

Empowering and Empowered Women

The global women's movement has brought many significant changes in women's lives. In **Women in Action 1/92**, we highlight some issues and actions that empower women and are initiated by women.

We have included a feature on WOMENET, the international women's communications network formed during the DAWN media workshop in Barbados, an island in the Caribbean. The women's media network will serve as a communication channel for the exchange and sharing of information of women all over the world.

Three companion articles, all coming from South Asia, deal with the concept of feminism and the current problems and ongoing debates about it within the feminist movement. We also have two articles on feminism from Eastern Europe. In contrast to South Asian women's long struggle in the movement and their evolving definitions of feminism based on years of experience, our Eastern European sisters are just beginning to take an active role in the women's movement. Despite this difference, we all share a common cause--a desire to end patriarchy, poverty, underdevelopment and all other forms of oppression, whether it is gender, race, national or state.

Our section, *A Call to Action*, features horror stories on female victims of violence--rape, torture, beating, and clubbing. Maria Elena, Wangari, Kursheed, Veena are all courageous women who stood up and resisted patriarchal institutions. In the case of Maria Elena, it was against an ideological group; in the case of Wangari, Kursheed and Veena, it was against the state. These women have empowered themselves and continue to fight those who wish to disempower them again. Another case is the 14-year old Irish girl who was a victim of rape. She too had the courage to speak about her experience despite the taboo for women to speak about rape and pressures from Ireland's legal system.

We know that they are not the only victims of violence. There are other nameless women who suffer in silence. We express our solidarity with all of them and will be ready to stand by them, should they decide to break out of their silence.

Isis workers brought home first hand accounts of their participation and networking in two international conferences held in Japan and Singapore, respectively. We have also participated in the Interregional consultation for global communicators held here in Manila. Other conferences in this issue are the Isis-WICCE meeting on prostitution and poverty held in Bangkok and the socialism and feminism workshop proceedings from the International Peace Festival in the Philippines. Attendance in conferences of Isis workers is one of the best networking tools, allowing more direct lines of communication with other women.

There is much to celebrate in the women's movement today. We have tried to cover the different stages in its development from old groups from South Asia who continue to seek new ways of practicing feminism to new groups from Eastern Europe who are searching for the meaning of feminism and their role within the women's movement. We celebrate that empowerment is already a reality for many women who have fought and continue to fight for a just and humane society for all of us. 