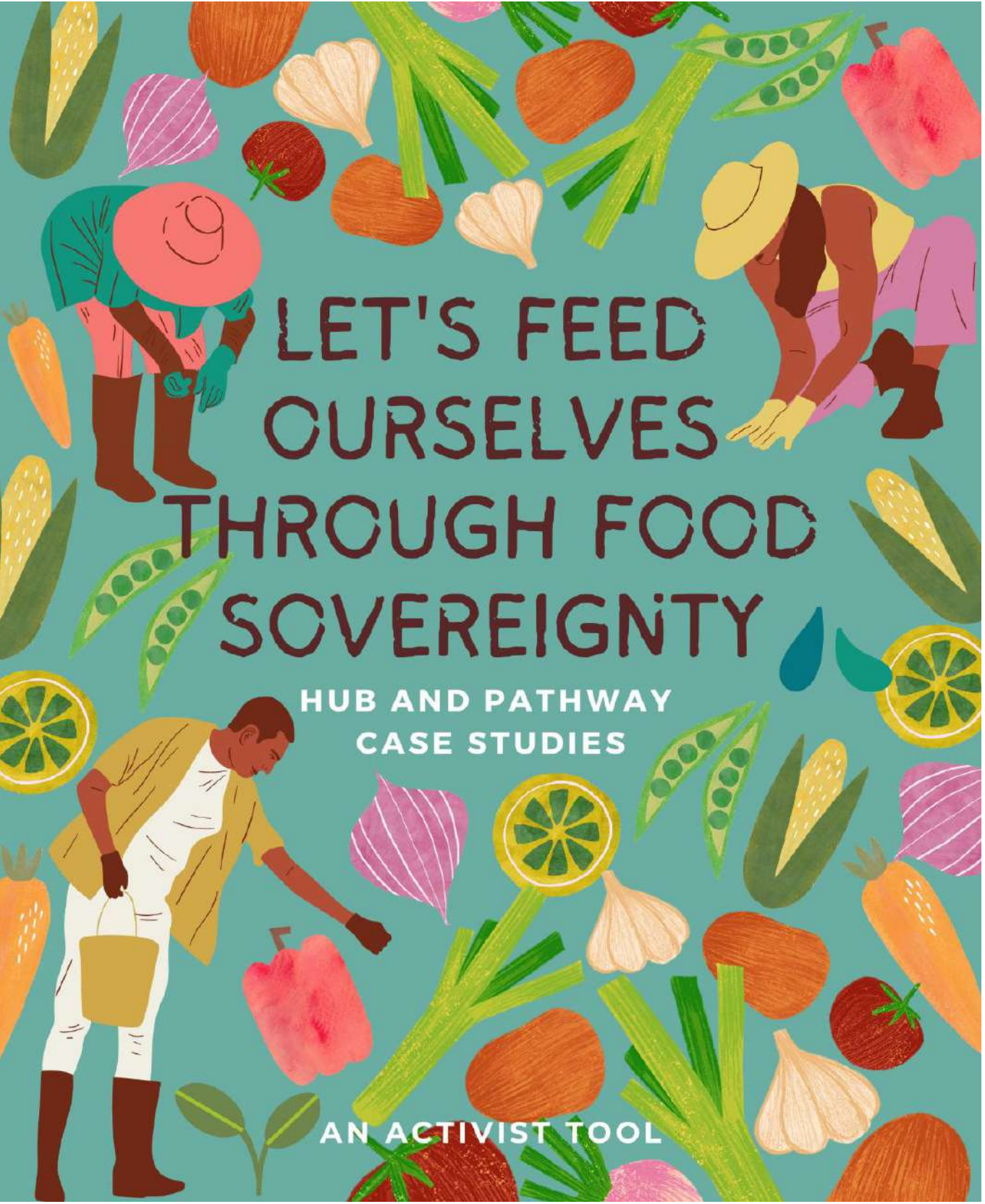
LET'S FEED OURSELVES THROUGH FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
HUB AND PATHWAY CASE STUDIES
AN ACTIVIST TOOL

Let's Feed Ourselves through Food Sovereignty:

Hub and Pathway Case Studies

An Activist Tool

2022

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SAFSC
SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN

CLIMATE JUSTICE CHARTER MOVEMENT

COPAC
CO-OPERATIVE AND POLICY ALTERNATIVE CENTER

Table of Contents

Glossary

Agroecology: A way of farming that does not destroy nature, but instead works with the principles of nature. For example, it uses plants and animal manure to make compost, rather than throwing these materials away or using chemical fertilisers that destroy the soil. It is about building self-reliance, independence and power of those who produce our food, for example, by seed saving, recycling materials, and so on.

Climate Change: The global warming of the earth's temperature caused by all the carbon dioxide that our factories, coal power stations, transport and agriculture put into the atmosphere. This causes changes in weather patterns, as well as extreme events like floods and droughts.

Compost: A mixture of organic matter (dead plants and leaves) that is used as a natural fertiliser for plants.

Eco-cidal practices undermine the conditions that sustain human and non-human life. These practices bring about large scale destruction of humans and ecosystems. More fossil fuel burning or land dispossessions for mining are such examples.

Eco-mobility is the practice of developing and managing local areas, towns and cities that supports practical, zero pollution, and environmentally friendly transport systems. It enables and provides multiple options for safe and effective mobility through walking, cycling, as well as public, affordable, clean energy powered transport systems.

Eco-village is a community where residents share the commitment to live more sustainably; to use local processes and practices in order to integrate the economic, social, cultural and ecological dimensions of sustainability. These eco-villages can be traditional villages that already exist (some located in developing countries) or intentional eco-communities (which are set up).

Food security: Food security exists when a household has access to enough nutritious food for its members to lead an active and healthy life.

Food Sovereignty is a term that emerged from the struggles of the global farmers' movement La Via Campesina and is also championed by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. It affirms the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food by constructing a food system controlled by small scale producers and consumers. Those who produce our food are placed at the centre of food sovereignty and valued highly. Food is produced through ecologically sustainable methods that protect the natural commons (land, water, biodiversity, biosphere, renewable energy and human labour).

Fossil Fuels are sources of energy (such as coal, oil, or natural gas) formed in the earth from dead plants or animals over hundreds of thousands of years. Burning fossil fuels produces greenhouse gases (GHGs), such as carbon and methane, that contribute to heating our planet.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs): Genetic modification of seeds, for example, is when scientists in a laboratory put genes into a seed to give it certain characteristics, like making it able to resist a pest or use less water. This technology is controlled by a few big companies who are forcing these seeds on farmers so that they can make a big profit out of selling them these seeds every season. There are also health and environmental risks with such technologies.

Hunger: In basic terms, when someone or a group does not have enough food. In this guide, we locate hunger as a key outcome of our current food system and unequal society, rather than just an individual experience of an empty stomach.

Liberalisation: When government removes barriers like taxes on imports like food in order to protect local producers and promotes exports as well, as a way of developing.

Living Soil: The idea of respecting the microbial importance of fungi, bacteria, protozoa, nematodes, arthropods, earthworms and other soil organisms that keep the soil perforated and naturally fertilised.

Market: Where goods and services are bought and sold. A mechanism where buyers meet sellers.

Natural climate solutions are actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that mitigate climate change, while also addressing other societal challenges

Neoliberalism: The idea that every problem in society can be solved by the market. Everything we as humans need should be done by businesses and bought and sold for the highest profit.

Regenerative Agriculture (such as permaculture, agroecology): is a set of farming principles and practices (water management, non-use of fertilisers) that help us fight the climate crisis and rejuvenate the ecosystem by keeping carbon in the soil.

Right to food: According to our Constitution, everyone in South Africa should have enough nutritious food to eat every day, as a right.

Transformation: A deep and thorough change of individual practices and systems to enhance the web of life. This can refer to individual transformation where a person changes deeply from how they were before. It can also refer to society, in which case we talk about social transformation – the deep and thorough change in society, usually for the better, from how it was before.

Water commoning is related to including and empowering people directly in controlling and maintaining local water systems

Module 1: Introduction

When humans do not eat food; they die. When humans do not eat healthy food; they have health problems. Healthy food is essential to give us all a good life. We live in a society that does not give the vast majority food, let alone healthy food. We often read headlines of children dying of malnutrition, families struggling and even eating cats and dogs to live. The South African constitution, section 27, provides for all to have sufficient access to water and food. This is not happening despite agri-business claiming South Africa is a food secure country; it produces enough to feed everyone. Yet food security, the production and sale of food through corporations, is not feeding the country and is not feeding people in need during Covid-19. Food as a means to make profits and as a commercial commodity, means many unemployed people and low wage workers cannot feed themselves and their families.

Before and during Covid-19, households have struggled to put food on the table. During our drought (2014-2021) food prices increased leading to more hunger. During the lockdown, the government response came short, with food parcels and the Solidarity Fund role proving to be inadequate to meet the needs of 30 million food-insecure people. Sky rocketing unemployment and desperation led to the storming of supermarkets, the hijacking of food trucks and, in July 2021, attacks on malls and supermarkets mainly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Food prices have continued to increase (now over R4 400 for an essential basket) and most working-class households are unable to afford an essential basket of food. In addition, increases in petrol prices, fertiliser costs and shortages of wheat supplies globally due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine have also added to a global and local shock on the food system. This is not the first time the globalised food system has had shocks that negatively impact South Africa. Droughts, floods, cyclones, wild fires and heatwaves have been impacting globalised food systems since 2006, including in South Africa. In this context, food inequality is a serious challenge. Some eat, while

others starve. South Africa should expect more violent upheavals in this regard, including xenophobia.

With food inequality threatening to tear our country apart it is important more than ever we work towards an alternative, a food system that can meet the needs of all in the country and which tackles the root conditions generating the food crisis. South Africa has a desperate society in terms of the food crisis: state failure, food profiteering, shocks on the globalised food system and worsening climate crisis mean we must act now in our communities, villages, towns and cities. We call this alternative a food sovereignty system that is democratically organised and controlled by small scale farmers, gardeners, informal traders, small scale fishers, communities and consumers. Food sovereignty is ensuring we plant what we want to eat, we fish, we forage in forests, the veld and on beaches, our food is healthy, we have zero hunger and we live in harmony with nature. The commons (land, water, biodiversity, creative labour, renewable energy and biosphere) which is the foundation of food sovereignty is protected and democratically managed to ensure all life thrives within the limits of nature.

