

VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

2008/03 N° 91

Rural people : active and
participatory citizens

VMR

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In the previous numbers of the VMR, we tried to present social and solidarity economy, using different approaches: fair trade, solidarity finance, solidarity economy and development, peasant agriculture. We insisted every time on the need for people's participation in the decisions that affect them and much more on their participation in all matters that affect the life of their community, country, and region.

The dossier deals with the issue of "citizen participation". Is it enough to have more or less free elections for citizens to really take part to the life of their country? Or do we have to raise the issue of the means that have to be used for a true participation of men and women to the decisions that affect them? Asking the question this way obviously means giving as an answer the need for a citizen participation of all people.

Very recently, we witnessed the failure of the WTO negotiations, presented as a failure by the media, from the point of view of government leaders in the WTO, but considered as a victory by many civil society organizations and minority governments. For us, this is the result of many years of work, awareness rising, and information on global challenges and we can only be glad about that. Isn't that the sign that people masses are finally taking part to the decisions that affect them, the sign of true citizen participation?

Nevertheless, there is still work to be done and the current food crisis, e.g. the oil crisis, are not elements that can lead people to commit themselves in groups, to carry out viable alternative projects. In their daily lives, it is a matter of survival... But the period could still be favorable because even daily basic necessities are not ensured and, thus, we must more and more have a long term vision, reflect upon the future and make social decisions, which totally breaks with the current system.

We are lucky to live this period. We must act now if we want to safeguard our planet and offer our children some possibilities of living a better life.

We hope you will enjoy reading this VMR and are looking forward for your reactions.

*Daisy Herman
Secretary general*



Action of the Movements

Burkina Faso

A delegation of thirty people took part to the 7th People's Forum that was held in Kouikoro (Mali) from last 6th to 9th July, as the African counterpoint to the Hokkaido (Japan) G8 summit.

“Our lives are worth more than your profit” was the slogan and text

written on the banners of the people fired from the local Burkina Faso oil factory after its liquidation, and it is a good expression of the resistance you can see in the forums, which shows that the people forgotten by the globalization process do not want to die!



Burkina Faso delegation at 7th People's Forum - Mali, July 08

Cameroon

After the February riots caused by the cost of life and fuel price, everything seems to be more or less back to normal. After the riots, the government announced a 15% salary increase and the annulment of tariff on first necessity products. Moreover, at the beginning of July, the Cameroonian Minister of communication lifted the suspension of 3 radio and television channels, prohibited after the riots. Equinoxe radio and Equinoxe TV were closed for “illegal practice of the profession”, according to the official version. These channels say they had been suspended for criticizing the government.

Uganda

The Government recently implemented a new land policy. The analysis of the first version by groups of peasants underlines that it is more in favor of foreign investors than small peasants. Even though the texts were communicated for analysis and amendments, before the vote and implementation, people noticed that the government was implementing the policy before it was even debated and voted in parliament. Many peasants were evicted from their ancestral land in the name of “development by developers”.

Many people lost their lives in the fights that opposed ethnic classes to the army, in the pay of influential people in the government.



Uganda

India

A survey was carried out by a group of women groups’ leaders in the village of Perungalatun, in Tamil Nadu. The survey is an initiative that is part of a broader strategy aiming at avoiding the sacrifice of the region villages to the chemical industry. The new urbanization and modernization have had a negative influence on villagers, since they lead them to sell their land to the chemical industries, which claim to produce natural and organic fertilizers when they will probably produce chemical products for tanneries, knowing that the leather industries are located nearby.



Nepal

The election of a President after the monarchy was overthrown last 28th May was an important step for the Assembly to be able to draft a new constitution. The first President of the Republic of Nepal, Ram Baran Yadav, took the oath last 23rd July but Maoists, who have the majority in Parliament, do not want to set up a Government under his authority because he preempted their candidate. These elections occurred in a tense situation since oil and basic products prices keep on rocketing and people suffer from the political crisis as much as from these conditions.



