

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARKS' (SANPARKS) KUDU GREEN SCHOOL INITIATIVE TACKLES CLIMATE CHANGE!



Despite the fact that Climate Change is talked about widely, there has been no corresponding evidence of the increase in public climate science awareness and understanding nor increase in positive public attitudes and opinions about climate science. Raising awareness about climate change or simply knowing will undoubtedly under-prepare a young nation facing an uncertain future. A dedicated educational programme is recommended to encourage active participation in biodiversity matters that relate to climate change.

SANParks as a Conservation Agency is not immune to the changes taking place in the climate and has taken an initiative to help improve climate science literacy. Advocating for changes in lifestyle and behaviours that favor resource conservation can contribute to climate change mitigation. The Kudu Green School Initiative (KGSi), a SANParks environmental education initiative, is such an initiative which seeks to address this demand. It is hoped that this will in the long term heighten the level of awareness and interest in conservation and climate literacy amongst urban

learners and encourage them to pursue conservation and climate - related careers whilst assisting them in responding to local environmental challenges that affect their schools-communities adaptability to climate change.

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PROJECTS

The sustainability project was started with a workshop to introduce sustainable schools concept to learners, teachers, SGB members, and school maintenance staff. This was followed by drawing a contextual map of the school in order to assess the school's current management practice and its environmental performance, and to identify priority areas for environmental action.



Figure 1: Contextual Map of the Nicholaas Laerskool in Pretoria West.

Analysing school environmental performance

The school groups then completed an analysis of their school's environmental performance using criteria: Energy Use, Water Conservation, Health and Sanitation, Waste Management and School Grounds, Greening and Biodiversity to deliberate how their school is currently performing against these criteria. The "School's Handprint" according to the criteria scores on a range scale gave a visual perception of the school's current environmental performance and from this the groups were then asked to



Figure 2: "School's Handprint" of the Sapebuso Primary School in Soweto.

prioritise 3 potential areas their school could work on to improve their environmental performance. This activity allowed for active dialogue and participation among the participants. Learners were given the opportunity to present their findings to the rest of the bigger group.

With the capacity being built to pursue the green school concept in the maintenance of their school yard, schools have initiated Environmental Clubs to engage learners in self-reliant, sustainability projects such as building solar cookers with the aim to harness solar energy and to educate learners about solar energy and energy conservation.

School grounds, as a local resource has been well managed for productivity, recreation and learning. Local (indigenous) knowledge has been harnessed where possible in the development of an indigenous garden for their school nutrition project which provides food to the needy.



Figure 3: A food garden for school nutrition programme. Figure 4: Learning in the environment



Figure 5: Presentations by schools through environmental games, exhibitions and dramas



Through the KGSi project, one of the school situated within the mining town, has propagated the Spekboom plants to curb the impact of climate change. The schools boasts of litter free school grounds by managing their litter properly with litter bins set up in front of every classroom that have been donated by SANParks. An exhibition stall was organized showcasing projects within the schools and raising awareness about conservation and “climate literacy” to all.

The skills and knowledge acquired will be transferred to the homes in the surrounding community where the individual children emanate and translated into profitable income generating initiatives to improve the livelihood of the destitute families to face the future with pride, dignity and confidence.

Professional development of educators

The KGSi project provided an accredited short skills course for each of the



educators in each of the identified schools in addressing environmental issues. This course 'Take Action to Address an Environmental Issue' formed part of their school based task which aimed to help educators select, investigate and research an issue identified by KGSi team at their schools.

Figure 6: Accredited training for educators in the KGSi programme.

Wilderness Experience

Three luxury 23–seater buses have been acquired through the South African Lottery



Funding. The environmental camps were planned for all the schools for a wilderness experience in a Provincial and a National Park. This was to widen the knowledge about parks and conservation initiatives.