



Facing Challenges and Generating Opportunities

Case Studies and Interventions on
**Women, Climate Change and
Agriculture**

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of case studies was prepared by GenderCC Southern Africa - Women for Climate Justice (GenderCCSA) as part of a project entitled "Mobilizing Women's Voices Around Food and Climate Justice in South Africa (Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Free State, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal," which was initiated in 2016 with support from Oxfam South Africa (OZA) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality (UN Women) South Africa Multi Country Office.

GenderCCSA in partnered with the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) and Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA) to build capacity of women in communities and the opportunities that adaptation efforts can present. They have been calling upon the various government departments and development partners to implement proposed strategies and measures that advance the land rights, food security, and climate justice agenda and to ensure financing for these efforts and for follow-up support. Adapting to climate change underlines the importance of knowledge and information. The lessons of climate change risk-proofing - both positive and negative - have to be shown that effective dissemination of information means reaching grassroots women.

The aim of this project was to ensure that women farmers in rural and peri-urban famers in South Africa are capacitated in climate change adaptation and capacity building in sustainable farming methods strengthened to focus on areas of selected crops, access to water and energy in order to stabilize and improve yields. The premise to this is that community based responses that can build resilient societies to climate change need to be scaled up to every other parts of the country in order to build climate resilient societies that are able to adapt to climatic changes, food insecurity, and limited rainfall, in order to deal with the water, food security and energy nexus to enhance sustainable development. Yet the food security and asset possession of rural small-scale farmers are severely limited.

Women and Impacts of Climate Change

Climate change is expected to affect many sectors of the natural and man-made sectors of the environment, and many of them are of particular relevance to the work and livelihoods of women. Women living in poverty are the most threatened by the dangers that stem from climate change. Women in South Africa are not immune to these climate change threats. In rural communities women are largely dependent on natural resources and agriculture for their livelihoods. Climate change will mean that the supply of natural resources will be threatened. Agriculture may become less viable. As it is, in many provinces of South Africa, farming activities take place on the edge of survival. Even minor changes to rainfall patterns (especially coupled with increased severity of droughts and floods) threaten food security. Women living in rural and informal settlements are vulnerable to frequent extreme events like flooding.

The climate change capacity building workshops and dialogues have the potential to facilitate gender mainstreaming and programme efficiency, thus contributing to capacity building and empowerment especially of grassroots women as producers and distributors of indigenous knowledge and has clear benefits for the communities that they will serve. This will also assist in achieving the long-term development goal of ensuring environmental sustainability.

The Food, Water and Energy Nexus

The impact of climate change, water stresses and access to energy on women is well documented. When water is short, it impacts on women's ability to manage health and sanitation in the family; safely prepare and to grow food. When energy is inaccessible (2.5 million households are without electricity), women are forced to spend valuable time searching for and collecting wood for fires or forced to use cheap sources of fuel such as wood, coal and paraffin that have adverse impact on their and their family's health; they do not have the means to/ for safe storage and preparation of food; and they don't have access to technologies that help farming or water collection. Climate change will exacerbate these stresses and women living in poverty will bear the brunt of the impacts. Women in the Limpopo region of Mopani, for example, are likely to be exposed to more extreme yearly flooding. Women in Limpopo and Eastern Cape are likely to experience drier conditions and find it difficult to grow food and access water for daily use. These beneficiaries have little "voice" and access to decision-making to address these challenges, expressing a need for knowledge of policies, as well as connections to stakeholders (e.g government) that could help.

Women's Access to Land and The role of Traditional Leaders

Another added key issue is that South Africa continues to recognize non-elected traditional leaders who have important powers, especially over rural land. Management and administration of rural land are critical roles played by traditional leaders and are intimately related to many of their other functions and responsibilities. Traditional leadership presides at the nexus of current controversies over land in South Africa and they are playing a key role in the land reform process. This is because they maintain effective control of allocation and management of land in many areas. However, just as traditional leaders understand their dynamics, awareness of the risks of cultural fragmentation and gender discrimination is essential, particularly within a larger society that continues to address the legacy of apartheid. While the pluralistic nature of South Africa has been rightfully embraced, there is also a danger that traditional leaders could perpetuate potentially divisive ethnic and gender identity politics. Moreover, adequate progress has yet to be made in terms of ensuring the realization of rights of equality and non-discrimination; the responsibility to respect and ensure these rights falls both on the state and on traditional leadership.

Economic Transformation for Women Smallholder Farmers

In this advent of climate change, it is crucial that women farmers, cooperatives and groups are mobilised to realise their rights to land, tenure and climate justice. It is believed that if women farmers have access to skills, resources, services, information and technologies for sustainable agricultural and productive activities; if they are able to participate fully in the agricultural value chains and markets; have access to finance they will be able to adapt to climate change.

