



Katlego Citrus owners Making a Difference

ANNE PRETORIUS

A study conducted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation found that in sub-Saharan Africa agriculture is the most important source of employment for women by a wide margin.

Yet many women who are employed on farms, either in permanent positions or as seasonal labour, face a triple burden. Women are often sole breadwinners, they have to raise children and while working as fruit pickers or in pack houses they worry about the safety of their children.

Stéfan and Anné Pretorius, owners of Katlego Citrus near Marble Hall in the Limpopo Province did not want women who work on their farms to be exposed to these difficulties. In response to this need the couple established Lesedi Day Care (LDC) in 2012. It is a registered non-profit organisation which provides care for 44 farmworker children up to the age of five. The school is open for the children of farm workers in the community, not exclusively for the farmworker children of Katlego Citrus.

The day care facility ensures that working mothers can earn an income and be assured that their young children are safe, fed and receive quality early childhood education in a nurturing environment. "The children are quite content to have their



parents close by in the pack house during our packing season or on the farm in the orchards," Anné said.

Identifying a need in the community

The experience of raising two daughters made Anné and Stéfán more aware of the lack of early childhood development centres in farming communities. "We also realised that many women in the community cannot take up formal employment because they have no one to take care of their young children," she said. If there were more facilities for children single mothers could achieve economic independence to provide for their families.

"We often find that siblings are left looking after their younger brother or sisters. With the young ones at crèche the older siblings can focus on their own school work. We know that the children are safe with us and they are here for most of the day," she said.

Developing a curriculum

At LDC children receive nutritious meals, early childhood development and education, preparation for primary school as well as a warm bath after a busy day of learning and playing. "When we started I wanted to implement the best curriculum possible to ensure that children learn all the skills they need," she said. LDC also entered into a partnership with Monkeynastix, an international fitness and movement educational programme, which runs weekly classes at the school.

LDC's trained teachers develop a relationship with every child and this helps them to quickly identify any developmental delays or health issues. When Ashleigh Malunga (7) started attending LDC in 2015 Anné and the teachers were concerned that he was not participating in class. "We thought the problem was hearing-related but when his hearing was tested at the Whispers Speech and Hearing Centre in Pretoria it emerged that he could hear," she said. He was diagnosed with a motor speech disorder known as Apraxia and although it is a permanent condition LDC staff helped with treatment such as remedial activities.

LDC has also branched out to provide adult education and basic training (ABET) for farmworkers. In South Africa there are about 3,3 million illiterate adults and ABET provides people with an opportunity to complete or improve their basic education. The programme focuses on skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and mathematics. LDC's first group of nine adults completed the ABET programme in 2013 and a new intake of students will start the course in 2017.

Experiencing farm life

As the school is situated on a farm the children have an opportunity to regularly immerse themselves in farm life. Anné and Stéfán think that this is an important part of the educational curriculum as children learn to appreciate nature and can see where their food comes from.

The children frequently go on day trips around the farm to experience different facets of the production process. They visit the pack house to see how fruit is washed, sorted and packed and they can also observe how fruit ripens on the trees. "In season the children get to drink orange juice straight from the land," she said.

LDC also has a vegetable garden specifically for the children where they can plant and look after their own produce. Another 0,55 hectares of land is being prepared for vegetable production. "We will be making this land available to our farmworkers over weekends so that they can grow their own vegetables to supplement their diets or sell for an additional income," she said.

Farmers can bring about social change

She said that farmers can play an important role to help children of farmworkers have access to a quality formal education. "There is a huge problem in rural areas as most parents are illiterate. By providing a service such as Lesedi Day Care, children can attend school and have a better future. We believe that we make a difference to the lives of these children," she said.

Future dreams

"We really believe in the positive change that LDC has and is making in the lives of these farmworker children" says Anné who dreams of growing LDC into a proper crèche and primary school to facilitate the need in the community.

Friends of Lesedi Day Care

A dream like this cannot be realised without the help of like-minded individuals and companies. LDC shares the good news of donations received on their website, most recently LDC successfully applied for funding from the Beeld Children's Fund and Hyper Auto who installed tracking software with video cameras in the vehicle that safely transports children to and from LDC.

Lesedi Day Care wish list:

- Ceiling LDC operates from a warehouse on farm J92. The facility has a very high roof which tends to be quite cold in winter.
- Indoor track Anné wants to build a 10m x 5m track where children can learn about traffic signs and road safety rules. Building materials such as cement, paint, labour, bricks and pallets are needed for this project.
- Contributions towards teacher remuneration During the harvesting season four full-time teachers attend to children and out of season one to two teachers are employed. Katlego Citrus funds all these salaries.

Anyone wanting to help contribute towards this amazing Project, please contact

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