



# PORTRAITS OF

# CHANGE

A BOOKLET TO ACCOMPANY THE IBT PROGRAMME FOR CHANNEL 4



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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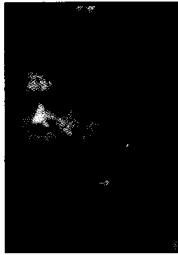
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# INTRODUCTION

*Portraits of Change* tells the powerful and moving stories of two women whose courage and determination are an inspiration to women worldwide.

Regina Gordilho, of Brazil, is a woman whose life was transformed by the sudden brutal murder of her son by the Military Police. From a middle class businesswoman whose concerns went no further than her own family, she became a campaigner on behalf of the poor women of the shanty towns. Her cause led her to become the first woman leader of the Council in Rio de Janeiro, where she fought a one-woman battle against violence and corruption.

Nelia Sancho, of the Philippines, seemed destined to a life of fashion and advertising when she won the beauty title of Queen of the Pacific. However, whilst still a student she became involved in political activities to overthrow the Marcos dictatorship. Whilst her husband was in prison for political 'crimes' she began to identify with the most vulnerable sector of her society; the poor women of the shanty towns and rural areas. She was to become Secretary General of the largest women's organisation in South East Asia, working with small grassroots women's groups all over the country on issues ranging from childcare to land reform and the external debt.

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The two stories are portraits of *change* not only because of the changes the women brought to their own lives, but because of the impact they are having on their societies. Both women are confronting violence and injustice, the legacies of previous authoritarian regimes. They are attempting to bring about real change by giving a voice to the powerless, and to poor women in particular.

By rejecting the subordinated role traditionally assigned to women in their societies, and facing personal harassment and danger, these women serve as a challenge and an inspiration to women in other parts of the world. This booklet aims to channel these feelings by providing background information on the two countries from a women's perspective, and a section on women worldwide with suggestions for discussion and action.

# BRAZIL




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## BASIC DATA

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**Land Area:** 8,511,964 sq. kms.

**Population:** 144,369,000 (1988)

**Capital:** Brasilia

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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

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**People:** Ethnic integration between original inhabitants (mainly Guarani) and African and European (mostly Portuguese) immigrants.

**Language:** Portuguese is the official and predominant language.

**Religion:** Mainly Catholic. Some merging with Brazilian cult religions.

**Education:** 79% adult men and 76% adult women literate (1985). 9 out of 10 children leave school after the age of 10

**Natural wealth:** 67% of the land area is rainforest. Mineral deposits include iron, manganese, copper, nickel and bauxite.

**Major exports:** Coffee, animal feeding stuff, iron ore, petroleum products.

**Foreign debt:** \$123,932 million (1987) Debt service as percentage of exports: 34.5% (1987)

Sources: Third World Guide 1989/90. Third World Editors.

The State of the World's Children 1989/90. UNICEF

Brazil Country File 1989/90.

Economist Intelligence Unit

*Tempo e Presencia* (various reports).

CEDI, Rio de Janeiro.



**ESTES  
SÃO OS  
5 POLICIAIS QUE  
MATARAM O MEU  
FILHO MARCELLUS**



# REGINA OF RIO

## A CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE

*"My struggle is against violence, I am fighting for individual human rights. That is why people come here to me...I try to follow the cases of people who come to my lawyers, I go to the police stations, I go to the courts. I feel that it is important to be present for these people, so I can give hope to the struggle for rights, for a better world."* (Regina Gordilho)

Regina Gordilho was a fifty-four year old businesswoman in Rio de Janeiro with no political experience, when, in November 1988, she was catapulted into political office as president of the Rio City Council. From a wealthy Rio family, she had enjoyed the privileges of her class, giving little attention to the social and political problems of her vast and turbulent country.

In the industrialised south of the country, where Regina comes from, the living standards of the wealthy are amongst the highest in the world, even though the economy now staggers under a massive \$120 billion foreign debt. But while the rich get the loans, it is the poor who are paying the debt, for Brazil is a country of brutal inequalities. Whilst it has the highest concentration of wealth in the world, two thirds of the population live outside the modern economy and one third of the population is malnourished.

During the period known as Brazil's "economic miracle" (between 1968 and 1974), the country's growth rates averaged a spectacular ten percent a year. During this time the rich became richer but at the same time the poor became poorer, and the military regime unleashed its most violent repression on all political opposition.

Although the military officially stepped down in 1985, the heritage of this terrible phase is still alive in today's "New Republic" and the Military Police (PM) and Death Squads have continued to kill ordinary Brazilians with impunity. A report by Amnesty International, *Brazil: Beyond the Law* (June 1990) details the torture and killing of criminal suspects by the police and the killing of street children by death squads.

Rio, with its population of 9 million, is notoriously violent. The *favelas* (shanty towns) which hang precariously on the hillsides above wealthy suburbs like Copacabana are said to be dominated by criminal organisations, like the drugs and lottery gangs. Middle class *Cariocas* (Rio citizens), fearful of the poverty and violence, want protection for themselves and their

Regina campaigning for justice. The poster says:  
These are the 5 policemen who murdered my son  
Marcellus. They are still free.

## POVERTY IN BRAZIL

According to the Brazilian government's own survey (Plano de Acao Governamental, 1987), 36 million children are severely deprived and 7 million children are completely abandoned, living on the streets. 10 million households are without water. 10 million Brazilians suffer from physical disability, mostly due to poor nourishment. Average life expectancy for Brazilians is 65 years (compared with 76 in the UK) but for Brazilians earning less than the minimum wage it is only 41 years.



Children sleeping rough in the streets of Rio  
(Photo: Jullo Etchart)

## MILITARY RULE

The populist president, Joao Goulart, was overthrown by a military coup in 1964. Using export incentives for foreign firms, the military government led Brazil into an economy heavily dependent on foreign capital, whilst allowing real wages to drop below the increases in the cost of living. With increasing signs of popular unrest, the regime took a sharp authoritarian turn in 1968, when the 'hardliners' took over. Habeas corpus for political detainees was abolished and kidnapping, torture and assassination became a veritable industry. Death Squads terrorised the population.



Marcellus Gordilho's funeral

### THE GORDILHO CASE

Marcellus Gordilho Ribas was killed on March 17 1987 after the Military Police (PM) picked him up in the community of Cidade de Deus thinking he was purchasing drugs. When he failed to provide identification proving employment, the PM forced him into the police van. Marcellus resisted and was violently beaten. He died on the way to the police station. His mother located a number of witnesses to the arrest. The PM advised the witnesses not to testify, and shortly before they were due to leave for the hearing in a bus hired by Marcellus' mother, the PM blocked the streets with a patrol car and two personnel carriers.

The neighbours were being menaced by a gang of drug-traffickers led by one Sam, who was in jail at the time, and the police warned them of reprisals from the gang if they testified. Apparently, the gang had made a deal with the police to try and secure the release of their leader. The result was that the homicide charges were dropped. The case was handled by a special military court with a police jury, which gave each of the accused an 18-month suspended sentence for "exceeding their duties". They went back to work.

