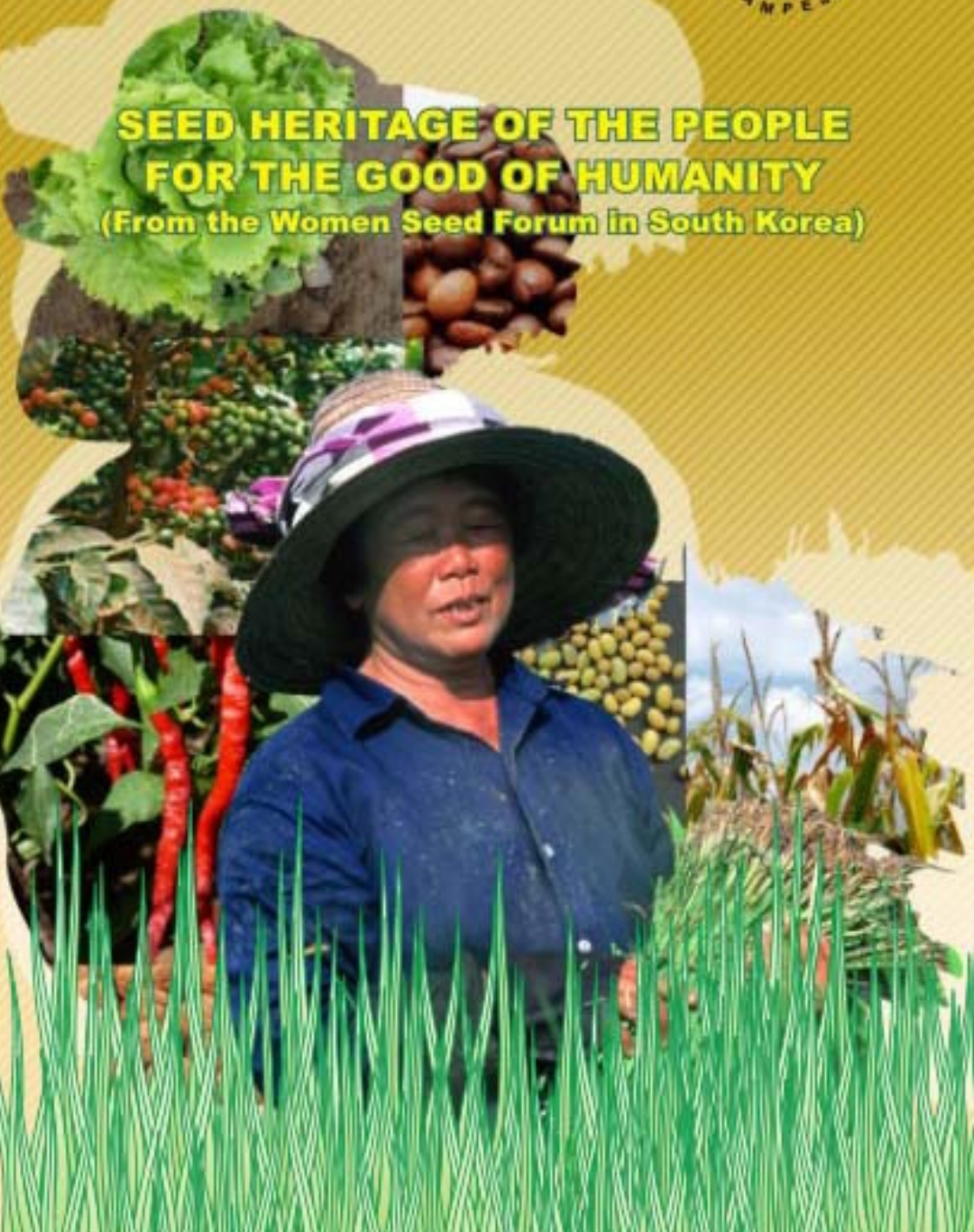




**SEED HERITAGE OF THE PEOPLE  
FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY**  
(From the Women Seed Forum in South Korea)



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Farmer's Right was adopted in international treaty as rights at FAO in 2001. Farmer's Right defines the right to access, preserve, and develop plant genetic resources in terms of the contribution made by farmers from the past, present and to the future. This is the basic right to materialize Food Sovereignty and it means the original right to the seeds. For human beings, seeds are the most important resources beside land, water, and air

The ultimate goal of protecting native seeds is to realize food sovereignty and seed sovereignty. It's not for cultivating cash crops but it's for realizing the value of women peasants. Also we are going to start from the scratch to establish strong basis for it. It's continuous work until we, women peasants, can regain the role of women peasants which is gathering seeds and managing them.

