



“Always, when I think of women, the image comes to me of an enormous and abundant river that we have to cross. Some only get their feet wet and then quit, others swim until they get to the middle or so, and then return for fear that they do not possess the strength to go to whole way. And there are those that decide to cross no matter what. While they cross, they lose bits of flesh, pieces of themselves. To those watching on the other side, it may appear that the woman is torn apart, in fragments. Yet what stays behind is her old skin. On the other side arrives a new woman...”

Zuleica Alambert





## Little Anna and her Stones

Cora Coralina - October, 1981

Don't let yourself destroy yourself...  
Bringing together new stones and  
constructing new poems.  
Recreate your life, always, always.  
Remove the stones and plant roses and  
make sweets.

Begin again.  
Make of your meager life a poem  
And you will live in the hearts of the  
young and in the  
memory of generations that are to come.

This well is for all those that are thirsty  
Take your share.  
Come to these pages and don't block  
those that are thirsty

**Publication :** Via Campesina Internationale

**Elaboration Team:** Collective construction coordinated by the Peasant  
Women's Movement (MMC Brasil)

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Brasília (Brazil), September 2012





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## INTRODUCTION

*Via Campesina International, by means of this booklet, hopes to encourage debate and reflection concerning a subject that unfortunately is part of the daily life of many women all around the world: the phenomenon violence against women, systematically silenced, naturalized and made invisible by capitalist patriarchic society.*

This material gives continuity to the Global Campaign to End Violence against Women that was launched by Via Campesina in 2008. This booklet will guide discussions in our meetings and educational processes related to this theme. It also serves as the foundation for our daily actions and struggles to end violence against women.

Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon that permeates all social classes, generations, sexual orientations, and it is just as much a part of women's lives whether they live in cities or in the countryside. This reality can be seen in both formal and informal data, countless life stories, testimonies, denunciations and demands made by women's social movements. This violence can no longer be silenced!

We know this silencing and the lack of data and information are what keep invisible the pain that women suffer when they are abused or their rights are violated all around the world. This social engineering is present in the hegemonic cultural expressions that dominate our symbolic universe within the context, both historically and currently, of the patriarchic capitalist system.

Along with the struggle for land and against the criminalization of social movements and transnational agribusiness, it is necessary to stop the violence against





women that invades their bodies, subjectivities and social, cultural and symbolic goods. It is necessary to confront this reality as the movements, peasant women's collectives and rural organizations that make up Via Campesina International.





# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: WHAT IS IT?

Violence against women can be considered a multifaceted, historic and social phenomenon. The term “violence” comes from the Latin form “violentia”, which has the radical “vis”, meaning force, vigor or use of physical force or bodily resources when executing a function. Violence takes place when an act goes beyond limits tacitly agreed upon, or breaks rules that keep order in terms of social relations (Zaluar: 1999, 8).

Violence constitutes itself as a complex historical phenomenon that is permeated by multiple dimensions. One of the ways to understand violence is to define it in terms of possible harm caused to another person. Another, from a sociological point of view, considers violence as transgression of social norms. In this case violence is considered relational, meaning that there is a relationship between aggression and victimization. Furthermore, there is structural violence that presents economic and social relations as generators of structural violence. Still, from a political point of view, violence can be understood as the relation of forces where there is an imbalance or an abuse of power of one individual or collective over another.

As you can see, it is difficult to conceptualize violence. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze it with respect to each culture and societal context and situate it according to each historical moment.

To better understand the phenomenon of violence against women, it is necessary to consider how gender, race and class relations were constructed and established in each historical moment and each society. Human, social, political, economic and cultural relations are not natural, but rather are





socially and historically constructed. For this reason they can be transformed.

The feminist movement made important contributions to the analysis of social phenomena, particularly with respect to the question of violence against women, by denaturalizing the oppression, discrimination, and exploitation that characterize violence committed against women. Yet male “superiority” is still commonly thought of as naturally linked to female “inferiority,” an idea which is historically constructed and produced, but has been imposed on people for generations as a natural life model in society. Such ideas are reinforced, reaffirmed and encouraged by the patriarchal capitalist society we live in. This is found in the connection between oppression/exploitation that perpetuates humanity without direction and perspective. One “model” of society legitimizes itself through reinforcing relations of dependence for one part of humanity, depriving it of autonomy through violence, institutionalized or not. Understanding this historical construction is necessary for peasant women because we believe in the possibility for new social, gender, racial, ethnic relations that are permeated with affect, caring, respect, camaraderie, solidarity, power-sharing and for the survival of all.

The feminist struggle has placed the subject of violence against women on the agenda in international conferences and conventions.

