

WRI WOMEN

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



Women's Peace Movements in Africa

Newsletter of the International Women's Working Group
of the War Resisters International

Editor: Shelley Anderson / Lay-out: Françoise Pottier

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Looking Forward to Women's Regional Conferences

Many of the articles in this issue focus on Africa, where women's peace groups are multiplying. The WRI Women's Working Group (WRIWWG) had been discussing with South African groups the possibility of holding the 5th WRI Women's conference in their country. While several groups were supportive, the challenges of building a new non-racist and non-sexist society are absorbing their energies. This fact, combined with a major criticism of the 1992 WRI Women's conference—that it was too large and tried to deal with too many issues at the same time—means that there are no immediate plans to hold the conference in South Africa.



At last year's WRI women's meeting in the Basque country, there was enthusiasm instead for the idea of holding smaller, regional meetings around a specific theme—for example, building up civil society, or reconciliation after conflict—which would culminate in several years in an international conference. A questionnaire about this idea, asking for suggestions about themes, was mailed out to WRIWWG members. A short meeting of WRIWWG core members has taken place in London in early February to look at the responses to this questionnaire. We'll report back to you the results in the next issue. Meanwhile, we welcome your contributions and criticisms of the WRI Women's Newsletter. The deadline for the next issue will be May 30.

Shelley Anderson

African Women for Peace

African women peace activists were very visible during the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the parallel NGO Forum, which took place in Beijing, China, in September 1995. A highlight of the opening ceremony for the NGO Forum featured the presentation of a peace torch by the African Women for Conflict and Peace Project. "The woman is the first person to promote peace, because she is the first victim when there is no peace," said one African activist. Below is a brief sketch of some of the peace work African women are involved in.

Mali

A member of the Mouvement National des Femmes pour la Sauvegarde de la Paix et de l'Unité Nationale in Mali spoke about the problem of returning refugees after the Tuareg ethnic conflict in her country. "It is very important for reconciliation that both sides prepare mentally themselves for the return," she said. "We do workshops to educate the population. We also must help reorient the children who have been victims of this trauma; and look at the role of the media in peace. We offer training for women to prepare themselves for the roles they must play in reconciliation."

Contact: Mouvement National des Femmes pour la Sauvegarde de la Paix et de l'Unité Nationale, BP 1771, Bamako, Mali.

Rwanda

"In Rwanda women are now 65 percent of the population," said a member of La Campagne-Action pour la Paix Pro-femmes. "One big problem we face with widows and our 40,000 orphans is land rights. If their land has been taken over by someone else, the widow and orphan should have a right to get it back." She described how her group was reviving the custom of 'hagu' ('lawn'), a traditional public space where everyone gathered to resolve a conflict. "It is important to create a public space where the facts of the massacre can be known. Children as young as 12 were involved in the killings, as were women. We work to reintegrate them back into

society. We want to create a Village of Peace in each of our 11 provinces. In these villages people from both communities will live side by side. The villages will provide a role model for the country. We also lobby the government to create an Institute for Peace to educate and promote peace.”

Contact: Association des Volontaire de la Paix, BP 1787, Kigali, Rwanda.

Sudan

A founder of the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace (SWVP) described their work during one of several SWVP workshops at the NGO Forum. “We conduct five-day workshops on how to approach the war leaders, and how to address the pain we are experiencing. Muslims sisters from North Sudan also organized a meeting—two of them are in prison because of this. But our Muslim sisters still work with us for peace, only underground.”

“I am only half a human being as a woman, so I cannot talk directly to commanders,” she continued. “On the border of Kenya and Sudan we invited the chiefs of three provinces to meet with women leaders, to listen to widows talk about their dreams of peace. The chiefs were very impressed, but said they themselves could not speak for peace because the rebels would kill them. Still, in south Sudan we have field coordinators to organize the women. We make strategies to bring ordinary Muslim and Christian women together, because we face the same problems of displacement, poverty and lack of education. In the South, we have met with warring rebel leaders, introducing ourselves as ‘your mothers, wives and daughters’. We tell them the war has destroyed us enough. Many leaders are also tired of the war and ask us how to stop it. They help us travel inside the country.”

