
The invisible resistance of women against the commodification of life

All around the world there are women struggling every day of the year. Since the 20th century, however, International Women's Day has become a date on which their struggle is commemorated and highlighted. Women on every continent, urban, rural, indigenous, black, lesbian, among so many others, mark this date on the streets, raising their banners, which are countless, against gender inequalities that are manifested at the local and global levels.

Among the milestones in the international women's struggle, we should not forget the *World Conference on Human Rights* held in Vienna in 1993, where it was recognized that the rights of women are human rights. Another key moment was the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, also known as the Convention of Belem do Para, in 1994. Violence against women, particularly so-called domestic violence, which takes place in the home, is one of the global phenomena that most seriously affects the lives and dignity of women.

Nevertheless, women's lives are impacted by other forms of violence: the “double shift” entailed by paid work combined with domestic responsibilities, the overexploitation of their labour, the feminization of poverty and HIV/AIDS, the loss of their territories to large-scale projects, the pollution and degradation of the rivers and soil on which they depend for their subsistence. There is no doubt that women face a great many enemies, and perhaps the most ferocious of all, after patriarchy, is capitalism. The capacity of this mode of production to commodify life as a whole is felt most acutely by women. Women see the commodification of their bodies, transformed into merchandise, in the media and advertising, and are victims of the trafficking that feeds international prostitution rings. In addition, women must also struggle against the strategies aimed at the commodification of nature, such as the false solutions created for the alleged purpose of confronting the climate crisis.

So-called “environmental” non-governmental organizations and funds take control of collective forest areas and seek to restrict or even prohibit access to them by local communities in order to “preserve” these areas for the trade of “*environmental services*”, such as carbon storage in the case of REDD+ projects. In these situations, it is women who suffer most from the constant humiliation and repression that occurs in places where these types of projects are implemented.

When a community suffers the loss of its collectively used territory to projects aimed at the trade in environmental services, one of the invariable consequences is the surveillance and persecution of the community by forest rangers and, above all, public and/or private armed militias. Women, who stay at home to tend to domestic chores, raise crops and care for their children, become the most vulnerable to this persecution.

In addition, in areas affected by carbon or environmental services projects, shifting cultivation or swidden farming tends to be prohibited. This is a common practice among forest communities, in which women play a key role. It ensures a basic supply of healthy food for families and, at the same time, allows them to earn an income by selling surplus crops nearby.

In view of this, it can be concluded that the changes caused by the creation of market mechanisms for the use of nature violate a basic right: the right to food, and in particular, the right to healthy food. It is also important to remember that changes in dietary habits, through the introduction of industrially processed foods and crops grown with toxic agrochemicals, have led to the emergence of new diseases that were formerly unknown in these communities.

The loss of areas in which food crops can be grown also results in other impacts: many women are forced to go out and sell their labour ever farther away from their homes. But even though they have taken on new tasks in the world of paid work, women continue to be primarily responsible for domestic tasks. The work overload suffered by women has contributed to making them more prone to illness. Diseases like breast and cervical cancer are striking women at increasingly younger ages. High blood pressure, which used to be one of the main health problems faced by men, now affects more women than men.

The greatest irony of all, perhaps, is that although women are the ones most severely impacted, it is their images that are used in publicity to promote carbon trade and other environmental services projects.

We believe that our role, not only on March 8, but every day of the year, is to contribute to raising the visibility of women's struggles and realities, as well as to support the struggles of women's organizations against all forms of oppression, including the new wave of the commodification of life in these times of the *green economy*.