

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN: AN IRREVERSIBLE MOVEMENT
WORKING PAPER
4th International Meeting of the World March of Women
December 3–7, 2002
New Delhi, India

To national coordinating bodies of the World March of Women:

Many of you will be holding national meetings of the World March of Women in August, which is why we are mailing out this first message about our next meeting. We are also including several questions. As national coordinating bodies, your responses are necessary to the construction of this 4th international meeting of the World March of Women.

The March Follow-up Committee has met twice since last October. The first meeting was in Porto Alegre at the World Social Forum in February, and the other was in Rome, Italy, during the first week of June. The last meeting took place just after the European meeting of the World March of Women and a few members of the Follow-up Committee were able to attend as observers. This helped women to better understand the regional dynamic and women's diverse approaches to organizing. We think this is a practice to be encouraged.

As you know, at the February meeting, we had to change the location of our next international meeting because the women in Mexico could not organize it before 2003—this was judged to be too late by the members of the Follow-up Committee. The Indian coordinating body, which is represented on the Follow-up Committee, invited us to come to India, and we accepted their invitation. The next international meeting of national coordinating bodies of the World March of Women will therefore take place in ***New Delhi, India, from December 3–7, 2002.*** Women in India are in the process of forming an organizing committee, which will work closely with women on the Secretariat team to organize the meeting. *We will send you more logistical information in September.*

We invite you to carefully read the information that follows and above all, **send us your answers to the questions by September 14.** We also encourage you to use the electronic discussion forum if you want to make your coordinating body's position known and debate with other national coordinating bodies.

Please let us know, between now and September 2, whether you will be sending delegates to the meeting in India (a maximum of three delegates per country). This will help us to form an overview of the state of mobilization and plan for the meeting. We would also like to know by that date whether you expect to have a meeting of your national coordinating body and if not, what mechanism will be used to answer the questions.

The next meeting of the World March of Women will focus on drafting our strategic action plan and consolidating our network, by, among other things, adopting a structure. It is therefore very important that the maximum number of countries be represented. We are counting on your presence and your commitment to actively continuing our struggle against poverty and violence against women. Thank you for your collaboration,

Members of the Follow-up Committee

Goals of the 4th International Meeting of the World March of Women

The next international meeting of the World March will be a turning point for the continuation of our action. In 2001, we confirmed our intention to continue our work and maintain the links developed in this global struggle against poverty and violence against women. We agreed on our goals and areas of work, and discussed our demands; however, we only barely began to discuss our next actions. Yet, collective action of grass-roots groups is the hallmark of the World March of Women. With the perspective of 2005 in mind, we reiterated the importance of having a common rendezvous, because this serves as a catalyst for our energy at both the national and global levels and encourages mobilization.

Given the current state of the world, and the need to once again mobilize all participating countries in the World March of Women, in our opinion it is essential that we arrive at a strategic action plan leading up to 2005. This should be the focus of our next meeting. While we do not deny the need to continue discussions on our demands and analysis, the Follow-up Committee proposes that these discussions be considered as part of an ongoing process. The back and forth relationship between reflection and action, and the sharing of our analysis of the current context based on our diverse political cultures should result in dynamic and stimulating debates. We propose that we agree on our common action for 2005 and from there construct a process for continuing to update our demands. This is why we propose the following goals for the next international meeting:

- create an overview of the global context according to the demands of the March and continue developing our common feminist analysis
- adopt a strategic action plan for 2003–2005
- adopt the structure of the World March (decision-making bodies, membership, internal functioning, political representation, funding)
- adopt a common work plan

