

WOMAN

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Struggle

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MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS IN GRENADA

The Ministry of Women's Affairs of Grenada, established one year ago, represents the first of its kind in CARICOM.

Under Minister Cde. Jacqueline Creft, the Ministry developed out of a small women's desk set up by the People's Revolutionary Government within the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs.

Because of the Government's emphasis on human resource development, considerable resources have been allocated to the new Ministry in the form of finance, personnel and training.

In keeping with the general aim of making the promotion of women's affairs a national effort, the Ministry works closely with various other ministries and departments - as well as with a number of agencies, trade unions and mass organizations - in executing programmes to benefit women and integrate them more fully into the social and economic development of Grenada.

Scotilda, Newsletter of the National
Women's Organization of Grenada -
June 10, '83.

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REUNION'S UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

The French colony of Reunion has 500,000 inhabitants and the main concern of the population is the 50,000 officially registered unemployed. It is estimated that a calculation of the non-registered unemployed would bring the figure to 80,000, which 66 per cent are women.

One of the main causes is the economic crisis in capitalist countries which has rippled into the Third World. In addition, traditional discrimination against women in Reunion have led to an education system which leaves the women ill-prepared for supporting themselves and their families. In the family, tasks are differentiated. Women are expected to do housework while the men go out to work.

The education of boys is far more important in Reunion - school fees are very high, so that families with a low income can only provide for the education of boys at great sacrifices. This sacrifice is seldom made for girls.

Women do the most inferior and lowest paid jobs in Reunion. To escape the degrading situation, they often emigrate to France in search of employment opportunities. But, there, they must cope with the difficulties of living in exile and their work is still the most inferior. Many of them must become prostitutes to survive.

The Women's Union of Reunion considers work to be a fundamental right of humanity, connected to the right to self-determination. The Union is fighting for the reorganization of the education system so that all have an equal chance to secure worthwhile jobs, as well as improved conditions of service for working women.

Women of the World, No: 4, 1982

IMPROVED HEALTH CARE IN DELHI'S SLUMS

A 1981 census put the population of India at 684 million. Of these 27.7 per cent people live in towns and cities. Delhi alone now has a population of about 6.2 million, with an overall density of 4,178 persons per square kilometre. Health care problems are imaginable.

In years past, health care in Delhi was confined to providing curative services to the more 'important' segments of the population. With the growth of the city as an administrative centre, authorities have recognized the need for an accompanying growth in the medical services.

The slums of Delhi, which had been neglected in the past, are now to benefit from a programme in which primary health care systems are being set up and old ones expanded.

The almost inevitable managerial, financial and technical problems have already arisen. Too many authorities exist which deal with different aspects of health care and inter-agency co-ordination is difficult. But the authorities are determined that the underprivileged sections of the city are to have improved health care - the Delhi Administration has evolved to carry out an integrated action plan for health care.

Other services provided to the slums include the improvement of sanitary facilities, paving of footpaths, street lights, day care centres and the extension of adult literacy programmes. The members of the community play an integral part in the execution of the improvement projects.

World Health, WHO, July 1983

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A MOTHER'S STRENGTH

Jerry Mosoli died because of what he believed in life and continued to believe up to the moment of his death.

Seven hundred people from all over Cape Town, South Africa gathered and paid tribute to Jerry and to the other two ANC members executed in July 1983. Mrs. Mosoli, Jerry's mother spoke to the gathering.

She told the story of how Jerry Mosoli had left in 1967 and she had not seen nor heard of him until June 1982 when she heard and then read that three young men had been arrested for their affiliation with the banned African National Congress, including her son. Mrs. Mosoli visited her son in Pretoria, and saw him - for the first time in six years - in chains. She said, "In his condition, I held back my tears, I did not want to upset him."

Mrs. Mosoli followed the case and trial and she told the gathering that she was strengthened by her son's determination and the fact that he thought that what he was doing was his decision and that it was right.

The message of Mrs. Mosoli, as is the message of the ANC, is "Don't Mourn, Mobilize." The Cape Town gathering sang a song of praise of her strength.

Outwrite No: 16, July 1983

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THE SWAPO WOMEN OF NAMIBIA

Namibian women are oppressed by colonialism and by patriarchal traditions and attitudes dating back to pre-colonial society, and persisting even today.

Along with the negative effect of contract labour which puts extra work pressure on women, the Namibian men retain a semi-feudal mentality towards women and their roles. These attitudes are being struggled against in the process of national liberation.

With colonialism, fewer men are involved in cultivation than before. Increasingly, they must go into the urban centres as cheap labourers in the colonialist's mining, fishing and ranching industries. Namibian rural women have even harder times than before.

In 1960 SWAPO, the national liberation movement, was formed. The participation of women was at first very small. In the 1970s the women of Namibia began to take a very active part in the organizing of meetings and rallies, and today they are found at every level of the movement's structure.

