

## Notes of 'Facing Environmental, Food and Economic Crises - Women's Experiences and Initiatives'

People's Summit, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012



### Participants:

1. Tica Moreno, World March of Women Brazil
2. Tess Vistro, AWPLD
3. Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch, UK
4. Marjorie Pamintuan, IBON Foundation, Philippines
5. Isis Alvarez, Global Forest Coalition-Colombia & Women's Major Group,
6. Genevieve Azam, Attac, France
7. Emilie Mauroy, Attac, France
8. Lucille, Attac, Morocco
9. Annie Poudre, No Vox Network International, France
10. Moissa Kone, No Vox, Mali
11. Elisabeth Mpofu, La Via Campesina, Zimbabwe
12. Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition & Women's Major Group
13. Zhou Huiyan, NW Agricultural University from China and Centre for Rural Women
14. Jean (translator)
15. Francois Kieffe, Collective National Terre et Developpement, France,
16. Anchalee Phomklieng Chiang, Indigenous women's network of Thailand.
17. Miriam Nobre, World March of Women Brazil, Coordinator of int. secretariat
18. Naung Latt, Farmer, Birma/Thailand
19. Osprey Orielle Iasa, USA
20. Selma Gomes, casa de cultura comendador Noca de Portelo, Brazil
21. Caglar Nwdane, No Vox

## Presentations:

### 1. Tess Vistro, Philippines, National Farmer's Organization and AWPLD.

Supporting struggle of farmers in sugar state owned by the family of the president of the Philippines, more than 15 years of struggle! 1000 workers, approximately 500 are women struggling to gain land rights that were taken from them from the above-mentioned family. Recently, a ruling was issued after legal battles; farmers finally got good outcomes from the Supreme Court and the family of the president should distribute the land and farms hence, farmers would be legal owners of their historical land. Now they support distribution of lands, there is optimism.

One particular area of concern is women as they are part of the struggle but when land is distributed, women are relegated to the background so we try to make sure they are also taken into account. Many lives have been lost during this struggle; in 2006 a massacre occurred after farmers protested. Security forces of the President's family opened fire and killed 7 agricultural workers. They continue their struggle. In 2011, there was a ruling in favor and now listing and distribution will go on. However, they still wanted farmers to pay around US\$25,000 but the Supreme Court ruled for US\$1,000 for 1ha of land. At this point, it is an interesting stage on this struggle as the ruling just came out.

Due to lots of pesticides, now land is turning to ecologically friendly farming. We want to make sure that women will continue to be in the forefront and benefit from the fruits of their struggle.

Based on experiences we participate in Rio+20, based on the areas of concern. Last year there were 4 advocacy issues:

- Access to resources, land water energy
- Decent work
- Voice and political participation
- Peace

In the Rio+20 negotiation document there is no reference to peace, it was not taken into account after the WMG sent it; access to resources apparently will be present in the Food and Agriculture section, the political role of rural women in sustainable development. Women's wage may be present in the jobs section, and women's voice maybe in the gender equality section but nothing is clear and peace is absent. If the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an outcome there will be a process that will replace MDGs which end in 2015. So advocacy will continue in the SDGs. We want to look at military budgets of governments and advocate on base of it, for voice and political participation continue to advocate in governments and the UN, but no measurable goal that we will advocate, we will see that post-Rio.

Simone provides a description on the Women's Major Group: *"In agenda 21 it was agreed that there going to be Major Groups one of them, women. Different*

*organizations have been forming a core group, organizing advocacy work especially in the inside process. Bringing rights and needs to governments, by organizing side events as well and giving speeches inside. But the presence is not just inside but also outside”.*



## 2. Simone Lovera, Paraguay, Global Forest Coalition – Soy Plantation Expansion in Paraguay.

Escalating soy monoculture plantations in Paraguay, 28% of Atlantic forest destroyed in the last 20 years to soy. The rapid expansion is due to high demand in Europe to use soy as fodder for livestock and lately, agrofuels exacerbate the problem; there has been increasing opposition against genetically modified organisms. Peasant women have seen their food crops surrounded by fields of soy monocultures thus women and their families get ill due to the intensive use of pesticides and/or suffer violent evictions; the case of Silvino Talavera, a young child living near the soy fields who died due to fumigations with agrochemicals. The Mbya Guarani women are now environmental refugees and have migrated to the streets of Asuncion where they live in the streets or can even end up involved in prostitution, plus all the impacts it triggers. Therefore, the model for a certification of ‘Responsible Soy’ is misleading as the production of soy creates significant environmental and social impacts, especially on women and children.

## 3. Tica, Brazil, World March of Women (WMW)

How we face the crisis: this is a summit convened by many people and use this space to be able to propose to the broader public that the solutions to the crises we confront, come from the people. Thus, it is an open space, everyone can be here but also has a clear political view. It started more than a year ago and the WMW know that there’s a challenge on keeping facing together the crises to come and have clear how to confront them.