OVERVIEW

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. Women 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.

Many grassroots need financial support for the Green Climate Fund from which women should be supported; more governments 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; and 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.

This collection of case studies starts from the premise that women are not just affected by climate change the most but that they may be effective agents of change for both mitigation and adaptation. They have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction, and adaptation strategies. As GenderCC, we recognize technology needs for women as of highest order. We also recognize women's indigenous knowledge towards enhancing adaptive capacity. Women have a lot of knowledge useful for adaptation because they work with the environment through their household duties including fetching water, gathering firewood and fruits and farming.

When developing and implementing adaptation strategies at the local level, either in rural or urban settings, it is critical to recognise and respect the greater vulnerability of women to the impacts of climate change as well as the difference in the way they are affected in comparison to men. For instance, they are more strongly depending on well-functioning infrastructure for water and sanitation, energy services, and mobility which is at risk due to extreme weather events.

CASE STUDY 1



Nombulelo Mbandesi

Goedgevonden Youth Development Services, Vendersdorp, North West

Goedgevonden Youth Development Services is a homebased care NGO based in Goedgevonden village outside Vendersdorp in the North West Province. Since its establishment several years ago, the NGO, which has 11 members, ten which are women, has been involved in health care services and a feeding scheme for beneficiaries, who predominantly are orphans and vulnerable or food insecure community members.

The organisations render healthcare service to elderly people and run a soup kitchen for orphans and vulnerable children and families. However, according to Ms Nombulelo Mbandesi, chairperson of the NGO, running such an organisation is costly as they have to buy the food used in the kitchen. To bring the running costs down, the group established backyard food gardens to grow at least majority of the food used in the kitchen. The organisation is currently using two of the members' properties to grow among other things spinach, chillies, pumpkin, and indigenous beans used for dual purposes. "The bean plants' leaves are edible and are highly nutritious. We cook, dry and grind the leaves to make soup and the beans are also dried, packaged and sold in winter times," explains Nombulelo.

While the vegetables are used in the soup kitchen, the surplus is sold and some donated to vulnerable families to cook themselves. But the money raised through sales is not enough to run the organisation effectively. There isn't enough support from government or private business either. Goedgevonden YDS sometimes receive support from the Department of Social Development for their home based care services. "This happens once in a while though," says Nombulelo. Other challenges include theft and climate change. There was a burglary recently at the Goedgevonden YDS offices where all the computers were stolen and fences at our projects are often stolen, resulting in losses caused by animals destroying the plants. All these challenges are made worse by issues of climate change which has affected the project's water supply. Because of the recent droughts, water supply in the municipality was affected and the project sometimes go for many weeks without water. Nombulelo says the rain patterns and temperature have also been affected by climate change. She says the rise in temperatures is affecting plant growth and therefore yields. The organisation lost almost all their pumpkin crop following an attack, for the first time, by an unknown worm which they believe could be attributed to climate change.

Lack of resources and infrastructure is also a huge challenge to the youth group. This has made it impossible to mitigate against effect of climate change. "We have had some good rains recently, however, due to lack of funding, we don't have water storing facilities such as large tanks nor afford to drill our own boreholes," explains Nombulelo. She adds that putting the plants under shade nets would help protect them from the heat. "But we don't have money to put up shade nets for the plants," she says.

According to Nombulelo, the members attend courses on permaculture and other agricultural production related courses to try and equip themselves with knowledge. She says they would like to be supported through training, and donations not limited to monetary, but of infrastructure and other inputs such as seedlings and fertilizer for their project to be successful and sustainable.

CASE STUDY 2



Bophelo Thembisa Cooperative

Castille, Thembisa Village, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province

Three members of the Bophelo Thembisa Cooperative, Grana Mahlake, Linda Maltji, Petra Makhubedu, from Bushbuckridge attended the recent workshop organised by GenderCCSA in Johannesburg to come learn, share ideas and network with other women running rural agricultural enterprises. The women gathered around for three days to discuss issues relating to climate Justice, agriculture, and food Security.

According to Grana Mahlake, proceeds from their farms makes it possible to attend such informative workshops, where they get information which contributes to the business growth. The three women are part of the five members of the Bophelo Thembisa Primary Cooperative based in Castille Village outside Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga Province. The other two members are men. The cooperative produces vegetables and ground nuts on an 8 hectare communal farm and make beads jewellery for extra income.

