

CARFA NEWS.

NEWSLETTER OF THE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH AND ACTION.



CAFRA NEWS.

CAFRA News is the quarterly newsletter and primary networking tool of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA).

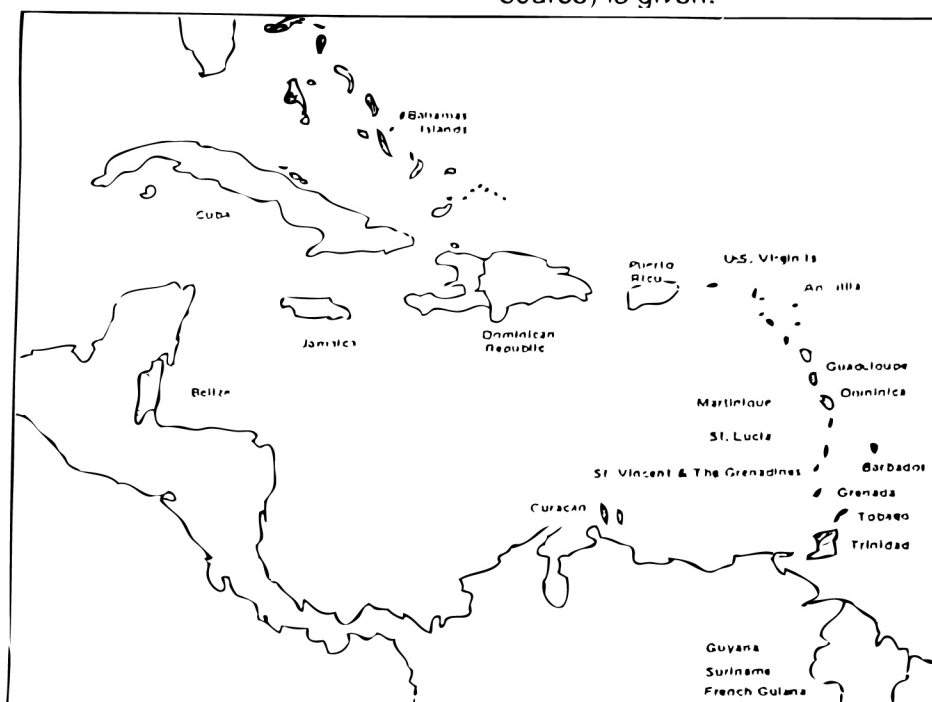
Its main purposes are to:

- Inform members and other interested persons about the activities and programmes of the association;
- Provide a forum for discussion and debate on key issues of concern to women in the region;
- Promote the sharing of experiences and foster links among individual feminists, activists and women's organisations;

- Assist in breaking down language barriers in the region;
- Stimulate women's creative expression; and
- Contribute to the development of the women's movement regionally and internationally.

We welcome letters, articles, poems, reviews, opinions and artwork for editorial evaluation and selection. The newsletter committee has a final right to edit content and to reject material not appropriate for publication, e.g. that does not further the aims and objectives of CAFRA and promote a spirit of sisterhood; or that is racist, sexist or "maternalist". Individual authors and reviewers are solely responsible for views and opinions expressed in published articles.

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Editor's Note

CAFRA News is now established as a quarterly publication, with four copies in English being produced each year" in-house" by the desk-top publishing method on CAFRA's computer, and a Spanish version which will be coming on stream from this month.

The newsletter team needs your help in improving the standard of CAFRA News and giving it a truly regional voice. It is key that members throughout the region and beyond become more involved in as many aspects of the newsletter as possible, including the following:

1. Content

You can play a much more active role in determining the contents of the newsletter. Writing original articles is one important way, but contributing does not necessarily have to involve writing on the part of the sender. You can clip articles from the press for the 'News, News, News' section; send graphics (something we are always looking for) and photos; persuade national level organisations to send in information about themselves for 'Carifem Update'; and so on.

We also need ideas and suggestions on the way the newsletter should progress.

Articles can be sent by fax to the University of the West Indies (809-663-9684), Attention: CAFRA.

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2. Translation Skills

Since a version of the newsletter is now being produced in Spanish (Novedades CAFRA), we need to set up a network of women around the region who can translate from one language to the other, as well as from French to either/both. Please let us know if you have these skills - you would only be asked to translate one or two articles per quarter. Again, fax will be the quickest method of communication.

3. Financial Support

The World Council for Christian Communication (WACC) is providing in-part funding for CAFRA News for 1990. The newsletter is also supposed to be supported by membership fees and subscriptions, but the reality is that many members are owing dues, and a number of individuals and organisations who could pay for their subscriptions do not. We would like to appeal to you to **PAY UP**. Another way in which you can help is to encourage other women and/or organisations to subscribe to the newsletter. We would also like to suggest sustaining contributions for those who can afford it. (US\$50 or \$100).

With such a far-flung membership, the association's newsletter becomes a vital organ of communication. Your input in that process is needed.

F^{eedback}

Getting Inspiration

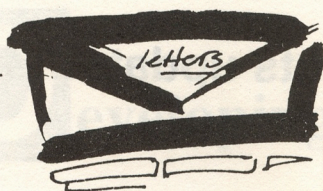
CAFRA News Vol. 3 No. 3 (Sept-Nov. 1989) was very good. The variety of articles was both stimulating and informative. I was particularly happy to read the article by Peggy Antrobus on "Impact of Structural Adjustment Policies on Women". As a feminist and an economist, it inspires me to write about our women's movement in Jamaica. The strategies proposed are worth discussing further and should inform our work as activists. I hope that this thrust of theoretical discussion can be continued in the pages of CAFRA News.

The magazine grows from strength to strength. Keep up the good work.

Annie Bonner, Jamaica

Military Madness

ONCE AGAIN THE CLAWS OF MILITARY MADNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS STRUCK A SOVEREIGN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY. PANAMA IS PRESENTLY BEING BOMBED BY THE US ARMY. PANAMANIAN AND AMERICAN MOTHERS ARE NOW MOURNING DUE TO THE DEATH OF THEIR BELOVED. LET US TAKE UNITED ACTION IN ORDER TO AVOID A NEW VIETNAM IN OUR HEMI-



letters

SPHERE. PEACE AND JUSTICE
LIE IN OUR HANDS.

*Continental Women's Front
Against US Intervention in Central
America and the Caribbean.*

Integrating Women

The National Council on Women and Development of Ghana was established in 1975 as the official machinery to advise government on issues related to the advancement of women, and to develop programmes for women's integration in national development at all levels.

Our information/documentation centre was set up at that time, and it has continued to collect and disseminate information on a wide variety of topics related to women and development.

We are at present expanding and enhancing our collection and services. To assist us further, we would appreciate your sending us your periodical CAFRA News.

*Ms. A. B. Boeteng, P.O. Box M53,
Accra, Ghana.*

Building Solidarity

The Guelph International Resource Centre is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. We are a community based group that promotes awareness of international development and "Third World" issues. We do

various presentations to schools, churches and to the community.

We are interested in receiving your newsletter. We are at present in the process of developing a Women and Development programme. This will be an issue oriented programme that will draw parallels between the lives of women in the Third World and women in Canada. We hope to show that even though we as women live in developed or less developed countries, we still suffer under the patriarchal system. We hope to establish some "action" component of the programme which will include building solidarity with women in Guelph and in developing countries.

*Shehnaz Ali, Guelph International
Resource Centre, 34 Essex
Street, Guelph, Ontario, Canada
N1H 3K3.*

Representing the Diaspora

I am very happy to be selected as the Diaspora Representative of CAFRA, although I am not sure what my duties are apart from attending meetings. It was regrettable that I was unable to attend the meeting (of the Regional Committee), but I have placed it on my calendar for next year.

I have enclosed a copy of my vita, and will gladly furnish you with any other information that would be useful for you to have regarding my role in CAFRA. I have always

tried to maintain close contact with the struggles of Caribbean as so much of who and what I am is shaped by that identity.

*Opal Palmer Adisa, P.O. Box
10625, Oakland, CA 94610, USA.*

Need for Support

We have recently started to offer a popular education workshop on 'Media and Influences on Attitudes' (and the link to violence). The workshop uses popular theatre techniques, and has attracted much interest - in fact, we have received more requests than we can deal with.

To respond to so many requests, we have to try as an urgent matter to consolidate some sort of infrastructure - a space with a phone and typewriter as a minimum. Until now we have survived out of members' bedrooms, pockets and briefcases! And with much support from overburdened typewriters belonging to Sistren, Caribbean Conference of Churches, etc.

Since sexual violence is high on CAFRA's agenda, we hope that you will keep us in mind and give us ANY kind of support you can.

*Women's Media Watch, P.O. Bag
344, Stony Hill, Kingston 9,
Jamaica*

Diverse activities

projects update

The 'Women's History and Creative Expression' project is expected to hold two practical workshops this year. The first is to be held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines from March 30-April 5. This workshop will be on 35mm photography. It will combine theory on the use of camera and darkroom as well as hands-on practical experiences both in shooting pictures in different settings and developing black and white film.

The second workshop is expected to be on video production, to be held during the second half of the year if CAFRA is able to secure the necessary funds.

.At present we are also

investigating the book distribution system in the Caribbean. This will help us ascertain the distribution problems as well as which booksellers/distributors are willing to accept the work of Caribbean women writers. Our readers can assist us with this project by providing up-to-date lists of bookshops and book distributors in their respective countries.

