



## **RURAL WOMEN'S DECLARATION RIGHTS, EMPOWERMENT AND LIBERATION**

**2 August 2007  
MANILA, PHILIPPINES**

We, 52 women from 14 countries representing peasants, agricultural workers, indigenous women, Dalit women, workers and migrants met in Manila from 31<sup>st</sup> July to 2 August 2007 to assert our rights to self determination, secure livelihoods, land and productive resources, just wages, health, food sovereignty, and democracy.

The process of globalization has disempowered rural and indigenous women. This process driven by G8 countries, perpetuated by the WTO, bilateral and regional trade agreements, sustained by International Financial Institutions such as World Bank and IMF benefits the landlords, elites and TNCs. This present imperialist dominated economic and political processes have intensified patriarchy and fundamentalism that has increased the oppression and violence on women.

TNCs are controlling and exploiting women's and local knowledge, water and fishing resources, patenting seeds, poisoning land and food and harming women's health and the environment. In collusion with governments, TNCs are grabbing agricultural land to pave the way for corporate agriculture, contract farming and commercial projects that do not benefit the people. These projects are forcibly displacing peasants and indigenous women from their land and robbing them of their livelihoods consequently causing increased hunger, malnutrition and accelerating poverty.

We demand land for women and access to and control of productive resources such as seeds, water, and forest and pasture lands. We call for the elimination of pesticides, genetically engineered seeds and patents on life and the promotion of organic and biodiversity based ecological agriculture. 'Development projects' that oppress rural women such as dams, mining, corporate agriculture, contract farming, and sex and health tourism, industrial aquaculture should be ceased immediately.

Caste discrimination and class exploitation are eroding the right to life of Dalit women and children. Dalit women are treated as untouchable, sexually exploited, and given menial jobs in society and face daily violence, atrocities, harassment by the dominant caste. Entrenched patriarchy, religious and dominant cultural fundamentalism is denying Dalit women the right to land, political power and equal status. We call for the end of caste system and untouchability practices.

Ancestral lands and resources belonging to indigenous women and their communities are being taken over by industries like mining, logging, energy projects, bio fuel production and agro-industries. Traditional knowledge and practices which have kept indigenous women self sufficient are being destroyed by commercialization and monopoly control. Displaced from their economic base that exacerbates poverty and absence of social services, women are forced to migrate internally and abroad, thus losing the protection that their communities provide them. This migration is alienating indigenous women from the right to self-determination, and from their ancestral land, culture and value systems. Imperialist globalization indeed is causing ethnocide among indigenous women, their children and their communities. We call for the end to grabbing of ancestral lands and other resources, and demand for rights to self determination.

Globalization processes have caused the greatest destruction of formal and regular work worldwide. The strategy of flexibilization of labour has further pushed workers into informal work. Informal workers are vulnerable to greater exploitation and abuse as they are not covered by labour laws which guarantee their right to organize, collectively bargain and other labour and trade

union rights. We have and we will continue to organize and form genuine women workers movements. We demand decent wages, humane working conditions, secure work, right to health and safety at work, right to organize, to collective bargaining and right to association.

Forced migration and trafficking of women driven by global market economy and the consequent rural crisis is subjecting women to increased violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination and criminalization, further denying rights as workers and as migrants. The remittances of migrant workers have sustained the economy of governments and have become the policy of national governments, encouraged by World Bank through structural adjustment and debt payment and the UN. We demand the end of forced migration kept in place by the agenda of corporations and governments. For migrant workers now, we demand protection of all rights including the right to stay or move with dignity.

The increasing privatization of the health sector has led to rural women having no access to accurate and appropriate health information and comprehensive and affordable health services. This is accelerated by entrenched patriarchal norms and the negligence of governments. Rural women suffer from pregnancy- and childbirth-related deaths and disabilities, unsafe abortion, HIV/AIDS, reproductive cancers, and physical and sexual violence. Rural women have limited access to safe and nutritious food and are forced to endure dangerous labour conditions – all of which leave them ill, injured and malnourished. Asian rural women assert health rights including sexual and reproductive rights, control over bodies, ending the exploitative use of sex selective and other reproductive technologies. Rural women demand right to decide on contraception, marriage, pregnancy and child birth, and education.

Militarization and the US-led global “war on terror”, closely implemented by national governments and new repressive legislation are being used to suppress people’s resistance and legitimate demands, destroying natural resources, homes and livelihoods. In the guise of security, repressive governments are carrying out extrajudicial killings and the forced disappearances of men, women and children. Ethnic conflicts and civil wars are causing forced displacement of thousands of people. Women in conflict areas are raped as a tool of war, killed, and forced to “service” the armed forces and in extreme circumstances victims of genocide. War of aggression has no place in our society and we demand end to all state- led wars and for justice for human right defenders and affected communities. We call for the removal of all US bases in Asia, and prioritise budget allocations for food production, education and health, social services and empowerment of women over military budgets.

Rural women continue to resist imperialist globalization, fundamentalism, patriarchy, caste and all forms of discrimination and violence, feudalism, militarization and undemocratic governments. We will strengthen our movements and consolidate our voices for economic, social, cultural and political changes at the local, national, and global level. We assert all rights for empowerment and liberation. In solidarity, we call on all sectors and people’s movements to join us in this struggle as we move towards the Rural Women’s Conference in Chennai in March 2008 for Rights, Empowerment and Liberation. Long Live Rural Women’s Solidarity!!!

**Rights, Empowerment and Liberation**  
**Rural Women’s Declaration**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007**  
**Manila, Philippines**