

# Sustainable Cultures – Cultures of Sustainability

## BACKGROUND PAPER 12

by

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### **Sustainable cultures/societies: Feminist's interventions**

Fundamental change in society is impossible  
without fundamental change  
in the individual,  
“Charter of Human Responsibilities”

In this paper I want to give an introduction to the feminist economic, ecological and political discourse in the context of sustainable cultures and societies. I first try to give some positive examples and answer the following questions:

- How the 'marginalised majority' of women could and is already partly becoming a political force making a difference?
- What would be their ideological standpoint?
- What kind of political organisations are already in place or can be foreseen?

Lastly I suggest:

- Sensitization programs on “Importance of Democratic structures and on Gender equity, for bureaucratic and other institutions, local, national as well as international” and give background material for such programs.

In the annexes I attach the declaration of the “World March of Women” and my personal experiences as an organic agriculturist and consultant on gender and development issues in my District in South India.

It has rightly been mentioned that majority of the world's women do contribute to the sustenance of their families without any or little use of industrial energy. They are primarily from rural/tribal/indigenous communities. By subsistence farming, child rearing, house keeping, elderly care, nursing of the ill and artisan work for household needs, they actually constitute the back bone of human existence. Yet their recognition is close to zero when modern economic or political discourse is concerned.

And yes, it is time and it is necessary to show how women are determined to change this (and liberate also the oppressiveness in men in the same go).

Even if women don't comprise a majority in most parliaments, they have shown what they can accomplish through grassroots organizing, international networks and other creative means. There are an increasing number of women, who are heads of states and world leaders, as well as grassroot women and their initiatives, which indicate how the 'marginalised majority' could and is already partly becoming a political force making a difference?

Below I give some examples:

Though the International Agricultural Policy making is in the hands of USA and EU and also male-dominated, women are organizing themselves in protest:

In finding out women's own alternatives to the Anti-economic Globalisation movement of the World Social Forum (WSF), at the FEMATTAC (part of WSF) conference organized by the women of the University of Graz, Austria, September 2003, a no. of speakers from the international women's movement shared their views. Prof. Maria Mies - a Marxist feminist scholar from Germany, who is renowned for her theory of capitalist-patriarchy, which recognizes third world women's contributions - spoke of the subsistence economy, of the Third World women playing the role of the "housewives" in the "international sexual division of labour" and of feminisation of poverty. Her contributions are of great relevance in our discussion on sustainable cultures/societies:

One of Mies' founding works in the development of her theory of capitalist-patriarchy was a study that she prepared for the International Labor Office (ILO) under the World Employment Program (WEP). WEP was founded in 1969 and its goal was to develop policies aimed towards alleviating mass poverty and unemployment around the world. The work that Mies did for this program was published by Zed Books under the title The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market in 1982. It is a detailed case study of women's involvement in the lace making industry of Narsapur, which the Chief of the Rural Employment Policies Branch of ILO, Dharam Ghai, declared reveals that if they do not transform the current (i.e. 1982) "production and reproduction relations" of women's policy guided employment then the policies "may lead to the impoverishment of the women, and a polarization not only between classes but between men and women as well".

Lack of official data on women highlights the nature of women's work, which is often labeled as part of the 'informal sector' or as that which makes up the 'shadow' economy.' The work of women is labeled as such because it is not considered as work contributing to the economy, but rather as housework or subsistence work. Mies labels this phenomena as the 'housewifization' of labor, which allows for women's labor to be viewed as subsistence work (i.e. natural) and not considered in the production of capital.

The concept of why women's work is not valued as such and how this contributes to the poverty of many women is taken up by Mies theory of capitalist-patriarchy. This theory is presented in her book Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor (first published in 1986 and then again in 1998 in the form of a new edition). In this book Mies focuses on third world women, the international division of labor, and the capitalist system from a Marxist perspective. She claims that there is an intrinsic relationship between capitalism and patriarchy and that we can no longer accept a classical Marxist explanation of the capitalist system, because it does not include women.

She goes on to propose that capitalism usurps the labor of women through a patriarchal system, which labels it as housework or subsistence work. In turn this "subsistence" work is not accounted for in the cost of labor (i.e. production), which leads to the accumulation of capital. This means that the labor of women is exploited by the system of capitalist-patriarchy, because it is not given credit for the economic benefits that it provides for the system.

In *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* Maria Mies goes on to evaluate women's role within the International Division of Labor (IDL), which she represents as a sexual division of labor. With the rise of multinational corporations (MNCs) and the global economy, women's labor has been increasingly exploited, for women are viewed as docile, low wage, flexible workers with low visibility and little power.

Maria Mies also couples issues of third world women and the theory of capitalist-patriarchy with that of ecofeminism. She wrote a book in 1993, with Vandana Shiva, entitled, Ecofeminism. In the book they argue that women and the environment, of both the North and South, are negatively impacted by capitalist-patriarchy. They propose that in order to protect the environment and women, we must reject the idea of unrestrained economic growth and mass consumerism.