January 1980 was the first Consultative Congress of the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC) held in Angola. The SWC is committed to ensuring that after the liberation struggle, women are not left out of participation in the government which they helped to bring about.

ISIS International Bulletin No: 19 -
"Women in National Liberation
Movements."

This issue of WOMAN STRUGGLE edited by Grace Barrett, a final-year student of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communications, UWI.

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ONE VICTORY IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is a problem women face from day to day in their places of work and even in the home. Hardly do women have the power to resist or protest, and rarely do trade unions take the problem seriously enough to offer the women support.

However, recently in Liverpool, England, there occurred one victory in the battle against sexual harassment.

Audrey White, manager of a boutique, lost her job when she protested about the sexual harassment of her staff. She organized trade union support and, after a well supported campaign, won her fight.

Outwrite No: 16, July 1983

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WHEN IS AN AIR HOSTESS TOO OLD?

Past regulations of Air India and Indian Airlines deemed an air hostess 'too old' at age 35, the age for retirement. There are also discriminatory practices of dismissal of air hostesses who marry or have children.

The Supreme Court of India delivered a judgement in the case of air hostesses which entitles them to continue to work up to the age of 45 instead of 35, and orders the management to amend the existing regulations. The earlier regulations on dismissal were deemed "unconstitutional" by the court.

The chief air hostess of Indian Airlines presented a writ petition to the Supreme Court on the grounds that the airline's management discriminated against women. Male cabin attendants, married or single, and fathers of children, continued in service.

Women at Work, No: 2, 1982

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TECHNICAL CO-OP PROJECT FOR WOMEN IN UPPER VOLTA

The National Women's Organization in Upper Volta has implemented a UNESCO technical co-operation project for women.

The purpose of the project was to build an education centre to accommodate girls from rural areas who had some formal schooling, but needed additional skills to prepare them for gainful employment. Courses at the centre include nutrition, baby care and typing, among others. Training courses last from one to four weeks.

Financial assistance comes from various sources including the Ministry for Economic Co-operation which is responsible for development aid. However, assistance for the completion of the building was received from the Federal Republic of Germany.

Women at Work, No: 2, 1982.

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EXECUTION OF BAHA'I WOMEN

Shiraz, south of Iran, was the scene of the execution of ten Baha'i women in June of this year. The group included women between the ages of 18 and 54.

The women were arrested for teaching and spreading Baha'i religious beliefs to children, and condemned to death. Constant pressure was placed upon them to renounce their faith, but they refused.

Discrimination against, and punishment of, holders of the Baha'i faith has been very severe in Iran. Baha'i families are excluded from food rationing and their property is confiscated. The basis of Ayatollah Khomeini's hostility to this religion is its less discriminating attitude towards women.

Baha'i women are considered equal to men and are allowed an education and employment. They do not have to wear a veil, and there is no sexual segregation in the Baha'i religious circles.

Such is the "crime" of being a Baha'i woman in Iran.

Outwrite, No: 16, July 1983.

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MOTHERHOOD FOR THE SRI LANKAN PLANTATION WORKER

The pregnant Tamil woman, who works on a tea plantation in Sri Lanka, gets only two weeks off from work before confinement - doing physically demanding work for eight and a half months of her pregnancy.

After the child is born, the woman gets three weeks off. No time is given for her to breast-feed the child. She must resort to an expensive breast-milk substitute, which may prove disastrous for her child under unsanitary conditions.

The mother must travel long distances from her place of work to the creche where the child is left with women barely able to converse in the mother's tongue.

For the Tamil child, life is nurtured in deprivation.

ISIS International Bulletin, No: 23

- "Motherhood"

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THE BREAST IS STILL BEST

The combination of poor women, insanitary conditions, and costly breast milk substitutes mixed with dirty water has disastrous results for the child. Laws have been passed in many places to curb the marketing of breast milk substitutes but this has not been enough. The trend has arisen from a variety of factors associated with modern living.

The World Health Organization has recently published a booklet entitled "Women and Breast-feeding." The theme is that every woman has the right to breast-feed her children, but society must provide the services and support she needs. The conflict facing women is between her own needs, which may be met through employment, and the needs of her child. Hardly any provisions have been made for the reconciliation of these needs. Many rural women in the Third World must travel long distances to earn a living and can neither carry the child with them nor keep it at the workplace.

The author suggests that women should gain greater control of breast-feeding promotion, by increasing their involvement in policy-making and programmes and their representation in public bodies.

"Women and Breast-feeding" can be obtained (in English and French) from:

Division of Family Health or
Division of Public Information and Education for Health
World Health Organization
1211 Geneva 27
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World Health, World Health Organization,
July 1983.

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We invite your comments and suggestions.