Report

The Rural Women’s Assembly met in Durban parallel to the COP17 (Conference of the Parties) to discuss how rural women have been affected by climate change. The assembly consisted of women from across Africa and Latin America, culminating in resolutions and a memorandum that was handed over to African ministers at COP17 asking them to take their issues forward into the main COP17.
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The Rural Women’s Assembly was kick-started on Wednesday 30th November with an evening launch. To celebrate the event a panel of speakers were invited to pledge solidarity with the Rural Women’s Assembly and share their experiences of climate change. Each speaker was welcomed in song. Below are summaries of the speeches.

Chair: Constance Mogale (Director of Land Access Movement of Southern Africa – LAMOSA)

**Director of Rural Women’s Movement in KwaZulu Natal – Sizane Ngubane**

Comrades! Sisters! Mothers! Daughters! Sons!

As KwaZulu Natal, we feel very humbled to have you in our province. KwaZulu Natal is one of the poorest provinces (in South Africa) and we are experiencing climate change. The communities we are working with, particularly one that is about 200km out of Durban, could not harvest last year. The commercial farmers and small scale farmers in that area could not harvest due to flooding. Climate change is here, and we need to look at how we are going to re-organise ourselves, and adapt to this situation. I thank you.

**Swaziland Rural Women’s Assembly**

Viva to the social movements here Viva!

I am here representing the Swaziland Rural Women’s Assembly. First, I would like to tell you briefly about Swaziland, it is not a province in South Africa, it is a country, it is small, but we are a country. It is still governed by an absolute monarchy. We are very privileged and happy – that is why we are dancing – to be in a space like this, in Swaziland spaces like this are very prohibited. I am very happy to see all the activists in this room, and no policemen. I am here and I am saying Viva! And not worried or afraid of being charged with the oppression of terrorism act. So after all said and done, Swaziland is still undemocratic and we are still pushing and fighting for the liberation of the Swazi people. In Swaziland political parties are still banned, so for us to say Viva to the political party we support, is a pleasant moment for me. But here I

“...every year, 350 000 persons die because of climate change natural disasters. We cannot be part of this genocide...”

– Pablo Solo (Chief negotiator for Bolivian delegation)
would like to talk about the rural women’s assembly which is a network of all rural women, farmers association, women small traders and a lot of activists around what women are doing in Swaziland. The Rural Women’s Assembly came about when we were invited to South Africa for the southern African Rural Women’s Assembly where I remember the theme: Guardians of Land, Life and Love; which we took back to us as our slogan in Swaziland. The assembly was held in Limpopo in 2009. It was then that we went back to Swaziland and started a gathering of this sort because women in the rural areas of Swaziland are the most marginalised sector in our country. Women in our constitution are not even regarded as people, but as children. We do not have a lot of policies on women, but now we have a space where we come together to share practical examples, and skills of our livelihood.

**Latin America**

Viva Afrika! Viva Latin America! Viva Bolivia! Viva Ecuador!

Good Afternoon Compañeros, Sisters. I am from Ecuador, in America Latina. We have been fighting for environmental collective rights for 25 years. I came to Durban first of all to give you my solidarity, and to all the social movements and the women’s movements here in Africa. Also, I came to Durban to say thank you for your history of fighting, against apartheid. Your struggles have inspired a lot of social movements in my country, Ecuador and America Latina. Thank you to all of you, and thank you also that I can address this crowd. I also came to see a funeral, a funeral of the COP here. But, we know that even if a dog dies, rabies stay, and we have to fight that too. Even if the COP dies, there are problems we have to continue fighting. We have to continue fighting the curse of carbon trading, emissions, and mitigations that are distracting us from our real struggle. Our real struggle is to save our lives, to defend our land against corporations, banks, armed forces, governments because they want to take our lands, our resources for themselves, and this we will not allow because we are standing together. I think that they have the power, they have the money, but we have the wisdom, we are right in what we are demanding and we have to continue fighting together as Africa, America Latina, and
Asia, for all of these rights that they want to take from us. I want to say that of course as women we are the most vulnerable to climate change, but also, women invented agriculture, women invented medicine, women forged mother tongues, women – we know can do a lot of things to fight climate change and what we have to do, what we know to do, first, to defend our seeds, to defend our food, to defend our lands, teach our children that our struggles are worth it. And I think all of this knowledge that we have is the only thing that will help us to save the planet from climate change. I would like share an experience about the struggle of women in Ecuador. In the indigenous territories men decided to negotiate with the oil companies, and the women resisted, women in this indigenous community said to the men, you cannot stay anymore in this community, if you want, you can look for other women, but not in this community. If you want to stay you have to resist with us against the oil companies. And the men listened to them and stayed, and up till now, after 15 years of struggle, women have changed the lives of this people that were threatened by oil companies. Finally I want to say that I come to Durban to listen, to see, I did not think that I was also going to dance and sing, I come to understand, and most of all to learn from you.

Fisheries – Sara Niemand

Viva! If you strike a woman you strike a rock! Especially a fisher woman.

I am Sara Niemand. I harvest my own fish. I go to sea early in the morning. I catch my crayfish. I come from the Western Cape, a fisherman village called, buffelsjags baai. If you know where the abalone poaching is, you will know the place I come from. And I belong to an organisation called Masifundise, which works with EMG (Environmental Monitoring Group). And if you see my T-shirt, you will read “No Fish No eat”. We are here in Durban because we love the ocean, our livelihood is the ocean. As time goes by, we see a lot of changes, and the place we come from is a very poor place, it’s not like a lot of people there knew about global warming, and when EMG came there, they taught us about global warming. We have a lot of resources there, for 25 years people came from the east and the west with their

“I came to Durban to say thank you for your history of fighting against apartheid. Your struggles have inspired a lot of social movements in my country…”

- Yvonne, Ecuador
families to camp and have holidays there, but now, for five years these are closed by sand banks, so nobody can camp there, and we think this is also part of global warming. I don’t have much to say, but ladies, this evening it’s us, and I feel the spirit of a rural movement of women here, I feel we come to this place, not to come and go and there is no answer, we depend on this COP17 that something is going to happen. Thank you.

