Notes: “Urban Agriculture Forum”

SITE VISIT AND DISCUSSION #3 AT
Pietermaritzburg Child Welfare Soup Kitchen Garden

Date: 12th February 2014, Wednesday Time: 09:00 – 11:00 Venue: Mayibuye Centre in Dambuza

1. Welcome - Professor Robert Fincham

2. Handover of Donations - Farmyard Organics
100 bags of compost (Farmyard Organics) and 2 trays of seedlings (Sunshine Seedlings: cabbage and spinach, 100 seedlings each) were presented by Shepherd Kazunga of Farmyard Organics to Pietermaritzburg Child Welfare.

3. Vermicomposting Demonstration – Wiz Worms
You can use a lot of organic waste in the worm farm. Weeds, waste veggies from the soup kitchen all of which can go into a worm farm. Cardboard is essential to worm farms (20-25% for all organic waste added). No onions and citrus. The worm waste which is liquid is highly nutrient. An asset that is of value. Worm wee adds vigour to a garden (studies have showed great improvements to gardens). You also get compost (used in pot plants and seedlings).

Three other organisations/individuals also have worm farms: Bruce Haynes, Eden Kids Foundation Trust and Mpopomeni Conservation Group.
4. Mayibuye soup kitchen programme - Child Welfare
The garden services more than 200 children on a daily basis. The idea was that the garden supports the soup kitchen but has failed to do so because a lack of resources. The person in the garden wasn’t trained. The kids are not involved. Farmyard will keep monitoring to see the improvements.

5. Garden Tour

- More space for development (plant trees, compost heap, mulching). Turn it into a working community centre.

- Mpopomeni Conservation Group offered assistance BUT wants to work directly with the children and youth. Community (children) involvement is key. Maybe a portion of the garden to be owned by the community. Joel Ruttenberg (Eden Kids Foundation Trust): if utilising children in the garden, safety is important and make it fun. Set of swings right at the back of the garden. Door size gardens for the kids. What they can maintain and own. Shepherd Kazunga: managing the garden, there is no way it can done without the community. Don’t give them food for a day but rather for a lifetime by training the community (sustainably feeding).
Don Blacklaw: The project can easily fail if there is no single person accountable for the project (there needs to be strategy going forward; finance, monitoring, planting plan, needs and sustainable management). Rob Symonds: it needs an individual who will drive the project. Will donate some hay bales for the mulching.

Bruce Haynes: inspired by the experience. Got the conservation group who have experience in facilitating how to garden in a long term way. If transport costs are covered, transport conservation group to the site.

Jonathan Mponda: garden at Snathing, passes by twice a week, Tuesday and Thursday. No problem if they have the kids and he can train because he passes by (an hour or two with the kids and staff).

Brian Karlsen: mulching is important reduces watering and weeding. Spare seedlings from UKZN trials they will donate the excess seedlings to the forum.

Rob Fincham: engage with the ward councilor Majola (ward 11). How are we going to coordinate the work. MIDI’s role is to facilitate the process going forward and set up a strategy with Child Welfare and the offers of assistance

6. Group Discussion

- Mpopomeni Conservation Group: The children and elderly get readily involved in their community gardening initiatives. They go door to door initiating gardens (rats and fencing are major problems). Gardens at schools and homes. Green fund donated tools as a result of the Urban Ag Workshop. At Mpopomeni they want to build a permaculture training centre (waiting for municipality to give them the lease). Lots of dumping areas; willing to change them into permaculture gardens (firstly teach the community next to the dumpsites about the risks). Nelisiwe: didn’t like gardening. But when she had TB she lost her job. Doctors advised to buy greens but it is expensive. Approached Ntombenhle to start planting because they have free land. She has kids involved. TB free because of the garden.

- Mpopomeni and Howick (near taxi rank) idea of opening up a demonstration garden (information site). MIDI to add professional support (interaction with municipality) and community based organisations. Even if you have great ideas the municipality doesn’t want to listen. Develop a strategy to address the issues with the municipality.

- Communicating stories out to the public. Rob Symonds: Verdant life blog. Post on things related to sustainability. Farm gate blog. Almost completed forming a Midlands Organic Growers Association: developing an organic certification scheme, set up a resource for information for others to use. Blogging provides a world of knowledge (you have to read to blog). Facebook is a powerful resource. Blogging is like the media (gives you up to date information).

- MIDI webpage: partner with all the organisations and communicate the CBO’s message on MIDI websites.

7. Date and venue of next meeting

Jika Joe Informal Settlement (Eden Kids Foundation Trust Community Garden) 9th/16th April 2014