Starting the project was not easy for the group. After receiving permission from the chief to utilize the 8 ha, which they had to develop by hand, the Bophelo Thembisa members is currently only using 6 ha. Using their own resources, the members managed to put up fencing for the 6 ha using second hand barbed wire and self-made poles cut by hand. This is because the cooperative receive no support from neither the municipality nor department of agriculture in the area. During their first year of operation, 2015, the cooperative planted only two hectares under groundnuts and sweet potatoes. The harvest was good, they used proceeds from the sales to further develop four more hectares.

Due to challenges relating to lack of infrastructure and resources, other crops are not doing well. Their biggest challenge is lack of infrastructure for irrigation and water storage facilities. "We started off, fetching water from the nearby river to manually water the plants and later received a hip pump which does not require electricity as a donation," explains Grana. They use the pump to draw water from the river into buckets, then from buckets into drums which they use to store water. These challenges has driven Bophelo Thembisa to specialise in ground nuts and chillies which are more tolerable to these conditions and heat. "Because our area doesn't experience extreme cold in winter, we manage to plant all through the year which helps when coming to cash flow," says Grana.

Last year they managed to harvest and fill ten 20l buckets with ground nuts which they sell for R250.00 each. Their weekly chillies sales ranges between R300.00 and R500.00. According to Grana, with more support, they would easily double or triple their income as there is a huge market for their products. “We don't struggle to get customers. There is minimal wastage as all our products are sold,” she adds.

Climate change has affected the project, especially excessive heat which affect the crops and members ability to work. Plant growth is affected, therefore yields are going down, explains Grana. Although Bushbuckridge itself is a hot area, Grana believes that the temperatures are on the extreme rise making the heat intolerable. This according to her, has affected the work output due to shortened working hours due to heat. She says by 10am, the sun is already too hot to work under, therefore they have to cut their working day short. Lack of rainfall also has had an effect on their project. Following the recent drought which affected animal grazing, people often let their animals out overnight or too early to allow them enough grazing time. “We have to wake up too early to go to the farm and stand guard to prevent the animals from entering the farm because of poor fencing infrastructure,” Grana explains.

CASE STUDY 3



Small-Scale Farmers and Markets

Leeko Mokoene - Made with Rural

Raised in a farming area and being surrounded by a legion of farmers it's no surprise that the passion for everything agricultural caught up early on for Leeko. With a background in Business and Human Resources Leeko has strong business acumen and people skills. This coupled with her upbringing in Makapanstad, North West formed a strong base for being the creative and innovative social-entrepreneur she has become. Leeko was also a commercial farmer for many years specialising in chilli, onion and herb cultivation - to date she still produces Chilli Relishes for upmarket restaurants. But the bigger picture has always been about empowering rural farmers, through her company of 5 years Made with Rural - The aim is to assist with many challenges that hamper small-scale farmers in competing in the main stream economy as their counterparts.

Made with Rural Farming Approach

Leeko's approach to farming is centred on a concept of Cluster Farming and Buying which provides a holistic approach to making Agribusiness work. The purpose of this model is assist small scale rural farmers to focus on growing crops that are consistent in quality and frequency of supply to potential customers. This is done by bringing a cluster of small scale farmers to leverage their numbers in order to meet order quantities, get better pricing and grow their businesses. With Community Development being the core of what Leeko and her team are passionate about, assisting small scale farmers does not end with helping them access profitable markets. The team is also central to providing education on and outside the farm, this entails changing mind-sets about certain crops and teaching about what is required to sell to formal markets. Small scale farmers are encouraged to plant high value crops and specialise instead of growing the usual less risky crops they are accustomed to. This, she adds will result in small scale farmers having a competitive edge and entrenching themselves in the industry.

What lies ahead....

Leeko is at her happiest when she sees a farmer tripling their crop through their intervention. The biggest stumbling block however remain the older generation of farmers as they are used to old and trusted methods and are not open to change. She adds that one of the strategies they have devised is to ask farmers to lease a portion of land to Made with Rural to demonstrate new methods and creative ways of cultivating land.

Through her many networks and work with government they ensure that farmers obtain the necessary tools and seeds to bring back life to the barren fields. Through an APP, they allow farmers to get instant updates on information pertaining to climate change, such as rainfall patterns and changes in the planting season. It also seeks to educate, analyse and provide solutions designed to improve farming methods and practises of small scale farmers. This result in better planning for small scale farmers when dealing with their crops both on field and off field. Leeko says through this initiative they are beginning to record numerous successes. One farmer made R22 000 in just three weeks from selling her crop and this is the sort of success that she hopes to see replicating itself in communities across the country.