One example of this is the definition of violence against women that was adopted in the Belém Convention (International Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, adopted by the OAS in 1994):

*“Violence against women is a violation of human rights and fundamental liberties...”; “... violence against women is whatever action or conduct, based on gender, that causes death, physical, sexual, or psychological harm to women, in both the public and private spheres” (art. 1).*







Violence against women is, therefore, a violation of human rights. All women have the right to live without discrimination and violence in the public and private spheres they inhabit.

Women have the right to be respected, have physical, mental and moral integrity, and enjoy liberty and security for themselves and their families. They also have the right to equality in workplace, access to jobs and public office, access to goods, properties and services, as well as equal protection under the law. Human rights must have value for all women.

***If violence against women is a social and historical phenomenon, this means that things have not always been this way and that we can change this situation!***

***For life and food sovereignty  
Stop violence against women!***



# CONTEXTUALIZING VIOLENCE: THE INEVITABLE EXPRESSION OF PATRIARCHAL CAPITALISM

Violence is a practice that each time is more and more visible in human life. It causes pain, suffering and tears, damaging the dignity and the lives of many people.

Violence is always a demonstration of power against a person, group, community or social class with harmful impacts for all of humanity. Yet it manifests in a different way for men and women.

Masculine violence against women is the fruit of a patriarchal society in which personal affective relationships are based not on feelings and affect, but on property, control and the domination of women. And this guarantees men's power to abuse and dominate women, given that they too are considered property.

The violence that is part of modern patriarchal capitalism expresses itself in all spheres of women's lives and ends up reproducing itself as if it were something natural. Naturalization is accompanied by male domination of all aspects of the woman's lives and of their bodies. The female body is seen as an object to serve, give pleasure to and obey men. All these issues are part of the daily life of the majority of women in the world. It is necessary, therefore, to denaturalize these realities.





The Campaign to End Violence against Women is a call to provoke social, cultural and political change, particularly amongst ourselves, in our communities, organizations, homes and families. It is a painful issue, yet it must lead us to construct a new culture and to overcome the unequal relationships between men and women.

It is important to remember the United Nations (UN) conventions, pacts and action platforms that deal specifically with issues related to violence and discrimination against women: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Cairo, Vienna, Peking, and Belém do Pará, which a number of countries are signatories to. However, despite signing these agreements, the majority of countries does not carry them out and does not have effective public policies to combat the violence that women suffer.

In this regard, the most urgent challenge we face is to build strategies for action, mobilization and struggle in order to guarantee that the rights laid out in these international covenants are respected.





## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: WHY CONFRONT THIS PROBLEM?

### *Because:*

- At least 1 out of every 3 women around the world experiences some form of violence during their life.
- Domestic violence is the principal cause of death and deficiency among women between the ages of 16 and 44, and kills more than cancer and traffic accidents.
- Close to 70% of female homicide victims are killed by their partners or husbands.
- In Brazil, 23% of women are subject to domestic violence. 70% of these aggressions occur inside the home and the aggressor is the husband or partner.
- Violence against women affects women of all social classes, races, ethnicities, religions and cultures.
- Violence against women produces devastating emotional consequences, many times irreparable, and has grave impacts on physical, sexual, mental and reproductive health
- More than 40% of the violent actions result in body scars from hits, slaps, kicks, burns, beatings and strangling
- Violence, or even the fear of violence, raises women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection, as well as other sexually transmitted diseases. The fear of suffering from violence, for example, can force women to submit to unprotected sexual relations.

We cannot forget that these numbers may not show the whole truth; the real scenario of violence, principally domestic,



is still not widely known since aggression in many cases is not denounced to the authorities and instead women search out friends and family for help.

**When one woman moves forward, all women move forward!»**

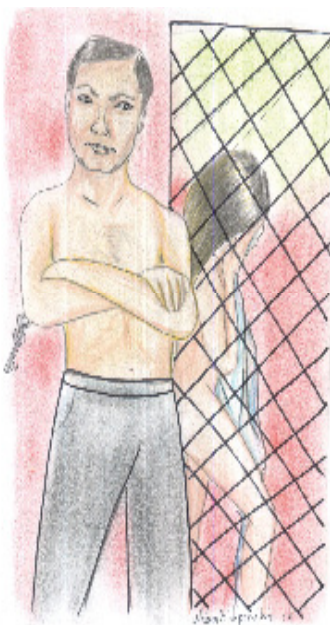


# THE MANY FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## Physical violence

Any action or omission that offends the physical integrity of a woman, when her body is subject to: shoves, slaps, hits, strangulation, knife threats, homicide attempts, hair pulling, pinches, bites, burns, any kind of hit with an object, cigarette burns, or burns with other objects.

In the majority of cases physical violence is domestic violence, violence inside the home, in the symbolic space often called “home, sweet home.” In the majority of cases, husbands and partners are the ones who commit such acts, which are perpetuated through the power relations characteristic of patriarchal capitalism.