One SWVP workshop took place in July, when nine SWVP representatives travelled to Narus, in south Sudan, to organize a women’s peace group there. They encouraged the women to speak out against the killing and rapes. And in Lokichogio, Kenya, recently, SWVP organized the workshop “Grassroots Promotion of Dialogue, Peace and Unity”, held with church, community and refugee leaders from south Sudan. It was the first time representatives from hostile ethnic groups came together. The groups have been pitted against each other by rebel “war lords who draw their support from their respective ethnic groups. As a result rural people have participated in looting and killing each other. Any peace process that does not take this into account is bound to be ineffective.”

The Lokichogio Action Plan for peace was drawn up at the workshop. *Copies (and the quarterly English-language SWVP newsletter "New Voice") are available from Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace (SWVP), c/o People for Peace in Africa, Waumini House, Westlands, Box 14877, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel. 254 2 568547; fax 254 2 441372.*

Burundi

Since autumn 1993, an estimated 100,000 people have been killed in tribal violence between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi. Among those killed are Quakers, who number about 7,500 people, mostly Hutu, in Burundi. Quakers in Burundi are engaged in important peace work, despite the continuing atmosphere of fear and violence. They have built a peace center in Gitega and brought together Hutus and Tutsis to rebuild houses destroyed by the war. They have also organized relief supplies of food and housing materials, and established a peace committee in Kibimba that brings together Hutu and Tutsi leaders to prevent further violence. Their peace theatre, where actors reenact bloody incidences from the war, has educated many audiences about the need to actively work for peace. Their peace work has been hampered by the destruction of buildings and looting of equipment.

A Quaker hospital in Kibimba was saved from destruction, and its patients from death, because one nurse refused to flee. After all staff and patients able to walk had left, she remained and was able to persuade soldiers not to destroy the building. The nurse, from a neighboring African country, later decided to return home. She was stopped by soldiers at a road block and never seen again. Today, though there is no doctor, the hospital provides some medical care for villagers.

Contact: Quaker Peace & Service, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ, UK. Fax +44 171 388 1977.

South Africa

The Quaker Peace Centre Cape Town offers Peace Education training in schools for teachers and student. The Peace Centre is lobbying the government to include peace education curricula in all schools, and continues to run camps for young people from all of South Africa's communities.

The Peace Centre, with a staff of 29 people, has trained 34 Xhosa-speaking men and women who live on the Cape Flats as community mediators as part of its Reconciliation and Reconstruction team. The community mediators intervene in conflicts and help negotiate for improvements in housing, electricity and the needs of squatter camps, roads, transport, etc..

The Peace Centre's Economic Program offers advice to small businesses in the Karoo and Cape Flats area, while the Community Development Team has given advice and assistance on vegetable growing in 800 back yards and 80 plots in a community garden. The Team has organized sewing classes for both beginners and advanced students, and joined other like-minded people in planting hundreds of peace trees in South Africa's first Peace Park, in Khayelitsha.

Contact: Quaker Peace Centre, 3 Rye Road, Mowbray 7700, Cape Town, South Africa. Tel. +27 (0)21 6857800; fax +27 (0)21 6868167.



War and Peace: For Men Only?

by Shelley Anderson

“Before the war, a group of women decided to go to the border with flowers for the soldiers,” Sanda Muminovic of Bosnia said. “I will never forget how those soldiers looked at us, like we were boring flies. We threw our flowers into the river and went home. It was too little, too late. While we were buying flowers, they were buying guns.”

Muminovic was speaking at the conference “War and Peace: For Men Only?” conference, organized January 26 in the Netherlands. The culmination of a three-day consultation with experts on conflict, gender and development, the conference drew representatives from groups such as the Asian Women’s Human Rights Council, Fundacion Victimas de Guerra (Foundation for Victims of War—Nicaragua), and the Organization of African Unity. Dutch development and human rights agencies, concerned about the lack of a gender perspective in current discussions on conflict and conflict resolution, organized the conference hoping it will lead to an international network on women in conflict.

Speakers from Algeria, Uganda, Peru and elsewhere outlined the specific ways women are affected by conflict. “Societal inequalities become exacerbated when women leave their home base. Yet at the same time women are confronted with additional responsibilities: the care of the sick, aged, injured and children,” said Laketch Dirasse of the African Women in Crisis project of the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Relief agencies often compound the problem by ignoring women’s specific needs. No where is this more evident than in refugee camps where, despite the fact that up to 80 percent of the world’s refugees are women and children, power remains in the hands of men. “There have been several cases where food distribution being in male hands only led to food being sold for luxury items, never reaching women and children,” Dirasse said.

“In conflict, violence increases. There are many gender specific issues that aid agencies don’t take into consideration. Women’s emotional overload, the needs of the menstrual cycle or pregnancy, the needs of rape survivors exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, may all be seen as luxuries. In addition, there are a number of problems precisely because women remain in the legal system of their own country, especially if the government is the cause of the displacement,” she said.



Dirasse then went on to discuss the work of the African Women in Crisis (AWIC) project. “AWIC began in 1993 to promote gender sensitivity in both disaster mitigation and prevention. We put women in the center of the search for solutions to conflict. The African continent is plagued by a number of sociological and economic crises. Structural readjustment programs and heavy debt necessitate the cutting of social service programs, while drought, famine, civil wars and the heaviest migration since

independence. 30 out of African 54 countries are either producers or recipients of refugees. There are four million refugees alone in Rwanda, Burundi and Sierra Leone. At precisely the time when support was needed, Africa lost the superpowers’ strategic interest, so these crises face a loss of material resources,” she said. The AWIC works to strengthen local women’s capacity to engage in peace negotiations, conflict resolution, and assistance to other women in need. In cooperation with International Alert, conflict resolution trainings are conducted in countries in conflict, such as Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

During workshops, women shared many strategies they had developed for making peace. The entire conference of some 60 participants joined in clapping as Kamaliza, a Rwandan woman frequently seen at women’s peace projects in her country, sang songs of reconciliation.

In a workshop on gender roles in conflict, Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, director of Akina Mama wa Afrika, presented an analytical framework on gender, conflict and development. She identified four phases of conflict—the build-up to the conflict; the conflict; peace and negotiations; and reconstruction—and discussed the roles women play in each phase.

(Akina Mama wa Afrika is a London-based African women’s organization, which coordinates national, regional and international initiatives taken by African women.

The March-September 1995 issue of the organization's bi-annual magazine, *African Woman*, focuses on African women in conflict.

Contact: *Akina Mama wa Afrika*, London Women's Centre, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU, UK. Tel. +44 171 405 0678; fax +44 171 831 3947).

The day-long conference made clear that women are indeed at the center of any effort to create peace and prevent war. The question, however, remains: how many policy makers realize this? And what are women going to do?

For information about an international network on women and conflict, contact Maja Mischke, Secretary, Project Group on Gender, Conflict and Development, Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Postbus 77, 2340 AB Oegstgeest, the Netherlands. Tel. +31 71 515 9392; fax +31 71 517 5391.

RESOURCES

Human Rights of Women in Conflict Situations, by F. Butegwa, S. Mukasa and S. Mogere (40 pages, 1995). A study by Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) of interviews with over 800 refugee women in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan.

What You Should Know About Rape: A Practical Guide for Africa and the Third World (40 pages, 1994), compiled by Kabahenda Nyakabwa, is a manual for everyone who works with rape survivors. Cost US \$7.50 or UGShs. 8000 from K. Nyakabwa, PO Box 52021, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5S0, Canada or PO Box 16182, Wandegeya, Kampala, Uganda.

Democracy Must Include Everyone

by Shelley Anderson

Women in South Africa are continuing their efforts to build a non-racist, non-sexist society. In the Netherlands recently Ms. Frene Ginwala, Speaker of the House in the South African parliament, spoke on the work to increase women's role in political participation and decision making. Ginwala said that South Africa's 1994 democratic election was an example of "a fundamental re-examination of all institutions—including the concept of what equality for women means and what institutional changes are necessary to achieve this. In other countries after liberation, women have been marginalized at crucial moments of decision making. We were determined this would not happen to us. We want a people-shaped South Africa, not a man-shaped South Africa."