(From "Police Abuse in Brazil", Americas Watch Report, 1987)

### INFANT MORTALITY:

**64 PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS (cf.UK 9)**

This is an average figure which disguises major class and regional differences in Brazil. For example, the rate of infant mortality — death before the first year of age — for children of poor single mothers in a shanty-town in the Northeast is 132.6 per 1,000, while for children of prosperous households in the south it is 38.5 per 1,000.

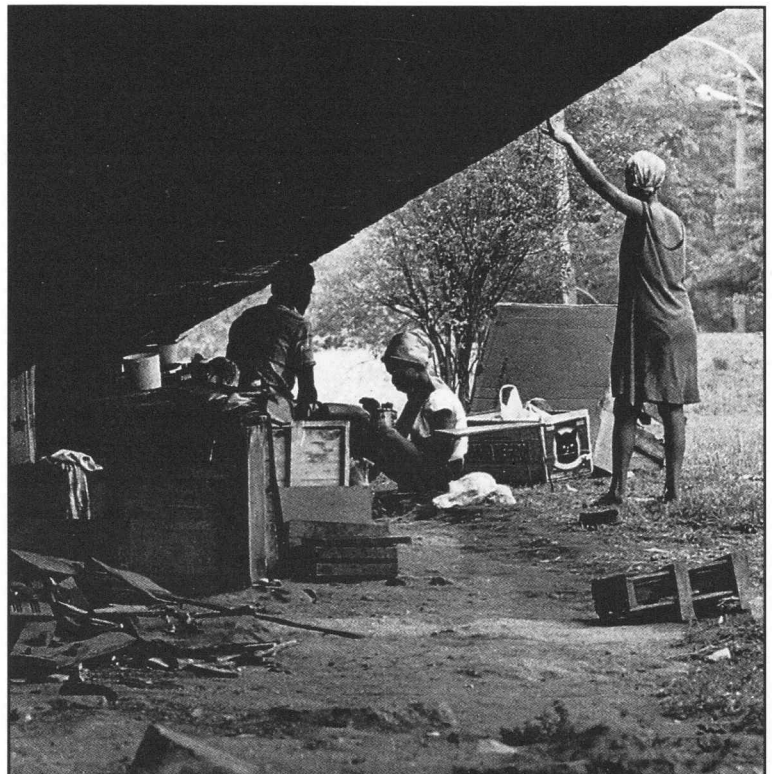
poverty and violence, want protection for themselves and their property, and turn a blind eye to — or even condone — police brutality. Deaths of *marginais* (poor people) in police raids are small daily items in the newspapers: their lives do not count for much.

The reality of arbitrary police killing was brought home to Regina suddenly and tragically on the 17th March 1987 when her 24-year old son Marcellus was beaten to death by the Military Police in a police van, for failing to provide proof of his employment as a swimming instructor.

With an energy born of her anguish, Regina flung herself into a campaign for justice. As Regina herself says, the "educated" middle classes in Brazil are cushioned from the situation of the masses of poor Brazilians. Their privileged education does not teach them about the poverty and injustice of the system of which they are part.

*"I used to think that nothing would happen to affect the day to day lives of the middle class but when Marcellus was killed I woke up to the social problems in Brazil — the slums, the workers, and the situation of the poor here. When I began campaigning, I realised that there was an enormous number of mothers who had had similar experiences. Mainly it was poor mothers."*

Poor women in Brazil live with violence of every kind. Not only are they victims of specific police attacks, like Lidia, the prostitute in the film, shot at by the PM for continuing to work on her "beat", but of the generalised violence of poverty, hunger and ill-health.



Makeshift home under a flyover in Rio (Photo: Jullo Etchart)



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## WOMEN FIGHTING FOR CHANGE

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There have long been heroines in Brazil. These are the individual women who have one way or another tackled oppression. We can look back to the nineteenth century at Maria Quitéria, a Brazilian Joan of Arc, who dressed as a soldier to fight the Portuguese in Bahia or more recently to Luiza Erundina, the first woman mayor of Sao Paulo. But for the mass of Brazilian women, it is through organisations, from mothers' clubs in the *favelas* (shanty towns) to trades unions, that the struggle for social justice is taken forward. More recently, women have begun to organise around the specific violence that is aimed at women. *Machismo* — the "cult of the male" justifies many forms of violence against women, particularly domestic violence.

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## THE WOMEN'S POLICE STATIONS

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"*Mulher gosta de apanhar*" (women enjoy a beating) goes an old Brazilian saying. In 1985, a women's group campaigning against violence reported that during the first half of the year in Sao Paulo and Rio each, there were over 5,000 cases of rape, bodily injury, death threats, and murders. Of 5,246 cases in Rio, 4,823 were wife-battering.

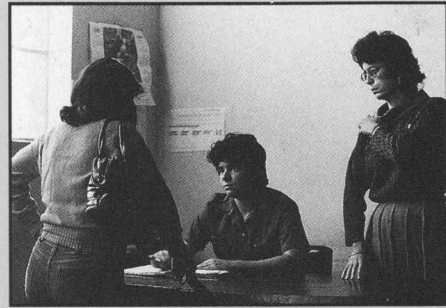
In 1985, feminist groups campaigning against violence against women gained a major victory in the setting up of the world's first women's police station. Staffed entirely by women, the *Delegacia da Mulher* operates as a normal police station, but also makes medical and legal help available to women who are victims of violence. When the first station opened in Sao Paulo, in the early days of its operation, there were up to 500 women there at any one time, reporting predominantly cases of domestic violence, rape and incest. Now there are 50 such stations throughout Brazil. And there is a further urgent need — for shelters for women who dare not return to their homes after making a complaint for fear of their lives.

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## WOMEN IN TRADES UNIONS

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Traditional machismo demands that women stay at home, subservient, dependent and producing children; but for poor urban and rural families, economic factors militate against this. The emergence of women as a political force outside the home was given an impulse in the "miracle" years, when real wages were held down to provide the wretchedly cheap labour which helped produce the boom. It meant that in urban areas women were drawn into previously male-only jobs to augment the family income, and could become part of a unionised labour force.



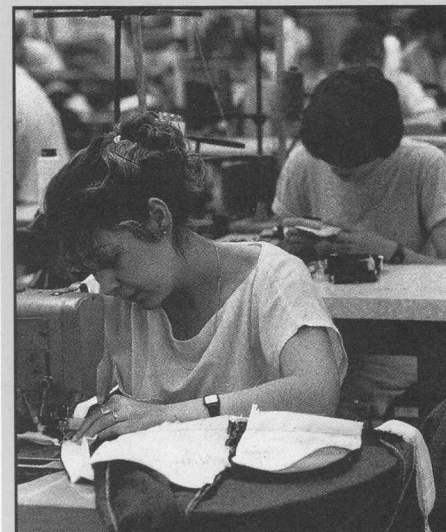
One of the 50 women's police stations now operating in Brazil

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## LABOUR FORCE

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44.5% of estimated population in 1986. In 1985 it was estimated that women were 33% of the labour force, but this excluded unpaid workers in agriculture (peasant farmers) and domestic workers and should be very much higher today as women have been increasingly drawn into the labour market with the deepening economic crisis. Women earn between 60% and 40% of men's earnings.



