

CODE Forum 2026

Introduction to the Papers and Workshops

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Diaconal Community Development and Environmental Consciousness: Mobilising Marginalised Youth in a Climate-Stressed South Africa

This paper examines the urgent intersection of environmental degradation and youth marginality in South Africa. By exploring lived experiences in both sudden-onset disaster zones and areas of slow-onset ecological decay, the study illuminates the profound psychosocial toll of climate stressors on vulnerable populations. Using empirical data and a case study (Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa [URCSA] congregation) as a practical model, the research demonstrates how integrating contextual eco-theologies with therapeutic support, such as art-based trauma processing, fosters tangible post-traumatic growth. The paper concludes with a definitive call to action: marginalised youth must no longer be viewed merely as passive victims of the climate crisis. Instead, through robust interfaith collaboration and targeted diaconal empowerment, they must be recognised and actively integrated as essential co-creators of sustainable development and holistic community resilience.