



No. 1, 2009 Women in Action

Harvest Reaped but Hard to Reach:

The Food Crisis and
Women in the Global South

The **Isis International Women's House** has been a home for feminists, development workers, scholars and other guests especially those from the global South and traveling on a tight budget.

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Located at the heart of Quezon City, Metro Manila where many local and international organisations hold office, the Isis House is accessible to major public transport systems, shops, laundry services, drug stores, restaurants and banks. Moreover, the staff are friendly and willing to help in every way possible.



For more information, please call us at Tel. +632 928-1956 or e-mail Mrs. Elvie Colobong at elvie@isiswomen.org. You may also visit our website at <http://www.isisinternational.org>



This issue of *WIA* features and analyses the impact of the food crisis on women, especially poor rural women, women farmers and fish workers in the global South. The dominance of grassroots women's views on the crisis, testimonies on their lived experience, reflection on their struggles and hopes in their initiatives are extremely valuable and crucial. This, as much of the analyses on the crisis have come from a rather academic and economic perspective.

The challenge then is how we can go beyond this crisis:

How can we transform these women's voices from different corners of the world and integrate their visions into policy processes at the international, regional, national and community levels? There is still little information on the impact of policies and emergency measures being implemented by the governments on women. We must think of further demands and measures to ensure that women's needs and concerns are being addressed, that their voices are being heard, that their initiatives are considered in the planning and implementation of policies and coping mechanisms.

In this globalised world, no crisis can occur on its own and can be solved without a holistic set of strategies.

Fortunately, several articles in this issue of *WIA* contribute insightful analyses on the inter-linkage of the food crisis with other compounding crises such as the economic, climate and energy crises and its implication on women and the latter's access to social justice. However, there are some issues which are equally important to further discuss and address as these are likely to be aggravated by the food crisis: the right to food in situations of armed conflict and in contested territories. It is hard to imagine how food security can be achieved while some women are raped or even killed on their way to farmland so as to feed themselves and their families.

We thank all those who shared their stories, critiques and perspectives on the food crisis. We also thank our guest editor and Isis International's co-founder Marilee Karl, who has been passionately working on this issue, among many others for decades. Their contributions have made this issue of *WIA* truly empowering.

Cai Yiping
Cai Yiping
Editor-in-Chief

Cai Yiping님께서 기증하셨습니다.



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



Production Team

Editor-in-Chief: **Cai Yiping**
Guest Editor: **Marilee Karl**
Managing Editor: **Nina Somera**
Layout Artist: **Jim Marpa**
Illustrations: **Jim Marpa** and **Nina Somera**
Proofreader: **Annette A. Ferrer**

Contributors

Marilee Karl, Edra Mbatha Kavati,
Denise O'Brien, Anahit Gharibyan,
Bernedette Muthien, Magda Lanuza,
Kong Sokchhoin, Oamjie John, Nuruddin,
Ryoko Tsuboi, Mela Gipanao, Tran Thi Lanh,
Nina Somera, Eleanor P. Dictaan-Bang-oa,
Maria Eugenia Chavez, Reihana Mohideen,
Genevieve Vaughan, Montawadee
Krutmechai, Varantorn Keawtankam,
Esther Penunia, Walden Bello and
Elenita C. Daño

Editorial Committee

Cai Yiping, Executive Director
Bianca Miglioretto, **Precy Obja-an** and
Nina Somera, Community and
Independent Media Programme
Marion Bernadette Cabrera,
Coordinator, Governance,
Communications and Democracy
Programme

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and Honorary Chairperson

ISIS INTERNATIONAL

Write to:
Women in Action (WIA)
Isis International
P.O. Box 1837, Quezon City Main
Quezon City 1100, Philippines
communications@isiswomen.org

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contents

EDITORIAL EDITORIAL NOTE FEATURES

Inseparable: The Crucial Role of Women in Food Security Revisited

Marilee Karl

8

Hunger in the United States

Denise O'Brien

23

Stories of Survival at the Margins of Manila

Nina Somera

61

The Fading Food of Indigenous Peoples

Eleanor P. Dictaan-Bang-oa

66

When Women are Badly Bruised by the Bubble

Reihana Mohideen

80

Curing the Crisis in the Crevices of the Communities

Nina Somera

86

Biofuels: False Solution, Disastrous Consequences

Elenita C. Daño

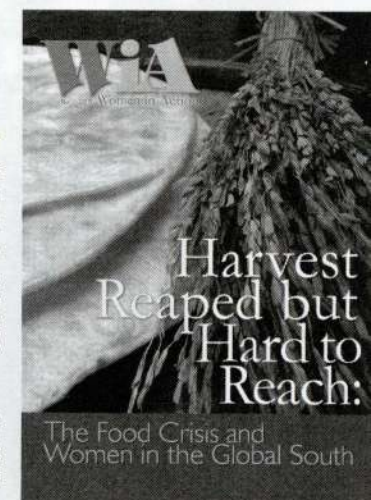
112

On the cover

Harvest Reaped but
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contents



TALKING POINTS

- 20** **Mired in Mathare**
Edra Mbatha Kavati
- 29** **Creative Responses to the Crisis**
- 30** **ATP is Planting Armenia's Future**
Anahit Gharibyan
- 33** **Secret Gardens of South Africa**
Bernadette Muthien
- 36** **Learning the Coffee Crunch in Nicaragua**
Magda Lanuza
- 40** **Pursuing Organic Farming in Cambodia**
Kong Sokchhoin
- 42** **Fisherwomen in Kerala Fight Back**
Oamjie John
- 48** **A Case for Cassava in East Nusa Tenggara**
Nuruddin
- 50** **When Survival of the Self is the Survival of Others**
Ryoko Tsuboi
- 53** **Bracing the Burdens of Bulan**
Mela Gipanao

- Behind the Semblance of Abundance** **56**
Nina Somera
- Productivity in Peace, Diversity in Dialogue** **58**
Tran Thi Lanh
- Rescuing the Pacha Mama (Mother Earth)** **73**
Maria Eugenia Chavez
- The Gift Economy** **92**
Genevieve Vaughan
- Bound Up: Women and Alternative Agriculture** **96**
Montawadee Krutmechai and Varatorn Keawtankam
- Accessing and Accounting ASEAN** **100**
Esther Penunia

ONE ON ONE

- The Secrets in Feeding China** **77**
Interview with Cai Yiping
- WE'VE GOT MALE**
- The Orthodox Account of the Food Price Crisis: A Critique** **105**
Walden Bello

COMMUNITY AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

- Alternative Airwaves for Agriculture** **120**
Nina Somera

