Rural Action for Climate Resilience

Co-funded by the European Union

Hello, Friends!

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Rural Action for Climate Resilience (RACR) newsletter, marking our third issue for 2023.

In this issue, we will be sharing the progress of the RACR project activities and sharing project highlights of all the remarkable work that has taken place within the project during the past quarter. We are excited to see each and every one of you working towards a sustainable future and building resilience against climate change.

RACR Learning Festival

From 29 August to 1 September 2023, we hosted the final installment of the RACR Learning Festival in Cape Town, bringing together approximately 60

participants, including faith leaders, community legal advisors, development officers, and youth citizen journalists, from rural areas in Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Northern Cape.

The participants engaged in informative topics around climate change including gender and human rights in the context of climate change hazards and responses, faith's role in addressing climate change, and had interesting learnings about the #NuclearFreeSA Campaign and how to make a hotbox for cooking.

Learning Festival Highlights

#EnergyPlan4All vigil outside Parliament

Following the learning festival conversations on energy and climate justice and the impact nuclear power has on climate change on the second day of the

Learning Festival, faith leaders gathered outside Parliament for a vigil, together with South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI), The Green Connection, and Project 90 by 2030 to fight against the current energy crisis in our country, in particular, the use of nuclear as an energy source and demand affordable, clean energy source and an #EnergyPlan4All.

Women in the Just Transition

In celebration of Women's Month, on the evening of 31 August, as part of the Learning Festival programme, RACR hosted an event on Women in the Just Transition. The purpose of the event was to highlight the critical role of women in climate resilience, the Just Transition, and fostering collaboration within the climate change sector.

Our panel discussion on Women in the Just Transition was joined by RACR youth citizen journalist and activist Amber Julius, community leader Phumeza Sibengile of the Masiphakameni Advice Office, Saliem Fakir of African Climate Foundation, and Francesca de Gasparis, SAFCEI Executive Director and was moderated by Keren Ben Zeev of Heinrich Boell Foundation.

Through this panel discussion, participants in the RACR project and others in the sector gained a deeper understanding of the intersection of climate change and gender.

Networking opportunities were a vital component of the festival, fostering connections among RACR project participants and other professionals in the climate change sector. These connections are essential for building collaborations and sharing knowledge that will drive progress in climate

resilience efforts.

The evening event also highlighted the project's efforts to enhance climate resilience in rural communities through a photographic exhibit.

Popular Education Materials

The RACR team produced a popular education material in the form of a poster that depicts these different climate change hazards and responses in a rural South African landscape, based on the inputs from the participants at the Regional Workshops held this year.

The map is thoughtfully organised into five sections: firstly, it examines our physical environment, highlighting natural and man-made features that shape our community. The second section focuses on our community's structure, gathering data on demographics, livelihoods, population density, and power dynamics. In the third section, past hazards and potential future risks are documented. The fourth section analyses vulnerable social groups. Lastly, the map facilitates open discussions on response strategies, emphasising collaboration and collective efforts to enhance climate resilience.

The map is available in English, IsiXhosa, and Afrikaans.

Engaging with local government

On 13 June 2023, three organisations in the RACR project sent a submission on the state of governance of the Beaufort West Municipality and its repercussions on service delivery, with particular attention to its adverse implications for climate resilience. The Beaufort West Municipality meeting originally scheduled for March, wherein the submission would be considered, has not yet taken place. However, it is anticipated that when rescheduled, the submission will be taken into account. The organisations have been collaborating on the submission since late February.

The submission was put together by Merweville Advice and Development Office, Beaufort West Legal Advice and Development Office, and Nelspoort Advice and Development Office. It is broken up into different sections, focusing on inadequate public participation and consultation, poor service delivery and infrastructure maintenance, and how leadership instability impacts service delivery, budget allocation, and development.

Grant recipients

Compost-making training by John Nzira

Permaculturalist, John Nzira recently provided compost-making training to community gardeners in Dordrecht with the Boniswa Machubeni Primary Co-Operative.

Compost-making not only reduces the carbon footprint as we recycle material that would have ended up in landfills, but it also improves the structure and health of the soil by adding organic matter that helps the soil retain moisture and nutrients while reducing the need for pesticides and fertilisers.

Field visits

On the 15th of August, our team had the privilege of conducting a field visit to Merweville, alongside SCAT's Director Dr. Joanne Harding, and Anna-Marie Müller from DGMT. Our primary objective during this visit was to connect with the dedicated individuals comprising the Merweville Advice and Development

Office team, the board overseeing their operations, and members of the Garden Steering Committee. These individuals play pivotal roles in shaping the CBOs' development and well-being.

Our visit extended beyond meetings and discussions. We had the chance to explore the community garden that is being re-established with funding provided by RACR's Climate Champions Core Grant. Notably, although the planting season had not yet commenced during our visit, it was revealed that planting activities were scheduled to commence in spring. Additionally, we conducted an inspection of the recently installed ferro cement tanks, which are essential for water storage and management. These tanks represent a significant investment in the community's infrastructure, aimed at improving access to clean water, an invaluable resource for the town's growth and sustainability.

Merweville Ferrocement Tank Building

The Merweville Advice and Development Office came together with dedicated committee members, staff, and volunteers to build a sustainable ferrocement water tank.

A ferrocement water tank is a water storage structure constructed using wire, cement, sand, and stones. This technique creates a strong and long-lasting tank capable of holding water for various purposes, such as drinking water, irrigation of crops, or water for livestock. Ferrocement tanks are known for their durability and ability to withstand harsh environmental conditions. Watch the full video here.

What's Coming Up?

Field visits to the Core Grantees alongside John Nzira from 9 - 16 October.

Online seminar on seed saving and the dangers of GMO seeds: 19 October 2023. Facilitated by Edmore Parichi. (Further details to be confirmed and shared in the WhatsApp group).

Things to watch or listen to:

Just Us and the Climate podcast: Spotlighting Mpumalanga's arduous journey through an energy transition fraught with challenges, as it grapples with the complex interplay between coal dependence and environmental degradation.

Cape Town TV Social Justice Channel.

Latest articles by RACR Youth

Citizen Journalists

Climate Change activists stage protest at Cape Town Civic Centre over Earth Overshoot Day

Dams overflow, but fishers unable to make a living

Who stole our oceans?

Revolutionizing agriculture to combat climate change

Thank you!

Your hard work and dedication to this project are phenomenal, continue to inspire others and build a more sustainable and resilient future.

RACR Team.

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