

Village celebrates rural milestones

Rural Women play a crucial role in agriculture, food security and nutrition, land and natural resource management and rural enterprises, often in severely difficult conditions that include insufficient infrastructure and inadequate rural services.

This is why GenderCC SA and the Hebron Mango Tree Owner Primary Cooperative, as part of the Gender and Climate Resilient Communities Initiative, hosted a Rural Women's Day Celebration on 15 October 2020 in the Madibeng Municipality.

"We wanted to celebrate rural women in recognition of the important role they play in sustaining families and communities," says Martha More from the Hebron Cooperative.

Tabea Masilo, also from the Cooperative, adds that they wanted to encourage and motivate women to come out of their "cocoon" following the hard lockdown and to show that women can stand on their own feet to look after their families".

Attendees included farmers and members of the Hebron Mango Tree Owner Primary Cooperative, as well as delegates from GenderCC SA and the Government of Flanders. Participants were given an opportunity to talk about how they adapt to climate change in terms of nutrition, food security and water conservation, and also gave attendees a platform to voice their struggles and challenges.

Tackling food insecurity

The biggest struggles and concerns raised related to climate change and measurements taken to combat COVID-19.

"In the past people were able to go to the community garden to get food, but because of movement restrictions they were no longer able to do so and the garden also got severely neglected. Many women then had to revert to backyard farming, but food takes time to grow and many did not have enough space or the skill to do so, resulting in even more families than usual suffering from hunger," More says.

The Community has tried to address food insecurity, by identifying vulnerable families and supplying them with surpluses from other families.

As far as climate change is concerned, it is exacerbating poverty by resulting in temperatures getting warmer, increased unpredictability and more extreme weather, such as droughts, heat waves and floods. Along with this, there are shifts in disease and pest threats.

"We are planting our food outside, which makes us extremely vulnerable to climate change and its associated production threats. We also suffer water shortage and do not have equipment for optimal irrigation," More says.

GenderCC SA is helping to alleviate pressure on the community through training. "GenderCC SA is playing an amazing role in empowering women in our community with skills to grow their own food and in effect fend for themselves. They also lobby for us to ensure our plight is not overlooked when it comes to the development of new policies," Masilo says.

The Cooperative has announced the launch of the solidarity market as of the 5th of December. “The market will give an opportunity for community members to bring and sell surplus food as well as crafts and other goods as organic honey and sundried vegetables. We are planning on hosting a solidarity market once a month, but will do so twice a month if we see there is a need to do so,” More says.