



WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN AFRICAN REGIONAL MEETING

REVIEW OF THE AFRICA CONTEXT AND THE WOMEN'S REALITY

11, 18 September & 18 de October 2021

Introduction

The World March of Women Africa held its regional meeting on the 11th and 18th of September, having completed with the election of IC members on the 18th of October.

The meeting used the ZOOM platform as a tool and lasted 3 hours for each session. 24 National Coordinations Bodies were registered, having effectively participated 16 on the first day and 11 on the second day due to constraints in the internet connection, among other difficulties.

All sessions began with a mystique to connect the participants, followed by general information about interpretation and the day's agenda.

Here, we briefly list the main points of the meeting:

Regional and National Context - What are the current challenges and how does WMW organize and respond?

The early exposure of girls and women in Africa to violence results from a patriarchal context that reproduces the acceptance of the prematurity of relationships, which in turn generates a cycle of oppression, from premature unions, teenage pregnancy and early motherhood that perpetuate the instrumentalization of minds and impede the consolidation of political consciousness. The dimension of women's body control and sexuality was pointed out as a common issue, for the reasons explained above, as well as the structural consequences for the exercise of individual rights and freedoms.

Associated with the process of premature instrumentalization of girls and women, the Covid-19 Pandemic exacerbated the weaknesses of health systems, the diversion of the budget from the women's area and social action to Covid programs and military conflicts causing diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS were left unattended. Many pregnant women no longer have access to prenatal care, consultations for healthy children, limited access to contraceptive methods.

Due to the health crisis, governments took restrictive measures that increased the vulnerability of women and girls to violence. Confinement increased the length of stay of women with the aggressors, generating more abuse. In several countries, unwanted pregnancies have been reported among girls and adult women. There was an increase in the burden of women's domestic work, associated with telework in the context of urban areas. The contribution of care work is neither valued nor accounted for at an economic level, it is women's time that becomes invisible. In this way, the capitalist and patriarchal system manipulates women's lives, making us believe that this dedication of women to the family is natural.

Infection with the new coronavirus generated unemployment, weakened purchasing power, in the case of girls in the poorest areas, limited access to supplies such as sanitary towels for menstrual management. The militarization of public space, abuse of police force during the period of implementation of the restrictive measures of Covid-19, led to the detention of women in informal work situations. Persecution of social movements and curtailment of individual liberties, including the right to come and go, using specific laws and decrees based on Covid, limited mobilization actions and street campaigns.

The lives of women in Africa are also affected by the situation of insecurity generated by terrorist attacks, internal conflicts that increase political and social instability. Keeping wars is a mechanism to perpetuate violence against women, because their bodies are used as weapons of war. Violence and sexual exploitation serve as means of expropriation, expansion and domination by patriarchal, capitalist and religious fundamentalism.

The challenges faced by rural women in accessing land, preserving their seeds, preserving food and creating a solidary, transparent and fair market.

The widespread corruption in different countries has inhibited the development process, through the precariousness of public services due to the misuse of public resources. The co-option of the State by business and political elites has eroded its provider role, preventing the implementation of fair and egalitarian public policies to correct structural inequalities. Even in the context of Covid-19, government officials responsible for managing the funds, used it for their own benefit to the detriment of the population. Unemployment and hunger in urban and suburban areas. Prostitution as an alternative to subsist.

In the public space, the representation of women is weak, affected by the patriarchal and capitalist structure that instrumentalizes them, placing them in less strategic and easily manipulated positions. The channels for legitimizing political power are political parties, sexist and conservative spaces. Women are not seen as candidates on an equal footing with men, but as part of an administrative process of inclusion of female participation.

Climate change has negatively impacted the lives of women and girls, their farm spaces and homes destroyed, they do not receive support on an equal basis with men, because their bodies are used as a means of exchange. Climate change is affecting southern Africa to a great extent, making it impossible to practice family farming, which is responsible for food on the table for 90% of the population. Land degradation, and disappearance of biodiversity have a major impact also in other regions of Africa negatively impacting women who are responsible for providing food for families.

How does the WMW organize itself to face the challenges faced?

- Social movements have been organizing themselves in different ways. They have been improving their militancy work and creating movements focused on different issues, reflecting on and seeking solutions to some of the problems.

- The persecution of movements meant that public activities were limited and there was a migration to the digital which, although very effective, reaches few grassroots groups, so it is important to think of alternatives. Mobile phone use is highly encouraged to maintain the communication.
- Where it is possible to bring humanitarian aid to women victims of conflict or COVID-19, we use these mechanisms to bring political content as well.
- Community support for social and economic issues. Women visit each other in small groups about five (5) people and share their difficulties.
- Partnership with progressive local authorities or at least sympathizing with some specific cause of impoverished women and groups.

Savings and credit circles that aim to help women to avoid taking out bank loans. In the communities there are committees on women's issues, where information is shared from the base.

How to strengthen the work of the WMW Africa and our proposals for movement

- There is a need to recuperate the work from the base, mobilize women to get to know or reconnect to the World March of Women. The women of the World March of Women must work together and there must be no discrimination because of tribes, religions, regions of origin and political parties.
- Strengthen Solidarity mechanisms and actions. Expand women's voices through Public Actions of International Solidarity. Those who suffer oppression are unable to make themselves heard for this reason, the others must publicize the cause. For example, the issue of the Western Sahara, where it is necessary that on a specific date all the NCBs in Africa and the world make a reference so that they do not forget what women there are living under occupation.
- We need to work more on regional political formation so that approaches are consolidated and we all the same understanding on the WMW themes. It is important to re-establish consensus about our feminism, how we view patriarchal capitalism. This is only possible by ensuring the routine implementation of the Feminist School as a tool for political formation and strengthening of the movement;

- Choose common themes so that it is easy to follow the same agenda, but also be aware of the need to recognize local agendas.
- Some common themes for the region are, among others: Climate Change, Transnational Corporations, Solidarity Feminist Economy and Violence and Women's Health in the most varied forms.
- The development of communication actions and visibility of good practices, lessons learned that the different member organizations of the World March of Women are carrying out around the world, as a way to mobilize more women to join the Movement; Establish partnerships with some communication channels, to establish a routine in the knowledge socialization process;
- Articulation with other social movements, such as environmentalists, trade unionists to reinforce the political agenda against the patriarchal, capitalist, racist and colonialist system;
- Develop actions to generate income and a solidary and sustainable market as an alternative to the situation of hunger that women are experiencing;

Internal Coordination and Representation

It is necessary to strengthen the coordination and internal communication mechanisms of the World March of Women. We must continue to create sessions where people can learn, share everyday situations and seek solutions to the challenges faced by women, from the point of view of popular feminist education.

Maintain and resume regular national meetings.

Monthly coordination meeting. Expand regional online meetings by uniting the entire region to debate various issues of common interest. It is important to have all region together not just by language.

Reactivate subregional coordinations for effective coordination of routine actions and support the role of representatives of the region in the IC.

Maintain an African communication group, seeking support from NCBs and regions that are more effective in communication.

The difficulties in accessing the Internet for most groups in the region and the need to return to full face-to-face actions were acknowledged, but it is importance to learn to use communication and information technologies and seeking resources to cover the derived costs.

IC members Election.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the IC representatives in Africa were elected.

1. Solange Koné, representing Côte d'Ivoire, renewed her mandate for one more term.
2. Sophia Ogutu from Kenya has ceased her duties, having been elected to the mandate Sophia Ngalapi from Tanzania.
3. The meeting also decided to elect Rita Nyampinga as alternate.

We Resist to Live, We March to Transform