We oppose that companies and government monopolize seeds to use them in commercial way. We have to get back our genetic resources which is export abroad and we need to make clear that the right to the seeds belongs to the people. It's the plan to inform people that the farmers have right to the native seeds gathered by farmers' hands from the past.

In the long term, it's the plan to inform the people that genetic resources mean one of the sovereignty of the people will have in the future through seed campaign, seed festivals, and establishing seed banks.

It's to figure out the way for urban and rural area to survive together. It's possible because people acknowledge the value of woman peasants, plural value of agriculture and women peasant can be guaranteed with enough production cost to reproduce.

## **Women Peasant of La Via Campesina**

In September 2005, La Via Campesina South East Asia and East Asia held training session with woman peasant leaders from South East Asia and East Asia in Seoul hosted by KWPA (Korean Women Peasant Association) The delegation came from East Timor, Indonesia, The Philippines, Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, and Korea. At that time, all the participants shared the damages and failure of neoliberalism. Also, we resolved that we would struggle actively to stop neoliberal globalization.

In November 2006, La Via Campesina South East Asia and East Asia held the women peasant exchange program to Philippine, hosted by KMP and PARAGOS Philippines. Here we learn the struggle on land is not only done by the man but women peasant play important role on the struggle for the implementation agrarian reform in Philipines as well as the role of women on managing family income.

In September 2007, La Via Campesina South East Asia and East Asia held the international seed forum in Seoul. Now, we need a concrete struggle strategy. All woman peasants have common historical call to protect native seeds. We are trying to make the power of women peasants to protect native seeds and opposing neoliberal globalism. Furthermore, we try to make the start to socialize the importance of seeds and food sovereignty.

## **Seed Booklet**

This booklet is the compilation of the papers and experiences of the women peasants from peasant organizations members of La Via Campesina in the region. The booklet explained about the role of the women peasant in conserve the seed and in another hand we are loosing the native seed we have.

This booklet also given example how woman peasant save the seed and exchange the seed among the peasant. Seed exchanges not only exchange the seed but also the knowledge on how to conserve and grow it.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **WOMEN SEED FORUM IN SOUTH KOREA**

The women seed forum hosted by Korean Women Peasant Association (KWPA). It was held on September 4<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

La Via Campesina delegation were women peasant leaders from Indonesia, Philippine, Thailand, Timor Leste, Chile, Cambodia and Brazil. The women delegation brought with them various kind of seeds to be exchange among the delegation as well as share with Korean farmers.

The Women seed forum activities including, international seed forum with participated by local and international delegation. Meeting with Korean organization who work on the seed conservation and environmental. Rally at September 10<sup>th</sup> on the international struggle against neoliberalism as well as the field trip to the farming family. Below is the paper present during the women seed forum in south Korea.

#### **1. SEED AT THE CENTRE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

**By Ms Juana Curio ANAMURI Chile**

*“Every man, woman and child have the right to an adequate standard of living which guarantees them, and their family, health and wellbeing, and especially food”.... etc. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*

One of the main activities of ANAMURI is the Campaign for the protection and preservation of seed. For peasant women this has become a strong form of resistance, action and organization, and is at the heart of our struggle for Food Sovereignty. Through this campaign a great number of activities have been carried out at local level mainly by the women and organization that form part of Via Campesina and other social movements from rural areas. The motto “Seed, heritage of the people for the good of humanity” is well known today and has been adopted by many social movements at international level.



The seed campaign is one of the concrete forms of resistance, action and organization which are at the root of our struggle for **Food Sovereignty**. Millions of men and women from peasant and indigenous communities carry out this form of resistance through the recovery of seed, never renouncing to the constant struggle to maintain the culture and promote the wisdom which has been passed down to us from generation to generation.

In this way the recovery of seed has become one of the most vital activities of our organizations, and the exchange or barter of seed is an action of true political content, which make it clear that Food Sovereignty and Seed go together hand in hand and that both are rooted in a set of principles and values that spring from the struggle for land and territory; in order to safeguard our sovereign capacity to produce, preserve and provide food for our peoples. It is this sovereign capacity that today is threatened, and which we must reconstruct and reinforce, but which neo-liberalism is trying to seize and to tear down by all possible means.