## Sexual violence

Any action that obligates a woman to maintain sexual, physical or verbal contact through the use of force, intimidation, coercion, trickery, bribery, manipulation, threats or by any other means that annul or limit her personal will. It can be practiced by someone known or unknown, such as a husband, work or school colleague, uncle, grandparent or other relative.

Examples of this kind of violence are: verbal or body language that are not agreeable to the person; touches and



caresses that are not desired; exhibitionism or voyeurism; forced prostitution; or forced participation in pornography.

Sexual violence happens when a woman is obligated to maintain sexual relations against her will, or perform acts that are undesired. Numbers from the WHO show that up to 47% of the women in the world declare that their first sexual relation was forced, and that 52% of the women are targets of sexual harassment.

Other numbers from the World Health Organization show that between 10 to 34% of women in the world are assaulted, and that husbands, partners or boyfriends commit 70% of these cases of aggression.

## **Psychological violence**

Any action or omission that is designed to control a woman's actions, behavior, beliefs and decisions, by means of: intimidation, manipulation, threats, humiliation, threats of aggression, privation of liberty, impeding work or study, intentional harm to desired objects, damage to esteemed animals, harm or threats to loved ones or friends, isolation from family or friends, and any other conduct that implies harm to her psychological well-being.

It is very common in these cases that women have their self-esteem and sense of security damaged by verbal assaults, threats, insults and humiliations.

## **Patrimonial and economical violence**

This can be characterized as any action or omission that implies harm, loss, subtraction, destruction or retention of objects, personal documents, goods or valuables. Examples include destruction, sale or stealing of objects that belong to the victim; destruction, sale or theft of work instruments belonging to the victim; destruction of the victim's documents or the document's belonging to their children; the sale, renting or





donation of property that belongs to the victim or the couple, without authorization of the woman.

### **Moral violence**

Any action that involves slander, defamation or injury to a woman's honor or reputation. Moral and psychological violence affect women's self-esteem when she suffers verbal abuse, humiliation and threats. This is the most veiled form of violence, which incapacitates women and often fosters resignation, as they begin to accept aggression as natural..

***«Organized women don't accept violence anymore!»***





## THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE!



***Destruction of Documents:*** Many men hide, tear or destroy women's documents, such as their identification card or work-related paperwork.

***Slander and Defamation:*** When a woman is falsely accused.

***Attempted Assault:*** Occurs when a woman is obligated to maintain any intimate contact, or when she is forced to witness other people in sexual acts.

***Physical Discrimination:*** Many women suffer discrimination because they are considered outside the standards of beauty imposed by society and the media; they are considered fat, excessively skinny, tall, short, hairy, physically handicapped, black, among others.

***Rape:*** A forced sexual encounter, including by a husband or partner, imposed by force or coercion, without the means for a woman to defend herself. It may involve vaginal sex or not. It is important that the victim keeps, and does not wash, the



clothes that were used at the time of the crime so that they can be tested to prove the act.

***Homicide:*** When a woman is killed, by a partner, husband or boyfriend.

***Institutional Violence:*** This kind of violence is perpetrated by the State, and manifests itself in the role of the police or other repressive agencies during popular protests. It is the lack of public policies and the limited access women have to production, health, education, leisure, social protection, and social security, among others. These factors maintain social inequality and reinforce violence against women.

***Trafficking of women:*** The trafficking of women occurs on a global scale. Often women are tricked into accepting potential work opportunities, and when they arrive at their destination they come face to face with the horror of slave labor, mostly in brothels and without the minimal conditions needed to return to their home countries.

***Prejudice and racial and ethnic discrimination:*** Many women suffer violence due to racism, particularly in black and indigenous populations.

**Don't forget: all violent acts are criminal acts:  
Denounce!**



## CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE IN WOMEN'S LIVES

Consequences of violence in women's lives are serious and manifest in:

- ***Shame and loss of self-esteem:*** because they are assaulted during intimacy, and thus lose physical and psychologically integrity
- ***Guilt:*** for not resisting forms of violence, for not "having acted according to the appropriate roles imposed by society."
- ***Fear:*** of reacting and being brutally violated.
- ***Illness:*** this may be one of the first manifestations of guilt, which appears with the deterioration of women's health, through injuries, hematomas, depression, discouragement... and even death.
- ***Reproduction of violence as a part of human relationships:*** people living together learn to relate in a violent way and reproduce a cycle of violence in their living spaces.



## WHY DO WOMEN PUT UP WITH VIOLENT RELATIONS FOR SUCH A LONG TIME?

*Perhaps you think or have already heard, "if they don't separate, don't denounce their partners, or leave, well, it is because they like it, don't have any character, are sick, or are just cowards."*

It's not so simple. There are many reasons why women do not leave their partners, husbands or violent boyfriends, reasons that reflect thousands of years of patriarchal culture reproduced in the education and life of each woman.