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) emerged out of a national dialogue in 2014 and in 2015 we launched our platform. The SAFSC is a platform and a space for convergence of agrarian sector forces, food justice activists, climate and environmental forces and social justice forces. In drawing attention to the impact of the drought and climate on our food system, the SAFSC realised it was important to build local alliances and processes to achieve food sovereignty in communities, villages, towns and cities. Since 2017 it has been learning by doing in terms of local pathway building. In this context it developed various tools and spaces to empower activists through contributions by partner organisations such as the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC):

- Food sovereignty festivals;
- A seed sovereignty tool;
- A water sovereignty tool;

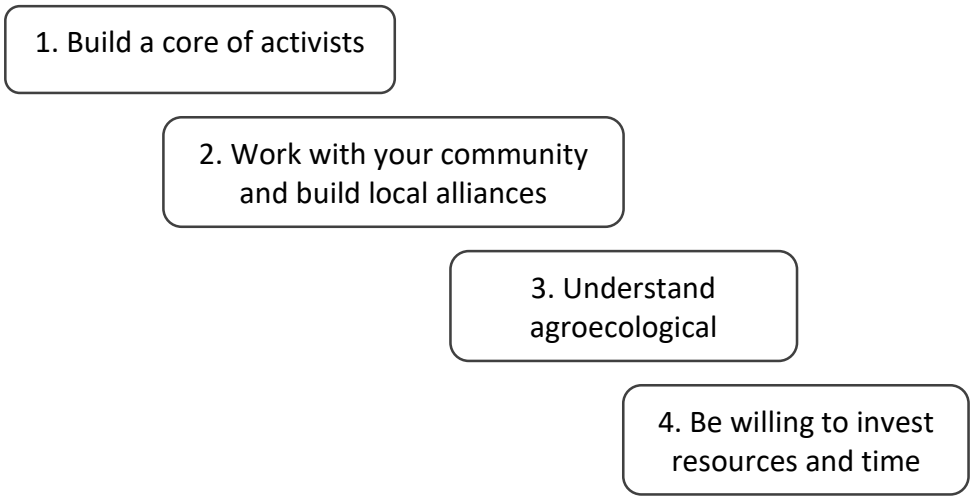
- A land justice tool;
- A Peoples Food Sovereignty Act;
- A worker cooperative guide;
- A Solidarity economy tool;
- A food commons map; and the
- Climate Justice Charter.

Most importantly, activists have utilised these tools to set up gardens, small scale farms, soup kitchens, local markets, communal kitchens, build solidarity relations with informal traders and small scale fishers, establish worker cooperatives and more. These are all the elements of a food sovereignty system. However, some have gone further to utilise their food sovereignty spaces as hub spaces. A Food Sovereignty Hub is a democratically controlled support infrastructure for capacity building, a place of learning and sharing, building solidarity and ensuring the commoning of water, land, biodiversity, creative labour, knowledge, the biosphere and renewable energy. It is the backbone to build food sovereignty pathways and systems in communities, villages, towns and cities. In different contexts, food sovereignty hubs have different elements: seed banks, farming tools, nurseries, greenhouses, composting systems, water-saving systems, agroecology gardens, renewable energy, libraries, spaces for meetings, kitchens, regular markets and more. They are spaces to get organised and scale up food sovereignty. A hub can train a street, a community, a village and beyond. Some places might have more than one hub. The food sovereignty hub concept was developed in practice in South Africa to ensure food sovereignty as a system grows from below, based on agroecology, small scale fishing, connecting production and consumption in solidarity economies and alternative institutional forms such as worker cooperatives and community markets. If a transformative government were to come to power tomorrow, we can take this to scale at a national level and have a people-driven food sovereignty system through the adoption of the Peoples Food Sovereignty Act. In the meantime, let us learn from each other's transformative practice and build the food sovereignty system now from below.

Module 2: Practice

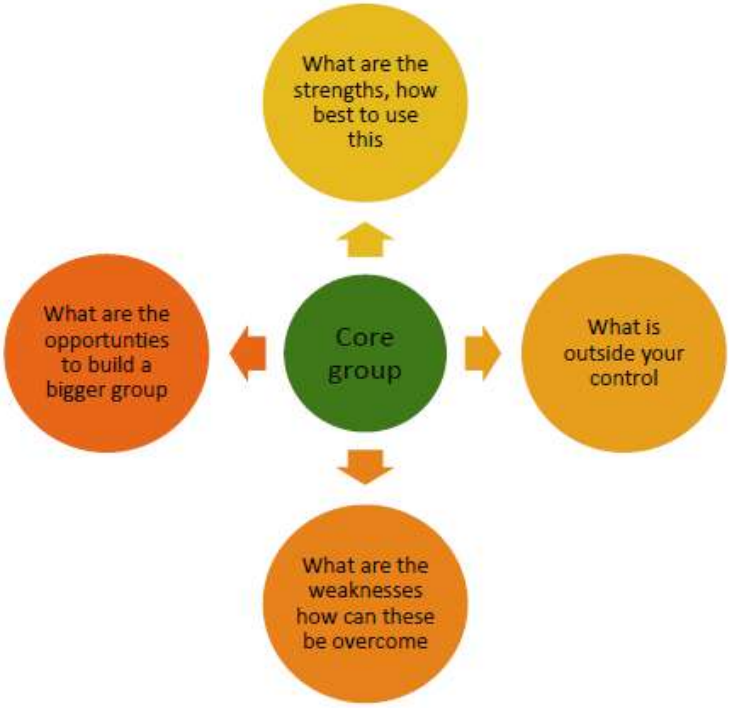
How to set up a Food Sovereignty Hub

A Food Sovereignty Hub is a democratically controlled support infrastructure for capacity building, a place of learning and sharing, building solidarity and ensuring the commoning of water, land, biodiversity, creative labour, knowledge, the biosphere and renewable energy. It is the backbone to build food sovereignty pathways and systems in communities, villages, towns and cities. In different contexts, food sovereignty hubs have different elements. It brings control of the food system to the people by enabling them to decide which food is produced, how it is produced and whether or not it is culturally appropriate. Such a hub enables communities to be more than passive consumers but active producers who decide the state of their food system. Such hubs come in varying sizes; some are small backyard gardens where a few people farm while others are large community and school gardens as the case studies will show. As different and unique as these hubs may be, they are brought together by their transformative power. The hubs detailed by the case studies have been started in different ways with unique challenges and opportunities for each. However, key steps in setting up a food sovereignty hub can be learned from them. The following are some of the key steps that an activist could follow when setting up a food sovereignty hub.



1. Build a core of activists

Building a core of activists; people who are committed to the work and who share your vision is essential in setting up a food sovereignty hub. No activist is an island and only with people power is real transformative change possible. Food sovereignty cannot be understood outside of grassroots movement building, in and of itself, food sovereignty is a movement, a collective action that unites different people; people who are united by goals, principles and a common vision such as building a climate justice state. That is why it is essential to build a core of volunteers who see the bigger picture, who understand that building a food sovereignty hub is more than just about food but a means of redefining the power balance between the people and corporate monopolies who control it. This graph sets out the SWOT analysis of building a core group of volunteers.



Adapted from the CJC Movement Organising Toolkit

2. Work with your community and build local alliances

The Climate Justice Charter says that "Every community must prioritise small scale, agroecological farming to meet local needs." To achieve this, activists need to work with their communities. This requires an understanding of the problems, opportunities and circumstances that are specific to the community. A food sovereignty hub must produce "culturally appropriate and nutritious food" as the CJC says. Each community has its unique characteristics, culture, identity and its unique approaches to food hence, working with the community brings with it immense possibilities. It is also a way of inspiring people to join the movement thereby building people's power to accelerate and deepen the just transition in communities. Working with the community means being on the ground, listening, talking, organising and mobilising neighbours, family, friends and meeting with different community leaders from faith-based organisations, to youth organisations and local representatives. All of this connection and solidarity must lead to food sovereignty alliance-building, bringing together the employed and unemployed, households and community organisations. Such alliances can be institutionalised through local food sovereignty forums, campaigns and initiatives.

3. Understand agroecological farming

Agroecology is based on 'zero input costs'. It means soils, seeds, seedlings, biodiversity, composting and water-saving, together with shared care labour in households and communities produce the food. It has the potential to create many climate jobs that end carbon emissions from food systems. Industrial agriculture is based on the market imperative; capitalism's endless drive to invest in new technologies as a means to reduce production costs and maximise profit. The farming technological industry is its own giant, ever inventing new ways of excluding workers and promoting environmentally damaging tools all in the name of technological progress. South Africa, with an expanded unemployment rate of 46.46% (start of 2022) cannot afford to lose more farm workers. Agroecological farming can transform the rural and urban economy with localised farming practices that absorb many unskilled and semi-skilled people and is the answer to the food

system question in South Africa. We can end hunger and food challenges in our communities.

In agroecology, nature is not the enemy; all insects, plants, water and human beings are bound in the chain of life. This is why agroecology is based on the transformative idea of farming with nature through the principles of regenerative agriculture and living soil. This stops the need for pesticides and insecticides that kill soil organisms (worms, microbes etc`) which are essential for healthy soils. This farming with minimal disturbance to the soil ensures that carbon dioxide is stored in the soil and not released back into the atmosphere. It also stops the use of industrial fertilisers which amount to more than 50% of farming expenses in some cases. The prices of industrial fertilisers continue to sky rocket making it very expensive to farm. The costs of fertilisers are largely driven up by the increasing costs of the fossil fuels such as natural gas which are used in their manufacturing. The agriculture sector remains the largest emitter of nitrous oxide (N20) which is damaging the Earth's ozone layer. Unless the agribusiness frees itself from nitrogen fertilisation, and unless agriculture as a whole frees itself from fossil fuels then we will see more planetary boundaries being overshot. In the context of the climate crisis and with their destruction of the environment, ecosystems and of the lives of farm workers and consumers alike, synthetic fertilisers are a non-starter.

4. Be willing to invest resources and time

There is no easy path to transformative change, there are no shortcuts. To build a truly democratic food system free from the chains of corporate control, we must be in it for the long haul. This means sacrificing our time and resources for a cause we believe in. The case studies captured here demonstrate this, they demonstrate that the most important contribution is determination.

Thus, we must be willing to invest our resources to kick start the food sovereignty hubs in our areas because we cannot attract support if we are not doing something. The state in South Africa is reactive, only when an idea has proven itself successful does it get involved. If we are not willing to take our ideas forward, then who will?

Growing food requires patience and dedication. It requires that we use our energy on a daily basis to take care of the food garden or farm. This is why a network of dedicated volunteers is important. Fortunately, the ground has already been laid, there are several important tools developed by activists over the years that will help in setting up a food sovereignty hub.

Some of these tools are:

- The Food Sovereignty Activist guide

This is a very important guide for understanding food sovereignty and how the corporate-controlled food system is behind the hunger crisis in South Africa. It capacitates activists in movement building and most importantly, it provides practical skills for organising food sovereignty initiatives.

- People's Food Sovereignty Act

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign calls for the deep transformation of our food system by breaking the control of food corporations and repositioning the state to realise the Constitutional right to food, and ensure the creation of conditions and space for the emergence of food sovereignty alternatives from below. This people's Act is one way in which we seek to do this. It expresses our emancipatory desire for transformation and serves as a copmas for those pursuing food sovereignty.

- The Seed Saving Activist Guide

This is an important tool for seed banks, seed sharing, indigenous seeds and the understanding of seeds within the global food system. This tool outlines the transformative power of local seeds while warning about the dangers of GMOs and the politics of GMO seeds.

- Advancing Food Sovereignty through sustainable land use

This tool deals with the debates around the land question in South Africa. It also helps in understanding land management and the importance of using land as a living organism.

