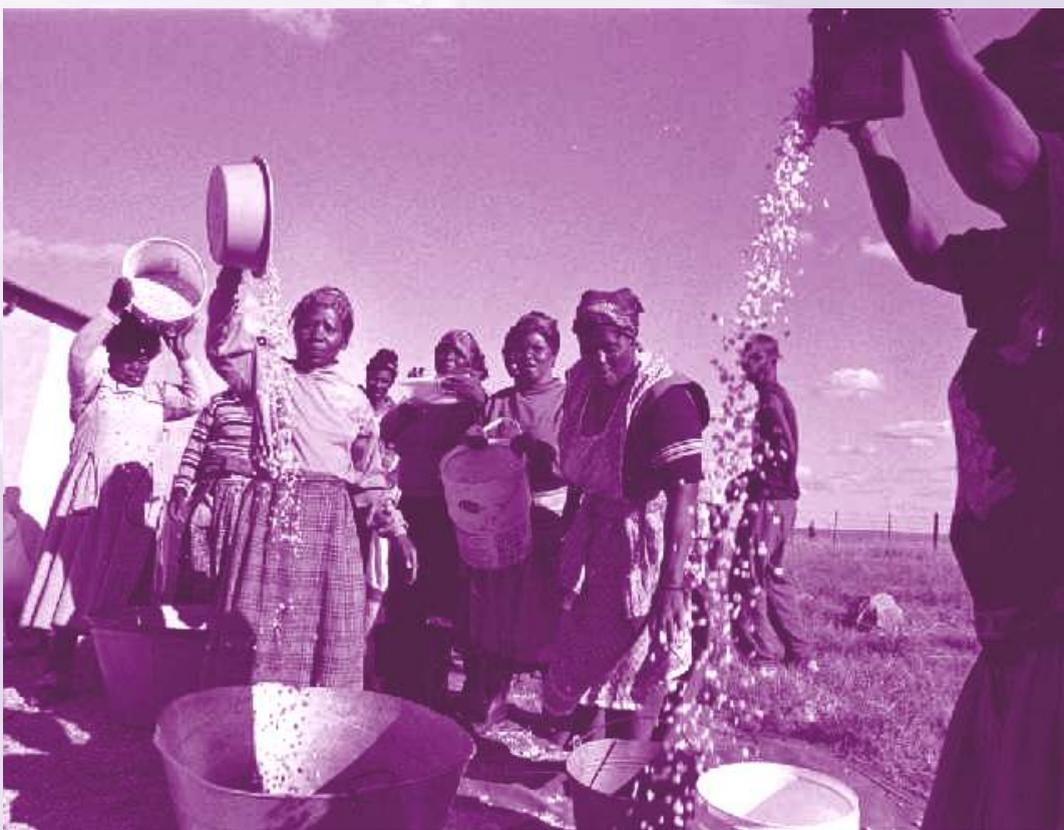


Women and the Right to Livelihoods

World Social Forum 2009



Testimonies and Discussions

Women and the Right to Livelihoods

World Social Forum 2009

Report written by
Emma Sydenham

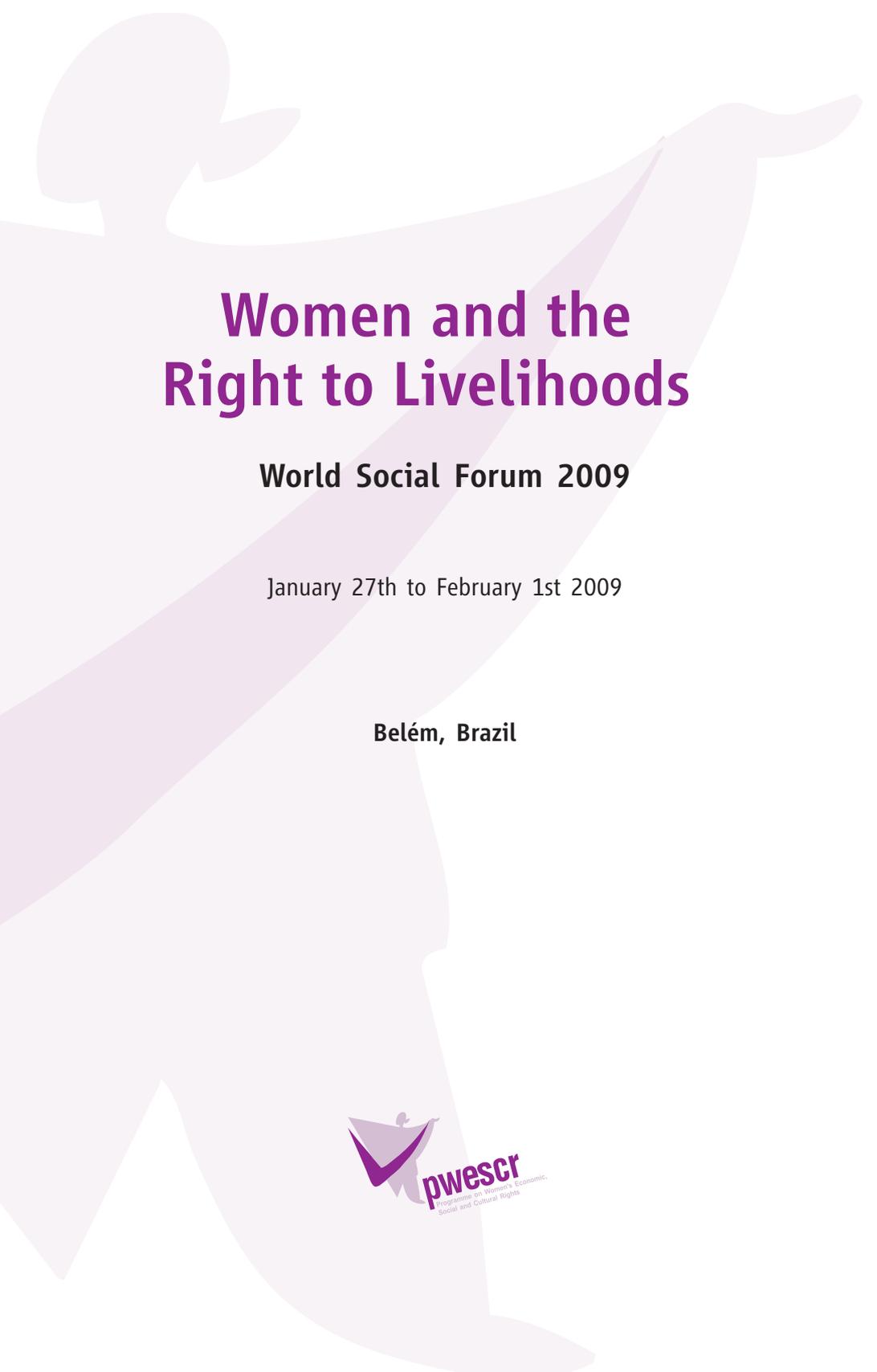
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Women and the Right to Livelihoods