To get to the point of denouncing, it is necessary to recognize every citizen's dignity and rights. It is also necessary to have adequate information on how and where to denounce, as well as a strong support network. This latter point is important, so women don't feel alone or abandoned.

Another factor is the mistrust or fear that women feel when they are being attended, whether in health services or by the police. The fear of not being heard, of being criticized, of having to wait hours with penalizing stares and not having the trust and support of friends and loved ones and of often having to be economically dependent on their spouses many times discourage women and impede their ability to come forward.



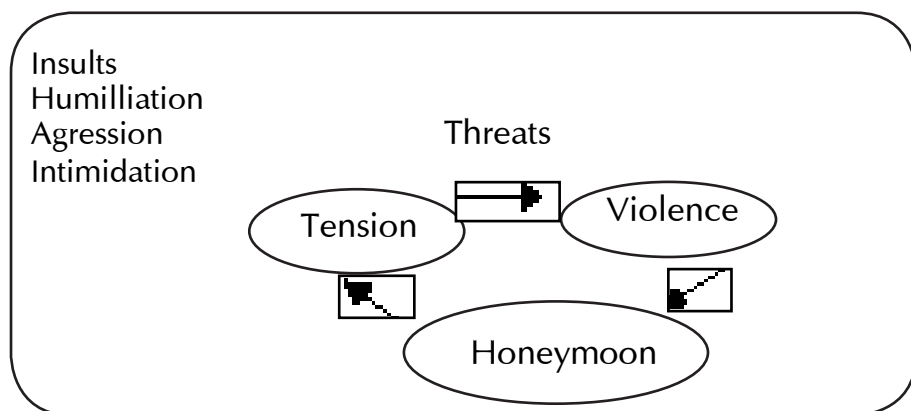


## WHY DOES VIOLENCE REPRODUCE ITSELF?

People who suffer violence during their youth, either during their childhood or adolescence, end up often repeating the same violence in other social relations later in life. In this way, violence is reproduced throughout generations. An example of this is that children who suffer violence during their childhood have a higher probability of becoming violent adults and reproduce what happened to them.

**The cycle of the violence can be understood in terms of repetitive actions that take place in three cycles which vary in intensity and duration.**

### "CYCLE OF VIOLENCE"





## Today I Received Flowers!

It isn't my birthday, nor is it any special day.

We had our first argument yesterday night and he told me many cruel things that were really offensive. Yet I know that he regrets it and doesn't really believe what he says because he sent me flowers today. And it isn't our anniversary or any special day.

Yesterday he threw me against a wall and began to strangle me. It was like a nightmare, yet we awake from nightmares and we know that they are not real. Today I woke up in pain and with bruises all over my body. Yet I know that he regrets what he did because he sent me flowers today. It isn't Valentine's Day or any special day.

Yesterday at night he beat me and threatened to kill me. Neither makeup nor long sleeves can cover up the marks on my body. I couldn't go to work today because I didn't want any one to see me. Yet I know that he feels bad for what he did because he sent me flowers today. It wasn't mother's day, or any special day.

Yesterday he beat me, and it was by far the worst time. If I leave him, what will I do? How could I be alone with the children? What will happen with money? I am so scared of him! Yet I depend so much on him that I am scared to leave. And I know he regrets it because he sent me flowers.

Today is a very special day. It is my funeral. Yesterday he finally killed me. Beat me to death. If only I had the courage to leave him... sought professional help...today, I didn't receive flowers!





## AGRIBUSINESS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST PEASANT WOMEN

The word “agribusiness” represents a new way of doing business in the countryside by copying the American model of agribusiness. It is a rural economic model, structured and utilized by large producers in an exploitative way, which concentrates power that could be distributed among many men and women. Land becomes concentrated. This results in violence particularly against indigenous peoples, African descendents, women and peasants in the countryside.

Agribusiness practices are oriented around profit; they disrespect natural processes and generate more and more artificial products contaminated with pesticides. What is more, agribusiness practices raid the public coffers, appropriating around 80% of total agricultural credit, always negating or renegotiating its debt with the government instead of paying it off.

Agribusiness causes environmental destruction, disregarding environmental laws and attempting to make natural disasters seem inevitable. It also destroys cultural and crop diversity and biodiversity.

While concentrating land and wealth for the few, agribusiness expels thousands of women from their land, destroying their cultures and generating isolated spaces in the countryside. In these cases, women are the first to bear the consequences; they are left with no place to work and are forced to remain in the domestic sphere, to carry out invisible and unrecognized labor.

As a result of this concentration, expropriation and violence, agribusiness has become the manifestation of capitalism in the countryside, bringing with it exclusion, exploitation and violence against peasants, and particularly women family farmers. Agribusiness can therefore be considered patriarchal capitalism’s rural strategy.



# AGRIBUSINESS - CAPITALISM IN COUNTRYSIDE — AND THE EXPLOTATION OF WOMEN'S INVISIBLE LABOR

As we have seen, agribusiness destroys the culture and very existence of peasant agriculture, and women are the most affected and massacred in the process.

Peasant women have an important role in the economy. Their work is most with children, yet without any recognition, benefits or any other kind of recognition. Many abandon their studies, which results in many illiterate women.

Such women continue to be invisible to the system, and their labor is not recognized. Even when formally recognized, many times their basic right to a dignified life is still denied.





# AGRIBUSINESS AND HEALTH OF PEASANT WOMEN

Beyond the invisibility of their work, peasant women workers lack proper medical care or can only access poor quality service, particularly in terms of reproductive and sexual services, such as prenatal care.

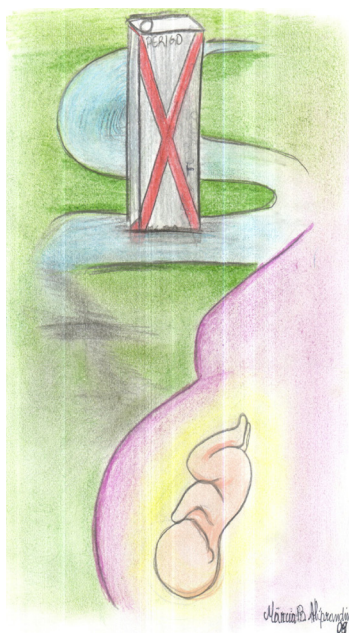
In this sense it is important to highlight the vulnerability of peasant women due to constant exposure to pesticides and chemical poisons that agribusiness uses. Such exposure directly affects human health and generates depression, disfigured fetuses and infertility, among other problems.

This violence is covered-up and needs to be exposed and debated.

There are innumerable other forms of violence that agribusiness and the capitalist State commit against peasant women, such as the repression and criminalization of organization and protest, which also need to be discussed and fought.

We are faced with the daily challenge to construct new definitions of life and of our bodies that are rooted in the desire to make people free and happy. We need to deconstruct imposed standards, organize ourselves and combat all forms of violence and injustice against women, and all human beings, everywhere in the world.

We also must challenge ourselves to be supportive of our fellow women, feel their pain in a collective way, and struggle against the system that humiliates, exploits and massacres women.





## WHAT SUSTAINS VIOLENCE

In order to better understand the process of violence, it is crucial to analyze the causes of and reasons that this phenomenon is naturalized in our societies, as well as its consequences on peasant women's lives.

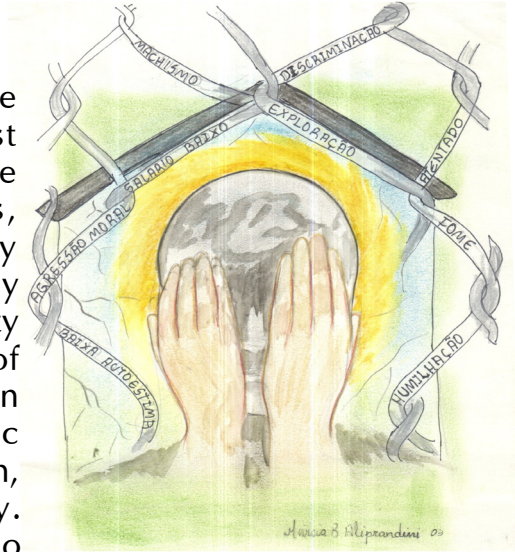
It is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of certain central concepts in order to orient our discussion on the naturalization of violence against women.



# CAPITALISM AS THE MAIN SUSTENANCE OF VIOLENCE

Although violence and oppression against women have existed since pre-capitalist societies, capitalism shows everyday its contradictions, especially in terms of gender inequality and the sexual division of labor that considers women to be responsible for domestic labor and caring for children, the sick and the elderly. In paid jobs, women do not receive the same pay for the same work that men do.

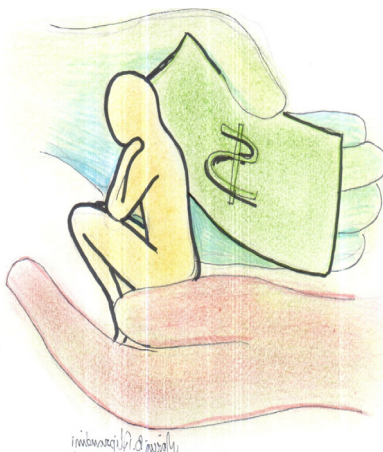
This system shows its contradictions when it comes to domestic violence, when power relations, submission and violence are hidden, masked, or naturalized. Society “washes its hands,” so to speak, with phrases such as “it’s better stay out of fights between men and women.” These values are passed on from generation to generation by family structures; they are perpetuated and reinforced by religions that use rituals and norms that sustain patriarchy and affirm the submissive role of women to men.



