

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

Dear sisters,

The chance to bring together World March of Women (WMW) activists from all five continents happens in two key moments in the movement's 'life': during International Meetings every two years, and during Global Actions every five years. For obvious logistical and financial reasons, we are not able to meet more often than this at an international level (though of course this has been more feasible at regional levels), and we are therefore very conscious of the importance of the upcoming International Meeting in Galicia. As you'll read in this, the third 2008 edition of the international newsletter, the dates

of this Meeting are fast approaching, and it has been the focus of work for the Galician NCB and International Secretariat (who make up the Organising Committee) for several months already.

This seventh International Meeting is important, not only for the reasons outlined in the article below with regards to the seven-day programme, but because it is a moment to reflect on just how far the World March of Women has increased in size and strength and confidence over the last ten years. For this **seventh** Meeting will be held on the anniversary of the **first** International Meeting, on the 18th October 1998, in New York, the day after the culmination of the Global Actions of 2000 in front of the UN Headquarters. A

decade of international, feminist struggle (as highlighted in the title of the new WMW book to be launched at the Meeting – see article below) is no small feat, and we are very excited to have the opportunity to celebrate this moment together in Galicia.

In addition to news of the International Meeting, you'll also find news of the UMAR Feminist Congress in Portugal and the CADTM and Vie Feminine feminist training courses in Belgium, the IV Assembly of Caribbean Peoples, preparations for the World Social Forum 2009 in Belém and regional forums, the WMW at the People's SAARC 2008, news of WMW seeds sown in South

Africa and Sri Lanka, the South African People's Summit, the Climate Justice Conference in the Philippines, and the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum evaluation meeting in Mali.

Conscious of the volume of news in this edition of the newsletter, we have also included an article recently published by the Brazilian WMW, on the commodification of women's lives, bodies and sexuality, one of the four workshops on offer to participants during the feminist training day of the International Meeting. See you there!

São Paulo, September 2008

ONLY ONE MONTH TO GO BEFORE THE VII WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN INTERNATIONAL MEETING!

Over the last couple of months, the Organising Committee of our 7th International Meeting has had the pleasure of receiving your Registration Forms, in the knowledge that we will meet many of the "WMW family" personally in October...

Until now we have received 35 National Coordinating Body (NCB) registrations and a few other countries have informed us that they will definitely be sending representatives... So we hope to have a total of around 90 delegates from over 40 countries, as well as other allies and WMW activists who have been invited as guests and observers. In total, we'll be at least 150 participants: delegates, guests, observers and workers.

From the 14th – 21st October these participants will come together at the Panxón Training and Meeting Residence near Vigo, Galicia, to:

- Define and make regional and international decisions regarding our Global Action 2010;
- Formally approve our principal political directions;
- Advance our political debates and deepen our knowledge around a number of feminist themes: the commodification of

women's lives and bodies, the right-wing offensive against women's autonomy, experiences and challenges of working with young women; and popular education;

- Discuss and carry out monitoring of the four WMW Action Areas;
- Hold our General Assembly, at which delegates will administer WMW internal issues such as approval of finances and the VI International Meeting (Peru) report, election of new IC members and decisions regarding the VIII Meeting...

The programme has been approved by International Committee members, documents for discussion – Action Area documents and proposals for our Global Action 2010, the VI International Meeting Minutes, a letter with practical information - have been sent out to NCBs, and interpreters and the equipment they need are already being mobilised / organised... all in all, preparations for our International Meeting 2008 are well on their way! Please send us your comments with regards to the Action Area documents and proposals for the Global Action 2010 by 30th September at minobre@marchemondiale.org.

As well as being responsible for the

logistics of the Meeting (infrastructure, interpreting equipment, transport, etc), the Galician NCB are working incredibly hard in the preparation of the food sovereignty weekend – an International Forum, a Food Sovereignty and Responsible Consumption Fair, a demonstration and the creation of a *milladoiro* – open to other activists and the general public in the territory / region. Speakers have been invited for the forum on the Saturday night, plans have been laid for the market all weekend, a route has already been thought through for the demonstration and the *milladoiro* has already been designed by local women artists from the Potevedra School of Arts... For their design to work, don't forget that each NCB needs to bring **with them to Galicia a stone from their**

country, measuring about 3cm in height, 3cm in width and 3cm in depth.


For those NCBs who have not yet sent the Organising Committee the 'Method of payment' and / or 'Arrivals and departures' forms of their delegates, please do so as soon as possible by email: vigo2008@marchemondivale.org. Please don't hesitate to email us at the same address if you have any queries or requests for more information or fund-raising support.

We look forward to seeing you very soon in Galicia, where we will unite under the WMW banner, share experiences, strengthen ourselves as activists and remind the world of our struggle: "Women on the March until we are All Free!"

STOP PRESS: THE WMW WILL LAUNCH ITS NEW BOOK AT THE VII INTERNATIONAL MEETING!

We are thrilled to announce that we will be launching and distributing a book entitled "The World March of Women: 1998-2000: A Decade of International Feminist Struggle" at the International Meeting in October. Produced in three different versions – Spanish, French and English – the book examines the March's collective and international identity, retraces steps taken by the movement through its key historical documents, and looks to the future while considering current challenges. It also includes a pull-out poster chronology of the March's history, through coloured photos and short texts.