Ram Baran Yadav

China

China must feed 22% of the global population with only 7% of farmable land. Due to growing urbanization, pollution and desertification, it is estimated that the surface of farmable land decreases in 2500 km² on

an annual basis. Self-sufficiency, in cereals among others, is globally ensured but the evolution of the lifestyle will probably generate new needs in the coming years and lead to an increase in imports. Nevertheless, the authorities wish to limit the imports, as they only consider them as a complement, and thus they are limited to 5% of the national production. The production increase is mainly based on the development of irrigation and on a better selection of species. The use of fertilizers is highly encouraged. Nevertheless, their efficiency is not established and their use generates serious nitrogen pollution problems, especially in the market garden belts of big cities. The development of cultivation under plastic sheets (the white revolution) has been spectacular. Its surface increases in nearly 700 000 ha on an annual basis.

Peru

Trade union, peasants and women organizations and all civil society organizations gathered under the banner of the “National Dignity” to organize a huge strike movement last 9th July. This way, the civil society wants to denounce corruption in its government, its lies, the dismantlement of basic services such as education and health as well as the lack of interest in what people claim.

Paraguay

The movement creation process is going on. Initiated in San Pedro del Parañá, the teams are now working and they keep on training and supporting peasants. Father Pascual Kinoti, the parish priest, was posted 600 km away to the San Miguel Arcángel parish and is now training groups that will join the young movement, which wishes to host the FIMARC 2010 World Meeting.

Argentina

Since March 2008, rural producers from Argentina are in conflict with their government. This conflict has been revealed in the last four months but is actually the result of a State policy made by leaders who totally ignore the life and the work in the countryside.

A brief historic: in 2001 the socio-economic crisis causes the demission of the President De la Rúa. Afterwards those who ensure the management of the country, the President Eduardo Duhalde asked their collaboration to the rural people for “the social peace” instituting a deduction of 10% of the production. When Nestor Kirchner in 2003, ensured the Presidency he raised this “deduction” up to 25% by decree and without any consultation. In October 2007, when he ended his mandate, he let the economic

management to his wife elected as President for the period 2007/2011, the deduction was about 35%.

On March 11 this year, the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner signs the “resolution 125” with variable deduction. This means that the deduction raised up to 44%, at the right moment of the soy crop. Those deductions are variable as the percentage can raise or go down in regards with the rendering of the crop and the world price of the grains.

This was the moment for the rural word to react by demonstrations of protest. Demonstration of “self convened” supported by urban communities. And the position of the government remained “not oblige and respond to the demands of the farmers” even utilising hurtful attributes in their speeches. In front of the firm attitude of the sector with the support of some political leaders, the government called to the dialogue. Four leaders of the main rural institutions ensured the representation of the farmers “self convened” calling those meetings “table of links”. After 4 months of dialogue, silence and frustrations, the “resolution 125” arrived at the National Congress for legalization but it was refused and annulated by the legislators.

What happen during those 4 months?



The government tried to justify those deductions by different arguments that varied: for equality and social inclusion, for the support to small producers, for accessible prices for the consumers, to built roads, hospitals and schools, to pay the international debt... Those invented and false justifications have caused the reaction of the rural sector that responded by demonstrations and temporary road cuts to claim “the call to attention” from the government. The finality never has been to create a shortage on the local markets. We have to note the more and more important support of urban families to rural producers as well as we can note the absence of some agricultural organisations, just being spectators or even condemning those demonstrations.

We have also noticed that the actual government don't have an agricultural policy. His only interest was what they could “deduct” and gain for political achievement. Arguing that their priority was the country supply, they closed the export of grain, meat and milk produces.

The “soyization” encouraged and favoured by the government, paying retribution to the multinational for “those economic beneficial effects” ruined a lot of dairies transforming their meadows in soy cultivation.

Nowadays, one month after the cancellation of the “resolution 125”

and with the change of some government ministers, we can see a new crisis appearing as the government did not give a proper response to the deep preoccupations of the rural world.

Italia

ARI and other Italian organizations are involved in the Italian solidarity economy network (RES). The Italian RES currently has 20 Solidarity Economy Districts (DES) disseminated on the national territory. Each DES is independent and autonomous in terms of its local organization; at the national level, they are all in a common referenced document titled “Charter of the Italian Solidarity Economy Network”, which defines the foundation of what the solidarity economy is for us.