- Building People's Power for Water Sovereignty: An Activist Guide

This guide comes out of a workshop on the water crisis hosted by COPAC on 23 May 2017. It is crucial in helping activists understand water from its source, to its flow, its storage, and use. This guide is also important in the understanding of climate change and the impacts on our water resources.

- Create Work Through Worker Cooperatives: A Guide For Grassroots Activism

The main objective of this guide is to provide tools for designing and developing a worker cooperative through three phases of groundwork, start-up and consolidation. It is therefore a tool that can be used as a guide for those who are setting up a worker cooperative or wanting to strengthen an existing one.

- Building a Solidarity Economy Movement

For over a decade, COPAC has been engaged in building worker cooperatives and the solidarity economy as an alternative to capitalist globalisation. This guide comes from those years of learning and experience and it is essential in developing transformative solidarity economy activists as well as building cooperatives.

- Climate Justice Charter

This Climate Justice Charter emerges out of six years of campaigning, during the worst drought in South Africa's history, by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre. It has been informed by grassroots input from water stressed communities, the media, labour, faith based communities, youth, climate scientists, academics, women's organisations, environmental and social justice organisations, as well as, think pieces by leading activists.

Learning from the Case Studies

The following sections of this activist tool provide case studies of rural, urban, university and general food sovereignty hubs and processes in South Africa. You can use the examples and lessons from these case studies to inform the design of your own hub, garden or community organisation, by reflecting on each case study. Use the following questions to assist and guide your reading of each case study:

1. What does the community in this case study have in common with my community? (location, challenges, gender, age groups, etc).
2. How have the people in this case study involved other members of their community to build an activist core/base, and build alliances? What strategies did they use? Which strategies could be helpful for my situation?
3. What type of organisational model does this case study use, and can it be beneficial for my situation/garden/community?
4. How have people in this community overcome challenges they have faced during the Covid-19 pandemic and other issues that have arisen? Can these be applied to my situation?
5. What is the key lesson or take-away from this case study?
6. How can these case studies as a whole assist with Food Sovereignty and pathway building in your context?

Module 3: Rural Areas

Case Study 1: West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum

By Davine Witbooi

Agroeclogical garden

The West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum was established in October of 2016. We are based in Lutzville, a small rural town on the West Coast of South Africa. We are part of a broader network that practices agroecology and food sovereignty nationally and internationally. We started community gardens with indigenous seeds we received from farmers during exchange visits. I also received training on food sovereignty and agroecology from manuals we received from COPAC and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign. We also grow seedlings and distribute them in the community. We have established two soup kitchens. We live in an area where agriculture is dominated by the chemical way of farming. We also face a lot of environmental damage caused by mining in the area. This leads us to a new approach of safe practices to look after our environment.

Since the beginning of the lockdown, we have seen people suffer due to a lack of food. Many lost their jobs and the promise of food parcels by the government never reached rural communities. Covid-19 was something the people never expected and no one was prepared to face these difficulties. Food prices increased and made it more difficult for rural people to get access to healthy nutritional food. Our organisation found it difficult to move around because the lockdown restrictions did not allow us to visit people's houses. We could not get access to government

departments because they closed their offices. The only way for us to reach others inside the community was to use social media. We depended on the community to share their food. We also helped the migrants who have been left without jobs and food. Due to travel restrictions and a ban on international travel, they could not return home.

The impact of Covid-19 was a heavy burden for most families in rural areas. Nutritious food was hard to find, creating a lot of food stress and eventually hunger. Children were begging for food to provide for their families. Due to job losses, many families depend on child social grants. We started two soup kitchens and supplied them with vegetables from our community gardens. The soup kitchen provided daily cooked meals for 500 families. We also encouraged people in the community to establishe gardens in their backyards and plant vegetables. We realised that we cannot wait on the government's empty promises. The West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum reached out to the Doornbay women and youth fisher folk and did advocacy on agroecology and food sovereignty. We also reached out to Koekenaap small scale farmers who practice in indigenous herbal pants. We engaged with the municipality and local businesses to help us to get more land to build more food hubs in all towns in the Matzikama municipal area.

Challenges we faced during the Covid-19 pandemic

- Lack of access to government support
- No access to healthy nutritious food
- High food prices
- Lockdown regulations restricted us from visiting families
- Loss of jobs
- Job losses contribute to gender-based violence
- No access to technology (cellphones, computers) and high data prices
- Covid-19 infections and death in the families
- Lack of healthcare

Successes during the Covid-19 Pandemic included the following:

- Establishment of community agroecology gardens to provide for community needs
- The distribution of cultural seeds and seedlings in the community
- The training on agroecology and food sovereignty that was given in the past and also the activist tool kits provided good guidance for communities to survive and combat hunger

Lessons from the past years (2020 and 2021)

- We realised that we need to make sure that we plant our own food.
- Government is nowhere to be found when we need it, this has encouraged us to lead our struggles.
- Getting the community involved and giving training on how to build your community gardens. Each community is different because of the different climate patterns but we have one common purpose and that is to have healthy nutritious food to eat and eliminate hunger.
- Farming can take place on any size of land that is available and that a community can get access to, for example, backyards, parks, schools and churchyards.
- It is important to teach young children and get them involved in gardening.
- Link your community gardens and keep a record and establish seed banks.

Case Study 2: Abanebhongo People with Disability

Profile by Nosintu Mcimeli, written by Charles Simane

Nosintu with other women and young people at the farm

Abanebhongo People with Disability (APD) is a registered non-profit organisation based in the village of Jekezi in the small rural town of Nqamakhwe under the Amathole District Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province. The town of Nqamakhwe was established by refugees of the Mfengu clan in 1865 after the great Mfecane (period of wars, migrations, and unifications of Nguni clans from 1815 to about 1840). Today, the town of Nqamakhwe, historically a town of immigrants, is facing an exodus. Poverty, unemployment, rampant crime, and municipal incompetence have caused many to flee the area and seek greener pastures elsewhere.

This is even worse for people with disabilities, pensioners, and unemployed rural women. This difficult situation motivated Nosintu Mcimeli to stand up and do something. In April of 2020, she together with six other women established the APD to help disabled and unemployed people as well as pensioners. With the small donations they receive, they provide food parcels as immediate food relief for their community. Nosintu and her group understand that food parcels are not sustainable. Thus, with the money they received from the Solidarity Fund, they started farming vegetables on a small plot of land they had received. APD now runs a food sovereignty garden producing much-needed vegetables in the poverty-stricken village of Jekezi.

These six women are on a mission to turn Jekezi into a food sovereign rural area to feed themselves and the community. They are actively encouraging backyard farming and assisting community members with the little they have. As part of the

Climate Justice Charter Movement, Abanebhongo is also educating the community about the climate crisis. The farming they are practising and teaching does not use insecticides, fertilisers or pesticides but relies on the principles of permaculture.

In Jekezi, like many other rural areas with an underdeveloped, neglected, and sometimes totally non-existent water infrastructure, people struggle to get clean water. Taps decorate the streets without a single drop of water. Vegetables demand constant watering so the lack of clean and reliable water supply is a huge challenge to the women of Abanebhongo. They often have to fetch dirty water many kilometres away from dams and natural water streams to drink for themselves and water their plants. The second challenge is the lack of seeds and farming tools. They mostly use their hands and a few spades to plough. The women did not have much training in agriculture, water management, and permaculture training, they are being helped by tools from movements like SAFSC. The threat of crime is another challenge. In a poverty-stricken area, the threat of vegetables being stolen before they are harvested remains large. Another challenge is to get many young people to farm, their perception of farming remains largely negative.

Despite these challenges, there have been positive outcomes. Starting a small farm is in and of itself an achievement. It leads to self-sufficiency and breaks the chains of poverty and hunger by restoring dignity. These women have shown that it is possible. Despite overwhelming research proving that small-scale farmers feed the world, many people have the perception that large-scale industrial farms are the ultimate source of food, but they are not. Nosintu and her devoted team are proving that small-scale farms run by women feed the world. They are successfully encouraging other community members to farm and be food sovereign. They are angels of change. They have quickly developed a working structure and are learning farming management and other skills. Through practice, they have learned that farming is not easy, but it is doable. They have learned the importance of self-reliance and starting small with the little that they have. Farmers should learn from other farmers. The Abanebhongo women have learned the importance of learning from other farmers through platforms provided by SAFSC.

Case Study 3: Masifundise

By Carmen Mannarino

Masifundise is a civil society organisation that has been working with small-scale fishing communities across South Africa and globally since 2001. Masifundise is based in Cape Town but we work in Western Cape, Eastern Cape Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State.

Women protesting against corruption in fisheries

Masifundise's mission is to build the knowledge, skills, and capacity of small-scale fishing communities to enable them to become agents of change within their communities, organisations, and social movements, with the ability to understand, engage with and, where necessary, challenge and advocate for just political and economic decision-making processes. This includes facilitating and strengthening participatory governance at all levels, enabling fishing communities to secure their social, economic, and political rights and demanding redistribution of access to natural resources and roll-back harmful development initiatives and promoting principles of social, economic, and environmental justice.

Masifundise is a member of the World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP) and through this affiliation, we are active in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC).

Since 2001, Masifundise has been involved in the struggle for fisheries to be recognised and managed as a food-related sector, not only an environmental management and commercial sector. The fisheries' legal framework and governance

fail to effectively recognise the role that fishing plays in food and nutrition and the cultural significance of fishing and related natural resources for traditional and customary practices of fishing communities.

Through mobilisation and litigation, Masifundise and Coastal Links - a community-based organisation that was formed with the support of Masifundise - were able to secure legal reform through the development of the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) Policy (2012- Currently under implementation), which provides a framework in line with food sovereignty and Human Rights principles. However, the implementation of the policy has been poor: while 152 SSF Cooperatives were formed and allocated fishing rights, they cannot effectively realise their rights. Furthermore, many fishers were left out of the policy process which failed to recognise them. In the implementation of the policy, DFFE is taking a top-down approach, in which co-management of the resources is not implemented and the basket of species does not match traditional practices and availability/capacity. Overall, we see a push from the government for formalisation and commercial orientation (including export) in implementing the policy.

At the same time, SSF Inland Fisheries are still not recognised. Policy development is in place but currently, there is a vacuum, which leaves inland fishers in a space of informality, which in several instances results in criminalisation.

It is in this context that in 2018, Masifundise took a strategic decision to shift the focus of Masifundise's work from "fishing rights and human rights" to include "human rights and food sovereignty". For Masifundise, the principles and objectives of food sovereignty look beyond the act of catching fish and constitute a direct response to the multiple aspects and systemic causes of the crisis. Social, environmental, and economic justice are its key principles. The principles of Food Sovereignty, with emphasis on local control and democratic governance of the food system, are the core of all Masifundise's activities and initiatives, which can be divided into 3 broad categories:

1. Empowerment and movement building: We co-design and facilitate local, provincial, national, and global training and learning platforms (workshops, consultative forums, Winter and Summer Schools), related to food sovereignty in small-scale fishing in South Africa, and globally as part of the WFFP. We also work to support mobilising of inland and coastal small-scale fishing communities to access and claim their fishing and wider socio-economic rights within a Food Sovereignty agenda and paradigm that promotes the strengthening and expansion of existing social movements, networks, and partnerships.