This – the most recent WMW book – builds on, and follows on from, previous

international publications, which include: Changing the World Step by Step: Mosaic in Tribute to Women's Struggles Worldwide (2000); Women on the March: Focus on the Actions and Demands of the World March of Women (2002); The Women's Global Charter for Humanity (2004) and A Change of course: The Millennium Development Goals through the Lens of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity (2005); as well as many published articles over the years. These publications are available (at least a part of each) on the WMW website, in the 'Publications' section:  <http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/publications/en/>

FEMINIST CONGRESS RECOVERS THE HISTORY OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL

More than 500 people – the majority of them women – activists in the women's movement, LGBTT, academics and artists, participated from 26th – 28th June 2008 in

the Feminist Congress organised by the *União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta* – UMAR (Alternative and Answer Women's Union) in Lisbon, Portugal. The initiative

was an opportunity for Portuguese women to re-visit the history of the movement in their country.

In 1924 and 1928, the 1st and 2nd Feminism and Education Congresses were held. In the 1940s, the writer Marta Lamas travelled the country to learn about the joys, the work, and the pain of the women of her time, which were reflected in her work *As mulheres do meu país* (The Women of my Country). In preparation for the Congress, the Organising Commission organised the 'Feminists' Route', composed of debates and protests organised in various cities and villages across Portugal from 7th – 9th March.

This Congress was held in a context marked by the consolidation of women's access to abortion one year after the plebiscite victory, large teacher demonstrations to protest control and pressures to perform in their work, and a scenario of restrictive migration policies. All of these themes were expressed in the programme of the Congress, which also addressed issues such as the political participation of women, the media, trade unionism, etc. International solidarity was translated into concrete cases. Eurídice Monteiro, of Cape Verde, for example, invited participants to demonstrate their support for high school students who are prohibited to enrol in school when pregnant.

 (<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/discriminacaonaescola/index.html>)

In the opening session, reflections were expressed which we have also been discussing within the World March of Women. Elisabete Brasil, the president of UMAR, affirmed, "the feminist agenda has to be entwined with the agenda of other social movements", while Sônia Alvarez, of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, spoke of "the renovation and radicalisation" of feminisms in Latin America in the "resistance to neoliberalism", which is distancing itself from the well-behaved feminism practiced in the corridors of the UN and the World Bank.

Feminism in the globalised world

In the panel 'Feminisms, Social Movements, and Public Policies', Miriam Nobre spoke about the limits and possibilities of networking and mutual contamination between the feminist movement and other social movements.

The relationship between the feminist movement and the left has been marked by tensions. In the 19th Century, many activists denied women the right to work and organise and called upon them to be mothers. In the mid-20th Century, the feminist movement criticised the traditional left, its analyses restricted to the exploitation of class, and its hierarchical and sexist methods. On the one hand, the organisation and activism of women were often used as a tool for political party transmission, on the other hand, women were accused of being responsible for dividing the so-called "general class struggle".

At the end of the 20th Century, a new movement emerged to challenge capitalist and neoliberal globalisation. Neoliberalism implied an expansion of the market society in space and time, establishing the market as the parameter for relations among people, between people and their bodies, and between people and nature. In a scenario in which the market and its institutions organise the lives of women, actions that prioritise the targeting the State, demands for public policies and legal changes, and participation by specialists in such policies as the main form of action, become insufficient.

The emergence, with the anti-globalisation movement, of a new political generation renews feminism in terms of analyses and forms of action. An offensive against commodification translated into street protests and direct action. The issue is no longer the addition of women's rights or the 'transversality' of gender in that which already exists. The objective of action is resistance to the patriarchal, capitalist, racist, homophobic order, and strengthening of all types of alternatives.

FEMINIST TRAINING IN BELGIUM

The Committee for the Cancellation of Third World Debt (CADTM in French) organised the training weekend “Without Women’s Emancipation there is no Development” in La Marlagne, Belgium, on 5th and 6th July 2008. Nearly 50 Belgian and French participants, the majority women, discussed different conceptions of feminism, and women’s movement strategies.

CADTM committed itself to intensify the impact of this training with the publication of a special section in its magazine “The Other Voices of the Planet” and the organisation of a gender training module. The participants of this training agreed on the need to recreate grassroots activist groups – with a special view to including young



Miriam Nobre speaks at the CADTM training weekend

women – and carry out collective actions.

‘Looking ahead to the World March of Women 2010!’ Vie Féminine suggested this slogan for their training week “*ToutEs autre chose*” (“All other – women’s – things”) that brought together 370 women in Floreffe, Belgium, from 1st to 3rd July 2008. Vie Féminine

is a feminist movement of social and intercultural action that unites more than 20 thousand Belgium women of different cultures and ages. The four WMW Action Areas were discussed, along with the March’s organisational approach and suggestions for global actions.

The Belgian National Coordinating Body has taken its first steps towards the organisation of the Global Action 2010: WMW members have sent out a call for participation to women’s groups around the country for the preparation of a common action on 8th March 2010.