Preliminary agenda

The agenda for the meeting in New Delhi, India, from December 3–7, inclusively, has not yet been finalized. However, we have begun to put various elements into place so that you can follow the progress of our discussions. We asked the women in India to open the meeting with a symbolic gesture representing the Indian women's movement and a short presentation on the women's movement in India. The *first day* will be devoted to creating an atmosphere favouring discussion, adopting the agenda and being informed on the current context in each of the world regions. The *second day* will be devoted to the strategic action plan. Drawing on a shared vision of what we want and believe we can win with the World March of Women, we will discuss strategies and work on setting the criteria for selecting our actions. The *third day* will be devoted to identifying the actions that need to be conducted at the international level to reach our short- and medium-term goals. The *fourth day* will be about choosing and adopting an appropriate structure for accomplishing our action plan; included, will be a discussion on our main principles. The *fifth and last day* will be devoted to planning the next year's work, including the adoption of recommendations from our working groups. These groups will take responsibility for organizing the different discussion blocs. We will also need to make decisions regarding the next rendezvous of the World March of Women.

Prior preparation

To achieve our goals, we count on the viewpoints and proposals of the national coordinating bodies. To this end, we have included a series of questions to which we would like to have

your answers by **September 14, 2002, at the latest**. We will then make a synthesis of all the responses and identify the points of convergence, which will allow us to come up with proposals for December. In addition, we would like you to send us, by the same date, a summary report on the state of the March in your country (actions undertaken, mobilization, membership, challenges, etc.). We will then be able to come up with an overview of the World March of Women in the different countries.

We would also like to use more creative means for advancing certain discussions and facilitating discussion amongst us. So that each national coordinating body can illustrate its specific character and long-term vision of the World March of Women, *we ask that you bring an image or drawing that represents what the World March of Women means for the participating groups in your country*. In what way can the World March of Women change the world? We will then be able to construct a mosaic of our wishes and hopes—our utopia.

We are planning regional meetings during the first day, so that delegates can discuss the current context in their country, territory or region, the impact of this context on women, and how the March should or could respond to that situation. We will then have a global portrait of the state of the world in terms of women. Your delegates will need to be prepared for this activity.

In addition to the above preparation, there are three particular subjects regarding which we would like to have your coordinating body's viewpoint, so that we can draft proposals that take everyone's expectations into account:

2003–2005 Strategic action plan

Any strategic discussion regarding our actions will need to draw on our accomplishments from 2000 to the present. At the global level, in the year 2000, we led a support card campaign in which we gathered and presented 5,684,000 signatures from roughly 100 countries to the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. We requested and obtained a meeting with the president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Horst Köhler, on October 16, 2000, and another meeting with the Vice Secretary-General of the United Nations, Louise Fréchette, the UN Advisor on Gender Issues, Angela King, and several representatives of UN Member States on October 17, 2000. These meetings generated mixed results, from a paternalistic reception and fairly sterile discussion, to an affirmation of the upcoming benefits of globalization and advice to address our domestic governments. Still, it was a first for grass-roots women's groups to be able to address these bodies directly and speak from their own experiences. Our demands were clearly presented by our delegates. We delivered a letter to these institutions containing our demands and analysis of the situation of women in the world.

In 2001 and 2002 we did not follow up on these meetings. We mainly concentrated our action on our alliance with the movement opposing neoliberal globalization, in particular the World Social Forum. We also participated in the Global Forum in Monterrey that preceded the UN conference on financing for development. We plan to participate in the NGO forum in Johannesburg on the occasion of the Global Summit on Sustainable Development. On each occasion, we produced documents to explain our analysis and present the demands of the World March of Women. Women in many countries have organized new actions to challenge their government. The issue of peace was also at the forefront of our concerns and actions. In October and November 2001, women of the March and various other social movements organized vigils.

The results of our actions at the international level and even nationally cannot be assessed at only one level. We will know the impact of these actions over time, because we must take into account both our own actions and those of our allies.

It is also important to note that our mobilization in 2000 and the actions that flowed out of it place us in a good position to influence and challenge other social movements. Our contribution to the World Social Forum is an asset both for ourselves and for other movements aiming for major transformation in our societies.