The RES was created at the initiative of “Rete Lilliput”, a movement of Catholic inspiration. The DES are local “steering labs” in which different forms of collaboration and synergies are tested out in order to concretely assert local people's food sovereignty and a practical economic model opposed to the neoliberal globalization model – dominant and presented as the only possible model – on the basis of an egalitarian and socially sustainable economy.

Belgium

Last 13th September, the ACRF celebrated its 100 years of existence. Today, more than 200 local groups are present in the rural world and they try to find solutions to the problems faced in the rural world, such as problems of mobility, reconstructed families...

Different events recounting this centenary took place at La Marlagne and gave participants a chance to discover one century of history, which is not going to end here thanks to the energy of local teams.



80th anniversary celebration ACRF, Wépion (Belgium) 1988



Rural people, active and participatory citizens

In the previous numbers of the VMR, we tried to present social and solidarity economy, using different approaches: fair trade, solidarity finance, solidarity economy and development, peasant agriculture. Each time, we insisted on the need for people's participation in the decisions that affect them and much more on their participation in all that affects the life of their community, country, and region.

The dossier deals with the issue of "citizen participation". Is it enough to have more or less free elections for citizens to really take part to the life of their country? Or do we have to raise the issue of the means that have to be used for a true participation of men and women to the decisions that affect them? Asking the question this way obviously means giving as an answer the need for a citizen participation of all people.

CITIZENS WANT TO PARTICIPATE

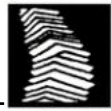
The Benin Movement underlines that peasant producers are not associated to the decisions that affect them. The Sri Lanka Movement notes that social leaders are not consulted by political decision makers. Is it enough to consult people for democracy to work out? It is essential that all citizens know their rights and duties and benefit from freedom of expression. But an obstacle arises: citizens lack training and information. One of the conditions of a democratic life is the political training of all, in the sense of society management: understanding projects challenges, analyzing them and deciding together. That is what can be called citizen training.



WSF - Nairobi (Kenya) 2007

Obstacles to participation

Another restraint observed is the lack of agreement among the members of a community on their wishes, projects, and personal interests that come before collective interest. Nevertheless, civil society's dynamism – citizens organized in associations and different groups – emphasizes the fact that public authorities often have cold feet and that they too often want to assert their dominating status. Thus, people that are left out must express their views, talk freely, and share they human richness.



A minimum knowledge of laws is required to control elected people's and political leaders' actions. Too often, citizens are not aware of the need to participate as people to the social life, not only with their votes but also with an active participation. Could it be because they are afraid of committing themselves or of being impugned? Because of traditions and the strong influence of habits, citizens delegate their citizen powers to the people that are elected.

It is also obvious that the corruption of many political leaders discourages citizens to act. The right to development, democracy is curbed by the structural obstacles that penalize some countries: the external debt, financial speculation, the influence of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank on countries' economic decisions, etc. Weak States cannot withstand the pressure put by these international organizations and the World Trade Organization, and thus cannot dedicate enough means to make citizen participation possible.

People's participation works miracles

In Nicaragua, the mayor of the municipality of El Rosario is convinced with the common implementation of local projects people started to take up their responsibilities and got organized. "They are poor small landowner peasants, but for a lot of years, they have learnt to work together, to solve their problems, negotiate among themselves, respect different opinions, join their efforts, reflect, decide, ask explanations and be accountable for... With such a rich participation, they are no longer that poor."

(Extract from DIAL magazine – Dissemination of Information in Latin America).

Precedence of citizens' needs

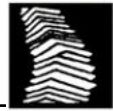
Democracy and citizen participation are to be understood and lived in a local economic, social, and political context. It goes beyond the “functioning” of institutions, with votes and more or less free elections. It is also the freedom of expression for all, citizens' participation to decisions and projects, and the allocation of richness among all people, the existence of an independent press of financial powers. Information is a powerful tool to foster citizen participation.