Women participants at the Vie Féminine feminist training

IV ASSEMBLY OF CARIBBEAN PEOPLES

A region of islands that range from a population of around 5,000 (Montserrat) to over 11 million (Cuba), the Caribbean has a strong culture of social movements and struggle against the domination, slavery and the cultural system imposed by colonisers over the centuries. Currently, several countries are resisting neo and re-colonialism (Martinique and Guadeloupe by the French, Bonaire and Curacão by the Dutch, Anguila and the Virgin Islands by the British...) occupation by foreign militaries (Haiti), economic and political domination by the USA (Puerto Rico) and economic blockades (Cuba).

In this context, and as an integral part of the region's social movements agenda, 167 men and women delegates from 20 countries came together in the province of Havana, Cuba, from 30th June to 4th July 2008, for the IV Assembly of Caribbean Peoples. Representing social movements and organisations, peasant women's (including the WMW), grassroots and youth groups, trade unions, political parties and NGOs, along with representatives from continental networks and campaigns, delegates came together for 5 days to denounce: the rising militarisation of the region; the criminalisation of social protest; neoliberal economic

policy expressed in FTAs and EPAs, privatisations and the growing power of transnational organisations; the threat to food and energy sovereignty and climate change. As stated in the final declaration of the Assembly, "This [globalised capitalism] model of domination, patriarchy, racism and exclusion is the source of the generalised poverty of our peoples. Our struggle needs to be focussed in the construction of another world of equality between men and women and social justice"

On the first day of the Assembly, World March of Women activists from Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the International Secretariat joined other sisters at the Women's Forum to exchange experiences of struggle in the region and discuss alternatives. Though the debate could have gone further, the WMW was able to share current and future challenges, goals and areas of struggle with other participants – our 4 Action Area demands, the International Meeting in Galicia, Global Action 2010 proposals, etc – and make important contacts with women from Caribbean countries in which March the March is no longer active, though activities have been organised in the past (as part of the 2005 Global Actions, for example, in Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname), but where

there is interest in re-launching the WMW, particularly within the framework of the next Global Action of 2010.

We were also invited as the WMW to present our principal action areas and struggles, and perspectives for the future in the plenary Meeting of Networks, Campaigns and Social Movements, along with other key groups in the region / continent.



A. Carol Jacob from the Haitian NCB at the IV Assembly of the Caribbean Peoples
B. Celia Alldridge, SI, shares WMW's principal action areas and struggles in the plenary

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM PROCESS: AMAZON, EUROPE AND AMERICAS

Various activities are currently influencing the WSF process, at international as well as regional levels. See below for the main news:

WSF 2009 in the Amazon

In a meeting held in July, in Belém do Pará, Brazil, ten action objectives were defined, around which the WSF programme will be organised. These objectives were identified as a result of extensive public consultation of the diverse organisations and entities that participate in the WSF process.

1. Building a world of peace, justice, ethics and respect for diverse spiritualities, free of weapons, especially nuclear ones;
2. Liberating the world from the domination of capital, multinational enterprises, patriarchal colonial and neocolonial domination and from unequal systems of trade, with the cancellation of impoverished countries' debts;
3. Ensuring universal and sustainable access to the common goods of humanity and nature, particularly water, forests and renewable energy sources;
4. Democratisation and decolonisation of knowledge, culture and communication, for the creation of a shared knowledge system, with deconstruction of intellectual property rights;
5. Ensuring dignity, diversity, guaranteeing equality of gender, race, ethnic, generation and sexual orientation and eliminating all forms of discrimination and caste (discrimination based on descent);
6. Guaranteeing economic, social, human, cultural and environmental rights, especially the right to healthcare, education, housing, employment, decent work, communication and food security and sovereignty;
7. Building a world order based on sovereignty, self-determination and peoples' rights, including minorities and migrants;
8. Constructing a people-centred, democratic, emancipated, sustainable and solidarity economy, with ethical and fair trade;
9. Building and amplifying real democratic political and economic structures and institutions

(at local, national and global levels) with full people's participation in relation to decisions and control of public affairs and resources;

10. Defending the environment (Amazon and other ecosystems) as the source of life for Planet Earth and for the original people of the world (indigenous people, afro-descendants, fisher people...) who demand their territories, languages, cultures, identities, environmental justice, spirituality and well-being.

At the 2009 World Social Forum, it will also be possible to register self-organised activities aimed at the exchange of experiences, or the reflection and evaluation of anti-neoliberal globalisation movements and the WSF process and future perspectives of both, that are not necessarily linked to one of the 10 objectives.

The registration of participants linked to organisations, and activity proposals for the WSF 2009 began in September, via the website:

 <http://www.fsm2009amazonia.org.br/>.

Attention: The deadline for registrations for self-organised activities is **31st October 2008**.

Regional Forums: Europe and Americas

The March is organising or co-organising activities around its Action Areas and in preparation of the Global Action 2010 in two regional social forums that will take place between September and October 2008.

The first of them is the European Social Forum (ESF) that will be held on **17th - 21st September** in Malmö, Sweden. In this event, the March will co-organise the following activities:

- Feminists in action for another Europe, for another world

- Assembly on food sovereignty: what can we do to implement it in Europe

And will speak at the following two activities:

- Assembly of the movements against war, militarisation, military bases, weapons industries

- Women's Assembly, 17th September

A fourth activity, entitled "Assembly Charter - Another Europe is Possible: Social and Democratic Rights for All" aims to bring together

the results of diverse seminars and workshops that discussed Europe to some degree in order to construct alliances to promote mobilisations, actions and campaigns, and to develop strategies, visions, common alternatives and analyses of issues relevant to the current context.

