

# PROMOTING HEALTHY & RESILIENT ENVIRONMENTS

*Healthy communities through healthy environments*

## **The Wits Siyakhana Initiative**

School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies  
Faculty of Science



# TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES



“The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and difficulties within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole. We need to shift our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community”.

Peter Block, Community: The structure of belonging



# SOUTH AFRICA STATISTICS



- 54% of the South African population are food insecure (SANHANES 2012)
- 71% of poor urban households are food insecure (AFSUN)

**A Health and Social Crisis!**

# WITS SIYAKHANA INITIATIVE



- The Wits Siyakhana Initiative (WSI) is promoting innovative and trans-disciplinary research and interventions to help address this crisis
- WSI is a leading incubator and repository of knowledge and best practice relating to food security, urban agriculture and agro-ecology
- WSI is formally located within the Wits School of Geography, Archeology and Environmental Sciences (GAES)





# VISION AND MISSION



## **Vision**

To promote healthy urban communities in South Africa.

## **Mission**

To grow knowledge, capacity and leadership enabling South African communities to access good food and healthy environments.



# SIYAKHANA'S STRATEGY

## ■ Growing networks

- Siyakhana Garden
- WITS, UJ, UCT, SU
- Gauteng City Region Observatory
- African Food Security Urban Network

## ■ Growing leadership

- EU Edulink II Programme → Masters' Level Course
  - Building capacity of WITS academic staff
  - Lectures, supervision and mentorship of students
  - Publications

## ■ Growing healthy children and youth

- Improving school environment
- Good nutrition





# SIYAKHANA'S STRATEGY

## ■ **Growing high-level partnerships & collaboration**

- SA Food Lab
- SA Human Rights Commission
- Provincial and Local Government
- International university partnerships

## ■ **Growing capacity via Siyakhana Agro-Ecological Hub**

- Tangible example and learning system accommodating researchers
- Health Promotion Courses for community, civil society & government
- Agro-ecology courses





**2005: Transforming a dumpsite...**





**Into a thriving social enterprise...**





Oyster mushrooms



Peaches





**Harvests of fresh garlic**





**Spinach**





Winter frost



Summer Growth

# ADMIRABLE TRACK RECORD

- Solid and highly relevant research outputs
- Extensive networks and partnerships, both local and global
- Alignment with global, regional, national, provincial and local government policy, MDGs, WHO, Environmental health etc.
- Innovation and social leadership
- Focus on food security, agriculture, health and environment, especially related to climate change, biodiversity loss, urbanisation and the food/water/energy nexus, geo-informatics urban-rural resource flows
- WSI's trans-disciplinary approach is aligned with emerging best practice in addressing complex issues





# WITS ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & HEALTH

## **The Challenge:**

- Food security is threatened by climate change, urbanisation and ecosystem destruction
- These interrelated crises are new and poorly understood

## **The Need:**

- Increased knowledge for innovation
- Capable leadership

## **Our contribution:**

- Enterprise development
- Edulink II → Certificate of Competence Course on Food Security
- Building capacity of WITS academic staff
- Training and mentorship of students
- Pioneering and relevant research



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Biggest contributing factor for co-morbid diseases was not HIV but ***hunger***

- Reduce poverty and hunger ('hidden hunger')
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/Aids, TB and other chronic diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development





# AGRO-ECOLOGY BENEFITS

- Enterprise development and entrepreneurship
- More productivity
- More jobs and better incomes
- Reduced climate change emissions;
- Less water intensive and more drought tolerant;
- More resilience against droughts and other effects of climate change;
- Provide food sovereignty, and resilience against food price increases.

# ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS

- Best presentation at 2013 GDARD research symposium
- Winner 2011 “Best Innovative Project” & “Best Overall Community Project” in Gauteng
- 3rd Prize 2012 Award in the National Conservation Agriculture category
- EU award for building leadership in food security in SA
- Multi- and inter-disciplinary research and teaching with several schools and departments
- Working with national, provincial and local government sectors

# ENDORSEMENTS

*“The Siyakhana Initiative has proved that it is not just making a difference to the people of Gauteng, but is also making a significant impact country-wide. You have indeed done the Province and my Department proud.”*

MEC GDARD: Ms N Mayathula-Khoza

*“I have noted the economic benefits of this initiative especially with regard to the creation of green jobs as well as entrepreneurial development and this is in line with the Department's objective.”*

MEC GDED: Mr N Kolisile

*“We consider the Siyakhana project to be a developmental programme of significant public value.”*

City of Jhb, Director of Social Assistance: Jak Koseff





## City of JHB Food Garden





# North Eastern University and School children workshops