In Europe, debates on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) emphasize the lack of global agricultural governance. Consequently, there is an unfair competition among peasantries around the world, which does not foster the fight against inequalities and the reduction of poverty.

The neoliberal logic tends to put economic decisions outside democratic processes, i.e. that decisions are only taken depending on the economic interests and not on citizens' needs.

Questions for movements and groups :

- *What participation bodies do you know in your community, region, and country?*
- *What obstacles are you facing in terms of the citizen participation of all?*



PARTICIPATION, A HUMAN RIGHT

The right to speech is a right for all people, in a political system based on democracy. “We have a right to express ourselves when faced with people who do not listen” a Latin American organization says. Small producers live, work and produce in the peasant and rural world. They assert their rights to live from their productions, their right to land, and their right not to be expelled from their land. But when will all these voices be listened to? Because people’s voices do not match what authorities say. It is essential that people can express themselves.



Nieves Martinez Bravo - FIMARC European coordinator

Debates, in all groups and institutions, and their acceptance by those who have power are the foundation of a citizen society able to reconcile personal development with the fact of caring about the general interest. Citizens’ right to participate to public affairs is one of democracy principles. Public authorities – bottom-up at State and international level – must create the necessary conditions for citizen groups to be able to act freely, to express themselves, criticize and decide together.

For an economy that respects communities' welfare

“Solidarity economy is an alternative, fair and human model for realizing the economy. It is based on solidarity work, mutual support and cooperation; it involves an integral and sustainable development at human scale, which is especially related to local realities, with new relationships between economic stakeholders, based on principals of mutual understanding and cooperation, with the objective to put social utility before profit.

To strengthen and develop the existence of Solidarity Economy and Food Sovereignty, we want to consolidate these concepts and turn them into an ideology of Economic Sovereignty. In order to materialize this ideology we, the participants to the Asian Seminar, commit ourselves to:

- Boycotting the products of multinational companies that invade our markets through publicity and to promoting local products that respect culture and that are much better for health.
- Explaining to our families, groups and communities the dangers of these products
- Avoiding the use of hybrid or genetically modified seeds, and of chemical components that damage our natural resources
- Systematically promoting organic agriculture and the fair trade of these products
- Joining all campaigns and especially the “no more weapons” campaign, making alliances with the groups that defend similar interests before governing structures at the local, national and international levels in order to achieve our objectives

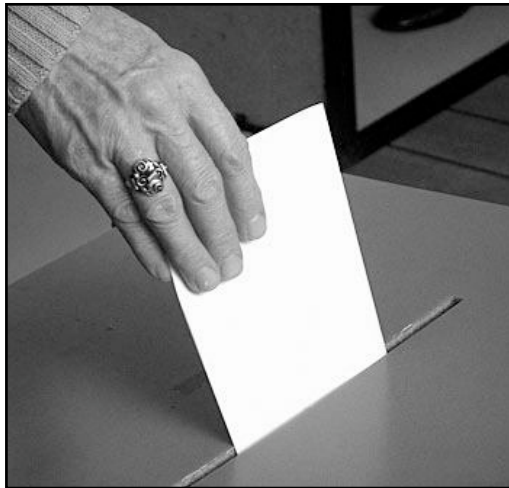
We strongly ask our politicians, religious leaders and all the representatives of governing institutions to consider our demand legitimate for an economy that respects communities' welfare and to ensure justice and a dignified life for all.”

(Final Declaration of the Asian meeting – Jessore (Bangladesh), 28/01/2008)



Requirements and characteristics of participation

It is not only a matter of being able to express your views through a democratic vote. It is also a matter of giving citizens the means to understand what is at stake in a project: information, transparency, participation to debates, orientations, evaluation, acknowledgement of citizen associations, etc. This participation can take many forms, depending on traditions and local habits. It can be a participatory budget, upon which citizens decide for their area or community; it can be councils, which can have different names, always with the objective to solve community problems together with local solutions. Whatever the form of participation, it is essential to have an interaction between citizens and those who are elected or politicians.