Across the Atlantic, at the Americas Social Forum, in the Guatemalan capital on **7th – 12th October**, the March will promote or co-organise the following activities with ally movements:

- World March of Women: Towards the Global Action 2010;

- Feminist Alternatives for Integration that Generates Equality.

There is also a third initiative which will work on the theme of peace and demilitarisation as part of this programme, following on from the II Hemispheric Encounter Against Militarisation in Honduras, on 3rd – 5th October.

More information:

Americas SF: <http://www.forosocialamericas.org/>

European SF: <http://www.esf2008.org/>

FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF THE MARKET SOCIETY

In this text, we analyse commodification as a principle characteristic of societies based on economic liberalism. In this model, relations among people come to be measured by their relationship with goods. Goods appear to have a value in and of themselves, which hides the enormous amount of work by people needed to produce them.

This system is not only expanding through the colonisation of regions of the planet in which societies were organised in a different manner, but also through the increasing pace and intensity of exploitation of the work carried out in factories, homes, and offices. Today, the new frontiers of the market are advancing on our rights, on the environment, on the genes of living beings, and on the knowledge and creativity of humans.

In the wake of strong resistance from people, principally the struggles against the WTO and free trade agreements, it is perceivable that the model is facing a crisis. Nevertheless, it maintains its hegemony, although it can no longer present itself as the only alternative. The construction of critical thinking and direct actions against commodification are fundamental to rebuilding, in our society, the hegemony of another model based on the well-being of humanity.

Women's place in the market society

The market has become the organiser of the economy, and thus imposes on us a way of organising our lives and defining what it means to be a woman. In life based on the market, being a woman means having to be flexible and patient to accept worsening work conditions with shrinking salaries. It means sacrificing oneself to informal work with no guarantee of one's rights. It means feeling solely responsible for caring for the house, the children and the sick after a full day of work.

This is how the market society exploits women's domestic labour for free, to avoid having to provide public health and education services, popular restaurants, childcare centres, public laundries, etc. The discourse that is disseminated is that public services are a thing of the past; that if we want high quality hospitals and schools, we must pay for them.

In life based on the market, the woman who feels tired after all of this is expected to go to the pharmacy and purchase the new drugs that promise to put an end to the aches and pains of the body and soul.

We are women, not commodities!

In this system, which is simultaneously chauvinistic and capitalist, women are transformed into goods, objects, whether in the prostitution and pornography industry, or in the manner in

which they are presented in advertising, which manipulates our dreams and desires, creating needs that did not exist previously in order to increase consumption.

Advertising presents women as a product for men's consumption (and whose value is established by men's will), literally, as in advertisements for beer, or indirectly, as when we are told that we will be happy and become pleasing to the eyes of men if we purchase product X or Y, as if this were our primary attribution: to be a welcoming, attractive, available object. There are also those advertising campaigns that announce a thousand and one items to help women accomplish their intense workload, such as miraculous cleaning products that will make the housework, which is women's responsibility, more "efficient".

The definition of "femaleness" is marked by dependence in relation to masculine expectations, real or imagined. One needs only to take a look around to see that we are surrounded by products intended to serve "femaleness", based on the exploitation and naturalisation of this dependence.

In advertising, women are constantly represented in this way: the object of consumption who, in order to have value, must follow the norm. To achieve this norm, it is necessary to accept the conditions of the market and consume large amounts of products and services. The women who appear in these advertisements become "models of perfection", models that women follow as though it were a condition for their self-realisation. Thus, the presentation of the image and the bodies of women as objects contributes to keeping them in a constant state of insecurity in relation to their bodies.

The form and shape of women bodies, controlled throughout history, can today be purchased according to the standards dictated by fashion. According to the secretary-general of the Brazilian Society of Plastic Surgery, in an



"Against the Globalization of Silicone, We globalize Feminist Rebelliousness!"
The Brazilian batucada (drumming group) demonstrates its irreverence

interview in the Folha de São Paulo, the number of teenage girls who have had silicone implants has increased 300% in the last ten years. In 2006, 700 thousand plastic surgeries were conducted in the country. This pattern is similar in other countries of the world, such as Spain, where a study by the International Society of Plastic Surgery and Aesthetics found that 40.1% of the aesthetic surgeries conducted in the country in 2005 were carried out on patients less than 21 years of age. This European nation is in fourth place in the world in terms of number of procedures with a percentage of 8.14%, behind the United States (12.9%), Mexico (9.23%), and Argentina (8.46%). The growth in the market is partly due to an expansion among women of lesser means, made

possible through instalments, consortiums, or debts to moneylenders.

The right to our bodies

The commodification of the bodies and lives of women is also expressed at the level of sexuality. The determination of a norm for women to exercise their sexuality, and the constant control and vigilance over it, demonstrates how, at the level of sex, women also have to be seen as available and belonging to men. The experience of sexuality is marked by the oppressive relations that women are subjected to in society.

The increasingly banal treatment of female sexuality is highly visible, in the way that it is endlessly presented by the media or approached in a disrespectful manner in diverse spheres of society. In this way, sexuality is also presented as a commodity available for sale. This banal treatment brings with it a standardisation regarding the exercise of sexuality, imposing an acceptable norm for how each man and women should live their lives. This situation shows how the control exercised over women's bodies and over their sexuality is very much related to this reality of "objectification" and commodification.