Women working in a garment factory in Sao Paulo, Brazil  
(Photo: Julio Etchart)

### LAND DISTRIBUTION

4.5% of the population hold 81% of the farmland. 11 million rural people have no land, or insufficient from which to live.



Luiza Erundina, first woman mayor of Sao Paulo  
(Photo: Julio Etchart)

### MARIA MARGARIDA ALVES

Maria Margarida Alves was president of the rural workers' union of Alagoa Grande, in the northeastern state of Paraiba. She had been an active trade union leader for 15 years. She was negotiating better pay for sugar cane workers in the region when in August 1983, she was shot in the face and killed by gunmen in the doorway of her house — witnessed by her son. Margarida had been receiving death threats from landowners and sugar mill bosses for some time. After her death, a lawyer working with the union lawyer was threatened with death, and her house bombed and sprayed with bullets.

*Brazil: Killing with Impunity*, Amnesty International 1988

In the rural Northeast, the expulsion of peasant families from the land was accelerated with the mechanisation of sugar cane production, and women were turned, with men, into landless wage labourers on the sugar cane plantations. Miserable as the working conditions were, women then became part of the trade union movement where their influence is increasingly felt.

Women participating in the big sugar cane workers' strikes in 1984 and 1986 in the state of Paraiba, and in the metalworkers' strikes in the industrial heartland of Sao Paulo in May 1978, started bringing specific women's issues into the trade union movement's traditional demands.

The feminist movements in Rio and Sao Paulo in the mid-seventies are questioning basic issues like female sexuality, contraception and abortion, and the male-dominated union movement felt threatened by them and was openly antagonistic. But women workers, supported by the burgeoning number of women's groups tackling these issues, began to raise them in the Trade Union Congress (CUT). Eventually, the 2nd national congress of CUT approved the new women's demands, which included the right to creches, extension of maternity leave, pensions, full recognition of domestic workers, and the right to unionisation still denied to women in certain rural unions.

### WOMEN IN POLITICS

Regina's struggle is also about equality for women: *"Women traditionally have been less active in politics and political struggles...there is a lot of chauvinism in Brazil. So my struggle represents the hopes of women here in Brazil."*

Regina was not the first woman in Brazil whose battle for justice was to draw her into a political party. Luiza Erundina, whose upbringing in the impoverished North-East of the country was very different from that of Regina, joined the radical socialist PT (Workers' Party) and became the first woman mayor of Sao Paulo.

Regina's party, the PDT (Democratic Labour Party) is a centre-left social democratic party led by the veteran populist politician, Leonel Brizola, ex-governor of Rio and the governor of the state of Rio Grande do Sul at the time of the military coup in 1964. On the PDT ticket, Regina stood for the Rio City Council, the corrupt "Golden Cage" of nepotism. As its elected president, she embarked on an immediate clean-up, sacking 400 fraudulent 'employees' — names on the payroll of people who often did not even exist. The shock was too great for the corrupt establishment, and two years later she was voted out of office by her fellow councillors.



Regina confronts police on the streets

## WOMEN AND POPULAR MOVEMENTS

Although Regina does not think that women necessarily have to organise separately, she does believe they have an important role to play in changing their society: *"I think that only through mobilising ourselves can we change the situation here. First of all we can do this through mothers and women in general"*

Outside the union movement and the political parties, there were two mass mobilisations in the middle and late seventies in which women were the prime movers – the Cost of Living Movement, and the Campaign for Amnesty for political opponents of the regime. These movements were the expression of grassroots organisation in women's groups of every description throughout Brazil, and involved women across class and racial barriers.

Popular movements spread all over Brazil as the Brazilian regime moved towards *"abertura"* or democratic opening up after 21 years of military rule. The movement of the Landless, the movement for Human Rights, the native Indians' movement for land and rights were all structured into networks of organisations. Church, trade union, civil and legal aid groups work with all sectors of society. There are countless women's groups in the country. All these groups meet with police harassment and violence.

As Regina says:

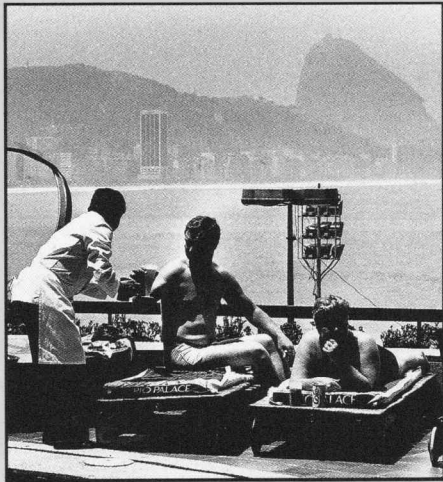
*"I think we have to fight the present situation. Currently and historically our individual rights are not respected and I felt very personally what this means...I feel that I have restructured my life. What I do is to project my situation and try to make others realise the situation of women's lives, I try to make things happen and shake people up to make them realise what is happening."*

## THE COST OF LIVING MOVEMENT

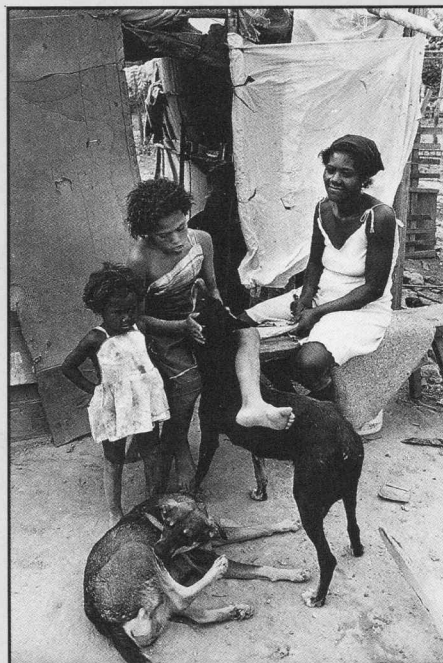
The Catholic Church had given the 1964 coup its blessing, but as the military regime increasingly institutionalised its acts of violence, the church became virtually the only vehicle for political opposition. The Medellin conference in 1968 had formally aligned the Latin American church with the poor and oppressed. The Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs) grouped people around social and political problems, preaching the theology of liberation. Women were very active in these groups in urban and rural areas, and the first national genuinely grassroots movement to have a major political impact grew out of mothers' clubs in the favelas around Sao Paulo. This was the Cost of Living movement, which on the eve of the 1978 elections presented a petition with 1.3 million signatures to the country's president in Brasilia.