Along with Vandana Shiva of India, Maria Mies played the main role in starting a campaign around the FAO/UN World Food Summit in Rome, November 1996, to draw attention to the fact that food security – and this means subsistence security- is no longer guaranteed in Southern or Northern countries. Globalisation has finally wrested control from the life of those, who truly nourish the world, namely, women and peasants (and not the assumed male bread-winners) and given it to the Multinational concerns.

The critic from the Women's movement in India towards Food Security policies of the Govt. is well put in their "Charter for Food Rights", describing how food security can well be achieved if women's perspectives are given due priorities. They are very critical towards the WTO policies on agriculture, as these do not take into account the life-situation of (rural) women and the farming community in India into account. The USA and EU subsidize their farmers heavily, but impose restrictions on the Indian Govt. regarding the same.

I too had the privilege to present my experiences with the Southern women farmers and agricultural workers at the FEMATTAC meet. I emphasized on the spiritual dimensions of life and to seek alternatives in simplicity, which most Southern peoples, particularly rural/tribal women workers and women farmers practice. This aspect is being discussed now with great fervor in the lifestyle discussion in the context of Climate Change issues.

It was an eye-opener for me to get familiar with the situation of the European women and particularly of (organic) farmers, it being quite similar to that of women farmers in South, in many aspects. I found that the EU's decision-making processes alienate the East and West European women. They were hence planning a demonstration to be held in the next days in front of the EU office in Brussels. The World March of Women is a result of this. Below I give details on this in annex1.

Being myself a grandmother of 2 lovely girls, I feel excited about The Grandmothers Council of the Center for Sacred Studies (CSS), New York, which is dedicated to sustaining indigenous ways of life through cross-cultural spiritual practices, ministry and education, and a commitment to peace and unity for all peoples. The vision

shared by both CSS and the Grandmothers calls for the Earth's first nation peoples to unite for the benefit of all beings and could be of much relevance for our work. ([www.sacredstudies.org](http://www.sacredstudies.org) and [www.cssministryofprayer.org](http://www.cssministryofprayer.org).)

Women have also been protesting against the use of Genetic Engineering for human/ animal life before enough research was done. In 1982 the German GREEN Feminists organized a meet "Women against Genetic Technology" in Bonn, in which amongst others Mary Daly of USA and Renate Klein of GB took part. Fortunately meanwhile there exist now an increasing number of groups all over the world protesting against the use of Genetic Engineering in agriculture and otherwise. In my District Medak of South India, a thousand rural women farmers recently protested against use of this technology in agriculture.

The EU commissioner *Benita Ferrero-Waldner* organised on this year's international Women's Day, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2008 a meet "Let us start the revolution", with many women heads from all over the world. The situation of women in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Ruanda, Bolivia etc and the many brilliant women, who are already fighting against the injustices done to women in their countries were discussed. Below some pictures:



*EU-Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Edit Schlaffer of „Women without borders“*



*Mairead Corrigan Magurie, Nobelprize winner 1976*



*Suhair Al Ali, Minister for Planning and international Cooperation in Jordan and Edit Schlaffer*



*Naila Ayesh, Executive Director of Women 's Affairs Centre Gaza*

*08. März 2008*





*Frauen waiting in a hospital in Hillah for treatment*  
© Manal Omar

Many women's initiatives exist in USA (e.g. below the Feminist Majority Foundation and the Ms. Magazin, which take up issues of women in distress both at national as well as international level e.g. abortion in USA and support for the Iranian Prof. Ebadi, a Nobel Laureate.



Illegal abortions were causing untold suffering and countless deaths of young women in the United States. Today, in the developing nations each year, approximately 70,000 women and girls die from botched and unsafe abortions and another 500,000 maternal deaths occur...most of this suffering and loss could be prevented. U.S. international family planning contribute to this death toll.

Ms. sent the signed petitions to the White House, members of Congress and state legislators and also placed the petition online and supported the targeted abortion providers, such as the sole remaining women's clinic in Mississippi. Ms. made politicians face their neighbors, influential movers and shakers, and yes, their family members – for U.S. women and the women of the world – not to their lose the right to safe and accessible abortion or access to birth control.



The Feminist Majority Foundation in USA took up the cause of Prof. Shirin Ebadi. She is one of only seven living women Nobel Peace Laureates, and her contributions to human rights in Iran have been considerable. They started an international campaign to urge the United Nations to support Shirin Ebadi and the Iranian government to declare legal the Center for the Defense of Human Rights, co-founded by Shirin.