For example, despite the abundant exposure of feminine nudity and exploitation of sexuality, sex continues to be closely associated with motherhood. In the market society, we are experiencing a regression: maternity is seen as an obligation and condition for women to be "complete", and is one of the permanent resources used by advertisers seeking to sell everything from toothpaste to health insurance.

It is feminism that has insisted on the need for debate around the social function of maternity and public responsibility for guaranteeing pre-natal and birth care, childcare, education, and other policies. At the same time, women should be guaranteed the right to decide whether or not to have children, and the right time to have them.

Being a biological mother has also become a commodity as a result of the market for "assisted reproduction". An increasing number of women consider it natural to seek physicians, to take hormones, and submit themselves to painful procedures to become pregnant at any cost.

The commodification of the bodies, lives, and sexuality of women has also manifested

itself in the pharmaceutical and food industries (two 'gold mines' of multinational companies), as well as the beauty industry, with all its false promises.

Women struggling against commodification

Opposing the commodification of the bodies and lives of women signifies struggling against the logic that transforms women into objects to be bought and sold, or even taken by force.

The deconstruction of market mechanisms, the exploitation of labour, the pressures exerted by the media and of the old and new ways of controlling the body, goes to the heart of the capitalist system, and allows us to establish relationships, based on the daily experiences of women, between situations of oppression and the operation of the economic order.

One of the main axes that structures WMW actions is the struggle against free trade or the free market. In Brazil, for example, it has been active in the struggle against the WTO, denouncing the way this institution not only serves to regulate commerce, but also works toward the objective of commodifying every dimension of life. In the campaign against AFTA (American Free Trade Agreement) in 2002, the WMW invented the slogan "The world is not a commodity, and neither are women!" This slogan was transformed into a slogan used by the feminist *batucada* (drumming group): "*A nossa luta é todo dia: somos mulheres e não mercadoria!* (Our struggle is daily; we are women and not commodities!)" Since then, the WMW in Brazil has struggled and resisted in various feminist and mixed spaces in the country, in the World Social Forums, in the Brazilian Forums, in workshops, direct actions, protests, national and state meetings, and in campaigns (such as the "Offensive Against the Commodification of our Bodies and Lives").

The struggle against the market society and resistance to the commodification of the bodies and lives of women continues to be a fundamental axis for feminist action that incorporates the class perspective and is a protagonist for a profound transformation of the global social order; that is, for the construction of a feminism that is non-institutionalised and activist.

**Text adapted from the Caderno Marcha Mundial das Mulheres, Nº 1 – June 2008, WMW Brazil*

PARTICIPATION OF THE WMW AT THE PEOPLE'S SAARC

The People's SAARC is an annual regional convergence of peoples organisations and movements in parallel to the annual South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit, attended by heads of state or governments of member countries. In 2008 it was held in Viharamahadevi Park in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 18th - 20th July, with the participation of approximately 500 participants from seven countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), united under the slogan: "South Asian People Unite! For Justice, Peace and Democracy".

As part of the programme of the event, the World March of Women of South Asia organised a discussion on violence against women (VAW) on 19th July at 2pm on the Stage of the Open Air Theatre in the park. Forty women and men from Sri Lanka (Colombo), Nepal and India and Pakistan participated and took part in the discussion. Zahida Hina, Pakistani writer and journalist and very popular in South Asia presided over the programme, while Farhat Perveen - coordinator


of the WMW in Pakistan presented a paper on the situation of VAW and poverty in Pakistan. The participants then questioned her and asked about Pakistani public policies.

Saleha Athar then presented a thought-provoking paper around VAW and poverty levels in the region; she discussed the situation in all seven countries. After presentation of the paper, a discussion was coordinated about the circumstances and causes that lead to the secondary position of women in society. The participants shared their views on the political and economic conditions that South Asian women suffer, and discussed the status of women in South Asia's patriarchal society. The situation of working women, such as low wages and less pay than men, was also highlighted: women have longer working hours than men; no security is providing to women to free them from harassment in the work place, female trafficking and prostitution is increasing. At the end of the meeting, suggestions with regards to five strategies for the future were debated: Revising our conceptual framework, Building



Women participate in the mass rally on the last day of the People's SAARC in Colombo

a large and powerful grassroots base, Recasting structures, Exchange programme, Creating new jobs for women. Full details of these strategies can be found in Saleha Athar's paper in English on the WMW website:

 <http://www.marchmondialesdesfemmes.org/structure/cn-groupes/asia-oceanie/pakistan/newspk092008/papersathar072008/en>

Declaration of the World March of Women in South Asia at the People's SAARC

We, the women from South Asia, denounce, condemn, and oppose all the attitudes, strategies, policies and actions of individuals, organisations, agencies, states, and governments against peace, progress, prosperity and unity to Sisterhood/brotherhood of world fraternity which provoke poverty, war, hunger, suppressions and conflicts.

We, the women from South Asia,

1. Denounce the continuing centuries-old systems that maintain patriarchal social relationships between women and men and support fundamentalist ideas, feudal traditions, and

masculinity to make women's lives miserable.

2. Denounce the strong hold of traditions and customs over women in societies that promote violence against women such as rape, burnings, physical tortures, female trafficking, "honour killings", prostitution, harassment in the work place.