2. Research activities: Masifundise is currently working in several sites on the coast and inland together with small-scale fishing communities, applying Participatory Action Research methodologies with the goals of 1) document, reflect critically and describe local histories, natural resource interactions, sacred sites, demographics, livelihood and tenure patterns, customary systems and rights, capacities and skills, talents, household incomes, services and assets, 2) document and develop a stronger understanding of both the issues impacting small-scale fishing communities and 3) empower fishing communities to take actions to claim their rights and to lobby for access and control of natural resources. We also conduct, together with several national and international research partners research activities to deepen and expand knowledge on the context, trends, and systemic challenges relevant to Food Sovereignty and small-scale fishing communities in South Africa, and globally.

Fishers' rights are human rights

3. Advocacy: We seek to create platforms at all levels of government to enable small-scale fishing communities and their organisation to articulate their needs and opportunities to advance the realisation of their human rights and propose solutions based on food sovereignty practices and solutions.

The advent of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown measures have challenged us as an organisation. Not being able to be operational and work on the ground has created major challenges to continue to support mobilisation and organisation building in fishing communities, which is the very essence of our empowerment, research and advocacy activities. We had to find more creative methodologies to both communicate with and share knowledge and strategies with our network of predominantly rural fishing communities, especially in the deep rural areas in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Many of our meetings with communities had to be undertaken on virtual/online platforms, with airtime and data being provided for fishers to attend. However, this was a limitation for our work, as many of these rural communities are remote, with limited connectivity access, and infrastructure challenges.

Covid-19 negatively impacted the small-scale fishing community especially during the hard lockdown in 2020, exacerbating pre-existing challenges. Many small-scale fishers were prohibited from accessing their fishing grounds. The closure of public Parks and Marine Protected Areas as part of the ***Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002***, further entrenched the food and economic crisis in these communities whose traditional fishing grounds are located in public Nature and Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas. Small-scale fishers were declared an essential service during the lockdown. However, the movement required for the sale of fish was prohibited. The lockdown led to a crisis in fish markets and plummeting in fish sales. Prices dropped to less than half compared to pre-Covid. The average prices of fish sales have still not returned to pre-Covid levels and fishers are still struggling.

Inland fishing communities were especially negatively affected during Covid-19. The lack of clear, national-level policy and legislation regulating the inland fisheries

sector meant that inland fishers were not able to be effectively recognised as essential services. This has led to further criminalisation.

While many in fishing communities benefited from the special Covid relief grant and the grant top-ups, small-scale fisheries have not received any relief or meaningful support from the government as a sector, for example when compared to the relief measures put in place for small-scale/subsistence farming.

The Covid-19 and related food crisis has further shown that systemic change is necessary and that food sovereignty and its principles are more relevant than ever. In this context, much of Masifundise's work on food sovereignty has focused on ensuring that communities have access to the natural resources they depend on for their livelihoods. Masifundise has continued to conduct online and, when possible, face-to-face local and provincial and national meetings to work with communities to empower them to engage and struggle against the threats to SSFs food sovereignty and livelihoods, in particular against extractive developments (oil, gas and mineral mining, aquaculture, Marine Protected Areas) happening all over the coast and putting the very existences of local small-scale fisheries at risk.

As part of the interventions related to Covid, Masifundise has partnered up with PLAAS to look at the impacts of Covid-19 on the small-scale fisheries food system and value-chain in the Western Cape with a focus on the political economy of our food system and food flows, as well as the impacts of Covid-19 and the associated government responses. This research is currently ongoing.

The SSF National Strategic Forum hosted by Masifundise in April 2021 also provided another moment for representatives of small-scale fishing communities to discuss their fishing rights and the important role they play as food producers during South Africa's ongoing food crisis. The National Strategic Forum assisted them in understanding their local food production system and the value of fish in terms and nutrition and economics and the role that women and the youth can play along the value chain.

Successes and challenges

- Communities have struggled to adapt to the limited physical presence of Masifundise on the ground. Many of them were also challenged at first by using online platforms such as Zoom as a means of communication and engagement.
- Poor connectivity and internet infrastructure have strained communication and the sharing of knowledge in the rural communities Masifundise works in.
- This has created challenges in strengthening the fishers' movement at this time of crisis.

Despite the restrictions of Covid-19 and all the related challenges, we continued with the work and were able to have some successes, including:

- Securing access to the dam for inland fishers in Vanderkloof Dam, Northern Cape
- The redoing of the SSF Policy verification process in the Western Cape. Masifundise and fishing communities lobbied the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries to re-assess the verification process that lead to the exclusion of bonafide fishers. As result, the Minister ordered an independent audit of the verification process in the Western Cape province. In February 2021, the Minister announced that the audit concluded that the verification process was "wholly inadequate" and that the verification process will be re-done in the Western Cape. This was an important achievement, as for the first time since the roll-out of the SSF Policy the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries has admitted to the shortcomings in their policy implementation approach.
- This creates an opportunity for all small-scale fishers to have their rights recognised and resulted in renewed energy and mobilization within small-scale fishing communities, which prompted significant local-level mobilisation on the occasion of South Africa's Human Rights Day, on 21st March 2021
- The SSF National Strategic Forum in April 2021 was a successful event, where using 4 locations and a hybrid online/face-to-face approach, we were able to bring together more than 90 SSF representatives, together with partners and allies, to strategise on the way forward to ensure that food sovereignty because

of a reality in SSF communities. In the context of the National Strategic Forum, fishing communities were able to speak directly to Minister Creecy. As a result, the Department committed to a series of interventions aiming at improving the implementation of the Small-scale Fisheries Policy, the recognition of the subsistence fishers and the challenges to access that fishers whose traditional fishing grounds are located in Marine Protected Areas and Nature Conservation areas.

Learning from practice

- Small-scale food producers play a very important role by providing healthy and nutritious food. However, in fishing communities, too often the nutritious food leaves communities to be sold in urban and international markets. Covid-19 has shown us the fault lines within the global South African food system that has been under strain since the beginning of the pandemic. In this context, empowering SSF to locally and democratically control their natural resources and food system, in line with food sovereignty, would protect communities in moments of crisis in the future and limit the reliance on outside sources for food parcels.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the fact that localised food systems and shorter value chains are the most resilient in times of crisis. These localised food systems allow food to stay within the community, financially benefiting the broader community including women and youth who are involved in the post-harvest value-adding and trading of products and ensuring food and nutrition security in the community. To make this a reality, building solidarity and partnership between fishing communities and other food producers will be very important, as we will continue to face the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis

Module 4: Peri-urban Areas

Case Study 4: The Vrygronde Agroecological Hub

By Chriszanne Janse van Vuuren

The Vrygronde agroecological hub that was launched in April 2021 is fulfilling the pivotal function of restoring dignity, strengthening social cohesion and building solidarity in the Vrygronde community and beyond. Through the hub, the relationship between the Vrygronde community and local stakeholders was strengthened and several local businesses already committed themselves to support this innovative initiative. Women have been at the centre of this endeavour and the youth developed an appreciation for the environment and an interest in environmental issues. Moreover, youth leadership was promoted, and the youth developed an understanding of the important role that they have to play in their community.

Young people removing rocks

Concerning agroecological production, the soil has been prepared with manure supplied by local small-scale producers who are in full support of the hub, and winter crops have been planted. According to Nettly Ahmed, Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC) fieldworker responsible for, inter alia, assisting the Vrygronde community in the development of the hub, preparing the soil for planting was challenging – the site was full of rocks and needed a lot of attention – but the hard work paid off.

In addition to the challenges relating to agroecological production, several other challenges have been encountered but, fortunately, it was never anticipated that the

process would always be smooth sailing. The primary challenge relates to the lack of community involvement. Even though a considerable number of the members of the Vrygronde community are involved in the hub, it has not been possible to achieve the objective of getting the entire community on board – some members of the community simply do not share the transformative thinking. Political interference has also played a role in diverting the community from its transformative agenda. Nettly says that they also struggle to keep the youth interested and actively involved. "The youth do not always have the patience to wait for results. Several workshops and exchanges are in the pipeline, and we are hoping that the planned workshops and exchanges will contribute to resolving some of the challenges." The workshops will include agroecology and markets since, in addition to the subsistence of the community, the aim is also to test local markets towards the sustainability of the hub.

Materials delivered

At present, progress is measured on a weekly basis and planning for the following week is based on the immediate practical needs that are identified. Considering that we are moving out of the winter season, the community has already planned to start planting summer crops soon.

Irrespective of the challenges, the Vrygronde agroecological hub is proving to be much more than merely a production site and therefore SCLC is already supporting the establishment two additional agroecological hubs in Uniondale in the Western Cape and Rosmead in the Eastern Cape respectively. We are hoping to share similar success stories in the near future.

Case Study 5: Amandla! Collective reflects on Food Sovereignty in Nelson Mandela Bay

By Janet Cherry

Over the past year and a half, Amandla activists have been active on the ground – and literally, in the ground – in five townships in Nelson Mandela Bay. As part of the Food Sovereignty Campaign, we have engaged in different kinds of responses to the crisis of hunger in our communities, which was made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown. The activists from Amandla collective have worked in partnership with various community groups, NGOs and service providers, and with Nelson Mandela University Centre for Post School Education and Training, and the Department of Development Studies. A network of food sovereignty activists has been built which, although it is not structured as a formal 'food hub', has promoted food sovereignty in the townships of Nelson Mandela Bay.

Potatoes and onions harvested from the garden

As the crisis hit us a year ago, we responded with a basic food distribution campaign. This was organised in KwaDwesi and involved a weekly allocation of funds to the KwaDwesi team to buy basic groceries in bulk, put these into balanced food parcels, and identify and distribute these to the households in need in the neighbourhood. Eventually, the Covid grants came through and this emergency relief programme was replaced with a more long-term developmental project of food gardens.

The food gardens were implemented in backyard gardens in KwaDwesi as well as in schools and open land in KwaDwesi, KwaZakhele, Zwide and Wells Estate. Spinach, green peppers, onions, garlic, lettuce and cabbage are grown, although some problems have been experienced with cabbage in the KwaDwesi garden and one KwaZakhele garden. Some of the vegetables are consumed by the participating households, while others are sold to households in the neighbourhood. In KwaDwesi, the vegetables are distributed to households 'on tick' and at the end of the month, or when they receive their grant payments, the cash is collected. The money raised from the sale of vegetables is then used to buy more seeds, and grow another crop. Some seed saving has also been done successfully, in particular with green peppers and chillies, where the seeds are easy to get from the plant, store and then plant.

Planting under the tree shade to conserve water

We have tried to use permaculture and agroecology methods in all our gardens, and activists and participating households have received training in these methods. In the Saltuba Cooperative in KwaZakhele, which is part of the Transition Township project, the food tunnels are linked in with a water capture system and a PV solar array to generate electricity and feed it into the municipal grid, as well as run a pump to pump the water onto the vegetable gardens. This project is situated on a gap tap between the houses, with 25 households being members of the Saltuba Cooperative. Four households have gutters on their roofs which feeds rainwater into a tank and a storage dam, and two households have washing machines linked to another tank for grey water.

