



Nyéleni was a Malian woman...
Illustrations created by Anna Loveday-Brown

Editorial

Women and Food Sovereignty

What is the **necessary strategy** to change the situation of women around the world? Some feminists think that *women's distinctive characteristics*, which are made invisible and/or considered inferior by a male chauvinistic and patriarchal society, should be recognized. Others claim that it is necessary to *fight for wealth redistribution between men and women*, thus overcoming the causes of inequality resulting from sexual division of labor and power. But many feminists have already realized that **this is a false dilemma**. In order to move forward it is necessary to coordinate **the seemingly contradictory actions of recognition and distribution**. The principle of Food Sovereignty increasingly recognizes **women's contribution in food production**: from agriculture to preparing food for their families or school cafeterias and other community facilities. It also contemplates the need to equally distribute land and the conditions of production between men and women. It is necessary to take *a step forward and recognize the need to redistribute the work done by women* to take care of the family – even preparing food- among all the members of the family living together. Rural and urban women and girls around the world work more hours than men, considering the number of hours dedicated to paid work and to housework taken together. They are the first ones to get up and the last ones to go to bed. **Enjoying Food Sovereignty means changing both the food production and consumption model**. This implies having time to cook, eat and share as well as having time for themselves. This change cannot be based on the increasing work of women. In order to have more time, we neither need fast-food nor canned food, but we do need public policies that support reproduction, such as food in schools and popular restaurants and... distributing work among all!

Miriam Nobre

Coordinator of the International Secretariat of the World March of Women



12 October

Day of Global Action against Capitalism
http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances_mondialisation/asamblea-movimientos-sociales/declarations/dakar2011/en

16 October

World Food Day

17 – 22 October

37th Session of the **World Food Security Council** – Rome, Italy. Participate in the on-line consultation until the 15th of October, http://km.fao.org/fsn/cfs/cfs-e-consultation/es/?no_cache=1

3 – 4 November

6th **G20 meeting** - Cannes, France. *Mobilize against the G20!* <http://www.resist.org.uk/>

17 - 20 November

International conference: *Stop land grabbing* - Selingue, Mali

28 November – 9 December 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) of the United Nations Framework Convention – Durban, South Africa <http://cop17insouthafrica.wordpress.com/>

October – December

Regional UN Conferences on Sustainable Development (Rio2012). Let's participate into the regional meetings to get sustainable agriculture in the agenda of Rio! Check the calendar for your region: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=23>

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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Women in rural and urban environments: a history that has a lot in common

Day by day, women face problems due to the fact of being women. Either in the countryside or in the city, they are faced with an economic system that discriminates them since it is both **a capitalist and patriarchal system**. **This system is based on the division between production and reproduction**. Market activities are considered part of the production, and the tasks usually done by women are considered part of the reproduction, thus making invisible the link between both. In contrast with this division, feminist economy broadens the notion of *labor* once again and differentiates it from the notion of *employment* (paid work or market work)¹ in order to include the biological and social reproduction tasks in the definition of *labor*, i.e. housework, community work, care. Food Sovereignty is also part of this notion, since it recognizes the fundamental work done by women, and it also implies the redistribution and equality of tasks between all the household members.

Who we are

In the last years hundreds of organizations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organizations were present in the Nyéléni Forum 2007 and feel part of a broader Food Sovereignty Movement, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organizations involved: Development Fund, ETC, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, Roppa, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Veterinarios Sin Fronteras.

Now is the time for Food Sovereignty!



Attaining Food Sovereignty

Our current system, which divides productive and reproductive tasks, by leaving the former to men and the latter to women, **places obstacles on Food Sovereignty**. This system associates reproduction with the tasks related with buying and preparing food. **But in order to make Food Sovereignty possible, these tasks should be valued and shared.** The *strike funds* and *"soup kitchens"* are a clear example of how important food preparation and distribution is. Many strikes that pursued improvements and labor demands were possible in the past thanks to women's work in these collective funds. Although their contribution in the history of the workers' movement is often made invisible, women have led these transformation processes, which have survived thanks to their presence and to the fact that they have played roles like the collective preparation of food.

Food in a consumerist society

The food processing industry, big supermarket chains and the pharmaceutical industry try to set the standards we should follow every day: what we should eat, what is good or bad for us, what is affordable. Reflecting on this issue and beginning to consider it as a problem has **led us to think about alternatives. Resistance lies in food diversification and in forms of production and consumption that are different from those imposed by the market.** How can we possibly stop being part of a consumerist society in order to create a survival model through food? An example of this are direct and advance purchase groups, that create links between women who live in rural and urban areas and that may result in the collective preparation and distribution of food. Besides, instead of the supermarket's low quality, imported products, which often fail to meet cultural food standards and try to impose irresponsible forms of consumption (by selling out-of-season fruit and vegetables), it is possible to adopt food habits that promote the consumption of locally-produced and sold food through fair trade networks.