**Pablo Solo – former ambassador and chief negotiator at the UN climate change negotiations for Bolivia**

Sisters! I come from Bolivia in the heart of South America, and from my people I want to give you all my heart for your struggle and your fight. Let me share with you what climate change means for my country. In Bolivia, we live in the mountains, and our mountains have glaciers, they have snow. And you know what has happened with the snow in our mountains with the global warming? The snow has begun to disappear – now we have mountains without snow, because of climate change, because of global warming. And what happens when we don’t have water in the mountains? When we don’t have snow in the mountain? We don’t have water, it affects the agriculture, it affects human access to water, affects animals, plants...so there is a huge impact in my country because we are losing the snow in our mountains. And while the people in the highlands suffer this, in the lowlands we have too much water, resulting in floods. So climate change affects some parts of the region – no water, other parts of the country – too much water. Some parts of the country is hot, other parts are freezing. Climate change is affecting our lives, and we have been negotiating for more than a decade on how to stop this. I have been the ambassador for Bolivia in the two previous COPs, at COP15 and 16, in Copenhagen and Cancun, and in Copenhagen and Cancun, we opposed those agreements. We stand as Bolivia against the Cancun agreement, and we said we are not going to subscribe to the Cancun agreement, and we said that because actually, every year, 350 000 persons die because of climate change natural disasters. We cannot be part of this genocide. Already, people all over the world are dying because of climate change. And what is going to happen at COP17? The

“We have to continue fighting the curse of carbon trading, emissions, and mitigations”

– Yvonne, Ecuador
big countries, the rich countries, don’t want to reduce their emissions from greenhouse gases. Shame! Shame on the US that says they will only reduce by three per cent. Shame! On those rich countries that say they will only reduce if there are new carbon market mechanisms. They are more worried about the business and the profit than the lives of the people. This is something that is happening there. You can say why they don’t come to agreement when we are all on the same boat? We are all living on this planet? Climate change is going to affect the South and also the North, but they prefer to think about the profits, the economics, their business how much money they are going to win. They don’t want to spend money on reducing greenhouse gases, they prefer to keep the profit, that is why, in Copenhagen, in Cancun, and here in Durban, we say change the capitalist system, not the climate. We have to change this logic of trying to buy and sell everything. Life does not have a price. Trees don’t have a price. Rivers don’t have a price. In Bolivia we have a peoples world conference, we discuss with delegates from all over the world that now is the time to fight, not only for peoples rights, but also for nature’s rights. Because here nature is treated as a thing, as an object, they explode nature; they transform nature, without thinking of the consequences. We have to learn that this is our home, it’s not only a planet, it’s our mother earth, it’s our mother nature, we have to treat that with respect, because we all belong to nature, we don’t own nature, we don’t own the land, we belong to the land. So we have to discuss the real causes of climate change, and the real causes have to do with this bad system of profits, that we have to change. Also, this appetite; that we are living in a whole world against nature. There is a new appetite that we must end; it is the appetite against mother earth. When I go into the COP17, the basis of the negotiators of all countries, even the rich countries, they don’t want to look because they know what they are about to do is a shame. They know what’s going to happen. When I come here, I see that we are suffering, but we sing, we dance, because we have faith in our struggle, in our unity. I am absolutely sure, that the only way we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions is through our organisation, through our unity, through the social pressure in all the countries, from the people, and especially from the women. In Bolivia, in the struggles that
we have had against the privatisation of water, for the nationalisation of our natural resources, always at the fore, were women, always. Women have taught us that when you go into a struggle you fight until the end. And you don’t sell your brother, you don’t sell your sister, you don’t sell your demands for something. So now we have the challenge here in Durban, but all around the world, woman, man, children, with nature, with our mother Earth all together, to defend our home, the only home that we have, the future of life, the future of life of humans, the future of life of nature. We can do it, all together, united. Thank you.

Mercia Andrews – South Africa

Comrades! It is great that we could open the Rural Women’s Assembly with close to a thousand people. Forward to the struggle of women! Forward! Forward to the Rural Women’s Assembly! Forward! Phantsi polluters! Phantsi! Forward to life! Forward!

We, the Rural Women’s Assembly are organisations that come from the region. We have comrades from as far as Kenya, Ghana, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and all these countries are here today, and we must welcome you. But there is another remarkable thing about today, people travelled with public transport, with busses, over great distances to come here, so we want to praise you and thank you for your effort. Tomorrow and the next day we will talk about the Rural Women’s Assembly. We have come here to Durban during the COP17 for a purpose. As rural women we are here as farmers, as people without land, as small producers, as people who have nothing, and tonight with the fishers. We are pleased to have this alliance with them. We have come to this COP because we are saying that Africa is burning, we are saying that our country – South Africa - is not playing a responsible role, our government is not standing with Africa, and our government is not saying no to polluters. On the contrary, our government is looking to the big brothers, and we have a responsibility. We have to begin to mobilise, and we have the power, we have shaken this country before, we brought down apartheid, now there is another turn, this is a bigger struggle, a more important struggle, and this is a struggle we must unite around, we must say no to climate apartheid, no! Comrades

“Today we are joined in what is probably the most important struggle of our lives...the lives of our people...hundreds of millions of people...”

- Philippines
and friends, tonight we must make a pledge to ourselves, we have come to Durban, to this COP17, where we are excluded, they are sitting there in big fancy hotels, eating our tax money, and we are struggling with public transport, without food, and they are wining and dining on us, we must say this must stop, and we must take a firm stand, and we must build the movements, and we must say to our friends inside, we are watching you. And you must be accountable to us. Because we want to ensure that we can use this space to build an alternative, to say that another South Africa, another world, another Africa is not only possible, but it is necessary today.

**Representative from Philippines**

I live in a place so far away I just spent 48 hours changing airplanes to find this city and get to Durban. I am here not just for the Philippines but for many movements in Asia that we work with and whose representatives are in Durban today to fight with you and to be in solidarity with you. Like you, we have many struggles. We struggle for our land, for our water, we struggle for our rights as women to have control over our bodies, we struggle for livelihoods, and we struggle for our lives. But today we are joined in what is perhaps the most important struggle for our lives, because it not only threatens our land, our water, our resources, our livelihoods, it threatens the lives of our people, of hundreds of millions of people across the world - in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, but even in other places in the world. This is a fight in which we have little time, so as the negotiators of developing countries face the developed countries it cannot be business as usual. So we also have to tell ourselves that we cannot do our movement building and our struggles as usual. We have to try harder and work faster because there is little time to defend our land, our homes, our children and our families. We know that we will win this struggle, especially because women are in this struggle, because women work hardest, longest, and we will do everything and anything to fight for our children and our families. And so I would like to thank you for having this experience, to share the strength that we can feel in this room and the strength and courage that only women can generate. Thank you very much.
Day Two – Thursday - 1 December 2011

Chair: Fatima Shabodien (Director Women on Farms)

Official Welcoming (Aunty Nora)

Amandla! Viva Rural Women’s Assembly! Viva!

Comrades it is a pleasure for me to welcome you to this assembly. It is our responsibility as rural women to see to it that things go well in our country. Today is the international day for HIV/Aids. We as women are mostly affected by this. I children are raped, we are raped and infected with this disease. As women we have to stand against this abuse. We have to stand together to fight against this disease. We are the mostly affected and if we do not stand together things won’t change.

Also, we are ascending here to fight against climate change. South Africa, our country, is the number one polluter in Africa. It is rated number 13 in the whole world, shame on South Africa! Shame! As women we are affected by climate change, as rural women and farmers we are the ones that see to it that our children have something to eat daily before sleep. Because of climate change, we are no longer able to predict what we plant and when we plant. When we do finally plant, the temperatures affect the growth of our crops and we do not get the expected yields. This means that our income is reduced.

Therefore, we cannot feed our children. We have to stand together and ensure that the decision taken in the COP17 is the decisions that will sustain our lives. We cannot wait for them to decide on what they want, because they are supposed to take a binding resolution, but now they are debating that. This is because they are not affected; it is us that are affected, the poor. They did not even bother to invite us to attend that event. We don’t agree with their world. So we have to stand together as women and fight against this, we cannot take it any longer.