Accused of trying to impose middle class, foreign ideas on South African women, women leaders demonstrated grassroots support by forming the Women's National Coalition, whose purpose was to ensure that women were part of the transition to democracy. "The Coalition was the most representative body in terms of religion, age, and community in the whole country. Ninety national organizations and between 6,000 to 7,000 regional organizations belonged, for a total of two million women," Ginwala said. "We kept to one issue, despite a flood of requests: what do women want in the new constitution? We spent a year listening to women, at clinics, shopping centers, from villages to board rooms. We asked two questions: What does being a woman in South Africa mean to you? How do you want life to change? Our work was described as the world's largest participatory project. The findings were collated into a women's self-defined agenda for change."

Women had to be part of the negotiations for the new constitution--especially in negotiations with traditional leaders, as customary law often discriminates against women. "Political leaders laughed at the demand that women be involved in negotiations. They said women's issues are not political," Ginwala said. Women demonstrated, and the African National Congress (ANC) decided that every party to the negotiations could have two negotiators—as long as one of the negotiators was a woman. "The linkages formed through the Women's National Coalition proved invaluable during negotiations," Ginwala said. Women crossed party lines to keep each other informed of compromises, and played parties off against each other in order to win concessions. Eventually, women were chairing negotiating sessions.

“The ANC set a quota for the national election, requiring one out of every three candidates to be a woman. Other parties refused quotas, but almost every party put forward more women than ever before. Now 25 per cent of the Parliament is women,” Ginwala said.

But, she continued, while there have been some improvements in women’s legal status, a non-sexist South Africa is still a dream.

“The issue is not discrimination. Discrimination implies that the institutions are okay and that the problem is only that some people are excluded. The assumption is that when people are let in, they will function. Yet the doors were opened in South Africa and women didn’t come in. We realized that the system into which we demand entry is itself skewed. It was designed by men for men, and reflects patriarchal assumptions and their experiences of society. The solution is not simply for a few women to gain entry, but to change our institutions,” Ginwala said.

“There was an assumption that workers don’t get pregnant, so there was no maternity leave. There was an assumption that everyone had the full freedom to work overtime with no notice,” Ginwala said, which placed an additional burden on women caring for their families. Women began to change Parliament, setting up a child care center for everyone who worked there, from janitors to parliamentarians. Sessions now end by 6:30 pm, with Parliament’s recess coinciding with school recess. Sexual harassment is a punishable offense and gender sensitivity workshops are held with younger members and staff. Parliament must publish an annual report on what it has done for the women of South Africa, and an alternative gross national product which includes the unpaid labor of women, children and subsistence farmers.

These new gains are still fragile, and could be lost. “The women’s movement that started this process hasn’t continued—our leaders have taken advantage of the new opportunities and moved on. We need to mainstream what is seen as women’s experiences into broad public policy. We must make as much mileage as possible in the next couple of years on this. We need a broad mass base to push for the issues, and to build up structures and legislation. Right now, for example, we are debating on whether or not there should be a separate Commission for Gender Equality, or if the monitoring of women’s position can be left to the Human Rights Commission. The danger is if this work is left to the Human Rights Commission, women might be ignored,” Ginwala said. She is hoping that the momentum generated by the 1995 UN Women’s Conference in Beijing will continue to push and support South African women’s struggle for liberation.

This struggle is necessary, Ginwala said, because including women's experiences is essential for true democracy. "Under our new Bill of Rights, everyone can exercise their cultural, traditional, and religious rights. But no one has the right to trample on others, to exercise racism or sexism."

Homophobia in Zimbabwe

In the summer of 1995, the group Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) had to withdraw their exhibit at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair. The President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, said that he found it "extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizationsshould have any advocates in our midst."

The organizers of the state-funded Book Fair were forced to withdraw their earlier permission for GALZ to have a stand at the Fair. State police visited the Fair and removed posters protesting GALZ's exclusion. Human rights groups protested the exclusion, which violates Zimbabwe's Declaration of Rights, which guarantees "freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference."

