



Communities say YES to the right to community decision-making and the right to development that supports life

In coming together to say NO to mega extractive projects, communities and self-identified groups are also saying YES. They are saying YES to the ways in which they live as a community and their relationship to the land that has nothing to do with money. They are saying YES to the ways in which they produce food and other goods, and how they exchange these with others. They are saying YES to a whole way of being that is connected to land and nature.

They are saying YES to holding land and resources in common as a community and to community decision-making. These are two

critical parts of an indigenous, traditional and group identity. This is very different to the western focus on the individual and on individualised forms of property ownership.

Communities and groups are saying YES to a vision of development that answers the question, “What is the development we want?”. When a group says NO, they may very well be saying YES to the changes they dream of for their lives. Instead of a bridge for coal trucks, they may want a small footbridge to safely cross streams and rivers. Instead of a large hydro dam that will benefit the mines, the middle classes, and rich





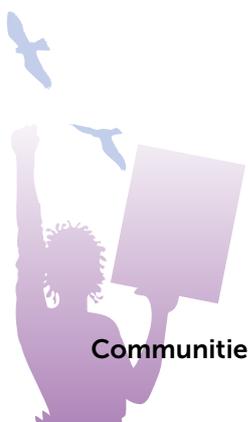
people, they may want a small dam that can help with irrigation and energy generation for the community.

Members of communities and groups are not all the same. There are young and old people. Men and women. And people who have a different status economically or socially, like traditional leaders or local business owners. These groups all have different needs and priorities when it comes to development.

Women's voices are very important because of the social role they play in taking care of the family. They are generally the ones who must grow the food, fetch the water and firewood, and take care of the young and sick. Because of these roles, women are more likely to say NO to development which will take or pollute the land, water, and forests, make people ill, and destroy livelihoods now and for future generations.

In their struggles, women and their communities are saying YES to some of the following:

- Their control over local and indigenous seeds, as well as the land and other means (like water, basic equipment, finance, etc.) to produce good quality and healthy foods. The methods of food production should nourish, rather than poison and destroy, nature and people.
- The right to safe, suitable, and adequate energy under the control of communities, and women specifically. And an end to dirty and destructive energy such as coal, oil, gas, and mega-hydro, and large-scale renewable energy controlled by large companies and sold for profit.
- Small-scale, low-impact forms of mining and extraction, under collective forms of ownership. The decision to extract resources should be informed by fair market prices, the ecological and social impacts, and a balance of local and national priorities.
- Participatory decision-making at all levels of society which recognises the different needs of affected peoples, such as women who carry most of the work to put food on the table and take care of household members. No development project should go ahead without the full and continuous



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consent of affected communities, and women in particular.

- Respect for and protection of communal and collective forms of ownership of land, forests, and water. The privatisation of these resources puts control in the hands of a few individuals and leads to the sale of the land and resources to companies and powerful people to make money.
- The creation of work opportunities by governments, and their support for livelihoods and small income generating projects which can improve people’s income and quality of life.
- A safe and clean environment, which supports good health and well-being now and for future generations.
- The range of public and social services needed for a ‘good life’: pre-school care, primary and secondary schools, post-school training, basic literacy and numeracy training, health care, safe transport, access to water and energy, etc.
- Respect and support for traditional and indigenous knowledge of seeds, forms of production, ways of living with nature, social relations, etc.

Given women’s responsibilities in families and communities, these two additional proposals on the YES would be critical to working class and poor women:

Freedom from all forms of violence, and strong penalties when violence is perpetrated against them. Government and all social and political institutions, as well as individuals, should promote care and respect for the diversity of people and nature.

The labour of care – food production, processing and preparation for the home, the collection of water and energy, care for people and the community as a whole – should be seen, valued, and shared equally by women, men, girls, and boys in the family.

Supporting women across Africa dream and imagine a different community, society, and Africa

In July 2018, a network of organisations and movements working across the African continent came together to talk about an African Ecofeminist Just Transition. Our thinking about this Just Transition is wider than just a shift from dirty, fossil fuels-based energy (coal, gas, and oil) to renewable energy (sun, wind, and water).

In our thinking, the Just Transition is a large-scale and deep change in the way our economies



and societies are structured according to whose interests and needs are served, what is produced and consumed, and how people relate to one another and to nature. This group agreed to the [Mogale Declaration](#) which sets out 26 key principles to guide thinking and action on the Just Transition.

Whilst this was an important start to imagining a different Africa, the participants were clear that a group of privileged women cannot set the agenda. Instead, this dream should be driven from below by women across the continent who carry the burden of a destructive model of development.

This dreaming and imagining process is now well underway across Africa with dozens of partners and allies working with communities of resistance to look back in history for ideas and practices that have been destroyed by waves of colonisation. This process also helps people to consider the present and look to the future and an economy and society that supports life and well-being, and not profit for a few.

Should your organisation or movement like to get involved in this African dreaming and imagining process see [webpage](#).

This is one of 6 information sheets on the Right to Say No:

Information Sheet 1:

What is the Right to Say NO?

Information Sheet 2:

The Destructive Economic System
Communities are Saying NO to

Information Sheet 3:

Laws and instruments communities may draw on to support their Right to Say NO

Information Sheet 4:

Why is the Right to Say NO a women's rights question?

Information Sheet 5:

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Information Sheet 6:

Dealing with risk when claiming the Right to Say NO



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