I come from the Northern part of the Limpopo, where temperatures reach 40 degrees Celsius. It is no longer easy to live in that area due to pollution. We have mining and it pollutes our environment. We can no longer stand for that. Those who pollute do not develop. We do not benefit anything, they benefit. They only look at their pockets and not at the well-being of the people. If we do not act now, and ensure that the decisions taken are ones that will sustain our lives, our children, our grandchildren, are going to spit on our graves. Amandla!
Programme

1. Panel address - how climate change affects our lives
2. Group work – discuss demands
3. What is COP17?
4. Banner making

1. Panel – How Climate Change affects our lives

Kenya: I am from a farmers’ association. There is a great woman I must mention, Professor Wangari Mathai for Kenya; she fights for the environment in Kenya, protecting the environment in Kenya and the world. She has fought government, she has fought culture, she fought against tradition, to ensure that this gets into the hearts of people, and she walks tall. I thank the opportunity to honour this great woman of Africa.

The issue of climate change affects everyone in the world. We have issues of rainfall. We have issues of rise in temperatures. We have issues of forests disappearing. It affects especially the women. With the issue of conflict, women are the most affected. The conflict starts at home, when women walk long distances to fetch water and cannot take care of her household chores, when she gets home, she is questioned by her husband. A fight starts. And the woman is affected the most.

In Kenya we also have tribal clashes that arise because of this conflict. This is because the fertile lands are very few. People fight over small pieces of land that can produce, and we have what you call tribal land. So tribes start fighting and evicting each other, and killing each other. Those affected the most are women and children. They have no place to call home, the children have no school. We still do not have a solution.

Another issue is that of food security. There is not enough food, causing malnutrition. Again, women and children are the most affected. Not having enough food means that women cannot breastfeed their children adequately. Children then have health issues. They do not have well developed skills between 6 and 24 months.

Even though the majority of small scale farmers are women, they cannot farm anymore. Women do not have a source of income, and some have to turn to prostitution to feed their children. This makes them more susceptible to diseases such as Aids. So we have older women taking care of the children and becoming mothers again.

People are turning to foreign aid. So let’s they receive maize, these are packed with toxins. This means that poisons are entering the bodies. This has no nutritional value and can also result in malnutrition.
Many are losing their source of water in Mt. Kenya due to climate change. We have less fish in the waters; climate change is really affecting Kenya.

**Swaziland:** there is land that is allocated to the king. This is not normal land; it is land that has rivers on it. Due to climate change our rivers are drying up, forcing us to sneak into the king’s land which is always guarded. When you are found in that land you are fined and have to pay one cow. If you do not have a cow you have to turn to your chief, who normally makes you clean etc. to pay off your debt to the king. So poverty in Swaziland has increased with no effort to eradicate it. You debt is usually carried over generations.

Since we do not have water, it is difficult and expensive to get clean water. This is the result of climate change and we do not have money to get water in urban areas.

**Senegal (translation French to English):** we are delighted to be here. Our organisation promotes the development of our areas, and goal is to promote development women. We also work on organic farming and are opposed to using chemical fertilisers. We are fighting to get quality seeds. We farm rice, which solves partly the lack of food, as rice is also very expensive, we try to develop women’s strengths is these areas.

**India:** Climate change is having a big impact in all countries as well as India. Climate change data ranks India as the second most vulnerable country in the world, after Bangladesh. Almost one third of people in poverty are in India, the situation of women and farmers in India is worsening every day. There are women working on this, but this is still small, a lot needs to be done. That is why we come to join you and work together against climate change. More than 60 per cent of people in India live in rural areas. Violence against women is also very high in India, like rape and child marriages; which are unbanned. Education is also very low. More than 15 per cent of the agricultural land in India is non-cultivable due to extreme use the land is non-fertile. Agricultural land was more than 70 per cent of the national product in the 1970s and 1980s, but now, it is
less than 20 per cent. This shows where our conservation has gone. There are also many multi nationals in India and there has been land grabs. Small farmers are finding it difficult to manage small holdings and companies come to take the land. Government has also taken land from the people to sell to the multi nationals, they get a profit. It is thus rural women especially farmers that are losing out. They sell their land because they are not benefitting from it. There are also no credit facilities, especially for women, no water facilities either. As in many countries it is the women, who eat last in the house, less food means it is women and children that go to sleep hungry. In India we have the caste system, upper castes and lower castes. The people who belong to certain groups are considered higher caste. People in lower castes are excluded from development. So we work with the valley communities, studies show very tragic figures. There will be an increase of more than one degree Celsius in the climate every year. We have tsunamis etc. in India and drought. According to these climate studies if this continues we will receive more rain, but also droughts and floods. We do not know how to manage. We need to put our voice together and fight against climate change. It is very difficult to understand because it is a specific cycle, you touch one point and it impacts. We need to all work on different things because everything has an impact. These five days will be very hopeful.

**Northwest Province, South Africa (English translation):** from Ventersdorp, there we are experiencing land grabs and repossession. We did apply for land under the land reform process but they did not give us our land. So we repossessed the land which was ours. We started to sort out which family had what land and did our own mapping and surveying. The community didn’t want to take anything government or State, so we built our own community hall. Ten years later, we still did not receive our title deeds. So with the help of the Rural Women’s Assembly. LAMOSA and others, they came across the Vaal River to assist. We have now been given our title deeds so you can see how we had to push things, instead of waiting on government assistance. We women should remember that we carry our babies for nine months, we nurture them in our womb, and we look after them until they grow, and then we enjoy the development. With climate change we should do that with our land and our people. Due to climate change, one year becomes one month, one month becomes one day. The process can take very long.

**Zambia:** climate change is really affecting African rural women. Farmers are affected. The weather pattern has changed. People used to grow plants, but now the rain is unpredictable. This is hard on the women in terms of incomes which are low. From small savings that we do have we buy seeds. We plant those seeds, after the rain comes
we unfortunately have a dry spell and our seeds get destroyed. So what do we do since we do not have money to buy more seeds? We plant recycled maize and hope for a good harvest. Yields of maize don't make enough money to even send our children to school. Then we have mining, the copper belts. Here no farming can take place, there are no trees, etc. everything has been destroyed. Three years ago there was an acid spill that affected 300 families. They were affected and government gave them money, which didn't actually help. Government must do something to actually protect our families. As women farmers we know that we must make money from this land. No women, no food, no future.

**Zimbabwe:** what is climate change? We used to have lots of rain, but that has changed now. There are many floods and droughts; we do not have enough food. Out livestock is dying, trees are disappearing. Food security has gone down, threatening families. Diseases like malaria are increasing killing women and children in areas where there used to be no malaria. The temperatures are rising, going up to 50 degrees. Heat waves are increasing. Our crops are a problem as there is no more planting season. Women now have to walk long distances to get firewood. Water supplies have also become inadequate. Our livelihoods are diminishing. So now men are trying to go back to the old culture of selling our girls to rich men. We want to see a deal signed a legally binding deal. We are saying let them reduce emissions, no more land grabs by western countries, no biofuels. As Zimbabwe rural women we have a committee etc. we have a drafted a constitution for ourselves. We are saying Africa, One Africa!