3. Denounce the economic policies that affect human life and push them back toward poverty, such as neoliberal globalisation and the policies designed by the WTO, IMF and World Bank.

4. Condemn the heads of countries and political forces that are obtaining support from the United States for their vested interest and mounting conflicts in their own countries as well as neighbouring countries.

5. Censure all the nuclear warheads and weapons that are being developed in the name of defence of countries and peace in the region.

6. Denounce the action in the name of War on terror: the United States is creating a war-like situation (in Afghanistan, the northern area of Pakistan, Iraq) and pursuing the same in various South Asian countries.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE WMW IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND SOUTHERN ASIA...

In regions of the world that have traditionally been under-represented in the World March of Women (for linguistic and other reasons), grassroots women's groups are increasingly interested in finding out more about us, with a view to joining us and forming their own National Coordinating Bodies (NCBs), thanks to the motivation and tireless work of International Committee members in these regions.

In South Africa, the WMW's newest NCB is one short step away from being officially formed, with a national meeting having been held in the first week of September, before the Galician International Meeting. The activism of WMW members in the country has long been recognised and valued among women's, grassroots, rural and trade union groups, and the creation of an official NCB is generating a lot of enthusiasm from women in these sectors. The Rural Women's Network, for example, has asked the WMW to help to



International Women's Day 2008 in South Africa

put together a regional women's meeting.

While in Sri Lanka, the latest country in South Asia to launch a process of NCB formation (following closely on from Bangladesh at the end of 2007 and Nepal at the beginning of 2008), the seeds of the WMW have also recently been sown. After many failed attempts to make email contact

with Sri Lankan women's organisations, Saleha Athar – International Committee member for the sub-region – was able to meet with several of them personally in July during a trip to the country for a planning meeting of the People's SAARC 2008 (see article above). Saleha organised a consultative discussion to discuss the issue of violence against women and was also able to share and discuss WMW materials with participants, several of whom (especially



Sowing the seeds of the WMW in Sri Lanka

from the Fisheries Development Solidarity Centre) showed an interest in inviting other women's groups to join them in the creation of an NCB in the country.

We welcome these countries to the WMW family and share in their excitement as they work toward building solidarity amongst grassroots women's organisations fighting to eliminate the causes at the root of poverty and violence against women!

ORGANISING THE IV SOUTHERN AFRICA PEOPLE'S SOLIDARITY SUMMIT

Wilhelmina Trout, WMW International Committee member, was very central to the organisation of the recent Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network (SAPSN) People's Solidarity Summit that brought together male and female delegates from ten Southern African countries: Angola, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

More than four hundred representatives of social movements, labour organisations, economic justice networks, faith and community based and youth organisations, developmental, health environmental, human rights and other

NGOs gathered in Gauteng, South Africa, from 14th – 16th August, to discuss their common concerns and present their demands and alternatives to the governments of Southern African Development Community (SADC) meeting in the same city at this time. A civil society demonstration on Saturday, 16th, ended where the Heads of State were meeting, and the People's Solidarity Summit Declaration was handed over to them.

This, the fourth annual South African People's Solidarity Summit, took place in a period of deepening political tensions within the SADC and deteriorating social and economic situations for the majority of peoples of the

region. In this context the discussions held, and final summit declaration, focused on proposals and demands with regards to the following issues: Democracy and human rights abuses; Poverty and unemployment; Food insecurity and hunger; Health crisis and social insecurity; Privatisation of services; Debt burden and aid dependency; Trade deficits and capital outflows; and Climate change dangers and energy crisis.

Particularly shocking were the accounts given by the large Zimbabwean delegation of the current political and economic situation in their country. Zimbabwean women shared horrific stories of killings, rape and chronic food shortages; the situation being so desperate that summit participants took bread with them in

their suitcases in an attempt to feed their families back home.

Break times afforded Wilhelmina the opportunity to speak to women delegates about the World March of Women's work and how through the WMW the stories of women in Southern Africa could be disseminated to women around the globe, especially at this critical time for Zimbabwe. Women from Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe committed themselves to establishing the presence of the World March in their respective countries. "We can truly look forward to good representation from women in Southern Africa at the 'Africa Continental Meeting' planned for next year", concluded Wilhelmina.

NCB KENYA: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Over the last few months, the WMW National Coordinating Body (NCB) in Kenya, with particular support from the 5 Centuries Human Rights Theatre Group, has been involved in the organisation and coordination of various activities.

On 31st May, for example, the WMW

joined other civil society groups in organising a "solidarity match for the poor" to dramatise the urban poor's frustration with rising food prices and the escalating cost of living. The procession was disrupted by police and 7 people were arrested (they were released 4 days later, but on bail of 10,000 Kenyan

Shillings - around 99 euros - each), but the WMW had already mobilised women at the end point of the procession who came out in large numbers with their cooking pots and spoons and dramatised cooking empty pots. Women spoke of how they suffer, and how they do equal work for unequal pay.

In June, two principal days of mobilisation were co-organised, the 26th and 27th. The WMW marked the International Day in Support of Torture Victims on 26th with a peaceful gathering outside Nyayo House in Nairobi which was used by Moi's administration in the 1990's for holding and torturing



The WMW in Kenya remember the International Day in Support of Torture Victims

prisoners. Police dispersed the gathering using teargas, but after much protest the event was allowed to continue and those who were held in these torture dungeons gave harrowing testimonies. The WMW was present in solidarity with all torture victims, but especially the women prisoners. The day after, civil society organisations, including the Kenyan NCB, held a political rally and protest in solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe and WOZA and all other Zimbabwean women

suffering torture under Mugabe's mis-rule.