World Social Forum 2009

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Women and Livelihoods events held by PWESCR in collaboration with organisations involved in the Gender Equality Coalition of the Human Dignity and Human Rights Caucus at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Belém, Brazil 2009. It is produced as a record of the testimonies and discussions presented at these events. There is also a further expectation that the document will be utilised in ongoing work in the area of Women's Right to Livelihoods.



Contents

Introduction	2
Women’s Right to Livelihoods: Addressing Development and Displacement	5
The Right to Food: Agriculture, Food Security and Food Sovereignty.....	6
Natural Resources: Land, Water and Forests.....	6
Education, Skills, Work, Markets and Credits.....	7
Speakers.....	7
Sônia Costa.....	7
Ana Filipini.....	8
Tran Thi Lanh.....	10
Rukmini Rao.....	11
Gigi Francisco.....	12
Discussion.....	14
Women’s Right to Livelihoods: Building a Collective Agenda	17
Topic Areas.....	18
Questions for Working Groups.....	18
Right to Food: Agriculture, Food Security and Food Sovereignty and Women’s Right to Livelihoods.....	19
Natural Resources and Women’s Right to Livelihoods.....	21
Education, Work, Markets and Credit and Women’s Livelihoods.....	22
Launch of the Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods	26
Annex.....	29



Women's Right to Livelihoods: Addressing Development and Displacement

January 30th 2009

This event was organised by PWESCR, in collaboration with Habitat International Coalition (HIC), to highlight the diverse issues connected to livelihoods and the ways in which development and displacement are violating women's rights to livelihoods. The event saw high participation of 80-100 attendees with many responding positively and expressing interest in the possibility of forming a collective working on Women and the Right to Livelihoods.

Priti Darooka, Executive Director of PWESCR, introduced the session, detailing various issues connected to livelihoods and women. She considered:

As collectively we start talking about livelihoods to be recognised as a human right, we need to get a more inclusive understanding of what we mean by livelihoods: issues connected with land, water, forest, right to food, food security, income security and so on. So the first step in building up this network is building up a common understanding of what we mean by women's right to livelihoods.

A number of experienced activists and practitioners spoke on interconnected aspects of livelihoods as a human right for women. A broad picture of women and the right to livelihoods emerged from the discussion, closely connected to the right to a dignified life. Speakers captured the essence in different ways; in terms of self-sufficiency, the means of production or life itself, and as Tran Thi Lanh (Vietnam) captured powerfully in her opening:



Livelihood is every human right. This concept is in our heart, it is a culture, it is land and it is the environment. It is the basics of our human existence.

What is clear is that livelihoods for women is not a new issue, it is about issues women have been mobilising around for decades – land, water, forests, indigenous peoples' rights, climate change and displacement. However, there is a pressing need to focus on livelihoods as a right in the context of the deepening crisis of capitalism and its impact on livelihood related rights for women around the world. Viewing the different aspects as part of a greater issue and addressing them in a more holistic way has tremendous power. As Gigi Francisco (Philippines) highlighted, the link between women's economic empowerment and food security is women's livelihoods.

The following three focus areas emerged from the testimony of speakers and group discussion:

The Right to Food: Agriculture, Food Security and Food Sovereignty

It covers a range of concerns from: food security; struggles to use local, organic products and regain control of seeds; loss of work; massive displacement of the indigenous; agrarian reform and State withdrawal from agriculture; destruction caused by the agro-business of the rural economy and environment; the invisible role of women as workers in agriculture.

Natural Resources: Land, Water and Forests

Displacement, land, water, forest and environmental issues are central to this theme. In particular, speakers highlighted the loss of resources (such as land to monocultures), the impact of destruction of forests, the privatisation of natural resources and the abuse of natural resources by multinational corporations (MNCs), particularly in the presence of State alignment with MNCs.