**Botswana:** it is a small country. It is hot so it's hard to go crops because of the heat. The smoke from the mines from South Africa affects us, our health. The trees are affected too due to climate change. There is thunder and lightning that strike our animals. Climate change affects us.

**Lesotho:** it is an honour to be her. I am very young and this is the first time I stand in front of rural women, who have been affected by climate change. For me it is quite an experience. Lesotho is a country that is about 1000m above sea level. We have mountains on abundance. For me as a young person with some of my group members, we decided to do youth outreach in our country with rural women, go from village to village just to find out what is happening there. The reason for this is, talking especially for young people, young leaders, we have this tendency to think that because we have degrees we abandon our own people, our own mothers, our own villagers – I admit I was part of that. I was moved when on a project to collect data, I saw parts of my country that I had never seen. Lesotho is hot, due to climate change, making arable land impossible.
Production is low, Lesotho is landlocked and we get food from South Africa. We import everything from South Africa. For rural women it is worse, nobody talks to them, no accessibility. Government is doing nothing about it. I want to say to the young ones, let’s stand up. We are the future generations, let’s go out there, reach all of our rural women, bring them up, and mend their needs. Aluta Continua!

**Keynote address - Canada:**

I come from a rural area in Canada, it is very cold. In a cold year we have three months when things are not frozen. In the other nine months everything is frozen and there is no possibility of growing crops or drawing water, we have a delicate environment. When I was very young the oil companies came and brought a lot of white men, who interfered with the indigenous women, the young girls. My first job was to take the babies that resulted from those rapes, and that interference, into the capital city, where these babies were taken by white families and raised. So my first impression of the oil industry was that it was bad for girls and women. It got worse. The oil companies destroyed the fishing and the hunting, which was the way of life of most of the people there. Then they interfered with the farming through putting down pipelines and burning natural gas. Our cows, goats etc. are being disturbed, so that when they have young, they are born malformed. Now people are being born with all sorts of physical handicaps, sometimes no brain, and they die. The women are having spontaneous abortions. A lot of females are being born, there is a 2:1 ratio of females to males born, and this is due to poison from oil. Then comes climate change, and the warming of everything, now we are having five months of no frost. Five months for a growing season might sound good, but it is not because there is a very bad insect. Normally, this insect would be killed by the freezing weather. Now, they eat all the trees, and the trees are dying, causing problems for global warming as the trees now release carbon instead of absorbing it. We say that there has been almost a one degree centigrade increase in the average temperature. We know that in Africa it is higher, and in the North Pole and in Antarctica it is very much warmer. In Canada we have had a three degree centigrade increase. This is important for people in Durban, or Nairobi or Mombasa, or Lagos. When it
gets hot in the North the ice melts creating a rise in sea levels. So much so that our cities, towns and farmlands near the sea are going to be flooded with salt water, so we cannot live there. Our water systems and cities will be destroyed. Many are already experiencing this. My experience in Nigeria, in Lagos in the 1970s and Port Harcourt in 1980s, where the oil companies are, every Sunday I would go to church in the rural areas. So many of you have heard of Ken Saro Wiwa, a martyr, killed by the government in 1995 for resisting the bad practices of oil companies. In 1999 before the big WTO meeting in Seattle, the Nigerian women carried out an action called a gift to humanity. They shut down many oil operations, where natural gas was being flared. Some occupied the headquarters of Shell in London. This action made a big impression on Shell, it scared them.

The women were saying they knew that that natural gas was hurting the world. They also confronted the oil companies naked, it was powerful. They were saying it was here where life comes from and we wish we had never given birth to you. We symbolically withdraw your life because your actions kill life. Women across the world did the same against these climate criminals. Today, revolutions are happening in many North African countries. Looking at the women in Yemen, they came together and took off their burkhas and poured kerosene on them. Because the military had killed 25 people, and they were suffering from hunger even though they had oil, they were going to exchange this oil for food. This is the action that can deprive big companies of power over oil and taking power over food by placing a value on food and oil, not value placed by the stock market. This is the way we are going to address climate change, people power at the grassroots over energy and food.
## 2. Group Work – Report Back