Water is one of the big challenges faced by all our gardens, as there is a severe drought in Nelson Mandela Bay. We cannot rely on capturing rainwater, as it does not always last long enough to keep the crops growing until the next rain. We haven't managed to get a good greywater system going yet, although in KwaDwesi the greywater from two washing machines is being used on the vegetables. We are hoping to get a tank or a drum to collect the greywater, but until then a black rubbish bin has served this purpose well. It should be noted that not all detergent is good for vegetables, so the houses using the washing machines are asked to use Sunlight powder, which is okay for vegetables.

Beetroot growing in the garden

Some of the houses that have backyard gardens are using municipal water from their taps, but the problem here is that if more than the 'free basic' allocation of water is used, then we have to pay for the extra, and not only has water become more expensive because of the drought, but there is a water restriction and households are only allowed to use 500 litres per day. In gardens that are on school grounds, the Department of Education pays for the water, but they are reluctant to foot the bill for vegetable gardens. Gutters and tanks are the obvious solutions where there are roofs, but again this depends on there being regular rainfall. Other solutions we are exploring for open ground are setting up containers with gutters and jojo tanks for rainwater collection. The containers can then also be used for waste collection for recycling, or for community kitchens – but we have not quite got there yet!

Other challenges have been the need for capital inputs for items like fencing, water tanks and sometimes machines to dig up the very hard ground. The fencing issue has

a potential solution, in using old tyres to make a 'tyre wall' to keep out animals. The problem here is that we need to hire a truck to collect a big number of old tyres.

Despite these challenges, there are important victories that have been won, and lessons that we have learned over the past year. The first is that young women can get together and do something practical – "We learned a lot" says activist Vuvu Made. For unemployed youth, the vegetable gardens answered the question of "what can we bring to put on the table?".

The successful gardens then serve as a demonstration and an inspiration to others in the community. There has been a mushrooming of backyard gardens all over the townships. ***"It shows that women have strength and can do anything they want to do"***

Case Study 6: Feed the Future for Life

By Charles Simane

Understanding the Cape flats

It is estimated that there are more than one hundred thousand gang members in the Cape Flats. Most of them are young people, some are children as young as 12 years old. Between 1 January 2020 and 31 March 2021, 215 children had died as a result of gang-related violence in the area. This daily gang violence has turned the Cape flats into the murder capital of South Africa.

A failure to reverse apartheid legacies, a failed nation-building strategy, a failing and corrupt police force, an absent and weak state, a segregated economy and a dysfunctional education system are just some of the underlying causes of the tragedy of the Cape Flats. The De Klerk brothers; Valentino and Geronimo grew up in this notorious area in Elsies River. They are primary witnesses to the brutality of the Cape flats and like so many others who live there, they have lost loved ones and dear friends to drugs, gang wars and stray bullets. However, this is not a case study about the darkness of the Cape Flats but one of hope and inspiration. As Saint Francis of Assisi (patron saint of ecology) once said, "All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle." The Feed the Future for Life initiative is indeed a bright candle in the Cape Flats.

Geronimo and other Activists

Starting the Feed the Future For Life Campaign

The initiative was started by two brothers; Geronimo and Valentino De Klerk. They started the initiative in March 2020 just after the Minister of Health had announced the first case of Coronavirus in South Africa. They are based

at Trinity Place at the Council flats of Elsies river in Cape Town. When they started, Geronimo was only 18 years old while his brother was 20. They started by clearing an illegal dumping site that was full of all manner of rubbish including syringes and needles used for drug injections. Like many dumping sites in townships, it was a hotspot for mugging and it provided an easy getaway for perpetrators. The brother's efforts inspired other young people to join them in the clearing campaign until the entire community came to their support and they converted this dumping site and crime hotspot into a community food garden.

Community meeting at the food garden

It was not easy for the garden to get going, Geronimo and his comrades needed support in terms of farming equipment, seeds and most importantly, farming knowledge. Luckily for them, they received seeds from the Cape Town Together Food Initiative. Working with other volunteers and using basic tools they planted carrots, potatoes, beetroot, beans, cacti and other vegetables.

The community garden was a great success. The De Klerk brothers with other young volunteers started supplying community food kitchens with fresh vegetables during the strict lockdown months of 2020. This community food garden was a timely intervention by the De Klerk brothers because many South Africans faced dire food insecurity. Before the outbreak of Covid-19, 14 million people went to bed hungry in South Africa and during the lockdowns, half the population was facing a very precarious food situation where families were skipping meals and adults sacrificing food for their children. The Covid pandemic exacerbated an already precarious

situation as job losses result in a loss of revenue overnight. There were also severe food supply chain disruptions with the hastily introduced lockdown measures. Seventy percent of township households source their food from informal traders so the lockdowns negatively impacted many informal traders who themselves were scared of Covid-19 and did not get sufficient assistance and protection from the state. The food garden has gotten the attention of the Western Cape Agriculture MEC who brought seeds and equipment when he visited their blooming garden.

Western Cape MEC at the food garden

The De Klerk brothers have been inspired by the Climate Justice Charter Movement and they are active members of it. They are actively living out the goals of the Climate Justice Charter (CJC) by building food sovereignty initiatives and pathways in their communities. They are strengthening and accelerating the deep just transition by feeding themselves through food sovereignty which is one of the systemic alternatives for transformative change espoused in the charter. They have inspired a community riddled with drugs and gun violence and they have not stopped at Trinity Place, they are also starting new gardens in other parts of the Cape Flats. They are also starting new food gardens in schools across the Cape Flats while also educating young kids and the community about the need to build a new food system in the context of the climate crisis. They are recruiting other young people, some of whom used to be in gangs and abused drugs but now have a new purpose in life. This is truly profound. The brothers understand that climate justice is social justice!

Module 5: Towns and Cities

Case Study 7: The Oude Molen Food Garden

By Kelly Mansfield

Planting seedlings during lockdown

The Oude Molen Food Garden is an urban agricultural community food project which began in 2002. The programme originally started as an educational and empowerment project for youth and children. The site was an old hospital dumping ground and with the help from the Oude Molen community and other partners, it was transformed into The Oude Molen Food Garden. To date, Kelly Mansfield manages the garden and over the years with the help of many volunteers has continued to transform the garden into a space where everyone is welcome.

People pop in over weekends just to stroll through and buy organic vegetables and homegrown seedlings. They are currently setting up a nursery for public sales. The garden has about 16 allotment holders, all of whom are responsible for their own gardens and all practice sustainable organic growing techniques. No pesticides or hormones are used in the garden; only natural organic methods are allowed. All funds received in the garden go towards our two workers, William and Andrew who are in-patients at Valkenberg hospital, they are employed three mornings a week. We also have Keith and Annelien who are from The Open Circle at Alexandra Hospital. Keith and Annelien come to the garden as part of their occupational therapy on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. They are currently sponsored by People & Gardens in the UK.

Kelly runs a kids garden program every Wednesday afternoon for the neighbouring local communities and she can get up to 27 kids per time, ranging from 5 to 16 years. Kids are the future and so she teaches them how to grow from seed to harvest and everything in between, from recycling projects to eco brick building. The children have their own gardens which give them a sense of pride, which then carries through back into their homes and their own communities. Kelly also runs a volunteer programme every Saturday morning where she can get overseas students and school children who need to do community service. Keeping all this in mind, she volunteers her time and energy without taking a cent for this garden.

School children during community service

Covid had a full impact on the garden in that no gardeners were allowed access and so I became fully responsible for keeping everything alive, watering for up to two hours every second day. The general maintenance also fell into my hands, taps, irrigation, infrastructure etc. The kid's programme stopped and that was the hardest for me personally. I took the time in a positive way to clean up the garden areas in the space that were not being utilised efficiently and I created smaller gardens for planting for community members. My husband and I created a big round garden which I called “The soup kitchen garden”. It looked like a large pizza and all seedlings grown in this garden went to community members, security for the village and Valkenberg and we supplied our local soup kitchen with veggies on request, plus numerous churches approached us for veggies, which we gladly gave. We also applied for Food & Trees for Africa for the seedlings that were advertised. When the seedlings came, we planted them all in the spare ground, filled the soup kitchen garden, filled up our gardener's beds, our community took seedlings, we gave

seedlings away to numerous Community Action Network (CAN) projects and people who approached us got seedlings. We definitely spread love! Some CAN members approached me for advice and we chatted about how to set up basic gardens etc.

We have continued the soup kitchen garden with the intention of feeding those who need food. Locals came and got spinach, kale, lettuce, beetroot and more.

The soup kitchen garden

The challenges over the past year and a half have always been about trying to create and grow food on a shoe-string budget or none at all. I was lucky in that I retained my job as a health care worker and was able to put money into the garden and wages when there was none.

The success has been that the lockdown gave me a chance to see what was important to the community, how we can work together as a whole to create a sustainable system, not looking at personal gain. It connected me with like-minded people who are invested in making a positive change in their communities. Food growers' initiative/ seed savers/ CAN groups and members are all making a difference.

What I have learnt is that one can go to a community to set up a working garden but it takes a community to keep it going. The community must be part of the setup, be on the ground from the beginning and be invested with their time to truly reap the benefits of it.

Case Study 8: The Valley Food Gardens Initiative

By Marshall Rinquest Interviewed by Charles Simane

The Valley Food Gardens is a food sovereignty initiative that was launched by the Greyton Transition Towns (GTT) in Genadendal, Bereaville, Voorstekraal, and Greyton. The initiative was started in 2020 during the harsh lockdown months when several people (almost half of the country) were going to bed hungry. The founder of the project Marshall Rinquest says that they were working with the Red Cross and the GTT to give food parcels to families who were in desperate need. The food parcels helped to alleviate the immediate problem of hunger, but they were not a sustainable solution. He says that after they had managed to raise a million Rands to

Marshall Rinquest on the right

supply communities with food parcels, they knew that more was needed to help empower the community. This is how the initiative was started. In their last distribution of food parcels, they gave 500 families seed vouchers. They also gave 250 seed vouchers to other families who wanted to participate in the program. In all, seed vouchers were distributed to 800 families. These vouchers contain 40 assorted vegetable seedlings. For a water-stressed country, the Valley Food Gardens initiative

is fortunate to work in areas with sufficient water and weather conducive to farming. However, many communities did not know how to farm. Marshall and his team then developed a permaculture pamphlet titled *How to Grow.* This pamphlet accompanied every seedling voucher. The Covid pandemic exposed the danger of market dependence and a food regime where purchasing power determines who eats and who goes to bed hungry. It showed the need for teaching people how to grow their food as well as supplying them with resources like seeds. The Valley Food Gardens has created a food sovereignty knowledge hub. It has established centres with experts who not only distribute seeds and farming pamphlets but help people by actively assisting them to farm. These knowledge hubs serve as a reference centre where these new farmers can learn about manure, water management, and other farming techniques. This initiative is also about land transformation, teaching people to use their land other than having several desolate hectares.