During a visit with other African leaders to the Netherlands in November, the Dutch group Strange Fruit and other black and migrant lesbian and gay groups protested Mugabe's anti-gay remarks. The Dutch government is reported to have challenged Mugabe's anti-homosexual remarks.

The anti-homosexual 'debate' has continued in the Zimbabwean Parliament over the last few months. On 28 September, 1995, Member of Parliament Mutyambiz said, "I would like to call for all traditional forces in this country to rally behind the State President in the eradication of homosexuality. I feel that all those who know homos in this country should make them be brought before the courts of law and be tried for their evil activity." In another such debate in November, MP Chief Makoni suggested that caning and flogging should be introduced as punishment for both male and female homosexuality. Under the Zimbabwe penal code, male homosexual acts are illegal and punishable by a fine.

ACTION

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) is requesting that foreign governments continue to express their grave concern about this denial of lesbian and gays' human rights. Send letters to your foreign ministry requesting that they contact the Zimbabwean authorities. Letters should state that:

—Remarks such as those made by President Mugabe and various members of Parliament encourage the human rights violations to which sexual minorities are subject around the world.

—The international community has a responsibility to speak out against statements of intent to persecute a minority group. Continued pressure is needed to ensure that state harassment of gays and lesbians ceases, and that the government of Zimbabwe does not further implement its discriminatory policies.

Please send copies of the letters to: H.E. Robert Mugabe, Private Bag 7700, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe and to The Zimbabwean Parliament, P.O. Box CY 298, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Peace Train 1995— From Helsinki to Beijing

by Mary O'Hara Wyman

Thoughts turn around like the wheels of the Peace Train
Towards the women who ride and towards the women who wait,
and the women back home and the women long gone,
towards the women not born, and the women who fear,
and the women who dare and the holy women of prayer.

Here we are, here in Helsinki, free to be who we are
And there they wait for us, in places with fairytale names—
St. Petersburg and Kiev, Bucharest and Sophia, Istanbul and
Odessa,
Alma Alta and Urumchi, and that most forbidden city, Peking.

In all those cities they wait for our train, the women we'll meet
Afraid for us to come, afraid that we'll not—
and together we're longing, belonging—hello-ing, good-bying—
with one long sighing—eying the distant horizon of Peace.

I think we are women with far too much
And they are women with never ever enough
And we are women allowed to fly through the air
And they are women coerced to the earth.

I pray for the women who feel hopeless
For I must be hopeful for them, and yes I can pray
for the women who cannot act on their own
And I will, yes I will, be their activist.

Let us all be women who must do what we must
To give hope to the women who must struggle for peace.
We are the women who must find peace from within
And model this peace to the world without.

Wheels keep rolling rolling rolling in my heart
My reverie expands to visions of joy—to women of hope....

Let us be mothers and lovers, to sisters of colors
To Asians, Australians, the Africans, the Indians, and
Europeans and Americans, all all sisters sisters linked by blood linked by birth,
linked by pain, linked by plan, linked divine

To women who wait for the train by the side of the track.

I too have a dream...of all women in the world on the Train—
all all of us, Peace Pilgrims

All, all all of us—the mothers and daughters and sisters
dead and alive, and as yet unborn

All Planetary Pilgrims on the Peace Train forever.

[A Peace train, organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, carried some 100 women activists from Helsinki through countries of the former USSR to the 1995 UN women's conference in Beijing.]

Women in Kosova

“MOTRAT QIRIAZI” is a woman’s group in Kosova which is working on the empowerment of rural women, changing traditions and responding to educational needs. We would be very happy to correspond women working on similar issues by email and to hear your comments, suggestions or about your experiences.

“MOTRAT QIRIAZI”, the Society for Education of Women in Prishtina, Kosova, was named after the two sisters Qiriazi, who founded the first school for girls in Korca (Albania) 100 years ago. Two sisters from Prishtina, Safete and Igballe Rogova, formed the society for women’s education “Motrat Qiriazi” (Sisters Qiriazi) in February 1995, with the formation of the Women’s Network in Prishtina and with the collaboration of other women’s groups.

