

# IVth International Women's Assembly for the construction of a peasant-based and popular feminism

It evaluates its global campaign to 'Stop the Violence Against Women'

Sunday 9 June 2013, by [La Via Campesina](#) (Date first published: 8 June 2013).

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(Jakarta, June 7, 2013) Cheers of "Hooray for peasant women! We are the mothers of food sovereignty!" launched the IV Women's Assembly of La Vía Campesina. The memory of María do Fetal, who died last year as a victim of violence, has been taken up again at this Assembly, which will also stress the importance of ending violence against women of the country and the city.

Today began a day of debate, in which more than 300 peasant women from every corner of the world have gathered, and in which the context of the crisis and capitalism and its consequences for women were analyzed.

Following the conferences in India in 2000, Brazil in 2004 and Mozambique in 2008, the meeting in Indonesia will focus on patriarchy, feminism and the construction of a peasant-based and popular feminism that recognizes the diversity of the women who are part of La Vía Campesina. Today begin two days of significant debate over their fights, their challenges and their aspirations, under the slogan "Sowing the seeds of action and hope, for feminism and food sovereignty!"

Elisabeth Mpofo, representative from the Organization of Small-scale Farmers of Zimbabwe, has condemned "the effects of capitalism that has influenced the Free Trade Agreements and has given rise to the deregulation that harms alternative development". She has also insisted that the "crisis of capitalism has taken it out on the poorest, especially on women of the country, snatching away their access to quality markets and products". "The financial policies imposed by the West have negatively affected the food sovereignty of the local communities, increasing the differences between rich and poor".

During the panels, numerous references have been made to the defence of natural resources, acknowledging that the acceleration of climate change increases the suffering of the villages. In addition, attention has been drawn to the peasants for their strategic role as the driving forces of community values and food sovereignty.

Throughout the day, working groups have convened in which debates over how patriarchy and capitalism affect women's lives have taken place. In addition, testimonials and experiences of women from Asia, Africa, America, Europe and Palestine have been presented.

The assembly will continue tomorrow with two roundtables on the political and organizational process for the women of La Vía Campesina and on the campaign Stop Violence against Women. An action plan will also be drafted by continents, with an agenda of common fights and actions, as well as training, communication and exchanges.

The mistica will be present on both days of the Assembly, to represent and express the confidence in achieving common goals, beyond cultures, the importance of coordinating the fights of the peasant men and women of the world in this historical moment.

This morning the day began with traditional dances and songs from Indonesia, and the day will end with the screening of the video “Peasant Women” created by LaVía Campesina, which acknowledges the political and leading role over the movement’s 20 years of struggle and action.

The experiences and points of view from the World March of Women have been narrated, including the condemnation of the violence exerted by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, promoting the campaign Stop Violence against Women.

Tomorrow the closing of the IV International Women’s Assembly will be led by peasant women from Asia and Africa. Before that, a final declaration will be presented, in which the women will expose their alternative proposal for confronting neoliberalism, and above all, the strategies for fighting against patriarchy.

Over the coming days, a total of 500 people, peasant men and women, small- and medium-scale farmers, landless peoples, women farmers, indigenous peoples, immigrants and farm workers from around the world will be participating in the VI Conference of La Vía Campesina, which aims to strengthen the movement, the alliances, as well as go more deeply into debates such as the right to food sovereignty, the right to land and the fight against capital and the neoliberal model.

### **Campaign Stop Violence against Women**

Tomorrow the IV International Women’s Assembly will re-launch the campaign “Stop Violence against Women”, which was propelled by La Vía Campesina 4 years ago. It is one of the most daring and significant campaigns that has established itself as an international peasants’ movement, and is the result of a process of discussion and debate that materialised during the V Conference of La Vía Campesina in Maputo in 2008.

The goal is to condemn the violence faced by women, based on discrimination against class, gender, ethnicity and sex, which is worse for women in rural areas, and seeks to reinforce the commitment to building new gender relations within La Vía Campesina.

### **Communication team of La Via Campesina**

\* Published on Friday, 07 June 2013 10:58.

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**Women’s Assembly evaluates its global campaign to ‘Stop the Violence Against**

## **Women' and makes plans for the future**

(Jakarta, June 7,2013) The global campaign pioneered by La Via Campesina to Stop the Violence against Women is celebrating its fifth anniversary. The last five years have seen significant advances, the fruit of all the work and struggle that women have put into this campaign in all the regions which have taken it on board.

The campaign was born in 2008 with the aim of putting an end to all forms of violence against rural women. Now, five years later, around 300 women peasants and small-scale farmers from around the world have met in Jakarta under the banner of the Fourth Women's Assembly of La Via Campesina, which today has been discussing how to continue the campaign in each region.

