

N° 12

WRI WOMEN



*Join us at the
WRI WOMEN
CONFERENCE*

*Korea comfort girls
Women in Nepal*

MORE ...

the
newsletter
of the
women's
working
group of
War Resisters
International



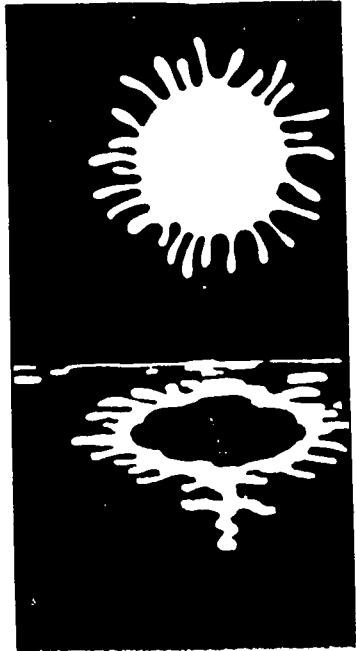
WAR RESISTERS INTERNATIONAL
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Newsletter
of the Women's Working Group
of War Resisters' International

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Dear WRI Women,

All of us have been watching the developments in the struggle for democracy in Thailand and concerned for our friends there. We have been assured by our co-organizers in Thailand that the conference will still proceed. When making your travel plans, please be aware that progressive groups within Thailand such as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists have called for a boycott of Thai International Airways. One of the most powerful military generals in the country, Supreme Commander Kaset Rajananil, is also Director of Thai International Airways. Progressive groups are working to make the coalition of five political parties responsible for the nomination of General Suchinda as Prime Minister accountable for their actions.

So our plans for the conference are continuing--and becoming more exciting as the list of speakers and participants grows. Some groups who have been invited to send a representative include S.O.S. Femmes, the first shelter for battered women in Mauritius; the Musasa project, in Harare, Zimbabwe, which provides counseling and public education on violence against women; and the Maori Women's Center in Aotearoa/New Zealand, which uses traditional healing methods to help survivors of abuse.

In order to help these women attend, and the many others who had asked for financial assistance, please continue your fundraising efforts! If you or your

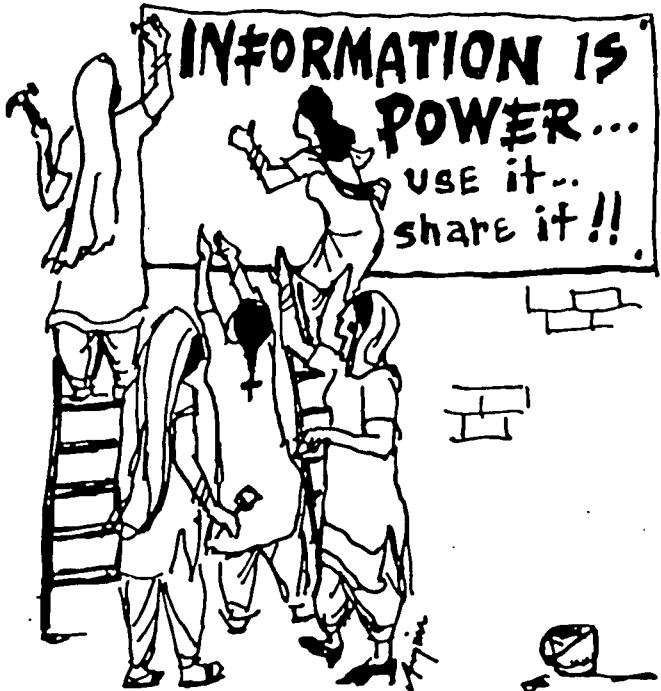
section is interested in sponsoring a participant, please contact the London office.

In the following pages you will find a partial agenda for the conference, some thoughts on past WRI women's conferences and some more background on the situation for women in Nepal. You will also find an article on Korean 'comfort girls', an insidious example of how militarism and violence against women intersect.

You will also find more information on the beautiful array of T-shirts, pins, holiday greeting cards and note cards which are being sold in support of the conference. A beautiful gold and black poster with a scene from one of Thailand's historic temples will also be available soon--contact the London office for details.

See you in Bangkok!

Shelley Anderson



GIFTS AVAILABLE IN SUPPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

It's never too early...a beautiful variety of Christmas cards are available from the London office. Also cards with an original floral design, for every day letters and notes. Donated by the artist, proceeds from the cards go to the Conference. Inquiries from bookshops and stationary shops welcomed.