Their demands were for:

- an emergency cash bonus for all labourers
- land for those who work it
- agrarian reform
- price freeze on basic necessities
- wages increased to the level of human dignity



Poolside service at the luxurious Rio Palace Executive Club, on Copacabana Bay, where rich Brazilians and foreign visitors meet (Photo: Julio Etchart)



Family living in hut under enormous pylons — they have no electricity (Photo: Jenny Matthews/Network)

## BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- 1500 Portuguese explorer Cabral lands in Brazil, inhabited by an estimated 6,000,000 indigenous Indians.
- 1822 Portuguese prince Pedro 1 declares independence from Portugal and makes himself Emperor of Brazil.
- 1888 Abolition of slavery after millions of African slaves imported to coffee and sugar estates.
- 1889 Emperor dethroned: Brazil becomes a republic.
- 1922 Berta Luz founds Brazilian Federation for the Progress of Women which soon has branches in 14 states, struggling for social and political rights for women.
- 1930 Beginning of populist dictatorship of Getulio Vargas.
- 1932 Women enfranchised.
- 1933 First woman elected to the National Assembly.
- 1964 After a brief democratic interlude under President Joao Goulart, the military seize power, with US assistance.
- 1968 Military crackdown on political dissidents, and beginning of "miracle".
- 1974 Oil price rises end boom. Opposition makes gains in senate elections.
- 1975 UN Decade for Women begins. Women's Centre opens in Rio.  
  
Cost of Living Movement and Campaign for general Amnesty gets going all over Brazil with initial impulse from womens' groups.
- 1979 General Figueiredo takes office, promising to speed up "abertura" (political opening up) for a return to democracy.
- 1980 Women's groups in Sao Paulo dealing with violence against women spread to other parts of the country.
- 1985 First civilian president for 21 years, but Brazil a long way from democracy and the rule of law. President creates the National Council for the Rights of Women linked to the Ministry of Justice.
- 1985 World's first women's police station opens in Sao Paulo.
- 1987 Constituent Assembly to draw up new constitution has 20% of women amongst elected deputies.
- 1988 November municipal elections bring left-wing party candidates to power in four major cities, including Luiza Erundina as first woman mayor of Sao Paulo.
- 1989 November. First direct elections for national president with universal suffrage.

# THE PHILIPPINES



## BASIC DATA

**Land Area:** 300,000 sq. km. (94% of the land is concentrated in 11 of the 7,107 islands)

**Population:** 59,686,000 (Mostly concentrated in Luzon and Mindanao)

**Capital:** Manila

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

**People:** A process of cultural assimilation through successive migrations from Indonesia, Muslim migrations from Borneo, followed by colonial rule by Spain and then the United States. More than 50 recognised national minorities make up over 12% of the population. A significant minority group is Chinese.

**Language:** Pilipino is the official and predominant language, based on Tagalog, the major dialect (of over 80). English is compulsory in schools and frequently used in public administration and the media.

**Religion:** 80% Catholic, 10% other Christian, 6% Muslim, 4% traditional animist.

**Education:** 86% adult men and 85% adult women literate (1985) However, 45% of school leavers can hardly read or write

**Natural wealth:** 43% of total land area is forest. Main producer of iron ore in S.E. Asia. Also chrome and copper deposits.

**Major exports:** Garments, electronics, vegetable oils, sugar

**Foreign debt:** \$29,962 million. Debt service 57 % of exports (1989)

Sources: Third World Guide 89/90. Third World Editors, Montevideo.

CIIR Comment

IBON DATABANK

Statistical Handbook of the Philippines, Republic of Philippines National Statistics Office.





# NELIA OF THE PHILIPPINES

## A "SUBVERSIVE" BEAUTY QUEEN

*"In the Philippines, if you decide to live and work with the poor by choice, you are called 'subversive'. So the government's side of the story was that since I was a beauty queen and a university student, but was now living among the poor, I was a "subversive". (Nelia Sancho)*

Nelia Sancho was arrested in February 1976, four years after President Ferdinand Marcos had declared Martial Law. During the Marcos regime, thousands of people died from diseases related to poverty and malnutrition, whilst Marcos and his cronies increased their own wealth, much of which was illegally taken out of the country. Opposition to the regime was met with arrests, torture and murder.

Nelia was one of the victims of the repression during the Marcos years. She was held without charge for two and a half years and released only after a successful international campaign against her detention. Later, when her husband was in prison, she experienced the problems of women trying to bring up children alone:

*"I couldn't be three things at one time - mother, political activist and wage earner"*

She joined up with other women in similar circumstances organising day care centres for children. She began to understand the need for women to have their own organisations:

*"Individual solutions can't work for women, any women. We had to create an organisation."*

Nelia was a founder member and became Secretary General of GABRIELA, which was to become the largest women's organisation in S.E.Asia. GABRIELA serves as an umbrella organisation supporting and promoting initiatives by smaller grassroots groups of women. It grew out of a national women's assembly called in 1984.

*"Because of my work, I have become a national figure, but the unsung heroines are the women who are successfully inventing new ways to better their lives, But few people know them or even care about them".*

Nelia Sancho, Secretary General of GABRIELA  
(Photo: Brenda Prince/Format)

## THE MARCOS REGIME

President Ferdinand Marcos came to power in 1965. His rule became more authoritarian and repressive as economic conditions worsened, particularly after the imposition of Martial Law in 1972. The economy was based on exporting raw materials and importing manufactured luxury goods that benefited only the Philippine elite and the foreign companies at the expense of the poor. The foreign debt escalated, and the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund restricted public spending and wage rises. The Army was increased in size and given the role of policing the population, with widespread brutality. In 1983 the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino heightened opposition and led to greater repression and a flight of capital. In 1986 a group of dissident colonels of the Armed Forces staged a revolt which was supported by a popular uprising, forcing Marcos out of power and into exile. During his rule, Marcos remained Washington's staunchest ally in South East Asia.

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President Marcos (Photo: Piers Cavendish/Reflex)

## GABRIELA

**GABRIELA** (the General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action), was named after Gabriela Silang, who led a rebellion 200 years ago against the Spanish colonialists. **GABRIELA** now has over a hundred member organisations which encompass all areas of Philippine society. It enables these grassroots organisations to run campaigns on a wide range of issues from health to nuclear bases, working towards a goal of justice and a genuinely independent Philippines.



Garment factory worker producing shoes for a South Korean factory (Photo: Piers Cavendish/Reflex)

## LIVING CONDITIONS

According to government figures, 70% of the population lives below the poverty line and 70% of children are malnourished. Infant mortality is 56.8 per 1,000 live births (1985) with pneumonia as the top killer. In some areas this figure is much higher. Average unemployment is 13.4% and underemployment is 33.2% but again these figures are subject to regional variation.

## THE UNSUNG HEROINES

Nelia's "unsung heroines" are to be found among those women in the Philippines who are fighting the unequal battle against disease and malnutrition. They are the women who break their backs in the fields and return home to a pound of rice for the family meal. They are the women who sell their bodies so that their parents and siblings can survive.

They are women like Teofila Clavez, from Apelo Cruz, interviewed in the film. Over two million people live like Teofila in overcrowded slums skirting the city of Manila. They have no basic services like water, electricity, sewage or waste disposal. Women may earn a few pesos selling water, scavenging on the city's rubbish dumps to find things to sell or scrubbing other people's clothes. They are mostly confined to the margins of the economy and are permanently underemployed or unemployed.

Through the urban women's organisation, **SAMAKANA**, the women of Apelo Cruz have set up a health clinic. In the passages between homes, plants grow in old oil cans, for the women are trained in herbal remedies as well as preventative medicine. Both the clinic and a child care project are partly funded by the rice cooperative they themselves set up. Ultimately, it is the women who bear the final responsibility for providing food for the family. The role of **GABRIELA**, as Nelia says, is to help women to help themselves.

