



November 2021 Newsletter

Global leaders, scientists and climate activists recently gathered in Glasgow for COP 26 Climate Change Negotiations. This meeting came at a time when the world and the communities we work with in rural and urban communities of the North west Province, Gauteng and in Vhembe District, Thohoyandou had started to recover from the pandemic, in addition to numerous extreme weather events. The Climate Negotiations at the COP needed to achieve the ambitious goals of dramatically reducing CO2 emissions to curtail the devastating impacts of climate change. The COP also needed to ensure that the Paris Agreement signed in 2015 can be effectively implemented, by ensuring that countries set ambitious targets in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are increasingly recognised as imperative for the Paris agreement. Women and Men are disproportionately impacted by climate change due to gender inequalities and socio cultural norms affecting access to and control over financial and physical resources, knowledge, and decision making power. While women, youth and grassroots communities contribute significantly to combating climate change, their initiatives face several barriers including the global digital divide which has left the majority of communities living in poverty and in rural areas not being able to contribute adequately to fighting climate change and being able to amplify their voices in enhancing climate actions. Supporting women and men to overcome these barriers provides an opportunity for climate approaches to be more effective, sustainable and equitable leading to broader and shared benefits which ensures that nobody is left behind.

Many women-led initiatives face challenges in accessing funds, especially core funding to ensure the long-term sustainability of their projects. Lack of financial support creates barriers to accessing technical equipment, training, awareness raising, and the implementation of adequate adaptation responses. Thus, understanding the market and developing viable business models provides an opportunity to attract the necessary funding that communities require in order to build resilience to climate change and the creation of viable eco-inclusive enterprises. The two partner cooperatives that we work with in Hebron North West and in Venda Limpopo are at the centre of mobilising communities in the North West and Venda. The Hebron Mango Tree Owner Cooperative and the Vhembe Agro-processing Cooperative have been seriously engaging in their strategic planning and creating business plans to allow them to access finances and micro credits in order to build and strengthen climate resilient communities. Grassroots communities, community based organisations and cooperatives often experience difficulties in identifying technology needs and potential solutions for them to build viable climate resilient enterprises.

Due to social and cultural norms regarding women's role in society it is sometimes a real challenge to get acceptance for women's leadership, targeted technical training, leading to unequal access, not only to training, but to technologies that are locally made and affordable and are useful for water recycling, grey water and harvesting rainwater for crops and everyday human uses. Gender responsive, climate resilient agricultural practices and technologies provide an opportunity to close the gender gap and bring women into the forefront in the fight against climate change, poverty, and inequality through enhancing the knowledge of women farmers on various water harvesting techniques, resilient farming methods and facilitating access to markets and the value chain remain

at the core of strengthening community resilience. Thus capacity building and the mobilisation of small-scale farmers through the two cooperatives in Vhembe and Hebron North West to enable them to access business development skills, resources, services, information and technologies allowing them to participate fully in the mango and agricultural value chain and markets. An uptake of climate change adaptation measures and interventions has remained key to ensure innovation, job creation, access to market opportunities through the solidarity markets in order to create opportunities and social enterprise development in a climate driven green economy. Thus gender responsive and inclusive ecosystem based community driven and holistic approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation are essential for resilience building, to guarantee sustainable livelihoods, to allow communities to successfully bounce back from the devastating impacts of the COVID pandemic; protect the planet and should remain central to all climate actions.

- Bertha Chiroro (Director of GenderCC Southern Africa)