Education, Skills, Work, Markets and Credit

This area covers issues of productive resources and access to resources, and involves concerns in labour and goods markets. Discrimination and work conditions in all sectors are central to the discussion, as is women's role in social reproduction, in particular recognition of work, generating employment, employment security and equal wages. The invisibility of women at work and persistent images of women as 'supporters' rather than 'actors' in the work environment are also concerns. Finally, trade liberalisation and agro-business ventures, as well as the use of market mechanisms to solve environmental problems (in particular new markets in biodiversity and carbon), were highlighted as key issues.

Issues concerning trade liberalisation, MNCs and migration cut across all three areas. In the course of the discussion however, it was clear that all aspects concerning women and livelihoods are deeply interconnected. This also highlighted the importance of determining a comprehensive response based on a common and holistic analysis.

Further detail of individual speakers' input follows.

Speakers

Sônia Costa

Sônia Costa (Brazil), Director President of FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) and human rights lawyer, explored issues connected with land eviction from a livelihoods perspective. She highlighted the contrast between law and reality: with solid constitutional recognition and non-discriminatory legislation on the one hand, and widespread discrimination in practice concerning women and children on the other. Costa confirmed that women are more concerned about issues of livelihood and vital conditions of life. By way of illustration, she discussed the fight for agrarian reform in Brazil and success in achieving the right to land for women. In particular, she drew attention to macro issues of violence through this struggle and its consequences, which impact women (who stay behind) the most.



She discussed recent government attention to implementation of projects on agriculture. In this however, there remain persistent issues related to low level of means of production and difficulty of access, also linked to payment of interests. What is missing, Costa argued, is stronger public policy and government assurance of dignified livelihoods and access to means of production for our women. Concerning women in the context of livelihoods and the family, an issue that must be redressed is women being perceived as the 'helper' rather than a protagonist, despite the significant work they actually do. Trade matters and managing resources are also seen as the sole responsibility of men. In the urban context, women have more experience and education than men, especially in the last decade with higher female participation rate in the university, however this does not always eventuate in equal rights of women in the work market. The reality is that women earn 35 per cent less than men.

Costa cited the following as areas for redress in the context of women's right to livelihoods.

Environmental destruction, and in particular the production of agro fuels, causes distinct human rights violations, particularly to the poor, leading to displacement and with direct consequences to women, including prostitution. Displacement of water supplies, particularly as a result of hydroelectric dams, was also highlighted. Costa drew attention to a recent FIAN study on agrofuels, which illustrated the dynamics of women's marginalisation by society and their insertion in the informal economy. Migration of men to work in other regions also leaves women suffering the hardest consequences by being left alone. Finally, Costa suggested that strategies of redress should focus on policy restructuring through an inclusive public process.

Ana Filipini

Ana Filipini (Uruguay), from the World Rainforest Movement, shared her experiences and insights concerning natural resources, displacement and women's livelihoods. She described them in terms of:



The issues are invisible as women are in this world. We work hard, we speak out. But we don't get heard. It looks like we are invisible for men and women, for all society, that we don't even work. Our men and women are using their land, their water, the forests, everywhere in the world. People need to start realising why they are losing their resources, their land, to monocultures in particular. This invisibility happens because the governments from all countries have decided to adopt the same policies as the companies.

Filipini explained how big business companies have been making huge money at a human cost for more than 500 years, taking our money, forest, water and land. These companies fail to recognise the people on the land, killing them, sexually violating women and using and exploiting the land for their purposes. Now, such traditional owners must request the federal government for small tracts of this land for themselves. She shared some of the stories and testimonies of women on their experiences of the forest:

Argereiro women in Paraguay;

We know the forests. We use what the forests offer. We protect the forests. We are ushers and guardians of the forests. We care about them.

Women in Thailand;

The forests are very important to us, it is from the forests that we gather our fruit, water, and food basically. We also have animals and birds.

Argentinean women;

It is from the forest that we have fire, medical plants and herbs. It is also from the forest that we are able to develop good agriculture.

Ayelli women from Cameroon;

We love the forest because it is fresh there. We are not scared of the forest and we have lots of fun over there. I don't know if you noticed that the kids here they have lots of fun in the forest and water. I would like to join them sometimes.

Cambodian women;

We have so many funny things to do in the forest.

The Mapucho women from Chile also shared stories on the consequences of plantations, a worldwide phenomenon:



We don't have any more water since the plantation was installed. We don't have any more water to drink or to wash our clothes; there are no more fruit and vegetables any more. We are so afraid of the man of the big business companies, we women, we don't have work any more and the work they give us is so hard.

In closing, Ana stressed:

What is important now is that a decision is made to stand up in order to achieve livelihood. We have the right to livelihoods and we have to unite. We have to create and strengthen networks of women, of men, of all those who are interested in defending the basic right of livelihood.

Tran Thi Lanh

Tran Thi Lanh (Vietnam), of the Social Policy Ecology Research Institute, continued the discussion, drawing on her work with mining MNCs. She denounced the fact that our current existence benefits only very few individuals; the capitalists of oil, hydroenergy, mining and plantations. This 1 per cent capitalist population own 80 per cent of the earth's natural resources. Speaking on behalf of the Mekong countries, she condemned the hydropower companies owning the largest dams in the region who are destroying the fish, native birds and wild life, and depriving women from using their intellectual knowledge and capacity. She stated:

MNCs are stealing resources from 30 million people: a million hectares of forest and land; it disappears.