Motrat Qiriazi began its work in the Has region (an isolated region in western Kosova) which suffers under the domination of many oppressive patriarchal traditions. It is the only region in Kosova where more than 50% of the girls are promised in marriage by the time they finish primary school. Very few girls attend high school. After marriage, often to boys they have never met, the girls go to live in an unfamiliar village with their husband’s extended family. In this environment a woman’s life is controlled by her mother-in-law, senior males in the family and by the power of the social circle.

**In the Has region,
more than 50% of the
girls are promised in
marriage by the time
they finish primary
school.**

In this way the customs of bygone centuries are reproduced generation after generation. Motrat Qiriazi emphasizes the preservation of tradition and at the same time the elimination of customs and practices that are detrimental to women. At present Motrat Qiriazi is working in 13 villages in this region. Thirteen local activists take part in the project’s organization and implementation and carry on the work when Motrat Qiriazi brings the project to other regions.

One of the key goals at present is to create and maintain a regular forum of weekly meetings in the local primary schools. The meetings provide a forum where women gather to exchange ideas with each other and with visitors from outside the village, where they can begin to examine the ideological and mental parameters of their

lives. In some cases this is one of the few occasions where women can meet with other women outside of their family circle.

Motrat Qiriazhi is dedicated to the following principles:

- Understanding the problems, needs, and desires of rural women.
- Raising the consciousness of rural women and breaking the isolation by facilitating the exchange of ideas and skills between rural and urban women.
- Supporting the democratization of the family and aiding in the elimination of all forms of violence against women.
- Addressing issues like health education and the importance of high school education for girls.

We bring gynaecologists, pediatricians, and general practitioners to hold discussions about pertinent health issues, answer questions and provide information on contraception, pregnancy, childbirth; the care of infants and children; personal and household hygiene; the cause, prevention and treatment of diarrhoea and other water-related diseases.

In June 1995, in collaboration with the group “Home Economics”, from Prishtina, Motrat Qiriazhi started sewing courses in response to women’s requests. It is hoped that this will eventually lead to income generating activities. In September 1995, a literacy component started; women who need training in basic literacy skills follow a six-month literacy course with two or three lessons per week. Also in September 1995, a six-month English language course started for local activists and other women who want to learn. It is hoped that this will eventually give women greater access to diverse types of information and world views.

In September 1995, collaboration with the local paper of Has, “Etja” began. There is now a minimum of four pages (out of 31) set aside for women. The publication is an important vehicle for social change; it is read in every home, and its content directly reflects issues important to the local people.

We are looking for examples of women’s problems and solutions found in other parts of the world—to break the isolation of Has women and to provide ideas of how they might change their lives.

So, if you have stories of women changing their lives and their communities, PLEASE SEND us these stories. If you work in a similar project PLEASE CONTACT us so we can exchange ideas and learn from each other. Contact by email: I.ROGOVA@ZANA-PR.ZTN.APC.ORG

Letter from Cambodia

Liz Bernstein works with the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation in Cambodia, assisting Cambodian women in their struggle against landmines. She wrote the following letter to the WRI Women's Working Group (WRIWWG) in December, in response to the WRIWWG questionnaire. WRIWWG is discussing holding a series of smaller gatherings, focussed on a theme such as reconciliation of disarmament, which would culminate in a larger international meeting.

Dear WRI women,

Women in Cambodia find the topic of social healing an interesting one. When we went to Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the end of the 1995 peace pilgrimage, my colleague Kim Leng (who was part of the Cambodian delegation to the women's gathering in Beijing) kept asking, "How can we heal, teach our children the suffering we endured but not pass on the hatred?" She asked hibakusha (editor's note: survivors of the 1945 atomic bombings) in Japan, and said to the Sri Lankans, "Like us, your war is still going on, it is hard to begin healing but we must start the process."

We are also interested in your ideas of bringing together women from a few specific regions of conflict to talk face to face; this would be hard to organize, of course. Another idea which interests us are domestic violence and the links with military violence.