Instituted powers must be accountable for the way they handle the mandates they have received. They must explain how they give life to Human Rights, in the global sense of the word. It requires concrete mechanisms through which leaders are accountable for to people. It is also necessary to make the most of what we all know, on the basis of community sovereignty and local self-management. People must be able to grow in dignity, freedom, justice, peace and equity.

Citizen participation involves aspects of decision-making process and decision implementation: respect for fair rules and laws, rejection of unfair rules and laws, transparency, reactivity, consensus focused on the welfare of all, equity and equality, efficiency and performance, responsibility assumption. In these expressions, we see that we must have a common goal, a project for living together, and that we must always try to reach an agreement. Hence the tension between the private interest of all, community interest and people's general interest.

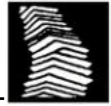
We are purveyors of land

The land, the basis of our profession, is a common good that we inherited and that belongs to us all the less since we will have to return it, to give it back, in a state that will allow those who will receive it, those who will be entrusted with it, to use it without abuses so that in their turn they can also hand it over.

Thus, we are only purveyors and the only way to reflect upon that profession is to do it collectively, without being impregnated by this non-utilitarian obligation to use it, this obligation of restitution. (...) We are responsible for that land, for that feeding land that we farm, which we turn over, which some days we curse for being ungrateful, which we love because it is our job and it is maybe not only with the only purpose to feed. (...)

Maybe the time has come to put peasants back to the place they truly deserve so that they can be the guarantors of a nature that a social contract entrusted them with, the purveyors of the land heritage that belongs to all people."

(Marc Parcé – France - in a magazine on agriculture).



Deciding together how we will work

In all sectors, the authorities must foster participation, citizen's responsibility and be accountable for what they do. It is a matter of implementing collectively pertinent policies to face current challenges. It is also a matter of claiming a democratic control exercised by the population. The solution is people's participation. It is not about giving things to people but about people taking care of themselves, participating to projects, their realization and evaluation. Participation is not only about working but also about deciding together how we will work, how we will get organized for the work that we have to do together and the decisions that have to be made. Because people can participate all the better and all the more when they see the results of their work, and they are "their results". Thus, it is a matter of using people's skills, in a mutual stimulation and respecting all people and groups.



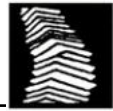
Farmers meeting - Pakistan 2008

A sustainable development is only possible if it is accepted, managed and coordinated by the human societies involved: organized citizens, communities, stakeholders of all kinds or different associations, etc. The democratization of power is one of the conditions for citizens' mobilization and commitment to ensure development and a better future.

We can finally underline that participation is a right proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 20). Its implementation requires consultation, concrete mechanisms making participation possible, listening to citizens, respecting their choices. Power must return to citizens the mandate it received from them, so that they can all constantly participate, freely criticize and ask for explanations. Community is the subject of its own development and of the construction of its future.

Questions for movements and groups :

- *What are public authorities doing to make citizen participation easier?*
- *What obstacles or restraints to citizens participation to the decisions that affect them can you identify?*



RURAL PEOPLE, PARTICIPATORY ACTORS

To participate to the citizen life, you cannot remain a “spectator”, but you have to “be vigilant” with elected people. We must ask the State to take political measures so that all people can express their views, have their place and responsibilities. Organized rural people must ask governments to support a development that foster production and the marketing of local products for the satisfaction of local people. It is necessary to develop a fair richness allocation policy for the development of all people.

Another demand would be to decentralize all action policies to make the active participation of citizens easier. Thus, they will be more able to be actors in matters affecting their future. All human communities must take care of themselves and act for the common good. Nothing can be achieved without an active participation of citizens, their consent, an awareness of their importance and role, their recognition as constituted groups.

Access of all to fundamental rights

In all projects and actions, groups must search for alliances with all existing local networks to inform, train and have an influence on common actions. Solidarity among networks makes the most of the knowledge and commitments of all. It makes it possible to develop a culture of dialogue between political bodies, citizens, different groups in society, associations and other bodies, since they are all actors able to build a world of justice and peace.