Très chic! From France, stylish black/gold/red pins with the logo "4th WRI Women's Conference 1992". Available for 20 FF per pin (plus postage), or 15 FF per pin for 10 or more.

Also from France, hand crafted notecards with a color photograph from Kanaky/New Caledonia, 10 FF each, plus postage. Proceeds from both the pins and notecards go towards sending a Kanaky woman to the Conference.

Be multi-lingual! From the Netherlands, 100% cotton T-shirts (XL) with the Conference's logo "Women Overcoming Violence" in Thai, Spanish, French and English.

Gorgeous T-shirts with the WRI women's symbol "Women Overcoming Violence" in English are also available in Canada.

For prices, to send your ideas and help and for more information on the gorgeous new poster, please contact the London office.

KOREAN WOMEN DRAFTED FOR SEXUAL SERVICE BY JAPAN

Korea, annexed as a colony in 1910, suffered under oppressive Japanese rule until the end of World War II. During that time there were many acts of repression against the Korean people, no single example of which was more severe or massive than the forcible drafting of Korean women for sexual service to Japanese troops located throughout the Asia-Pacific area. The euphemistic term by which these women were known is translated into English as 'comfort women' (or girls).

It is only through recent efforts by Korean women, joined by women in Japan, that world attention has been focused on this gross violation human rights violation, suffered by Korean women (and women of some other Asian countries) from 1937 to 1945. The Korean Council for Women Drafted For Sexual Service By Japan (KCWDSSJ) was created and is continuing to uncover facts from previously hidden or unknown documents and through eyewitness statements. This has created a climate where elderly women survivors are gradually coming forward to tell their experiences, both privately and in the media. Cases have already been taken to the Japanese courts.

Shamed by what they have undergone, these women, many of whom bear almost unimaginable physical and psychological scars, are now starting to recount stories which testify to a history of rape and degradation. Between 100,000 to 200,000 Korean women were unwillingly taken from their families and country and forced to perform sexual services for Japanese soldiers. The Prime Minister of Japan, on a recent visit to Korea, publicly acknowledged what his government had until recently denied, and presented an apology, which was considered unsatisfactory by many.

Facts and figures are as yet difficult to obtain because of the years of invisibility and shame surrounding the tragedy. At the time many Koreans themselves were unaware of what was happening. Beginning with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937-38, Korean village girls, from 17 to 20 years of age and of poor families, were taken by the Japanese, and

told that they would be given jobs in military restaurants or as maids. More indiscriminate kidnapping occurred later: Korean women, from 14 to 30 years of age (including marriage women if they had no baby) were sent throughout the Pacific, wherever the Japanese Army was located.

According to recent eyewitness testimonies (including those by Japanese prostitutes, former soldiers and former Army doctors), one 'comfort woman' was made to serve an average of 30-40 soldiers per day, who would wait in line outside her small room. In some regions the women were assigned Japanese first names, and later elsewhere they were identified only by a number. In the latter part of World War II, some Korean women were known to have serviced as many as 65 men daily. An Okinawan woman testified that she knew a Korean woman who was forced to have sexual relations with 100 Japanese soldiers in one day.

This large-scale sexual exploitation (considered by many as the rape of an entire nation) caused extreme suffering, including beatings and torture, widespread illnesses, abortions, death and massive abandonment of the worn-out women when the Japanese retreated. The emotional anguish at the lost of chastity, which in Korean society is considered almost more important than life, was a high price to pay for being women living in a country ruled by another country.



Illustration AZ/AF

According to the (KCWDSSJ) it is difficult to fully assess the scope of this violation against women and nearly impossible to obtain full statistics. However, an estimate of the number of Japanese troops and the average number which were served daily, according to witnesses, has enabled researchers to arrive at an approximate figure. Unfortunately, many military documents were destroyed by Japan, but some of the few that remain have come to light in the USA. It is estimated that in the months ahead more documentation and testimonies will corroborate the information verified thus far. From January 14 to 16 in Tokyo, a hotline installed to receive calls from Japanese people regarding the 'comfort girl' issue produced new detailed information which substantiated many claims. One example is the recent report that at least one former 'comfort woman' is living in a leper colony on Nagashima island.

Appealing to world organizations concerned for the maintenance of human rights, the following demands are made on behalf of all Korean women:

1. That the Government of Japan and the Emperor recognize and take full responsibility for their violation of internationally-recognized standards of human rights in this issue, and make a full, strong and complete public apology to the individual victims, to Korea and to the women of other Asian nations likewise drafted into sexual service. Japan should make not only chartable gifts of money to the few women who have come forth, but in light of the many who have since died, should make country -by-country reparations as an acknowledgement of its crime against Korean women.
2. The Government of Japan actively cooperate with the Korean Government and concerned international groups to pursue further studies in order to obtain as full information as possible on all aspects of the issue, and that the results be made public to the world community, with the goal of preventing any such future tragedy.
3. That the Japanese Government encourage and assist its citizens who want to testify about this issue to do so without threat of reprisal.



