

# RURAL REVIVE



Building a local economy, driving progress, sustainability and community empowerment



## Taking stock and looking ahead

2024 has been a year of significant and tangible progress for RuralRevive. From starting waste management initiatives to supporting local farmers and training local small entrepreneurs, we've seen our vision for a desert-based circular economy come to life. With our dedicated team, partners, donors and community support, we look forward to continuing this journey in 2025 and beyond.

Thank you for being part of the RuralRevive Initiative. Together, we're building a sustainable future within the Namibian desert!

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## Celebrating Three Years of RuralRevive

Welcome to the first edition of the RuralRevive Newsletter! We are excited to share key milestones of the year 2024 as our initiative continues to grow, reaching more people within and beyond Maltahöhe. Over the last three years, RuralRevive has stayed committed to its founding ideals and expanded its focus on sustainability, community development, and the creation of a thriving desert-based economy. This newsletter is a reflection of our achievements, highlighting key moments and progress made.

Photo below is taken after the morning circle on a given day during 2024. By now some 30 formerly unemployed residents found meaningful work in Maltahöhe, both full-time, part-time and casual.





### RuralRevive registers with the Namibian Agronomic Board

RuralRevive has been officially registered as a crop producer with the Namibian Agronomic Board. This recognition as a legitimate producer opens up new opportunities for us in both formal and informal markets, furthering our mission to promote sustainable agriculture and food security in Namibia.

### The DesertRunner: Connecting RuralRevive with the Namib desert



November 2024, we have successfully launched our DesertRunner, a transport system designed to streamline weekly logistics for RuralRevive and local businesses. From staff commutes to and from surrounding areas, to transporting linen, fresh produce and recyclable waste. This initiative provides affordable transportation and supports a thriving local economy by connecting the RuralRevive Laundry and Trading Hub with local southern lodges, ensuring everything runs smoothly. Plus, it's helping improve waste management by efficiently moving refuse out of the desert to Maltahöhe.

## A Circular Economy The heartbeat of RuralRevive

At RuralRevive, we are pioneering a desert-based economy that's grounded in the principles of a Circular Economy. In simple terms, a circular economy is one that works like a closed loop, where nothing goes to waste.



*The official landfill site at Maltahöhe is major mine of hidden resources. Metal, plastic, glass and Aluminium - worth a little fortune - awaits harvesting and managing. The landfill site forms Phase 3 of RR Waste Management Initiative and will be addressed as soon as possible.*

Everything we use—whether it's a glass jar, manure, or water—is seen as a resource that can be repurposed to create something new. This system is inspired by nature, where even the death of a tree contributes to the cycle of life by nurturing new growth.

In contrast, a Linear Economy – which relies on a “take, make, dispose” model – extracts resources, uses them, and discards them, leading to waste. This unsustainable model can't last. The circular economy, however, is all about finding new uses for what would otherwise be discarded. For example, discarded glass jars can be cleaned and reused to sell homemade preserves, and livestock manure can be converted into compost to nourish crops. At RuralRevive, we're working to create a collective awareness of this potential, helping our community see value in materials that might otherwise go to waste. By embracing this mindset, we can unlock new opportunities for sustainability and build a cleaner, healthier future.



## Queen of the yard



Wilma Garises - who is also one of the founding board members of RR Section 21 - came back to her hometown of Maltahöhe from Swakopmund to put shoulder to the wheel of the RR Solid Waste Management. Apart from managing day-to-day collection and sorting and accounting of recyclable waste, Wilma's special focus will be to explore creative ways of turning trash to treasure. Like her signature handbags made from packaging converted into a useful and sexy day-to-day commodity.

## Solid Waste Management – Turning Trash into Treasure

In August 2024, we launched a community-led waste management facility at Maraun's Garage, which now operates full-time with a dedicated team of four. Led by our Trash-to-Treasure Manager, Wilma Garises, this project has already started making a visible difference in Maltahöhe. Some 22.000 (yes, twenty-two-thousand) bottles have to date been collected from the streets, resulting in payouts in the tune of NAD 15.000 to waste collectors.

A crucial partnership for RuralRevive is with Rent-a-Drum Namibia, who continue to provide invaluable technical expertise and support to our team through education and capacity building in waste management.

We are also proud to partner with Namibian Breweries, who play a key role in our waste management initiatives by regularly collecting empty beer bottles brought in by local waste collectors. In exchange for these bottles, the collectors receive cash, helping to keep our streets clean and promoting a circular economy. This partnership supports both local livelihoods and our environmental goals.

In addition to the bottles, 17 bulk bags have been sorted into Aluminium cans, plastic bottles, plastic bags, paper and carton, awaiting transport to Windhoek and the Rent-a-Drum recycling Facility.

The next logic step will be the establishment of a bulk storage facility in Mariental, enabling other communities to connect to the national transport system, ideally direct to recycling facilities in South Africa.

## Sports for Wellbeing

As part of our effort to instil well-being to the community, RR has partnered with the Maltahöhe Volleyball Club.