Made with Rural

Do good, solve problems, and reap the benefits (profits). This is how Leeko Mokoene managed to build two successful brands Chilladiddo and Made with Rural which complement each other at solving challenges faced by rural smallholder farmers. Young, creative and a vibrant social-entrepreneur, Leeko Mokoene, is CEO of Chilladiddo, an agro-processing business producing chilli condiments for various food businesses started her business in 2010. Apart from making money, Chilladiddo was her way of offering a route to markets for rural small-scale farmers who produce quality products, but for some reason, are struggling to access formal markets.

With this in mind, Leeko made a commitment to purchase 80% of Chilladiddo ingredients from smallholder farmers to help them sustain their agribusinesses. But not long after this, reality hit... As a small business, Chilladiddo's quantities were not enough to absorb all the produce coming from their suppliers. "We found ourselves having to turn back produce, and this was not part of the plan," says Leeko. As a product of a rural smallholder farming family, Leeko understood first-hand the challenges faced by smallholders. "We didn't want them to remain emerging forever, so we started looking for much more advanced methods and ways to get them participating at a bigger scale in the agricultural value chain, even if it meant outside Chilladiddo".

Starting Made with Rural

"Small scale farmers have unique problems or challenges that require patient markets. To sustain the existence of small scale farmers, formal markets need to offer much more than off-take agreements," explains Leeko. She says rural farmers are isolated. Thus, information discussed at the level of formal markets doesn't reach them.

"With the new Agri-business BEE Codes, formal markets are required to increase procurement from small scale (rural) farmers. Formal markets who are prepared to procure from small-scale growers, require product assurance and in most cases, certified farmers. Most rural farmers are not yet at that stage. That is where Made with Rural (MWR) comes in," she explains.

The MWR approach is designed to bridge the information gap (disconnect) and offer a platform for both small scale and township farmers and formal (fresh produce) markets to do business with each other. MWR's focus, Leeko says, is not only ensuring that farmers have off-take agreements with formal markets, but assist growing their skills and businesses, through ensuring they are compliant and sustainable.

The Value of Partnerships

Due to the enormous challenges faced by the farmers, a small establishment as MWR, had to look and work with a corporate partner. That is how, Dew Crisp, a leading provider of value added salad products to retailers and food service companies operating in Johannesburg and Cape Town, came into the picture. "The people at Dew Crisp have been instrumental in helping us address the challenges for these smallholder farmers. At the top, is training, production inputs, certification, cold storage and transportation," Leeko explains. She says their partnership with local government entities, farmers and Dew Crisp has allowed MWR to tackle challenges one at a time. Another partner is the City of Tshwane, through its Agri-Park, which has helped with cold storage needed to warehouse the products while awaiting cold transportation provided by Dew Crisp. As part of its enterprise development contribution, an important element of the new BBBEE Codes, Dew Crisp also assist with mentorship and training. These partnerships have helped change the lives of hundreds of farmers. According to Leeko, some of the farmers, have for the first time in their farming lives seen income exceeding R30 000.

Three Way Commitment

Leeko admits that one of the biggest challenges with trying to bridge the gap of market access for small farmers is low production. This, at times causes problems for initiatives such as MWR when they can't find enough produce to fulfil their contractual agreements. This is a big challenge, she acknowledges. However, following MWR's research into this problem, it was found that some of the reasons small scale farmers are not productive or farming at a bigger scale (in cases where they have the land), was mainly because they are not confident enough whether or not their produce would be bought.

Leeko says they decided to approach it from that end. "We have taken care of the market, and it is very important that this market comes with the patience required for this target group," she stresses. She adds, "As much as the market is prepared to procure from this target group, it is also important that they help build them up first, so issues of assurance can be addressed, and this include assisting with production inputs in most cases, seedlings, fertilizers etc. Made with Rural facilitates and manages that entire process".

Of course, there are always challenges when starting to address problems such as this - hence MWR decided to start small and grow as the model's teething problems are taken care of. Currently, MWR is piloting a Cluster-farming Model in Makapanstad, Hammanskraal, Soshanguve, Winterveld and Rooiwal, all near Pretoria. "We are only selecting farmers, already actively producing, in and around these areas," says Leeko. The MWR programme requires farmers with basic farming skills, open to advancing their knowledge, interested in growing their businesses, who are open to a contract-farming or off-take agreement model. To make this work, the three: the farmer, MWR and partner must be highly committed to the course.

Spreading her Wings

Although the programme is currently only in Gauteng and parts of the North West provinces, the plan is to take it national once the model is perfected in these areas. Pointing out opportunities in expanding, Leeko says through working with a major partner such as Dew Crisp, which supplies national stores, it will allow for MWR to assist more farmers in different parts of the country at a later stage. She adds that MWR has also set its eyes on more corporates with a national footprint, especially large hotel chains and other food companies. “However, the challenge will be to find willing companies which will not only assist with growing plans, but enterprise development funding that will help support smallholder farmers with inputs, training and a central hub where they can collectively store and transport their produce,” says Leeko.