On-going activities include work on the publishing handbook for Caribbean women writers, and keeping our files on Women's History projects or activities taking place in the region up to date. We would like to hear from you if you are involved in such a project or activity.

One we recently heard about is that being undertaken by Josephine Dublin in the Commonwealth of Dominica. She is working on a booklet which will document the life history of women who have contributed to the development of that country. The women chosen are being drawn from a wide cross-section of the population. The project is called "Women in History".

The 400+ page manuscript of Creation Fire: A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women Poets has now gone to the publishers, Sister Vision Press of Toronto, Canada and should be out by mid-1990. Other good news is that CAFRA is co-publishing the book with Sister Vision Press.

Creation Fire

by Nelcia Robinson

WOMEN

Write of the
Joy, Ecstasy,
Levity
Dark times of living
Of Women
But most of all
The pain . . .

Of loneliness
Being battered
Misunderstood
Responsibility without
means

Creativity
Sisterhood
And underpinning faith
That gives birth
to alternatives
In a system
That cannot work for
women
One that loves things
And bruises people . . .

WOMEN

Write of
Refusal to conform
Using
Individual women's

Collective thoughts
To love people . . .
A self-renewing
Metamorphic
CREATION FIRE!

Nelcia Robinson is the Co-ordinator of the Committee for the Development of Women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. She was inspired to write this poem during a meeting held in January in Trinidad and Tobago to discuss the manuscript and publication of Creation Fire.

Developing a law project

projects update

During 1987-1988, CAFRA in collaboration with the Inter-American Legal Services Association (ILSA) embarked upon a regional 'Women's Rights and the Law' project. The project was initiated by ILSA in response to the awareness that the legal system has fundamental implications for the women's rights movement in its struggle for greater social equality.

The aim of that project was to generate knowledge/information which would enhance the effectiveness of women's legal services and women's rights campaigns, and encourage research on issues related to women and the law.

In general, the number of responses to the survey was small. Indeed, several countries did not participate in the research phase at all. Despite these limitations, the research threw up several important findings. Firstly, that there were few action and research programmes in the region which have focussed on Women and the Law issues. Secondly, many of the responding organisations identified sexual and domestic violence, family law and labour law as areas for further research and action.

In November 1988, the CAFRA General Meeting, upon discussing the project with the then Project Co-ordinator Gaiety Pargass, requested that CAFRA examine

the feasibility of developing a law project for implementation in the Caribbean region. Since September 1989, therefore, CAFRA has been in the process of developing a project proposal and exploring commitments to a project on 'Women and the Law'.



The types of follow-up activity envisaged in the proposed project include:

- i. the production and dissemination of materials for popular education, to inform women of their rights under the law;
- ii. the development of a training module for non-legal persons/organisations who in their work encounter legal issues affecting women;
- iii. a meeting of Crisis Centre personnel in the region to share their experiences and explore the legal problems encountered and possible resolutions; and
- iv. a meeting of legal aid clinics in the region to discuss legal

services for women.

In exploring the avenues of possible collaboration across the Caribbean region, the present Project Co-ordinator visited Grenada, St. Lucia and Antigua in February 1990 to discuss the project. These countries were selected because there are no National Representatives there to initiate the process of discussion around a 'Women and the Law' project.

In these countries, there appears to be a high level of enthusiasm for the project which focusses on the transformative potential of the law. This enthusiasm was displayed by both non-governmental agencies and the various national machineries for women.

Because of funding, administrative and institutional limitations, CAFRA is unable to implement this project in all the member countries simultaneously. It has therefore been proposed that four or five territories be identified. Within this context, CAFRA once again reiterates its call upon National Representatives to provide feedback on the commitments to the proposed project in their territories as soon as possible.

Roberta Clarke
Project Co-ordinator

W

ho really owes whom?

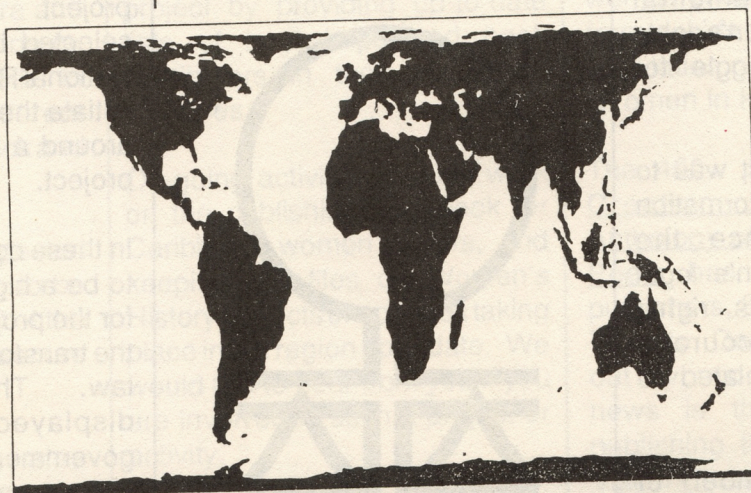
the debt crisis

While the governments of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean were meeting with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washington in the last week of September 1989, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from all these regions were also meeting just across the road. Why? To assess the impact of IMF and World Bank policies on the peoples of these regions, and to bring these to the attention of the policy-makers. Below, Joan French who represented CAFRA, shares some of the major learnings from the experience.

"We're all in the same boat"

Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are all suffering in similar manner from the policies applied by the IMF and World Bank for the 'development' of these regions. The same 'structural adjustment' policies are being applied everywhere: devaluations that put up the prices of food, housing, transportation, clothing, books, etc.; wage freezes which make it impossible to cope with the rapidly increasing cost of living; massive breakdown of social services such as health

and education; no consultation with the ordinary people whose living conditions are the most affected by these policies; repression of people's protest; and the confinement of decision-making to elites within the local populations. In this model,



Third World Resources (Note: This is an accurate map of the world showing all countries on the same scale)

development is about big projects that serve big business. For example, on the three continents, hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples are being moved from their lands to make way for huge dams to service the enterprises of multinational corporations while ordinary people have no access to clean drinking water.

Women across all the regions are the main burden-bearers of this 'development'. In the Caribbean, they are the ones employed in the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) factories which are the main 'solution' offered. The idea that a

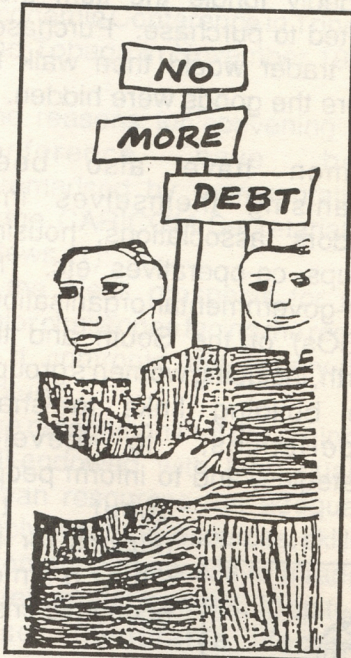
woman's wage is supplementary to that of some man is being used to justify paying the women extra low wages. In actual fact, in the Caribbean, as in Africa, Asia and Latin America, women's income and labour are critical to family survival. Faced with the

deepening economic crisis, women must work longer and longer hours of overtime to make ends meet, and also do more work at home so as not to spend cash, or to make up for declining social services. With less leisure time for themselves, their children, their families, and their

social relationships, the quality of life declines. Despite the women's efforts, thousands of children have had their life chances damaged by these policies, and the effect will be felt for generations to come. In 1989, for example, Jamaica recorded the lowest ever percentage of passes in the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Exams. This is a direct result of the high cost of books and school materials; the low morale of teachers as a result of grossly inadequate pay; and the fact that parents have less and less time to see to their children as they fight the desperate battle for survival. This increased

the debt crisis

desperation is a direct result of IMF condition-alities placed on loans made to the governments.



Adapted from The Debt Crisis Newsletter, No. 5, Dec 1987, Washington, D.C.

Who is NOT suffering?

While the quality of life is getting worse for ordinary people, the banks and corporations are flowing with funds. While we have been suffering, U.S. and other corporations have had record profits during the 1980s, particularly since 1987.

Where does all this money come from?

With all this talk about Third World debt, it may come as a surprise to learn that we are subsidising the U.S. and other

western banks and big companies, and not the other way round. In 1988-89, US\$50 billion more went out from the Third World in profits than what we got in loans, investments, etc. Over the last three years, the net 'capital outflow', as it is called, was US\$120 billion.

This money does not stay in our countries to contribute to our own development. We need money for this. How do the banks respond? They rush to give us "loans". So then our governments have to put out more (capital plus interest) to pay them back. Furthermore, they can increase the interest rates whenever they wish; then we have to pay back even more.

In reality, the root of the problem lies in the historical colonial relationship between the South ("Third World") and the North ("developed countries"), where the South was colonised mainly to provide cheap raw materials and labour for the profit-oriented machineries of the North. The North sets the prices, and the priority is to get what they need at the cheapest possible rate.

