



In this issue of *WIA*, women farmers and indigenous women, rural and urban poor women, women fish workers, women organisers and activists speak about the impact of the global food crisis on their lives and communities.

They describe how the crisis has aggravated already difficult situations of poverty and how it has been made worse by climate change, the global financial crisis and ever-decreasing access to land and natural resources.

These women, from all corners of the world, also speak about how they are meeting the challenges of the crisis in creative ways. They share their strategies, struggles and solutions for overcoming the crisis. Their responses range from survival strategies and coping mechanisms to empowering initiatives.

These initiatives are not the “success stories” or “best practices” of development projects and programmes. They have arisen from the ground up, from women and their communities themselves. Many of these initiatives point to long-term alternatives for their communities that could be adopted on a wider scale.

While the voices of these women are the heart of this publication, this *WIA* also presents analyses and perspectives on key issues surrounding the food crisis. Several articles propose macro-level alternatives to the neo-liberal economic models that have brought on the crisis.

The opening article, “Inseparable: The Crucial Role of Women in Food Security Revisited,” looks at one of the root causes of the food crisis: lack of knowledge and insufficient promotion of women’s essential contribution to food security. The article ends with the demands of the women farmers who participated in the Rural Women’s Workshop co-organised by Isis International at the time of the World Food Summit in 1996. If the demands of these women farmers had been listened to and acted upon earlier, the food crisis might not have hit women and their families so severely.

In these pages, women from Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America describe how the food crisis is affecting women worldwide. We present a particular look at how it is affecting indigenous women in different parts of the world. These descriptions also give a glimpse of the determination of women in these situations to meet and overcome the challenges of the food crisis.

This issue of *WIA* also presents provocative critiques of the orthodox account of the food price crisis, of trade agreements and of biofuels. An article on the Gift Economy presents an alternative to patriarchal capitalism. This issue is also a first for Cai Yiping as Isis International’s executive director. She shares the challenges of the food crisis for mainland China.

We thank all those who took the time out of their busy lives, struggles and activism to contribute their stories, examples, critiques, views, perspectives and responses to the food crisis. We also thank all those who interviewed women at the grassroots and translated their stories from local languages and dialects. We are grateful to the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) for further linking us with farming communities in the Asian region as well as to Verso Books for allowing us to publish excerpts of Walden Bello’s upcoming provocative book, *Food Wars*.

The voices we present here come from many different countries around the world, including Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Chile, Ecuador, Fiji, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Laos, Nicaragua, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, the USA, and Vietnam.

We place these articles before you in the hope that they will make a difference.

Marilee Karl
Marilee Karl
Guest Editor