

Annex 4

Women respond to the Food Crisis: We are part of the solution

During the last months, the whole world has been suffering the crisis in food price. According to recent figures today 1.4 billion persons live under the new poverty line of USD 1.25, and the majority of these are women and girls. Some 850 million persons around the world suffer from hunger and 820 of those 850 million¹ live in developing countries, areas that are likely to be more affected by climate change. These figures are linked to the rise in food price because world provision of cereals in 2007 was 420 million tons, a historical minimum since 1983. According to an OECD report, a third of the rise in agriculture prices foreseen for the next nine years is caused by biofuels.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 50 million people still haven't got access to adequate food. Child malnutrition, with its negative biological, social and economic effects, is currently affecting more than 9 million children and the achievements in the fight against poverty and indigence are in risk due to lack of food. The problem of poverty and hunger in the region is related to wealth distribution and land concentration in the world. This results from the neoliberal economic policies of extreme privatization and reduction of national investment imposed by the international financial institutions. This situation has had more relevance in Haiti, Argentina, Peru and Mexico and the UN agencies in the region foresee a 5% rise in food prices that will increase indigence in almost one point.

According to FAO, "Latin America and the Caribbean have a 31% surplus in food resources. The region's problem of hunger is therefore not one of production but, rather, one of access to food"². Beyond economic trends, climatic or protectionist factors that have an important impact on the current crisis, the main problem of this food crisis is the lack of access to land and properties and consequently to food, particularly among rural and indigenous women and household heads.

This situation is worsened when neutral policies are implemented that underestimate and ignore the role and contribution of rural and indigenous women in food production and through development strategies that have no gender perspective, with a negative impact on women's living conditions and their possibilities of contributing to food production and rural, local and regional development.

Food crisis and the rise of prices can bring unpredictable political consequences. If prices continue rising, 10 million more people are in risk of becoming poor and a similar number of poor people could increase.

In view of this situation, we, peasant organizations, and organizations of rural and indigenous women, feminists organizations and other women's networks concerned with overcoming poverty and reaching gender equality report that the current food crisis is the result of the failure of the structural and macroeconomic policies

¹ FAO, 2006.

² FAO, Thirtieth Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, Brasilia, Brazil, 14-18 April 2008. Statement of the Director General

implemented during the last 30 years under the leadership of the international financial institutions (IMF, WB, IDB and the WTO). In Latin America and the Caribbean these policies have in brief:

- reduced the policy space of developing countries to define their own development and rural strategies;
- Promoted the exportation of national and local agriculture production without considering the need to cover the national demand first.
- Promoted free trade agreements in unequal basis for developing countries, that raised vulnerabilities of several sectors and social groups, with clear negative effects in rural women in several countries.
- Supported financial speculation on food and a state that has no longer the role as controller of imports and exports.
- Have promoted the massive production of agro-fuels.
- Have ignored the role in promoting agricultural adaptation and of land property of the peasant and rural communities where the role of women is key.
- Have prioritized the servicing of the foreign debt in detriment of public domestic investment with a gender perspective in the national agricultural sector.
- Promoted national poverty reduction strategies without considering inequality differences and discriminations.
- Promoted the reduction of the role of the state in all policies, particularly in rural development and market regulation, but also in social policies.

Through the above-mentioned actions they have contributed to worsening the difficult living conditions of millions of peasants, and, particularly, for the most vulnerable groups: women, indigenous women and boys and girls.

The immediate solution to this crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean can be developed through short and medium term actions, we cannot let the solution for the long term because it will be too late.

We call for the following urgent actions in the short term:

- Establishment of national agricultural policies with a gender perspective and with a significant budget as part of a broader programme of national investment, prepared with the participation of all stakeholders.
- Development of policies and strategies with gender perspective that take into consideration the role, responsibilities and rights of men, women, according to age and ethnicity.
- Immediate implementation of support programmes and economic subsidies, in the countries of the region, addressing the poorest sectors of the population, including school lunch programmes, delivery of food packages, particularly for women who are household heads, employment programmes.

