

# Seed initiative helps feed poor



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## Unemployed find hope in act of kindness

By DAVID MACGREGOR  
Senior Reporter

**A**N UNEMPLOYED Port Alfred man is on a mission to help poor township people put food on the table by giving them free seeds and advice on how to grow vegetables.

Instead of sitting around waiting for handouts, Minet "Rastar" Nojoko started a community garden project 18 months ago to try and help himself and other struggling households in Nelson Mandela Township (Nemato) to survive.

"I do it because I am sick and tired of lazy people," the 34-year-old father of two told Saturday Dispatch.

Even though the Ndinani Garden Project does not have any sponsorship, this has not stopped Nojoko from helping 50 poor households grow their own food to eat or sell.

"I walk around asking people for donations to buy

seeds and equipment," he explained. "It is very difficult. Some people give you 50c and some give you R50."

What he lacks in funding is overshadowed by Nojoko's enthusiasm as he regularly pounds the pavement in Port Alfred and makes the haul to Grahamstown for the National Arts Festival to try and raise funds for the project.

Although most fob him off as they hurriedly walk by, some people stop and listen, and a few even read the literature he has made about the project, and help out if they can.

To also raise money Nojoko and project members collect paper, cardboard, glass, plastic and tins to sell for recycling.

Nojoko, who grew up on a farm near Grahamstown and was taught from a young age by his father to grow food for the table, said the poor and unemployed had become so marginalised that they no longer had hope that their lives would improve.

"I do this to try and help



**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** Minet 'Rastar' Nojoko helps Nomsa Matshotyana tend to her small vegetable garden in Port Alfred's Nelson Mandela Township  
Picture: DAVID MACGREGOR

people survive by providing them with skills development that will uplift them and

make their lives better. I want to make people self-sufficient so that they can live with dignity and grace."

Only able to help 50 families, Nojoko said more could benefit if he had funding and land to expand.

"My wish is to uplift people, to try take them out of poverty and crime. I got sick and tired of waiting for help after I lost my job so I decided to do something myself."

Nomsa Matshotyana, 48, said she became involved in the project early last year when Rastar was going to houses in her neighbourhood asking if they were interested

in vegetable gardening.

"I said yes and he gave me vegetables and advice on how to grow them. I could not believe someone wanted to help me for free."

Unemployed and with six family members to support, Matshotyana says the R350 child grant she gets does not go far.

"With Rastar's help I am now able to put some food on the table."

Neighbour Sylvia Magawu, 67, said trying to survive on her R1 300 state pension and two child grants her daughter gets was not easy especially when she had to pay monthly rent for her house and school fees.

"If I need money for electricity, I can take spinach or beetroot from my garden and sell it to my neighbours. This project has helped me a lot."

Besides seeds and advice each member is given a black book to record their progress and includes information of sales and budgets.

Nojoko is determined to get more people involved and does not mind how many times people tell him to "voetsek" when he is trying to raise funds.

"I want to see every house with a vegetable garden. It is a good way to reduce poverty and give people hope." — [davidm@dispatch.co.za](mailto:davidm@dispatch.co.za)

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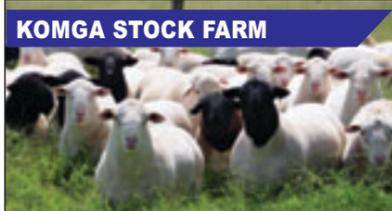
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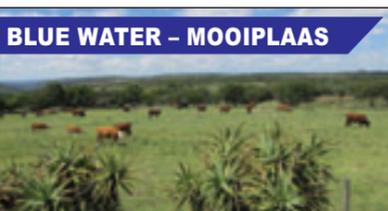
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13 Hectares with no buildings. Undeveloped land.

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#### TAINTON

32 Hectares with a house, dam and ESKOM.

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## Media icon killed

THE last moments of respected media strategist Gordon Patterson's life were captured on video as he was shot in his driveway in a botched robbery.

The global media and marketing professional was shot on Thursday night at his Randpark Ridge home in Johannesburg.

The video, distributed on the internet, shows Patterson and another person arriving in the driveway in a white sports utility car.

As the gates are about to close a man with a gun is seen approaching the driver's door.

Patterson and the other occupant are seen fighting off the attacker. A second attacker arrives and fires a shot.

The occupant of the car runs to Patterson before returning to the vehicle. Patterson is seen walking bent, holding his waist area.

Police spokesperson Tsekiso Mofokeng said police were investigating the attack. — *TMG Digital*