The march wants to make clear that the economic and food crises are all part of a big crises caused by capitalism, plus it is a crisis of care. The model of production and consumption is in crisis and we women are very much exploited as our form of work is not recognized, and that doesn't contribute to women.

Our view of the crisis is holistic, with different expressions. Therefore, when we see what are the topics being discussed it is clear that the true solution is not one based on markets or the commodification of life. And that is how we want to identify in terms of green economy: what is being proposed and analyze why it is a false solution to the environmental crisis and on gender equality. We do not trust this attempt to put women as the great nature defenders while what is happening in territories is that women's role in sustainability of life goes completely unrecognized and exploited in the name of the planet. So, this is not just a debate on the impacts we suffer but also how to use it, analyze it and understand it.

We resist all forms of commodification of life and we present a radical view on the commodification of our bodies; part of the process of commodifying territories and all aspects of our lives. Overall, our solutions are not market-based, and all who's gathered in the People's Summit share the same perspective. We are strongly against the Green Economy as it is a way to impose market-based mechanisms on us. So this is not just a side event to Rio+20, is a process of articulation that started long ago and will not stop after Rio+20.

Our methodology is building convergence among the different actors involved, they are in the form of analysis and also in building agendas for after Rio. We are close to 800 to make those convergences from a gender point of view. There are 5 plenaries on convergences such as the struggle for rights, defending the commons, food sovereignty, extractive industries and jobs, and other economy. If we don't change the construction in the economic model we wont find real solutions to the crises.

Plus, take it too to the street, with all women we are building a demonstration on the 18<sup>th</sup> at 10am at the MAM, to defend of our bodies, our territories. We are also building with the results of the plenaries, a people's summit that will unite close to 10,000 people and will produce a very strong position against the commodification of life, against green economy and false solutions. On the 20<sup>th</sup> we will mobilize near the official Rio venue. And this is how we build dialogue and present our position to inside negotiations.



#### 4. Marjoline, Philippines, IBON

Organizations working against the exploitation of women but works with many other themes, research, advocacy, education but all in order for the marginalized people to be able to fight oppression.

Before IBON, she organized grassroots rural peoples against climate change... one of the communities visited were located in the south islands; the previous government increased the economic burden when a mining corporation destroyed the island, the company is based in Australia. She was at the fore-front with other women, every time a crisis hits a community women are the worst hit. There are women fighting big corporations, they are very active. Men can lose their home or go to jail but it is always women who continue to fight. Eventually, the organization finally won and the company had to leave the island and women were major players in such decision. IBON carried their stories to negotiations, to campaigns, rights for sustainability. Publications available.

Intervention by woman from Burma: *"fighting for their rights, lots of people suffering, most affected women and children; no access to food no water; government inviting investors to take over their land; people have lost livestock and land"*.



#### 5. Almuth Ernsting – Biofuelwatch, UK

Campaigning in the UK in 2006 when first got aware of the EU policy on biofuels, at the time of the emergence on global trade of agrofuels. Now, working trying to stop policies driving biofuel expansion worldwide.

A land grab study published last year found that it affected 2000 women on over 75,000 ha of concern, in Africa 66% of land grabbing; land grabs from biofuels are from many companies many European, at this stage there are 25million ha worldwide. In North America at least 6million ha of land should be potentially converted to biofuels despite the impacts from increased use of fresh water and agrochemicals. Massive spread of biofuels leads to tree plantations; 6 millions tons of wood that want to be burned for Biomass in bio-stations in the UK; Suzano (Rio+20 sponsor) started planting massively in Maranhao, Brazil to supply Europe's demands. Now trying to stop the demands with other local groups and groups in the US and elsewhere. Their biomass policies are directly affecting communities worldwide thus trying to compile evidence in order to present it at a national level and to policy-makers to try to stop those drivers.

Bioenergy affects more women, they are often the first to leave territories for tree monocultures provide very little jobs, less children in schools until they have to shut down thus they need to move, urban migration triggered.

6. Genevieve, France, ATTAC

Network of grassroots groups, main axes of struggle with women groups working on agriculture, and housing.

Strategy of action, is for example last time that 15 farmers were in jail because a company came and took their land, so they went in front of the embassy and did the same when people was removed from their houses in Brazil. We all work in 1 specific struggle.

This movement is very young women very mistreated, working many hours; a group in Mali decided to mobilize and we worked with them those who work on households fighting for their rights as they lack any and establish a legal frame to establish access to rights. In November there was a meeting in Bamako with participants from 5 different countries; in Brazil also work together to fight against international slavery and for their rights; very important to organize the base of the movement.