Today Chile, as is the case of other countries in the region, represents one of the most pathetic cases on our continent, where the extension of policies to produce cash crops for export is the prologue to the imposition named “re-engineering of the land”. These are concepts of government authorities, not ours. In the case of our country, land will be divided into areas organized depending on the needs and interests of the agro-industrial units to be installed, many of which have been created by the trans-national companies. In this way they not only take away our resources, exploit our land and workers, but also other economic resources such as training and research which are channelled towards the requirements of these companies.

This is closely linked to the idea that peasant family farming should be subjugated to the large companies. No great effort is needed to see the similarities between this new type of production system and the industrial “maquilas” implanted by the trans-national companies in Mexico, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Chile has become increasingly more dependent on imports for its own food. Since 1970, the quantities exported have multiplied by more than twenty. At the same time, our production of potatoes, wheat, beans, lentils, milk and beef have diminished by similar quantities, over twenty times less. We depend increasingly more on imports of grain, tinned and processed foods, including junk food. Not only has this made food more expensive, but has made obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes predominant problems of public health.

The possibility that in the future we produce even less food is today a real threat, as a result of government intentions to promote the production of agro-fuels. These are presented as a positive substitute to wheat, beetroot and rapeseed. It is aberrant that today on our continent we are presented with the idea that it is a step forward to produce food for machines and cars for the requirements of continents in the north instead of feeding our own impoverished people.

This “big business” is one of the greatest dangers that is challenging Food Sovereignty in our regions, and which is irresponsibly being presented as a first-rate economic alternative to peasant family agriculture, by governments that also count on the support of the regional office of the FAO in America.

It is therefore urgent for our indigenous peoples, for peasants and fisher-folk, for women and for social and grassroots organisations, that the struggle for **Food Sovereignty** be engaged, it is crucial for the physical and cultural survival of our peoples. This is a struggle that calls for the defence of our territories and our local food systems in their integrity, it means planting, preserving and sharing our seeds and our knowledge, it entails defending our territories and waters and also that we demand that the right to land become a reality. This is a battle that we must fight to hinder the expanding empire of capitalism and all its institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO, Free Trade Treaties, the national States which are its accomplices and even the FAO which is increasingly at its service.

In this context, our struggle and the **Campaign for Seed** is permeated by the resistance of our peoples, with actions that carry the message of life, dissent and enthusiasm, that stir and strengthen hope, and, above all, recognize and accentuate the dignity and values of peasant and indigenous peoples' way of life and the wisdom they represent. It is for this reason, that, in a campaign for life, we women we have played a central role.

**Food Sovereignty**, for our organizations, has become a principle for struggle, as can be seen by the definition given by Via Campesina: “**Food Sovereignty is the right of people to produce, exchange and consume foods in agreement with practices defined by the values, knowledge, beliefs and rituals that form part of their cultures, with access to wholesome and nutritious food, without any type of hindrance or pressures of political, economic or military nature**”.

This implies **duties** and commitments. In our opinion a primary duty is to be clearly aware and convinced that **food sovereignty is our right** and that therefore no-one can take it away from us.

It is necessary to create the **awareness** that this is a right based on values, such as the right to self-determination, dignity, freedom, justice and equity, rights that are fundamental for political sovereignty and free determination of peoples. In a neo-liberal capitalist structure, a people that does not produce its own food (or a great part of it), is a people that can easily be subjugated by pressure, extortion or domination imposed by the trans-national empire and will end up by losing its sovereignty.

That is why, to prevent being crushed, we should continue to recover, defend and preserve our seeds and to build Food Sovereignty. It is necessary to first strengthen our organizations and ensure that they have an identity built on a clear ethnic and class vision, to give strength and determination to our convictions and to fight against those who intend to take away our rights.

We women are convinced that if we want to reclaim food sovereignty, it is our

duty to go back to our roots, to our history and to our cultures; these define us and are our reason for living and belonging to a people with a clear and firm identity.

This is one of the necessities in today's struggles when confronting the agro-systems imposed by neo-liberal capitalism which are systematically destroying biodiversity (autochthonous and natural seeds, flowers, plants, animals, fish, waters, rivers, seas, minerals, land, etc.) as well as cultural diversity (knowledge, rituals, songs, poetry, traditions, eating habits, dress, dances, occupations, crafts, etc.). This wealth of biodiversity provides us with the tools and input to produce our food and to prepare it in harmony with our traditions and local environment. We must resist and not be tempted to eat what the trans-national companies, in their self-interest, want us to eat. As a comrade from MST has said "they have flattened out and standardized our sense of taste"; but worse than that, they have standardized our environment and our culture by plundering biodiversity.