Women that **GABRIELA** tries to help are like those who work in the Free Trade Zones. This is where the country's major exports, such as garments and electronics, are assembled for export. Most of the factories are owned by foreign companies such as Unilever and William Baird Textiles, which are allowed to carry out their business tax free and without having to comply with labour laws. Many workers are paid below the minimum wage of 89 pesos (just over £2 a day) and it is not unusual for them to earn 50 pesos or less (the government defined poverty level for an average family is 180 pesos). Working conditions are often appalling:

*"We work from 7am to 3pm sewing pieces of jeans. Our quota is 400 pieces per worker for 8 hours but we are made to sew 350 more and we usually end up working for 14 hours. Most of us complain of ulcers, headaches and kidney disorders due to fatigue and hunger. What makes us feel very exploited is the fact that we make jeans worth so many thousands of pesos and yet we get only 29 pesos (about 60p) a day."*



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**SUBIC BAY**


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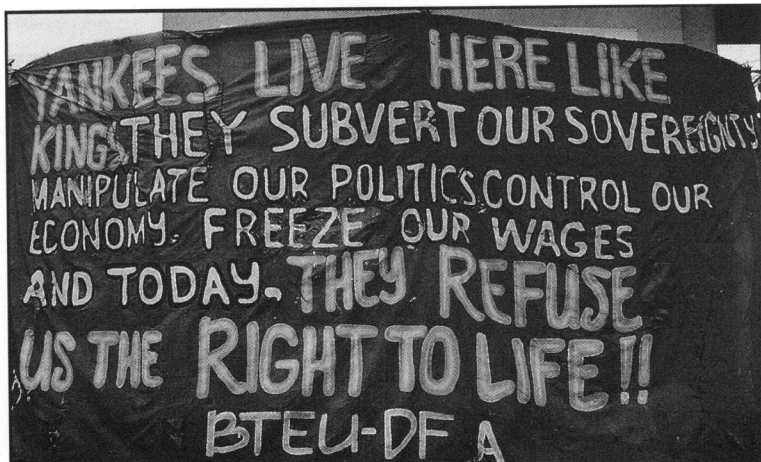
*"My only wish is for us not to starve and for my child to have a proper education".*

Fe, the prostitute from the Buklod Project visited in the film, is typical of many women whose only escape from abject poverty is the degrading and exploitative work of prostitution. At the Subic Bay Naval Base, the arrival of a US naval ship is good news, for providing sexual services for the crew means the chance of earning a few pesos. However, the work is tiring and involves risks of pregnancy and disease. The customers are often despised:

*"I now have a very low opinion of our American customers. They'll promise to pay you and even to marry you. Some of the women still believe them. I don't."*



Catering for the crews of US naval ships in Subic Bay (Photo: Stephanie Henry/Format)



Feelings run high — anti-US banner (Photo: Brenda Prince/Format)

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**THE SHADOW OF THE US**


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The US Air and Naval bases are a legacy of 57 years of colonial rule. In 1898 the Philippines were 'ceded' by Spain to the United States. Despite a long and bloody war of independence, the US did not finally withdraw until 1946, having secured a deal with the landowning elite which laid the grounds for cheap exports to the US and a market for manufactured goods. It had also established naval and air bases that respond to their strategic needs in controlling the Pacific Basin. These bases were due to be dismantled in 1991, in response to a large popular protest movement, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the Aquino government will allow them to remain. In the words of Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus (1988), "the powerful shadow of the US remains cast over our land".

## LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP

The Philippines is the world's largest exporter of pineapples and the fourth exporter of sugar and bananas.

70% of the labour force earns a living from agriculture

80% of the land is owned by 20% of the population.

Other major agricultural products are rice, corn and coconut.



Sugar workers from Negros where, due to falling sugar prices, 180,000 workers have been laid off  
(Photo: Brenda Prince/Format)



Pineapple harvesting, Del Monte Estate  
(Photo Jenny Matthews/Network)



Women pick through rice stalks coming out of a thresher to glean any rice that is still on them (Photo: Network)

## THE LAND QUESTION

According to President Cory Aquino, the peasants are "the backbone of the economy", but it is a backbone that is permanently bent in the field. Women work side by side with men yet they do not hold tenancy rights and rarely have a voice in the affairs of the community. In addition to the farm work, they collect water, fuel and food to supplement the family diet, and do the housework: "We carry half the village sky, but who cares about our burdens?" as one peasant woman puts it.

Much of the land is controlled by transnational corporations such as Dole and Del Monte. They produce the bulk of the cash crops and sustain the export-oriented economy, paying minimal wages to the plantation workers. Women are paid less than men and are usually the first to be laid off.

On a visit to one of the projects, Nelia said: "In areas such as this, most peasants have no land of their own. Often more than half of the rice grown must be given back in payments to the landlord."

The problem of making ends meet is particularly harsh in the rural areas, where over 60 percent of the population lives. GABRIELA is active amongst rural women, helping especially those who have no land of their own.

GABRIELA supports the rural women who are fighting for a redistribution of land to help resolve the contradictions of immense poverty and wealth. It was hoped that President Cory Aquino would use her special powers to institute a genuine land reform before the convening of Congress in May 1987. She did not, and neither did the landlord-dominated Congress, which reflects the interests of the landowning elite, agricultural corporations and powerful families. The majority of rural people have seen no improvement to their situation, including those who work on the Hacienda Luisita, Mrs. Aquino's own estate.

Rural people are now beginning to take matters into their own hands. CPAR (the Congress for People's Agrarian Reform), a broad-based coalition of 12 peasant organisations, has drawn up its own land reform programme based on the principle of land to the tiller. The peasant women of AMIHAN, one of its member organisations, have reclaimed disused land for growing crops and communal gardens.

It is women like these who are suffering the worst of the repression. Using a crackdown on 'communism' as an excuse, the government is singling out anyone who belongs to an organisation that is trying to bring about genuine change. Their tactic is to use brutality to instil terror. As Nelia told us in the film, two peasant women, members of GABRIELA had recently been murdered. One was pregnant and had the baby ripped from her belly.

## POPULAR OPPOSITION

Events over the last year have served to increase popular opposition to the government. With no change in economic policies, the country has plunged further into debt. The conditions of the latest IMF loan, which President Aquino contracted in the face of massive popular opposition, include the abolition of rice and fuel subsidies.