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<th>Country/Province</th>
<th>Consequences of Climate Change for rural women</th>
<th>What must be done?/Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Botswana         | • Poverty: Sporadic rainfall; Extreme heat causes Lack of food; Unemployment; Decrease in food production  
                   • Health: Smoke from Phikwe mine has caused illness such as asthma and TB among women  
                   • Soil Erosion: Floods – the chobe fish is affected (they die due to some chemicals in the soil); Plants die – important because we need plants to breathe  | • COP17 should have a legally binding agreement  
                   • This agreement must be implemented by the government/states  
                   • Rural women should always be included in these discussions because we are the most affected by climate change |
| Northern Cape, South Africa | • Floods: more rainfall causing rivers to overflow destroying houses and roads  
                              • Drought: dryness of the land  
                              • Excessive heat: increases danger of fires  
                              • Health: skin complications and cancers; rise in death rates; TB; malnutrition  
                              • Water scarcity  
                              • Air pollution  
                              • Water contamination  
                              • Unknown pests  | • Awareness raising campaigns on climate change  
                              • Policies and legislation on climate change  
                              • Law enforcement on main polluters e.g. Sasol to control Eskom  
                              • Eradicate air pollution  
                              • Raise awareness on usage of ozone friendly products  
                              • Conduct agricultural ecology training  
                              • Climate Change must be incorporated in school curriculum |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Swaziland</strong></th>
<th><strong>Zimbabwe</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Abnormal growing patterns of crops</td>
<td>• Abnormal growing patterns of crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in temperatures: floods; storms; wind; seasons are changing (sometimes there is no rain); drought; soil erosion; rural to urban migration</td>
<td>• Shortage of water/rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health: we grow one type of crop, this causes malnutrition and other related illnesses</td>
<td>• Short farming season leading to droughts, food insecurity/hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education: Trees/fruits are destroyed by storms. These are our sources of income to educate our children</td>
<td>• Outbreak of diseases like typhoid and cholera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food security: again, because we grow one type of crop we have to grow in quantity and not quality</td>
<td>• Social disintegration leading to HIV/AIDS and prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stop cutting down trees</td>
<td>• Environmental degradation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Companies must reduce carbon emissions</td>
<td>• Destruction of property, especially due to wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Governments must put in place a mechanism to boost the economy</td>
<td>• Minimise greenhouse farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stop the burning of grass, rather cut and store for fertiliser. This will reduce the costs of farming</td>
<td>• Afforestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raise awareness on climate change</td>
<td>• Encourage new farming technologies e.g. organic farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immigration offices to reduce border costs for hawkers. Farmers etc. due to climate change people, especially rural women, are losing profits</td>
<td>• Involve women in policy-making issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversification of agricultural production and practicing of value addition</td>
<td>• Diversification of agricultural production and practicing of value addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capacity building of women in areas of empowerment, solidarity</td>
<td>• Capacity building of women in areas of empowerment, solidarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern Cape, South Africa</strong></td>
<td>- Economic instability. &lt;br&gt;- Dissemination of information to grassroots women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Health: fever, stomach aches, TB etc. &lt;br&gt;- Lack of purified water (causing the health issues) and thus being forced to use dirty water from the rain &lt;br&gt;- Lack of development in rural areas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Malawi</strong></td>
<td>- Low food production in the home &lt;br&gt;- Increased burden of care for the sick &lt;br&gt;- Increase in diseases &lt;br&gt;- Low household income levels &lt;br&gt;- Displacement due to floods &lt;br&gt;- high dropout rates from school among girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limpopo, South Africa</strong></td>
<td>- Extreme temperatures: changing rain patterns; no harvests and no first rain; growth of alien plants &lt;br&gt;- Livestock (drought): high death rates; low milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production (caused by stress); increase in diseases (low production)</td>
<td>• Reduce deforestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No income: increased food prices</td>
<td>• No veld fires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Human beings: ill-health; new-borns have chest problems (due to pollution); high death rate; increased crime rate; migration of animals and people</td>
<td>• Promote indigenous food crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Food insecurity: malnutrition; related diseases; reduced productivity</td>
<td>• Plant drought resistant crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Disasters: floods; fires; mudslides – all these makes families homeless</td>
<td>• Promote traditional nutrition – rich crops</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Water insufficiency</td>
<td>• Apply technology for value addition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• High farming inputs: high prices of seeds; fertilisers and pesticides; high food prices</td>
<td>• Reduce reliance on aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Poor infrastructure: roads; social amenities like hospitals, schools etc. non-productive areas do not attract infrastructure</td>
<td>• Improve on post-harvest practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drought: no harvests; animals die – results in no food and no income</td>
<td>• Say No to GMOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of access to income-generating activities: this results in prostitution, spread of HIV/Aids, orphans, old mothers taking care of children</td>
<td>• Use water harvesting technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Desertification: productive farmland disappears</td>
<td>• Alternative environment-friendly energy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sources like solar, wind, biofuels from waste biomass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Planting of trees (conservation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide “women-friendly” means of access to funds, training, markets, networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish income generating activities: micro-industries in rural areas</td>
<td>Identify flood areas and problems – policy should be implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative agricultural practices/organic farming</td>
<td>Deforestation: Due to urbanisation trees have to be cut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobby for better governance; land laws; management of public funds</td>
<td>Government to build dams for rainy season</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planting of trees and medicinal plants</td>
<td>Seed exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women must stop the mining companies</td>
<td>Solar system instead of electricity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote organic farming/agro-ecology</td>
<td>Students should be taught climate change at school</td>
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</tbody>
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| KwaZulu Natal, South Africa (translation Zulu to English) | • Floods  
  - Landfills – dumps are placed next to where people live  
  - Climate change has affected our economy negatively | • People to build houses on upper-level ground  
• Super powers should contribute money to prevent floods, droughts and storms  
• Flood water should be harvested to prevent drilling expensive boreholes  
• Through the floods, government needs to catch fish for breeding  
• Governments must look at issue of global warming to measures in place to minimise it |
|---|---|---|
| Zamibia | • Low food production  
  - High temperatures  
  - Inconsistent rain patterns | • Lobby government to restrict investors involved in pollution creating activities, both land and air pollution  
• Lobby government to unite with other African countries to advocate countries like the USA to |
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Gauteng and North West, South Africa</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lesotho</strong></th>
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</table>
| - Increased incidence of domestic violence  
- Early marriages  
- High levels of illiteracy  
- Increased prostitution  
- Loss of employment  
- Increased rates of HIV/AIDS  
- Poverty  
- Shortage of resources like water  
- Changed weather patterns – no longer four seasons, only Winter and Summer  
- Increase in inflation  
- Health: increased death rates due to strange illnesses with prevalence of HIV and TB  | - Diseases: skin cancer; headaches; eye problems; sinus; asthma (in 3 – 5 year olds); diarrhoea  
- Severe weather changes: Change in rain patterns; Dams no longer have water due to drought – so we cannot irrigate, floods resulting in crops not being watered; There is now snow, hail storms and strong winds  
- Low food production: results in malnutrition, high  |
| - Sign protocols against climate change  
- African women should unite and speak out against climate change, against those causing pollution and deforestation  
- Women to organise and re-plant trees  | - Education  
- Accountability  
- Be creative with the green fund  
- Reduce gas emissions  
- Plant indigenous trees, discourage planting of exotic trees like eucalyptus that uses a lot of water  
- Intensify public participation at grassroots levels, raise awareness, build capacity  
- Promotion of key-hole plots |
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<th>infant mortality, HIV</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Livestock: low mohair/wool production; pigs and poultry affected, chickens die due to high temperatures</td>
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<td>Decline in economy: unemployment, human trafficking</td>
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<td>Mountain biodiversity is affected</td>
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<td>Review policies/laws/strategies on environmental issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rotational conservation for endangered species</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Change irrigation system</td>
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<td>Seasonal shifting</td>
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<td>Stop littering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Rains have decreased from 900-300mm, decreased by one third</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainy season stops before harvests (June-October, now only two months)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Less crops results in decrease in revenue for women</td>
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<td>Rice cultivation (normal id 90-95 days but it is not ripe), it has to be partially imported</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lower rate of quality seeds: must purchase from international companies and externally</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth have deserted rural areas and moved to cities and foreign countries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in child diseases like diarrhea</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plant trees to fertilise soil</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultivate vegetables and fruits during the dry season</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Partnerships for quality seeds adapted to the region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>More access to land for women</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promotion of rural development for youth and women</td>
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</table>
Sisters from Guatemala arrive: We are happy to be here to make friends with those around us. We are also rural women’s movements and we are fighting for land, we are fighting for food, we are fighting for peace and fighting for the new generation.

It is our first time in South Africa and we have flown via Europe to learn from you. Since you like singing we have a song (*African women then learn their song in the assembly*).

3. What is COP17?

Amandla! Viva Rural Women!

I am humbled to stand before you. Power lies in the hands of rural women. We are a great number here, and the greater the number, the more powerful. Let us not underestimate ourselves.

COP is the Conference Of the Parties. This is a United Nations (UN) initiative which brings together all nations on the globe to strategise on how best to deal with climate change. In Durban we have COP17 and the “17” means that this is the seventeenth Conference Of the Parties. What we feel as Africa, what we feel as women, is that all these conferences are using a strategy of buying time. They “bring out” nothing for the women ... nothing for the African continent. During all these discussions they came up with the Kyoto Protocol (KP). The KP is the only legally binding document that ensures that countries like America and England, countries that emit all these gasses that cause climate change, have obligations that they must meet. Up until today, multinational corporations in places like America have not met these obligations.

So what are these obligations? One is that these countries must pay for the gasses they have emitted in Africa. America and its allies have not been able to meet these obligations. That is why at this COP17 we are saying to America and its allies; you must extend the KP; it is the only legally binding document. Or you need to sign the COP17 document to meet
your obligations for emitting gasses into Africa; for co-ordinating a genocide in Africa; for having an apartheid of Africa, not just South Africa. They need to pay, but America is not willing to pay.

