



We are excited to celebrate Heritage Day this month. Otherwise known as National Braai Day, it's a special time for all South Africans to share their culture and the **diversity** of their beliefs and traditions in the wider context of a nation that belongs to all its people. Culture also extends to food, so we have included some health recipes from Dr Sandra Pretorius, our Health In Action Programme Manager.

We are particularly proud of our lead story this month as well as the wonderful interview of Ntswaki Anna Toolo, who participated in a webinar broadcast by USAID recently.

Last but definitely not least, we said a very sad farewell to a close friend and colleague, **Samuel Moselane**, who passed away recently. Samuel has been such a special part of our INMED family over the last couple of years, and we will always remember his incredible commitment and diligent work with our INMED Aquaponics® programme in Kroonstad.

We hope you enjoy reading our September stories and remind you all to please also follow us on **Facebook** and **Instagram** and donate seeds for home gardens to families in need via our **Seeds for Life Campaign**. We appreciate your support!

*Unathi Silhlahla*  
Director of Programmes, INMED South Africa



## Deputy Minister and High-Level Delegation Visit Free State Aquaponics Site

The lives of nearly 100 disabled farmers in the Free State province have been transformed, thanks to the INMED Aquaponics® programme and the dedicated efforts of three thriving farming cooperatives in the area. Each of the cooperatives, made up of primarily women with disabilities and youth, have managed to continue their operations in spite of the COVID-19 lockdown—and have changed the face of subsistence farming.

Our efforts caught the attention of Thembi Siweya, Deputy Minister in the Presidency, who recently visited the Lentsweleng Cooperative in Kroonstad to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the project. She was accompanied by MEC Bulwane, the Executive Council responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Free State, the Executive Mayor of the District, Mayor Phoolo, as well as the Local Mayor and Councillors and some other senior government officials. Sadly Mayor Phoolo passed away this week and we extend our condolences to his family.

“We were so impressed with the site, which produces 4 tons of fish and 7 tons of vegetables annually,” said Ms Siweya. “Using the aquaponics methodology, the growers are able to conserve 90% of water. This initiative is contributing to food security in the region and we really would like to see this model replicated in other areas of the country.”



Unathi Sihlahla, Programme Director of INMED South Africa, arranged for a special crop planting activity for the delegation and noted that he, as well as the project beneficiaries, really welcomed the visit. “The project has really changed the lives of people living in the area. Subsistence farmers with disabilities here were struggling even to produce enough vegetables for themselves,” he said. “Today, they are producing enough vegetables not only for themselves, but for their communities as well at an affordable price while turning a profit.”

Sihlahla added that the senior delegation members were literally blown away with how the INMED Aquaponics® system works—especially its simplicity and durability. “There is no doubt that this climate-smart agriculture solution can be rolled out to so many struggling areas, and we are delighted over a possible collaboration with the Government,” said Sihlahla. “We need Government support if we are to upscale aquaponics across the country, including schools, and to expand our training for extension officers and communities. We also appreciate the offer of additional Government support to address some of the challenges that were raised by cooperative members.”

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## Showcasing Our Unique and Diverse Cultures





Mantombi wearing traditional Zulu attire for women



Emma wearing a modern Xhosa wedding dress



Amanda shows off her traditional Zulu jewelry



Menzi sporting a Zulu headband worn by married men



Janet wears her ancestral Scottish tartan plaid



Sandra taps into her Norse heritage



Unathi wears Xhosa beadwork with West African colors

What we wear tells people of our unique identity, heritage and culture. Our many different styles and colours weave a beautiful tapestry of South African diversity and unity. As we celebrate Heritage Day on September 24, our INMED South Africa staff shares their own traditional garb.

**Project Coordinator Mantombi Madona** (top left) is wearing traditional Zulu attire for women. It is normally worn during weddings and family gatherings.

**Health in Action Programme Facilitator Emma Mufamadi** (center) wears a modern Xhosa wedding dress, while her sister and niece wear the traditional Xhosa dresses (imibaco) for young girls. Emma's sister (right) also decorated her face with imicopozo (dots made with calamine), which is meant to enhance a woman's beauty.

**Administrative Assistant Amanda Xulu** (top right) is Zulu, the largest ethnic group in South Africa. "Traditional clothing is an important part of our culture," says Amanda. "It's colourful and bright, and it usually includes beautiful beadwork for women and children. In my picture I'm wearing my favorite two pieces of our traditional jewellery, the necklace and the matching bracelet."

**Menzi Khumalo** (middle left) is also Zulu. He's wearing a traditional headband reserved for married men. Unlike the leopard skin headbands worn by dignitaries, Menzi's is fairly plain. "Leopard skin is worn only by the royal family, izinduna (generals) and chiefs," he explains. "The amount of leopard skin worn depends the status of the person. The king, for example, may wear leopard skin as he wishes, while a chief may be entitled to wear only a headband."

**Health In Action Programme Manager Dr Sandra Pretorius** (bottom left) is a South African with Norse origins—84% from Norway and Sweden and 16% from Sierra Leone and Western Africa.

**INMED South Africa Programmes Director Unathi Sihlahla** (bottom center) is wearing the beadwork synonymous to the Xhosa culture. "Usually when attending traditional ceremonies, men would just wear their beads only on top, and in the olden days a person's social status and identity could be read through their beadwork," he explains. "I've combined the beads with a shirt that has west African colors. I always say I'm an African first."

**Operations Manager Janet Ogilvie**'s ancestors are Scottish, but her family has been in Africa since the 1700s. She is wearing a waistcoat made of tartan and a tartan mask.

And what's a Heritage Day celebration without a good braai?! [CLICK HERE](#) for some delicious healthy recipes and tips for your Heritage Day braai and summertime festivities.

We really enjoy sharing our cultures and celebrating our diversity. Share your heritage with us on our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages—and let us know how you like Sandra's tips and recipes. We'd love to hear from you!

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## Shining a Spotlight on Economic Empowerment for Women with Disabilities



INMED Aquaponics® programme participant Ntswaki Anna Toolo was a featured panelist in a recent discussion hosted by the United States for International Development (USAID) to raise awareness of inclusive development objectives, including women, people living with disabilities, and other marginalized populations.

Toolo is the Chairperson of the Lentsweleng farming cooperative in Kroonstad, Free State, which is a beneficiary of a commercial INMED Aquaponics® system. The programme, funded by USAID, increases opportunities for people with disabilities to strengthen their food security and achieve sustainable livelihoods. Toolo is also the chairperson of the Disabled Women of South Africa in the Free State.



“Living as a woman with a disability is not easy,” said Toolo, citing accessibility as one of the main challenges. “Access to venues, technology and transport are major hurdles that other people don’t realise.”

Panelist, Olwethu Sipuka, an advocate for people living with disabilities and Director of USAID’s YALI Southern Africa Regional Leadership Centre, agreed, stressing it is not the person who is disabled – it is the society that disables the person because of these kind of obstacles that prevent them from becoming active economic participants in the economy.

“We need a more inclusive society that appreciates people living with disabilities and their needs,” he said. “We need to take off our blinkers and ensure attitudes change because the biggest barriers to people with disabilities and their emergence, be it in business, higher education institutions and everywhere else in society, is that of ignorance, because attitude is linked to ignorance.” Toolo, concurred, saying unfortunately there is still a stigma around people living with disabilities, and this hampers their effectiveness in the community.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.



## Support Seeds for Life

Help us facilitate 2,500 backyard gardens for families going hungry in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. For as little as R110, you can provide seeds and training for 1 family via our Seeds for Life campaign.

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more.

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