In the late 1970s, this exploitation took on a new phase because there was extra money in the big banks from increased petroleum profits from which the multi-national corporations were the main ones to benefit. Of course, small countries which had no oil

suffered from this. Then came the banks with their petrodollars to "bale us out", but only if our governments would allow the companies to have a free hand to exploit us through cheap labour, no taxes, no price controls, no unions, etc. The economic situation of the poor countries has therefore gone from bad to worse. But WHO REALLY OWES WHOM?

The Debt Squeeze

Our governments feel powerless to fight the banks and the corporations, so they squeeze us instead, by cutting back social services and by levying more and more taxes on the majority of us. All over the Caribbean, we are seeing more taxes being placed on the backs of the poor rather than on the rich: taxes on traders (also called hucksters, higglers, etc.), VAT (Value Added Tax), consumption taxes, etc.

When taxes are not enough, the IMF and the World Bank and the big foreign corporations that they serve say, "We will accept your land, your successful enterprises, your hotels, in exchange for the debt". This is what they call 'debt-equity swaps'. In this way, they get our governments to sell out our countries to them.

Debt of Selected Caribbean Countries (US\$)

Jamaica	\$4,048m
---------	----------

T & T	\$1,860m
Guyana	\$1,039m
Haiti	\$ 957m
Barbados	\$ 650m
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	\$ 59m
Source: World Bank Debt Tables 1989	

Much of what we owe is due to changes in interest rates; in other words, we are paying for money we never actually got.

What are people doing about this?

There has been resistance all over the Third World.

In the Caribbean, there have been riots and demonstrations in Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti and Guyana. Women in particular have had to confront harassment and brutality from customs officers and police all over the region in their efforts to expand and increase their informal trading activity to maintain themselves and their families. In many of our territories, state forces have driven them from the streets, destroying their stalls, and

relocated them away from the areas where it is easiest to get sales. Prostitutes have also come under fire. None of the authorities have concerned themselves very much with the conditions that drive women more and more to these activities.

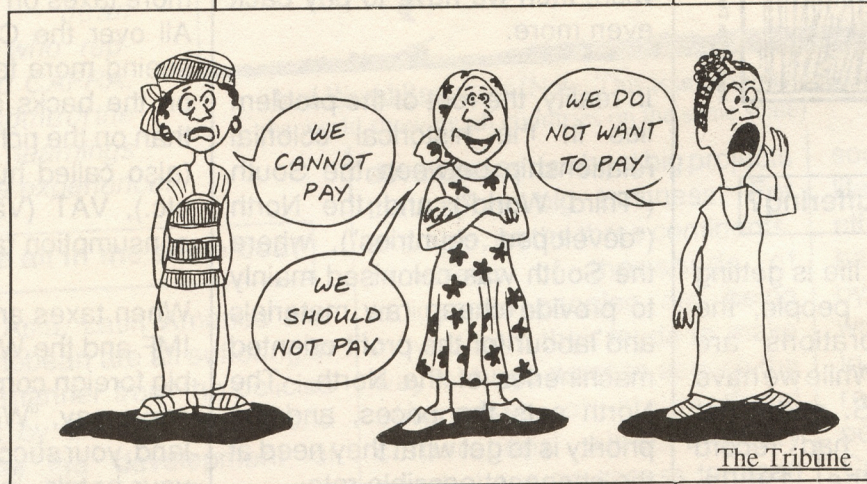
The women traders have responded with a variety of strategies. In Caracas, Venezuela, traders lay out goods on oil-cloths. When the police sirens are heard, goods are scooped into a bundle in the twinkling of an eye, and disappear into all kinds of hiding places. Minutes after the police leave, the

other indicators of the goods they had to sell. Interested buyers would come by and sit as if in conversation. They would absent-mindedly fondle the item they wanted to purchase. Purchaser and trader would then walk to where the goods were hidden.

Women have also been organising themselves into vendors' associations, housing groups, co-operatives, etc. The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of the South and the North, including women's groups, are building links to share experiences, to develop strategies, and to inform people about the reasons for the sharpened economic crisis.

NGOs are also beginning to discuss alternatives to the IMF/World Bank prescription which has turned out to be medicine which kills us while they grow fat selling it to us. There is a

growing view that the debt should not be paid, and that the money should be used instead to promote regional and inter-regional development which locates people as the main focus of development.



goods are out again. In Africa, traders in Accra, the capital of Ghana, were forcibly removed from the streets. In response, they took to sitting at the roadside with brooms - sweeping at least is a legitimate activity! On the brooms, they tied strips of cloth or

R

egional economic conference

the debt crisis

The Tenth Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Region (CARICOM) held last year agreed to hold a Regional Economic Conference in Trinidad and Tobago in November 1990.

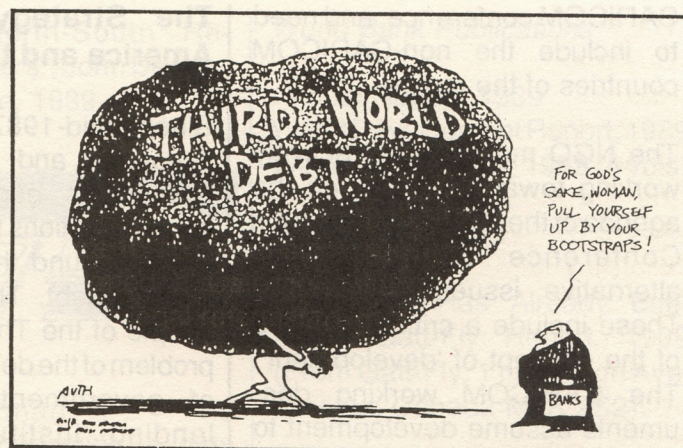
The reasons for convening this conference have been summarised by representatives of the CARICOM Secretariat as follows (1):

- the bleak prospects for and major challenges facing the region as it confronts the twenty-first century;
- the recognition that the region is well-endowed with high quality human resources, an adequate supply of natural resources, skilled diplomats and access to a range of preferential markets. In spite of these favourable factors, economic performance is poor and many opportunities remain unexploited;
- a rapidly changing international economic environment which threatens to overwhelm small states and to eliminate many of the preferences on which several CARICOM products depend;
- high and growing unemployment which is unsustainable in a democratic political setting; and
- the recognition that the region is

currently operating against the background or within the framework of several constraints such as the balance of payments problems, high debt and debt servicing burdens and IMF and World Bank conditionalities enshrined in structural adjustment or standby programmes.

The background documents being used by CARICOM for this conference are: Professor Bourne's book, Caribbean Development to the Year 2000: Challenges, Prospects and Policies; the paper HGC 89/10/33, 'Preparing Caribbean Economies for the Twenty-First Century - A Proposal for a Caribbean Economics Conference', presented by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; and the paper HGC 89/10/6, 'Status Report on the Study on CARICOM into the Year 2000', presented by the CARICOM Secretariat.

The process of planning for the conference is supposed to include broad-based National Consultations in each CARICOM country, in addition to three



regional conferences on the issues of 'Human Resource Development, Management and Technology' (22-24 March, Barbados); 'International Relations' (April - date and venue to be determined); and 'Sustainable Development' (May - date and venue to be determined).

The regional non-governmental organisation (NGO) movement is organising alternative National Consultations which, it is envisaged, will take place before the government organised National Consultations, and hence feed into the latter. The NGO movement sees this Regional Economic Conference as a target around which a popular and people-centred debate on the regional economic crisis can be organised. But the movement is clear that the discussion and debate on the economic crisis and alternative development models need to go beyond the November 1990 date for the

(1) 'Summary Notes for the First Meeting of the Co-ordinating and Planning Committee Meeting for the Regional Economic Conference, 16-17 September, 1989', p. 1-2, Mimeograph. 9 pp.

International campaign of

CARICOM conference, and need to include the non-CARICOM countries of the region.

The NGO movement is actively working towards placing on the agenda of the Regional Economic Conference a number of alternative issues/perspectives. These include a critical analysis of the concept of 'development'. The CARICOM working documents assume development to mean 'increased productivity and growth', a non-people centred approach implicit in the structural adjustment policies currently being followed by regional governments. An analysis of the 'informal sector' has been proposed under one of the conference themes, 'Production', as a strategy by which half of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is surviving. What is being proposed to the CARICOM governments is that they should be asking what can be done through policy measures to facilitate what people are doing. They should be participating in the exploration of non-conventional methods of addressing the crisis, and stop limiting their policies to externally inherited choices (2).

(2) Taimoon Stewart, 'Report on the Second Meeting of the Co-ordinating and Planning Committee for the Regional Economic Conference, 1990, 16 October, 1989. Mimeograph. p. 1-2.

The Strategy of Central America and the Caribbean

Since mid-1987, a group of European and Latin American NGOs has begun to develop concrete actions to mobilise public opinion round the theme of the external debt. The impact on the people of the Third World of the problem of the debt, and the action of governments, banks and lending institutions at the international level, demands an alternative response, principally by those sectors most affected. This response is based on the common conviction that it is necessary to place the welfare of a society ahead of its compliance with external demands.

Thus arose the project for a 'Forum on Debt and Development' (FONDAD), with the purpose of organising an international campaign of conscientisation and mobilisation against the external debt, promoted by NGOs from The Netherlands (ICCO, CEBEMO and NOVIB) in co-ordination with their counterparts in the Third World. Co-ordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES) took on the task of promoting and uniting the efforts for the campaign in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

During 1988 and the first half of 1989, the principal thrust of the efforts in the sub-region was in the area of research and the

establishment of institutional linkages. The current phase includes the process of organising a campaign of popular mobilisation on the debt.

