

Women and farmers campaign for food sovereignty

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Selingue, a small Malian village near the border with Guinea, is hosting Nyelini 2007 - Forum for Food Sovereignty from 23 to 27 February. The meeting has been organized by Via Campesina, World March of Women, Friends of the Earth and other fisherfolk, pastoralist and consumer organizations. The event is being held in Mali, one of the poorest countries in Africa, in a rural setting in order to be able to discuss agriculture and food in context and to create consistency between proposals and practical methods for achieving food sovereignty.

As Paul Nicholson, of Via Campesina, explained during the opening of the event, Nyelini 2007 - Forum for Food Sovereignty has three main aims: to discuss how the different groups meeting at Selingue define food sovereignty, to strengthen alliances and to create dialogue on the subject between different sectors and countries, and to build common strategies for action among the wide range of organizations present. Mr Nicholson particularly stressed that it is not a typical social forum but that it has a different methodology; the delegates have been specifically invited to participate and it has specific long-term aims and strategies.

Delegates will focus on seven central themes (e.g. international trade and local markets, technology, access to natural resource, the right to land, production models). The agenda for action and the final declaration will be approved by the different sectors participating in the forum: farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, consumers and indigenous people.

Women take the floor

The day before the forum began (22 February), a women's meeting organized by World March of Women was held at the same venue. The meeting had two specific aims: to discuss women's opinions about food sovereignty and to make joint contributions to the Nyelini 2007 forum. The women paid tribute to the legend of Nyelini, a Malian peasant woman who campaigned to assert herself as a woman in an unfavourable environment.

Delegates from Korea, Mali, Swaziland, the Philippines, France and many other countries took the floor to blame capitalism for violations of women's rights. As Miram Nobre, of World March of Women, pointed out, "Women are responsible for providing water, food and fire in the home. They have a series of invisible jobs that have been made even more difficult by capitalism."