Questions for national coordinating bodies

The action plan must also include: what we want to obtain, from whom, why, what action should be prioritized, why, when it will take place, are other actions needed, by whom, with whom should we take action, etc. We invite coordinating bodies to discuss these questions at your meeting and send us the results of your deliberations. We believe that one way to begin the discussion is to carefully assess where we want to be in 2005. What victory or victories would be the most significant for the women's movement and the struggle against poverty and violence against women? What will have changed? How will we have obtained this?

Our goal is to simultaneously challenge international political, financial and military institutions as well as other social movements in terms of specific goals. For example, we would demand that democratic and representative political institutions implement concrete measures to end poverty and violence against women. We would challenge the legitimacy of international military and financial institutions. Do you think different types of action should be organized, depending on the bodies being targeted? Which ones? In what order? As for other social movements, we challenge them to change persistent sexist attitudes and analysis and their failure to address patriarchy. What actions do we need to take with respect to our allies?

Some women have suggested that we conduct a simultaneous action in all participating countries and territories every year. For example, organize a march in each participating country on October 17. What do you think?

Others have proposed that we also conduct regional actions in 2003 and 2004 based on regional situations. For example, in Latin America, some participating groups of the March want to form a March network in the Americas and invite participating countries to organize actions to oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas in 2003. In Brazil, in 2003, rural Brazilian women will be holding their 2nd *Margaridas* March to demand access to land, the end of violence, and full participation of women in agrarian reform; they invite us to send delegates from diverse regions; in Europe, women are planning a European Feminist Forum in 2004. Can we combine national and regional actions? Should we choose one or the other? Regional actions could enable us to demonstrate both regional characteristics and the similarities in women's experience. In addition, this could be the occasion for giving more visibility to certain aspects of our two themes and organizing more precisely targeted actions on violence against women or poverty. What do you think?

For 2005, we need an evocative idea that will once again galvanize millions of women and allies but above all will allow us to achieve concrete gains at the international level. Some ideas have been circulating: a women's parliament at the global level that would take place in the street and be responsible for adopting laws reflecting the type of society and alternatives

that we defend to put an end to poverty and violence against women; the idea of symbolically constructing and adopting a global constitution of women's rights; holding another international march, this time converging on one of the poorest areas of the planet or in a conflict zone. Clearly, we will need selection criteria for these actions to ensure their correspondence with our common concerns and goals. What should these criteria be?

Let your imagination go; think about our goals and the steps needed to meet them, and above all, remember to **send us the fruits of your thinking before September 14**. This will enable us to draft an action plan to be discussed and adopted in December 2002.

A structure that will bring us to 2005

Some useful reminders

- until 2001: the World March of Women was part of the legal structure of the Fédération des femmes du Québec To organize the actions in 2000, we formed a coordinating committee composed of Québec women's groups and an International Liaison Committee composed of 40 women from the 14 world sub-regions;
- at the 2nd international meeting of the World March of Women in New York City in October 2000, women expressed the need for a flexible structure, reflecting a spirit of openness, creativity and flexibility;
- at the 3rd international meeting of the March in October 2001, we formally confirmed our desire to continue the March and establish an independent structure; we began the debate on structure but did not arrive at a common agreement;
- to ensure operations of the March in 2002, a temporary solution was found: a Follow-up committee, composed of nine women from the major world regions, the March coordinator and a representative of the city which would be hosting the next major international meeting of the March.

We have two principal goals for the 4th meeting in India: draft a strategic action plan for 2003–2005 and adopt a structure that will facilitate the accomplishment of these actions. If we are to arrive at a decision about the structure of the World March of Women, we will need to carefully prepare the debate. This is why we ask that you answer the questions below and **return all your responses to us before September 14**.