In today's scenario of increasing terrorist violence, it has become necessary for women to start the global Initiative called „Women's Anti-Terror Platform“ in Vienna of *SAVE* - Sisters Against Violent Extremism. They are holding a strategic meeting to mobilise women of the world from 28. till 30.11.2008 in Vienna, trespassing borders, against terror and power. The

Initiative is going to develop strategies of peace in a climate of fear. The first Women's Anti-Terror Platform is a unique international initiative, to develop new strategies and women's alternatives together with female experts from all over the world.

A positive example of a male politician in a Western country is given by Mr. Zapatero of Spain. In a country whose culture has been defined by machismo, the new Socialist government headed by Prime Minister Zapatero is legislating equality in every aspect of Spanish life. All political parties must now allocate 40% of their candidate lists to women, while all large corporations are required to give women 40% of corporate board seats. Women ministers make up half of Zapatero's Cabinet and his Vice President is a woman - Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega - the highest proportion in any government in Europe.

#### Women advocating climate Change issues:

With the share of women in government delegations at the annual U.N. meetings on climate change ranging between 15 percent and 30 percent in the past 11 years, women's advocates are now pressing governments and the U.N. to fully involve women in planning and implementing environmental projects at both the international and local levels.

"Women are not only the most vulnerable but also key agents for survival and stability in the community," says June Zeitlin, executive director of the New York-based Women's Environment and Development Organization, which advocates for women's rights in global policy.

They demand that the Kyoto treaty address the different ways men and women will be affected by global warming and climate policies, because they say that global warming will perpetuate gender inequalities. If climate change predictions by researchers at the University of Toronto prove to be right, low-lying Bangladesh and mostly its women will suffer some of the worst effects of global warming. In some past floods--such as in April 1991 following a Category 4 cyclone--the death rate for women was five times that of men.

The Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) have held the Third Global Congress of Women in Politics and Governance on October 19-22, 2008 at the Dusit Hotel, Makati City, Metro Manila, Philippines. The theme of the congress was "Gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction."

Women and environment experts have raised concern over the absence of women in the discourse and debate on climate change and disaster risk reduction, both of which are global mainstream issues that are currently impacting the entire world. The involvement of women in areas of environmental management and governance should not be perceived as an afterthought. Women's roles are of considerable importance in the promotion of environmental ethics.

#### What would be the ideological standpoint?

I may suggest that a framework for a political perspective and ideological standpoint could be Ecofeminism. It is the social movement that regards the oppression of women and nature as interconnected. Consequently it is now better understood as a movement working against the interconnected oppressions of gender, race, class and nature.

Ecofeminists Prof. Maria Mies and Dr. Vandana Shiva's work have been mentioned above. Another ecofeminist Ariel Salleh argues that Ecofeminism reaches beyond contemporary social movements, being a political synthesis of four revolutions in one: ecology is feminism is socialism is post-colonial struggle. Informed by a critical postmodern reading of the Marxist tradition, Salleh's ecofeminism integrates discourses on science, the body, culture, nature, political economy. (Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern. By Ariel Salleh (London: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 208. Npg.)

Ecofeminists want to change the world into a better place. The only way they feel the world will get better is for females to dominate. If all the females in the world would join with nature and take over the world, then the world would become peaceful. This is not the viewpoint of all ecofeminists, but most seem to think that this is the solution.

Most ecofeminists want women and nature to dominate. They want people to realize that everything on the earth is nature. Nature is a delicate and fragile thing. It encompasses everything that is in the world. Animals are nature, trees are nature, and people are nature. Most people look at nature as inferior. We take it for granted. Most people don't believe or don't even realize the destruction to nature humans are causing. The same can be said about women. Most people don't even realize that women are looked at as inferior. Women have been trampled upon since the beginning.

Some Ecofeminists are very political and want women to run the world. They want women to be in every power position in the world. Some are spiritual and want women and nature to be together to make the world a loving, peaceful place for all.

Ecofeminism as Politics is a comprehensive and persuasive account of ecofeminism's role in critiquing the foundations of the global economic, intellectual and political orders.

#### What kind of political organisations are already in place or can be foreseen?

From my own experience I believe that the political organizations which can be foreseen for our task and many of which are already in place have to be the ones which support the world-view promoting a dignified life for all living forms of life and respect for Nature/ Cosmos/ Ecology. Equality and Rights are not more important than Respect and Responsibility. It has to be a non-hierarchical, non-deterministic, network type of organizational structure. Hence it has to be a democratic, socialistic, ecologically sensitive world-view. Such a world-view has been promoted by the GREEN ideology and a Feminist school of thought, which respects the Family/community care informal work, with the involvement of children/ old/ disabled/ marginalized peoples. A few instances of this are given from the examples cited above.