Without biodiversity it is not possible for a people to be sovereign. Without land, without water, Food Sovereignty is not possible either. We have a duty and we should take on the commitment to reject unsustainable production methods, which are deeply noxious and devastating to our biodiversity. Oriented only to the production of cash crops for exports, the trans-national companies can't decide what and how we should eat, what we should produce and when, where and how the products should be marketed.

We should value our crops and return to food production systems that safeguard social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. Of all living species, human beings are one of the most dependent. All our needs, from the basic to the complex, can only be satisfied with the help, solidarity and cooperation of others. That means that the only way that men, women and children can survive is by living together in an organized society.

CLOC, Coordinator of Rural Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean Base of la Via Campesina, has proposed that in order to eliminate hunger and

reduce poverty the only durable solution is through **comprehensive local development**. It points out that it is necessary that decisions on how to produce food in a more sustainable way should progressively be defined more at local, national and regional level. This will make it possible to generate wealth, employment and vigorous rural communities in a more diversified and harmonious environment.

The goal should be to advance towards local and sustainable food production. Towards a system where production, handling, marketing and consumption of crops and animal products occur, wherever possible, within the same or neighbouring community. Where this is not possible, priority should be given to internal markets (national) or to trade blocks at subregional or regional level, in a horizontal relationship based on solidarity and fraternity among peoples.

It is evident that food is a basic need of all living organisms. It is a continuous necessity for the care and sustenance of life, just like air and water. However, for human beings food is more than a basic physiological necessity, because through food we also interact and share. Food enhances our capacity to create, and awakens our senses by its colour, taste and smell. It is also at the heart of our festivities and ceremonies, it encourages dialogue and is sometimes an offering of thanksgiving at funerals

So our unsparing efforts build on this conviction, to join our actions and voices to those from all over the World who at the Mali World Forum cried out to affirm: **THE TIME OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY HAS COME**

## **2. The women's role in protecting seeds**

**By: HAN, Young-Me KWPA South Korea**

### **The Conditions of Food Sovereignty and Seeds Sovereignty**

The reality of Korean agriculture is developed in a way that we have been seemed to lose our sovereignty since we went through Japanese Colonial period. There were three stages in destroying of Korean Food Sovereignty. First, it began with Japanese land investigation and delivering rice. Next, it continued by destroying of Korean land and production infrastructure when the Korean War broke out. Finally, planting system was collapsed completely when Korean Peninsula was divided into South and North. Since then, biodiversity such as wheat and cotton was disappeared because of American relief work.

Agrobusiness system based on capitalism started with the industrialization and urbanization controlled by development dictatorship of Korean government. In the beginning of 1980s, neoliberalism agricultural system began to entered Korea. As a result, seed industry was dominated by foreign capital and terminator seeds and traitor technology spreaded all over the world. Furthermore, we can find GMO among farm products harvested in Korea, even though we don't cultivate GMO food. On top of that, many farmers were badly damaged in the process of hybrid seed experiments so a great number of farmers started to struggle to get compensation for seed damages. Due to use of pesticides and fertilizers, land is under the threat of acidification and desertification. The worse situation is that productive land is occupied by the rural development policy turning into industrial city or business city. Therefore agricultural infrastructure for the stable food production is shrinking. In the past, we bred seeds for farming by ourselves, but we started to purchase the seeds from the seed companies after agriculture was reorganized into green revolutionary farming. Since we began to farm with the seeds from seed companies, we've cultivated our crops with the manure, fertilizer, pesticides, machinery and even microbial medicine for environment-friendly agriculture which farmers can buy in the market. Farmers ended up not being able to cultivate farm products without money, because they cannot

breed seeds by themselves and they have to rely on seed companies. Agriculture used to depend on the natural cycle, but the cycle was broken by capital. Seeds are the first loop of vicious circle.

### **The value of native seeds**

*For farmers, seeds don't mean only future crops and the source of food. Seeds are culture and the storage of history. Seeds are the first link to agriculture and food system. Seeds are the ultimate symbol of Food Sovereignty.*  
(Vandana Shiva)

Native seeds are the asset of farmers.

Traditional knowledge, which has developed through exchanging among regions and preserving seeds, belongs to farmers.