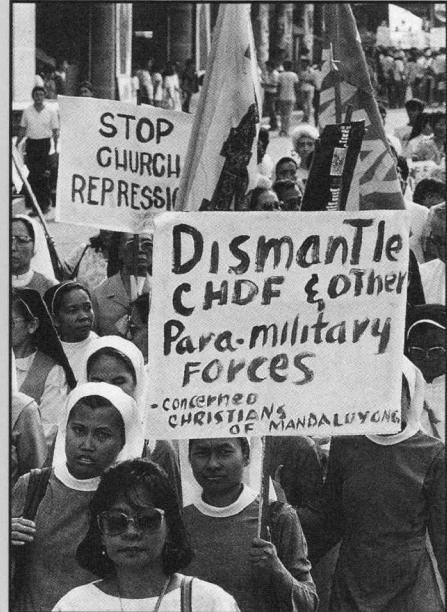
The attempted coup in 1989 by young army officers led to the imposition of a State of Emergency and increased repression. The people are defending themselves through a united front of peasant, worker, women's and other organisations. The NDF (National Democratic Front) is an underground organisation first set up after the declaration of Martial Law and which, according to the government's own figures, has organised about 20% of all villages and neighbourhood communities. There is also increasing support for the NPA (New People's Army) which is a communist-led guerrilla army implementing its own land reform and providing basic medical services and education.

Direct intervention by the United States would be unpopular, both nationally and internationally. The response has therefore been to adopt a counter-insurgency policy known as Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). Its aim is to exploit divisions within communities and to arm civilians in vigilante groups whose purpose is to seek out "subversives". Women from GABRIELA have been forced to flee from their villages. As Nelia reports:

*"These peasants have fled from army brutality in the island of Leyte, and their story is typical. The government, which is fighting a full-blown war against the communist guerrillas in the hills claims that these poor farmers are sympathisers. But these peasants are just asking for a little land and a livelihood. Whole villages have been bombed and destroyed. Many have been killed and hundreds have been forced to flee."*



A village overshadowed by US Army tanks — manoeuvres have been taking place regularly since 1982 (Piers Cavendish/Reflex)



Priests and nuns demonstrating in Manila against the murder and detention of nuns, priests and lay workers (Photo: Piers Cavendish/Reflex)

## THE 1989 COUP

The coup attempt, the sixth and bloodiest since President Aquino came to power, was launched by a group of young, middle-ranking officers known as the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) led by Colonel Gregorio Honasan. It emerged out of the political factionalism in the military in 1985, prospering under the patronage of Marcos' and later Aquino's Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile. After 6 days and at least 125 deaths, the rebels agreed to return to their barracks after negotiations with the government. Neither side talked of 'surrendering'.



Evacuees in the town of Dincalan in the 'chicks' region of Negros. People have left their homes for fear of reprisals by the Philippine army which has been subjected to attacks by guerillas of the New People's Army (Photo: Piers Cavendish/Reflex)

WANTED IMMEDIATELY: FOR SINGAPORE	
7- CARPENTERS A	- S\$ 400.-
5- CARPENTERS B	- 350.-
9- STEELMAN A	- 600.-
10- MASON A	- 600.-
7- MASON B	- 350.-
10- LABORERS	- 450.-
1- LEADMAN	- 850.-
1- FOREMAN	- 850.-

FOR SAIPAN & GUAM: (U.S. Territories)	
40- WAITRESSES	
REQUIREMENTS:	
High School Graduate.	
2-3 to 5 years experience.	
18-30 years old.	
1. With or without passport accepted.	

INTERVIEW: 10:00 A.M. SEPT. 13-18, 1982	
IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENT: SEPT. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 1982	
1. Free room & board.	
2. One year contract subject for renewal.	
3. Open Overtime.	
4. Return Plane Ticket.	

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS:	
1. Free food & lodging.	
2. 6 months trial.	
3. \$1.75 per hour.	
4. 8 hours per week.	
5. \$2.00 per hour.	

Adverts in the windows of an employment agency (Photo: Network)

### IMMIGRANT WORKERS

The Philippines is the largest exporter of nurses and second largest exporter of doctors in the world (after India). The Philippine Nurses Association estimates that 90,000 nurses are working overseas out of a total of 150,000 registered. Yet in the Philippines there are only 19 state nurses and 16 physicians per 100,000 population.

### FILIPINOS ABROAD

As a result of harsh conditions, low wages, unemployment and violence, many Filipinos have left their homes to seek low paid jobs in those very countries that already benefit from the "cheap" labour and raw materials of the Philippines. While Filipino migrant workers are divided equally by sex, most of those who come to Europe are women, who work in the service industry or as domestics.

In many cases, it is the much needed teachers and nurses of the Philippines who end up supplying the cheap labour for menial "women's work" in Europe. Due to tighter immigration controls, many of these workers are unauthorised and therefore have no legal rights to state benefits, health care or education for their children. Despite fear of immigration officials and the power that employers have over them, these unauthorised workers are organising for their own mutual support and to demand their basic rights as workers, putting their case to the public and before parliament.

Both abroad and within their own country, Filipino men and women continue to organise despite harassment and hardship. The networks and coalitions of grassroots organisations, including GABRIELA continue to grow, thanks to the courage of women like Nelia Sancho and the "unsung heroines" who are making a special stand for the rights of women.



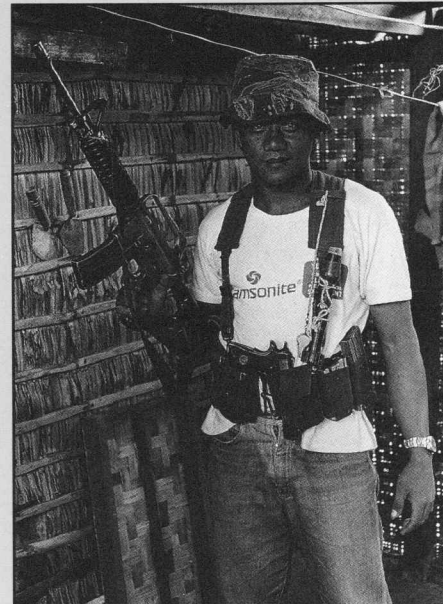
International Women's Day march and rally, Rizal Park, Manila (Photo: Brenda Prince/Format)

### BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- 1521 Spanish explorer Ferdinand Magellan lands.
- 1565 Systematic conquest and colonisation by Spanish begins.
- 1896 Philippine revolution, after three centuries of prolonged resistance including the rebellion by Gabriela Silang.
- 1898 Treaty of Paris. Spain cedes the Philippines to the U.S.
- 1898-1946 — Filipino-American War of resistance to U.S. troops.
- 1941 Japanese attack on U.S. bases
- 1942 Japanese occupation, resisted by Anti-Japanese People's Army.
- 1944 U.S. Forces return
- 1946 U.S. grants "independence" whilst maintaining supremacy over extensive military bases and property rights. The Philippines becomes a "neo-colony".
- 1951 Mutual Defence Pact, allows U.S. to intervene in Filipino affairs.
- 1965 Ferdinand Marcos elected president
- 1970 Mass demonstrations call for overthrow of neo-colonialism.
- 1972 Martial Law declared.
- 1973 National Democratic Front formed, including the women's group Makibaja.
- 1975 UN Decade for Women begins.
- 1976 Nelia Sancho arrested.
- 1983 Assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino
- 1984 GABRIELA comes into existence
- 1986 "People Power" revolution brought Cory Aquino to power
- 1989 Attempted coup by young army officers. State of Emergency declared.