Towards this effort, CRIES, in collaboration with FONDAD (The Netherlands), CIPAF (Centro de Investigación Para la Acción Femenina, Dominican Republic), CIECA (Centro de Investigaciones Económicas), and INTEC (Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo), will be holding a regional meeting of the NGO sector of Latin America and the Caribbean in June-July in the Dominican Republic. The theme for the meeting will be, 'Debt and Popular Mobilisation in Central America and the Caribbean'.

The principal objectives will be:

- to provide participants with basic up-to-date information regarding the specific problematic of the debt in the region, with the goal of establishing the arguments and the basic key issues;

- to expose and exchange arguments from different social sectors (women, unions, neighbourhood organisations, etc.) that constitute the key to the popularisation of the campaign in each sector;

- to present, discuss and distribute some concrete tools to employ in the campaign such as videos,

mobilisation

pamphlets and books on the subject; and

to design and articulate the common lines of action in the future of the campaign.

Interested NGOS in the region can contact (1) CRIES by mail: Apartado Postal 3516, Managua, Nicaragua; by phone: 215137/26228/23188; by telex: 2296; or by fax: (505-2)675670; or (2) CIPAF by mail: Apartado Postal 1744, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; by telex: (1-809)567-0120/9; by fax: (1-809) 562-6893/5879.

Booklist

Some of the materials available on Debt, the World Bank and the Economy (including structural adjustment)

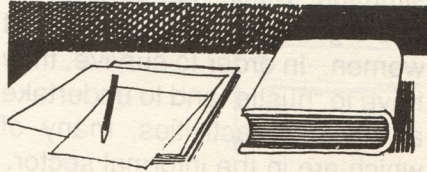
Papers and Books:

Third World Debt: Global - Local Links, Inter-Faith Action for Economic Justice, 1989.

"The Problem of Official Debt", Percy Mistry, International Finance Development Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, Aug. 1989.

"How the Debt Crisis Came to be" (PACCA).

"Reducing North-South Resources Transfers", John Denton, Fondad-Europe, 1989.



Girvan, Norman P. "Is development becoming a dirty word?". Paper prepared for CUSO Consultation on Development, Kingston, 16-19 January, 1990. 11 p.

"Bank Debts Owed by the Poorest Countries", John Denton, Fondad-Europe, Brussels, 1989.

"The Third World Debt Crisis - An Appeal to European Banks by European Development NGOs", Fondad, Brussels.

"Funding Ecological and Social Destruction: The World Bank and the IMF", Bank Information Centre, Washington.

"A Critical Look at World Bank and IMF Policies", The Development Gap, Washington, 1989.

Handbook on the World Bank, Bank Information Centre, Washington.

Aid for Just Development, Stephen and Douglas Hellinger et al.

World Bank Publications

Annual Report, 1989
World Development Report, 1989.
World Debt Tables, 1989 (4 vols).

Popular Materials

"The Debt Has Already Been Paid", Gatt-Fly Report, 1989. (From Gatt-Fly, 11 Madison Ave., Toronto, Canada M5R 2S2).

"Seeing Through Debt and Development, IBON Databank, 1989.

"Dicing With Debt: The Third World Dilemma", International World Tribune Centre, 777 United Nations Plaza, N.Y. 10017, USA.

"What For ... Really?" IBON Facts & Fymes, Vol XII no. 7, 1989.

"Money Makes the World Go Round: Finance for Beginners", New Internationalist, 1989.

"Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives", International Women's Tribune Centre, June 1989.

"The Churches and the International Debt Crisis", Joint Conference Church and Development, W. Germany (leaflet).

"Women Want Freedom from Debt", Freedom from Debt Coalition, Room 130 Alumni Centre U.P., Diliman, Quezon City, Phillipines

Growing marginalisation of women

by Astrid Elstock

The National Women's Movement of Suriname is considering doing a research project on "Women in the Informal Sector".

The economic and social situation has, as is the case in many developing countries, deteriorated significantly in Suriname. The most important factors which had their impact on the socio-economic development are: the suspension of development aid by The Netherlands; the reduction in export earnings of the bauxite sector; and the internal hostilities going on for more than three years with very negative effects on industrial sectors such as the wood industry and the palm oil industry. These factors resulted in a shortage of foreign currency, which generated a parallel market, a phenomenon well-known to all of you. Inflation increased from 11% in 1985 to 53% in 1987. Investments have decreased by almost 50%.

It is quite clear that as a result of these economic developments the standard of living has declined for large sections of the population. Women in particular have become the victims of this process.

The problems confronting the lower strata, and now even some sections of the middle strata, relate to: the costs of living which have risen sky-high; transportation;

employment; medical care; and housing. In fact, most aspects of life have been affected by the deteriorating socio-economic situation, which has contributed to the growing marginalisation of women. In order to survive, they have to "hustle" and to undertake all kinds of activities, many of which are in the informal sector.

Research/Action Project

Although the informal sector is a major employment outlet for many women in Suriname, there is hardly any data on it. Women in the informal sector or in "home-based" industries constitute an invisible labour force. That's why it is important to devote particular attention to it. In our opinion, a research project would certainly contribute to a better understanding of the situation of women in this sector, and would provide a platform to undertake action.

The informal sector is characterised by uncertain employment, low wages, and poor working conditions. Most of the women employed in this sector have no access to new technology, marketing facilities, credit, and so on. Therefore, strategies for the promotion of such infrastructural facilities should be given special attention.

Astrid Elstock is the CAFRA National Representative for Suriname.

Focus on '92

"Regional NGO Strategy of Development", Jamaica, January 16-19, 1990

by Regina Dumas

If there was one very concrete result of this CUSO-sponsored workshop, it was the collective recognition by regional NGOs and national umbrella organisations that the current conjuncture demands a strategy that makes use of their combined energies and experiences to stimulate and implement policies and programmes designed to have a qualitative impact on the lives of Caribbean peoples.

Participants noted the impact which issues of international concern were having at the regional level, which in turn are creating their own spin-offs at the various national levels. Significant among these elements are: the international Debt Crisis and its close relation, the policy of 'Structural Adjustment'; the unification of Europe in 1992; the international drug menace and related regional narco-politics.

While it is evident that all of these issues, currently and in the future, impact seriously on the people of the Caribbean, it was recognised that none - as an end in itself - is being dealt with by our national or regional NGOs.

The Workshop identified, among others, the following strategies: A

Jigsaw

redefinition of development for effective action; information networking to be highlighted as a communications strategy with particular regard to the role of the popular media; research as a tool for accepting the information and making effective use of it.

Concretely, the 1992 unification of Europe was selected for immediate action focus in the emerging strategy. It was agreed that at the national level, an attempt would be made to co-ordinate research on the issue, information dissemination and appropriate follow-up action. Regionally, the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD) and the Windward Islands Farmers' Association (WINFA) would spearhead the action of collection and dissemination of all information relative to 1992 to the appropriate regional bodies (CUSO included) and national umbrellas. CUSO would be expected to network with CCIC, an umbrella organisation of Canadian NGOs and the Inter-Agency Working Group.

Please send bibliographic and other material relevant to the implications of 1992 and beyond to: CNIRD, #40 Eastern Main Road, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago; or WINFA, P.O. Box 817, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Regina Dumas is the Programme Director of CNIRD

by Marion
Bethel

I am a woman
assessing
shapes
colours
materials
depths
borders
edges
cuts
heights
images
fitting pieces together
with wild constancy
changing them
just when they all seem to fit
I am a woman
puzzling my way
into definition.



Tracey Johnson

Marion Bethel lives in the Bahamas where, since 1985, she has worked as a Crown Counsel in the Attorney-General's chambers. She is a member of the Nassau-based group Developing Alternatives for Women Now (DAWN) - not to be confused with the international DAWN grouping, Development Alternatives with Women for A New Era.

Literacy, popular education and democracy

Fourth World Assembly on Adult Education Thailand, January 8-18, 1990

by Tina Johnson

Almost 600 people from 93 countries, speaking a variety of languages, gathered in Bangkok, Thailand for the 4th World Assembly of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), January 8-18, 1990. It was held at the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, just over an hour's drive from the city centre. 45% of those attending were women, which was apparently far more than at previous assemblies, and was announced to loud applause from participants. The theme of the Assembly was 'Literacy, Popular Education and Democracy', and for most of those attending these three concepts were inextricably linked.

The 16 participants from the Caribbean, the majority of whom are members of CARCAE (the Caribbean Council for Adult Education, based in Barbados), also included 2 representatives of CAFRA, myself and Elsie Doñe Molina (National Representative from the Dominican Republic).

The ICAE is an international NGO whose membership is made up of approximately 150 national adult education organisations and also regional adult education organisations. The former nominate members to the Executive while the latter propose



from the conference programme the Vice Presidents. The President for the past four years has been Dame Nita Barrow, and elections held during the Assembly to select a new president chose Francisco Vio Grossi, the Secretary General of Latin American grouping, CEAAL.