## *The culture of patriarchic capitalism rests on four pilars:*

**Women's economic dependence:** Unemployment and underemployment exist in cities. In rural areas, women's labor is not recognized as a generator of wealth, and is merely seen as support for their partner/husband.

**Not having decision over our own bodies:** Women do not decide; men, the State, religion, family and many social movements impose on women a standard for obedience and behavior, which prevents women from making their own decisions.



**Political participation:** There is little participation by women in public spaces of power and decision-making, from the domestic sphere to spaces that are usually dominated by men such as churches, parties, governmental institutions, social movements.

**Violence against Women:** When there is no other way to dominate them, women are subject to physical and psychological violence, which are naturalized through ideas around male honor, sexism, control and power.

The capitalist system and patriarchic culture define gender roles for men and women. Women are destined to stay in the private sphere, while men belong to the public sphere. According to this model men are in charge of production, while women are involved in all informal work, such as reproductive labor and care. Domestic work is understood as a duty and not as labor. However, despite these cultural standards, in many families women are the main providers, as they take care of and guarantee livelihood for the whole family.



This model for society which justifies violence against women is not good for humanity. It destroys relationships, dehumanizes, makes people individualistic and egoistical, and maintains a social structure of inequality between men and women, and rich and poor. The State ought to promote public policies that reach all women who live in the countryside in order to confront violence and discrimination.



We also call attention to the serious lack of research when it comes to gender and race. The research that exists is incomplete, especially with respect to peasant women. This is a limiting factor and challenges us to search for solutions.

Moral and religious values prevent women from exercising their right to make decisions about their own bodies. Abortion, for example, is a public health problem. Thousands of women die around the world due to illegal abortions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in the world there are around 50 million abortions performed per year, and 20 million of those are clandestine. Reproductive responsibility and the use of contraception belongs to women, yet is denied to them.

In some countries abortion is legal, for example in Italy, England, Sweden, United States, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Turkey and South Africa. In others, abortion is allowed in cases of rape or when the woman is in danger of dying, such as Portugal, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay. Other countries prohibit and criminalize it, as is the case in Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Even in the countries where abortion is allowed when the mother is at risk of death, or in the case of rape, there are still serious and systematic problems concerning the violation of women's rights, their humiliation and disrespect. Women





that have abortions are treated like criminals in Brazil. In Mato Grosso do Sul state, ten thousand women had their names posted in public and are facing criminal prosecution after the police discovered a clandestine abortion clinic where abortions had been performed for the past 15 years.

It is important to remember the United Nations (UN) conventions, pacts and action platforms that deal specifically with issues related to violence and discrimination against women: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Cairo, Beijing, Vienna, Peking, and Belém do Pará, which a number of countries are signatories to. However, despite signing these agreements, the majority of countries does not carry them out and does not have effective public policies to combat the violence that women suffer.

The naturalization of violence against women bring with it man's domination over women. Women are seen as objects to give men pleasure. All these questions and issues characterize the daily life of women all over the world





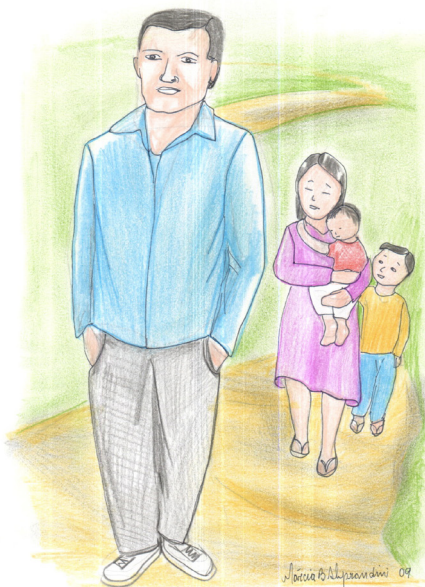
# THE HISTORICAL DOMINATION OF MEN OVER WOMEN AND THE PERMANENCE OF POWER RELATIONS

The differences that are socially and culturally attributed to men and women produce and reproduce power relations and have been established in historical contexts of domination that remain strong over time. It is enough to understand that, despite the progress that has been made in terms of work, education and participation the public sphere, the persistence of inequality and the material base of patriarchy is remarkable.

If this were not the case, there would be no difference between men and women's salaries that have the same education level and work in the same positions. The same can be said about the role of the State and religious institutions, the control they have over the reproductive rights of women and male predominance in parliament and other spaces of power.

For Saffioti (2004) it is absolutely necessary that this trajectory be described so that there is empowerment, not for women, but the social category that they constitute.