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Land and landgrabbing

Climate change

Factory farms

Farmers' seeds and biodiversity

Food price volatility and food markets

The Nyéléni Europe forum

A new look on agribusiness

From this perspective, problems like the ones created by agribusiness – which imply a corporate model based on exploitation and concentration – may be seen in all their dimension: from their most evident social costs, such as the displacement of peasants or the ones related to labor exploitation in general, to the most invisible ones, that are related - for example - to the sexual division of labor. In the highly mechanized sectors, like soya or sugar cane production, the most qualified jobs are done by men, while women do support tasks, such as cleaning or cooking. Meanwhile, in intensive sectors like fruit and flowers women are hired for their ability to carry out delicate tasks (such as fruit packaging), but without there being a specific economic retribution for that: in fact, young women are usually hired for a meager salary without enjoying workers' rights.

Women and access to land

In practice, **the increasing market economy tends to exacerbate the already existing inequalities**, both as regards to labor exploitation associated with agribusiness and to differential access to land between men and women. According to the FAO², as land is sold and it becomes less available, the male members of the families reduce access to land that women used to have, especially in the case of widowed and divorced women. Even though on average they make up 43% of the agriculture labor force in developing countries³, women have less than 15% of land around the world⁴. By denying women equal access to land – which should not necessarily be limited to private property, yet it is possible to have rights over land through the lease of state or community land – **their economic, social and political situation is negatively affected**. This is directly linked with the patriarchal system. This system provides that land is inherited on the father's side, and that women can only access land through their male children, husbands or their male relatives. Besides this, the patriarchy has historically placed women **in a position that enabled their use of land but not their ownership over land**.

The lack of recognition of peasant women in family farming exploitation results in **their having no allocated resources, because the sales are carried out on the name of the owner of the exploitation** (usually a man). This causes other problems, for example that some of the rights of women workers are limited: in Spain, for instance, these women have been denied aid for their children under three years old. For this reason, **the work and rights of peasant women should be recognized**. This necessarily implies to **rethink the agrarian and social policies** as well as income distribution within households.

When an agrarian reform is implemented taking all that was said above as a problem and trying to solve it, women farmers may have access to credit and plan their production through land property, while **they gain more negotiation power** at home and in the decision - making processes within their communities. In Nicaragua, for example, a new legislation came into effect in the 80s, which provided equal benefits for men and women in land ownership programs. Also in 1997, a joint property law was passed, which provided that both spouses should be entitled to the rights acquired by the family through an agrarian reform program. As a result of this, the percentage of women who have access to land property titles increased from 10 to 42% in 20 years⁵.

From Nyéléni to today: the role of women in food production and distribution

The fact that the *Food Sovereignty forums* promoted by the peasant movement are called **Nyéleni** is not a coincidence: they are named after a woman whose story has been told in Africa throughout the years. The story tells that Nyéléni was a Malian woman who had agriculture as her priority, something considered a *men's task*. She managed to outperform all of them in agriculture contests. Besides, she managed to domesticate crops like fonio and samio, beating the arid land, and feeding all the Malian population.

Nyéleni is a symbol of the fundamental task carried out by women in the pursuit of Food Sovereignty. Today, peasant women in developing countries **produce from 60 to 80% of food**. Just as Nyéléni, women have had to face big challenges (such as the

1 - Since industrial development "paid work or free-lance work is only considered as labor, therefore all non paid activities done by household members to meet their own needs are not considered labor. This in fact restricts the original definition of labor to activities related with market labor" (Cristina Carrasco, *La sostenibilidad de la vida humana, ¿un asunto de mujeres?*, 2001).

2 - Report *Género y Tierra. Igualdad de condiciones*, FAO, 2007

3 - FAO, 2011

4 - International Center for Research on Women, 2006

5 - For more information please visit: www.rlc.fao.org/es/desarrollo/mujer/situacion/pdf/genytierr.pdf



outbreak of diseases like HIV/AIDS, armed conflicts or migration of men to the cities). As a result of this, in the past years women have become the heads of 25% of the rural households. Nevertheless, there is still the challenge of women reaching the same social status as men, **since the tasks they perform continue to be underestimated.**

Sharing experiences to strengthen the participation of women!

Many social movements and grassroots organisations are engaged in denouncing gender inequality and injustice around the world – included as the unbalanced participation of women in political and decision-making processes, or the existence of discrimination in terms of rights and laws - and they relentlessly call for change. However, often their **daily challenge is the application of these much needed changes within the movement itself.** Several mechanisms have been developed to facilitate the creation of a new model within the movement; and some of them are quite easy to apply in different contexts. Here some ideas: the creation of groups of women within the organisation; the application of quotas to guarantee the equal participation of women; to avoid the identification of women or men with a specific task (an example from agriculture: men use machineries – women pick berries); the presence of women in leadership roles; the provision of child care facilities to enable the involvement of mothers; the coherence in language and content of the material which is published and/or used by the movement; the implementation of training for women and men on this issue to stimulate reflection, and more...