The towns of the Valley Food Gardens initiative have sufficient water to run a small farm effectively but the problem according to Marshall is getting people to farm. He says that many people in the area undermine farming and others are just not committed enough to do it. They still prefer to go and buy their vegetables from the supermarket than farm them. This is even worse among young people. Many of them see farming as a primitive rural exercise, not something for the millennial or the so-called 'ama2000'. Resources are also a problem as many people need essentials like farming tools. However, there are several successes. Several families are taking farming seriously to the extent that they are no longer just farming to feed themselves but they are selling their produce and making a profit from it. Another great success is the skills transfer. Families have been freely trained in permaculture. They are passing this knowledge to their friends, neighbours, and relatives. The successful farms according to Marshall have motivated other people to take farming seriously and be part of the initiative. Even some young people are being drawn into farming because of the prospect of making a profit. But the biggest success is food

sovereignty. Teaching people to produce their food, eat it and sell off the surplus. This brings dignity to many families who would otherwise starve.

Small seedlings growing in tires

There have been important lessons for the Valley Food Gardens initiative over the past year. The first lesson is that not many people want to farm. The purchasing culture and the market dependence that underlies society runs deep. This is even more difficult for young people who sometimes want quick cash jobs and do not have the patience that is required for farming. Another important lesson is the importance of food sovereignty hubs. Having hubs that distribute seeds while also serving as knowledge centres is critical in helping emerging farmers. The initiative has also learnt the importance of running farmer's markets holding them Wednesdays and Saturdays. These are important since farmers usually struggle with access to markets and get exploited when they sell to supermarkets who purchase their produce at poverty inducing low prices. But the most important lesson is that food sovereignty pathways are the only way of breaking the chains of hunger and poverty.

After-care Garden replanted by the Valley Food Gardens

Case Study 9: The Philippi Horticultural Area Food and Farming Campaign

By Nazeer Sonday Interviewed by Charles Simane

The Phillipi Horticultural Area compromises several farmers, using different farming methods. Nazeer Sonday is one of the farmers in the area. He uses the most sustainable way of farming, which is agroecological farming which does not rely on insecticides, pesticides, or fertilisers but instead uses ecological diversification, permaculture, input reduction, biodiversity protection, and synergy. The entire PHA area supports local food needs thus removing the food production and consumption divide. Local food production, agroecology, living land, and a multifunctionality approach to agriculture are essential for food sovereignty. Nazeer's farming practice expresses this and teaches these principles of regenerative agriculture that focuses on living land rather than chemicals to produce high-quality crops. Nazeer brought together unemployed farm workers and taught them these principles of agroecology. His goal is for them to start their own farms and ultimately develop farming cooperatives with like-minded farmers who believe in the principles of living land and de-chemicalised agriculture. He also trains university students studying agriculture. This multifunctionality approach makes his farm a training centre that empowers aspiring farmers, especially young people.

Nazeer Sonday at the farm

Like in other communities, the impact of Covid-19 in Phillipi and surrounding areas was catastrophic. Most people who work in the townships are employed in the services sector in areas like human care (salons, restaurants, etc). These workers lost their jobs overnight and could not afford to buy food. Symptomatic of their country where almost half the population could not afford to buy food, 30 million food stressed. This is the reality of a market centred food system, where purchasing power determines who eats and who goes hungry. Nazeer and his group responded by forming a food kitchen to help their community with meals, especially for children. Food kitchens are not sustainable but under the circumstances, they were a lifesaver for many. The food kitchens were made possible thanks to donations from NGOs and this made it possible for them to source much of the produce from the local area. According to Nazeer, this showed just how important local food production is because being able to source local food reduced costs and other expenses. In the context of the climate crisis, local food production is essential to cutting long transportation which emits a lot of greenhouse gases.

Work on the farm

The PHA is considered a water sovereign area because it locally sources its water from an aquifer. This makes the area very important in a semi-arid country with long droughts and erratic rainfalls. The importance of the aquifer became more evident when the city of Cape Town was on the verge of day-zero and farmers around the province were closing shop because of the drought. It provides about 200 000 tons of vegetables to the city of Cape Town and surrounding areas. Farmers in the area continue to resist the planned projects that will undermine the ability of the aquifer to recharge while destroying farming land and entire ecosystems.

Nazeer says that Covid has shown the importance of local food production and that these networks must be encouraged and strengthened through coordination between farmers and informal traders as well as farmers' markets. Small-scale farmers should not imitate chemicalised agriculture which destroys soil organisms undermining soil nutrients and the quality of farm produce. Covid-19 has also highlighted the need for more coordination between farmers because those farmers who were not connected to others suffered the most; they had no assistance and no information on how other farmers were surviving. With hunger expected to increase due to job losses, production needs to be democratised. It cannot be in the hands of a few export-oriented and market-driven large-scale farms. Rural, peri-urban, and urban farmers must rise to the occasion and realise that they are the heart of food production, failure is not an option.

Protest against the planned PHA development

Case Study 10: The Molobanye Cooperative

Profiled by Violet Phala written by Charles Simane

Waste collection is a huge health, financial and social problem in many townships in South Africa. It undermines people's right to dignity and to a clean environment. Waste lying around is harmful to health. In 2011, the women of Alexandra decided to do something about the waste crisis in Alex which has created dumping sites that are fertile ground for rodents, foul smells, and crime while also serving as a constant reminder of the indignity of poverty. These women started clearing a dumping site to create space for farming.

Women clearing the dumping site

With assistance from the City of Johannesburg, cooperatives were set up to farm on this newly cleaned piece of land in the Lenin Drive Gardens as part of the city's Urban Farming Project. The Molobanye Cooperative is one of the Co-ops that emerged. It was founded by five members and now has two active members, three full-time employees and volunteers who assist at certain times. On their farm, they produce different herbs such as mint, thyme, chilli, basil along with vegetables such as pumpkins, spinach, carrots and others through permaculture farming. Through methods such as circular herbal portioning, they eliminate the need for pesticides and insecticides by creating a balanced ecosystem and plant diversity.

Although the coronavirus is dangerous to all age groups, it has disproportionally affected older people due to physiological changes and a weakened immune system due to age and other underlying health conditions. This is why older people are in the high-risk category and are likely to need hospitalisation if infected and unvaccinated. Violet Phala is 59 years old, and the women she farms with are in her age range, they are all in the high-risk category. When the lockdown began, they were very scared of the virus and many of the women she farms with were reluctant to come to the farm. The fear was made worse by the disinformation that was spreading wildly in the townships which made them feel like getting the virus was a death sentence. Thus, for her and the other women, each day of coming to the farm felt like a dance with the jaws of death. The soldiers and police who show little regard and respect for township dwellers did not make the situation any easier. Although farmworkers were designated essential workers and were allowed to operate even under the harshest level five lockdown, township farmers like Violet were constantly harassed by law enforcement officials who are notorious for undermining the rights of the poor. The women's co-op essentially served as a food source for the food parcel scheme and soup kitchens set up by the Department of Social Development which bought some of their produce.

Herbs growing in the farm

The emotional toll of farming during the gravest health pandemic in a century was made worse by the unreliable water supply of the City of Johannesburg. Endemic corruption, maladministration and the de-professionalisation of local government in South Africa have led to a dilapidated water infrastructure that loses 37% of freshwater due to bad water management. The women of Molobanye know the face of poverty and they tried to help their fellow community members by having

volunteers at the farm which they then gave some fresh produce at day's end. They also had to be generous with prices and give whatever little they could even though the farm is their only source of income, they had to practice Ubuntu.

Dried herbs ready for sale

Violet and the other women have learnt that they play a critical role in the food supply. Being easily accessible to the community, they save their community members from exorbitant transport fees. They hope that more dumping sites can be turned into farming spaces in urban areas. Space is a problem because it limits their farming and many women who want to start cooperatives and partake in farming are not able to because of land. They also wish to see more young people taking farming seriously especially with the rampant youth unemployment in South Africa. With regards to water, they have learnt the importance of using Jojo tanks since municipal water is so unreliable. The Coop also wants more farmers' markets to strengthen the relationship with informal traders. This will help their communities and themselves as they will be able to sell their produce at reasonable prices which are more profitable than selling to large scale supermarkets.

Module 6: Universities

Case Study 11: UFS Food Sovereignty Campaign

By Tshiamo Malatji & the UFS Food Sovereignty Campaign

On 16 October 2018 (World Food Day), we founded the UFS Food Sovereignty Campaign at the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein campus). We hoped to steer the university's hunger relief programmes toward agroecological vegetable gardens, fruit trees, organic markets and community kitchens. These practical ideas were tabled before our Student Parliament and to the office of the Dean of Student Affairs. What followed was an immensely bureaucratic process where our ideas were accepted in principle, but the process to implement them dragged on. Today, the university has vegetable gardens, but they are yet to adopt agroecology practices and our remaining proposals remain to be implemented. Still, the "food environment" (as the university labels it) has progressed since 2018 and the pressure of many groups, ours included, has materialised in some considerable victories, namely:

1) The creation of a Food Sovereignty Task Team,
2) the commissioning of a report into food sovereignty,
3) the inclusion of food sovereignty into the university's Integrated Transformation Plan (ITP),
4) The opening of vegetable gardens,
5) The opening up of said vegetable gardens to all students (they were reserved for residences),
6) The inclusion of fruit trees in the planning of the university's gardens, and
7) The diverting of resources for community activities toward addressing hunger.

Still, much of the campaign's ideas remain to be implemented and the university's slow and ineffectual processes have limited the ability for food sovereignty to spread through the university. This has further slowed down due to the Covid-19 lockdown,

which has been used conveniently by the university as a reason for the lack of progress on food sovereignty initiatives.

In response to these lockdown measures, we have moved much of our activism off-campus. The majority of the university's community lives off-campus. But, without access to the university's land and water, we discovered an even greater bureaucratic issue — the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. After knocking on many doors and attending multiple meetings, it became clear that there was no political will from members of our local government to use vacant municipal land for food gardens and municipal buildings for community kitchens. To make matters worse, there has been no support for informal and small-scale traders, providing more affordable food. In fact, the opposite has been the case, with the municipality cracking down on traders.

There have been elements of hope too. At the start of lockdown, we participated in an initiative that handed out food relief packages to dozens of students in need. We raised funds and purchased food for people who otherwise would have gone hungry. However, we believe so much more could be done if the people who have decision-making authority (at the university and the municipality) had the will. We realise that the journey that we, as activists, underwent has not been shared by those in power.

Our idea to campaign for food sovereignty was, after all, sparked by a presentation about the Wits Food Sovereignty Centre by Dr Vishwas Satgar in September 2018. In fact, the concept of food sovereignty revolutionised our activism at the university. Never before had it been so clear that there was a certain solution to hunger among the student community, added to addressing the loss of biodiversity, the risks of climate shocks and corporate control of the food industry. The roots of the problem were clear. The food industry was creating hunger by denying the most vulnerable access to food through centralising control over land, water and seed. At the same time, by learning about this (the true cause of hunger), pathways were opened. What we had seen but not understood before was made clear and seeds of hope emerged — we could defeat this system through a coordinated student movement.

So, we rallied for support. We visited residences and student associations. We enlisted progressive lecturers and student representatives. The campaign launched a declaration, stating:

"We, the UFS Food Sovereignty Campaign (UFS FSC) and interested stakeholders of the University of the Free State community, declare to all that this university should openly embrace food sovereignty, agroecology and a just transition to a sustainable and ecological food and agricultural system."