So through the history of COP17 we can see it is a matter of buying time. They are on holiday in expensive hotels, while we are here, they are sleeping there all the time. There are talks and talks, but they are not able to walk the talk. We are saying as African rural women, these COPs should walk the talk. The so-called COPs should stop the genocide. We need COPs that will bring results, not talk and talk and talk and no results for Africa. Not just results for America, but results for the African people; results for the African women; results for African rural women who are the tillers of the land. And way say to America “to hell with you” you need to sign a deal today or else we start a war. If America refuses to sign a deal today, then we have to draw a line, a battle line. The war that we fight against climate change is the same as the war we fight against gender equality. It’s a similar war, and in a war there are casualties,

but that is not going to take us back. So we need to stand in solidarity, united as African rural women. So that we can say that if America does not sign a deal or extend the KP, consider the battle line drawn.

This is a brief history, but America and its allies should fund the mitigation and adaptation processes. We are already experiencing climate change. In, Zimbabwe, temperatures are already reaching 50 degrees Celsius. So it is bad news. We need to fight and soldier on as rural women.

Amandla

4. Banner Making

Participants are asked to answer set questions and explain their answers through making banners. Each banner would have its own slogan.

Eight groups were formed and materials such as paint and canvass were supplied.

(Report backs scheduled for Day three)
Day Three – Friday - 2 December 2011

Programme

5. Sketch

6. Banner making report backs

7. Panel Discussion

8. Demands

9. Trip to speakers corner

5. Sketch

Participants organised a sketch with actors drawn from the North West province group at the Rural Women’s Assembly, where they incorporated issues such as climate change, HIV/AIDS, traditional healers and cultural practices. It also tackled traditional beliefs and practices and how it clashes and/or exists beside modernism.

This awareness raising exercise was well received and it showcased that the participants were women of many talents, including a love and talent for theatre and the arts.

(see left insert for photographs of this amateur production)
6. Banner making report back

**Group 1: Develop a Woman, Develop a Nation**

Explanation: Rural women are the worst off. It is not just the government; we as rural women also have a responsibility to assist with climate change. Scarcity of food, water and droughts all affect rural women, and how will government help? We are looking at our position at COP17 so that we can do something about climate change.

**Group 2: Protect Our Natural Resources**

Our natural resources will not be available anymore; therefore humans and animals will die. There will be no water and no life. Hunger too will cause death. Inflation, unemployment and poverty will increase. Rural women and children will be the most affected. Migration will occur because people will need to find jobs elsewhere. Villages will turn to deserts. Government is doing very little because they do not face the same problems we face as a rural community. They do not understand temperature change in the same way we do. They use climate change as an economic term and do not understand it as we do. They are ignoring us. We say to them that they must raise more awareness. The local government must stop asking for funds from developed countries in the name of poor people and then they do not support us. They must stop focusing on economic value and further the aims of human rights. That is why we say “Protect our resources. Protect our Human Rights. Stop ignoring our rural communities”.

**Group 3: Protect Our Environment**

Explanation: We want our environment protected against climate change. This field shows how the houses etc. are falling part. At the end we have a person crying. We want to tell government, corporations etc. please protect the environment.
Group 4: No Job

The first picture is of the sun that is killing the plants. Climate change is a huge issue, and when government makes policy they must consult with rural women. There is no food and no work and government must stop keeping jobs for themselves. Rural women must have representation at parliament.

Group 5: Poverty

We must fight against climate change. People will die of poverty and hunger. Government is not doing anything. The message is that women must unite. Government is not taking us seriously, so we must fight for the earth.

Group 6:

The sun is very hot and in our villages the rainfall is low. The lady in the picture is crying because she used to plough, but with climate change things are different

Group 7: Stop Air Pollution, Protect Nature

They have houses here, on the picture and there is a factory right next door. The rubbish flows into the river, into their water. People are therefore getting sick. They are here to fight for their communities and resources, especially food.

Group 8: No Life, No Future

The trees are dying and the houses are falling down, people are dying, as shown in the picture. Everything is destroyed. This is what will happen if climate change continues. And what is government doing? They are doing little or nothing. So you can see we show government relaxing, driving posh cars. So as women, we are here to fight against climate change. We want to say to government: wake up! Do something! Because at the end of time, the environment will collapse. Stop using carbon emissions. Use ozone friendly chemicals. Raise awareness. Consider people.
7. Panel Discussion – Fair and Just Work

Farmworker (Gauteng): The labour conditions on farms are terrible. We do not have maternity leave even though labour law in South Africa is progressive; even in Gauteng, a progressive province, we are poorly paid and we must work on Sundays as well. We have no land, so the food we produce we cannot eat. We produce for the market, and are struggling to feed our families even though we are the producers of food.

Eastern Cape/Mpumalanga: Thank you for inviting me to this women’s forum. We are the South African Waste Pickers Association. We are an organisation of men and women who are working on the landfills, working in the streets, collecting recyclables and sorting to sell. We are a new organisation and are only three years old. We pledge our solidarity to you. We do not discriminate on grounds of gender and need to build leadership. We need to create awareness in society about our jobs. We contribute a lot to emission reduction and are owed a climate debt; we take care of the environment. Women are the pillars, and there is a lot to learn from women. We recycle rubbish, and we need respect because we too are human beings.

Pat Horn (StreetNet): I am not a street hawker myself. StreetNet, where I work is an international organisation. Today the hawkers are preparing for the Global Day of Action and Fridays are usually their busiest days. Street vendors and hawkers are usually harassed by the municipality, chased off streets, harassed by the police who often ask them for bribes. The majority are women who are supporting large families as many of the men have lost their jobs. We work with 36 countries and 29 are in Africa and then we work in Asia and Latin America. Street traders of the world therefore can speak with one voice. Just like the waste pickers, street vendors also want recognition as workers, even though they do not receive a salary from a boss. With climate change there have been food price increases, but if street vendors increase the price of food then people will not buy from them. If they decrease the price they cannot make their own money. Hence, they are affected by climate change. The waste pickers and street hawkers have been forming an alliance across Africa, because together they face the municipalities, who do not recognise them as workers, even though they are workers in the informal economy. Their alliance is helping in some of the places where united voices help deal with the municipalities. Many women from rural areas come into the city to sell their products. We suggest that when you enter a city you look for an organisation of street hawkers. That would mean that you are not alone and can receive...
assistance. I have the contact details if any of you are interested. Amandla!

Farmworker (Western Cape): I live and work on the farm. I am a single mother with three children and am a seasonal worker. Climate change has had a major impact on us as seasonal workers. We are struggling to put food on the table, especially with the uncertainty of climate change, which impacts of our income. While we are busy with our own vegetable gardens the rain and snow kill our plants so we are unsure of what to plant. It also impacts on our health as there is not enough food to nourish us, especially since TB is such a big issue in the Western Cape. Our children tend to turn to crime due to lack of food and money, and end up in prison. Today I want to ask, what are we going to do?

Mozambique: This is a huge issue in my country. We are doing sustainable agriculture and are getting local producers on board to fight climate change. We want to gather with the rest of Africa so that we can find answers and solutions to climate change. We engage as women, there is no victory without women.