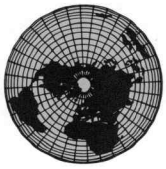


Crowds supporting Cory Aquino just before Marcos was toppled in 1986 (Photo: Brenda Prince/Format)



Member of the New People's Army which has been gaining support in rural areas since 1989 (Photo: Brenda Prince/Format)





# WOMEN: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Tired of waiting for policies to change in their favour, women all over the world are defying their traditional roles and actively promoting real change in their societies.

Being active players rather than passive victims requires particular courage for women because their lives are shaped by policies and decisions over which they have no control. They have an unequal share of power, training, income, land and property in comparison with men. They may have to challenge the culture and religion they were brought up with and sometimes face considerable personal risk. Many women, particularly in the Third World, are often also facing the consequences of structural adjustment policies as a result of massive international debt, putting their capacity for survival to the limit.

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## WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

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Attention was drawn to the special condition of women in the Third World during the early seventies. Studies suggested that women were "marginalised" from development, benefitting little or not at all from the projects promoted by governments and international agencies. Handfuls of women, inside and outside the United Nations began to put pressure on this unwieldy organisation, which was persuaded to declare a UN Decade for Women. During this period (1975 - 1985) governments were to examine their policies towards women, and accelerate new ones to bring about "Equality, Development and Peace".

The Decade was intended for all women. It should have been a period of rapid change in laws, pay, sharing childcare and housework, in facilities and opportunities for all women, and in the equal balancing of power and decision-making in every walk of life. It was a time of great hopes, many of which were disappointed because governments did not fulfil their obligations and because international banks adopted strategies which noticeably made life for women in the Third World more difficult.

The majority of the world's women, in the countries of the North as well as the South, were actually worse off in 1985 than they were in 1975. The British government virtually ignored the Decade, resting on the supposed laurels of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. Individual women and groups of women campaigned to remind the government of what it should have been doing. They did not suffer death threats but still showed

*"Cuts in public expenditure by Third World governments, often imposed by the IMF, have led to increased unemployment and women have found themselves pushed into the informal sector. Falling commodity prices...are forcing developing countries to increase further their cash crops exports resulting in more work for women, often without additional income and leaving less time for women to produce food to meet their own families' needs"*

*Cuts in subsidies on drinking water, on food, health, education, public transport and the fall in average per capita income in many developing countries are placing an ever increasing burden on women to make ends meet."*

from *Combating Gender Blindness*  
NGO-EC Liaison Committee, Brussels 1989



Women's work

## THE CHIPKO MOVEMENT

### (A WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE ON ECOLOGY)

In the mountainous region of the Himalayas, women have traditionally managed the rainforests, which have been a source of water and fertile soil for sustainable food production. For three centuries, commercialisation of the forests has been encroaching on the access and rights of the forest people, denying them their basic needs and also bringing about major ecological crises such as floods and droughts. In the early 1970s, women of the region organised together and formed the 'Chipko movement', using the non-violent tactics of the 1930s when women tied themselves to trees that were about to be felled. As the movement spread, it was supported and joined by men of the region who respected the women's special concern for preserving the forests not only against exploitation from outside companies but also within the context of the global environment.

courage and inventiveness and were prepared to face scorn and imprisonment, like the Greenham women who took a stand against nuclear bases.

The shortcomings of the Decade have forced women to look again at their situation. On the basis of women's experience in the Caribbean, Peggy Antrobus, from the University of the West Indies, Barbados, pointed out: *"While the focus on meeting practical needs in the areas of employment, education, health and nutrition was important, we failed to recognise that even these practical gains are easily reversed if women lack the power to protect them when resources are scarce..."*

She argued for women to be involved not only in the decisions that affect their lives directly, but for a woman's perspective to permeate all aspects of decision-making: *"We argue that there is no issue - from the international debt to military budgets, from the famines in Africa to the industrial strategy at Bhopal - which could not be illuminated by a feminist perspective. Our concern is not just for women, but for the world."*

## A COMMON FUTURE

In a move to break down barriers between Third World women and women from the more industrialised countries of the North, the notion of Women and Development is taking on a new meaning - of women all over the world learning from each others' experiences.

Women in the North have a great deal to learn from how women in the South confront their problems. Debt, for example, is not only an issue for the Third World. In the wealthier North, government policies of adjustment have often had the same disregard for women's needs as in the poorer countries.

In Britain, over the past ten years, many economic policies have been detrimental to women in relation to men, and to poor women and immigrant women in particular. Changes in the social security system, child benefits, healthcare, housing, employment opportunities and the immigration laws have all tended to marginalise significant groups of women.

## TAKING MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS

Women are not sitting idly by. In Britain, women in trade unions have achieved the support of men at the top of the TUC, to launch a campaign on childcare, to allow women into full-time employment. Others, like Brenda Dean, General Secretary of SOGAT, have overcome traditional resistance to women and become powerful leaders in their own right. The miners' wives, who played such an active role in support of the strike of 1985 and then had their application to join the NUM rejected, have formed their own groups for action with other women.



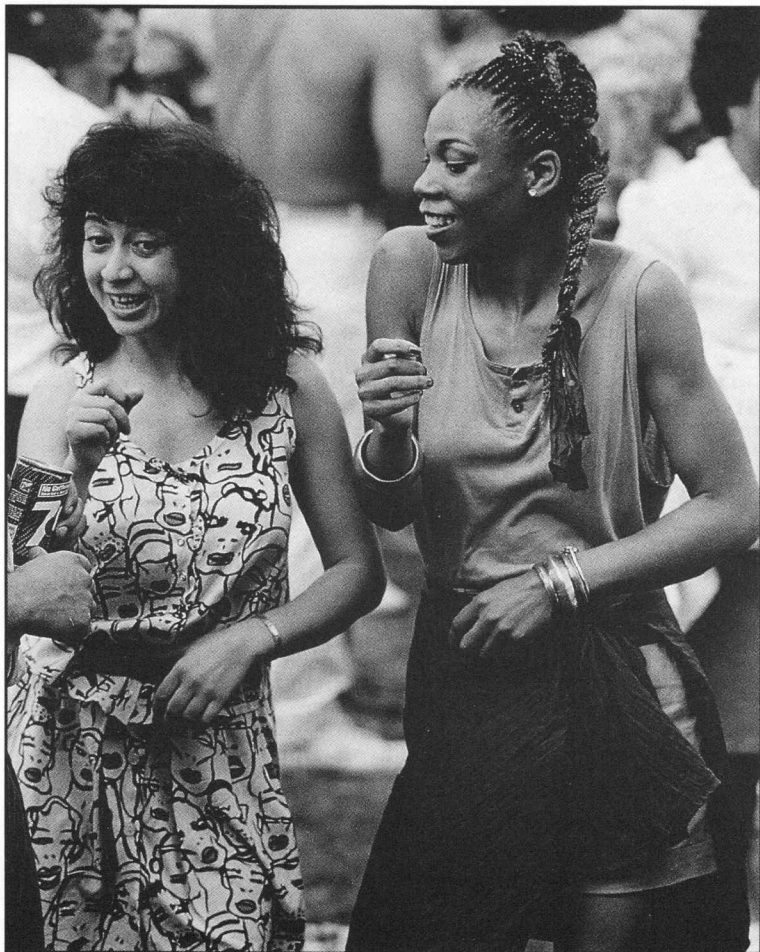
A tree-planting project by women in Siaya, Kenya  
(Photo: Richard Keefe/IBT)



In some countries, such as India, the Philippines and Holland, women have set up women-only trade unions. In other countries, such as Spain, France, Iceland, Hong Kong and the Philippines, women have formed their own feminist political parties. Even in Japan, where women have traditionally played a very subservient role, housewives have formed a huge organisation challenging corruption in business and politics and the double standards of men's sexual morality.

