

Nthatsi adapts to climate change with new farming practices in Thaba-Tseka, and calls on policy-makers to take climate action

Research by UN Women shows that women and girls are the most vulnerable population to the impacts of climate change. Nthatsi Lechesa, born and raised in the mountainous district of Thaba-Tseka in Lesotho, is no exception, but having seen the impacts of climate change first hand, she is not only adapting to the challenges, but is also using her knowledge to drive climate and environmental action in the Mountain Kingdom.



Nthatsi, who previously moved to the capital city of Maseru to access better services and employment prospects, now spends most of her time in her family's home village of Majakaneng in Thaba-Tseka after inheriting seven hectares of agricultural land from her mother. She produces a variety of vegetables such as cabbages, spinach, beets, onions, carrots, peas and pumpkins, as well as cultivating fruit trees including peach, pear and apple.

As a farmer in Lesotho, Nthatsi is acutely aware of how the climate is changing, with drought conditions and sporadic rainfall resulting in floods which can destroy whole crops. In response to these challenges, she has adopted a number of adaptive strategies including the construction of a keyhole garden, called a 'lentloane', with raised beds which allow for easy composting and which mitigate against land degradation and erosion. She also uses a technique called double-digging, known as 'cheka-cheka' which accesses deeper and more nutrient rich soil.

As a social entrepreneur, Nthatsi is co-founder of Bokamoso Youth Cooperative Society, a youth-led organisation established in 2015 by a group of young people in Thaba-Tseka. The cooperative aims to create job opportunities for young people through processing and

recycling while addressing climate and environmental issues. She also hosts her workshops for young people in the local area, to equip them with skills they can apply to mitigate the impacts of climate change. She says, 'I have thus far reached over 500 youth across Thaba-Tseka and have I participated in interviews with the district community radio station, in order to reach a wider range of audiences with these important messages.'

As well as responding to the impacts of climate change, Nthatisi is also passionate about promoting the importance of proper waste management and uses her platforms to discourage littering and burning waste. She says that unmanaged waste has greatly affected her farming business by degrading the land and increasing dependence on fertilizers, as the soil becomes polluted and contaminated with toxins.

Nthatisi's passion for environmental action has even taken her beyond Lesotho's borders, through the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance and the Nairobi Summer School on Climate Justice at Kenyatta University through which she has had opportunities to travel to different parts of Africa, sharing and gaining important knowledge about the climate crisis and learning how to advocate effectively for climate action. Through these experiences she has been inspired to lead a campaign to plant 10,000 trees in Thaba-Tseka in the coming years.

Nthatisi concludes, 'our policy makers should take climate change seriously, as it needs to be addressed and our policies should protect the environment. The public should also be taught about climate change, its causes and how to combat it.'