The MNCs are avoiding taxes and making profit off nature and people, entrenching their own power and ensuring that poor people are further excluded. Lanh advocated for priority focus on the Amazon and Mekong regions, the Middle East, and Central America, to stop the capitalist advance before it is too late. To do this she called for maximum utilisation of the power of local and international media and the internet as, well as tapping into local knowledge, languages and customary law for solutions. She expressed a need to move from a UN focus to building local movements and actions to rise up against MNC power.



Rukmini Rao

Rukmini Rao (India), of Gramya Resource Center for Women,¹ centred discussion on the right to life, which she saw as at the core of women and livelihoods. She noted the desperation of starving farmers, committing suicide in massive numbers in India because of rising debt. Rao shared a number of consequences of industrialised agriculture, such as loss of work, dumping of western foods and use of harmful industrial chemicals and pesticides rather than organic manure.

She shared some innovative ways that women are carving out livelihoods for themselves despite the challenges. She detailed how very poor Dalit women in India have made livelihoods possible for themselves, growing food that they want to grow, demonstrating that they can maintain food sovereignty. Specifically, she said:

Poor women have demonstrated that biodiversity is life. With some help from outside, they have improved their soil. Instead of getting external inputs, they use organic manure from their own cattle; they keep control of their own seeds, and keep control of the markets. This provides an alternative to MNCs, which sell us our own water, our own potatoes, our own clothes which women weave at home. In this way, women can create employment for themselves. In industrialised societies like the UK, 100 acres of land is farmed by one man and one machine. Our women, from countries of the Global South, generate 100 days of work over this land, securing enough money and food to feed their families.

Rao also discussed dumping in the Global South as a consequence of global trade. She decried the \$US 80 billion profit of North American farmers in 2008 and the \$US 1 billion a day government subsidy they received, while the Indian demand for government farmer subsidies goes unheard. Rao argued:

The Government should not give money for pesticides and chemical fertilizers; that money has to come to women to cultivate manure in their own households and farms, to dig their own wells, to have their

¹Board Member of Deccan Development Society; Core Committee Member of Sangat and South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication.



own water and to manage their own seeds. Instead of going to the supermarket to buy food, women have generated work for themselves by this action and strengthening their cooperatives.

Rao urged that we must take control of our resources. To empower the movement for women's right to livelihoods, she called for stronger campaigns to force our governments to support our people. At the international level, she also sought the dismantling of the World Trade Organisation.

Finally, Rao spoke of the mass displacement of indigenous peoples, making up eight per cent of the India's population, but with 50 per cent of those displaced. When we are threatened with displacement, our demand is land for land. Here she highlighted the success of campaigns in India, which led to legislation that allows indigenous people to farm in forest areas that they owned traditionally. Rao concluded with a plea for greater attention to traditional knowledge to take us forward:

There is tremendous knowledge and women and men are holding this knowledge. We have to learn from them and we have to find a way of continuing to conserve and preserve the forest. Women have said no to plantations, we want to grow our own trees, our own medicinal plants and our own fodder. Women's ideology now is not only to care for themselves and their families, it is also to care for the animals around them and for all of nature. So women's right to livelihood, it really means the right to life for all.

Gigi Francisco

Gigi Francisco (Philippines), of the Development Action for Women Network (DAWN), considered the macro forces that impact all issues raised by speakers, and in particular the international trade regime and the struggle against trade liberalisation. She said that the right to livelihood is not a new issue, with women raising it for a long time in relation to other issues and struggles. Women's livelihoods were also central to the struggle of peasant farmers over the right to land and the struggle of indigenous peoples over ancestral domains. However a particular campaign on women's right to livelihood as a human right



may be understood in the context of an explosion of claims for rights unleashed by the deepening crisis of capitalism.

It has been established without doubt that trade liberalisation in agriculture poses threats to peoples' livelihoods and food security. The shift to 'export oriented' crops plus the entry of cheap foods into the market is redefining the system of farming in rural areas. This creates more problems for the sustainability of women's livelihoods and food security in the community. Francisco also insisted that women's livelihoods are very much about women's work. Women's work in the agriculture sector is found both in production and social production (care of the family). One cannot separate the two because production, such as women's farming activities, is simply seen as an extension of their housework, or taken for granted as supplementing men's incomes. However, there are two human beings active in production in each household everywhere in society and women hold the sole knowledge of many sustainable production practices that we can learn from.

Putting it into the larger context, Francisco explained:

To understand women's livelihoods, we need to situate our analysis in the triangular relationship among (1) land rights systems; (2) rural labour markets; and (3) intra-family production and consumption systems. This is not a new proposition but has never been taken up seriously in our search for alternatives. In this light, access to micro credit for women for livelihoods begins to fall seriously short of demands for the right to livelihoods. Micro finance is necessary but supports only a small part and can weaken women's position if not situated within a larger analysis of the rural system. This framework also raises questions about government programs that support contract farming that links specific communities to the supply chain of MNCs. This is also very limited and can lead to a strengthening of dominant MNCs; it will defeat our real struggle for women's livelihoods, food security and economic empowerment of all people. Instead, we need to situate our analysis and campaign on women's right to livelihoods in the context of the larger struggle against the free trade regime. In particular, we need to link the right of women to livelihoods with the emerging force of global resistance against dominant



agro-business corporations. These corporations are destroying women's livelihoods, destroying our rural economies and homogenising our production around the supply chain that makes them more profit but leaves people hungry.