Despite the recent incorporation of the concept of gender into theory, debates, and spaces of power, we still need to elaborate and debate much more in order to understand how this impacts relationships between men and women. Many women have written about this, yet it is important to reaffirm that we human beings





are a totality, both mind and body. There are women that have never suffered physical or sexual violence, yet were victims of some other form of violence that also leaves deep marks because they had their personal objects, documents, clothes, etc. destroyed by their spouse in a violent attack of jealousy and a demonstration of their domination over their partner. This destroys the identity and deeply wounds the soul of a woman.

Studies show that somatization produces physical illnesses, and women who suffer from this are routinely treated by health professionals as “women without sufficient love”, or in “need a man,” or “a woman that is having a nervous breakdown.” This has a profound impact on women’s lives since it ends up subjecting them to the worst kind of violence, namely resignation and the acceptance of their subordinated role in the patriarchic capitalist society. This also has an impact for research, since it is not visible and thus not considered.

All these aspects make us realize that gender equality, power sharing, freedom of relationships between men and women, are fundamental issues that are linked to everyday actions and struggles conditioned by the contradictions that characterize capitalist production.

According to Saffioti (2004, 128) the sexual contract between men and women in marriage establishes a new relationship in which each side has a role: “the side that offers protection is authorized to determine how the other will carry out their function within the contract. The man’s political power is based on the sexual or marital right.”

The sexual/social contracts assumed by men and women during marriage have been around for centuries; it is the moment when the man - the macho, the provider - is supported by civil and religious powers as the head of the family. On the other hand, the woman - fragile, weak and sweet - is the housekeeper that will “carry out the duties of the home,” care for the house, the garden, the fields, small animals, etc. In our capitalist society, this labor has no monetary value.



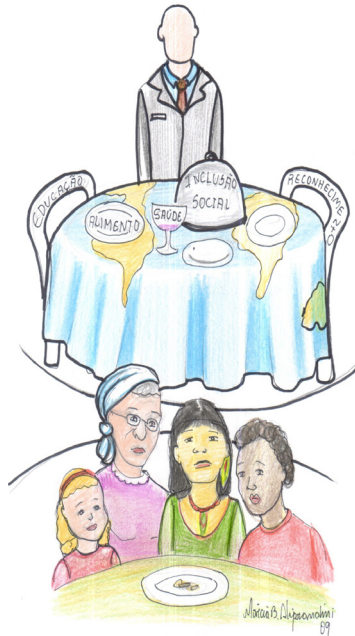


# PATRIARCHY AND THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY AND CLASS

When we talk about violence against women, it is necessary to understand two central concepts: gender and patriarchy. Our society is marked by gender differences. When we speak of gender, we are referring to the way that our society constructs representations of men and women and presupposes that the relations are natural. It is necessary to clarify the difference between biology, which characterizes males and females in the human species, and social and cultural constructions that define roles men and women should occupy in the world.

When we talk about patriarchy - beyond the traditional conception which refers to structures of social organization centered around the father figure or patriarch - we are referring to the definition that women's movements attribute to the term, as a synonym for any social structure wherein women occupy subaltern roles and are subject to male domination (Machado: 2000).

The dominant patriarchal discourse, reinforced and reproduced in religious discourse as well, states that men and women's conduct originates in a sort of natural and biological programming which is determined by the type of physical body each individual is born with. In western cultures it is assumed that the male is aggressive and thus dominant, while





the feminine is smooth and delicate, and thus subordinate.

However, we have to be clear that there is no clear relationship between biology and men and women's conduct. Instead, there is a process of learning and internationalization that goes into the construction of gender and that begins during childhood.

From when they are young, in the family and school environments, we teach children to act in a certain way. Toys express this function. Girls are given dolls and domestic utensils that teach them household chores, such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. Boys play with weapons, shields and swords cars. They learn to appreciate sports, adventure and a certain dose of violence. From youth they are positioned to fight and be aggressive. At this age, children are also being taught the sexual division of labor, always present and ongoing in our societies.

In this way, a series of expectations for men and women are constructed. How they each ought to talk, walk, play, carry themselves and their bodies, love, dance, have sex, cook, teach, love etc, are taught to them and made to seem natural. How many of us have asked about why these inequalities exist and have heard the answer "it has always been this way" or "that's just the way it is." It is this dominant historical construction that produces an organized domestic economy, which sustains the patriarchal order. Women are the objects for the sexual satisfaction of men and reproducers that create new generations, new workers, and new female reproducers.

The naturalization of inequalities, and not only in terms of gender, is a historical phenomenon that has determined the fate of women for centuries and has caused their submission to all kinds of physical and moral violence. They suffer discrimination, mutilations and insults, as the base of patriarchic capitalism throughout history.