We knew we had entire communities behind us. This was also reflected in the declaration:

"We are not isolated in our struggle for food, dignity and sovereignty. The university community is comprised of thousands of stakeholders, who together can set a remarkable example for similar campaigns in institutions of higher learning around the world and the general global food system. Together, we can advance this collective eco-social agenda. Food! Dignity! Sovereignty!"

But many of the people we were working with have grown despondent waiting for change, showing up, again and again, to call for the university to address student hunger. In the wider off-campus community, it has been even more difficult to rally people to call on the municipality to initiate food sovereignty initiatives. We have done so again and again, but the people in the power just have not budged.

We have come to realise that the people in power do not feel much pressure from the communities they have responsibilities to because they do not feel threatened. Ward Councillors are elected each local election without providing as much as food relief to the hungry in our communities.

So, learning from this, we decided to launch a campaign for public office this year, running on many issues, including food sovereignty. We hope to create enough pressure for our elected leaders to launch food sovereignty initiatives and in the best-case scenario, run a campaign to win office so we can implement such initiatives.

Short of contesting in the elections, we believe that each community should find ways to pressure their representatives to action. These representatives are a final barrier to implementing food sovereignty initiatives in our communities. Whether it is officials at the university or officials in municipal buildings, if they are not oriented in favour of the community, we need to push them.

Here, we are doing that through a direct independent campaign for political office. We hope to revive the energy and spirits of the campaign that we launched three years ago, and bring our communities together — but this time, we aren't asking for permission for food sovereignty initiatives, we are demanding it.

Case Study 12: Stellenbosch University Food Garden

By Matthew Wingfield and Tayla David

On the 23rd of September 2020, a group of students at Stellenbosch University (SU) met to discuss the possibility of developing a food garden project. The aim of this project was three-fold: To grow crops that could aid in the alleviation of student hunger, to use the garden as an educational tool for the *Eco-Maties* student society, and lastly, to possibly incorporate the garden into degree programmes in the Agricultural Science faculty, as a form of practical instruction. As few of the founding members were Masters's students in Sustainable Agriculture and the AgriSciences faculty, many of them already had access to resources that could be used in starting the garden, along with connections to various staff members, such as Dr Ethel Phiri and Rhoda Malgas who would be essential to the longevity and sustainability of the project. It was through this connection with Dr Phiri that we were able to get access to the growing tunnel in which the project first broke ground.

The growing tunnel (offered by a faculty member) before the project began

From the initial discussions with various students and staff members in planning the garden, it was clear that one of the main challenges that would be faced in the development of such a project would be sustainability —that is, how such a project would be maintained in the future, as students move through their time at the university in a short number of years. This challenge, it was noted, had been the point of failure for past generations of students attempting to do the same thing.

Furthermore, ensuring that there were enough students regularly being involved in the propagation of seedlings, the weeding of beds and the management of the garden remained a core focus.

Preparing seeding trays

We soon purchased some seeds, and in consultation with Dr Phiri, sowed seeds into trays ranging from cabbage and spinach, to millet, amaranth and okra—Dr Phiri's specialisation in indigenous crops was educational and practically useful in understanding how to best cultivate these crops. Along with a few other peers from the Sustainable Agriculture cohort, we were able to keep on top of the weeding of the beds inside the tunnel in preparation for planting the seeds. At this point, a member that was connected to the *Eco-Maties* society began advertising this project to the societies' members, leading to a few volunteers helping out with the development of the beds in the tunnel.

Volunteers outside the garden

The garden was conceptualised to work in an agroecological and sustainable manner, to ensure that this was a financially viable project, as it was student-funded. Therefore, as noted, we propagated our own seedlings rather than purchasing these. We continuously were in conversation with a range of people within Stellenbosch University networks and externally, in order to leverage any support and donations we could; these conversations were lucrative at crucial times in the start-up phase of the garden. The organic waste from the garden

was also deposited into old re-claimed wooden bins in the hopes of creating compost.

Seedlings ready to be planted

Another core challenge that the project faced was identifying to whom the grown produce could be given. While after contacting SU management we were shocked to find out that they had estimated that about 30% of the +-30 000 students were food insecure, there was no working list of exactly who these students were. This is where the value of our growing networks came into vogue again, where we became aware of an NPO named *The Small Things Fund.* This connection gave us a way of getting in touch with students that were in need, to whom we could donate the produce we had grown to. This flourished into an established relationship that became mutually beneficial as the garden became more productive. Since its inception, we have consistently contributed to the feeding of dozens of students for almost a year, as illustrated by the image on the right.

Packaged produce ready to go

Challenges and opportunities of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic presented a range of challenges to the functioning of educational institutions throughout the world; the SU context is no different. It was clear that the information received from SU regarding food insecurity would

only be compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving an increasing number of students that could benefit from the gardening project. However, while we had expanded quite quickly in the first few months, there was no way in which we could hope to even begin to account for the exponential growth in need. The Covid-19 pandemic thus also presented stronger justification for the gardening project, where it was clear that institutional solutions were missing the mark in terms of the time of response, along with the actual need that students had.

Reflections and Future Plans

It is clear that student-led food gardens face many challenges which are further compounded by the Covid-19 context in which we are living; ensuring sustainable student support and bureaucratic hurdles are the core among these. It is further made clear by the Covid-19 pandemic that student food insecurity is not being dealt with sufficiently on an institutional level, leaving scores of students hungry, with few alternatives. This stresses the importance of such interventions as student-led gardens that grow food, but also serve as educational hubs and as support for communities during these times characterised by isolation on various levels. The SU food garden aims to keep expanding and making connections with younger generations to transfer the knowledge gained in this short period, but also to eventually leave the management of the garden to future generations of SU students that can bring their own creativity into making this project successful.

The garden project has also been leveraged as a tool in which to engage various students and other partners on the Climate Justice Charter (CJC). As food sovereignty and the co-creation of knowledge regarding such systems is foundational to the CJC, we have found it useful to use this as an entry point from which to think through the CJC at SU and its formative role in creating better lives for students while also thinking through the bigger discussions that can come out of such innovative projects.

Case Study 13: Wits University Food Sovereignty Centre

By Jane Cherry and Vishwas Satgar

Despite efforts to address hunger at Wits, ad hoc food security interventions cannot keep pace with the increasing numbers of hungry students.

The Food Sovereignty Centre at Wits not only empowers and dignifies food-stressed Witsies but is also a model of how to shift beyond food security initiatives to food sovereignty alternatives.

While interventions such as feeding schemes on campus are necessary in the short term, they don't offer sustainable solutions for food-stressed students. Add climate change to the mix, and the future for hungry students is even bleaker. Our natural food-producing systems are unravelling and hunger is increasing.

Finding sustainable solutions to hunger, climate change, and environmental degradation involves tackling the root of the crises. Advocates of food sovereignty and climate justice identify systemic causes – and solutions lie not in existing 'business as usual' trajectories, but rather in community, ecological and people-based alternatives.

The Food Sovereignty Centre at Wits provides a pathway for such alternatives on campus and in the inner city of Johannesburg.

Food sovereignty takes root at Wits

Food sovereignty refers to a food system in which the right to food is affirmed through control by small scale farmers and consumers to ensure agro-ecological food production, solidarity economy relations, healthy and culturally appropriate food.

A series of factors and events culminated in what became the Food Sovereignty Centre at Wits. These include the formation of a student-led food sovereignty and climate justice forum, which students in the International Relations class at Wits organised. The forum was formalised as a student society, the Inala Forum, in 2015 and they set up a food garden. Inala is isiZulu for 'abundance'.

Another factor was a march in 2016 against high food prices. Here Inala, the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC – a grassroots NGO), and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) handed over a memorandum to University management. The memorandum highlighted the plight of hunger in our universities and the need for Wits to support the call for a zero waste, zero hunger, and zero carbon institution.

A central demand of the memorandum was a space of dignity for food-stressed students whom the Wits Community Citizenship and Outreach (WCCO) programme supports. The WCCO runs a feeding scheme, which provides more than 1 000 hot meals to students daily, and a food bank, which provides students with non-perishables. The University subsequently earmarked the Sanctuary Building on Braamfontein Campus East for a Food Sovereignty Centre.

Food for thought too

Student organisations, the WCCO, and COPAC have since deepened their collaborative efforts to establish the Food Sovereignty Centre and its composite parts. A food garden that students initiated on campus in 2015 now supplements the WCCO's food bank with spinach, carrots, onions and cabbage. Since early 2018, Copac entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with Wits to implement the food sovereignty centre's activities, including establishing more food gardens, hosting food culture events, hosting a farmers' market, and to bring about the first eco-centric university in South Africa. In 2019 and 2020 more gardens were established at the International House residence and Sunnyside residence.

Agroecology workshop at Sunnyside Residence with agroecologist, John Nzira

The Wits Food Sovereignty Centre is organising and enabling the food sovereignty pathway at Wits and in surrounding communities. The centre is a pilot to advance and model eco-centric practices for the University, other higher education institutions, and society.

It comprises three spaces:

First, a community engagement and eco-demonstration space which serves to advance learning about climate justice and agro-ecology. The building is being renovated to embody the principles of eco-centric living and will model water harvesting, renewable energy, insulation, waste recycling and sustainable architectural design and building materials. Fruit orchards and agro-ecology gardens have been established by students and volunteers at dedicated agroecology workshops, and additional food gardens are planned.

In 2019, an internationally renowned protest muralist from Bolivia painted the building, with beautiful murals depicting indigenous plants, patterns and birds. Water tanks were bought for the centre and gardens, and an additional training space was well on its way to being built before Covid lockdown restrictions were implemented. A building company for the training space as well as a solar installer have been secured, but plans were halted due to the pandemic.

The front and side of the centre with new murals by Knorke Leaf

The second space, a space of dignity for food-stressed students is managed by students and includes a communal kitchen and culturally appropriate food preparation space. A communal kitchen with a fridge, stove and some appliances

was set up, and opened at a launch in September 2018 where students and staff came together to celebrate the opening of the Wits Food Sovereignty Centre, listened to music performances and poetry while sharing a meal together. Amnesty International- Wits took initiative on the communal kitchen where they organised students, created a schedule and helped to oversee the kitchen. Throughout the year, they were able to create a space for students who needed it, to cook their own food and share with others, with limited capacity and space they had up to 20 people using the kitchen daily. They also established a clear link between the gardens and the kitchen, where the vegetables from the gardens grown on campus were then harvested and sent to the kitchen where other students were able to cook those vegetables. Nompumelelo Mqwebu, a South African author and chef who has won international awards for her self-published cookbook came on board and collected donations for the kitchen. She also got the students in contact with some local chefs who, along with others came into the kitchen and taught students how to make meals with what was available in the garden. Due to Covid, activities at the Kitchen ceased during 2020 and 2021 but will be started up again in 2022. Fundraising initiatives are underway for modular kitchens and covered areas for students to eat.

Chef Maye teaches students how to cook at a session in the Communal Kitchen

The communal kitchens and eating spaces represent a food sovereignty alternative to the fast food sold on campuses.