One thing we want to tell you about is our involvement in the landmines campaign over the past few years and the role of women in it. The international campaign to ban landmines is an exciting area full of possibilities. Did you know that women trade unionists from the Valsella mine producing factory in Italy are active in the campaign? Last year the leader, Franca, wrote a letter of support to Cambodian women on their day of 'Cambodian Women Against Mines'; now she is coming here to Cambodia to visit, in February during Ban Mines Week. We hope the Cambodian Women's Media Center, which made the 12-minute video "ARE WE THE ENEMY?" about the effects of landmines on women's lives in Cambodia for the Beijing conference, can make a video about the uniting of these powerful women.

THIS is how it will happen, links of women like this, these Italian and Cambodian women and their strength.

We hope to publicize this connection and strength during the next European-ASEAN meeting in Bangkok in March, because as Valsella comes under more pressure, they are shifting producing to Singapore. So there must be more European-ASEAN links and women with our own links to combat this. Of course, in all the countries which have called for a ban on mines, it is women members of parliaments who are doing the work. and in the international campaign too. We see so clearly the power of the links of women on all these levels: in parliaments and the international campaign, in elitist NGOs and grassroots groups, among women affected by mines daily and trade unionists in factories. Secretaries at the UN came up and asked for a briefing from us during the UN review conference on conventional weapons, asking to sign the petition. These are just anecdotes, but the power and strength of all these women from all these areas over one issue--landmines--and the resistance of the men in the UN rooms debating military issues because we start denying another weapons system to them....!

I will be in Geneva for the next UN round of the landmines conference, 8-20 January, and then back in Cambodia. In February we have Ban Mines Week and Franca's visit, then for March 8 our theme is Women Against Landmines, with events stretched out over the month.

Take care all of you, and have a happy, peaceful 1996,

Liz Bernstein
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News

Newest WRI Women Member

Congratulations to Simone Maria Helwig on becoming the youngest WRI Women's Working Group member! Simone was born December 20, the first child of WRI Women's Working Group coordinator Maggie Helwig and former "Peace News" editor Ken Simons. Congratulations to the happy parents! Maggie and her family will be returning to Canada in a few months, where they will continue their peace work.

Campus Day Without Violence

The Peace Studies Association is issuing a call for a Day without Violence on the world's college and university campuses on 4 April 1996. An information packet with suggestions for activities, discussion questions and an evaluation will be sent to interested people. The day was chosen because it is the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The purpose of the event is (1) to call attention to the desire by the university community everywhere for peace and an end to violence; (2) to focus on alternatives to violence such as conflict resolution, nonviolent conflict, and the creation of social structures that cultivate peace rather than war; (3) to

promote the study of the processes of peace as a central aspect of the educational and research agendas of the Academy; and (4) to cultivate communication among interested individuals on campuses around the world. *Contact: L. Kurtz, 30039 N. Waukegan Rd #104, Lake Bluff, IL 60044 USA. Fax: +1 708-234-0068; Tel. +1 708-735-8715; email: lkurtz@nwi.edu*

War Rape in Rwanda

In February last year the report of French child psychiatrist Catherine Bonnet documented the mass rapes of Rwandan women by mostly Hutu soldiers and paramilitaries during the 1994 massacres. "The scope of the rapes is unimaginable. Virtually every woman or girl past puberty who was spared from massacre by the militias had been raped," she wrote. The National Population Office of Rwanda estimated that some 5,000 women are pregnant as a result of the war rape. Health officials estimate that some 90 percent of the women do not want to keep the babies.

Resources

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has initiated the African Women in Crisis (AFWIC) program, which has developed the **African Women for Conflict Resolution and Peace (AWCRP)** project. The project helps African women take a more pro-active role in reconciliation and peace-making processes, and links grassroots groups with regional or international organizations working on the same issues. The program has organized expert consultations on issues such as "Reproductive and mental health issues of women and girls under situations of war and conflict in Africa".