We may also note that Women have always played an important role as voters. For example for the recent victory of the black American OBAMA, women were a major contributor. Nationally, 56 percent of women (who were 53 percent of voters) voted for Barack Obama compared with 49 percent of men (who were 47 percent of voters). Nationwide, it is estimated that Senator Obama received 35,900,000 votes from women and 27,800,000 votes from men. In my District too, women outweigh the number of voters compared to the men voters (7,81,594 vs. 7,68,791) and can play a bigger role in deciding about the political reality. However so far, unfortunately, their voices have not been heard, they have only been exploited as vote banks.



A lot needs to be done still. And we need to remind ourselves of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which the Indian government has signed, which respond to the world's main development challenges. MDG Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women deals with women's concerns and has a long way to go.

Lastly I want to mention that Sustainability is closely linked to the concept of development. Who is developed and who not, has unfortunately till today been decided by the North. We have to admit that there are serious shortcoming of the modern development paradigm and the understanding of good life in relation to ecological sustainability.

Basically, the survival of Sustainable cultures/ societies and of the world's poor will be a battle against the global companies and the monetarists. A new definition of Development , keeping the Southern cultures and their approach in mind, Decentralization and local empowerment will be key factors, local - in many cases - meaning Women!

My concept of Development is very close to the following:

“Human development means not only economic, political and ethical development; it also means artistic and spiritual development. To develop, both individually as well as collectively, is to develop one's artistic and spiritual potential. Aesthetic development facilitates border crossing between many domains which are considered isolated from and opposed to each other such as economic and artistic, material and spiritual”. (Dr. Ananta Kumar Giri of Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai (email: [aumkrishna@yahoo.com](mailto:aumkrishna@yahoo.com))

And my world-view, behind this concept of Development takes also the following gendered value-classification into consideration:

<i>Male values</i>	<i>Female values</i>
<i>Conventional Agriculture</i>	<i>Organic Agriculture</i>
<i>Cash-oriented</i>	<i>Sustenance-oriented</i>
<i>Controlling nature</i>	<i>Humility towards nature</i>
<i>Big/ global</i>	<i>Small/local</i>
<i>Planned</i>	<i>intuitive</i>
<i>Linear, one-dimensional</i>	<i>Network, multi-dimensional</i>
<i>Deterministic</i>	<i>Chaotic</i>
<i>Tayloristic/ reductionist</i>	<i>holistic</i>
<i>Technocratic</i>	<i>Socio-cultural</i>
<i>Wars and destruction</i>	<i>Life affirming</i>

It is very much essential that development strategies incorporate women's realities in a holistic manner.

One of the important tasks before us is the Gendered Dimensions of Policies and their Evaluation. Gender Budgeting is one area, which is seldom looked into.

I have talked about my vision of development to bureaucrats in my district Medak in Andhra Pradesh. And I said that if we have regular Gramsabhas in villages and could hear the voices of the rural women's groups, we may find more voices asking for water than for construction of roads as is the priority visible in today's lopsided development plans. Water is a priority for

women, because they are responsible for the nutrition needs of the family members. Some state and central development programs today are incorporating such knowledge.

We have been sensitizing women of our self-help groups in ten villages of the Medak district of the Southern state of Andhra Pradesh, about the importance of being organized in Self Help groups and about the importance of ecological agriculture and healthy food for their own families, the community and the society at large, over the past 15 years. I have been observing a progress in the living standards of our rural families, due to the empowerment of their women. Women deal more cautiously with the inputs: the credits, the animals, the agricultural inputs or other assets they received with our support.

The rural/tribal women generally invest their assets in the health and educational needs of their family members. They do not waste them over alcoholic drinks and mobile phones or other such irrelevant technology, not of priority for their rural needs. Hence I firmly believe that removal of patriarchy and more decision-making powers in the hands of the women will make societies sustainable in many ways and many areas.

Unfortunately it is not only their own husbands or the village Sarpanch, who do not really give them decision-making powers, but the Institutions, the bureaucracy as well as the society at large does not trust them with their capacities. Annexe2 gives a list of examples from my experience as a consultant for the Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) Governmental scheme for the Medak District of Andhra Pradesh.

Hence I very much want to suggest Sensitization programs on Importance of Democratic structures and on Gender equity, for bureaucratic and other institutions, local, national as well as international.

#### Background material for Sensitization and Training programs on gender:

##### On Food Sovereignty

“Women and food sovereignty Kit” by the Women and Environment Task Force” of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Mauritius, 2006

##### On Food Security

“Women’s Charter on Food Rights”, Women’s Food Rights Campaign, New Delhi  
“Women, Food and Global Trade”, Maria Mies, November 1996, Institute for Theory and Practice of Subsistence, Bielefeld, Germany

##### On Watershed Management

“Integration of gender issues in Watershed Development Programs”, Ministry of Rural development, Hyderabad, India

##### On Ecology

“Staying Alive”, Dr. Vandana Shiva, KALI for Women  
“The CHIPKO message”, Tehri-Gharwal, U.P., India

##### On Agriculture

“Agriculture without women: a scenario in the making?”, Kamla Bhasin, FAO

“India’s Agrarian Crisis”, Facts against Myths, October-November 2004, Mumbai, India  
“When farmers die”, P. Sainath, The Hindu, 22 June 2007

### On (feminist) Economy

[Patriarchy and Accumulation On A World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour](#) by Maria Mies, Paperback, AMAZON Books, 1999

Claudia v. Werlhof, Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen: Frauen, die letzte Kolonie (Women, the Last Colony), AMAZON Books

[The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalized Economy](#) by Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, Paperback, 2000, AMAZON Books

[Ecofeminism](#) by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, Paperback, Zed Books

Mies, Maria. Indian Women and Patriarchy. Delhi: Concept Publishers, 1980.

