

A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the
Durban Climate Change Conference

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Events convened on Wednesday, 30 November 2011

Gender, Justice and Social Learning: Exploring Theory and Practice in Adaptation

Organized by the Pennsylvania State University (PSU), Environmental Monitoring Group Trust (EMG), and Rhodes University (RU)



Lena Kotze, Heiveld Co-operative, explained that using adaptive farming techniques in arid areas proved critical to the protection of their organic rooibos crops.

Petra Tschakert, PSU, explored the framings, limitations and traps of climate change adaptation at the intersection of poverty, gender, justice, and social learning. She said in the overall understanding of adaptation "we should never lose sight of the people caught in the center of our decision making."

Jackie Dugard, Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI-SA), presented a case study on the impact of acid mine water drainage in three communities. She commented on the lack of awareness of the negative impacts, regardless of socio-economic background.

Nancy Tuana, PSU, presented several current research collaborations on: gender justice; methods of communicating this research; and institutional practices that result in unjust climate responses.

Sheona Shackleton, RU, presented their research that focuses on social learning for climate change adaptation through shared experiences. She emphasized the need for societal innovation and new adaptation strategies and practices.

Injairu Kulundu, RU, presented a video clip of a South African rural community case study using a participatory process based on social learning theory to: share knowledge; build local agency and adaptive capacities; and bring the community concerns into climate change research dialogue.

Sidney LeFleur, Ericaville Farming Trust, talked about problems facing honeybush farmers of Ericaville, South Africa, over the last five years as a result of climate change, such as: severe floods; subsequent root diseases; and sudden drought and crop destruction by baboons. He stressed the importance of changing farming practices to anticipate such events.

On the challenges in the organic rooibos farming community of Heiveld, South Africa, Lena Kotze, Heiveld Co-operative, talked about adaptive measures undertaken by the farmers to counter the impacts of climate change. She urged women to realize their potential as farmers, regardless of the threat from changing weather patterns.

Participants discussed the challenges facing marginalized communities threatened by changing weather patterns, such as: lack of technical expertise; population growth and migration patterns; community consumption levels; and the unsustainable use of child labor to buffer against natural disasters.

More information:

<http://www.geog.psu.edu>
<http://www.ru.ac.za/static/departments/environsci>
<http://www.heiveld.co.za>

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