The formal opening of the conference took place on 12 January and was an occasion of great pomp and ceremony (and security) because the inaugural address was given by Her Royal Highness Princess Maka Chakri

Sirindhorn of Thailand. National dress was worn by those who had brought this (which included Dominica and Jamaica from our region). The opening was followed by the 'People's Launch of International Literacy Year' in the courtyard, where there was a ceremonial 'signing of the book' from each region. Balloons were let off, candles were lit, and everyone joined in singing 'I'd like to teach the world to read' (sung to the tune of the Coca-Cola jingle!).

Solidarity Visits

Prior to this, participants had been out of Bangkok on 'Solidarity Visits'. There were about 30 of these to different non-formal education projects. My trip was to

visit women's handicraft projects in a village close to Chaing Mai in Northern Thailand (10 hours overnight by coach). The women had been helped to set up a co-operative through the YMCA and with a loan from the local Buddhist 'abbot', who had also set up a day-care centre to look after their children. One group made cloth dolls dressed in the Northern Hill Tribes costumes, while another made baskets.

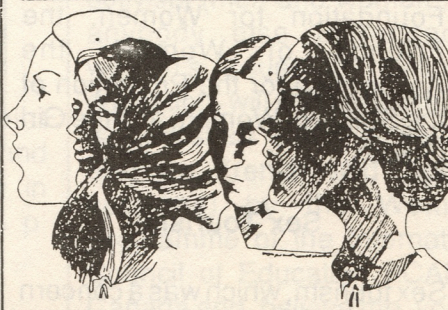
Formal Programme

The formal programme included

plenaries, thematic workshops and skills workshops. Among the more memorable presentations at plenary sessions were those of Katherine-Ann Gigsby Vado, Vice Minister of Education, Nicaragua and Rita Giacaman, Birzeit University, West Bank. Ms. Gigsby Vado, speaking on 'Literacy and Building a New Society', reminded us that literacy is a liberating force since it offers people the necessary tools to exercise power. She noted that it must integrate the social and the political, and must be rooted in reality to alter reality. The Palestinian experience was vividly evoked by Rita Giacaman, who described the 'Intafada' (uprising) as a popular education school. A South African panel also dealt with the topic of education under conditions of repression, and showed a disturbing video to illustrate the topic.

There were many thematic and skills workshops to choose between. Participants in the 'Literacy and Women' workshop led by Lalita Ramdas of India agreed that top priority should be given to the question of literacy, education and development among girls and women in particular because they constitute 63% of all illiterates, and because of women's role in the upbringing of children. Those attending 'Fundraising for Women's Work', organised by the Women's Programme and facilitated by Lynda Yanz, were concerned

about such issues as: how to break into the funding circuit; whether to accept foreign dollars; the pressure for sustainability; who is naming the priorities; and what is going to happen with funding in the future, when it seems that funding agencies are turning away from women towards other issues,



Jo Beckelheimer/Spare Rib such as the environment. Those present shared their experiences, and two 'case studies' were looked at: CAFRA and the Women's Studies and Resource Centre in Davao City, The Philippines.

Nandini Narula of India was the resource person for a workshop on 'Learning Processes of Women', which attempted to identify some of the ways in which poor women learn best in a training programme. We looked at the anxieties that women have (about their family, community opinion, feelings of inadequacy, etc.) which have to be allayed, and the support that they need afterwards. A very useful contribution was made by Chan Lean Heng who has been

working with women in Free Trade Zones (EPZs) in Malaysia.

Building the Network

There were also meetings of the different Networks. In the Women's Programme meeting, Director Lynda Yanz talked about the work of the Programme. She noted that, as can be seen from the description of ICAE membership in the third paragraph above, many people involved in adult education are not in fact members. The Women's Programme, therefore, is involved in building a network of women who work in this field and responding to their expressed needs/supporting their work. It also promotes programmes such as 'Women and Health' and works in advocacy within ICAE. It produces a newsletter, Voices Rising, three times a year in three languages.

The Women's Room

The informal sessions were equally, if not more, rewarding. The Women's Programme held

its first meeting on the first evening so that we could all introduce ourselves and Lynda explained that two main concerns were to keep gender issues before the Assembly, and to strengthen links among women in the Network. Meetings were held in the Women's Room, the walls of which were lined with displays on

the organisations to which those attending belonged. CAFRA, of course, had a display, as well as newsletters and brochures for distribution.

Other meetings not on the official agenda included a slide show and discussion about slum dwellers in Bangkok, and a session with members of the Thai women's movement. At the first of these, Samsook Boonyabancha, Secretary of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, explained that the biggest housing problems in Bangkok are eviction and lack of security of land tenure. 5,000 families live under the city's bridges and many squat on government land. As has been the case in other countries, people were resistant to attempts to move them into apartments out of the city centre, since many of them had an irregular income which made it impossible to pay rent, and they also felt the lack of close neighbours. Community organisation was seen as the only method of resistance since this

led to negotiated agreements, such as the landlord developing part of the land and allowing the squatters to rebuild in the rest. Elected slum committees were the first grassroots organisations in Bangkok.

Members of the Thai women's movement who came to talk with us included representatives of the Foundation for Women, the Friends of Women, the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women, and the Girl Guides.

Sex Tourism

Sex tourism, which was a concern of many of the participants in the Assembly, became the focus of the discussion. A member of the audience brought up the fact that a conference on 'Education for All' was being held in March sponsored by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP. The location was Jomtien Beach, 5 minutes from Pattaya, a notorious centre of sex tourism.

Outrage was expressed over the choice of site and the fact that a new conference complex was being built there at a cost of some 3 million dollars. It was noted that this would act as a magnet for women from the surrounding region, and would be there

Women's Exploitation in the Sex Trade Industry

An extract from the 'Call the Action' presented to a plenary session of the 4th World Assembly on Adult Education, Bangkok, Thailand, January 8-18, 1990.

To express our concern for and solidarity with exploited women everywhere, we urge the Assembly:

1. Not to endorse the selection of the conference venue;
2. To contact those attending the Education for All conference in each of our countries and communicate our dismay and concern regarding the selection of this venue;
3. To communicate the concern and dismay of the participants and the secretariat of the I.C.A.E. to the New York-based inter-agency committee organising the conference; and
4. to strongly recommend to the inter-agency committee that decisions as to the location and programme content for the forthcoming and subsequent meetings be based on a critical awareness of, and a sensitivity to the domestic context; programmes at such meetings should have as a priority learning about the important issues the country and region; and - the mobilisation of both human and material resources to support such meetings should be of a kind that contributes to, and supports the development programmes of the host country, such as the building of community vocational centres, schools and shelters.



Rachel Martin/Voices Rising

Jam-packed with goodies

long after the particular conference was over. Those present agreed to register a protest on their return to their own countries, through newspaper articles, contact with their Minister of Education, etc. A 'Call to Action' to the Assembly (see box) was subsequently drafted by a small team (myself included), presented at a plenary session, and accepted.

I also attended a meeting to discuss the Vth Feminist Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held in November in Argentina (see p. 26)

Two evenings were given over to what might be described as 'popular entertainment'. Participants from Asia and the South Pacific performed one evening, while the 'rest of the world' took part in an International Cabaret another night - and what a lot of talent was displayed! Performances ranged from a Dutch shadow puppet show about the 1st World War to a Japanese flautist. The Caribbean contingent sang a medley of calypsoes, and finished off with the limbo to tumultuous applause.

The conference was extremely well-organised and enjoyable, and the Women's Room and Women's Network helped those of us working with women to get to know one another and focus on issues of mutual concern.

Review of Voices Rising. Vol. 4, No. 1, January/February, 1990

by Joan Ross-Frankson

VOICES RISING is aimed at women educators, but it is always well-researched material that communicators, students and activists (men and women), and anybody else interested in women's issues in relation to education, will find very useful. It is published twice a year (in English, French and Spanish versions) by the Women's Programme of the International Council of Education (ICAE) in Canada and, believe me, you will want to file each issue for future reference.

The first issue of the decade (Vol. 4, No. 1, January/February 1990) is very timely. For International Literacy Year, Voices Rising is dealing with The Literacy Issue: Feminist Perspectives on Reading and Writing. In some fifteen articles and features, various perspectives of where women are worldwide in relation to literacy are put forward.

Literacy is a tool for the empowerment of women, but there are powerful constraints against which we have to struggle. Nowhere is this put better than in a piece by Elizabeth Ndaba, a literacy learner in South Africa, reprinted in her own handwriting (and spelling): "I come late again.



This time was from class. He sa to me I an going to stop this bisciness of learning. He take my books and throw them I away out of the door. A go out and pick them and say yo. I do this again a pack my clothes and go away. You cook and wash for the children. He look at me. He keep silent ... And I know I have win ..."

We learn that of the world's approximately one billion illiterate people, 63% (or 561 million) are women - and the proportions are steadily growing as women battle against prejudice (traditional sex divisions of role in society exclude many girls from schooling) and overwork (the act of birthing added to domestic tasks and income earning activities leaves little time for additional projects like literacy). Yet women are motivated for literacy. Many in the Third World are now active in areas that men previously monopolised, so literacy is seen as an instrument

Some regional ILY activities

for coping with their new responsibilities. Women also want to take part in political processes, help their children with homework, handle bank accounts and correspond with their men who have been forced into migration.