Currently, the WMW is part of a campaign to boycott Java products in conjunction with members of the Tukomeshe Unajisi Network, in protest against the owner of Java coffee shops who has been sexually abusing female minors. The case is ongoing. Most recently, on 12th July, WMW mobilised women in Kamukunji for a community action to destroy the cholera focus points in the area, an exercise that was very successful.

GENDER ON THE AGENDA AT THE CLIMATE JUSTICE CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

Esperanza Santos of the Philippines National Coordinating Body was one of over 170 activists including fishers and farmers, forest and indigenous peoples, women (around 40), youth, workers, researchers and campaigners from 31 countries representing both the north and the south who gathered for the four-day Climate Justice Conference on 12th - 14th July at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

The conference was hosted by the Focus on the Global South (India, Philippines & Thailand) and reunited the members of Climate Justice Now! network (formed during the Bali Conference last December - see the June 2008 WMW International Newsletter: http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/bulletin_liaison/2008/200802/en/) who came together to denounce the absence of a justice dimension in the climate change negotiations. "By climate justice, we mean that the burden of adjustment to the climate crisis must be borne by those who have created it, and not by those who have been least responsible. The current reality, however, is that the main victims of climate change are those who did not create it" (Summary Report, Climate Justice Conference).

Gender and Climate Change Workshops
Together with Titi Soentoro of Nadi (the 'Vien'), Indonesia, who spoke on "Why there

is no Climate Justice Without Gender Justice," Esperanza Santos co-organised this workshop that brought together 8 women from 6 countries, at which participants shared their experiences on how women are affected by climate change and in general agreed on the following main points of Titi's presentation:

- Although climate change affects everyone, it is not gender neutral. The experience of women is different to men due to their gender roles and responsibilities;
- Climate change magnifies existing injustices, reinforcing the disparity between women and men in their vulnerability and capability to cope with climate change;
- Women, as the majority of the world's poor, are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. When poor women lose their livelihoods, they slip deeper into poverty, and the injustices they suffer because of their gender, intensify;
- Women suffer from increasing discrimination and violence because of escalating competition for food, water and energy due to drought and crop failure and the production of agrofuels; the destruction of livelihoods following environmental disasters; large-scale displacement and migration due to sea level rises, disease and famine, etc;
- Women suffer from an increasing double and multiple burden:

- The time-consuming and labour intensive task of gathering and transporting water generally falls to women, therefore their workload increases dramatically when water becomes scarce;

- Women's responsibility for collecting wood for fuel, household water, wild food, and medicinal plants is hindered by agrofuel plantations. Women's livelihoods are further threatened because the few jobs created by agrofuel schemes are almost exclusively offered to men;

- The chemical fertilisers and pesticides that are increasingly used in agrofuel plantations, and that have known health hazards, also disproportionately threaten women's health.

These reflections were also shared during the second women's workshop-caucus that was initiated by Esperanza together with two other women from the Philippines, and attended by 15 women activists from 9 countries. As one participant commented, "We should stop always presenting and projecting ourselves as victims. We must now show ourselves as empowered women whose creative conducts have made us who we are now – skilled, talented and full life.." Another, rural, woman reminded the workshop organisers that, "for more than 500 years we have been victims of the plundering of

our natural resources, the destruction of our environment, and expulsion from our lands." "Gender justice should be fought for alongside struggling against capitalism", concluded another participant.

Aside from the sharing of general knowledge on how climate change affects women, their families and communities, participants also came up with the strategies regarding women and gender, including the following:

- Conduct of more collaborative research on women and climate change;

- Publication & dissemination of popular forms (e.g. primer) of informative materials on gender and climate change (it was noted that the documents and reference materials on climate change distributed during the conference are gender blind).

Everyone at the caucus agreed that we face a global emergency and that we need a strong network to make its presence felt when forging global agreements that would truly take into account justice and the welfare of the world's poor and marginalised women. As the Focus on the Global South invitation letter stated: "We have no time to lose in forging a just, equitable, and efficient response to climate change. But a solution to climate change that is not just and equitable is no solution at all."

NYÉLÉNI FORUM FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A TIME FOR REFLECTION ONE AND A HALF YEARS LATER

Five hundred people from around the world gathered for the Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty in Selingué, Mali, in February 2007. Peasants, shepherds, fishermen and women, indigenous people, migrants, farm workers, women and youth exchanged experiences and analyses and built a common agenda for Food Sovereignty.

The most recent meeting of the organising committee was held in the same locale, the Nyéléni village that was built for the

Forum. Participants included representatives from the World March of Women (WMW), Via Campesina (VC), Friends of the Earth International (FOEI), World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty, the Food Sovereignty Network, and the National Coordinating Body of Peasant Organizations of Mali (CNOP).

It was evaluated that the strongest point of the Forum was the work in alliance.



