



UCPP NEWSFLASH #13: ECOFUTURES UPDATE

UNPACKING LOCAL GREEN ECONOMY CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The Ecofutures programme is a pilot process in the upper uMzimvubu catchment, which aims to open up opportunities for local youth, with limited tertiary access, within the local green economy. The pilot aims to develop a process which can be used in other rural areas with high unemployment and landscape challenges: this aim makes the lessons along the way important to learn from! Please see newsflash # 11 for more background on the concept.

Application, screening and short-listing of candidates saw the initial 94 applicants in late 2017 filtered down to a final 16 towards the end of phase 1 in mid-2018. The applicants went through an intense exposure and initial training process which involved opening their minds to environmental issues

and career opportunities which can serve livelihood needs, contribute to the local economy, and have a positive impact on the landscape and society.

These exposure activities included:

- Observing Working for Water teams which provided an overview of why we clear alien plants, methodologies, site management and safety measures.
- Citizen science training introduction (theory and practical)
- Visit to off-grid farmstead using green energy development alternatives including solar, wind and biogas.
- Visit to a landfill site, followed by a visit to a recycling collection depot looking at what is recyclable, sorting waste and transport logistics to the market.
- Visit to AgriSpace campus where groups of innovative youth are exploring different bioprocessing ventures, followed by a visit to a local farm where wattle is being used as a feed base for winter fodder and feed supplement production.
- Visit to a village based charcoal production project run by innovative youth in the Mt Frere area
- Financial and computer literacy training
- 'Idea generation training 'to build on participant's skills on how to make an idea "come alive", and secure its place in the market.
- An exciting hiking trip to the Wild Coast near Port St Johns, to experience being a tourist and the opportunities available in the ecotourism sector. The trip provided a lot of insight about amaMpondo culture, as well as geology, plants, history, climate, and different categories of accommodation such as backpackers, homestays and lodges, as well as the use of green energy in remote wilderness areas.

These exposure and training opportunities made extensive use of the wide range of UCPP partners' skills and networks, providing a rich and stimulating few months for candidates to learn from. For many, it was their first experience as a tourist, or to see a landfill site, observe wattle as a problem, or to know that plastic can make money from recycling. It is important to note that these visits were voluntary, and no subsistence allowance or stipends were offered except transport catering and accommodation where necessary. This showed a lot of determination by the candidates and was part of the 'filtering' process to gauge who was serious about pursuing a 'green' career. Other monitoring tools were used to check progress and participation, in a form of open discussions, completing questionnaires and writing reviews on the programme/process.



Hands-in introductory training to citizen science techniques



Career variety workshop presented by experts to inspire youth



A talk by professional guide Mr Zukulu on rock formation during a hike along the beach

This phase 1 process, of exposure and selection towards a more intensive phase 2 for fewer people, led to the need for a 'transition' phase between phases 1 and 2, and further learning by the UCPP facilitators regarding how this process could become a replicable model for other areas. Phase 2 'thinking' initially involved working on a chosen career stream, as a result of phase 1, that one would like to pursue, but it was realized that phase 1 requires more exposure and support to allow candidates to effectively choose, rather than fall into a default, career.

An open call for mentors for a two month period was circulated to the UCPP network as part of phase 1B, and candidates are currently doing work placements as follows:-

- 2 candidates with ECPTA in tour guiding near Port St Johns
- 3 with umAfrika recycling in Matatiele
- 2 with Wildcoast Sun hotel in environmental compliance
- 9 candidates under rangeland management and biomass value adding activities in Matatiele area, rotating between ERS, CSA, LIMA, Azanian Charcoal and Meat Naturally Pty

These placements will be for a duration of 2 months until mid-July with a paid monthly "stipend" mainly to cover travelling costs, and candidates are expected to submit weekly reports on their activities, come up with suggestions/ advise their hosts on operations such as safety measures, recycling processes, efficient water and energy use, participate in environmental day events with local schools and UCPP partners.

They also have to complete a six week on-line course in Sustainable Consumption & Production (SCP) designed by UNDP and tailor-made for the Ecofutures candidates to expand their knowledge and enhance their new computer skills.



AgriSpace entrepreneurs share production ideas

The ongoing framework and support of the programme has vested other opportunities where some participants are receiving training in:-

- Enterprise management, through AVOCADO Vision
- Tour guiding, by ECPTA
- Environmental justice training by GroundWork

Thanks to core UCPP partners including CSA, ERS, EWT, Matatiele Municipality, ECPTA, Meat Naturally Pty, Avocado Vision, and DEDEAT for their enthusiasm and guidance.

The next six month phase will involve selection of 4 final candidates from this group, who will function as full-time interns within their chosen career paths and with specific UCPP mentors, and will receive further accredited training in Occupational Health and Safety, First Aid, basic GIS, further citizen science and other skills relevant to producing capable, competent, enthusiastic actors in the local green economy.



Ecofutures group at the mouth of the uMzimvubu at Port St Johns

Further information on the programme status can be obtained on this website link: www.umzimvubu.org/ecofutures

ECOFUTURES is a collaborative concept developed and driven by UCPP partners, facilitated by ERS with WWF Nedbank Green Trust support. Conservation SA is collaborating on a key component of the entrepreneurial training with support from CITI Foundation.