Make it happen within your organisation!

Industrialization: of nature and of women's body

The process of industrialization of nature in agriculture is the same than the process of industrialization of the body of women. In agriculture, the idea is to *increase productivity* as much as possible through external inputs, reducing the necessary natural cycles when the land rests to recover fertility. This way, the industry develops pesticides, agrotoxics and seeds improved from a capitalist point of view to produce more food, faster. In the case of women, all their natural cycles, such as menstruation and menopause, are treated by capital as diseases that reduce their work productivity. And in order to avoid them, injectable or subcutaneous hormones, or medicaments that suspend menstruation or control their effects are used. As in agriculture, **these mechanisms put the bodies of women under the control of industries.** This way, in the case of birth control, for instance, contraceptive methods that are not under the control of women, such as injectable hormones instead of the daily pill or condoms (that in addition allow women to negotiate their use with their partners) are encouraged. We notice that there is a common strategy for agriculture and women, because the industries that produce agrotoxics are the same than the ones that produce injectable hormones, such as Monsanto, Syngenta, Novartis, that are part of joint ventures, and all of them refer to themselves as “bioindustries”.

Voices from the field

*Short stories from Africa, America, Asia and Europe,
resistance and alternatives*

Fighting poverty, particularly amongst women

Nana Aicha Cissé, Mali, member of the African Coordination of the World March of Women.

The growing poverty, especially among rural women, and the dependency of some countries - brought upon them by the structural adjustment programs - have led the *World March of Women in Mali* to focus their efforts on two objectives: *changing the food model in favour of healthy food*, that is not harmful to our health, and *strengthening the links among rural and urban women*, established through meetings and shared knowledge. To meet the first objective, our member organizations promote local products: raising awareness among the population that, by consuming manufactured goods, not only do they contribute to impoverish our local producers but also that they are putting their health at risk, because, most of the times, the exact ingredients of canned goods are not known and, very often, the expiry date has passed... They also need to understand that the canned products they buy are available in fresh form on markets and thus are not just healthier but also taste better. Rural women in Mali and those living in peri-urban areas produce vast amounts of produce which they have trouble selling on the markets because they live too far away from markets and they lack means of transportation. And since conservation equipment is usually non-existent, they are often forced to throw away their unsold produce at the end of the day. We have organized a number of trainings to convince more and more urban women to engage in food transformation activities. They buy the raw materials from producers from rural and peri-urban areas in order to manufacture to pre cooked products (e.g. fonio, djouka, couscous, etc.) or dried products (vegetables, fruits, condiments, millet or maize flour for *tô* - a traditional dish in Mali...). These processed products enable women who work outside the home, in urban areas, to better manage their time: they have to spend less time in the kitchen, allowing them to do other things such as participate in public activities, all the while providing their families

with adequate and quality food. Thus, gradually, the eating habits in our communities evolve.

Peru: Solidarity in action through community “meal centres”

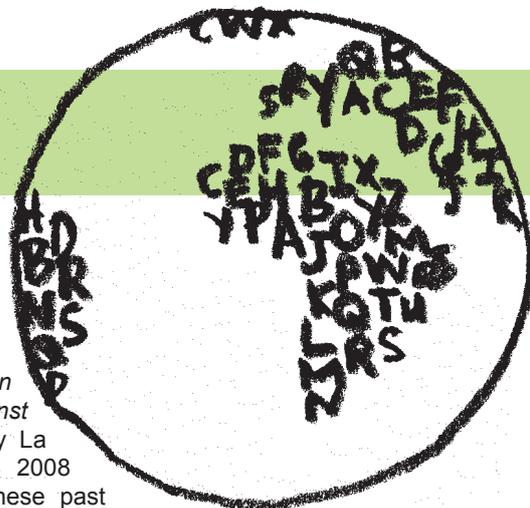
Rosa Guillén, Peru, Executive Secretary at the World March of Women

Community meal centres have existed in Peru for about thirty years, from a solidarity initiative by women who looked to face, in an autonomous way, the structural adjustment that took place in the 80s with Alan Garcia's first administration.

A precedent of this is the important role that women had in the community kitchens that arose in the context of strikes or land occupations. Several organizations established autonomous community meal centres, besides the food policies by governments. Later, these groups proposed a bill that considered them as organizations with the same rights than other organizations, and not just governmental programs: this experience allowed them to negotiate with the government, but maintain their autonomy, something that would become a characteristic of the movement. This law entitled them to receive state grants in food, which allows them to cover a percentage of what they need in order to function, although most (around 80 per cent) is covered through voluntary contributions in the form of work, payments or food. In order to carry out this project, nearly 10,000 community meal centres led by women are organized in a democratic way in a federation called the National Confederation of Women Organized for Life and Integral Development (CONAMOVIDI). This space, that represents and gathers women from grassroots social organizations from different Peruvian regions, is trying to have an influence in the implementation of public policies that contribute to the integral development of their country in the framework of the struggle against poverty, through proposals that encompass food, education, health and work.