On economic matters, too, women all over the world are organising to protect their interests. They are forming their own banks and credit systems, in some cases "rediscovering" systems that have existed for centuries in villages all over Africa and the Caribbean. In Britain, women on housing estates in Newcastle have started their own savings schemes to cope with emergencies such as family debt or rising housing costs.

Ultimately, however, women worldwide have little influence on the decisions that affect our present and future world. How can women like Regina and Nelia inspire us and how can we, in turn, support them.?



(Photo: Melanie Friend/Format)

#### THE SHIMONI WOMEN'S GROUP

In a small village on Kenya's east coast a group of Muslim women broke with tradition by organising their own successful fishing business. The women, many of whom had been abandoned by their husbands and left with families to support, had been marginalised from the main source of income, fishing, because their religious conventions did not allow them to go out on the boats. They got round this problem by forming a cooperative to obtain credit to buy a fishing fleet, which they then employed men from the village to work on. One of the women reports: "Now things are going very well. I have even managed to educate one of my children"

#### IT COSTS TO BE A WOMAN!

In Britain, in 1987, it was estimated that sex bias in employment was robbing women of £15 billion. Despite the Equal Pay Act women still only earn on average 75% of men's wages and men are far more likely to hold higher grade jobs. Wages Councils set a minimum rate of pay for certain jobs, but since 1986 only workers over 21 are protected, and many workers, particularly women, are receiving less because their employers pay less than the legal minimum.

Britain has 4.6 million women working part-time (the highest in Europe). This reflects both the convenience to employers and the inadequacy of childcare provisions (the worst in Europe). Part-time pay is often lower than full-time pay and workers do not have the same rights as full time workers. Women are more likely to work in small non-unionised workplaces where employers don't want unions.

Unlike the rest of Europe, Britain has no category for 'unpaid family workers' such as farmers' wives or shopkeepers' daughters who contribute substantially to productivity. The two million 'carers', mostly women, who look after sick, disabled and mentally disturbed relatives save the state £23 billion per year.

**CONTACT LIST**

Development Agencies · Human Rights Groups · Campaigning Organisations · Women's Organisations

**OXFAM**

274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ  
(Oxfam has a Gender and Development Unit (GADU))

**CHRISTIAN AID**

PO Box 100, London SE1 7RL

**CAFOD**

2 Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY

**WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN

**SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND**

Mary Datchelor House, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD

**BRAZIL NETWORK**

9 Poland Street, London W1C 3D9

**PHILIPPINE SUPPORT GROUP**

(AND WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP)

11 Goodwin Street, London W4 3HQ

**PHILIPPINE RESOURCE CENTRE**

1-2 Grangeway, London NW6 2BN

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

(BRITISH SECTION)

5 Roberts Place, London EC1

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

COMMISSION (EOC)

Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN

**CHILD POVERTY**

ACTION GROUP

1 Bath Street, London EC1

**WAGES RIGHTS OFFICE**

The Low Pay Unit, 9 Upper Berkeley St., London W1H 8BY

**NATIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK**

(FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY)

37-39 Great Guildford Street, London SE1 0ES

**WOMANKIND and**

NAWO (NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS)

122 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7PT

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF**

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

39 Eccleston Road, London SW1

**POINTS FOR DISCUSSION**

The following ideas for discussion may serve as a starting point:

- What have you learnt from these films and booklet?
- Did Regina bring anything to her post that is different from what a man would have brought?
- What is similar/different about the two women in the film and their approaches?
- How can we support the initiatives of women in the "Third World"?
- Do you feel you have anything in common with the women in the film?
- In what ways are the experiences of women in this country similar/different to those of the women in the film? Why do you think these similarities/differences exist?
- In what ways has the impact of the debt affected women's lives? What is the relevance for women in Britain?
- Do the films inspire you to take action? If so, what?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION**

These are some concrete steps you might take (addresses supplied in contact list):

On 19 June Amnesty International publishes its report, *Brazil: Beyond the Law* about the torture and killing of criminal suspects by police, the killing of street children by death squads and other abuses in the prison system in Brazil. This will launch a world-wide campaign to call for a halt to impunity for these gross violations.

If you want to take action contact Amnesty International, British Section, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RR (tel: 071 278 6000) for campaigning materials and suggestions, or write directly to the Brazilian Embassy expressing concern about these abuses.

Other things you can do include:

- Find out more about some of the issues. You will find some useful publications from the organisations listed opposite.
- Join some of the ongoing campaigns organised on specific issues (such as the Amnesty International Campaign).
- Offer your support to the Brazil Network or Philippines Support Group (which has a women's section) or any Human Rights group operating in this country.
- If you are already active in an existing group, use the films and booklet for discussion. Recommend them to other groups. (The film is available for hire from Concord Films Council and this booklet is free from IBT)
- Get your group involved in some community research (eg. on the needs of older women, young women, immigrant women) and publicise your findings, perhaps even lobby your MP with recommendations for change.
- Think about your own special needs as a woman. Are they being met? Think about how you can go about improving the lives of women in your community or organisation.
- Contact your local Low Pay Unit (address from the Wages Rights Office, listed opposite) if you need advice on pay.
- Make your voice heard, either by writing articles for your local paper or lobbying your MP or councillor on any issue that concerns you (it could be anything from sexist images in advertising to the need for more nurseries).
- Contact your MP about the need for the government to fulfil its obligations towards women. Our government, like other governments in the UN, has agreed to a list of commitments called the *Forward Looking Strategies*. They are there for us to claim!

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## RESOURCES

A comprehensive list of books and videos can be found in IBT's *Promised the Earth* booklet, with a more recent Video Supplement in the Spring 1990 issue of IBT's *Fast Forward*

More recent publications include:

*Gathering Strength, Women in Central America*, a study pack produced by the El Salvador and Guatemala Committees for Human Rights, 83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB.

*Just Ordinary Feminists - Women in Peru and Bolivia face the debt crisis* (interviews), *The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes on Women in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Mozambique*, a report by Rayah Feldman and *Women for a Change*, a photographic exhibition of women organising worldwide. Available from War on Want, 37-39 Great Guildford Street, London SE1.

International country profiles on women available from Change, 5 Central Buildings, Rye Lane, London SE15 5DW



is an educational charity and an independent production company producing films and printed materials on development and environmental issues. It is also a pressure group working towards more air-time for programmes that deal with world poverty, human rights and environmental degradation. If you would like a copy of our catalogue or wish to receive our regular publication *Fast Forward* please write to us at 2, Ferdinand Place, London NW1 8EE or phone 071 482 2847.

**PDT**



CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION