



# WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN NEWSLETTER

Volume 13 – Number 1 – March 2011

## Editorial

We have started the year enriched by the national actions we organised during 2010, as well as the bonds strengthened with women activists from other countries, with whom we have stood in solidarity, either at a distance, or in our regional and international level meetings. People’s uprisings in Africa and the Arab world, in which women, especially young women, have always been active participants also inspire us.

In 2011, our 8th International Meeting will take place in the Philippines. During our preparations for this meeting, we are challenged to carry out an in-depth assessment of the actions undertaken in our countries in the last year, thereby allowing us to advance in our task of building our international movement, in the identification of priority demands, and in the mobilization of other sectors of society. The recent events in the Ivory Coast and Japan demonstrate the need for us to act as a permanent movement on the alert and in solidarity with women living through socio-climatic emergencies, conflicts and the criminalisation of social struggle.

In this edition of the newsletter, we take a closer look at the demonstrations held on the 8th March, which already point to many common themes and demands between women in different countries. We also share news of our participation in the World Social Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, and the Americas Working Group meeting, both of which were spaces in which to carry out a first collective evaluation of the 3rd International Action and to identify future challenges. In Dakar, as a result of the work in convergence with other organised groups, the eradication of violence against women was included as a principal and common axis of struggle in the Social Movements Assembly. Finally, we draw attention to the preparation of the Young Feminists Camp to be held in July in Europe which promises to mark the struggles of women of that continent.

### INTERNATIONAL

## 8th March 2011: Once again in the streets to protest, denounce and to celebrate our victories!

In 2011, we invited World March of Women participant groups to express their solidarity with all women worldwide. In the demonstration organised by our sisters in Paris, **France**, they highlighted their solidarity with women in Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, Algeria, Libya, Afghanistan and they have organised their march in order to pass in front of some of some of these country’s embassies. In other countries, such as



Pakistan

**Australia**, women have expressed their solidarity with indigenous women and original peoples of their countries in the framework of women’s participation in their peoples’ struggles for auto-determination and territory.

After our Third International Action, National Coordinating Bodies have now turned their attentions and energies to

their own countries’ realities.

Many countries included the struggle against the privatisation of public services,

that diminishes women workers’ rights and increases the costs of these services so that they become unaffordable to the poorest, on their political agendas. These are the consequences of the so-called PPPs (Private-Public Partnerships) that our sisters from the **Philippines** denounced in their actions. We discovered many points in common in the evaluation of women’s issues and demands in different countries.



Philippines

In **Quebec**, women have said “NO” to health care taxes and to other government implemented neoliberal measures that transform the health services into merchandise. In a similar way, the reforms in labour and pensions have mobilised women in the **Spanish State**.

In addition, there are demands for more public services, such as children’s day care services and support services for women victims of violence in **Brazil**, or for the extension social services’ working hours in **Portugal**.

Furthermore, two women victims of violence in Sud Kivu, **Democratic Republic of Congo**, received support and solidarity from WMW sisters on the 8<sup>th</sup> March and were therefore able to afford the hospital costs for the deliveries of their babies in safety.

In **El Salvador**, women came out onto streets to continue their demand for a Law of Real Equality between women and men. Real equality is a demand also present in **Argentina**, where women are struggling for the right to decent work with equal salaries for equal jobs, and **Japan**.

We continue to make visible our alternatives and resistances with regard to the attacks on reproductive rights and to violence against women in its multiple forms, for example in **Chile**, where women denounced the violence that occurs in workspaces, and in **Pakistan**, where women demand an end to forced marriage, “honour” killings and the practice of dowry giving. From the North to the South, we perceive the laws in favor of women’s rights are not voted on within

legislative government spaces, due to the pressure politicians face from conservative sectors of the Catholic Church. In **Paraguay**, women demand that sexual and reproductive rights be discussed in schools.



Portugal

We also denounce the criminalisation of social struggles and poverty. In **Kenya**, the WMW invited people to listen to the voices of mothers and widows of poor youth who have died in extra judicial executions. The demand for justice, denouncement of femicides, and particularly the murder of women activists, mobilised women in **Mexico**. “We have broke the silence and we will not keep quiet!”.

Everyday, we receive at the International Secretariat more news on the 8<sup>th</sup> March actions. Follow details in the page:

<http://www.marchemondiale.org/actions/2011/08032011-pays/en/>

Please click as well on

<http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/actions/2011/08032011/en> to read the World March of Women international message for the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2011.



Argentina



Central African Republic



Brazil

## The International Committee meets in São Paulo, Brazil

Between the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> March, the WMW’s International Committee will meet in São Paulo, Brazil. The preparation of the 8th International Meeting, to be held this year, from the 20th – 25th November, in Quezon City, Philippines, will be one of the main issues on the agenda. At the meeting, IC members will also debate the socio-economic-political context, the planning of activities, finances and other topics related

to the functioning of the WMW, with a view to the putting together of preparatory documents for the International Meeting. One whole day will also be dedicated to the debate around communication strategies.