## *Intersecting violences: gender, race and social class*

The way we see difference is socially and cultural determined. Differences between men and women transcend all other kinds of differences, such as class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or race. These differences and all forms of classifications interact in a simultaneous way, producing relations and intersections that generate more inequality, discrimination and violence.

In culturally diverse spaces with immense social inequalities because of the unequal distribution of wealth, there is a complex social situation, where race and gender inequalities are produced amid profound regional, traditional and cultural differences. In this case, in each country, each of the various ethno-cultural aspects has social rules and morals that establish local customs and the integration of women in a given culture.

In these diverse cultures, apart from the struggle against social exclusion, many women have to confront racism and difficulties that come from their subordinated social role to men. Besides administrating the domestic sphere and competing for a place in the labor market, women also struggle for legitimacy and social respect both at home and in society. We have to recognize the poverty and ethno-racial discrimination that aggravate these conditions.

There is a triad of contradictions- gender, class and racism- that Saffioti (2004) discusses that forms a knot and produce even more perverse inequalities and life determinations. It is not simply that we add racism to gender and social class, or that a woman is doubly discriminated for being a black and working women, even more so if she is from a rural area. These are not quantitative variables that we are discussing here, but qualitative distinctions. We must recognize that the intersection of these traits composes a reality that makes these women's situation even more complex and difficult.





Poor working women, particularly those from the countryside, possess less access to a series of rights and public services. They are overworked in the home and have fewer opportunities to realize their dreams for financial and social emancipation. In this case, they end up living with and accepting the many forms of violence they are subjected to.

The struggle to end violence against women implies an end to the exclusionary and unequal gender constructions, but also implies the defense of human rights through a political and ethical posture in which all people equally share the right to be respected and treated with dignity, regardless of sexual orientation, social origin and ethnicity. These differences produce inequalities that need to be uncovered and overcome. They should not be attributed to nature or biology, but rather to the socialization process that defines roles, behavior and standards and reproduces the dominant model of power.

***Women against violence,  
against capital,  
against sexism,  
against neoliberal fascism!»***





## FORMS/STRATEGIES TO CONFRONT VIOLENCE

**Via Campesina International**, in its 5th Conference in Maputo in October 2008, decided to “break the silence” and launched the global campaign against all forms of violence suffered by women in the countryside. It affirmed that everyone, men and women, have the responsibility to construct new and better social relations as part of a new society.

From there we intensified struggles, strategies and actions by women’s organizations and mixed organizations related to Via Campesina in each country. In this way, this topic became part of the demands in local, national and international mobilizations. The idea was to encourage collective reflection among women and their families on this phenomenon that threatens women’s rights and women’s lives.

Now, our challenge is to deepen resistance and struggles to once and for all break the silence that is imposed on us by the hypocritical patriarchal capitalist systema and construct new human relationships.





## IMPLEMENTING VIA CAMPESINA'S INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN: "STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!"

The campaign's central focus is to confront the diverse forms of violence that are practiced against women in the countryside, as well as giving greater visibility to the violence that is practiced against all working-class women. To advance, it is necessary that we:

- Denounce and confront all forms of violence against peasant women in all countries;
- Give visibility to violence against working-class women all over the world;
- Demystify naturalized forms of violence against women and show that violence is structural in capitalist, neoliberal and patriarchal societies;
- Establish mechanisms of social control, make public the violence present in social movements and in society, discussing this in every possible space in order to create a culture of zero-tolerance towards violence;
- Enhance women's organizations and struggles for emancipation and progress towards fair and equal society;
- Strengthen alliances among groups, movements and individuals willing to take on this campaign as a part of their struggle;
- Pressure governments to fulfill international agreements, treaties and laws meant to combat discrimination and violence against women;
- Implement struggles and mobilizations to work on the creation and execution of legal instruments / laws and public structures (physical, professional and financial) to support female victims of violence in every country;





- Develop the Campaign “Stop Violence against Women!” with short, medium and long term actions, promoting concrete mobilizations in each country on March 8 and November 25 as already settled in our calendar;
- Denounce and follow up on cases of human rights’ violations, show statistics of women battered and killed by all different forms of violence and denounce cases in each country;
- Consider education and training on how the State’s ideological apparatuses function within capitalist societies and the root causes of violence;
- Promote in various countries and different regions Ethics Tribunals with organizations and movements, where women from the country can make visible their concrete cases of human rights’ violations, and analyze possible actions to enable us to confront this reality;
- Compose local, national and regional Via Campesina coordination groups to implement the campaign gradually and organically;
- Develop training and educational processes on the subject in order to achieve women’s autonomy and empowerment in all countries and the end of all social, class, gender, cultural, ethnic and racial inequalities;
- Struggle for equality in our organizations, ensuring women’s participation in decision-making, guaranteeing women’s visibility in politics, and creating specific spaces for women.

***« THIS IS THE SOCIETY WE WANT:  
NO MORE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN! »***





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