

## News

### **The Origins of Thatu** **16th January 2005 *FEATURE***

Margery Povall, born in Johannesburg and now a London resident, developed the idea of Thatu after several return visits to the New South Africa.

Now (officially) retired, Margery's career in the UK had focused on equality issues – especially those concerning women. So when she returned to South Africa after a long absence, it was of course equality issues that dominated her thinking. In this country of such obvious contrast of rich and poor, she was inspired by the efforts of very poor communities to improve their situation.

"I was particularly struck by their need for nutritious food," said Margery. "And I was very impressed by Food and Trees for Africa and what they were doing to support food gardens in communities and schools.

"Good nutrition is of course vital to all under-resourced communities. But in South Africa it has a special resonance. I've learned about the relationship between nutrition and HIV/Aids and how people in developing countries living with HIV can be expected to survive for 15 years even without retroviral drugs. In poorer countries, like South Africa, life expectancy with HIV/Aids is less than five years. The difference appears to be quite simply good nutrition. Extending the lifespan of mothers with HIV is of special importance because the impact extends to their children.

"By channelling some resources from a rich country like Britain, we can make a huge impact and encourage more food gardens and self-help schemes in disadvantaged South African communities.

"So I've gathered together some friends – many with South African connections – and contacted some of the organisations already involved in supporting South African communities. We've now set up a group of trustees – and we'd welcome interest from others, especially those with particular professional skills or an intimate knowledge of poverty in South Africa.

"We've already made a strong link with Food and Trees for Africa, a South African-based charity with excellent connections with South African communities. In the early stages of Thatu, they are helping to ensure that we invest our resources wisely."

So Thatu has just been launched. Already more than £2000 has been raised and Thatu is now almost ready to start its first project with Food and Trees for Africa. Plans are in train to raise £10,000 in its first year.