*The team receiving nets and Volleyballs*

Providing basics like nets and volleyballs is a start, and the beginning of our journey to use sports as a means of promoting physical and mental well-being. 2025 will see a more structured approach in supporting youth empowerment through sport.

## The Nursery – seeds for change

The RuralRevive Nursery continues to thrive, providing 1000's of seedlings monthly to local farmers, lodges, and community members. Whether you're looking to plant a backyard garden or expand your farm, we make it easy to access quality, organic seedlings. Production for a local vegetable economy - geared at the lodges in the Namib and local food security - is managed through this nursery, one seedling at a time. In anticipation of ever growing demand, an expansion of seedling farming is currently taking



*Some of our laundry ladies getting on Charlotte, ??? doing*

## Laundry Services

The RuralRevive Laundry service has grown tremendously this year. What started with four women from Maltahöhe has now reached full capacity, servicing around 15 clients, mostly local lodges. This project is providing consistent work opportunities, building a steady income stream, and empowering local women to thrive.

We aim to engage more local tourism establishments in supporting the sustainability of our communities and the environment. Given the fragile water situation in the desert – especially now, as we face one of the worst droughts in over a century – water conservation has never been more critical.

At RuralRevive, we are committed to using water sustainably through our recycling plant, which helps nourish our decorative gardens and supports local food production. By partnering with us, tourism establishments can play a key role in fostering both social and ecological wellbeing.



### Agri PV taken to new level

After overcoming several hurdles related to rezoning and subdivision, RuralRevive is thrilled to announce progress of our new greenhouses at the church property! These greenhouses, rich in organic content, are now bustling with life, growing fresh vegetables and salads that support our local food production efforts.

What's even more exciting is the installation of a 50 kW solar system, providing clean, renewable energy for the project premises and much-needed shade for our horticulture planters.

Initially, this photovoltaic solution powers our laundry and irrigation system.

Once legislation allows, RR will scale energy production and start to feed into the local power grid, and thereby contribute to a greener, more sustainable Maltahöhe.



### EconoMix – Basics of business



In 2024, we have seen the success of our EconoMix Program, which empowers aspiring entrepreneurs. The first cohort of seven entrepreneurs is now pursuing various business ventures, each supported with a N\$ 2000 grant. Despite a few dropouts, this program has fostered social cohesion and encouraged intergenerational dialogues, helping individuals grow beyond business skills. A second cohort of 10 participants successfully completed their training in October 2024 and are now working on developing their individual business



Graduates from the second cohort receiving their Certificates for successful completion of the course.

ideas. The final cohort, consisting of six community members, has begun their training, which is expected to conclude in April 2025.

Additionally, we have created accessible video tutorials that share valuable lessons on micro-business development, available to the community on open platforms.

[Check out the tutorial videos on the RuralRevive Youtube Channel, as well as some other interesting videos.](#)

### Connecting locals through community Open Markets



RuralRevive has hosted 11 community open markets this year, providing local farmers, artisans, and businesses a chance to showcase their goods. These markets not only strengthen local connections but also serve as a vital foundation for The Barn, a future marketplace dedicated to sustainable goods and services. The ultimate goal is to host a weekly Open Market at 'The Barn', located at the former PEP Store. The Wolwedans Foundation acquired the building in 2023 with the aim to convert it into a buzzing trading hub, including a coffee shop and RuralRevive Canteen.

### RuralRevive becoming a Section 21 (Association not for gain)



From left to right: Armanda (Youth and Development Officer), Emilie (Treasurer), Benno (Monitoring), Stephan (Director and Initiator), Wilma (Trash-to-Treasure Manager), Marika (Ground Project Coordinator), Reinhold (Overall Project Coordinator), Ceciliah (Happiness Manager), Antonia (EconoMix Facilitator), Oom Piet Bamm (Operational Manager).

On July 26, 2024, RuralRevive held a historic constitutional meeting with its founding members to validate and sign the constitution, officially establishing the RuralRevive as a Section 21 company. This milestone marks the transformation of RuralRevive into a fully-fledged non-governmental organisation, dedicated to serving the Maltahöhe community and beyond.

## Wolwedans Desert Academy

### Expanding Vocational Training to Maltahöhe



*The first Horticulture Group completed their training at Wolwedans in late 2024.*

In an ambitious new chapter, the Wolwedans Foundation is set to expand its footprint with the expansion of Wolwedans Desert Academy to Maltahöhe. Wolwedans Desert Academy is an NQA accredited training provider in the fields of Hospitality and Horticulture.

Located closer to rural communities, this new campus will deliver accessible and practical education, focusing initially on entry-level agricultural programs for small holder farmers and eventually broadening to include advanced Hospitality, Horticulture and, at a later stage, Facility Maintenance training.



Whilst Wolwedans Desert Academy in the aNmibRand Nature Reserve will continue as the flagship institution, the Maltahöhe campus will embody the Foundation's commitment to decentralising vocational education and empowering underserved communities. Whilst Level 2 - both theory and practical - will be taught at the Maltahöhe Campus, Level 3 job placements will be at Wolwedans and other lodges coming on board of the NTA's WIL (Work Integrated Learning) Programme.