Third, a *support space to advance food sovereignty in society*. A monthly Wits farmers market was launched in 2019 where small scale organic farmers from

around Johannesburg were given a space to sell their produce, and the Wits community was able to have access to a market and organic vegetables at a better price. Throughout the year, those who sold their produce at the market also attended planning meetings where they self-organised, and under Copac's facilitation, they engaged with food sovereignty concepts. Some farmers who came into the space did so initially with the intent of just selling their produce, but while being in the space many of them have learnt about food sovereignty and are now very invested in the centre and its goals of alleviating student hunger by also engaging in other projects, cook ins and regular donations to the communal kitchen. It is also a space for co-learning, as the farmers, who are predominantly black women, learn from each other and develop their own businesses and farms through advice given in the space.

Farmer's Market

The support and training space at the centre has also contributed to student and community engagement. Since 2018 the centre has engaged with students on food sovereignty and issues of climate change, this has been done at every workshop. Participants who attend agroecology workshops (including a delegation from the Eastern Cape) also engaged with the concepts and were able to go back to their communities and establish their own gardens at home with the skills they acquired at WFSC workshops. Students in the student organisations who have been part of the centre (including the Wits Student Physics Council, Engineers Without Borders - Wits) that have come on board have learned skills and are now champions for food sovereignty and climate justice.

Student organisations are self-organising to assist with the maintenance of the gardens.

SAFSC activists and students in one of the Wits food gardens

All of the activities were put on hold for most of 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 lockdown and limited access to the university. As the university opens up, the activities will start again, and more eco-centric buildings, including a seed bank, an indigenous and South African food archive, and a training space for agro-ecology is planned. The latter will be linked to the additional agroecology gardens mapped and planned for the University.

Module 7: General Case study

Case Study 14: Ukuvuna

By *John Nzira*

(Website: www.ukuvuna.org)

Ukuvuna was established in 2005 and registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) & Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) in 2016. Ukuvuna means *"a process or a period of gathering yield"*

As UNICEF Generation 2030/Africa estimated that Africa will have a population of 2.4 billion people by 2050, the majority women and youth. This prediction summarises the scale of our agricultural and urbanisation challenges: to feed and shelter Africans, create wealth for them, and to conserve resources for future generations. In this scenario, smallholder farmers in Eastern and Southern African countries are resorting to various counter-strategies to meet the growing demand and to avert food and nutrition insecurity and famine. In the past ten years, Ukuvuna, in partnership with other NGOs like SKI and COPAC have successfully trained and influenced over 8000 households to grow their own food and started Perma-preneurships in South Africa. Supporting smallholder farmers in their households is a great system however we realised that much effort was required to help individual farmers with agricultural knowledge, skills and materials to develop their own farms. The idea of the food and knowledge hub system was motivated towards developing a demonstration and sharing knowledge hub and the subsequent training and support activities for 165 smallholder farmers from Hamakuya community.

Hamakuya community is in the Thulamela Local Municipality in Vhembe District. Ukuvuna is working in Thulamela ward 6, within Chief Makuya area. For the past eight years Ukuvuna worked in ward 6 in Hamakuya villages including Dota, Mtshikilini, Makuya, Kavhambe, Gondeni and Madhamuni. The aim of establishing a food and knowledge hub was to strengthen, deepen and spread the agroecology/ permaculture technology within these six villages.

The number of people living in Vhembe District is 1 294 722 of which 54% are females. Youth below the age of 35 constitute 75% of the total population. The district has 382 357 households and 54,43% are headed by females. The literacy rate is at 96% of the district population and about 95% of the total are female. Unemployment rate is at 37% and most of the unemployed people are women. (Source, statistics South Africa 2016).

Women play a crucial role within the smallholder system and are commonly responsible for the production of food. Women and smallholder farmers aim to provide their own food, income, vital goods and services, promote rural development, create employment and accept their responsibilities as a custodian of the ecosystem. Hence, they engage in understanding and respecting ecosystem services as the pillar to support on-farm or off-farm abundance food production. For smallholder farmers this self-reliance system has no specific name and it doesn't matter what activities are practised as long there is diverse food, enough food and income for families, sharing locally and produced in harmony with nature.

In modern theories, this could be called a regenerative system. The regenerative system describes a process that restores, renews or revitalises its own sources of energy and materials, creating sustainable systems that integrate the needs of society with the integrity of nature.

Regenerative systems intertwined with agroecology principles and Permaculture design addresses the effective maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems, which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems.

The smallholder farmers in the Southern African survival system have been sustaining societies for thousands of years, however, the introduction of industrial agriculture promotes monoculture and has created a bare landscape. Monoculture is threatening the food production systems of smallholder farmers through commercial seed and agrochemical businesses who increasingly seek to privatise, monopolise, commodify, patent and control agricultural products. However, in Southern Africa, Ukuvuna is promoting anti-industrial agriculture, they aim to

establish food hubs and transform individuals, families and societies to become adaptable and resilient to social, economic and environmental challenges. Families are engaged in sharing pride in their ability to ensure food and nutrition security, and adapt to pandemics including Covid-19 and climate change through permaculture, agroecology practices and regenerative systems.

The food hubs are coordinated systems for the local community to get locally grown, small and medium scale agricultural food. The system supports indigenous knowledge sharing, food accessibility, and food availability and fosters social enterprise. The food system will therefore have shorter supply chains meaning more transparency and more participation of local farmers. The farmers will be more connected and build solidarity on food issues. Transportation and distribution of food are less costly and less polluting to the environment.

Through participatory methodologies, Ukuvuna provides capacity building and soft skills development to members of the food hub, most of whom are smallholder farmers and community leaders. Hence Ukuvuna's work empowers smallholder farmers and communities' leaders to safeguard indigenous knowledge and practices, integrating appropriate technologies to achieve food and nutrition security as well as the conservation of natural resources.

Family seed bank

Ukuvuna adopts regenerative systems to develop food hubs within communities. Regenerative systems and agroecology principles are applied when women, men and youth are engaged in the design and development of a food hub. The regenerative system

promotes a productive ecosystem that promotes soil and water management, ground cover, reuse of greywater, zero waste and use of renewable energy. The target audience will then acquire knowledge and skills to create a system of zero hunger and zero waste in their own community.

We believe that self-reliance and resilience are addressed when people have ownership of land, health and well-being, grow their own nutritious food, have the right to save their own seed, community belonging, open communication, trust and respect, lifelong learning and maintain Ubuntu (compassion and humanity). The food and knowledge hub has created a platform for networking, learning groups, and exchange activities such as expos and shows as a means of fair sharing. These events are coordinated and run by the local permaculture committee called Vhulungazwawo.

The Vhulungazwawo committee and its members consist of women and youth, who are encouraged to take ownership of the hub activities and become leaders towards self-reliance and a greater voice in the community. The engagement of young people and women ensures inclusiveness and motivates them to pursue farming as a life occupation.

Ukuvuna's unique innovative delivery approach towards establishing a knowledge and food hub is that all beneficiaries are encouraged to establish successful, local household food systems called Centres of Excellence (COEs). These outstanding farmers are organised in specific geographic areas and 10 to 15 COE's are grouped into a Community of Practice (COP). The COEs and COPs are led by Cluster Leaders who include elders, women and youth for knowledge transfer. Cluster Leaders can mobilise people in the village to take an interest in learning to live sustainably. Cluster leaders coordinate knowledge-sharing events and exchange visits to expand people's knowledge and skills at the knowledge Hub. At the Hub, clusters work with committees such as School Development Committees and community-based organisations. These committees link Ukuvuna with policymakers who advocate for broader community participation.

At the Hub, Ukuvuna promotes a circular economy system for improving the living standards of smallholder farmers, including the production of small grains, fruits, vegetables, small livestock, bees, fish, herbs, plant nurseries, nuts and pulses. Further, they are engaged in primary health and wellbeing through encouraging healthy eating, meditation and sport.

Farmers Training

Participating farmers are involved in post-harvest activities, seed saving, creating local markets, and networks and establishing saving clubs. They also learn to build low-cost bridges, dams, and water tanks (rainwater harvesting), establish plant nurseries, install solar systems, hence creating Perma-preneurships within their own communities.

Environmental issues are addressed through improved permaculture and agroecology knowledge and skills around water management, soil conservation, indigenous seed revival, seed saving and plant nurseries for regenerating biodiversity. This results in the creation of sustainable food forests in communities. The landscape is restored for providing greater food availability for wildlife and communities. These transformed communities are growing indigenous crops that are more resilient to climate change resulting in improved ecosystem management and environmental stewardship.

Ukuvuna facilitates annual organisational development (OD) for community leadership and board members. We facilitate participatory action research through Dialogues for Climate Change Literacy and Adaptation and Community Mapping. The process helps to disseminate information and gather stories of change, knowledge

sharing events like field days, agricultural shows, seed and food expos. The process also improves the quality of leadership within the program framework.

Our unique delivery and capacity building model allows the communities to continue with sustainable livelihoods beyond funding. The skills embedded in the community empower them to expand this model exponentially, resulting in the self-reliance of many people. Our work promotes the inter-generational approach by involving the elderly and youth to 'pass the baton' of leadership from the elders in due time.

Training in mulching

The hub infrastructure is built within communities with local resources where possible, so the community would continue to access and maintain it beyond external support. During Covid-19, Ukuvuna proved that training and knowledge sharing could continue through the delivery model using various alternative social media platforms. Ukuvuna has ensured the long-term buy-in of the traditional and local leaders, who are supportive and keen on the expansion of permaculture regenerative activities in their communities.

Module 8: Conclusion

The globalised and corporate-controlled food system is failing. We have to deglobalise our food system and delink from corporate value chains. This means we have to assert food sovereignty to ensure we meet the needs of people and nature. This has already begun. In the case studies shared, food sovereignty pathways are being built in rural communities, peri-urban areas, towns and cities, amongst small scale fishers and at universities. Activists have started getting organised, are building local alliances and community relationships, learning agroecology, working hard and are building a support infrastructure for food sovereignty pathway building. Some have fully-fledged hubs, others are working from gardens and small farms while others are supporting food initiatives in their areas.

The next food shock is around the corner, and so is the next climate shock. The SAFSC has encouraged local food sovereignty pathway building as a response since 2017. The Covid-19 pandemic confirmed the importance of this. We have the answers, experience and practice to deal with what is coming. We can feed ourselves through food sovereignty. There are challenges, but learning from each other means that we can figure things out together. The constraints of financial resources have not stopped activist initiatives and pathway building. We must keep the momentum going, deepen pathways and scale-up hub building so we can have zero hunger in our streets, communities, villages, towns and cities. It is happening but let us take this further.

Add your food garden, campaign initiative, forum and hub to the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign food commons map here: https://www.safsc.org.za/food-commons-projects/safsc-category/community-garden/.

Let us show South Africa and the world that the next food system is being built now. Together we can inspire others to do the same.


CLIMATE
JUSTICE
CHARTER
MOVEMENT
SAFSC
SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN
COPAC
CO-OPERATIVE AND POLICY ALTERNATIVE CENTER