Discussion

In discussion, participants raised various other issues and shared some of their experiences concerning women and livelihoods. Ronnie Hall, of the Global Forest Coalition and Friends of the Earth, raised the new problem concerning the use of market mechanisms to solve environmental problems, in particular new markets in biodiversity and carbon. The consequences of this for women are less land, less rights to land and less capital. With their greater dependence than men on forests for food and medicines, privatisation of these and sale to markets will deprive women of access and means to buy the commodities they need. Hall discussed a further problem involving the sudden interest of men in sustainable forest resource management, taking over roles of women when large amounts of money become involved in these processes. Such projects are very difficult to participate in, requiring money to invest, technical capacity, legal know how and a good understanding of whatever language is used. Women must be empowered with this knowledge to effectively participate.

In moving the debate to possible solutions, Darooka questioned the role the State may have in guaranteeing the human right to livelihoods. What would we like the government to do to protect livelihoods. Filipini argued that the role of the State in community support is essential. The problem we have now is that the State is supporting companies and not people. Major companies have many possibilities for facilities that none of us have and now they find themselves in crisis. What the Brazilian Government did, for example, in the Aracruz case, was to give US\$ two billion of the people's money to save the Aracruz company. We have never received support at any governmental level. Governments must cut company privileges immediately, stop giving companies land without requiring land payment and taxes; they must



stop offering privileges to MNCs and start offering them to the people. Filipino also felt the UN should be held to account:

The UN is complicit in what is happening, I would call them criminals. I dare to call them criminals because they keep doing more and more business using people. Instead we need to build and use more effectively initiatives like cooperatives and the solidarity economy.

Rao also offered some suggestions. She focused on strategies required by the people to pressure the government to respond in ways that meet demands as little real change will happen until that pressure is there:

Peoples' organisations and movements must force our governments to act, we need our lobbies pressuring governments in our states, in the EU, everywhere. We have demanded and are now getting support for organic agriculture, for example. The crisis is an opportunity for us and we must seize it. The government has set aside money for peasant farmers, yet this will likely be used for big companies. They will grow vegetables and export them. What the government can do is stop giving land to MNCs, we must insist on only market mechanisms for companies to buy land. In India we must also demand land for all displaced agricultural families, instead of setting up export zones, land must be used for people.

However, Rao affirmed that it would be a very long struggle. In India it has only been when people are willing to lose their life that the government has stopped giving land to companies (such as the withdrawal of Tata company). Only when the people's struggle is very strong and includes fierce lobbying of the government will change come. Finally, she suggested that we need social security as only if people are healthy can they have a livelihood.

Costa made reference to the obligations of the State to respect and protect the economic social and cultural rights of its people at an individual and collective level. It must not allow any kind of violation of its citizens' rights and work towards the realisation of existing law. Both the national and international legal systems should be utilised and any gaps in the law remedied to protect human rights as a whole.



She cited large corporate areas concerning major dam projects where there is no respect for human rights:

The fact that the Brazilian Government supports international groups for three decades to operate tax free while amassing huge profits is unconscionable. This at the same time as small farmers, who produce most food available in country, don't receive any kind of financial support and suffer human rights violations because of these financial and business factors.

Costa shared that another aspect of this concerns the forcible displacement of people from the land where these dams are today, displacement of people who were using the land for food production for big cities. This has consequences on food security and food sovereignty.

In closing, what needs to happen? As a Brazilian woman shared:

This is a very important issue for us all. Your struggle is no different to the one that we are facing as Brazilian women. We women here will join you and all of us united together, we need to merge our struggles.



Women's Right to Livelihoods: Building a Collective Agenda

January 31st 2009

This event provided a space for participants to exchange and dialogue on issues core to women and livelihoods and to develop a collective strategy to work at various levels to strengthen efforts for change. The proposals put forward will drive the newly formed Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods.

Across the three areas of focus in the livelihoods discussion, impact of trade liberalisation, privatisation and the rise of MNC power were prominent issues raised, particularly in their impact on food security, displacement, the right to work and sustainability of natural resource issues. Also central to the debate were structural gender concerns that impact women; invisibility and exclusion from decision-making processes, work related wage discrimination, invisibility of women's work including being overburdened and exposure to violence, lack of access to credit, markets and land ownership, and exclusion from education and capacity development. Groups stressed the need for recognition of women's close relationship with land and forests, and their wealth of traditional knowledge central for health and natural resource management.

Diverse strategies were discussed, exploring national, regional and international possibilities. All groups called for better networking at all levels for organising, capacity building, strategising and mobilisation, determining this as critical to any change. The emerging message was loud and clear; women need to unite, to strengthen our own capacities, to refine joint strategies and to engage with political structures to



press governments to fulfill their responsibilities to their people rather than fill their pockets with MNC profits. This must happen collectively at the national and global level, targeting States, relevant UN bodies and entrenched global financial structures (such as the World Trade Organisation and World Bank). We need to develop and advocate for sustainable alternative development models, with women at the centre, and engage with UN structures to better represent women's struggles for livelihoods.

Darooka (PWESCR) introduced the session with a brief overview of issues emerging from the dialogue of the previous event, 'Women's Right to Livelihoods: Addressing Development and Displacement'. Working groups were created around the three common areas that had emerged from this previous session.

Topic Areas

1. Right to Food: Agriculture, Food Security and Food Sovereignty
2. Natural Resources: Land, Water and Forests
3. Education, Skills, Work, Markets and Credit

Beside the larger critical concerns of feminization of poverty, cross-cutting issues for all groups to consider were also noted:

- Migration due to loss of livelihoods and for livelihood, including both women migrating and men migrating and leaving women behind
- Trade liberalisation as a threat to livelihoods (exploring issues like MNCs, extractive industries, international financial institutions, privatisation and government alliance with MNCs rather than its people).

Questions for Working Groups

- *What are the problems, concerns and issues around this theme, how are they being redressed? Where are the gaps?*
- *What could be a collective agenda to strengthen efforts for change? What can we do to advance the struggles at the national, regional and international level?*



The groups spent most of the allotted time in internal discussion, coming back to plenary only to share an overview of their discussion. The groups reported as follows.

Right to Food: Agriculture, Food Security and Food Sovereignty and Women's Right to Livelihoods

This group discussed a range of concerns around women and food security and food sovereignty. It focused on lack of support for women after displacement, lack of women's legal rights to land, very small farms with little income, lack of credit, no support from the Government, and corporate farming for cash crops such as Soya depriving communities of food security. Finally the group highlighted how women are losing control over seeds and how biodiversity loss is leading to loss of food. Issues discussed concerning work involved: low wages for women; no access to markets for women; the invisibility of women's work and lack of land leading to denied access to credit; lack of skills in mining communities post closure; marginalization of women due to technology and export crops; shrimp cultivation leading to sickness for women. In terms of decision-making and valuing women, the central concern was that women do not have control over decisions and women's knowledge is getting lost.

The group also discussed an array of possible strategies to redress these concerns. At the **national** level, these were as follows:

- Governments must take their obligations seriously and invest in agriculture.
 - ◆ Government investment in women farmers and women's cooperatives is imperative, if money goes to men, they are more interested in commercial agriculture than livelihood-based farming
 - ◆ Improvement of soil fertility in farming areas
 - ◆ Focus on local production and consumption
 - ◆ STOP supporting MNCs who grab land from the poor. Currently, foreign companies in India for example do not buy land, but



- rather get government support to clear land of people and access it in the name of development;
- ◆ Stop investing in WAR and invest in farming food.
 - Right to land: All women farmers must have independent rights to their own land.
 - Women farmers have the right to participate in decision-making that affects them.
 - ◆ Governments must promote and support women's cooperatives;
 - ◆ Women must be empowered with responsibility for food management, to better ensure food sustainability.
 - Access to credit.
 - ◆ Women are currently too often denied access to credit, based on (amongst other reasons) their lack of land ownership. Credit must be separated from land ownership.
 - Education and capacity building on sustainable agriculture.
 - ◆ Women must be given skills to manage soil, to keep control over soil and to manage their own agriculture, particularly in Latin America where women have been displaced and new generations don't have farming skills.
 - Right to work.
 - ◆ Support new cash incomes for women.
 - ◆ Improve women's access to markets. When women have no access to markets, they plant crops, grow food and process food, only to have it taken by men to the market. This means that income is in the hands of men.

At a **regional** level, the group discussed that a regional food bank is under discussion for South Asia. This would mean countries that are producing more food, rather than dumping it, would forward it to food banks for emergency aid, to go where it is most needed.



The group agreed that **internationally** the Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods should participate in international discussions to ensure that the issue of agriculture is taken out of the WTO. It must push MNCs to set up norms to enhance food security. The Network should also lobby the UN to set up an expert committee or an individual independent expert to review women's ESC rights and right to livelihoods. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and other relevant international institutes should also be mandated to support women farmers, including through research and training women farmers on sustainable agriculture (not chemical agriculture). The FAO now supports farmers, however the group argued that its interventions do little to make women less vulnerable.

Natural Resources and Women's Right to Livelihoods

The group highlighted the cross-cutting issue of land and resource 'grabs' in the name of industrialisation and corporatisation as a central concern globally and particularly in the Global South. They pressed for organisation at local and global levels and the development of stronger networks to fight the MNCs. They also centred solutions in the right to natural resources for women; empowering women to assert this right advances the struggle for natural resources as well as women's equality and realisation of other rights, given women's inter-relationship with the land, water and forests. They have power located in their access to natural resources, so when they lose their land, the nature and forests, they also lose their power.

At a national level, taking Brazil as an example, they advocated for a program, 'Brazilian Women's Empowerment in Natural Resources Management', which would work to empower women based on their own knowledge. Steps include to:

- Develop strong women's organisations at the local level, ensuring understanding of the values around and relationship between women and nature.
- Build institutions in natural resources management.



- Engage in political concerns and push for policies to achieve resource management.

The same steps were suggested for the Mekong countries in Asia, where the local women's organisations or 'natural resources associations' would in particular channel women's very rich experience, wisdom and knowledge, particularly in herbal medicines, and would take care of community health and handicraft textiles. They would also then build active institutions to lobby governments at the local and national level on land and forest issues².