4. That the Japanese Government pay full and adequate compensation to all 'comfort women' survivors.

5. That an appropriate monument be erected in Japan by the Japanese Government to honour and memorialize all 'comfort women' and to educate future generations about respect for the human rights of all people, including women and citizens of other countries.

6. That the Japanese Government revise school textbooks to include reference to this issue as part of the colonial oppression against the Korean people.

7. That the United Nations Commission on Human Rights thoroughly investigate this deliberate sexual subjugation of women toward the end of censuring Japan internationally both for its perpetration of a massive human rights violation and for its ongoing cover-up of all relevant facts.

by Heishoo Shin, Woman's Hotline, #502-7, Chang Chun-dong, Sedaemun-gu, Seoul 120-180, Korea. Tel. 335 6955.

WOMEN IN NEPAL

Women constitute half of Nepal's total population of 10.7 million but are backwards in comparison to men in every way. In education, women are only 12% of the 33% of people who can read in Nepal. Various data show that in agricultural and household works, it is women that occupy 60 to 80% share, but they do not have any hold in the property. The legal right on the ancestral property has not yet been secured. Similarly, women lag behind compared to men in employment opportunities.

The women who hold up half of the sky above men are deprived of their genuine aspirations. But this is not the end of their exploitation, as day in and day out they are made the victims of rape and adultery. Every year thousands of Nepali daughters get sold to brothels in different parts of India. IN this way women, instead of being treated as equals with their male counterparts, are treated as animals or commodities that can be sold and purchased in the market. The tradition of Vadi* and Deuki* clearly exhibit the status of women in society.

The solution of all these problems is not possible only with the governmental efforts. With the aim of studying, researching and enhancing the status of women, the Women Development Society (WODES), a non-partisan and independent organization has been formed.

Our objectives are: to study and document the position and problems of women in Nepal; to promote consciousness of Nepalese women and to raise voices against the violation of human rights of women in accordance with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to provide literacy to women, impart skill oriented training and to give other useful advice.

We also run classes to impart legal knowledge to women and to organize different types of symposiums and seminars; to work in coordination with the concerned institutions to provide legal remedy to women who are victims of injustice; to try to make an arrangement to provide education and treatment of women in areas of malnutrition, inadequate food, anaemia, pregnancy, childbirth and family planning; to train women on the

immunisation of children, sanitation and care of children; to investigate cases of trafficking in women, to try to bring these women back into the country, give them respectable status and to engage them in income generating projects; to study the superstitious practices of Jhuma, Deuki, Badi and Jari and to initiate appropriate actions against them; to try to free women from the superstition of Dhami, Jhakri and other social practices; to make women conscious and aware about the destruction of the forest, environmental balance; to hold various meetings, symposiums and seminars and to publish posters, brochures, etc. for the solution of these problems.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

WODES is an organization which can thrive only with the help of its friends and well wishers. You can help WODES by providing relevant information on women's rights; sharing experiences gained in the field of women's rights; exchanging publications and other relevant materials; participating in WODES programs; and by providing financial and material assistance.

WODES, P.O. Box 5840, Kalimati, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel. 270-047.

* These are all traditional customs--supported by religious belief--that hamper the emancipation of Nepali women: Deuki involves offering young girls to goddesses and forces them into being temple servants for their whole lives; Vadi involves the exploitation of women dancers by their male partners; Jari involves the compensation (with large sums of money) of the first husband by the new husband; Jhuma is a custom in some Mustang families whereby the second daughter is not allowed to marry.

CHILDHOOD

I was nine that year
One day with tears in her eyes
My mother told me "Tomorrow
you have to go to another house"
I asked mother why
"Because father and mother cannot feed all of you"

The next day a middle-aged woman came
My mother told me to go with her
I tried to run away, the woman
caught me by my wrist and pulled me away

I turned to look at mother
Mother had gone inside the house
The doors were shut

After a very long walk
The woman took me to a house
A boy came out of the house
"This is your husband"
Inside the house there were two other boys
"They are your brothers-in-law"
Every day I fetched water
Collected firewood, helped to cook
Served the boys food

Whenever there's something wrong
My mother-in-law cursed me
Sometimes I was beaten with the firewood

The boys were not much better
Slapping and scolding were common
Whenever I was a bit slow

At the age of 13
My mother-in-law told me
"Now you're old enough to be a wife
You're to sleep with my eldest son!"

by Sunjo (Nepal)



* Child marriage still takes place in many parts of South Asia.

