

# Kids plant the seeds for a better tomorrow

Healthy minds in healthy bodies as pupils tend their own school gardens

BY HELEN GRANGE

The children of Orange Farm have literally reaped the fruits of their labour, winning cash, trees, seedlings, compost and fertiliser for their flourishing school vegetable gardens.

Teachers and pupils of 11 primary schools in the area this week poured into the Orange Farm Multipurpose Centre to celebrate their efforts, part of the Healthy Futures South Africa programme implemented by INMED Partnerships for Children, an international NGO.

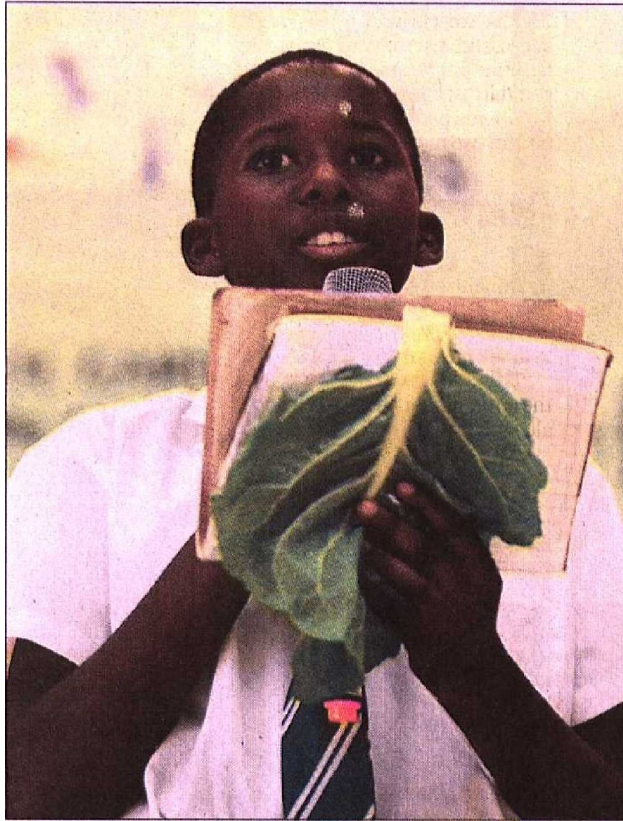
The programme has been running for three years.

In that time, barren patches of land around primary schools have been transformed into gardens full of cabbages, spinach, potatoes, tomatoes and other greens.

In this way, INMED and its partners, including Hope Nutrition and Monsanto Fund, are improving the nutritional status of about 10 600 children aged between five and 14 in the country's largest informal settlement.

At the same time, the children are learning about gardening as well as the benefits of good nutrition, a vital weapon in the community's armoury against HIV/Aids.

The programme, which ends at the end of this year, also works in co-operation with



**ODE TO THE HUMBLE CABBAGE:** Vusi Vukubi, of Stretford Primary School, recites a poem about the benefits of fruit and vegetables.

the school feeding programmes operated by the government and Joint Aid Management, a non-profit humanitarian relief and development organisation.

This week's celebration, which took the form of an entertaining morning of dancing and singing by pupils of 10 of the primary schools, was also attended by Dr Linda Pfeif-

fer, the American founder of INMED Partnerships for Children.

"As INMED is an international NGO, I travel extensively, and I can tell you that the children of South Africa are among the most beautiful, talented and creative in the world," she said after the rousing performances.

Ethel Zulu, director of the programme in Orange Farm, said the gardens produced enough to feed the children two or three times a week, and they had gained enormous nutritional knowledge in the three years.

"The important thing now is to sustain these gardens, for the various schools to continue buying seedlings and planting," she said.

Prizes went to the three schools with the best gardens.

In third place came Sinqobile Intermediate School (R2 000 and several bags of seedlings and compost).

Second place went to Madume Primary School (R3 000 and bags of seedlings and compost).

The winner was Refallette Primary School, which received R5 000, five fruit trees and several bags of compost and fertiliser.

"I need you to promise that you will look after these trees, to make sure they grow as big and strong as you," Zulu told the children.

