

RESOLUTIONS FROM PROVINCIAL WORKSHOPS ON GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE



**Commission For Gender Equality
in partnership with Gender Climate Change South Africa – Women For Climate Justice
By Commissioner Yvette Abrahams**

During July-October, 2011, the CGE organized workshops in each province, in partnership with civil society.

The objectives of the workshops were

- to report to stakeholders about our work on and climate change
- to inform people about the gendered impact of climate change
- to ensure that our submissions and other policy inputs were enriched by consultation
- to gather input for our COP 17 processes
- to monitor what is being done in various provinces

Workshops were attended by provincial government representatives, civil society, business, and fellow Constitutional institutions.



Responses were overwhelmingly positive. People were pleased that we had taken the trouble to consult.

Relations with Department of Environmental Affairs were uneven. Representatives attended in five provinces, agreed to present in four. In one province (North-West), they had confirmed for a presentation but did not show up. In two provinces (Northern Cape and Mpumalanga) provincial representatives were open to including gender in provincial climate change work. Mpumalanga distinguished itself by having already produced a user-friendly climate change manual which was very sound on gender. Western Cape requested our assistance in running a series of information workshops down to district municipality level.



Resolutions were:

1. PEOPLE REQUIRE INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

In each and every workshop, the sentiment was expressed that people appreciated being informed and education about climate change. Each workshop would have a specialist input on what exactly climate change was, and what caused it, before we began to discuss the gendered impact. Additional inputs (from research institutions or from provincial departments) discussed specialist areas like the effect on water supply, agriculture, the difficulty of measuring seasonal changes at a local level, or solid waste treatment options. **But people wanted to know what was being done to bring this information to the broader community.** Commonly, people had noticed the effects of climate change but had not known the causes. Especially when discussion moved beyond causes to discuss mitigation and adaptation, it was felt that it was not enough just to educate those present in the workshop. It was strongly motivated that communities and various stakeholders should all have access to the information provided in the workshop. Sadly, we had to respond that our budget only allowed for one workshop per province. We pledged to continue our advocacy and lobbying that the executive provide capacity-building. In Limpopo, Dept. Basic Education proposed working with provincial DEA to put climate change and gendered implications on school syllabus.



1. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION, CONTINUED

Of particular concern was the fact that provincial and local government officials (outside of specialists) were often as ill-informed about climate change as the community at large. Information which was critically needed in order to plan at a local and provincial level was mostly lacking. SA Weather Services presented in Mpumalanga to explain the difficulties reducing sub-regional predictions to local level. However, hard data was generally more available than soft data. Eg. it is clear that rainfall will increase in the east and decrease in the west.

- a/ how will this affect population movements and economic development planning?
- b/ how will this affect water storage needs and disaster management budgeting?

An issue raised in every province except Gauteng was the effect on agriculture and food security. Information concerning the effect on “traditional” crops, training and support to switch to more diversified and agro-ecological production systems, plans to reduce transport miles, all of this is completely lacking. In particular, in discussions with fisher-people it became clear that the information they possessed on changes in extreme weather, species migration and changes in breeding patterns is of better quality than the Departments.

A greater investment in research at a local and sector-specific level is clearly needed.



2. PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO ACT.

In almost every province once people understood the issues, the immediate response was to say: But what can we do? It was heartening to note (with the exception of DEA national in Gauteng) that this willingness to act was strong amongst all sectors of society. Gauteng workshop gave credence to CGE's recommendations around a unified climate change implementation infrastructure. Questions around implementation were met by the response: "you must ask Department of Health (or Agriculture), we do not have access to that information/we are not responsible for that area of implementation." This was not helpful to community members present. Such responses places the burden of time and resource investment on those sectors of society least able to afford it.

2. PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO ACT, CONTINUED



In six provinces (Northern Cape, Gauteng, KZN, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and North West) people wanted to know what government support structures exist to enable them to adapt and mitigate. Seed funding, institution-building and strengthening of capacity with a sensitivity to empowering women and youth were highlighted as strong and immediate needs. It was sad that the short answer is “none”.

Of particular concern was the lack of capacity at local government level. Information channels and communication flowing between levels of government need to be improved.

Another area of concern was policy incohesion. Eg. in Gauteng women’s co-operatives had begun recycling projects but were now displaced by Pik It Up. The Green Economy needs to move from policy level to practical implementation.



3: WHAT IS BEING DONE TO HOLD THOSE RESPONSIBLE ACCOUNTABLE?

ESKOM attended the western Cape workshop and came under heavy fire. We are pleased that they took the trouble to interact. SASOL did not attend in Free State, despite repeated efforts to bring them there. The ongoing Presidential Review of legislation and policy governing state-owned enterprises should be broadened to include carbon emissions accountability.

The efforts on the part of national DEA to begin carbon accounting for big business are laudable, but should include civil society and trade unions as watchdogs and monitoring assistance on the ground.

The executive should do more to communicate content on international agreements.



4. ISSUES AROUND NCCRP **PROCESS**

Resentment was often expressed from civil society that our report on submissions was the first that they had heard about the NCCRP “consultation” process. This was especially clear from the many women’s co-operatives and farmer associations, who were very well informed from their own observations about the effect of climate change on their harvests, but who had not been able to contribute to policy making. Responses from government departments were uneven, but it appeared clear that some critical departments (eg. Education, Health, Finance) were not well informed or closely involved in policy development process.

It was heartening to note that provincial gender structures attended in almost every province, and pledged their support in ensuring that CC and gender became linked. It was disturbing to note that local governments, who attended five of the workshops, appeared to be completely unconscious of the policy process. This despite the weight given to local government in the NCCRP.

Two provinces were writing provincial climate change policies, while one already had one. This is strongly to be encouraged and should be duplicated in other provinces. Of particular importance is that the policy process be cascaded down to local government.

People will continue to have difficulties visualizing implications of NCCRP until it is translated into implementation plans and budgets.



5. PROSPECTS FOR COP 17

It seems unlikely that there will be one national position on climate change and gender for COP 17. We experienced complete lack of support from DIRCO and very mixed responses from DEA. We also note (which we will expand upon in our next submission before Parliament) a reversal on key issues from the Green Paper to the White Paper, while other controversial issues remain stubbornly intractable.

DIRCO/DWEPD/DEA/DAFF efforts to communicate with civil society appear to have caused some ill-feeling, chiefly around issues of inclusion and exclusion. As a result it appears that the gap between government and civil society is widening, and it is likely that there will be two positions on gender and climate change, one emanating from government and one from civil society. CGE will be joining the civil society process at Gender CC International conference in November, while also monitoring South African government commitments at COP 17 itself. However, we remain open to co-operation with government and will continue to seek dialogue and engagement. Climate change is too important to be divided about. It requires that we as a species sort out our dysfunctions, improve our communication skills, and develop forms of social organization which can meet the challenge. The CGE is committed to doing what it can to achieve this outcome.

THANK YOU !!!