Since its establishment in 2007, the Wolwedans Desert Academy has been a flagship institution for vocational training in Namibia, setting benchmarks in skills development and sustainable education. To date, some 350 young Namibians were graduated through the Wolwedans Foundation. In 2024, RuralRevive has made the exciting decision to relocate and expand the Desert Academy to Maltahöhe to make training more accessible to people from the region and grow impact. This new campus promises to extend the Wolwedans Foundation's impact on Namibia's youth and rural communities.

Starting in 2025, this initiative will launch with a focus on horticulture, offering sustainable, practical skills that align with local needs and the RuralRevive ethos. Over time, it will evolve into a comprehensive vocational training center, providing a well-rounded educational experience for the community.

## Scenes from Blikkiesdorp



*Day-to-day life in Blikkiesdorp - the informal settlement in Maltahöhe - is tough and a real challenge. From lack of water, electricity (for most), makeshift shelters (Kambashu) to unemployment. And yet, the spirit of the people is very positive.*





### Internship Program

Meet Emerson Van Rooi, a recent graduate from the Wolwedans Desert Academy and a key contributor to RuralRevive. During his internship, Emerson helped establish horticulture gardens on five communal farms, playing an important role in their growth and sustainability.

Emerson shares his experience: "Being part of RuralRevive has been incredibly rewarding. It pushed me to grow as both a leader and mentor, and the community's openness to learning was inspiring. I've loved seeing people embrace new knowledge to improve their gardens. I look forward to more youth joining RuralRevive, and I believe that, no matter the challenges, there's always a new perspective to be found if you're willing to learn."

Emerson's vision for the future is clear: "I want to see these gardens reach full production and continue to expand. RuralRevive has helped me deepen my passion for agriculture and take my *knowledge to new heights.*"

We are proud to see Emerson and others like him lead the way in building a sustainable future for rural communities.

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We wish to welcome our new horticulture team members, Jimmy and Sandra! With Sandra handling the bulk of the admin work, Jimmy is bringing hands-on support, their contributions will be key to keeping production running smoothly.



### Supporting communal farmers

RuralRevive is proud to continue supporting communal farmers in the Maltahöhe region. Through our various efforts, including our partnership with GIZ's *Farming for Resilience* programme, we have been offering practical short courses to help farmers enhance their skills. From this initiative and our regular field trips, we have identified four local farms to work closely with, focusing on boosting their horticulture efforts. We are thrilled to share some early successes and the positive impact we're already seeing.

### Farm Mara – Orchard



Run by Cunstaf Hanse (90) his wife 85 year old wife and their son, this resettlement farm has seen impressive results thanks to our support, including irrigation pipes, seedlings, and water tanks. These resources, co-funded by the Capricorn Foundation , helped them grow a range of healthy vegetables, earning over N\$4,000 at the Mariental Farmers' Market in October 2024! It is a encouraging beginning for the Hanse'



### Capricorn Foundation puts shoulder to the wheel

In a landmark moment for sustainable development in Namibia as a whole and RuralRevive in particular, the Capricorn Foundation announced its partnership with the Wolwedans Foundation during a ceremony on March 15, 2024, in Maltahöhe.



FLTR: Mr Ruan Bestbier, Veripura Muukua and Marlize Horn (CEO Capricorn Foundation). Top Treeplanting to mark the occasion.

### Farm Vaalpomp



Another resettlement farm that received similar support – shade nets and seedlings – has transformed into a thriving garden of organic, fresh fruit trees and vegetables. Ready for market and already making an impact! While these two farms are already reaping the rewards, the other farms are not far behind, all working towards reaching their full potential with our continued guidance and support.



This collaboration signals a significant step towards empowering rural communities and fostering economic resilience in the region. And, importantly, gradually getting the Namibian corporate world on board. The Capricorn Foundation has pledged a substantial N\$1 million to fuel the RuralRevive: Building a Desert-based Economy initiative.

In celebration of this collaboration, a White Karee tree was planted, symbolising the foundation of long-term growth in Maltahöhe. In addition to the Capricorn Foundation's pledge, other partners supporting the initiative include the Social Security Commission Development Fund and the Julius Baer Foundation.

# Faces of RuralRevive



From top to bottom left to right: Cecilijah (Wolwedans Happiness Coordinator) with Hanse at Farm Mara | Mrs | Bianca (Laundry) | a village child | children at Blikkiesdorp | Reinhold Mangundu (Project Coordinator) and Anna-Marie van Wyk (Vaalpomp) | Tannie Sanna (Chef at Maltahöhe Hotel) Enrico (RR Gardener) and his family | Anna-Marie (Farmer from Vaalpomp) | Oom Piet (Ops Manager and Uncle Jimmy (Horticulture) | Annie Wilna (Recycling) Emily (Accounts) and Antonia (EconoMix) | Johnny Mallet (Draadcamper from Schlip) | Stephan (RR Initiator and Chairman Wolwedans and designer of our first newsletter ;-).