Perspectives change from continent to continent. For example, in many African countries, 70%-90% of enrolled literacy learners are women, but their drop-out rate is also high and their attendance irregular, while in South Asia women participate less than men, hindered as they are by poverty, and by religious and cultural traditions. In South Africa, literacy learning is affected far less by gender factors than racial and economic factors (47% of blacks are illiterate in comparison with 2% of whites). Experiences of programmes and projects in Jamaica (Sistren Theatre Collective), Chile, Greece, Haiti, and Mexico, as well as of native Canadian women add further breadth.

The bulletin doesn't just stop short on an examination of the issues; the challenges are also thrown out. What is the challenge of feminist theory? It is to uncover the systematic mechanisms behind the "obstacles" to women's literacy. When lack of time, male opposition and other manifestations of women's subordination become the basis of policy, they also become

confused with the fundamental factors which create the problems in the first place. The strategic challenge is how to develop productive programmes that allow women access to financial resources but which do not simply move the problem from reproduction to production. The challenges of implementing agency selection, of research and of policy implementation are also fully covered.

And, all of this well-researched examination of the issues, broad perspectives and challenges for future change are packaged in a very readable manner that won't strain overworked educators, communicators, students, or activists - a plus in any language! The pages are clean and there's plenty of catchy headlines and sub-heads, graphics, illustrations and photographs, to ease you into a good read. *Voices Rising* is also an effective networking tool with news about the business of the ICAE Women's Programme and women's organisations, as well as information on new resources.

In short, the current issue of *Voices Rising* is jam-packed with goodies that all those who are interested in a feminist approach to popular education will find worth its weight in gold.

Joan Ross-Frankson is the Editor of Sistren, newsletter of Sistren Theatre Collective, Jamaica.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The National Association for Mass Education (NAME) launched its programme for International Literacy Year on January 23, 1990.

NAME had its inception in 1986, and arose out the perceived need to establish opportunities and avenues of continuing education for all Vincentians. Prior to this, several community groups and grassroots organisations spent numerous hours in consultation. At that time, it was noted that successive governments had failed to provide adequate, relevant education to the nation's people shown by (a) the non-compulsory nature of primary education (some 20-25% of school age children do not attend school); (b) poor quality and irrelevance of education at all levels; and (c) very limited non-formal educational opportunities throughout the territory. According to the Paul Fordham Report, illiteracy in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is estimated at 30-50% of the population.

The overall theme chosen by NAME for the year is 'Illiteracy our National Concern - a National Response'. They have also chosen sub-themes for each month of the year, for example 'Literacy and Women' (March) and 'Literacy and the Community'

(November). Some of the plans for the former include a survey on the status of women, and encouraging women to become more involved in literacy work.

Trinidad and Tobago

by Dawn Mahalia Riley

The Network of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for The Advancement of Women launched its International Literacy Year 1990 'Literacy for Women' project at a workshop held on 31 January, 1990. CAFRA was represented by Marylin Jones, Denise De Bique and myself.

The workshop began with the Chairperson of the ILY sub-committee, Daphne Rousseau, giving an indication of the role of NGOs in the Trinidad and Tobago situation. The feature address was then given by Helen Pyne-Timothy, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and General Studies, the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

The official literacy rate for women in Trinidad and Tobago is approximately 90%. However, the official definition states that a literate is a person who has had 6 years of primary schooling, while the work group I attended defined literacy as the ability to read and write in Standard English as well as the ability to do basic

mathematical calculations.

There are several reasons for concern with and emphasis on literacy among women. Statistics show that illiteracy rates are higher among women than men, for example. As a result of illiteracy more women are becoming unable to fill slots in specialised job areas and they become ripe for exploitation by EPZs. They are also virtually alienated from participating in national politics and undertaking leadership roles.

The rate of teenage pregnancies is growing rapidly in the country, and for many girls an early pregnancy brings their formal education to an end. As these young women begin to care for their children, while unemployed or under-employed, their literacy skills deteriorate through lack of usage. Another factor is that, in a society where the economic climate is deteriorating, it is the elder child or the non-achiever who is taken from school or is chronically absent because she needs to care for younger siblings within the family. It should also be considered that mothers are the earliest educators of their children. If they are illiterate, how can they impart the knowledge that they themselves lack.

Equipping a woman with literacy skills gives her a toe-hold on gaining control of her life (economic and social) as well as that of her family. Developing

women's literacy skills empowers them and assists the development of future generations.

At the end of the workshop we isolated four possible projects which could be implemented during ILY. We also made a resolution that as part of our plan of action we should petition the government to remove VAT (Value Added Tax - currently 15%) from all books.



Paula Thomas

Members of CAFRA join the rest of the world in hailing the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, and look forward to the day when all South Africans will be free of the system of apartheid.

Action against sexual violence

by Hilary Nicholson and Joan French

The setting was a park in the middle of one of the busiest centres of town. Rows and rows of concrete-edged seats rose up from the stage in amphitheatre style. Below, Teens in Action and the Groundwork Theatre Company (GTC), assisted by Pauline Crawford of Sistren, were engaging the audience in a discussion of the drama scene they had just presented: a young girl pleading with her father not to "do that to her" while her mother was away. This was one of several scenes presented to the public at the Half-Way-Tree Park in Kingston, Jamaica on November 25, the day the women's movement now commemorates as International Day Against Violence Against Women.

"So what yu think about a man like



Sharon Chacko, *No to Sexual Violence*

dat?" asks Winston Bell of GTC. "Him mad", says a male member of the audience. "Well den, a nuff sick man inna dis society", shouts a sister.

After a scene on rape, 'Bello' asks, "But oonu don't tink di ooman dem mek it bad fi demself sometime, wid all dem short dress an ting?" A female member of the audience springs to the stage and grabs the mike. "Tell me someting, when di man-dem wear shorts, or don't have on no shirt, or even if dem go around in dem underpants, anybody rape dem?" "NO", comes the answer from the crowd.

The popular event in Half-Way-Tree was the culmination of more than a week of activities initiated by women's organisations to mark November 25 for the first time in Jamaica.

Other activities included a Lunch-Hour Workshop on Sexual Violence at which 150 teenagers discussed child abuse and adult sexuality based on a skit presented by Sistren and Women's Media Watch (WMW). These two groups also produced 10,000 stickers saying 'No to Sexual Violence' and 'Real Men Don't Abuse Women'. These were eagerly received at the Park, on the streets, in the market, and in offices. Women Incorporated highlighted the issues at their Annual Trade Fair in November. Radio, TV and newspapers ran

articles, talk shows and films. Popular theatre and singing personalities appeared in innovative dramatic dialogues on TV, speaking out against sexual violence.

Twenty different women's organisations signed a Call to Action, demanding legal reforms including increased penalties for carnal abuse and the criminalisation of sexual harassment. The booklet "No to Sexual Violence" was widely distributed. Sistren continued its workshops in schools on the issue. The Women's Resource and Outreach Centre (WROC) ran counselling sessions and the Organisation of Women for Progress (OWP) sponsored a discussion in collaboration with WROC.

The Association of Women's Organisations of Jamaica (AWOJA) worked with WMW and Sistren to distribute information packages to public personalities and media personnel. AWOJA also distributed appropriate Bible readings for use in church services, organised media exposure for the issues, and co-ordinated the final event in the Half-Way-Tree Park.

Since November 25, many more groups are becoming aware and concerned and are requesting talks, workshops, etc. on the issue. Women's Media Watch alone has since responded to requests from

In solidarity

the Jaycees, Kiwanis, Combined Disabilities Association and the Women's Bureau Rural Committees. Sistren and Women Inc. continue their on-going work in schools with support from WMW. Significantly, the government has moved to establish special Rape Units, staffed by trained personnel, where rape victims can report cases and receive treatment in a more supportive atmosphere.

The issues will be taken up again during International Women's Day (IWD), when stickers will again be distributed, and a film show and forum on violence and the image of women in the media will be held by WMW. Distribution of "No to Sexual Violence" continues. The Sisters' Celebration Concert", a major IWD event now in its 6th year, will play its usual role in counteracting violence against women and the negative portrayal of women in popular lyrics and culture. This year, the local "clean lyrics" artists who give their talent free of charge will be joined by guests "Queen Rita" of Barbados and "Lady B" of Trinidad and Tobago.

The ripples created by Jamaican women's organisations on the issue of sexual violence in previous years are growing, and we hope they will eventually become a virtual tidal wave washing this ugly phenomenon from our lives.

The following request for support was received from the Women's Anti-Violence Network (Red Contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres), Mexico

We are writing to ask your support in confronting the systematic rape of more than 21 women in Mexico City by the drug enforcement police force. The rapists were bravely identified by victims in June 1989. Nevertheless, they continued sowing terror for six more months, under the protection of their superiors, Javier Coello Trejo (head of the federal drug enforcement agency); Fausto Valverde (then head of the Federal Judicial Police); and Enrique Alvarez de Castillo (Attorney General).

The Women's Anti-Violence Network, a national coalition working to end violence against women through education and action, sees these rapes as well as the recent bombing of neighbourhoods in Panama as consequences of the mounting US-promoted and financed "War on Drugs", one more justification for the global abuse of power.

We are inspired by the courage and persistence of the survivors and women journalists who have, at great risk, uncovered high-level complicity in the commission and cover-up of these crimes, and our work is in support of and co-ordination with them.