GO RURAL App also provide the farmers with extension services support between planting and harvest, where farmers can send pictures of problems/diseases etc. through to the experts at Dew Crisp or service providers paid for by Dew Crisp to assist in identifying and diagnose the problems to offer solutions such as spraying programmes etc.

“The main aim of the App is to encourage group buying and selling to allow small scale farmers to participate significantly in the country's economy. The App's next phase will have features that will allow it to be made available for the public who can order and buy online,” explains Leeko.

CASE STUDY 4



Nono Sekhoto - Movers and shakers

In the fast-lane with agri's youth ambassador...

From being selected as an agricultural representative onto the Presidential Youth Working Group to hosting a delegation from the Oklahoma State University (OSU) from the United States on her family farm, 2015 has been an eventful year for Dimakatso “Nono” Sekhoto who four years ago swapped a successful career in the bustling financial capital of South Africa, Johannesburg, for a career in agriculture.

Nono has a BCom Degree in Financial Accounting; a certificate in Agricultural Enterprise Management; and is also a graduate of the GIBS Goldman Sacks 10,000 Women Entrepreneur course. She has participated in various local and international agribusiness programmes and courses for young entrepreneurs. Nono says her decision to leave her career in the financial services sector did not come lightly, but she wanted to pursue a more meaningful role in life and this resulted in her moving to the family farm. We sat down with Nono to find out what drives her and what her experiences has been as a young businesswoman in agriculture.

Nono is operating from her family farm, Makolobane in Senekal, a small farming town in the Eastern Free State, Nono is on a committed drive to empower fellow young farmers and entrepreneurs. The Makolobane farm has a herd of 650 beef cattle and 700 ha arable land under maize and sunflower. It is also known in the Eastern Free State for its apple production under 4 ha. The types of apples produced on the farm are; Royal gala, Granny Smith and Oregon Spur.

What is keeping Nono busy

Most definitely the management of Makolobane Farmers' Enterprises, their family farm, which is their bread and butter. Her responsibilities ranges from managing staff, overseeing the different business units, liaising with suppliers to managing the finances. The business has taught her a lot about running a farming business. Over and above the work on the farm, she also is in the process to establish a company called GrowthShoot, which is co-founded with a friend. GrowthShoot is aimed at empowering youth in agriculture as well as other smallholder farmers. Among others, the company will assist youth and smallholder farmers to access agribusiness opportunities. They will collaborate with established businesses in order to facilitate these business opportunities.

GrowthShoot has identified rabbit farming as one of the most cost-effective, viable and scalable business ventures for the youth in agriculture utilizing limited land, infrastructure and funding requirements. They will also assist with identifying innovative ways of providing sustainable income streams to the youth and smallholder farmers, but also simultaneously seeks to tackle the challenges of unemployment among young people.

For smallholder farmers' issues around access to markets, skills development and finance is of paramount importance. Their first plan is to bring rabbit farming to the Thabo Mofutsanyana municipal district. This will be done by setting up a large rabbit breeding facility which will be used for incubation and to upskill farmers and the youth on rabbit production and business management. They will source funding to assist farmers to set up infrastructure for rabbit production, provide ongoing monitoring and mentorship to ensure quality product assurance and provide market access through an off-take agreement with Coniglio Rabbit Meat Farm. In May 2016, a team of agriculture and business experts from OSU visited her farm, following an entrepreneurial fellowship she undertook to America in 2016.

What she learned in the US about entrepreneurship

In the US, Nono learned that when you have an idea which you believe is good, keep exploring it to see where it will take you. She also observed how young entrepreneurs in Oklahoma explored their passion in entrepreneurship and were willing to go the extra mile in order to make things happen for themselves. In fact, it was during her fellowship at OSU, where she discovered the idea of using rabbit production as a way of solving challenges faced by young farmers who work on their family farms, despite not receiving regular income.

There is a strong entrepreneurship culture in the US which encourages young people from an early age - at school already - that you can start your own businesses and its okay to do so. This passion can be seen in agriculture, where subjects, like agricultural studies, incorporate the running of a business by a learner for the duration of his or her high school years, as part of the curriculum. Nono believes that as a South Africans, we also need to encourage young people from an early age to be more entrepreneurial in our approach to work and business opportunities. Young people need to be socialised to understand their surroundings in order to find ways of solving some of the many social problems they face by using entrepreneurship as a tool.

