

SDGs covered by this initiative: **8, 15**



PROACTIVE MINE CLOSURE PLANNING FARM ERHARDTSHOF OFFERS SOLUTIONS BEYOND REHABILITATION

The Otjikoto Mine provides an ideal opportunity for proactive mine closure planning. Through the construction and operation phases, we have been working on rehabilitation activities and developing solutions for post-mining scenarios.

When B2Gold purchased the private farmland holding to develop the Mine, we immediately began creating the Otjikoto Nature Reserve, which we continue to manage. The Reserve is situated adjacent to our mine operation and constitutes a sizable area of 15,000 hectares. The Reserve, which was previously heavily overgrazed by domestic livestock, has been rehabilitated to its natural state – including flora and fauna. The Reserve also includes an extensive Education Centre where approximately a thousand school learners a year attend a wide variety of classes based on the government school curriculum, with an added focus on environment, conservation, sustainable utilization of biological resources, recycling, responsible living, and alternative energies.

The Otjikoto Rehabilitation Nursery is also located on the property, on Farm Erhardtshof. The nursery was initially created in order to grow seedlings and saplings for the revegetation of sites disturbed by mining activity; however, the activities of the nursery have expanded greatly to include additional core functions such as:

- » research that focuses on site-specific approaches to rehabilitation with indigenous species, in collaboration with local and international universities;
- » educating school groups visiting the Otjikoto Nature Reserve on the value of indigenous flora and methods of propagation;
- » the formation of partnerships with institutions such as the Directorate of Forestry and other interested stakeholders; and

- » the establishment of a national commercial nursery that produces indigenous saplings for sale to reforestation projects throughout the country.

Through various trials, the nursery team has managed to grow over 5,000 seedlings that represent 17 indigenous species – a task considered challenging due to the hardiness of the species and difficulty in achieving germination. In 2019, as part of creating awareness amongst employees, the nursery team facilitated initiatives such as the “Plant-A-Seed” campaign, World Environment Day and World Arbor Day, to promote the importance of rehabilitation.

As part of our thinking towards an integrated mine closure solution (see GWPP story on previous page), a horticultural nursery was set up with the intention of producing vegetables commercially. The nursery aims to supply the Otjikoto Nature Reserve, the mine contractors’ camp and the mine canteen with fresh vegetables. The nursery currently cultivates 2,000 plants of five vegetable varieties. The most recent project is the establishment of a fruit orchard, and we aim to market the produce to local stakeholders.

Owing to the substantial groundwater reserves on Farm Erhardtshof, and the fact that the farmland cannot form part of our GWPP project (as it is separated by a major district road), we are also exploring the feasibility of using the land for intensive agricultural production.

Once the above activities achieve success, we plan to share the approaches as a proof of concept for commercial agricultural that can be emulated by communities. B2Gold’s intention is for Farm Erhardtshof to be fully integrated into current and post-closure economic models.