Society must be organized on the basis of access for all people to fundamental rights. It is also important to value the citizen “expertise”, making the most of all people’s practices and knowledge, which implies that all citizens commit themselves to fighting, wherever they are, individually and collectively, for making a new world come.

Nevertheless, active participation is a long term process, which has a price because of the necessary meetings and structures to make citizens participate and receive the essential training. It means that rural people must demand that public authorities give them the required means for that training and participation. Citizen participation limits the autonomy of those who are in power, obliging them to give explanations, to accept the control exercised by citizens.

It all leads to refusing that “local notables” – whoever they are – monopolize the power by being in all bodies on behalf of the community. The community must decide who must represent them and to do what, and to ask for explanations in return.

Searching for alliances

Citizen participation is based on the capacity to resent unfair situations and injustices, and to show solidarity to other actors. It is based on a partnership with all actors going in the same direction, on the education and training of people and groups, on the preferential option for the poor.

Human beings are actors in society, individually or with other citizens. They take up their responsibilities and serve other people. They have their interiority to be able to take some perspectives when faced with different situations, events and decisions. They are human beings, in a relationship with other people, with nature, with “mother earth”, which always requires a lot of humility to try to live in a consistent manner words and actions, always serving the citizen responsibility of all people.

Questions for movements and groups :

- *What is your organization doing to develop the citizen participation of all?*
- *With what organizations are you making alliances for citizen participation?*



We interviewed Fabienne Tache, a member of the Peasant Solidarity Cooperative and of the ACAR, the French-speaking Agricultural Catholic Action, and a member of FIMARC's Human Rights Group.

Fabienne could you introduce yourself ?

I'm Fabienne, daughter of a peasant, 42 years old, and the oldest of a family of 3 children. I first worked for ten years as a "currency and precious metals" changer in a big bank of the city. I'm now the mother of two boys, who are 9 and 15 years old, I've been the secretary of my parish for 12 years and I'm also the secretary of a small transport company active in the field of waste.



Could you tell us about your life ?

When I was 10, my grandfather, who was farming the family land with my father, wanted to expel us to sell the land to my aunt who had some money to invest. We learnt it on a Sunday morning when we were going to mass. Two police officers, who thought we were not home, came to see how they could expel us.

A support committee was created in emergency to support my parents in their right to land for those who farm it. There were tensions, death threats, a fire was started, assault and battery, we went to court but also received an incredible support from the peasants of the region, who participated to two public demonstrations, a true surge of solidarity.

Peasants and friends accepted to be available 24 hours a day by phone to avoid assaults when the police did not want to come for “family matters”.

Could you tell us about your commitments?

I've been involved for 11 years in my municipality General Council and, in 2002, I had the opportunity

to take part to the drafting of my canton Constitution, Fribourg.

A constitution is implemented for the next 50 to 70 years and must ensure a dignified life for all during this period.

It must remain open to make a certain evolution possible but not too much in order to ensure the main human rights for all: access to water, housing, health, education...

We had to fight for every word in order to achieve this objective with better-off people who thought that a social State is too expensive and they were trying to favor a certain elite.

As a member of the Peasant Solidarity Cooperative and the ACAR, the French-Speaking Agricultural Catholic Action, a member of the FIMARC, I joined the Human Rights Group about two years ago.

I mostly accepted because I feel very concerned about the situation of women and children around me and around the world. They are often more affected by the lack of respect for human rights through lack of means (they do not have a right to speech, social or cultural situation, lack of instruction, etc.).



Human Rights Group meeting, Geneva (Switzerland) 2008

What is the situation of Switzerland in terms of poverty and access to rights problems?

Switzerland gives the image of an idyllic country that has no problems. For me, just like a coin, it has a heads side : its external image with, it is true, a large number of rich people but also a tails side, with people ashamed and not daring to show their living conditions. Consequently, it is difficult to get some support to make things change; those who have too much

fight with money in order to keep it and those who have no money vote thinking that one day it could happen to them.

We see a huge increase in xenophobia, people are afraid that foreigners will take away their wealth, when they do not hesitate to use them as unskilled workers, they are afraid of giving them the right to speech when they are part of the working class, afraid that they could awaken the servile and dormant mass.