- Implementation of the process of land reform and actions to overcome legal and economic obstacles so that women can have access to resources and benefits such as access to land, water, credit and all the inputs for basic production.
- Development of flexible micro-financing programmes that respond to debts contracted by indigenous and rural women.
- Development and support of programmes and actions based on traditional knowledge, particularly in what refers to conservation and exchange of native seeds.
- Developed countries must reach their commitment to allocate 0.7% of their GDP in Official Development Aid (ODA) and make explicit work plans to achieve this commitment; and moreover they should commit to reach 10% of ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment by 2010 and 20% by 2015, setting out in the action plan of donors, recipient countries and the DAC strategies for reaching the target, monitoring performance and evaluating impact.³
- The international community must commit to advance in the gaps of MDG8 and its negative effects in poverty, inequality, and the current financial, food, energetic and climate change crisis that particularly affect women.

We call for the following actions in the medium term:

- Promote studies and analysis to visualize the impact of food crisis and the strategies for sustainable livelihoods for rural, urban poor and indigenous women.
- Support investment in family agriculture and improve markets, promoting the fair trade approach to enable the marketization of women smallholders' products.
- Eliminate export barriers with the objective of encouraging small farmers to increase their cropping areas.
- Review the criteria for aid allocation and debt relief, including the inequality dimension and considering the particularities of middle income countries, where women confront the multiplier effect of inequalities and discrimination.

Signatures

- Action Aid
- Feminist Task Force, GCAP
- AWID
- Gender and Education Office (GEO) from ICAE
- Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Peru
- World YWCA

³ Expert Group on Financing for Gender Equality - the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Oslo, September 2007.

- Red Encuentro de Entidades No Gubernamentales para el Desarrollo (Argentina)
 - GCAP Argentina: Campaña Nacional "Ningún Hogar Pobre en Argentina".
 - Le Monde selon les Femmes, Belgium
 - Red de Educación Popular Entre Mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe – REPEM
 - Development Alternatives with Women for a new Era (DAWN)
 - National Alliance of Women (NAWO), India
 - Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS), India
 - Women's Resource and Advocacy Centre, India
 - National Alliance of Women (NAWO), India
 - Mahila Dakshata Samiti (MDS), Nigeria
 - Women's Resource and Advocacy Centre, Nigeria
 - The International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation' NY, USA
 - ENLACE-Education and Networking for Latina Cooperation and Empowerment, USA
 - Center for Women's Global Leadership, USA
 - International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN)
 - Centro de Formación y Promoción Humana Santa Ángela, Peru
 - IGTN Capitulo America Latina
 - Campaña Comercio con Justicia MIS DERECHOS NO SE NEGOCIAN-Colombia
 - INSTITUTO INTERNACIONAL PARA COOPERACION ENTRE PUEBLOS--EL SALVADOR
 - SERVICIOS ECUMENICOS PARA RECONCILIACION Y RECONSTRUCCION--EL SALVADOR
 - UNIVERSIDAD LIBRE PARA LA PAZ--EL SALVADOR
 - INSTITUTO DE COMUNICAÇÃO SOLIDARIA Toledo, Brasil.
 - CACES - Centro de Atividades Culturais, Econômicas e Sociais.
 - Centro de Investigación Multidisciplinaria para el Desarrollo - CIMDE, Paraguay
 - IWRAW-AP
 - Childolescent and Family Survival Oragnization (CAFSO)
 - CAFSO- Women's Rights Action Group (CAFSO-WRAG)
-
- Nang Lao Liang Won , Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) Burma
 - Carmen Colazo, Coordinadora Area Genero INECIP Regional Centro, Córdoba, Argentina, Estudios de Género de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Córdoba.
 - Wahu Kaara, KENYA DEBT RELIEF NETWORK (KENDREN)
 - Marta Benavides-- SIGLO XXIII, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION AMONGST PEOPLES -- EL SALVADOR
 - Moema L. Viezzler, consultora de educación socioambiental, Toledo, Brasil
 - Lina Grondin, Instituto de Comunicação solidaria

- Ximena Francisca Andrade Jorquera
- Nelly Stromquist, College of Education, University of Maryland
- Graciela C. Riquelme, Natalia Herger, Programa de Educación, Economía y Trabajo del Instituto de Investigaciones en Ciencias de la Educación (IICE) de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), República Argentina.
- Malú Valenzuela y Gómez Gallardo
- Patricia Stella Jaramillo Semillero de Investigacion en Sociologia Rural Universidad Nacional de Colombia
- Anita Fisicaro, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- Shirley Walters, Division for Lifelong Learning, UWC, South Africa
- Grupo Beijing de la Republica Moldova, Silvia Saca, presidenta del Grupo Beijing
- INTERFEM-STOCK, Hilda González, Ordförande
- Sara Longwe, FEMNET, Lusaka