

Mobilising young people in South Africa to develop drought resilience

Young South Africans produced a video and a policy document as co-researchers on the GCRF-funded project 'Patterns of Resilience'. They also developed ways to become more resilient to drought that had recommendations for local people, schools and community groups.

Natural disasters and hazards such as drought impact negatively on the social, economic, and environmental systems that affect young people's mental health and wellbeing. The impacts of drought on young people are particularly severe in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a large population of people under the age of 25 who also, and at the same time, face development challenges such as inequality, exclusion, poor education and a lack of employability skills.

Through co-design and co-production, the project explored the resilience of young people living in the drought-challenged Govan Mbeki municipality of Mpumalanga, South Africa with an interdisciplinary research team from South Africa and the United Kingdom.

The project team used information from historical documents archived in South Africa (e.g. newspapers, colonial records), combined with

rainfall data, to produce a time-line of drought severity for the study area back to the mid-19th century. Working with a community partner and local Masters students, young people from Govan Mbeki were encouraged to use arts-based activities to explore and communicate their personal, family, community, cultural, and environmental responses to times of drought.

The project made 10 recommendations for organisations at local, provincial, national and international levels, which include for the South African government that young people should be engaged by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry as part of the National Water Resource Strategy and for the Mpumalanga Province that district municipalities should be instructed to support young peoples' initiatives in saving water.

"The young co-researchers have new skills as well as new knowledge which they are applying in their communities. We are hoping that the materials will be used more widely in South Africa by NGOs, government policy makers and on university courses because there is a serious drought problem in South Africa."

Professor Angie Hart



Credit: United We Stand
https://www.brighton.ac.uk/_pdf/research/crsj/United-we-stand.pdf

CALL: GCRF Building Resilience to Environmental Hazards 2016

COUNTRY: South Africa

TITLE: Patterns of resilience among young people in a community affected by drought: Historical and contextual perspectives

GRANT NO: NE/P016057/1

UK LEAD: Professor Angie Hart, University of Brighton

FUNDER: Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

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