UNIFEM/AFWIC organized a Peace Tent during the African regional meeting to prepare for the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women, in Dakar, Senegal, in November 1994. Hundreds of women from groups like Comité National des Femmes pour la Paix (Congo), Liberian Women's Initiative, Women for Peace/South Africa and the Association of Women for Peace in Mozambique met to exchange ideas. The report of the UNIFEM/AFWIC women's peace mission to Rwanda and Burundi (November 1994) was presented. Over 360 participants signed a petition to the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity which stated that the



women of Africa reject the notion of ethnic, tribal or clan affinity as inherently conflictual and therefore a legitimate basis for conflict. Noting that political and economic greed underlie conflict in Africa, the women call on leaders to mobilize all means to bring about reconciliation, healing and peace.

For more information about the African Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace Project, contact: The Senior Manager, UNIFEM/AFWIC, P.O. Box 30218, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel. +254 2 228776/9/218332; fax +254 2 215102.

BOOKS

Our Human Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education is the first comprehensive training manual that addresses many aspects of women's human rights in an 'interactive format' which is suitable for many audiences, from school teachers, to advocates for women's rights, to general human rights groups. The manual combines development of rights awareness with problem-centered action, and includes substantive information about the human rights of women in such areas as violence, health, reproduction, education, the global economy, workplace, family life, as well as exercises that employ role plays, discussion, songs and audio-visual materials to deepen the understanding of this information. The end of each chapter connects the discussion to provisions of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and other international agreements, and also engages women in a discussion of follow-up strategies.

Our Human Rights provides tools for women and men to examine critically the framework of human rights, to define their own issues and needs, and build strategies and campaigns to further their human rights. The manual encourages a holistic perspective that not only identifies the connections

among different sets of human rights (for example, the connections between health and violence) but also the connections between different constituencies (such as the connections between women of majority communities and refugee women).

The author has waived copyright to non-English versions. The manual has been translated into Russian, Serbo-Croat and Albanian (funding pending), and plans are underway for French, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Ukrainian, Armenian and other languages. If your group would like to sponsor a version (coordinate it, fundraise for publication costs, etc.) and/or connect with other groups (both inside and outside the country) that are working on or wish to work on **Our Human Rights**, please contact: Julie Mertus, Mallika Dutt and Nancy Flowers, The Center for Women's Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, USA. Fax +1 908 932 1180, tel. +1 908 932 8782; email: cwgl@igc.apc.org

Insight and Action: How to Discover and Support a Life of Integrity and Commitment to Change by Tova Green and Peter Woodrow with Fran Peavey (160 pages, 1994, US \$12.95). This is a very practical and inspiring manual on how to give and receive support in lives dedicated to social change; how to use clearness groups to help get clarity on an issue; and how to deal with fear and discouragement

by strategic questioning. It is engrossing reading, full of personal stories and examples of healthy group processes. Includes a resource section on group process and dynamics, and a bibliography. New Society Publishers, 4527 Springfield Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143, US.

Fighting for Their Rights: Chinese Women's Experiences Under Political Persecution (1995, 46 pages) is a collection of 12 contemporary women's stories and personal testimonies. Mo Lihua describes survival in a Chinese women's prison, while Tong Yi explains about her 'reeducation' through torture. As frequently happens with women, some of the women suffer persecution by the current Chinese regime not so much for their own acts, but because of their relationship with other dissidents: Xin Hong is a political hostage because of her son's work for democracy, while Li Guoping lost her license to practice law because of her husband's alleged 'crimes'. A companion work, **Caught Between Tradition and the State** (1995, 102 pages), is a detailed examination of the violations of Chinese women's human rights, complete with an overview of current Chinese law and recommendations for change. Both publications are by Human Rights China, an international group formed in 1989 to empower China's human rights movement. Human Rights China, 485 Fifth Avenue, 3rd floor,

New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel. +1 212 661 2909; fax +1 212 972 0905; email: hrichina@igc.org

Crossfires: Nationalism, Racism and Gender in Europe is the proceedings of the 1994 conference of the European Forum of Left Feminists. Eight essays look at coalition building, gender and racial violence, young people and nationalism, racism and gender, and more. Writers includes Gloria Wekker, Tatjana Djuric and Natalya Kosmarskaya. Paperback cost £9.75, hardcover £29.25, from Pluto Press, 345 Archway Road, London N6 5AA, UK.

