

NEWSLETTER

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS, GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE SYMPOSIUM JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

26-29 August
2019



Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, South Africa; Yola Mgogwana, Earth Child Project; Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.

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Climate Change Disproportionately Affects Women and Young Girls

UNFPA symposium underscores the need to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender and climate change linkages

“Women bear the brunt of extreme weather events because they lack economic, political and legal power.” It is essential that escalated action be taken regarding climate change to create a sustainable green future, said Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, South Africa.

“It is essential that we understand the relationship between the effects of climate change and the persistence of violence against women,” she said.

Unless recurrent climate-related threats such as drought, flooding, disease outbreaks and gender-based violence are well mitigated through policy and programme mainstreaming, the vulnerability of those most affected, especially women and girls, cannot be effectively addressed, she added.

She was addressing a symposium on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender and Climate Change Resilience organized by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund in Pretoria, South Africa. The event was

held at the University of Pretoria’s Future Africa campus from 26-29 August.

The event attracted participants from across Africa. It sought to generate game-changing fast-track actions for building climate change resilience by providing a platform for cultivating strategic direction on programmatic, partnership and financing opportunities, with linkages to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), SRHR, gender and climate change resilience for the region.

Promote Climate Change Linkages with Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health



Climate change is probably the biggest threat of our time.”

-Dalitso Kabambe, Reserve Bank of Malawi



Ms. Andrea M. Wojnar, UNFPA Mozambique Country Office; Xoli Fuyani, Earth Child Project; and Dr. Dalitso Kabambe, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Malawi.

“Understanding the impact of climate change on development priorities in Africa – and adapting economies, societies, natural resource management practices, energy investments, budget and policies to its expected and uncertain consequences – is essential in the pursuit of sustainable development and improved climate governance,” said Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.

The impact of global climate change has disproportionately affected women and young girls, especially those living in the global South.

During Cyclone Idai, which ravaged

Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe earlier this year, pregnant women found themselves giving birth in the most adverse of conditions.

The ICPD Programme of Action in 1994 recognized that ecological problems, such as global climate change, largely driven by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, add to the threats to the well-being of future generations.

These threats impact many people, especially those in poor communities. Extreme climate-related hazards now occur regularly in Africa – such as drought in the Sahel region, severe water scarcity, more frequent and

extreme El Niño events, and severe storms such as cyclones Idai and Kenneth.

These exacerbate the vulnerability of a large proportion of people, especially women of reproductive age, adolescents and other marginalized groups. Climate-induced natural disasters limit their access to sexual and reproductive health services, safe water and improved sanitation, food security, and education.

When a natural disaster strikes, the number of people in need of emergency reproductive health services or protection from gender-based violence escalates.

Young People Amplify their Voices for a Sustainable Green Future

“We need concrete actions...the planet’s future is my future”
11 year- old eco-warrior Yola Mggogwana from Khayelitsha informal settlement in Western Cape, South Africa.



Sharon Murinda, Climate change focal person, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Harare; Chiagozie Udeh, Global South Focal Point, Children and Youth constituency to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Young people’s voices were central to the call to action to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Gender and Climate Change linkages demanding the need for a centralized platform to further advance their climate action efforts, support to upscale their programmes and innovations and concrete policy changes for environmental issues.

Young people shared how they are escalating their climate actions in their communities to achieve the future they want and called upon all governments, donors and the civil society support their initiatives.

“We need to localize climate change and empower more people with knowledge on how climate change is (directly) affecting them”, Chiagozie Udeh the 2019 Global South Focal Point for the International Youth Climate Movement who is also a #TrillionTrees campaigner with Plant for The Planet said.

Linking Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) to climate change, UNFPA Safeguard Young People Programme Regional Coordinator Renata Tallarico, shared with participants best practices on how to educate people on the effects that climate change has on their lives and on how to

encourage communities to become more eco-friendly.

“But this has to start from the basics. We can’t assume that people know [about climate change], so we need to do more at community and individual level,” she said.

Article 7 of the Paris Agreement recommends adaptation actions to follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory approach that considers vulnerable groups and communities.

Pretoria Call to Action on SRHR, Gender and Climate Change Resilience

As a threat we face together, climate change is the most significant long-term threat to sustainable development, including health, well-being, human rights and the environment.

After extensive discussions, participants agreed on a Call to Action to fast-track actions that will be game-changing in building climate change resilience:



Healthy, empowered populations including young people-UNFPA will invest in sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, and population and development to achieve resilience to climate change and long-term demographic, economic and environmental dividends to ensure no one is left behind.



Climate-resilient health systems: We commit to mainstream climate resilience into health sector plans and strengthen the capacity of health systems to protect and improve population health in an unstable and changing climate, in order to address the challenges that climate change poses to population health.



Risk reduction, better preparedness and strong emergency response: We commit to meet the sexual and reproductive health and rights needs of those impacted by climate crises, including prevention and response to gender-based violence.



Strong, disaggregated data on climate vulnerability and adaptive capacity: Through a well-coordinated mechanism involving all key stakeholders, we will ensure that climate-related vulnerability assessments and actions are informed by disaggregated population data and take into account sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence risks and protective measures



Working, financing and acting together: We will ensure diverse partnerships that promote cross-sectoral approaches, with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, young people, the private sector, environmental groups, regional bodies and development banks.



UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office

9 Simba Road, P. O. Box 2980, Sunninghill, 2191, South Africa

Website: esaro.unfpa.org

Twitter: @UNFPA_ESARO

Facebook: UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office