From Tackling New Challenges: Women in Action, Asian and Pacific Experiences. Asian Cultural Forum on Development, PO Box 26, Bungthonglang, Bangkok 10242, Thailand.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

The 4th War Resisters' International (WRI) Women's Conference is planned for November 25 to December 1, 1992 near Bangkok, Thailand. The conference will be organised by WRI and five Thai women's groups. Participation is being limited to 150 community-based women activists who have shown a commitment to nonviolent social change, with a strong emphasis on promoting exchanges between women from the Southern hemisphere. The Conference's languages will be Thai, Spanish, French, English and at least one other Asian language.

The title of the conference is "Women Overcoming Violence: Redefining Development and Changing Society Through Nonviolence," which reflects the three main issues the conference will deal with: militarism, poverty and nonviolent solutions, as experienced by women. The conference will consist of a plenary session around the main theme every day, and many related workshops. One day will be spent visiting women's groups (Friends of Women, Foundation for Women) in near-by Bangkok, in addition to a women's cooperative. That night the conference will visit EMPOWER, a prostitutes' self-help collective in Patpong, Bangkok's red-light district.

The plenary for November 26 will deal with "Women Overcoming Violence". After a break, working groups will take up some of the issues presented in the plenary, and then the first round of workshops will begin. Workshop topics will include Sexual Exploitation of Women, Experiences with Court Cases and Supporting Women Prisoners, Violence Against Lesbians, Racism and Overcoming It, Women in Rich Countries Opposing the Ruling Ethos, Rape and Supporting Rape Survivors. The afternoon series of workshops will include assertiveness training, communication skills, techniques for nonviolent education, and conflict resolution.

The next day's theme will be on "Women and Militarisation". The format is much the same--the day can begin with optional yoga or swimming, then breakfast, then a plenary and working groups. The

morning round of workshops will include Militarisation and Prostitution, Women Struggling Against Violence in Their Own Communities, Women in the Army and Police. The afternoon workshops will deal with Women Opposing Totalitarianism, Women and Conscientious Objection, Women's Roles in Conflicts Between Communities, Women's Place in People's Movements and the Gulf War.

The following day's theme is "Women Defining Our Own Development". The topics for the morning workshops will include Ways to Gain Economic Independence, Links Between Consumerism and Poverty, Women and Ecology, Links Between Militarisation and Development and The 2nd World: Between the 1st and 3rd Worlds. Afternoon workshops will debate redefining development. A video show will be offered this night.

An evaluation will be conducted halfway through the conference, and the results offered on November 30. The Agenda Committee will also meet on this day to discuss proposals for follow up, which will be discussed in working groups. A cultural evening will be held.

December 1 will see the last plenary session and evaluation, plus a press conference. If people are interested in exposure tours after the Conference, such as a trip to investigate sex tourism in Chiang Mai or the situation of the hill tribes in Northern Thailand, please request more information as soon as possible.



THOUGHTS FROM DIFFERENT CONFERENCES

Ulla Eberhard of Germany recently sent a questionnaire to previous participants of WRI Women's Conferences (France, 1976; Scotland, 1980; Ireland, 1987) in order to gain a historical view of the conferences. The results of some of the interviews were published in the German magazine on nonviolence "Graswurzelrevolution". Here are some excerpts:

"The idea for the second conference was born at the WRI Triennial in Sonderborg in 1979. We had a Commission on Women and Militarism that met every day, and as we shared our stories about the difficulties facing women in the peace movement, the need for a conference to break women's isolation seemed very important... There were a lot of questions about whether this was really the kind of work WRI should be doing and why the conference had to be women-only...

"I was the US contact and I think about 8-10 women from the States attended. It was more of a casual gathering than a structured conference. Some US and German women talked the first night about how unstructured it was and how it might be helpful to put together an agenda to propose to the whole group. So they worked into the night... But when they made their presentation the next morning, the rest of the women were FURIOUS. They said, "How American, how German, and how male-like, for you to structure something and then bring it to the rest of us, rather than letting us all work together this morning on producing a common agenda." I heard from the US women that this was very consciousness-raising for them. It certainly caused them to be a bit more subdued in their style during the conference, but I think most of them still enjoyed it.

"However, this story had some repercussions for the Ireland conference that were not as satisfying. The US participants had all heard the agenda story many times. The Ireland conference was also relatively casual and some US women had problems with this, but felt it was unacceptable for them to talk about their discomforts

out loud or suggest agenda changes. Consequently, I think some of them stayed together in a small clique and never really became part of the gathering.

