



MEMORANDUM
to
the South African Presidency, Government and Parliament
from the Rural Women of South Africa

International Rural Women's Day
October 15th

We the undersigned rural women's organisations of South Africa, on the occasion of the International Day of Rural Women note the following:

- that from colonial occupation, through apartheid and into the post apartheid era, rural women have been the backbone of families and communities, nurturing the labour force of the country, and providing the safety net for children, the disabled, sick, unemployed and elderly.¹
- that we contribute to every aspect of economic life, from farming and fisheries, manufacturing and industry as well as being the centre of cultural revival and indigenous knowledge

In spite of the vital role rural women have played in the history of South Africa we observe that:

Rural poverty, human development, and food security

- Poverty remains a rural phenomenon--72% of the poor are in rural areas and 71% of rural households are poor. Rural communities have the worst access to health and education, electricity and water in the South Africa. Spatial apartheid remains the reality of the nation.
- South Africa ranks 110th out of 165 countries on the 2010 human development index. Human development indicators have fallen by 6 points between 2005 and 2010. This is because maternal and child mortality have risen since 2005.
- Thirty percent of children live in poverty, and 60 percent of all child deaths between 1-4 are a result of malnutrition.² More than a fifth of South African households have inadequate or severely inadequate access to food.³

¹ Source: Trends in South African Income Distribution, and Poverty Since the Fall of Apartheid, OECD, Social, Employment and Migration working papers.

² Commission for Gender Equality, Gendered Review of South Africa's MDGs

³ StatsSA, General Household Survey 2010



Land reform, redistribution and restitution

- Government is behind meeting its targets for land reform, redistribution and restitution. Over the past 10 years, women have constituted only 36% of redistribution beneficiaries, and only 9% of restitution cases as a direct result of an absence of government strategy to reach women through land reform.⁴
- 13% of South Africa's land is under communal land ownership where there is also persistent discrimination against women's land rights.
- Over a million farmworkers were evicted from farms between 1994 and 2007, the majority of whom were women and children who had lived on the farms for more than 10 years.⁵
- The current Green Paper on Land Reform published in August 2011 offers no direction for land reform. It lacks a proper review of the situation as regards land reform, and does not propose any solutions for gender equality in land reform. It also fails to provide a road map for the revision of CLRA.

Agricultural employment and support for small-scale agriculture

- While half of South Africa's population is rural, less than a quarter of South African households are involved in agriculture, the majority of who are farming in backyard gardens. Of these, only 12% of households received support from government during 2009/10.⁶
- South Africa has the lowest level of agricultural employment relative to the size of its rural population in developing countries.⁷ This is as a result of the low levels of support for small-scale agriculture and high levels of mechanization in commercial farming.
- Furthermore formal and informal agricultural employment fell by over 50% between 2000 and 2007⁸ largely as a result of casualization and feminization of work.
- We note the continued violation of farmworkers' rights perpetuated by the system of labour brokering.

⁴ Source – Commission for Gender Equality, Gendered Analysis of Land Reform Policy and Implementation Outcomes in South Africa

⁵ Nkuzi Development Trust

⁶ StatsSA, General Household Survey 2010

⁷ ADRA Works, Spring 2009 Narrowing the Agriculture Gap

⁸ StatsSA, Labour Force Survey, 2000-2007



Climate Change and environmental degradation

- Our environments and livelihoods are at threat as a result of climate change caused by unsustainable solutions to climate change caused by unsustainable modes of industrial and agricultural production.
- Globally carbon emissions continue to rise, with the biggest global polluters refusing to sign a legally binding agreement to reduce emissions. Meanwhile they are pushing developing countries to bear the responsibility of mitigation. This means that governments, including our own, are willing to risk the lives of the most vulnerable women rather than make hard choices to save the planet.
- Internationally, climate response policies are putting forward 'false solutions' designed to create even more profit for the corporate sector. We note that schemes such as carbon markets, emissions trading or biofuels are resulting in the violation of land and resource rights for the poorest communities.
- Government has unquestioningly adopted the model of 'climate smart agriculture' pushed by the World Bank without consultations and inputs to rural communities and without attempting to develop its own homegrown solutions to agriculture.