Elements for discussion

- principles: the structure should reflect the underlying principles of the World March of Women (for instance: leadership in the hands of women; leadership shared by the world regions; independent organization of actions in the countries; recognition and appreciation of diversity, pacifism, etc.);
- goals: the structure should facilitate realization of the goals of the World March of Women (foster solidarity among grass-roots women's groups and support the process of popular education, etc.);
- areas of intervention: the structure should enable the March to act within the three areas of intervention that have already been adopted (alliance with the anti-globalization movement, presence at international rendezvous and alert network);
- actions: the structure should reinforce our feminist action network at the global level and the strategic action plan that we will be adopting in India;
- the experience of feminist movements: critique of traditional structures; critique of structurelessness (i.e. the absence of an explicit or formal structure); principles that emerge from this: explicit structure, transparency of decisional process, facilitate women's participation.

In the debate resulting from the structure proposal contained in the working paper for the 3rd international meeting of 2001, women expressed reservations concerning the proposed decision-making structure and the functioning of the secretariat; the resulting proposals and comments were retained and should be reflected in the new proposal.

Some women worried that an overly heavy structure would impede autonomous action, movement diversity, and the link with grass-roots women’s groups; others were concerned that if the structure were too informal, the World March of Women would lose credibility and the possibility of a broader political impact in their country. Some women were fearful of smothering women’s initiative and spontaneous participation with too much structure. Still others worried that without enough structure the March might fall apart, endangering the democratic and equitable participation of women from all backgrounds.

The new structure proposal must seriously take all these concerns into account, because they represent the experience of participating feminists and groups; a balance must be found to arrive at a solution that respects all these viewpoints and enables us to further our goals and our strategic action plan.

We have noticed, by the way, that the terms we commonly use (like network, movement, NGO, secretariat) evoke very different meanings for different women. We must address this by going beyond the terms and communicating our meaning as explicitly as possible.

Where decisions are made—the decision-making structure

Here, we think it would be helpful to provide a reminder and describe in two or three sentences the different decision-making bodies and consensus positions that emerged and were adopted in last October’s meeting, with which we have operated this year. To help prepare our next discussion so that we arrive at a structure that satisfies everyone, we will indicate the decisions needing to be made in December and ask you to give us your feedback.

1. The international meeting

There was a consensus regarding the idea that the international meeting should serve as a general assembly and the broadest decision-making structure; the meeting is open to delegations of national coordinating bodies; the meeting location will rotate among the major world regions.

To be decided: frequency of meetings, number of delegates per country

Your comments:
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2. National coordinating bodies

The creation and maintenance of national coordinating bodies is to be encouraged. National coordinating bodies should function in conformance with the principles of the World March of Women.

To be decided: Should there be an intervention in situations where groups in a particular country are functioning in an authoritarian manner, contrary to the principles of the March?

Your comments:
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3. Participating groups

They connect to the international structure via the national coordinating bodies.

To be decided: what happens when groups do not belong to a national coordinating group?
Should we maintain contact with them? What kind of contact?

Your comments:
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4. Secretariat

A secretariat of some kind is needed to support the work of the World March of Women and the delegated women (working groups or committees).

To be decided: do we want a rotating secretariat (immediately following the 4th international meeting or after 2005 or not at all); how should it function (hierarchical or collective structure, etc.)

Your comments:
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5. Working groups

In order to carry out the projects and meet the goals of the World March of Women, we need working groups composed of experienced women who will develop the positions and strategy of the March on diverse topics.

To be decided: the functioning of these groups, their autonomy, composition and requirements (experience, skills)

Your comments:
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6. International committee

A group of women from the different regions who would be responsible for coordination at the international level and information exchange; composed of 7–15 women.