8. Demands

During the workshops this year we have worked hard to be here at the COP17. These are the demands that have flowed from all our discussion.

1) Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Livelihoods
2) Land and Resource Rights
3) Protecting Environment and Ecosystems
4) Government Discussions on Climate Change must be based on Women’s needs

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1 Annex 1
9. Trip to Speakers Corner

The public park situated opposite the International Convention Centre (ICC) where the official COP17 conference took place was called Speakers Corner. Here activists from many organisations could use the space to raise awareness of their issues concerning climate change, serving as a meeting point for local and international civil society groups and activists.

The Rural Women’s Assembly used the convergence point to announce their presence in Durban, raise awareness of how rural women are affected by climate change, state their demands, and join with other activists in solidarity to discuss and hold leaders accountable for the decisions they were about to take at COP17. This is what some speakers had to say.

Welcome to the ICC alternative space. The reason we are here is because there is a Conference of Polluters happening across the road, and they are negotiating our future without us. NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!! We are here to remind them that we also have our solutions. We also have our ways. We are here to express our demands to those who are there.

We are living in a sick world. A world that is oppressive. A world that is oppressed by capitalists. This world needs to be saved. Can we save it? Stand Up. Now is the time to stand up; the time to share your knowledge and experience with other women. Pollution! Emissions! Are killing our women. I have no land. I have no natural resources. I need. You need. We need. We must fight until we get it.

They are sitting there, deciding our fate, like we don’t have voice to speak. Let us make a mark. Let us speak for ourselves. This is our future. This is our children's future. We cannot stand it any longer. Amandla!

In Senegal, we organised ourselves separately from government. Our local communities started an organisation to reflect on our issues around development and share ideas. For example, we tried to build things to counter some of the fires, tried to remedy the floods and tried to fight desertification by planting trees. Also, we planted vegetables and fruit and refused to use fertilisers that contained toxic chemicals. We used natural compost. We meet regularly in our small communities and have...
established a charter for the region to regulate things. We took fate into our own hands and did not depend of government.

In Malawi we are also affected by climate change. It has affected our produce and production is slow due to erratic rainfall and soil erosion. We are here to fight against climate change. Our governments must wake up now. We are suffering, we are crying every day because of the diseases we now face in our villages. So please government wake up to help us as rural farmers and women. Amandla!

I have many greeting from my beautiful country – Guatemala. Let’s feel our land, now feel your skin. There is no difference because this is our mother land. Our message is to keep the planet safe. So we are worried what is happening with women in our rural areas in Central America, in Africa, in Asia. We all have the same problems. We have to keep our hands and work together.

I am a farmer from India working amongst the women there. We have no land. We work in the land of others. Many of us work like slaves. In India we need land, give us land. As women we are powerful. We can do a lot. We can all come together and work. We need good solutions with an international focus on rural women. We don’t have food, we don’t have jobs; we have lots of issues. Nobody is there to take care of our issues, so now we must look at the issues when we are together. We are strong.

Viva rural women viva! I am from Zimbabwe and today we join the rest of the world, the rest of the rural women, to say the earth does not belong to us, we belong to the earth. The earth is saying it is tired, as rural women we join the earth to say we are tired of the exploitation that is happening to our countries. It has impacted on us as women, and we are saying ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! We are saying no to the exploitation of Africa. We are saying no to the genocide of African women. We are saying no to the massacre. NO! NO! NO! Viva KP Viva! Sign the deal or else.

The land belongs to us. Land is our heritage. The voices of the women must be heard TODAY! By the capitalists. We are poor, but we are the ones holding up the economy. Without rural women there will be no food in the rural areas. We are struggling. We have no water. We don’t
anything, but we can still bring food. Climate change caused by capitalists is robbing us. We did not contribute to climate change. There are no more rains. There is drought. The tornadoes are ripping our houses apart. Who caused that? The capitalists. Today we want answers. TODAY!

In Swaziland, what am I going to do? If it rains my child can’t cross the river. But what river? I will run to the field. Where is my field? But the mielies are short. I should be harvesting. What am I going to give to my children? My husband will kill me. What has happened to my cows? I will go to the next door land. It is the king’s land so it must be good. But if I cross I will be arrested for trespassing. What am I to do? How will I provide for my child? What will I give to my cattle? My land? This is my land, I have always lived here. What will I do when the factories come? Who is allowing them to come? Who will protect the rural women? What is causing this? Climate change. Where is our government? We must speak out and shout. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Namibia: TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT!

“...Let the rain wash our brain matter/Deliver us rain maker from Nano thinking/because it is a new world/to make it rain, we need a paradigm shift…”

– Poet at speakers corner
Day Four – Saturday – 3 December 2011

3 December 2011 was declared the global day action where all activists and civil society groups – those on the margins of COP17 – could march in solidarity against climate change. People from many different walks of life converged on Durban, South Africa to add their voice to the call for climate justice. Participants in the Rural Women’s Assembly added their voice to some 15 000 activists on this Global Day of Action.
Day Five – Sunday – 4 December 2011

10. Seed Exchange and Idea Sharing

Western Cape: How to use recycled bottles

A recycled bottle and old doll is used to make a gift or ornament (see insert on left)

This session showcased the different talents of the participants and the products which they sell. After, the seeds and products are put on display for sale. Women explained the uses of the seeds, the best weather to grow these seeds in and how people could save money and overheads during planting seasons.

Mozambique: I would like to share the way in which we store seeds in our country. We have various seeds but there are some that we share with others. I will talk about maize, sorghum and beans. We gather information from our forefathers and still use their methods to store seeds. We gather the maize seeds after the harvest and store it. Right up to the harvest we select the best seeds to store and those that we will eat. If I have five children, we select seeds for each and give it to them to store to see which has a good hand for keeping seeds. So, after that we see which one has the best the seeds; from then on that child will be responsible for storing seeds. This is our technique because the seeds at the market are expensive, so we do this every year. We organise fairs annually in each province where we share the seeds. So we exchange seeds with people from different parts of the country because not everybody can get good seeds. Thank you.

Namibia: First, our staple food which we use to make porridge. It does not need much rain, just a bit of irrigation, but very inexpensive to grow. It can be harvested in two or four months, usually in early April or June or July. Maize can be produced from it. The second seed takes six months to grow. You can harvest ten or fifty times. Harvesting depends on rain. The third seed requires a lot of rain, but you can get juice from it.
Limpopo: I would like to share my experiences with organic farming. I would like to show you a new method of farming – free from pesticides. We planted different kinds of herbs next to our crops. This has worked in controlling insects. The smell repels them. The fertilisers and pesticides destroy our health, so we must use organic farming. I have with me, rosemary, thyme and ointments that can be used in arthritis, as sometimes those pesticides cause problems with your joints. We have also made cough mixtures from our gardens.

Kenya: These are beans that can be used in a stew, with this one you can use manure which I can show how to use - during lunch please see me for more information.

Zambia: I have brought sorghum and mielies, they grow all over Zambia. We also produce mielies from millet. Also, you do not need too much rain. I also have ground nuts, which we produce with no fertiliser or pesticides. Thank you.