Demands

We demand that the rural women's rights be put at the centre of South Africa's economic, social, cultural and political development agenda. The status of rural women as fourth-class citizens must stop. Poverty, unemployment, hunger, disease will continue to persist without attending to the plight of rural women. To that end, we call upon the Presidency, Parliament and Government to present the nation with a radical path forward and implement the following measures:

Agrarian reform, redistribution and tenure

1. Equal rights and access to land, water and natural resources for women producers
2. Ensure that traditional governance systems do not discriminate against women's land rights.
3. Reopen the land claims process and finalise existing land claims.
4. Stop evictions and demolitions of our homes in the name of development.
5. Develop a new law to replace ESTA and ensure the tenure rights of farm dwellers.
6. Revitalise and strengthen the role of Community Property Associations
7. Stop the imposition of government officials and traditional leaders in CPAs
8. Support rural women's livelihood strategies and production.
9. Provide redress for victims of farm evictions



10. Stop violations of women's inheritance rights.

Traditional governance and customary law

11. All laws and traditional structures including the traditional courts bill, the traditional councils and the traditional leadership and governance framework must be brought into line with the constitution and operate according to its values.
12. Section 28 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act must be done away with.
13. End discrimination against women within all traditional systems and end traditional harmful practices.
14. Rural women from all walks must be represented equally in all traditional systems particularly the most marginalized and poor women.

Food sovereignty and self reliance

15. Make food sovereignty the centre of a programme of national smallholder agricultural renewal and eliminate dependency on industrial agriculture.
16. Engage in a massive programme of support to all rural women farmers ensure food security and reduce rural poverty.
17. Promote urban agriculture and urban food security through the creation of community food gardens
18. Expand programmes to provide women access to land, finance, human resources and skills building
19. Promote the use of indigenous seeds and farming methods to fight climate change.
20. Stop the use of GMOs, pesticides and other forms of industrial agriculture that destroy the land and environment.

Injustice, discrimination and oppression

21. End the inequality and apartheid between rural and urban areas.
22. Stop forced removals of rural communities from their land and homes in favour of 'mining and development projects'.
23. Protect our cultural rights and heritage by banning the removal of gravesites and stopping access to traditional gravesites by farm owners.
24. Deal with the violation of the human and labour rights of farmworkers and children by white farmers.
25. Ensure equal access to justice and equal treatment before the law which are frequently violated by local authorities and other public officials.
26. End violence against women, children and girls.



Climate Change and environmental protection

27. Support for education and awareness in rural communities – to demystify climate change and help communities understand the threats.
28. Support for adaptation and agro-ecology – to help rural communities build resilience to the impacts of climate change.
29. Take a strong stand on the international stage to push for cutting global emissions in order to protect rural women from further climate change induced suffering.
30. Reject external market driven solutions such as GMOs, carbon markets and biofuels in favour of indigenous, people-driven, women-centred and homegrown measures.
31. Engage with rural women and fisher communities from around the world at COP 17 through the Rural Women's Assembly to hear their needs and share best practices.

Participation in decision making and supporting partnerships with rural women

32. Consult with women to design models of meaningful and effective participation in local and national by women small scale producers in decision-making.
33. Provide adequate space and time and resources for inputs by rural women on the National Climate Change Response Paper, the Green Paper on Land Reform as well as the New Growth Path.
34. Ensure that the national budget has adequate finances to support community centred rural women's empowerment and the revitalization of rural areas.
35. Support partnerships between rural and urban women's groups, academic institutions, other women's associations and media to strengthen knowledge on rural women's empowerment.
36. Establish and support rural women's forums in all communities to promote local-to-local exchanges, build leadership and strengthen engagement in public policy.
37. Promote knowledge exchange and partnerships with rural women's organisations from the global south and in particular the African continent.

End of document

Signed at Pretoria, this day of 15th October 2011,

(Signature and participating organisations attached)



LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

Association for Community Rural Advancement (AnCRA)
Association for Rural Advancement(AFRA)
Cala University Students Association (CALUSA)
Gender and Climate Change Southern Africa
Iliziwi LamaFama
Itireleng and Mopani Farmers Union
Khanyisa and Makukhanye
Land Access Movement of South Africa (LAMOSA)
Legal Resources Center (LRC)
Masifunde
Masifundise Coastal Links
Mawubuye Land Rights Forum
National Movement of Rural Women (NMRW)
Nkuzi Development Association
Northern Cape NGO Coalition
Rural People' Movement,
Rural Women's Movement in KwaZulu Natal (RWM)
Siyazakha
South African Council of Churches (SACC)
Southern Cape Land Committee (SCLC)
Surplus People Project (SPP)
The Rural Action Committee (TRAC)
Transkei Land Service Organisation (TRALSO)
Trust for Community Outreach
Women on Farms
Women's Legal Center
Zingisa