To be decided: role and mandate, functioning, election or selection, duration of mandates

Your comments:

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Questions on the decision-making structure

	1. International meeting	2. Nat. coord. bodies	3. Participating groups	4. The secretariat	5. The working group concerned	6. International committee	7. Others (explain)	Comments
Who should have the power to decide:								
• changes to the platform								
• choice of international actions								
• the election of the international committee								
• the functioning of the international committee								
• choice and location of the secretariat and employees								
• functioning of the secretariat								
• participation of the World March of Women in an event/action								
• form and content of this participation								
• creation of working groups								
• public positions on political questions								
Who should be responsible for:								
• communications between participating groups								
• communications between nat. coord. bodies								
• fundraising								
• functioning of the work groups								
• functioning and support of the secretariat								
• execution of guidelines and decisions made at international meetings								

Other questions:

Describe the functioning of your national coordinating body (decision-making structure, secretariat, frequency of meetings, funding).

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What is the membership of your national coordinating body? Do you send regular updates of your membership list to the Secretariat? (If not, we recommend it, so that the Secretariat can send the newsletter and other documents directly to these groups). Are you satisfied with the membership criteria of the World March of Women, which are agreement with the international platform and conformance with the principles of the March? Have you developed other criteria for your coordinating body? What are they? Why?

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Your use of the Web as a tool for mobilizing, transmitting information and organizing

We know that the new information technologies (Internet, Web sites, e-mail, discussion lists) played a key role in the development of the World March of Women. However, we need more information in order to accurately assess their impact.

Now that we are moving toward the next actions and the consolidation of the movement known as the World March of Women, we need to evaluate this area. We would like to know the actual impact of the Internet on the women’s movement as well as the impact of the women’s movement on the Internet.

We want to increase our knowledge and measure both the positive and negative impact of Internet use, among other things, on mobilizing efforts. We can then improve our practice based on a better understanding, especially about our needs with regards to this tool. This will not only demonstrate that the World March of Women was, and will continue to be, a major actor in terms of Internet use, but also ensure that our development takes into account women’s diverse usages, experiences and technological levels while contributing to our advancement as a women’s movement.

Throughout the organization of the World March of Women we tried to avoid the marginalization of groups and national coordinating bodies who do not have access to the Internet. Despite this concern, certain problems remained.

This is probably not the last time we will be asking you questions on this subject. We are only beginning the information-gathering process, which is part of our overall development. Your answers will be reported at the December meeting to provide a basis for further developing our thinking and setting up the necessary mechanisms to improve mobilization, information transmission and organization in regards to future actions. It is important that we view the Internet as a flexible tool that we can adapt according to our needs.

Questions for national coordinating bodies

Question	Yes	No	Comments
Did you create a Web site for the March?			
If you already had a Web site, did you add a section for the March?			

Question (indicate your answer: fair – average – a lot)	National level	Regional or continental level	International level	Comments
How do you evaluate the contribution of the Internet to				
- Mobilization:				
- Transmission of information:				
- Organization of the World March of Women:				

	Yes	No	Comments
Have you used the following (set up by the international secretariat)			
- Posting of the list of participating countries and groups and the total numbers			
- Online signature of the support card (and posting of the number of signatures collected)			
- Information on the world demands			
- Information on the world actions and demands			
- Electronic discussion list of the WMW (between national coordinating bodies)			

What was the impact of mailings (via e-mail) from the international secretariat	Explain positive and negative impacts
- E-mail communications to national coordinating bodies	
- E-mails to participating groups	
What was the impact in your country of the use of three languages (French, English and Spanish) in our e-mail and Web site communications regarding:	Explain positive and negative impacts
- Mobilization	
- Transmission of information:	
- Organization	

What was your method for contacting participating groups in your country?	Estimate the percentage of groups contacted through each method
- Regular post	
- E-mail	
- Fax	

- Telephone	
- Other means	

These last questions will allow us to evaluate the evolution of your use of information technologies over the years. (Indicate your answer: fair – average – a lot)

Question	Before the March	During organization of the March (1998–2000 approx.)	Now	Comments
How do you describe your use of the Internet (navigation to sites other than that of the March)				
- E-mail (other than with the international secretariat)				
- Discussion forums (other than that of the March)				

REMEMBER TO SEND US YOUR ANSWERS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 14. HAVE A GOOD MEETING. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN IN INDIA.