At national level, the main problem is that people who have access to education, for instance, even when they come from a poor family, forget very quickly where they come from and often defend rich people. Even the population is supporting this process by pressuring people who dare to express different opinions.

For instance, 4 years ago, I appealed against my municipality for having illegally been rejected in a debate and vote on the opening of an additional class in the public school.

I could find a lawyer who accepted to help me for free if I did not reveal his name. The answer came 10 months later, i.e. at the end of school year, and the answer was that I was right. If I had lost, I would have had to pay for the proceedings but the municipality did not pay a thing.

On the other hand, during these 10 months, most citizens did not talk to me except to tell me to give up because it gave a bad image of our municipality in press articles. Even my political group asked me twice to resign.

Actually, it is because of that external pressure that people often do not want to react because they are afraid of losing their jobs.

Besides the fears you underline, what are the other reasons why people are hesitant to commit themselves?

Many people have a hard time reacting in a situation of emergency. You can especially see that in debates with strict intervention rules and local elected people do not dare to say something because they do not know the proceedings, the issues, because they have not given it enough thought or they do not want to be pressured and thus nothing changes.

Citizens no longer feel concerned and think that whatever they vote, the State will do as it wishes, so they no longer vote. The abstention rate in voting is astounding. We are now wondering if we should not institute the "obligation to vote".

What conclusions do you draw of all this?

My conclusions are not negative: we now have a young and educated movement, often sons or daughters of former militants, who mobilize themselves. Last June, we won a huge victory against xenophobia. During the voting, people did not want to dismantle our health system, which was an undreamed-of result.



Pierre Miot and Fabienne Tache - Geneva (Switzerland) 2008

Nevertheless, even if we see that people are beginning to feel concerned about the concept of sustainability, the rural world is threatened.

The concept of imports due to the small size of the country overcomes the notion of feeding land. The Swiss agriculture is very subsidized and has to respect drastic conditions in terms of animal detention and respect for nature, weary when the quality of the products on the market is unanimously recognized.

Many people wish to renounce to subsidies and to totally open borders within the scope of the WTO. Profit is what counts and too bad if peasants die. The fight must imperatively go on.

The conclusions are also positive for associations. The peasant solidarity Cooperative, through its struggle, made a new agricultural law possible, which protects farmers even if speculators are more and more virulent when fighting against it.

The Cooperative supports peasants expelled from their land on a regular basis. On other occasions, problems are solved easily, only because the Cooperative is there to support a family, which is a kind of silent but concrete pressure that makes abuse stop. Sometimes, this physical and moral presence lasts for months, even years: meetings, lawyers, court sessions and it prevents families from breaking.

For the ACAR, the initiator of the peasant solidarity Cooperative, the commitment remains very militant, despite the ageing of its troops, against unfair situation in the peasant world: producers, consumers, to protect the whole food chain and thus against the WTO, GMO's... and also as a member of the FI-MARC.

What are the deep motivations of your commitments?

In all these commitments, my main daily challenge is to reconcile everything, i.e. my family, my job, my political or militant commitment, but my main goal is to iron out all existing inequalities and rights violations. I have faith in God but also in Human beings.

Thus, my priority is still to resent situations of abuse, the duty to make these situations known so that things can change.

As isolated individuals, we are not obliged to change everything but maybe other people can do that. Then, let us be the spokespersons of those who have no voice so that the world can change.



General Information

The extraordinary general assembly of the International Conference of **International Catholic Organizations**, held in Paris on 19th June 2008, decided to DISSOLVE the institution. The main objective of the decision is to make room for the new enlarged Forum that gathers a hundred NGO's of catholic inspiration, which held its first meeting in Rome in November 2007. The initiative was launched by the Vatican Secretary of State. The platform fosters exchanges in network in order to make more efficient the presence and solutions to global challenges, in the framework of the United Nations and other intergovernmental bodies.