In terms of regional action, they felt capacity building and raising awareness were most important in the Amazon region, where women do not know how to protect their land and environment, now being lost to hydro-power development. Knowledge exchange with senior NGOs and CBOs would then be the next step. The group advised women to get in touch with organisations like Amnesty international and Brazilian Women's Alliance (AMB) and work together with them for change³.

The role for the Global Network, they argued, is to develop capacity so as to fight against the powerful development agenda that is destroying our environment. It should advocate for a different development model that would ensure sustainability of natural resources, one that offers opportunities for women at the local level and utilises that women are directly and deeply involved in their natural environments. For example, there is a dire need to provide alternatives for the use of rivers; today, pollution is destroying our wildlife, our oceans and us. Finally, the group recommended knowledge exchange as a tool for learning and solidarity at all levels.

Education, Skills, Work, Markets and Credit and Women's Livelihoods

This working group discussed women's position in the labour market and goods and services market, as well as the skills and resources

² To pursue this idea for Mekong countries, contact: www.mekong.dmp.org; speri@speri.org; tthanh@speri.org; a Vietnamese organisation working in the Mekong region.

³ For further information visit: www.articulacaodemulheres.org.br



women can access to enable market participation. The group stressed issues of concern about the use of micro-credit to access resources whereby a cash economy is entering the rural economy. Generally women focused micro-credit programs look only at money, and so they do not result in ensuring and protecting women's rights. Micro-credit schemes are undertaken without understanding women's needs, without real economic education, and without a plan. We need to ensure that women's rights are the focus of micro-credit. Women's voices were also highlighted as an important issue, in the micro-credit sector and financial decision-making structures, the concerns women do express are often not heard. The group referred to major advantages of companies to mobilise credit at very low interest rates over a long period that women ultimately bear the cost of. Women face 36 per cent interest rates on small loans, being punished and held accountable for others' loans and brought into a vicious cycle of debt and poverty.

The group reported much activity in the area of women's work. Women are entering work in traditional areas of land, forest, the agricultural sector and the informal sector, in both paid and unpaid forms. However, they get the least capacity building, have the least mobility and the least heard voice in the market. Trade liberalisation policies are creating competition for local products and displacement of national markets, while privatisation is leading to a drastic increase in informal labour and shamefully decreased wages. Also, there are no safety nets such as social security benefits or other facilities provided for women in the workforce.

Further, women are the most violated and at the receiving end of discrimination. Violence is perpetuated in every sphere of work and women are discriminated against as workers and unable to negotiate their rights. Gender discrimination places blame on women or mothers who have several responsibilities and little state support. There are further globalising trends towards broader forms of violence targeting women, for example, for their nurturing, reproductive and productive roles (that sustain communities), enacted by MNCs in



collusion with governments. The group also stressed the need to focus on State accountability; it is the State itself that denies women the right to social security. In situations of conflict, women are targeted and discriminated against. There is a false belief that the State will protect them. These conflicts then become not only about livelihood, but life itself.

In the education sector, the nature of education itself must be changed. Currently education is more about how women can remain in reinforced stereotypes, far from the empowering education needed. While the education sector claims to be free and accessible to women across the world, from Nigeria to India, educational institutions are run primarily by men, with women in the lowest cadres, that continues to promote aggressive masculinity, making women and men conform to a certain role. Education must be transformed to empower women to deal with leadership and negotiate rights within larger development debates. We need to reclaim for ourselves an educational process that strengthens us in communities in markets and in governance.

In all themes covered, women are also absent in decision-making bodies, they are absent in political governance, in institutions of the market and in institutions determining global trade agendas. As a result community and women's issues are not addressed.

The strategies the group advocated centred on:

National

Education: there should be free children's education and adult education as well as specific capacity building within women's groups in urban and rural areas to enable them to take action to claim their rights and specifically access credit and the markets. The group also called for political education for the oppressed, who often don't know they are oppressed, and broader public education.

Women working more within their homes must rally to fight against patriarchy from their family and husbands. In communities, they must fight the socio-cultural tradition that women are the property of men. This should be supported by media campaigns against patriarchy.



More outreach to women living in particularly vulnerable situations, such as the displaced and migrants, to deal with discrimination in community, family and the State.

Advocate for legislation, in particular concerning economic rights for women, such as reform of inheritance laws in India. Also examine our own policies and practices at the local and national level concerning how various legislative initiatives affect women.

To counter further invisibility of women as workers with rights, organise women into unions to pursue their demands and lobby for better legislation. For example, the first union in the history of trade unions in Pakistan – The Home-Based Workers Union – has just been created, and is now struggling for recognition of their work on registration of social security cards.

Regional and International

- Build stronger global networks for women's groups to unite, ensure women's voices are heard and fight collectively to hold governments accountable.
- Advocate that MNCs and banks developing micro-credit programs include a women's strategy within each one based on women's rights.
- Strengthen efforts to hold the World Bank accountable.



Launch of the Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods

January 31st 2009

Finally, the Global Network on Women and the Right to Livelihoods was launched on the last evening of the Forum in an event facilitated by Emma Sydenham (PWESCR) and Ramona Ortega (Women of Colour Network). This was an exciting moment, and the culmination of many months of discussion and engagement by an increasing number of individuals and organisations. However this took place in awareness of the reality of the depth of the struggles that threaten women's livelihoods around the world. So it was also a grounding moment, which recognised the need for solidarity and joint strategies, working from the local to the global level and making women's right to livelihoods visible and alive within the debates and action on the current global crises. John Samuels of Action Aid International underscored the importance strengthening women's movements across issues of globalisation and their impact on women, reclaiming their essential human rights. In support of the collective on Women and the Right to Livelihoods, he proclaimed that the time has come to restore a new language, a new imagination, a new politics and a new economy to the world. But the polity and politics cannot come from those used to domination, extraction and the power. A new politics can only happen when half of mankind can unleash their energy to transform the world.

Priiti Darooka and Sunila Singh (PWESCR), Rukmini Rao, Soma P and Mamata Dash (India), on behalf of those that have spearheaded



the process, shared how the coalition has evolved, from various meetings and skype conferences with an increasing number of women and organisations over the previous months. They stressed the urgency for collective action. This urgency was reflected in the fact that livelihoods are a global priority for women living in poverty and the increasing desperation of their situation in the growing crisis of neo-liberal capitalism. Lourdess (Brazil) from Via Campesina, reinforced the pressure of the fight against the capitalist market, not just against market products but also natural resources and the development of land. She urged:

We must fight for the fact that women are not products, they are not part of the markets, they cannot be sold. Women must be visible and they must be at the forefront of change.

Specifically she called for space for women to participate in decision-making in organisations and structures more broadly, as well as strategies that target the domination of MNCs.

Another pressing drive behind the collective is the need to develop effective strategies. Those behind the initiative shared:

We realise that we need a more integrated understanding of core issues affecting women's livelihoods as related to their human rights, and we need to work at all levels and touch all issues to move forward in each of our struggles; we need to work together!

PWESCR added that despite the magnitude and urgency of the situation globally, there is little awareness of this issue and the right to livelihoods is not recognised as a human right. This is a gap in human rights that leaves the conditions necessary to support, sustain and advance the lives of women and their families with dignity unprotected and unsupported.

So from this basis, PWESCR shared that the collective will work together to dialogue with and engage various groups and social movements including indigenous, Dalits, minority groups, land rights, environment, anti poverty, trade, housing, agriculture, worker's rights etc on women's livelihoods. Of great imperative is reaching out and ensuring those voices that need to be a part of the collective are there. As Valerie Traore (Burkina Faso) of Dignity International reminded us:



Women within our networks are not necessarily present in all levels of battle at the forefront. We need to acknowledge our privilege to be here and to connect with each other. We need to make sure in this network we are not just speaking amongst our selves and reach out to those that most need to be included.

The Collective will aim to:

1. Foster a collective voice to articulate the severity of the situation faced by women.
2. Develop a common understanding of the right to livelihoods.
3. Work to have the right recognised in international law.
4. Develop a strategy to advance women's livelihoods in reality around the world.

In terms of priorities, the dialogue and the strategy sessions at the WSF on women and the right to livelihoods were a strong starting point, as was the input of many men and women over the days of the World Social Forum who committed themselves to the coalition and shared their experiences and insights. The call for experiences, stories and insights on Women and Livelihoods continues (see Annex). PWESCR is processing these and organising them to share, to help in developing common analysis and to provide conceptual clarity. This is the first step for us before developing a collaborative action plan. PWESCR encouraged everyone to share contact details to continue the discussion online and in smaller groups to develop an agenda and means of working together.

PWESCR highlighted the potential of the moment, where the decision has been made to come together, to build joint strategies to strengthen our movement for change. But now the real work must begin to identify what the coalition will look like, how it will function, to identify its priorities, to reach out to women all over the world and to take action for change. The collective appreciates the need for new thinking and imagination, moving beyond our current frameworks, politics and means of operation to really reach out to women affected and to work collectively to realise the right to livelihood for women. The call is out, let us work together to make change happen: Livelihoods for Women Worldwide.



CALL TO ACTION!

Collective Sharing and Learning

In order to develop an inclusive concept of the right to livelihoods from a gender perspective, we are compiling a collection of woman's stories from around the world on livelihoods. This compilation will help in collectively developing a common analysis and providing conceptual clarity. It will then provide the basis for the Network to develop an action plan for a collective advocacy campaign. We invite you to join the Network and to participate now by sharing your thoughts on issues of livelihoods. In particular, we request your specific input in this first stage on the following.

Compilation of Stories

Please send us your stories, or stories of communities you work with or are associated with. Your submissions can come in any form: as testimonies, photographs, videos, press clippings, articles, poems, legal cases, etc.

Send your views

- What does the right to livelihood mean to you and to women you work with?
- How would you define it?
- What are its various components?
- How do issues of livelihoods affect women?
- Why is the right to livelihoods important to women?
- Or why should it be important to them?



- 
- What are the challenges women in your country and communities face regarding livelihoods?
 - What are some of the strategies being used by women to address these challenges?
 - What are the success stories?
 - Does the Constitution of your country guarantee livelihood protection?
 - Are there any policies or laws to protect livelihoods?
 - How effective are they for women?
 - Where are the gaps?
 - What do you think needs to happen to fill these gaps at the international level, regional level, and/or national level?

Please send your contributions to livelihood@pwescr.org. No material submitted will be reproduced without consent and acknowledgement of the contributor.

Be part of the Network: Join over 125 organizations or individuals! You can join individually or as an organization. Please send an email to livelihood@pwescr.org. with:

Your Name

Organization name.....

Country

Contact Details (Address, email and phone number)

.....

Your work on livelihood:



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