

SA women to raise concerns at COP21

Thousands of South African women will register their concerns and demands to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP21) taking place in Paris, France from 30 November to 11 December.



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The resolutions of the conference will replace the Kyoto Protocol, and different stakeholders will use the platform to voice their concerns about the impact of climate change. South African women, represented by the non-governmental organisation, GenderCC Southern Africa - Women for Climate Justice, will be among those who want their views to be heard.

GenderCC SA - Women for Climate Justice conducted various workshops to highlight the impacts of climate change on women and grassroots communities in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, North West and Gauteng provinces in the build up to COP21. Over three thousand women attended the information and discussion workshops where they raised a number of issues they want climate change negotiators and policy-makers to take into account as they plan the future of the world.

Governments must act

According to Dorah Marema, executive director of GenderCC SA, the potential of agriculture and food security in Southern Africa could remain a pipedream if the governments do not actively address obstacles facing women producers.

"Women want to move beyond the slogans and mere talking and focus on sustainable solutions, since they feel the brunt of climate change especially as smallholder farmers. It is unfortunate that the powers that be decided to host COP21 in Paris, one of the most expensive cities in the world, whilst millions of women at the grassroots communities across South Africa and many other developing countries are struggling to access finance for them to adapt to the changing climate," Marema explains.

Studies have found that the success of increased agricultural production and food security for Africa, rests largely in the hands of women farmers on the continent. Women farmers play a major role in food production on the continent, as the majority farmers and are key contributors to household food availability.

Severe constraints

Female farmers face severe constraints as compared to their male counterparts when it comes to accessing productive resources such as land, credit, technologies and information. Ignoring the potential and contribution of women in agriculture may come at price for the continent.

Attendees at the climate change workshops demanded:

- Financial support for the Green Climate Fund from which women should be supported.
- More government support for small scale women farmers.
- Inclusion of women in all decisions affecting women, especially in relation to climate change.
- Provision of relevant and affordable climate smart technologies for women producers.
- Support for women on renewable energies.
- Urgent need to address water infrastructure challenges impacting on women farmers.
- Provision of more information and education around climate change.

Agriculture has been cited as one of the main contributors to greenhouse emissions and a major driver of deforestation. The sector continues to be painted as both the villain and hero in the climate change debate, despite it having the most to lose from changing weather patterns and the related impacts having dire consequences on women and children in Africa.

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