

Sustainable Development

MODULE GGY 356: RELIABLE HOUSE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT USR WEEK

Course description

The module conceptually integrates environmental, economic, and social components of sustainable development. Other topics covered include changing perceptions on development and environment, development paradigms, challenges of sustainable development, actors and actions in sustainable development, rural and urban livelihoods, and a Third World assessment of sustainable development in the developing world.

Community challenge

As part of the GGY 356 course curriculum, we conducted two visits to the Reliable House project where the UP students initiated a food garden on the premises. The Reliable House offers recovering drug addicts a placement for a period of six weeks to help them acquire skills for re-entry into society. The home is situated in Hatfield, City of Tshwane. While the recovering addicts and other homeless people stay at the home, they are provided with food. The Reliable House, however, is also dependent on funding and donations from entities to keep the home functioning.

Opportunity description

As part of the GGY 356 module, we covered topics related to the issues of urban poverty, which is identified as Goal 11 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are also stated imperatives of teaching,

learning and research at the University of Pretoria. The GGY 356 module students are therefore encouraged to engage with the stated SDGs as we try to understand the extent of these challenges in the South African context. The visit to the Reliable House presented students with a real-world encounter of the nature and extent of the dimensions of urban poverty and required them to engage with the feasibility of potential strategies that can be deployed to address this challenge. Students were given a task that required them to think about ways of assisting the University of Pretoria in addressing urban decay, unemployment and poverty in the context of the Hatfield area. GGY 356 students decided to use their knowledge and skills to assist in initiating a food garden on the Reliable House premises. They had to decide which commodities to plant based on nutritional and practical considerations. They also needed to use their insights and knowledge on issues related to seasonality, slope, sun exposure and soil conditions to plan the design and layout of the food garden.

Impact (community and students)

The practical exercise given to the students required them to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired over the last few years of enrolment at the University of Pretoria to engage with the real-world dilemmas of displaced and homeless individuals in the Hatfield city context. Students were divided into

groups in order for them to learn from the insights of other group members. The group members consisted of students enrolled for either BSc Geography and Environmental Science, BSc Geology, BSc Soil Science and BSc Geoinformatics degrees. Added to the students from the NAS faculty, group members also included students enrolled for the BEd and BA degrees. The groups consisted of social science, education and NAS students who were able to have discussions about an SDG challenge from their distinct perspective, which allowed them to learn, not only from the actual practical encounter, but also from each other.

While planting the seedlings, students were assisted by some of the residents in the home. The interchange between the students and the residents of the home was an interesting opportunity to interact and exchange ideas. The students used the opportunity to encourage some of the residents. At the end of the visits, the Reliable House premises had an additional 1000 seedlings consisting of cabbage, beetroot, spinach and onions planted on the premises. Only organic fertilisers were used and the students' insights during the planting of the seedlings will ensure a sustainable harvest for many years to come.