We demand the prosecution of the perpetrators of these crimes against women. We demand the resignation of Javier Coello Trejo and Fausto Valverde for their complicity, freeing the men identified by the victims to continue their crimes. International pressure is critical. Please send telegrams demanding justice to: Procurador Enrique Alvarez del Castillo, Procuraduría General de la República, Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta, Col. Guerrero, Deleg. Cuauhtémoc, 06300 México DF, MEXICO; and Pres. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Palacio Nacional, Col. Centro, Deleg. Cuauhtémoc, México DF, MEXICO.

On March 8, International Women's Day, feminist, labour and neighbourhood and peasant women will march to the offices of the Procuraduría General and the National Palace to demand justice in these cases and to declare 1990 the Year for Action Against Violence Against Women. We ask you to remember us in your local activities.



Women in Action

T he wicked stepmother

by Gail Teixeira

On nights when there are blackouts, or electricity outages, in Guyana I often sing songs to my two little daughters and tell them stories to keep them from being afraid of the dark. I tell them whatever fairy tales I can remember, or just make up ones as I go along as we rock in the hammock. In the dark, my voice has to create colours, sounds and conjure up visions in my two beauties' heads. Of course, it also has to lull them to sleep or they would make me go on forever.

On one of these nights, as I was telling them the story of "Hansel and Gretel", I suddenly felt very uncomfortable although I could not really put my finger on the reason.

Eventually, those two imps of mine fell asleep, and between the light of the small kerosene lamp and the darkness that seemed to envelop me, I started to recall various fairy tales I had heard or read through the years. What did "Hansel and Gretel", "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and "Cinderella" have in common?

Why, of course, the wicked step-mother!

Being myself a step-mother of two teenagers who, from the beginning, cast me in the role of the "wicked step-mother" and who

had successfully, after 15 months, made me feel as if I was in fact such an odious character, I started to think about the fairy tales I knew and the morals they taught.

These three tales I mentioned are very popular amongst children, and are related over and over again by mothers such as myself. Thus the myth of the step-mother as a character who is mean and



selfish, and who treats her step-children badly, is perpetuated. The majority of the millions of children who will probably never have a step-mother would internalise this view, while those who have one would hate her from the start.

The 'other woman'

How did this myth start? What were its origins? It probably goes back thousands of years and, in my view, it goes back to the sanctity of the man-woman/husband-wife relations which began with monogamous societies.

In such societies, then and now, the one man-one woman relationship is held to be sacred - even with today's high divorce rate.

And it is the woman who "takes the man who leaves his wife" who faces the scorn and ostracism of society. It is the "other woman" or the second woman, who is seen to have replaced or displaced the first, who is vilified by society, the church, the ex-wife and - of course - the children.

Folk tales, fairy tales and myths are not simply invented but originate in our surroundings. It is society at a given moment of history which gives birth to the creative genius of humanity in its depiction of life, nature and society.

When people could not explain the unknown such as thunder and lightning, they created gods; when they wanted to depict the struggle between good and evil, they related stories about good kings and bad kings, fairy godmothers and witches. Of course, the forces of good always conquered the forces of evil, a moral that weaves itself through the most well-known of children's tales.

Thus too, the image of the wicked step-mother, as perceived by society, was transferred and woven into folk tales and fairy

On the bookshelf

stories. She became a representative of the forces of evil in the world at large, commensurate with the witches. And aren't the witches historically women who were burned at the stake?

No wonder I couldn't find one story in which the step-mother was a good character, or where she represented the forces of good in the story. Strangely, I could not recall then or now a children's story in which there is a wicked step-father. Nor, for that matter, one in which there are wicked step-children.

We as parents look to remove racist, ethnic and sexist stereotyping in literature for children - stereotypes which are prejudicial and transfer different forms of discrimination into innocent young minds. We should therefore try to create some new images of the step-mother. Isn't it time we came up with some fairy tales for the twentieth century - or have we lost the ability with our computerised age to story-tell, to weave works into a kaleidoscope of fantasy and beauty where, of course, good always conquers evil?

Gail Teixeira works with the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) in Georgetown, Guyana.

The following is a selected annotated list of recent acquisitions received by the CAFRA Office:

Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD). **Directory of rural development resources in the Caribbean.** St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago: CNIRD, 1989. xiv, 165 p.

Presents information on 149 organisations working on rural development in the Caribbean. It is divided into three sections as follows: 1) national organisations; 2) sub-regional and regional organisations; and 3) international organisations. Each entry includes the following: a brief description, objectives, activities, achievements, resources, and collaboration.

Casas, Maria I., Tatiana Cordero and Carla Foderingham. **"Here one gives ones life": final report Project Empowerment; a strategy for the empowerment of Latin American and Caribbean migrant window prostitutes in The Hague.** The Hague, 1989. 112 p.

Final report of an action/research project which sought to create the space and/or conditions through which migrant window prostitutes in The Hague could be empowered. Describes the background to the initiative, its conceptualisation and implementation, and evaluates the achievements and constraints.

Ford-Smith, Honor. **Ring ding in a tight corner: a case study of funding and organisational democracy in Sistren, 1977-1988.** Toronto: Women's Program, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), 1989. 107 p.

Sistren's former Artistic Director documents the history of the organisation and examines the factors that limited its success and impact. She argues that the dictates of international funding agencies exacerbated internal contradictions in the collective structure of Sistren, and concludes with recommendations for women's organisations facing similar problems.

Girvan, Norman and George Beckford, eds. **Development in suspense: selected papers and proceedings of the First Conference of Caribbean Economists.** Kingston: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; Association of Caribbean Economists, 1989. xx, 366 p.

Contains 22 papers organised around four major themes as follows: 1) the external impact on Caribbean economies; 2) adjustment, stabilisation and national experiences in the Caribbean; 3) the social impact of the development crisis; and 4) alternative development strategies for the Caribbean. The salient points made by discussants and participants are

captured. Includes papers by Peggy Antrobus and Marcia Rivera on gender and women.

Henry-Wilson, Maxine. **"The poor are not powerless"**. Address delivered at UNIFEM meeting, Port-of-Spain, 29-31 January, 1990. 33 p.

International Symposium to promote legal services in the Caribbean: legal services for the poor in the Caribbean, October 9-11, 1986, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Colombia: Inter-American Legal Services Association (ILSA), 1987. 87 p.

The publication is based on the discussions and papers presented at the 1986 conference and on subsequent programmes and exchanges held by ILSA and Caribbean legal services groups. Themes covered are: political regimes; social movements and legal services; popular education as a component of legal work; legal services in the Caribbean; and socio-political winds in the Caribbean.

Isis International. **Caminando: luchas y estrategias de las mujeres; tercer mundo.** Chile: Isis International, 1989. Ediciones de las Mujeres, no. 11. 118 p.

Consists of eight articles which highlight various aspects of the development of the women's movement in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

The issue is 'ism: women of colour speak out; Fireweed's Issue 16. Toronto: Sister Vision, c1989.

Originally published as issue 16 of **Fireweed**, a Canadian feminist quarterly, this anthology includes writings, photographs and illustrations by Black, Asian and Native women. The issues they address include racism, sexism, classism and imperialism.

Tang Nain, Gemma. **"Feminism and black women in 'white' societies: an alternative view"**. Research paper submitted to the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, 1989.

Seeks to determine, in the light of black feminist critique, the relevance or otherwise of certain feminist concepts of black women in "white" societies; the

compatibility or incompatibility of feminist political practice with the needs and concerns of black women; and to assess the viability of black feminism. The author is a former CAFRA National Representative for Trinidad and Tobago.

UWI. Women and Development Unit (WAND). Annual Report: August 01, 1988-July 31, 1989. St. Michael, Barbados: UWI. Women and Development Unit, 1989. iii, 34 p.

Presents information on the implementation of WAND's work programme during the year under review. The programme areas highlighted are: field work, women and development studies, publications, collaboration and networking, development alternatives, advocacy and staff development.

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Institutions and Organisations: Barbados BDS\$20; Eastern Caribbean EC\$25; Guyana G\$25; Jamaica JA\$25; Trinidad and Tobago TT\$25; Canada CAN\$25, UK, USA and others US\$20; Latin America US\$10.

New Docu-Drama on Jamaican Women

"Miss Amy and Miss May" is a 45 minute docu-drama based on the lives and friendship of two Jamaican women: Amy Bailey and May Farquharson. Amy Bailey, daughter of an eminent family of black school teachers, was leader of the Jamaican Women's Movement in the 1930s. May Farquharson, the daughter of a wealthy planter and his wife, was an early advocate of reproductive rights for women and reforms to benefit the elderly.

Directed by Cynthia Wilmot and produced by Sistren Research, (with in-part funding from CAFRA) the docu-drama follows the lives of these women through childhood and adolescence into their unlikely friendship. The brave, un-conventional and fulfilling lives they led take place in the most exciting moments of Jamaica's recent history. Covering a period of some 80 years, during colonial time and after, the video juxtaposes dramatic footage and interviews with pioneer feminists Amy Bailey, played by Pauline Crawford, and May Farquharson, played by Honor Ford-Smith.

A very special preview of the film was held in Kingston on February 8. Attending were Misses Bailey and Farquharson themselves, as well as Pauline Crawford and Honor Ford-Smith.

The video is available from Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica

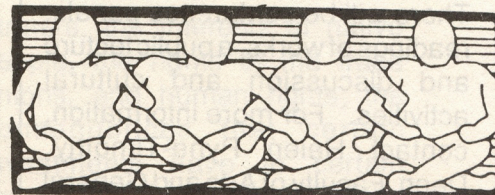
M eetings, conferences, etc.

