



Ana Silva

MIJARC International Women Commission 2009 in Assesse/ Belgium

This year, Europe – more precisely Belgium – hosted the International Women Commission in the village of Assesse, from the 25th to the 27th July.

In a friendly atmosphere, the Women Commissioners from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, together with MIJARC World Secretary General, Carolin Grieshop, revised the actuality of MIJARC work around gender issues at continental and national levels and defined a specific Action Plan regarding MIJARC

World's Objective “empower women at all levels in relation with their rights and their participation to take leadership”.

The International Women Commission (IWC) 2009 started analyzing the history of Women's Work within MIJARC and presenting, more detailed, last year's work at continental and national levels. It's clear the difference between continents in terms of needs but also the common difficulties to get financial support to implement more visible actions. The first conclusion and commitment from the IWC was, therefore, the need to create an effective communication network between the commissioners, sharing projects and activities, ways to get funds and follow-ups.

It was then time to reflect about the expectations regarding MIJARC Women's Work for the next 3 years and it was defined the functioning of the IWC in terms of media of communication, methodology, Basic principles to work together and Action fields. It was agreed that each commissioner would be the women commission speaker for alternated periods of 9 months.

The second day of the meeting was mostly dedicated to the reflection about Women in political participation counting with an important Input. The expert, Núbia Alvarez, from Colombia, former international coordinator of JOC presented some statistical data about political participation of women at international level, obstacles women have to face for their participation and tools/ suggestions to work on this issue.

About this topic, the commission discussed on what actions can be taken to ensure women participation in equality of conditions. It was concluded that women's capacities must be empowered, following several possible ways: educating small children, empowering young rural women, making lobby work and advocacy, inviting role models, sharing common goals with other women organizations, promoting more leadership training for women at local and national levels and taking economic issues into account. Thus, the IWC discussed on MIJARC possibilities for cooperation, networking and lobbying with other organizations, defining a contact plan at continental level.

From the third day of work resulted the IWC specific and realistic Action Plan for 2009-2010 and one for 2009-2012 aiming that MIJARC will promote gender equality in social and political life, women coordinators at all levels will be well motivated and gender equality will be reached within MIJARC at all levels, down to grassroots.

The IWC also planned to build a training manual to help women promoting civic education, on several contents like food, women's rights declaration, finances, political participation, health and millennium development goals. With this tool we expect to motivate local, national and continental levels to promote seminars/trainings and animations, focusing on gender issues.

We hope to fulfill all the expectations and achieve all the proposed results. Thus, we hope to count with all women support and participation through all levels, from continental to grassroots to make it possible. We propose to start having some participation in International Rural Women's Day activities (**15th October**) at any possible level, and then, sharing that experience. Let's work together for social gender equality at all levels.

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