### **Remembering Maria Do Fetal**

The IVth Women's Assembly pays homage to Maria Do Fetal, who was murdered by her boyfriend in the city of São Paulo last January. A Portuguese citizen living in Brazil, she had been involved in supporting the Landless Peasants' Movement (MST) and La Via Campesina in Brazil and internationally. Amongst many other activities, Maria was part of the interpreters' team for La Via Campesina's Fifth International Conference in Mozambique in 2008. She was actively involved in the Campaign to Stop Violence against Women, and as an interpreter participated in many of La Via Campesina's other activities. We pay homage to her in this Sixth Conference - she is present in all our hearts.

### **Taking the campaign strategy forward in the regions**

Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon which cuts through all social classes, regions, sexual orientations and generations. La Via Campesina, as an organisation which brings together more than 150 local and national organisations in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, provides the opportunity for women from different regions to share their visions. In this Fourth Women's Assembly regional groups have been working to progress with a strategy for the coming years which could reinforce and give continuity to the campaign against violence in all countries. "It is important that La Via Campesina continues to deepen the analysis contained in the document we wrote previously, which was about the evolution of the struggle against violence against women globally", explained Juana Ferer Paredes, a Via Campesina activist from the Dominican Republic. As Paredes made clear, it is essential that this material can serve as a point of reference for the struggle and for La Via Campesina's internal process. "Within our organisations we need to talk more about feminism and what it can contribute, so that we can make progress towards the goal of equality between women and men.", Paredes remarked.

### **Stopping the violence against women in Asia**

"What we wish for is that women can live in peace, in their neighbourhoods, in their families and in their countries". Mazdalifah, from North Sumatra

Mazdalifah, a woman peasant from North Sumatra, gave us an analysis of the situation facing women in Asia. Mazdalifah is actively involved with La Via Campesina's women activists, and is implementing the campaign to stop violence against women in Asia. "The campaign was launched in South Korea in 2008, working together with the Korean Peasant Women's Association", Mazdalifah related. "We facilitated training for peasant women around the campaign's main themes, and in Malaysia, for example we also tackled the issue of land defence". In Indonesia itself, Mazdalifah explained, the campaign was started on World Food Day in 2010, at an action about rice. The campaign was recently launched in East Timor, where women and children continue to live in

subhuman conditions, whilst multinational companies have occupied a lot of land to produce petroleum”.

Mazdalifah also explained the difficult situation facing women in Thailand, where they are obliged to work from a very young age onwards, and receive no protection from the state. “Domestic violence takes place in a third of households in China, which comes to 270 million families”, she added. These figures are cause for serious concern, Mazdalifah explained, stressing the importance of putting an end to all forms of violence by bringing the message to all women and men”. The message needs to be put in a way which will resonate with the general public, otherwise the campaign will never manage to achieve its aim. Mazdalifah believes that it is important to adjust to the local customs of the people we are trying to reach, which will be different in each region.

One of the resolutions was to reaffirm the 8<sup>th</sup> of March as the International Day of Women’s Struggle, and the 25<sup>th</sup> of November as the Day of Action against Violence towards Women.

### **The communication team of La Via Campesina**

\* Published on Saturday, 08 June 2013 22:33.

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## **LVC opens its 6<sup>th</sup> Global Conference and 20 year anniversary with the Womens’ Assembly**

(Jakarta, 6<sup>th</sup> June of 2013) La Via Campesina (LVC), the international peasants’ movement, will inaugurate its 6<sup>th</sup> Global conference and celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its struggle with the Women’s Assembly starting at 8:00 AM on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June at the Padepokan Pencak Silat Indonesia, Taman Mini, Jakarta.

The Women’s Assembly is a space created by LVC to give visibility to the role and vision of rural women in the peasants’ struggle. Since its birth, Via Campesina has sought to encourage women’s participation at all levels and to eradicate all types of gender discrimination. As Nettie Wiebe, a leader of the National Farmer’s Union in Canada points out -“Women have been key participants and leaders in La Via Campesina. In fact, the role of women is part of what makes our movement unique both in the history of peasant movements and among other international social movements and organizations.”

Many advances have been made such as a mandatory 50% representation of women in all decision-making bodies and activities of the movement, a global campaign to stop violence against women, training schools in some regions, and alliances with other women’s movements. “Women are not anymore a small part or topic in the Movement - we are a totality. We understand that making this change is part of the political maturity necessary to face the many challenges of the next period.” said Itelvina Masioli, leader of the Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Peoples movement) in Brazil.

Women and men from more than 76 countries and various allied movements will attend the colorful women’s assembly. They will discuss patriarchy, the global capitalist crisis and its impact upon women’s lives, as well as the need for greater gender consciousness and respect for women’s leadership in La Via Campesina itself. The assembly will also celebrate the fourth anniversary of LVC’s global campaign to stop violence against women and further build upon it.

At the end of the assembly, the women will launch a political declaration and an action plan to strengthen women's role and participation at all the levels of the movement.

LVC has created a short film on the women's role in the 20 years of LVC which will be distributed at the women's assembly. It has also published a booklet to explain, and create a debate about, violence against women which can be downloaded here:

<http://www.viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/en/Cartilha-VCSudamérica-ingles-18set12.pdf>.

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\* <http://viacampesina.org/en/>