More details about the meeting will be sent to WMW National Coordinating Bodies in April.



## INTERNATIONAL

### The World March of Women at the WSF 2011: commitment with global mobilization and solidarity with women's struggle all over the world



*Opening March, on the 6<sup>th</sup> February*

Around 75 thousand people came together in Dakar, Senegal, for the World Social Forum between the 6th and 11th February 2011. Caravans from across the West African region were organised, and awareness-raising activities were carried out on their journeys towards Dakar. We, World March of Women activists, took part in several different caravans, with our largest delegations from Mali and Mauritania.

The strong participation of African women and men and the revolutions underway in North Africa created an atmosphere of strength and energy that helped participants to overcome the Forum's logistical and organisational problems. The event was opened with a massive march during the afternoon of the 6th February, which toured the streets of the city and ended at the Cheikh Anta Diop University. After welcoming speeches by the organisers, the event was followed by a speech given by Bolivia's President, Evo Morales, who drew attention to the anti imperialist character of Arab uprisings and called for urgent action in the struggle for the Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the preservation of Mother Earth.



*Social Movements Assembly, 10<sup>th</sup> February*



*Food sovereignty in the program of the 9<sup>th</sup>*

Furthermore, it was this energy created by the uniting of grassroots struggles that was present at the centre of the Social Movements Assembly on the 10th February, in which approximately 3000 people participated. At the Assembly – which we organised along with CADTM, Via Campesina, Grassroots Global Justice and other movements – all social movements were invited to continue, strengthen or become part of collective struggles organised on two global mobilisation dates: the **20th March**, an international day in which we will stand up in solidarity with African and Arab peoples, whose national victories strengthen the struggles of all peoples, and a global day of action against capitalism the **12th October**, when we will express, in myriad ways, our rejection of a system that destroys everything in its path. Click to read the declaration of the assembly:

[http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances\\_mondialis\\_ation/asamblea-movimientos-sociales/declarations/dakar2011/en](http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances_mondialis_ation/asamblea-movimientos-sociales/declarations/dakar2011/en).

The Assembly also called for the convergence of our struggles around four issues: against transnational corporations, for climate justice and food sovereignty, against violence against women and against war, colonisation, occupations and militarisation. Our challenge is to intertwine these issues, reminding us of the permanent challenge we have to strengthen the links between our four Action Areas. These links were traced out during the WMW's self-organised activity, "Feminist struggle against militarisation, capitalism and patriarchy: the 3rd International Action", which brought together around 500 people on the 8th February. Women from 22 countries shared news of the activities carried out, and lessons learnt, during the International Action, as well as the regional actions

and Closing Event in Bukavu, in the Congo Democratic Republic. Click in : <http://www.mmm2010.info/news-1/tercera-accion-internacional-en-el-fsm-2011> for further information on this activity. Read as well the article below.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> February, we organised an alliance building workshop between the WMW and women from Via Campesina and Friends of the Earth International around the issues of food sovereignty, violence against women and climate justice. It was an important moment for activists and leaders from these three movements to get to know each other better and discuss how to advance in our discussions around these themes.

### **Women's Assembly and solidarity to Western Saharan people**

Finally, after a large process of convergence among the initiatives of the gender and equity committee of the WSF Senegalese Steering Committee in Dakar and the

initiatives of international movements and networks, we held a Women's Assembly in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Despite efforts, it was not possible to finish the debate around a common declaration because a minority sector, but a very active one, in the Assembly was against mentioning the right to self-determination of the Saharawi women. Many organizations that participated in the Assembly had decided to spread out the content of the proposed declaration in the form of a signed letter, the "Letter on solidarity with women's struggles around the world". Still, we are aware that many other women and organizations have contributed to the content of this Letter. Click to read the Letter and further information on the issue:

[http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances\\_mondialisation/cmifolder.2005-03-02.3713067089/femmes-dakar2011/en](http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances_mondialisation/cmifolder.2005-03-02.3713067089/femmes-dakar2011/en)

## **"We feel supported, finally we have been listened to"**

*During the activity about our 3rd International Action at the World Social Forum, Adele Safi Kagarabi, member of the WMW National Coordinating Body in the Democratic Republic of Congo, spoke of the results of the organisation of the Closing Event of the International Action in the province of Sud Kivu, between the 13<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010, and spoke of the challenges faced by women in her country.*

"The meetings we took part in during those five days gave us comfort. We feel supported, finally we have been listened to. Women from remote communities walked huge distances to participate in this solidarity meeting, where they met together, exchanged experiences and shared their testimonies".