What drove Nono as a business women in the not so easy agriculture sector to succeed given the capital and skills required in the sector

In many ways appreciating the skills she has and by endlessly trying to understand the agricultural landscape as a young person has helped her a lot. However, hard work and surrounding herself with the right people, is important. In her relatively short time in the sector, Nono has been extremely motivated by the overwhelming support she have received everywhere she goes, and this has been from her peers in agriculture and other sectors. Her family and business associates have also been very supportive. She believes her heart is in the right place and that is why things seem to be falling into place.

The experience of being part of a group of young people nominated to the Presidential Youth Working Group to represent the agricultural sector

It was an absolute honour and privilege for Nono to be nominated onto the working group and she believes this will open up further opportunities to assist young people and smallholder farmers through the GrowthShoot vision. The meeting was organised for youth who were from different sectors to meet with the country's Deputy Ministers of all the State Departments in order for the government to explore ways to interact more closely with the youth of the country.

The meeting was chaired by President Zuma and he gave each one of them the opportunity to express their views of how best government can reach out to young people to collectively address some of the challenges they face. Nono was invited to represent the agricultural sector in her capacity as the youth representative of the National Executive Committee Council of the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA).

Who are Nono's business mentors and people she draws inspiration from

Two of the mentors Nono singled out, amongst a few is her father Pitso Sekhoto and Dr Langa Simela former CEO of National Emergent Red meat Producers' Organisation (NERPO). The support from them has been of the utmost importance to her and she thinks it is because of them that she has been able to step out of her shell to do some of the things she does today. The words of wisdom from them about the industry, advise on building good relations and the encouragement that she must keep working hard, fueled her passion for the sector.

The main barriers facing young people in agricultural business

The first and main barrier in her view is a belief that "it cannot be done", young people not believing in their own ability to make things happen. If more young people could just think positively about the future and be willing to put more effort into their dreams, things would be different. The other barrier is the system or environment under which young people are expected to succeed. Not enough effort is made from both the private and public sector to understand how to accommodate youth from different backgrounds, especially from rural areas in both the work environment and for available opportunities. So, as result many young people are discouraged by the lack of faith in them and also feel that the system is working against them.

Future business endeavors

Nono's focus is to get Makolobane Farmers Enterprises to become a sustainable business as it heads towards a decade in existence. Furthermore, she plans to get GrowthShoot up and running so that they can finally showcase their experience around the country in order to reach out to as many young people, smallholder farmers as possible. They are open and invite successful businesses who share their vision to partner with them to increase youth participation in agriculture. They aim is to work with different commodities and also find innovative ways to get into urban agriculture.

INTERVENTIONS BY GENDERCCSA ON WOMEN & FARMING

Rainwater harvesting and conservation training for women farmers

Rain is the only source of water for drinking and domestic usage in rain fed areas. GenderCCSA is implementing the sustainable livelihoods project in 4 communities in Limpopo and Western Cape that are highly vulnerable to climate change and prolonged drought. Technical capacity-building trainings of women farmers are spreading awareness among communities on how to harvest every drop of rain for drinking, domestic usage and food production. GenderCCSA conducts trainings and technical assistance of women in rooftop construction, rainwater harvesting, runoff farming, storm flow conservation, benching and terracing of agriculture, micro catchments, solar pump systems; and using in-situ rainwater for sustainable food production. The main goal of this intervention was to reduce the amount of time women spend looking for water and doing household work. That could allow women the time for other activities such as income generating activities. The major output of this intervention was for grassroots women understand the role they can play in the fight against climate change and its impacts. GenderCCSA has transitioned into the new era, and that new staff and Steering Board are fully functioning.

Climate Impact

Food productivity is being affected by climate change including shifts in rainfall patterns, drought, temperature hikes, changes in sowing and harvesting dates, and water and land quality. This project is based on innovative adaptation technologies in order to mitigate excess usage of natural resources. Rainwater conservation by women has had excellent impacts on food security and saves water in order to reduce flooding in downstream areas. Extreme climatic events and prolonged droughts can be coped with efficiently with this project and, as a result, the demand on other natural resources will be limited. Water-borne diseases and hunger are reduced and nutrition and health are efficiently delivered with adaptation to climatic conditions.

Gender Impact

Women who are highly vulnerable to extreme climate change are trained well for adaptation under this project. As a result, women farmers are practicing multiple rainwater harvesting technologies to save water for future use. This project positively impacts on rural women's lives and reduces their daily work to gather water from long distances for drinking and sustainable food production. Women farmers are collecting rainwater and utilizing it for kitchen gardening for their family's consumption. This also empowers women economically. Issues faced by women farmers regarding both groundwater pollution and water scarcity for drinking, livestock and domestic use are addressed and sorted out in the targeted project area.