1990-1991

Applicants are invited for the Mary Jane Mossman Graduate Scholarship in Feminist Legal Studies, tenable for full-time graduate work in law at Osgoode Law School, Ontario, Canada, for the 1990-91 academic year. One, or in exceptional cases two, scholarship(s) will be awarded with a total value of Can.\$15,000.00. In appropriate cases, the scholarship may be combined with other forms of financial assistance.

The candidate must qualify for admission to the Graduate Programme of Osgoode Law School. The main criterion for the scholarship will be a demonstrated potential for excellence in feminist legal theory. This potential may be evidenced by a strong academic background. Other activities and projects will also be taken into account.

Applications for the scholarship should be made, in conjunction with an application for graduate work, to the Director of the Graduate Programme, Osgoode Law School, York University, North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3. Applicants should attach a short statement of not more than 500 words indicating their interest and qualifications in feminist legal studies.



CRACUM

April 1990

'Caribbean Women Writers Conference', Trinidad and Tobago, April 24-27, 1990.

This conference, with the theme "The Woman, The Writer and Caribbean Society" is being hosted by Women and Development Studies and the Faculty of Arts and General of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

The objectives include: providing a forum for the most important women writers of the Caribbean to engage in dialogue with each other, and to see their work in a broader multi-cultural regional perspective; giving literary critics, feminist literary theorists and scholars an opportunity to focus on the work of Caribbean women writers; informing members of the university community, government and the wider society of the increasing importance of the voices of women writers in the Caribbean; and giving Caribbean women writers based outside the region an opportunity to visit and reassess their relationships to these societies.

There will be conference panels, readings of works, a public lecture and discussion and cultural activities. For more information, contact Helen Pyne-Timothy, Dean, Faculty of Arts and General Studies, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, Tel: (1-809) 663-4042; Fax: (1-809) 663-9684).

June-July, 1990

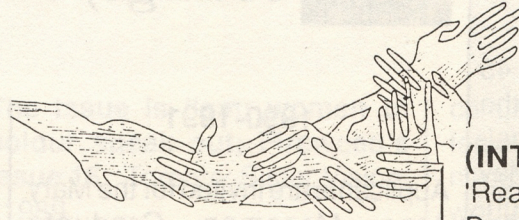
A workshop on 'Women, Public Policy and Development: Utilizing Microcomputer Databases', the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, June 18-July 13, 1990.

The workshop will draw on the availability of the UN Indicators and Statistics (WISTAT) database, which pulls together a large base of comparative gender-specific information on LOTUS files and thus can be manipulated and analysed in IBM compatible PCs. For more information, contact: Sam Johnson, University of Illinois, Department of Agricultural Economics, 437 Mumford Hall, 1301 West Gregory Drive, Urbana, IL 61801, USA.

November, 1990

'International Women and Health Meeting', November 3-10, 1990, The Philippines. Write: 1990IWHM Secretariat, c/o Women's Health Philippines, 1589 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City 1004, Philippines.

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November 1990

5th Feminist Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Panel discussions and workshops will reflect on the state of the feminist movement and come up with specific recommendations that the whole movement can work on. For more information, contact: Comisión Organizadora, Subsele Buenos Aires, Casilla Correo 5010, Correo Central, 1000 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

has created a Women in Development (WID) Unit to support research projects on questions related to the roles and problems of Third World women. WID will also be an advisory body to other IDRC divisions that fund projects affecting women in some way, and will try to increase awareness at IDRC of the importance of considering the effects of projects on women. For more information, contact: Dr. Eva Rathgeber, WID Unit, IDRC, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3H9, Canada.

The International Third World Legal Studies Association

(INTWORLSA) Project on 'Realising the Rights of Women in Development Processes' requests papers that focus on particular laws, policies and programmes that enhance women's legal entitlement to agricultural and financial assistance. Papers may examine the topic from a variety of different perspectives, including international human rights law, law and development, property, family or banking law, development studies or women's studies. Deadline for papers: August 31, 1990. For more information, contact: Professor Rebecca Cook, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, Toronto, M5S 2C5, Canada.

International Human Rights Internships

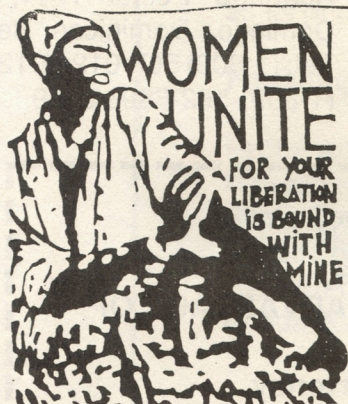
are available for qualified individuals of all nationalities for training positions with international human rights organisations in the United States, Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Most of the internships are for one year, although a small number of short-term placements of two to three months may be considered. A fellowship grant covers international travel, a basic living stipend, and health insurance. Contact: Director, International Human Rights Internship Programme, Institute of International Education, 1400 K Street N.W., Suite 650, Washington DC 20005, USA.

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Sister Collective

Sister Collective was launched in October 1989 as Namibia became independent. The 10-member collective aims to act as a catalyst in the conscientisation of the community with regard to the liberation of women and to address and confront issues which directly affect women in society on a current and international level. Apart from producing a newsletter, Sister Namibia, the collective's plans include holding workshops as well as the eventual establishment of a resource centre for women. Sister Collective feels that solidarity with women in Africa and the rest of the world is of vital importance. They can be



contacted at P.O. Box 60100, Katutura 9000, Namibia.

Cynthia Ellis Honoured

Congratulations to Cynthia Ellis, the Director of the Belize Rural Women's Association (BRWA), who has recently been selected

as a Fellow under the newly created Kellogg International Leadership Programme. This is in recognition of her work with community-based groups, particularly in rural areas of Belize. She has over the past ten years developed a dynamic programme for women, a reason cited for this award..

Cynthia is a member of CAFRA and will be well known to many members.

Action on Transnationals

INTO (Information Exchange Transnational Companies) is an organisation in The Netherlands which puts to the fore complaints from the Third World about the activities of transnational companies (TNCs). They believe that the international policy of TNCs necessitates solidarity and joint action across national borders. Some 20 Dutch development organisations are involved, and they report the findings of their Third World counterparts to INTO. Depending on the sort of information received, action can take the form of publicity, lobbying, supporting research and public education. Matters of concern to INTO include: the manner in which TNCs deal with the rights of local

farmers, the interests of native people, the rights of the trade unions, and human rights; the consequences that certain investments have to certain groups in the population, for the environment and for the local food situation; and how organisations



in the Third World react. INTO can be contacted directly at Postbus 19170, 3501 DD Utrecht, The Netherlands.

NEWS FLASH!

Peggy Antrobus, Tutor/Coordinator of the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the Extra-Mural Dept. of the University of the West Indies, Barbados (and a CAFRA member) is the recipient of the CARICOM Third Triennial Award for Women, 1990. Congratulations, Peggy.

Carifem Update

Dominican Republic

The Centro de Investigación para la Acción Femenina (CIPAF) is a non-profit organisation that was set up in 1983 in the Dominican Republic.

The organisation is managed by a permanent staff headed by the General Co-ordinator, Magaly Piñeda, with the work being divided into three areas: Education, Research, and Information and Communication. Volunteers also give important assistance, and temporary staff are hired as needed for specific projects.

The area of education is one of the basic pillars of the Centre, and a wide cross-section of women are reached through it - women of rural and urban sectors, working women, students, professionals and housewives. This is done by running courses,

producing audio-visual and printed material, holding cultural activities, etc.

The research of the Centre includes macro-studies such as the living conditions and work of the free zone (EPZ) workers, industrial workers and rural workers; and the domestic work load of rural women and urban workers. This research brings to light problems about which society prefers to keep quiet, such as sexual violence, domestic violence and femicide.

In 1988, in order to contribute to an understanding of the social, political and economic reality of Dominican women, CIPAF began a research project on women which attempts to enrich the social sciences through the integration of a gender perspective.

The area of information and

communication fall returns the research findings to the persons researched and develops educational materials. It is also responsible for the monthly edition of Quehaceres (chores) which is the voice of CIPAF, and the only regular feminist publication in the Dominican Republic.

Other activities of CIPAF include guiding groups in the process of formation; tutoring university students; supporting trade unions, farmers' organisations and community organisations which have a significant number of women in them; and serving as a meeting place for other women's organisations.

CIPAF can be contacted at Apartado Postal 1744, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Tel: (1-809) 567-0120/0129; Fax: (1-809) 562-6893/5879.

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Return to CAFRA, P.O. Bag 442, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago

Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

We are a network of individual researchers and activists and women's organisations who define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. We are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of exploitation in the society, and are working actively for change.

Membership spans the Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking countries of the region as well as the diaspora. It is open to women living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living abroad who support CAFRA's general aims and objectives.

Annual Membership Fee

Individuals: 25 units in currency of residence

Organisations: 35 units in currency of residence

(Payable by cheque, money order or cash in currency of residence or US\$)

A brochure outlining the aims and objectives of the association, as well as its priority areas, is available on request.

Founding Members

Peggy Antrobus

Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen

Sonia Cuales

Honor Ford-Smith

Joan French

Rhoda Reddock