The 30th Plenary World Assembly of the **International Movement of Catholic Intellectuals** was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 20th to 27th July 2008. At the end of the meeting, Ms Lawrence Kwark, currently working as a Chargée de Mission in the CCFD, was elected Secretary general of the movement. We wish Lawrence good luck with her new responsibilities.

The **MIDADE**, the International Movement of the Apostolate of Children, also held its Word Meeting in Chile in August.

The **European continental seminar** was held in Croatia from 9th to 16th September. It gathered delegates from 13 Eastern, Western and Central Europe countries. The methodology of the seminar was based on concrete solidarity economy experiences that allow achieving food sovereignty.



*European continental seminar, Croatia
September 2008*

The **members of the Bureau** met in Reconquista (Argentina) from 20th to 30th September. One of the main points on the agenda of that Bureau meeting was to start the preparation of the 2010 World Meeting that will probably be held in Latin America.

The world Assembly will be important considering the current challenges in the rural world and also because of the renewal of EXCO mandates and Bureau members.

The World Council of the **International YCW** is taking place until 12th October in Thanjavur (India). The theme of the Council is “Acting together for the future of work”.

The **MIAMSI** will hold its 12th General Assembly in St. Julians, Malta, from Friday 24th to Wednesday 29th October 2008 on the issue of “migrations, an opportunity for building bridges – families, cultures, religions and people in dialogue.”

The next **World Social Forum** will take place in Belém do Pará, Brazil, from 26th January to 1st February 2009. In the coming months, many meetings, forums, congresses... will be organized to prepare this International event.

New functions

Entraide et Fraternité – Vivre ensemble elected a new Secretary general **Mr Angelo Simonazzi** on 1st May. Mr Simonazzi is really knowledgeable in the field of project management, especially in Africa and in association management. He worked as a project manager in several humanitarian agencies, the CAFOD among others, our English counterpart, and was also in charge of Save the Children Italy and Handicap International Belgium.



Angelo Simonazzi

Mr Guy Aurenche will officially become President of the **CCFD-Terre Solidaire** on 1st January 2009. He will succeed to Joël Thomas. Mr Aurenche, 62 years old, is a lawyer and has 35 years of experience in the associative life. He was, among other responsibilities, president of the ACAT-France (Christian Action for the abolition of torture) from 1975 to 1983, then President of the ACAT International Federation from 1987 to 1998. Since March 2006, he has been the President of the association of the friends of La Vie, a weekly magazine. He went on several occasions to Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. He wrote a lot of books, one of them is titled “The dynamics of human rights” and was published in 1998.



Your column

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization in charge of the rules of trade among countries. At the heart of the Organization are the WTO Agreements, negotiated and signed by most global trade powers and ratified by their Parliaments.

Last 21st July, Mr. Pascal Lamy, the WTO Director, invited the 40 trade ministers of the most representative countries to unblock the so-called Doha negotiations on the liberalization of global trade. In the agricultural field (8% of trade), an agreement could be possible. Northern countries accepted to stop all export subsidies by the year 2013. Emerging countries would be authorized to cut their agricultural tariffs in a lesser manner (-36%) than developed countries (-54%).

In the industrial field (72% of trade): developed countries consider that their effort in agriculture is not reciprocated. They denounce the exemptions and deadlines that would be granted to emerging countries.

In the field of services, debates have barely started. Should negotiations fail, we might run a high risk of seeing trade tariffs wars reappear and bilateral agreements multiply, in which poor countries are rarely winners.

On 25th July, the dialogue of the deaf was total. Mr. Lamy decided to work in a select committee with the 7 most important commercial powers (United States, European Union, China, India, Australia, Brazil, Japan). He forces them to study his own project and requires them to take a stand.

On 29th July, Mr. Lamy accepts the fact that the trade liberalization negotiations in agriculture have failed. The situation came to a dead end on 28th July when developing countries asked to protect their agricultural production against an invasion of foreign countries.

The failure is not going to strengthen the trade multilateral system. In the best case scenario, different countries will be tempted to sign multilateral agreements, in which the poor will be the losers, and in the worst case scenario, to denounce multilateral agreements, which could lead to trade wars and, possibly, local or general recessions.



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