



NEWSFLASH #9: AUGUST 2017 ECOFUTURES PROGRAMME



LAUNCH EXPO: Enabling rural youth to choose green economy career paths which contribute to a more resilient society

The two day EXPO was facilitated by members of the locally based **uMzimvubu Catchment Partnership Programme (UCPP)**, a civil-driven alliance between state, NGOs, leadership and community groups, as part of the launch of the **ECOFUTURES programme**, which is aimed at fostering youth awareness of and involvement in the Green Economy.

This event was the eighth in a series of water and ecological awareness events arranged by the **UCPP** since early 2015 in the Matatiele area. Increased awareness and ability to act effectively is a vital part of securing the upper catchment of the uMzimvubu river basin as a Strategic Water Source Area (SWSA), one of 22 around the country. These SWSAs form only 8% of the

country's surface, and yet they provide over 50% of our national water supply. Healthy catchments help to buffer against extreme events such as floods and droughts. Their conservation and healthy functioning is critical as we move into uncertain times of climate change and unknown rainfall patterns.

The Alfred Nzo District has an estimated 96% of the population without access to tertiary education (Census 2011). The District's 2016 IDP statistics indicate a rapidly growing youth sector, where almost 80% of the population is under 35 years old, constituting both an opportunity and immense challenge. Matatiele Municipality at the top of the catchment has strategically chosen to invest in both youth development as well as agricultural enhancement, including processing and value adding, in alignment with its investment vision for tourism, nature and agriculture.

Water shortages and energy challenges, pollution and resource shortages, along with unemployment, sustainable development and livelihood security challenges, give rise to the urgent necessity for innovative approaches to addressing income generation and meeting socio-economic needs. With support from the WWF Nedbank Green Trust for 2,5 years, the **ECOFUTURES** programme is being developed as a UCPP-driven effort to respond most effectively to this spectrum of challenges in the rural upper watershed area of the uMzimvubu catchment, piloting an innovative approach for potential expansion across the District.

The EXPO was a means of exposing local youth to the range of opportunities available in the Green Economy: exhibits included the DUT Energy Drive truck, Eastern Cape Parks & Tourism, AgriBioTech plant processing, DuraWash clean carwash, Department of Environmental Affairs, Sutherland Seedlings, Endangered Wildlife Trust crane conservation and bee-keeping, and citizen science and recycling displays by ERS and CSA on behalf of UCPP. Attendance by schools was hampered by tests, lack of transport from rural areas and other commitments such as sports days, but students from 6 schools in the area participated and filled in application forms to participate in the ECOFUTURES internship.

Several speakers from local enterprises, including uMafrika recycling, Durawash, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Conservation SA and the Transkinirha Trust gave inspiring talks, rounded off by the Matatiele Youth council chairman who gave a brilliant talk encouraging the vital effort to involve youth in the pursuit of green economic options.