THE WORLD IN WORDS



Nyeléni 2011 took place in Europe

The *European Forum for Food Sovereignty Nyeléni 2011* took place in Krems, Austria, from August 16-21. The organizations that participated in this event, a follow-up of the Nyeléni Forum that took place in 2007 in Mali, reaffirmed their vision of unity that highlights “the right of peoples to democratically define their own food and agricultural systems without harming other people or the environment”. The little or null participation of the populations in the policies linked to the Commons such as land, air, seeds and water, was also identified as a symbol of the democratic deficit, according to the Forum’s final declaration. Around 120 organizations developed a wide alliance and a set of principles to achieve *Food Sovereignty in Europe*, highlighting the contributions of young people, women and food farmers, also stating that in order to achieve a true democracy, **violence, corporate influence and gender inequalities must come to an end, which necessarily means an end to patriarchy**. The diversity and richness of experiences allowed the European Forum of Nyeléni 2011 to identify a common framework and define a joint action plan, based on a democratic and participatory process.

For more information: <http://nyeleni2011.net/>

Mobilize for the COP 17!

South Africa will host the forthcoming *17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* in Durban from the 28th of November to the 9th of December. Last year during the COP 16 in Mexico most of the world’s governments, with the exception of Bolivia, did not seriously address climate change but instead proposed a **range of false solutions** which ignore and undermine the initiatives of social movements and wider society that are engaged in radically changing how we produce, consume and collectively manage the world’s finite resources. The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (REDD) offset projects, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and geo-engineering **are examples of these flawed solutions, that show how the climate debate has been captured by transnational corporations**. Social movements, civil society and environmental organizations are mobilizing again for the COP 17 in order to reclaim a space of discussion and to demonstrate the existence of real solutions to climate change - *solutions that many peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples around the world are already putting into practice in their everyday lives. Be part of it!*

Together, in order to put an end to violence

The *Global Campaign to End Violence against Women* launched by La Via Campesina in 2008 was strengthened these past years, both through internal and external discussions by organizations. This campaign implies a joint work against violence, altering its nature, which implies the development of plans within organizations that allow analyses, discussions and agreements to take place, where men and women are able to work together to solve this problem and aim to equality. Some of the pillars of this campaign are the eradication of violence against women based on economic dependence, violence against women who can’t decide over their own bodies, violence based on the exclusion of women from political life, and physical and psychological violence exerted on women. In addition, in the framework of the campaign, different types of violence are analyzed and denounced, including state violence and violence caused by the agribusiness model. For more information: <http://radiomundoreal.fm/Voz-Campesina>

Sign on to Rio+20 document!

In June 2012 there will be an important *UN conference in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil on sustainable development* – twenty years after the Earth Summit in 1992. *Agriculture will be one of the most important issues at the conference*. More than 50 organizations have now signed on to a document which put forward some challenges and suggestions for the conference. **Support of Food sovereignty is one of the important points in the document**. Which can be downloaded in English, French, Spanish and German from www.timetoactrio20.org - *Your organization can also sign on to the document on the webpage*.

More information on Rio+20:

The United Nations webpage for the conference: www.uncsd2012.org/
Stakeholder forum (coalition of civil society organizations):

www.earthsummit2012.org

Brazilian civil society committee for the conference:
www.Rio2012.org.br

FAO webpage about Rio 2012: www.fao.org/rio20

UNEP website about green economy: www.unep.org/greeneconomy

Next edition special on **fisheries and climate change** – Send your contributions - news stories, photos, interviews to info@nyeleni.org by the **30th of October!**

To read, listen, watch and share

- *Las relaciones de género en el trabajo productivo y reproductivo*, Lilian Celiberti and Serrana Mesa, 2009, http://ipsnoticias.net/_focus/mujer/IPS_Gender.pdf
- *La Via Campesina in Movement... Food Sovereignty now!*, La Via Campesina, 2011, <http://www.vimeo.com/viacampesina>
- *Women and Food Sovereignty: voices of rural women from the South*, FOEI, 2011 <http://www.foei.org/en/resources/publications/pdfs/2011/women-and-food-sovereignty/view>
- *India vs. Monsanto: seeds of discord*, video at <http://www.france24.com/en/20110921-india-monsanto-gmo-brinjal-bio-piracy-biopiracy-steal-seeds-terminator-cotton-onion-melon-debt-suicide>

For reports and more references www.nyeleni.org

One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk. Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877