Adele highlighted the example of a group of around twenty Congolese women from Kaniola, a village close to the south of Bukavu, that was invaded by Hutu rebels. "These women were all raped, some of them on several occasions, many of them are widows. They came together as a woman's collective against the war and created, with their limited resources, an orphanage to take care of abandoned and orphaned children. They walked 60 kilometres, for more than 13 hours, to attend the WMW Event, to meet with other women in similar situations and to share and speak to the delegates of other countries about what is happening in their territory. The orphanage lacks water and electricity, in a village that does not receive much support due to the fact that the region was considered too dangerous for most NGOs.

Another important moment of the Closing Event of the 3rd International Action in the DRC was the visit to Mwenga, on the 16<sup>th</sup> October. "WMW delegates explained in Swahili the reason why the WMW organised the trip and the ceremony in Mwenga, and they expressed their solidarity as individuals and as women from the diverse countries participating in the

visit. On this day, the silence and isolation suffered by the women of Mwenga was broken.



*Activity held during the WSF in Dakar*

One of the main challenges after the Closing Event in Bukavu, is to continue to strengthen the auto-organization of women in the DRC in order to move forward in relation to concrete gains in the lives of women. "We, the Congolese women, are determined to fight and to not be considered as victims, but as women able to contribute to the restoration of peace, the reconstruction of our country and our lives. To achieve this, we count ever more on the huge support of our sisters from the five continents."

Click to read Adele's speech in full (in French): <http://www.mmm2010.info/our-action-fr/rapport-de-laction-globale-a-bukavu>.

**Another video on the closing event in DRC available!** Made by Fionna Smyth, from Oxfam GB, the video is focused on the march carried out on the 17<sup>th</sup> October in Bukavu (available with subtitles in English, French and Spanish). <http://www.mmm2010.info/our-action/audiovisual-RDC>

## REGIONS

### Europe: moving forward with the Young Feminists Camp preparations

In Paris, a group of young WMW women have taken the initiative of organising a Young European Feminists Camp, to be held this summer, between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> July in Terreblanque, near Toulouse. The goal of this self-managed Camp is to permit young feminists to get to know each other better and to promote exchanges in relation to our political visions and experiences at a local, national, continental and international scale, and thus to formulate new projects and prepare future struggles.

The Camp is being collectively organised, along with young feminists from other European countries. So far, participant organization countries, in addition to France, include: Switzerland, Galicia, Basque Country, Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Poland and Macedonia.

The political agenda for the Camp is still under discussion, with the idea of incorporating reflections from different groups. The politic repression towards feminist and lesbian movements, the commodification of women's bodies, religious fundamentalism, and an

increase in misery, poverty and militarisation have been already decided upon as the main issues.

The conception of the Camp is intimately linked with the current context of European social struggles, a context that is less than sympathetic and supportive of women: liberal policies are gaining strength, through which governments increase the number of measures used to roll back social gains or to deny new rights for women and the implementation of rights already recognised in law in the lives of women with particular needs, with the result that they suffer more sharply the effects of violence and misery. In the face of this situation, feminism seems shy, divided and at times high jacked by right-wing and reactionary institutions.

Young European feminists will benefit from sharing their experiences of resistances and struggles. The week-long Camp aims to act as a catalyst for the construction of radicalism and solidarity, and the WMW is an ideal framework within which to base this construction.

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### Americas: Working Group evaluates actions and discusses next steps

To build a WMW campaign in the Americas region. To discuss militarization while expressing solidarity with women in Colombia, Haiti and Honduras. To debate women's role in socio-climatic emergency situations. To support the construction and reconstruction of the WMW nationally. These were the priority follow-up issues, identified at the Americas Working Group meeting held from the 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> January in Lima, Peru. The agenda included a regional context analysis debate, an evaluation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Action, a discussion around the challenges we face in building the WMW in Americas and the expectations we have for our next actions as a permanent movement in the region.

Created in August 2009, during the Regional Meeting of the WMW in Americas, the working group is composed of women from seven countries in the region. After preparation of the Women's and People's Summit of

the Americas Against Militarization, held in Colombia between 16 and 23 August which was part of our Third International Action, the group continues its mandate, now systematizing an assessment of the action and proposals for the follow up, in preparation to the WMW 8<sup>th</sup> International Meeting.

The meeting was preceded by a public event held on 26<sup>th</sup> January, where about 50 women, many coming from the movement for food and peasant movement, which are part of the WMW in Peru, have met representatives of the WMW in Bolivia and Brazil to exchange ideas on the third action and about joint actions around food sovereignty.

Please, click on

<http://www.marchemondiale.org/structure/groupes-collectifs/gtregional/gtamericas-012011/es> to read the complete report of the meeting (only in Spanish)

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