We will continue to fight because more companies are coming to try to get more resources or speculate; very important to have alliances before and after the event and try to build convergence otherwise there is no point to meet here.

Intervention by man from Mali: *"Millions of women with no access to core resources, you are here exchanging but we have to aim for results, not just keep it here! Share, communicate within families themselves ..."*

7. Isis Alvarez, Colombia, GFC

According to UNICEF, women constitute 70% of the world's poor; women usually have lower incomes and much less land ownership, in addition our work in household or caretaking is often unrecognized and even sometimes unpaid. Thus, as women do not have capital assets we have disadvantages in market economies.

Instead of adapting women to flawed economic models and policies we should adapt economic policies to ensure they respond the rights and needs of women

In 1987 the Brundtland commission made the link between environment and development objectives; in the following years, there was a growing recognition that economic institutions and trends like the Bretton Woods Institutions and corporate-driven globalization were the main drivers of forest loss and other forms of environmental destruction. Thus, there were hopes that economic policies would be adapted to the needs of conservation. But instead, the opposite happened; economists started dominating biodiversity policy and other environmental policies, and now we see that these policies are increasingly being shaped by the rules of mainstream neo-liberal economics. The "green economy" is yet another step in this process - it is an attempt to include forests and other ecosystems into market-based processes through the expansion of the so-called "bio-economy" - expanded markets in ecosystem based goods and "services".

The economic rationale of promoting markets in environmental services is to have market based mechanisms such as Carbon Trade (e.g. REDD), Certification, Trade in Genetic resources, Ecotourism – which operate under the premise of being equitable but, what if they are not? The current approach to conservation seems to be to turn biodiversity and the environment into marketable goods (commodification), but markets necessarily need privatization. And what are the consequences for women if a resource that used to be freely accessible, like wood or water, is now privatized?

Since rural and Indigenous women are highly dependant on free access to natural resources for their livelihoods, impacts from market based mechanisms are likely to affect them the most. According to Naidoo & Ricketts, *“the socioeconomic value of biodiversity of those groups in society that depend on it for their livelihoods, as many Indigenous women do, is much higher than the socioeconomic value of biodiversity for an energy company seeking to offset its carbon emissions, for instance”*.

Since the wealthy are able to pay for biodiversity, turning biodiversity into an economic commodity will allow them to benefit more from this common. But the restriction on access to some areas will create harmful effects on indigenous and local communities depending on them; lets not forget that women usually provide their families with key resources such as fuel wood, medicinal plants, fodder, edible fruits and nuts, and collect seeds. In short, biodiversity means everything to them as they are far more dependent on non-monetary benefits of biodiversity. Women and biodiversity have lived in symbiosis for centuries, they have been their caretakers and thus, have gained invaluable knowledge, but unfortunately this goes often unrecognized.

When talking about PES, formally recognized land tenure rights play an important role and usually indigenous and rural women lack any. When signing deals, it is men who often do it; women often lack the skills, as it is women who are more often illiterate, and even sometimes lack the language skills to be able to enter into this kind of agreements. Plus, such decisions may have an impact on community governance.

REDD – ‘positive incentives’: pays to reduce deforestation but what about those who have no deforestation to reduce? UNFCCC’s intention to do so. Not necessarily carbon markets, but many do wish to fund REDD through carbon markets (e.g. WB). But REDD has a very uncertain future, over 40 countries have received or have been promised funding to make themselves "ready" for REDD, but it is not clear what they are supposed to be ready for as there is complete uncertainty about medium-term and long-term funding for REDD. It is highly unlikely REDD will be included in mandatory carbon markets before 2020, and even after 2020 there is no certainty at all. The voluntary forest carbon offset market is in pretty bad shape as well as a lot of projects were speculative, and there are rapidly increasing indications of massive fraud and deceit with numerous false contracts being offered to Indigenous Peoples.

Moreover, it would be hard for women to participate from REDD as they often have small-scale initiatives and REDD’s scope is large scale (as seen with huge investment funds). Plus, problems of REDD financing examples Green Belt Movement / Uganda, Mount Elgon.

But PES is not the only way: GFC monitoring project looked at the implementation of the expanded program of work in biodiversity in 22 countries showed that the most successful conservation experiences can be found on recognized indigenous lands and territories.

- Recognition of ICCAs could play a major role on reaching gender equity.
- Rewarding women for their biodiversity stewardship – especially in reference to saving seeds and nurturing trees – through targeted and effective public governance measures.
- Ensure the effective enforcement of CEDAW, the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Implement UNDRIPS, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Retain free access to biodiversity and the environment and keep environmental services and forests out of carbon and other markets.

Cheaper alternatives that do not increase value of forests, inc:

- address drivers such as consumption, fuel poverty
- moratoria / bans on deforestation
- community-led reforestation programmes
- change UN definition of forests