

Sunday, Chonwe (26<sup>th</sup> August, 2023)



## **WOMEN ENVIRONS IN ZAMBIA CONCERNED WITH EXTINCTION OF INDIGENOUS SEED VARIETIES**

Women EnviroNs in Zambia National Coordinator Susan Chilala says more effort is needed to protect climate resilient indigenous seeds because they are under attack globally.

Ms Chilala said her organization is therefore, working with women in rural areas who are into small scale farming to protect and promote indigenous seeds.

"We have four thematic areas which include Women Seed Rights, Women Land Rights, Gender Equality and Climate Justice," she said.

Ms Chilala said under the Women Seed Rights, Women EnviroNs in Zambia has a Seed Multiplication Programme in all our areas of operation namely Rufunsa, Chongwe, Chisamba, Monze and Pemba, with a membership of over six thousand with the highest membership in Monze which has 1974 members.

"Under the Women Seed Rights, we promote indigenous seeds that are disappearing from the communities now. All our programmes are related to Climate Change and food security," she said.

Ms Chilala said her organization gives indigenous seeds to women which they multiply at community level.

"If we give a woman 10kg bag of indigenous seed, they have to bring back 20kg. The 20 kg is given to another group of women. Around the Seed, we have been advocating to the Chiefs and Policy Makers. We held our first Food and Seed Festival in Monze on July 11, 2023, where we gave out 200 packs of Seed to Pemba. I am talking about Advocacy, so we had the Permanent Secretary because the issues of Seed are critical as there is a lot happening around the world. The Seed is under attack, therefore, Women EnviroNs in Zambia is playing a part at community level. We are the evidence because wherever you will go, they will say indigenous seeds are not there. As Women EnviroNs in Zambia, we are working hard to ensure that these seeds are preserved and available on the market," she said.

Ms Chilala said Women Enviros in Zambia has plans next year, to work on having enough stocks of individual seeds for Government's and other stakeholders.

"What we need now are quantities. We have worked on the quality of the indigenous Seed and now we are looking at the quantities. The Seed now is on demand. We are trying to get to all the districts in Zambia by trying to get these seeds subsidies by government. What Government and other stakeholders does not have are the stocks. We have envisaged that in the next five years, we can have enough quantities to supply to government or whoever will be interested," she said.

Ms Chilala said Women Environs in Zambia has further gone into red sorghum such as early maturing varieties identified as Kafwamba, Muchiza njala while others would call it Tanda nzala which is 60 days to maturity.

"Under Climate Change, these seeds only need a little bit of water to survive. We started with Kafwamba, then moved to Gankata. We also had legumes such as groundnuts and beans. From the results that we have gotten, we are now trying to promote pigeon peas. More districts are beginning to appreciate pigeon peas as a legume because it grows under difficult conditions of Climate Change. We are also promoting cow peas but the produce has not done well this year especially in Chisamba," she said.

This came to light a Mapping Exercise marking the Centre for Environment Justice - CEJ launch of a project dubbed "Strengthening Civil Society Voices for Climate Advocacy in Zambia".

Ms Chilala said her organization will support the project funded by United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), covering five districts namely Lusaka, Chirundu, Luangwa, Chongwe and Rufunsa.

Meanwhile, Centre for Environment Justice - CEJ Executive Director Maggie Mapalo Mwape said the transformative initiative aims to empower Civil Society Organizations in Zambia to play a pivotal role in advocating for climate action and environmental sustainability.

Ms Mwape said CEJ will continue engaging with stakeholders in executing the project up to 2025.

"Now that the project has been launched in Luangwa, Rufunsa and Chongwe, we shall proceed to launch the project in Chirundu and Lusaka respectively. I am accompanied by Acting Head of Programmes Mr. Haggai Nyambe and Head of Logistics Mr. Patrick Kashanga to ensure a smooth Programme," she said.

Ms Mwape said the success of Zambia's National Adaptation Planning (NAP) processes and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) implementation in the country hinges on the participation of several stakeholders including the Civil society movement.

"It is for this reason that CEJ is building the capacity of CSOs in climate adaptation and implementation of nationally determined contributions," she said.

Issued By: CEJ Communications Unit

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