The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives Produce for the World Market. London: Zed Books, 1982.

Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1998.

“Zur politischen Oekonomie der Hausarbeit”, Feministische Initiative Lohnloser Muetter, Muenchen, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Amsterdam

“Gender Budgeting”, special issue UNDP, Mumbai, 2007

“Economy of Permanence”, JC Kumarappa, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan

“Essays in Gandhian Economics”, Romesh Diwan and Mark Lutz, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi, 1985

“Mcmmedia and Market Jihad”, P. Sainath, The Hindu, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2007

### On Women’s Movement

“Some Questions on Feminism and its relevance in South Asia”, Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan, KALI for Women

“Nature of Women’s Mobilisation in Rural India: An exploratory essay”, Madhu Kishwar, EPW, Dec. 1988

“Different Voices, Divergent Struggles: An Overview of the Contemporary Indian Women’s Movement and its challenges”, Veena Poonacha, SNDT University, Mumbai, Dec. 2007

“Women under the Left Front Rule”, Mira Roy and Soma Marik, Documentation and Study Center for Action, Vadodara, India

“Development for Whom?”, a report on the Women’s Development Programme in Rajasthan, India, Oct. 1991

### On GREEN Political movements:

“Die Gruenen: Ein Lichtblick”, Program fuer Bonn, Kreisverband Bonn, Germany (The GREEN manifesto for the City Council of Bonn, 1985)

“Vorlaeufiger Entwurf eines Anti-Diskriminierungsgesetzes”, Die Gruenen, Bonn, Germany (a Draft for a GREEN Anti-Discrimination law)

“Werkstattpapier fuer den 2ten oeffentlichen Bundeskongress”, Fraueninitiative 6ter October, 1982 (a GREEN-Autonomous Women’s program, 1982)

“Frauen im Osten: Die Armut ist weiblich”, Ost-West Informationen, ierteljahresschrift nr1, 2000, FEMATAC- Oesterreich (The East European Women’s magazine)

Last not least the “Charter of Human Responsibilities”, SHARE Publication, 2008, for a responsible approach to whatever we do.

### Annexe1:

The World March of Women held an International meeting in Vigo Galice 14-19 october 2008. ([www.marchemondialesdesfemmes.org](http://www.marchemondialesdesfemmes.org)) and they have given a CALL TO ACTION in 2010:

”Change the lives of women to change the world. Change the world to change the lives of women.” with the following declaration:

”We, activists of the World March of Women, struggle together against the root causes of poverty and sexist violence. Ten years after our first International Meeting, we gathered together in Panxón, Galicia, from 14th - 21st October 2008. We were 136 women from 48 countries

from all five continents, joined together to construct proposals around our Action Areas: Peace and demilitarisation; Common good; Violence against women; Women's work.

During these seven days, we also joined many Galician sisters and male supporters in a public forum for debates and a fair to defend Food Sovereignty and women's self-determination. We also took part in an amazingly joyful, positive demonstration - along with more than 5,000 people - in the streets of Vigo on Sunday morning, 19<sup>th</sup> October. Accompanied by the sound of "batucada" drums, we created rhythms for women's rights, against machismo and for peace.

Our struggles continue in the global context of an increasing offensive of the conservative sectors of society, religious fundamentalism of every kind, including communalism, the criminalisation of protest, the disrespect of people's rights over their territories, rising militarization, and violence perpetrated by governments in the name of an alleged "war against terror".

Patriarchy, capitalism and racism are three systems interlinked to control our bodies and our lives. The institutions of countries from the South and North - governments, large companies, and religions - want to prevent us from achieving our rights and take away rights we have gained. Following in the wake of the food, energy, environmental, and ethical crises, the financial crisis reveals once more. Yet again, the State is called on to bow to the interests of the financial system and transnational companies, abandoning the people and saving the market.

We struggle together permanently to resist the system imposed on us and to construct alternatives based on the values of peace, justice, equality, freedom and solidarity. In 2010, our collective voice will be even stronger from 8th March to 17th October:

- Marches of many kinds, colours and rhythms will open our mobilisation calendar and celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the declaration of International Women's Day.