Sharing news and experiences: The women from CAFO (Malian Coordination of Associations and Feminine NGOs) meet with Miriam Nobre

We dialogued and established commitments among populations being pushed into conflict due to the decreasing size of their territories, such as peasants, nomad shepherds, and indigenous peoples, as well as among different political cultures and traditions, such as peasants, feminists, and environmentalists. The alliance strengthened daily struggles. The World March of Women of Mali has been participating in protests against genetically modified organisms and EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) between Africa and the European Union. Via Campesina is preparing a campaign against violence against rural women.

Another positive aspect was the organisation of the forum in a way that demonstrated the alternatives we believe in. Examples of this include the construction of the Nyéléni village as a meeting space for social movements, particularly for Africans, and meal preparation by women from the region using local products. This manner of preparing meals influenced other events, such as the Burkina Faso Social Forum, and contributed to the professionalisation of the women. In the region of Sikasso, Mali, the women's

cooperative began providing juices and other products for the Association of Organizations of Peasant Professionals (AOPP) meetings. The women food producers have perceived a greater appreciation of their products and greater recognition of their work.

The principle of Food Sovereignty was affirmed as a viable alternative and response to the so-called food crisis.

Political context:

One and a half years after the forum in Nyéléni, food has become a major theme in the press and in international institutions due to the rapid increases in international food prices. There is no food crisis, but rather an increase in speculation of food prices. Part of the speculative financial capital, that considers average market interest rates to be low and are already taking risks in the Internet communication sector and the housing sector in the United States, are migrating toward safer investments, such as petroleum, and mineral and agricultural products.

This increase in prices is possible because the world agricultural market is dominated by an oligopoly of less than 40

companies who control the entire production process, from agricultural inputs to the agro industry. In addition, national governments have dismantled policies for controlling stocks and prices in response to neoliberal dictates, free trade agreements demands, and impositions made by the IMF and the World Bank. Until 1960, most countries were self sufficient in food production for their people, with the exception of those countries that face climatic difficulties in some regions of Africa. Today, 70% of all countries in the southern hemisphere are food importers.

The importation of food and food assistance produced changes in eating habits, leading to dependence, in the basic diet of populations, on imported products such as wheat flour, rice, and frozen poultry.

As a remedy for the crisis, companies and governments intend to offer the very thing that caused it: industrial agriculture dependent on external inputs (genetically modified seeds, pesticides, and chemical fertilisers), opening of markets, and price subsidies for imported foods. This policy leads to the private appropriation of territory by a small number of companies, the destruction of peasant agriculture and artisan fishing, and the homogenising of diets.

The political context in Mali has also changed recently. In Nyéléni, we commemorated the fact that Food Sovereignty had been integrated into the constitution, and discussed ways of implementing it through specific laws and instruments. Today one notes strong pressure from multinationals, Monsanto in particular, to allow the planting of transgenic seeds. In light of this, we reaffirm the need to dismantle the political and economic power of multinational companies that control the chain of food production, processing, and distribution, and to question the governments of their countries of origin, the United States and countries of Europe, who act to facilitate and defend their business activities.

Continuation:

The organising committee of Nyéléni was dissolved after having completed its function. The work will be continued on

two fronts: through a common work agenda for four movements (WMW, VC, FOEI, and WFFP), and through the creation of an education and training center in Nyéléni.

All four movements will be holding their international assemblies between October and November, 2008: the WMW will be meeting in Galicia from 14th – 20th October; Via Campesina in Mozambique from 17th – 23rd October; Friends of the Earth will meet in Honduras from 7th – 15th November; and the World Forum of Fisher Peoples will gather in Thailand from 8th – 18th October. At each of these gatherings, Food Sovereignty actions as well as strategic alliances will be debated. In December 2008, we will be able to evaluate the commitments and political will of each movement to define the next steps.

A permanent centre will be established in Nyéléni for education and training in agroecology, decentralised energy production techniques, water cycle management, and theoretical debates on Food Sovereignty. The World March of Women of Mali will contribute to defining the lines of work and the way the centre will be structured. The women of the CNOP presented a proposal to include training in food processing, storage, and preparation, and to build a kitchen appropriate for such activities.

Women of the CNOP, ROPPA (Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa), and the WMW of Mali are preparing an arts and culture festival for February 2009, to revive local products and modes of preparation. This festival is conceived of as a counter-discourse to that of the multinationals regarding the food chain. Nestle, for example, finances women's groups to disseminate recipes using their dehydrated and condensed beef and chicken broths, the so-called "magic cubes". The "magic cube" television advertisements present an image of a traditional Western family: father, housewife, and two children (a girl and a boy), very different from real families and African community life. Instead, what we see increasing among women in the wake of Nyéléni are collective kitchens, associations, and women's groups. Food Sovereignty's time will come only with the autonomy of women.

EVENTS CALENDAR

3rd – 5th October II Hemispheric Encounter against Militarisation, Honduras

7th – 12th October Americas Social Forum, Guatemala

17th – 18th October Citizen Summit on Migrations, Paris, France

17th – 23rd October V International Vía Campesina Congress, Maputo, Mozambique

7th – 15th November Friends of the Earth International General Bi-annual Assembly, Honduras

NEXT EDITION:

Evaluation of the VII WMW
International Meeting

II Hemispheric Encounter
against Militarisation /
Americas Social Forum

International
Via Campesina Congress

National Meeting: “Women
Struggling for Food and
Energy Sovereignty”, Brazil

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