Lessons Learned

The issues of climate change, poverty, environment and gender are tightly interwoven and cannot be separated. For example, women farmers are particularly affected by climate change, food insecurity and disasters, so we have to drive gender equality and decrease women's vulnerability in the agricultural sector. However, government and policy makers often don't recognise this interconnectedness and often don't come up with holistic policies and programmes.

Climate change policies and programmes are often promoting large-scale, market-based climate change adaptation solutions, such as nuclear power or genetic modification, and not ones that can be accessed by women and not on interventions like rainwater harvesting and water saving interventions as way to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Priorities seem to be placed on technologies not on lifestyle changes that ordinary people can implement in their daily lives. This remains a huge challenge that has to be watched by GenderCCSA all the time and continue to lobby and advocate for people-centred solutions that are context-specific, participatory and use local knowledge. Ultimately, we want to create environmental circumstances where women are in control and don't depend on others.

During the project implementation, we learned that to sustain the capacity building of grassroots communities and women, accessible climate change information (in terms of language and form of material) has to be made available to those that need it the most, especially in rural communities. Many of them were struggling to grasp the issues and still did not fully understand what climate change even though we had facilitators who were speaking native local languages and also used a lot of visual media like DVDs. This is because climate change is a very technical and scientific concept.

Defending women farmers rights for climate change adaptation and mitigation

This intervention aimed to mitigate and adapt to the many gender related insecurities due to climate change in communities in Limpopo, Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng by supporting women farmer cooperatives. The projections ensured that the women producers are better organized and mobilized to claim their rights to food security and climate justice, support women to mobilise and organize themselves to claim their rights in relation to agriculture in the context of climate change. GenderCCSA supported 1200 number of women in the 4 provinces to collect their demands on climate finance and funding mechanisms for agriculture as well as increasing public awareness and support for the campaign on food and climate justice. Their stories on climate finance and funding mechanisms for agriculture were documented in the form of a DVD, posters and flyers to influence policy makers at a country, regional and global level to prioritise the needs of women small scale producers in climate finance and funding mechanisms for climate resilience. The goal of the intervention increase integration of gender aspects on all areas of poverty reduction, climate related policies, programmes and strategies. The outputs of the intervention was to ensure increased mobilisation of women around agriculture and climate justice in South Africa, increased knowledge on women's struggles with access to climate finance and funding mechanisms for agriculture, for impacts of climate change on women and agriculture in South Africa mentioned during World Food Day and UNFCCC COP 21.

Climate Impact

One of the great challenges of the 21st century will be to feed a rapidly growing population. Current projections suggest the number of people on earth will outpace our ability to feed them by 2050. Food insecurity can lead not only to famine but also to political instability and violence. Our project, through a collaboration of various organisations and CBOs wanted to highlight women farmer's particular vulnerability to climate change, but also to understand their unique capabilities to playing a major role in climate change adaptation. Adaptation will be more effective if it makes use of women's traditional strengths. Their experience gives them the potential to lead community and national efforts—well beyond the household doorstep. Responses to climate change hold the potential for real improvement in people's daily lives.

Gender Impact

Drought, flooding and heavy rains are negative impacts of climate change and deeper analysis of our project highlights how climate justice for women focuses on the social vulnerabilities women face. The agricultural cooperatives we work with, holistically address women's vulnerabilities in the context of climate change. The women farmers directly responds to women's climate and social vulnerabilities in their activities. Our project is connected with benefits to bring forth discourse around distinguishing between rural women, agricultural cooperatives, gender, and climate change and vulnerabilities associated with poor sectoral responses to the needs of the rural poor and the causes of women's vulnerabilities and gender inequities in a climate change context.

Lessons Learned

There is little documented evidence from South Africa on how climate change is impacting on poor people in general and on small scale farmers and women in particular. We do know that the primary impacts are being felt in changes of weather patterns: that familiar patterns of wind, rain and temperature are no longer predictable and farmers, many of whom are women, are searching for new ways to respond and farm differently. But we need studies that look at men and women separately to be able to develop sound policies.

As it is, in many regions of South Africa, farming activities take place on the edge of survival. Even minor changes to rainfall patterns (especially coupled with increased severity of droughts and floods) threaten food security. Women living in informal settlements, specifically in provinces of Western Cape and Gauteng are particularly vulnerable to frequent extreme events like flooding. 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 small- holder farmers.

