

Sustainable Development

MODULE GGY 356: VIVA VILLAGE 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

VIVA Village in Mamelodi offers a number of strategic support mechanisms to residents based in Alaska, an informal settlement situated at the eastern outskirts of Mamelodi, City of Tshwane. The informal settlement surrounding VIVA is therefore an impoverished community where unemployment and lack of services are a general occurrence. Children in this community generally also do not receive adequate nutrition. To combat the dire circumstances in the surrounding community, VIVA has taken up the responsibility of providing daily lunches to primary school learners enrolled at the very well-equipped school on their premises and offers lunch to high school learners enrolled at a nearby secondary school. To achieve the objectives of improving conditions in the area in terms of access to sound education and nutrition, VIVA is, however, dependent on support/donations from

external entities. Vegetables grown on the premises were therefore seen as an important source of input to secure the daily demand for lunches that would feed children from the surrounding area. The lunches offered at VIVA are also a crucial incentive to ensure that children attend school on a daily basis.

Opportunity description

As part of the GGY 356 module, we covered topics related to the issues of urban poverty, identified as Goal 11 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are also stated imperatives of teaching, learning and research at UP. For 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 VIVA thus 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 VIVA in addressing the nutrition challenge faced by learners in the surrounding area. GGY 356 students decided to assist by initiating a food garden on the VIVA premises using their knowledge and skills. They had to decide which commodities to plant based on nutritional and practical considerations. They also

had 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 student required them to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired over the last few years of enrolment at UP to engage with the real world dilemmas of people living in an informal settlement. Students were divided into groups in order for them to learn from the insights of other group members. The group members consisted of a mix 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 were a mixture of social science, education and NAS students who were able to have discussions about an SDG challenge from their distinct perspectives, which allowed them to learn, not only from the actual practical encounter, but also from each other. As an outcome, VIVA had an additional 1 000 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.

