to study agriculture, because in my mind, no farmer, no future," she says.

Mantombi studied agriculture at Glen Agricultural College in Bloemfontein in 2009, and graduated in 2011. She then went on to do a B.Tech in Agricultural Management at Central University of Technology, also in Bloemfontein.

"I was helping with community food gardens, and voluntarily training farmers, when I was introduced to INMED by an office bearer at the Department of Agriculture. I started working for INMED in 2013," she says.

Two years later, however, Mantombi was retrenched due to funding running out. "For a few months afterwards, I worked at the Ya Rona Temo Farming Enterprise (specialists in agricultural services), facilitating theory and practical lessons for farmers. After that, I was busy growing vegetables on 1 hectare of land, supplying local supermarkets and the community," she says.

In 2018, when new funding from USAID came in, Mantombi was immediately re-hired and

appointed the Free State co-ordinator, working with disabled farmers in the three towns where INMED has set up aquaponic farming operations.

“I told myself that I need to build a strong relationship with these three groups in order to achieve good results. I believe the key to the success of these projects is the love, commitment, respect and patience I have for them as disabled people, and they also enjoy working with me,” she says.

Janet Ogilvie, operations manager for INMED SA, says Mantombi is an extraordinary woman who has mentored many in the communities she works in. “She has totally turned the co-ops around, and plays a vital role in the upliftment of these rural communities,” says Ogilvie.



[CLICK HERE to learn more about this programme](#)

Make a Year-end Gift



INMED South Africa is an affiliate of INMED Partnerships for Children, a Charity Navigator 4-Star Charity
NPO 094936 | CIPC Registration 2009/008197/08 | NPC (PBO) Registration 930039125 | VAT 4790286001