- Marches and other simultaneous actions around the world on 17<sup>th</sup> October will strengthen our presence in Sud Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Between 8th March and 17th October, we will carry out many actions, including defending the rights of domestic and rural workers, and rejecting the promotion of the prostitution industry during the World Football Cup in South Africa.

With the aim of making explicit the diverse causes and interests at the heart of increasing militarization, we focus our actions on various issues. We condemn the exploitation of our resources by multinationals, which impoverish the most vulnerable peoples. We denounce the State's responsibility in the development of the arms industry that leads to extreme violence against women. We refuse to accept that armed conflicts are waged for the control of the natural riches of a people. We refuse intervention or threats to people's sovereignty by imperialist powers. We refuse to accept that women's bodies be used as spoils of war!

Women on the March until we are all free !

Panxon, Galicia, 20 October 2008”

In connection with today's international fiscal disaster also the World March of Women gave out the following Financial crisis Déclaration:

#### Another World is Necessary and Possible

In a context of patriarchy and neo-liberal economics, the banking and finance system is in collapse. Attempts at recovery to improve its functioning only worsen the situation. The stock markets of the world are in free-fall; the crisis is growing and cannot be hidden. The consequence of the non-redistribution of wealth is massive impoverishment of populations, and of women in particular. This system favors the development war as a tool to acquire the resources of the South and to develop the arms industry. In the midst of these military conflicts, women suffer unacceptable and inhuman violence.

The colossal gains of the speculators and stockholders have been privatised while the enormous losses of the system have been nationalised, i.e. paid for by all us, men and women, through our States.

We, women of the world, are the first to be affected by run-away unemployment, by the loss of food autonomy, by the commercialisation of common goods. This financial crisis is closely linked to all the other crises : climate change, and the food, energy and work crises.

The countries of the South are pillaged for their riches. Theirs food habits modified to benefit the agro-food transnational corporations. They have been suffocated by the weight of debt and by the lack of transparency in the use of loans from international organisations.

In the face of the bankruptcy of the only model of globalised economic organisation, we,

activists of the World March of Women, gathered in Vigo, Galicia from 14th - 24st october 2008 - reaffirm our anti-liberal position and demand the transformation of the international Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Central Bank and the World Trade Organisation, as well as the Development Banks.

We vigorously denounce all free trade agreements, especially the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) - such as the Japan-Philippines Economic Prtnership Agreement (JPEPA) - and the General Agreement of Trade in services (GATS°. We demand the end to fiscal paradises that hide drug money and corruption; we demand control of all movement of capital.

It is clear that we need another economic system; we need to develop the creation of economic solidarity structures, autonomous production cooperatives, as well as a Bank of the South to support development that is ecological, egalitarian and sustainable.

We want transparency regarding the use and administration of public funds. We want the resources of the people to be allocated to meet their essential needs first and foremost.

Our states are responsible: they owe us accounts. It is their duty and obligation to regulate the economic system and protect citizens from financial sharks. The costs of the crisis should be assumed by the stockholders and by those, who have grown rich from the speculation.

Others rules for the distribution and use of money should be defined in a democratic and participatory manner, together with the populations, social movements, and feminist organisations. The definition for budgets should take into account the preservation of common goods and the development of public services. All of us, all men and women of the world, have the right to a healthy diet, decent housing, health care, education, a decent job, transportation and culture.

Together, we can build a world where our values of justice, peace, equality, solidarity and freedom are given priority

#### Annexe 2:

Let me give here 2 examples, one regarding my experience with bureaucratic institutions and the other with academic institutions.

##### 1. Example Indian Bureacracy:

Last October I was asked by Mr. XYZ, director of a big NGO in India, to work in a 4 month project, called BRGF, in which we were to help the district officials, develop the Medak District Development plan for the coming Five Year Plan. BRGF is a Grant fund, introduced by the Govt. of India to undo the unequal growth and imbalance that exists today between the urban and the rural population.

Mr. XYZ knew me through a small innovative project on promotion of organic farming through empowerment of small and marginal, women farmers, which we (STRAINATA, Medak and RDS, Mehboobnagar) implemented on his behalf.

Below I give some instances from the project process:

- On the whole again I felt most disturbed about the patriarchal culture in the bureaucratic institutions. The representation of women is low and that too mostly in junior roles. The male heads talk to them in a very patronizing way. Their behaviour is loaded with too much authority complex. They are like Indian children are supposed to be. They have to follow all what their seniors tells them, whether it is related to their official duties or not. They are full of fear, lest they loose their Naukri (jobs), which has such a holy character in India, only because the social security for old age is provided in a Govt. job. It is interesting that every time I expressed open critic and spoke on gender issues, XYZ had to remind me at the end of the meeting, that I should not talk about gender only and that his NGO should not be identified with gender only. I should talk about the general, District level issues, not only about experiences from my Village and about women farmers.
- During the meeting with ZPTC (district level technical committee) members, when I talked about the importance of gender budgeting and pointed at associated studies in West, Bengal and Maharashtra, regarding impacts of NREGS (National Rural Employment Gaurantee Scheme) and women in Agriculture, the CEO (Chief Executive Officer of the district Medak), an elderly gentleman, interrupted and pointing to the women members in the hall, he said I should talk about this to the women MDO's (Mandal Development Officer) and other senior women members of the ZPTC, who were attending the meeting. I did tell him that it is just as important that the men in the hall also take notice of it. Gender budgeting of all Govt. programs is not only a women's issue!
- APARD, the A.P. state training institute for rural development also did not really understand and appreciate it, for example, when I pointed to "why are there no Father's Committees in ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) plan, why it only mentions Mother's Committees". Children are the responsibility of both parents. Mr. XYZ too later told me not to mention such things in these high level meetings! It seems to be a non-serious issue for them!?

Though an Expert group report of the Planning Commission, which was supposed to be the BRGF guiding principle for the district planning and which suggested, that the Gramsabha meetings should be published and announced in various ways ( not only by putting up a notice in the Panchayat office, but by beating drums and putting posters all over in the village), so that most of the representatives of the various village level resource groups, particularly women, get to know of it and can attend the Sabhas and contribute to a real grass-root oriented planning, it was hardly ever taken seriously.

- In my lecture on 22.1.2008 to the 84 Extension officers and Assistant statistical officers of Medak dst, I emphasized saying that through the BRGF funds and the Planning Commission guidelines as well as 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of constitutional reforms, we are given this opportunity by the GOI to bring in some grass-root level planning, taking the poor-most into consideration. We are asked to emphasize on a horizontal instead of the present, mostly practiced vertical method of planning, namely the top down approach. I said, let us for a moment look upon each other as privileged citizens of India and not as Govt. Officers and an NGO confronting each other. Do we really want to feel proud about being Indian, we do seem to have a strong positive sense of our Indian culture? Do we want to be looked at in a positive way by the international community and not as beggars asking for money from WB / IMF/ ADB etc. to solve our most basic problems like education, health and sanitation? Then it is high time we make use of every situation we are given to fill in the gaps, to equalize the uneven growth between urban and rural Indians, to be able to feel really proud of

being Indian. I feel today, when the project is over, that they may have had a laugh at my naïve suggestions!?

- The District Planning Committee, which has been legally constituted after recent failures of the decentralized Planning, was not held till 3 months after the start of the 4-month project! The collector, the chairman of DPC kept postponing. We, as NGO and as facilitators kept running around.
- Many sensitization programs for the higher-level functionaries on the structure and content of the questionnaires and on how to fill the various forms, had taken place, but the villagers themselves and their representatives and more so their leaders and rural women did not get any or not enough capacity building, though BRGF provided resources for that! Was it again going to be a top-down exercise, the Line Depts. and the member politicians of the Distr Planning Committee finally deciding what needs to be done in the district? Don't we know that they generally have their own hidden agendas, wanting to keep their powers in their hands..., I kept asking myself?

Some more observations, excerpts from my diary on BRGF:

- “22 Crores of Rupees have been delivered under BRGF for our district! 2 months are left. The GP and ward members have still not been invited/sensitized about what BRGF is all about and what they have to do. How will the bottom-up approach take place?”
- “It will again be the “experts” in the departments, who will write the plan documents, based on some samples of data collected from earlier or elsewhere and the plan document given to the state machinery and finally to the central Govt. will NOT hear the voice of the “poor most of the poor”, as the BRGF document guidelines actually suggest.”
- “The state machinery will get the Rs. 3750 Crores for BRGF altogether from center. Our district, the collector, will get 250 crores, the NGO of Mr. XYZ will get 5 lacs and I will most probably get a few thousands, but what will the “poormost of the poor” gain from the whole initiative? The Sarpanch of my village was complaining that we are asking them to do additional work, but not a single penny of the Crores of BRGF has reached them yet.”

On 18.3, the collector and the various DPC members realized how late it had become for the final plan document to be written by the mid of April and so they started putting pressure on people in the hierarchy below.

What I found most disturbing was the fact that all the work trickled down to the lowest in the institutional hierarchy, namely the Aanganwadi workers, the Vidya Volunteers (mostly young rural women), the Prerkas ( leaders, mostly young rural women), who are supposed to fill up all sorts of proformas, without being given any honorarium for the extra work. Their main duty is to look after the siblings and NOT go around collecting info/data for various surveys of the Govt.. this was a clear example of exploiting the meakest in the bureaucratic hierarchy.

The teachers get their travel expenses and some honorarium for the various meetings, but the Aanganwadi workers, the VV's and other young people who come out of a feeling of responsibility do not get any material support for this job. I think this way they are not going to motivate most women volunteers and working mothers.