In South Africa women are inadvertently at the frontline of climate change effects, both as producers of food and as the people who ensure that families are fed. For example, female-headed households make up less than 10% of the beneficiaries of land restitution and less than a quarter of those South Africans who have benefited from land redistribution and tenure reform. South African policies, in particular the green paper on land reform, appeared to be "gender blind", not making specific reference to the needs of women and very silent on climate change impacts. In traditional authorities there is still the notion that if you are a woman you cannot own land. It should be owned by your husband and if he dies it should be owned by your son. In such areas there is no enforcement of policies.

The Green paper on Land Reform doesn't make direct reference to climate change and therefore doesn't address the quality of land that women should access and whether they would be able to use it once they get it and under what conditions. There has been some academic research done by the University of North West that has been pointing out that the land that many communities are getting back through the land reform process, is not productive any more and this will affect the livelihoods of many rural poor, especially women who are subsistence farmers.

Raising awareness on gender integration in climate change adaptation and building community resilience

The initiative used a “learn and build methodology” of awareness training on gender integration in climate change adaptation, energy efficiency, waste management, and sustainable farming methods in selected communities. The projects were led by women champions, government officials in Gauteng and Eastern Cape. Mostly the women farmers undertook a process of skills training and capacity building in the building hot boxes; processing herbs into skin care lotions, soaps, medicines, etc; bee-keeping; and compost making using worms (vermiculture).

The goal of the intervention build the capacity of grassroots women, small-scale farmers and civil society community leaders in climate change adaptation and finance, renewable energy & energy efficiency and sustainable agriculture in order that they can engage more effectively in the debates that are currently taking place; as well as to train grassroots women and small-scale farmers in various adaptation strategies and techniques including food and herb processing (process their farm produce), vermiculture and composting, energy efficient products (Hot-bags), and Bee-keeping.

Climate Impact

By using a learn and build methodology led by women, the intervention empowered the resilience of women living in poverty to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. Skills include 1) learning to be able to make products that will help them adapt and mitigate the impact of climate change; 2) diversification of the sources of income to improve their livelihoods and 3) increased resiliency to the impacts of climate change.

Gender Impact

The intervention enhanced and increased women's productivity and diversified their sources of income, they lead and manage the various initiatives. Women champions are establishing cooperatives to run the various initiatives and save money from selling garden produce and the products. The “learn and build” methodology has enabled women to make and sell various products they learned as part of the project. A participatory approach and ongoing capacity building has been important both ensuring that the beneficiaries have “buy in” in all aspects of the project cycle and for conflict resolution. It has given women extra time to do other activities including beading, exchanging information about how best to package and sell their produce, counselling each other, giving each other tips on economic empowerment and strategising on other income generating projects such as packaging their produce and herb processing.

Lessons Learned

One of the lessons learned is that climate change is often been considered as a technical problem requiring a technical solution and the current debates on climate change in South Africa by and large neglect the dimension of gender and up until the establishment of GenderCCSA not much has been done to include a gender sensitive perspective. As a result, GenderCCSA has to work hard to raise awareness around gendered impacts of climate change and that climate change is about human beings and their livelihoods. These issues will also have to be raised in the various national platforms and ensure that programmes by government include various adaptation and mitigation projects that could be implemented by grassroots women.

Adaptation to climate change has to not merely focus on women's particular vulnerability, but also to understand their unique capabilities. The majority of grassroots women are often illiterate with poor technological skills causing serious obstacles in increasing their productivity. They are also not capacitated with financial and marketing skills as such they are unable to meet the quality standards set by various players in the formal markets and as a result, they need to identify local markets that do not require expensive standards that have to be adhered to.

During the capacity building workshops, we realised that a lot has to be done to educate grassroots communities, particularly rural women about the issues of climate change and also to document their experiences that can help authorities to design adaptation interventions. We also realised that once women are educated about the issues of climate change and how they can participate in policy making processes, it will become easier for them to demand government to include them in the public participation processes and for them to make meaningful contribution to the policy process and ensure that their voices are heard. Adaptation will be more effective if it makes use of women's traditional strengths. Their experience gives them the potential to lead community and national efforts - well beyond the household doorstep.

CONCLUSION

More than 3 billion people, almost half of the current total global population, live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Therefore a functioning agriculture sector is crucial in creating income-generating opportunities that are key to eradicating extreme poverty in developing countries. Although progress has been made to recognize the role of women in agriculture, much more still needs to be done.

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 country. Despite women being the primary providers of household food security, women still do not receive the same level of support from governments and financial institutions. It is important to build partnerships with women which can influence policy and the status quo for the benefit of the broader society. 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.

The success of increased agricultural production rests largely in the hands of women farmers across the southern African. Women farmers play a major role in food production on the continent and are key contributors to household food availability.

NOTES





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