11. Assad – Friends of the Earth – Explains what is happening inside the COP17

Friends of the Earth is an international grassroots organisation. Sisters, we see the impact of climate change all around the world, it is happening. The floods, the mudslides, the fires, and we see it here in Africa. Who cannot know about the famine in Africa? Climate change is impacting on our agriculture; even here in Durban last week there was a flood that took the lives of eight of our brothers and sisters. We see it in our reality. We see that it will get worse and worse. You sisters, that are the guardians of the earth, you see it every day in your lives, and you see it happening. These changes are happening faster and faster and their impacts are getting worse and worse.

Why are we facing this problem? Because just 15 per cent of the world’s population have polluted 75 per cent of the world’s atmosphere. This small minority, through their actions, have created a problem that we didn't create, but it affects us first and foremost. There is this one per cent of the world’s population that want to take more than what’s theirs, who want to eat more than they need, who want to control more than they need to control. Those people, that one per cent, who don’t want anything to change, who don’t want their power to change, who don’t want a thing to change even though they can see the impact with their own eyes, and the governments and the companies who are
responsible, who can only see their profit, not what damage they do to the earth, to the planet, to our ecosystems. Not what damage they do to our lives, or the people that go to bed hungry every day. We all know that there is enough food in the world; we all know that there are enough resources in the world for us all to have decent lives.

Down the road from where we marched yesterday is where there are negotiations going on. You would expect that the conference would be about how we stop climate change. How can we cut this pollution? How do we get these rich countries, which created the problem, to take the necessary action like they legally and morally and politically promised. That they say we caused the problem; we will take action to ensure that the pollution decreases. And, we will give some money because we know that our problems have created problems in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and all of those countries, so we will give money so that you can adapt. Like, how can we make our agriculture resilient, how can we share knowledge around seeds and other good practices, and what sort of technology? How do we spread the learning, from the sister in Zambia to the sister in Ghana? You would think that that’s what they would be spending their time on. That would be thing that would draw them and say, we are going to ensure that here on African soil we are going to make the kind of agreement that will promise to deliver an agreement that says we the people of Africa and the world.

In reality the negotiations are about who will live and who will die; who will have food, and who won’t have food; who will have access to water, and who won’t have access; who will go to bed hungry, who will lose their lives; these are the fundamental questions being debated there. We know that when the temperature rises the weather is changing. One degree and we can already see the impact. At two degrees – we are looking at catastrophic climate change, or as Archbishop Tutu said, two degrees will incinerate Africa. Anything from 40 to 50 per cent of Africa’s agriculture will be severely inactive. When we reach two degrees in the world, in Africa it will reach three and a half degrees. Africa will be one and a half times the global temperature. When they say five degrees, Africa will be at seven degrees.

So far, they have said that there will be an initiative to deliver the world to five degrees warming. That is a death sentence for our people, for our economies, for our lives, for our way of living and for our communities. It is the most important challenge, in this room you do not just represent the sisters of Africa, you represent the millions and millions of
people across the world who cannot reach these shores. Who don’t have the money to fly in a plane to make their voices heard.

Three things were meant to be negotiated.

1. The Kyoto Protocol (KP) – 191 countries except the US signed and agreed to cut emissions, but they will protect KP in name only. In it will be an empty shell. There will be no emission reductions in it. The science tells us that rich countries must half emissions by 2020 to give us a 50-50 chance of keeping world temperatures stable. The US is reducing by three per cent. Rich European countries are cutting by 20 per cent. In reality that 20 per cent is zero, because of the recession they have already cut by that amount. The majority of reductions are in our countries, through REDD etc. Secondly, they want to negotiate for a whole new treaty, which will take another ten years, ten years which the earth does not have. They made a promise ten years ago, now they want to make a new promise. Thirdly, they promised us money. In Copenhagen they promised 30 billion for the most vulnerable countries. Again, they lied; all they did was change the name of existing aid. So it is not new money. They are talking about the money they will give in 2020, not now. It’s not that the government will give the money. The UN has said just for Africa to deal with impacts and to have basic needs met would require one trillion, they gave their banks three trillion, but they can’t find 100 hundred billion for poor countries.

This money will come from the carbon markets. They now want us to agree to a new treaty, which will agree to new markets. The biggest market they want is in soil, in agriculture. This will need land grabs. They will trade in our agriculture like a commodity and will bring in GMOs etc.

At the moment the only group standing firm is the Africa group, lobbying for strong emission reduction, a UN controlled climate fund etc. they are under pressure from the US and Europe, also increasingly from South Africa and Ethiopia. We must make sure that those ministers, who are arriving; we must say that this is the red line that you must not cross.

Our power is people power, it sits in this room, it is not in the negotiation, it is in our bodies, our voices, our strength. That is why we have to make sure that before we leave, every one of our countries, ministers and negotiators, know that we the people are telling them; this is not something you can negotiate away, you have to remain strong, united, you have save not just Africa, but people across the world.

“...for Africa to deal with impacts and to have basic needs met would require one trillion, they gave their banks three trillion...”
Q: Is the money really a solution? If pollution still continues after we accept money?

A: Money is not the solution, but they have a responsibility to pay for things like renewable energy, energy is expensive to access, that money is to transform the economy, to ensure access etc. it is just one part, the main thing they must do is reduce emissions.

Q: How united is the UN? Why is South Africa pressuring other countries?

A: many are lobbying the EU, there are conditionalities on everything which we call bullying. On South Africa, it is because they are the hosts – so it is about national pride, then there are economic interests, corporates have lobbied South Africa hard to side with Europe. There is also a lot of money involved.

Q: impact of climate change felt most by women. How are women represented in the COP?

A: People have been talking about the Rural Women's Assembly. So they have taken our demands and told the Africa group that their people want action, you must sign, and then sign to the wrong thing. They have twisted it. So we must speak to every politician every minister etc. we have to say to them, stay strong. They must know that they are not alone in that room, we stand with them in that room.

Q: I don’t think there is enough awareness of the problems.

A: it is happening, people might not call it climate change, but they definitely see it, they might not connect the dots, but they do see it. It is the same struggle everywhere, and we are fighting it everywhere. The movements are strong and we must stand together.

Q: Are we still allowing the west to take the lead on these negotiations?

A: at the moment the Africa group have agreed on a position. But when they have their meeting today, and on Wednesday the high level ministerial is where the danger is, because they give in to short term benefits. We need to ensure that at least some countries stand strong so that we prevent the worst.

Q: would you say something positive will happen? Or is it just another talk shop?

I would love to say that there is a positive outcome. But most of the option is making sure they don’t do the worst thing that ties us into something catastrophic.
12. **Group Work: Resolutions**

1. What are the main lessons that we have learned from this assembly?
2. How can we take the process forward? Strategies.
3. How do we use this process to strengthen our organisations and movements?

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Cultural Evening

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2 Annex 2
Memorandum³: Hand Over to African Ministers Representative

The Rural Women’s Assembly handed over their memorandum to the representative for African Ministers at COP17. The handover took place at speakers corner and was attended by many activists and organisations showing solidarity with the issues of rural women.

³ Annex 3