The 2 Aanganwadi workers are mothers of 2 young children each, get a salary of Rs. 1200 p.m., 4 vidya volunteers in the village get rs. 1500,- p.m. Travel costs they had to pay from their own pocket.

Though I was happy to see on TV one morning, on 14.3., Renuka chowdary, Min of Family and Child welfare speak about the ICDS, the Aanganwadi workers, their low wages and the improvement of the nutrition aspects of mother and child programs, but her proposal for introduction of packed processed food lunches for the children, a suggestion made by the planning comm. was very disappointing. This would not only reduce the quality of food, but also take away jobs of millions of rural women cooks. Fortunately Brinda Karat, CPM criticized and pointed at the hands of MNC's behind this future plan.

This is how all developmental plans seem to work! We will never understand and/or alleviate poverty this way!

As regards educational programs, I was told of how good the performance of the district dept. of primary level (girl's) education is, but when I visited some schools I found these in abysmal condition:

- "I stopped at Pulkurthy village on way back from a mandal meeting in and wanted to see how the young "out of school" children were doing in the Kasturba Gandhi Balika school. The school building is one private hall with 144 girls from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> class, living and studying in the same hall. There is no toilet for the girls. There is no provision for separate classes for young and old children. The teachers were not very smart, they didn't speak Hindi even, not to speak English. Contrary to what the officer for "out of school" children in SSA, Sreddy told me, these girls were studying there till 10<sup>th</sup> and after and not being put in other normal schools after completion of basic knowledge."
- "At Kothur, Khanapur I visited the 2 Anganwadi buildings and talked to the 2 AWW (AaganWadi Worker, mostly young rural women) and AWH (AanganWadi Helper, mostly illiterate rural women), Punyamma and Vasantha Rani resp. Though in Kothur the building was clean and spacious, the fact that it is a part of the primary school building and it has no water and toilet facility, because the hand pump is not working, a new motor is required, needs attention. The AWW (AaganWadi Worker, mostly young rural women) and AWH (AanganWadi Helper, mostly illiterate rural women) have to wait till they get back to home, to be able to use toilet! "
- "In Khanapur village, there are 40 children in Aanganwadi and 80 in primary school, both in the same complex. The AW children get "Therapeutic food" of NIN @ 67gms per child and this is supervised by the primary school HM Suryakala. The primary SCHOOL children get Mid Day meal, the little ones not. So the parents were protesting. Also the cook Pentamma was complaining about difficulties in cooking for the 40 children in rainy times, as there is no shed for her to cook under. She earns Rs. 2 per child and it comes to Rs. 1600,- to 2000,- per month."
- "The AWW was telling about what all she has to do besides looking after the little tods. Pregnant women, lactation, weight check ups, immunization etc. she gets Rs. 1400,- p.m., but not monthly, sometimes in 2-3 months she has to leave the children with the AWH Anantamma, who gets only Rs. 750,- pm and was complaining that after 1 .30 pm when she finishes at the Aanganwadi, she cannot take up another work to make both ends meet either."

- “The chaprasi, an elderly man , was complaining about the low salary, Rs. 1070 p.m. since years. The 250 chaprasis in Zbd. Mandal have been bringing this to the notice of the mandal officers since long. Who speaks on behalf of the young mothers and AWW and AWH?”

## 2. Example Academia

I attended the Indian Social Science congress end December 2008 in Bombay at the famous SNDT women’s University. I found the organization as well as the submissions suffering from the usual patriarchal structures in our society.

- Mr XYZ, the chief organizer of the Indian Social Science meet, agreed with me, that there should have been more women speakers in the ISS sessions, more so because it was being held at the premises of SNDT university, with people like vibhuti patel being the member of the organizing committee. He said he had called women, but they were not prepared to come, he gave an example, Utsa Patnaik.
- I attended some sessions in the parallel women’s movement sessions. Some of the submissions e.g. by Flavia Agnes and Supriya Pathak on the state of affairs of violence towards women cases and of how women studying at the women’s dept at a university are treated as being inferior students, respectively, would have been important inputs for the large male audiences of ISS, to know of. But it was just a few of us women, who attended these sessions.
- The fact that the women’s movement groups were having separate sessions in the afternoon and were not imbedded in the main sessions, when the title of the congress was about people’s movements, surprised me even more. Some of the women faculty members told me about the difficulties they had with the male organizing committee members regarding this issue.

For me, the BRGF experience has been an eye-opener, but I wonder whether my interventions had any real affect. Towards the end I was told to not to mention the problems at the grass-root level in the district level meetings, because even Mr. XYZ, who employed me as a consultant, did not want to confront the senior District officials with the poor state of affairs in their villages. He wants to get further assignments from the district collector!

Each one follows one’s own selfish interests. All this at the cost of the already under-privileged of our society!

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