"I guess the lessons in all this is that when we face cultural differences in our groups, and we take steps to make sure that women from the South have a voice, we also need to make sure that the women from the Western and traditionally dominant cultures feel safe as well...

"In working on this (Thailand) conference, I have become more worried that the women's conferences have very little effect on WRI's politics. What has happened is that because these are women-only events, we are given the resources and left to work on them with other WRI women. But that means that the issues never touch the lives of the WRI men, nor the WRI in general. We are off on the side, meeting and planning. We are not stirring up change in the full organisation. We will always need women's conferences every few years, but I think we need to begin strategizing how we are going to integrate feminist thinking into the mixed organisation. This is a job we have barely begun..."



NEWS

IRISH PRISONERS STRIP SEARCHED

On 2 March women prisoners in Northern Ireland's Maghaberry jail were attacked by guards and stripped naked, searched and forcibly re-dressed. Bronwyn McGahan was held on the floor and while three riot-clad guards sat on her, a fourth ran his hands over her body. Karen Quinn suffered several facial injuries and was taken to hospital for treatment. The one woman in the jail who was not strip searched was recovering from major surgery. A campaign has been launched in Britain to stop strip searches: Women and Ireland Network, P.O. Box 104, Sheffield 1, Britain.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

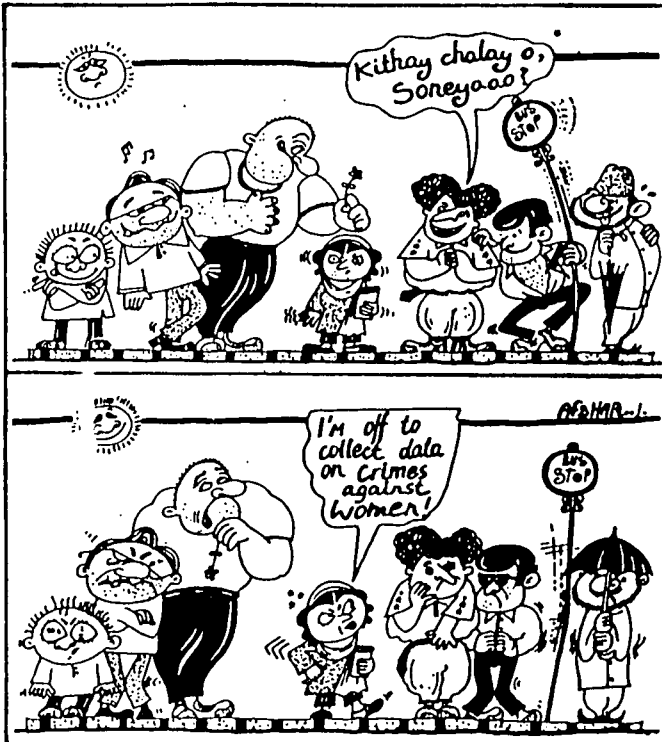
The London-Based Minority Rights Group (MRG) has published the 42-paged Female Genital Mutilation: Proposals for Change. The report, written by Efua Dorkenoo and Scilla Elworthy, includes first hand accounts of the practice and a series of recommendations aimed at governments, international agencies and aid donors. MRG is calling on international agencies to make genital mutilation of girls a major human rights and health issue in the 1990s. The organization is urging the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNDP to each allocate 0.5% of their total expenditure between 1992 and 2000 on programs to combat the practice.

Female genital mutilation can range from circumcision (cutting of the prepuce or hood of the clitoris) to infibulation (cutting of the clitoris, labia minora and part or all of the labia majora). After the latter operation, usually performed by older women with traditional instruments and without anaesthetics, the sides of the vulva are sewn together until scar tissue forms. Infibulated women need their vulva scars reopened in childbirth, which are then sewn back after giving birth. The operation can be fatal, and an

unknown number of girls die each year from shock, blood poisoning, tetanus or haemorrhaging. Female Genital Mutilation (£3.95/\$5.95), 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE, Britain. Tel. +44 71 9789498.

GULF RESISTER RELEASED EARLY

Dr. Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, a doctor with the US Army Reserves who refused to serve in the Gulf War, was released from a military prison April 6. She had served eight months of an originally 30-month sentence, which had been reduced to 15 months. She credited an international letter writing campaign, and being adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience, with her early release. The day after her release a petition was filed to revoke her medical license. The petition charges her with dishonorable conduct and committing a felony. The charges are based on her resistance to the war.





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