Native seeds are the resources that contain farmers' devotion and culture. Seeds have improved properly to the specific region's characteristics because farmers pick and distribute after careful sorting. Protecting seeds is the power to preserve biodiversity and culture diversity. (It's important to preserve traditional food culture as well.)

In the future, the one who controls seeds will control the global.

Seeds, which is the starter of realizing Food Sovereignty, are not only the end products, but it also the means for farmers to cultivate following years. There is an old saying that farmers wouldn't be dead if they didn't harvest seeds yet. Like the proverb, seeds are more important than any other things for farmers. The ability to get the seeds for farmers to cultivate following years by themselves without relying on the capital is the start of sustainable agriculture. Native plants are the other name of biodiversity and we need to consider them as the earth's friend that we live together. It's possible for human being to survive when native plants can keep existing and being preserved. With biodiversity, stable food supply can be done.

Like the saying that every medicine comes from native plants, its economic value is unlimited. We need to keep corporations away from making genetic

resources privatize and monopolize. Furthermore, All the rights relating to folk remedies given from their ancestors should belong to citizens.

### **The importance of Seed Sovereignty**

So far, woman peasants who give birth to children and raise them have had a role to gather and preserve seeds. Because of this role, the women have been respected and looked up too. However, multinational companies that possess seeds and use them in commercial ways take this role away from women. So women's status in the communities went down and communities collapsed.

For women farmers, seeds don't mean only the source of food. Seeds are not only our ancestors' history and culture which have come throughout thousands of years, but they are also the precious resources containing biodiversity. Women peasants' right to protect seeds is one of the valuable sovereignties that should be protected such as energy, food, natural resources for community's members and nation as well.

### **People who protect seeds**

Who controls seeds?

Farmers' right is women's right. KWPA is working on bring Food Sovereignty and Seed Sovereignty back by gathering the wills of people opposing to neoliberal globalization. It's one of the core task for KWPA to achieve this year. Several countries have already recognized the importance of genetic resources and have started to make an effort to protect their seeds from multinational companies. They are progressing many tasks such as establishing seed banks. It's a little late, but we must regain seed sovereignty. Vandana Shiva said that in the eye of patriarchal neoliberalism, women and seeds are the last colony for them to conquer, so they are getting desperate. Women farmers will get the right back with the tools that we are good at best, that is, production. We are going to look for native seeds that can survive without pesticides. Then we will develop them and share safe farm products with citizens. Also, We will protect seeds which are genetic resources and cultural ruins so that we can preserve environment that can sustain biodiversity. In addition we will discover traditional culture and restore regional



communities. These sort of tasks help women farmers to stop spreading neoliberalism and keep our dignity.

**Food Sovereignty is culture movement, community movement, agriculture movement and women movement.**

Women farmers are the ones that found seeds first and started to cultivate, produce over 70 percent of world's foodstuff and make tradition of land, water, seeds, knowledge and develop them. Food Sovereignty is the movement that respects and realizes these women farmers' dignity.

Women farmers have been neglected from the means of production. Farmers can regain the means of production, which means seeds, from agrobusiness through Food Sovereignty. Also we can make other people aware of the fact that the right to the native seeds belong to farmers.

Protecting and developing the right to genetic resources means right to enjoy land, labor and culture as well. Food Sovereignty doesn't mean only consumer's right to enjoy the safe food with stable supply. It's the movement to change food culture and regain the right to eat traditionally processed food. It can be done in several ways. First we can change production system through purchasing food in the right season. Also, we can change our taste that is already accustomed to Western one. We need to inform that cheap imported goods with subsidy threaten our farmers' right to live and consumers as well. Food sovereignty is the movement to let people know this fact and it's against WTO and FTA.

Food Sovereignty can stop the monopoly over the food resources which are controlled by corporations and governments. It is also against GMO and LMO which threaten sustainable agriculture system and have bad influence on both health and environment.

We are against WTO that confers patents on biotechnology including life, Farmers have had roles as breeders and protectors of seeds throughout the history. So farmer's right should be included into intellectual property rights.

Food Sovereignty is the community movement that people in urban and rural area develop the logic and implement it together in order to build agriculture system. It is the alternative movement to realize sustainable agriculture through moving into national agriculture and coming up with agricultural paradigm based on social solidarity and alliance.

Farmers should get away from production method of neoliberalism because we can foresee that farmers will be taken away by multinational corporations' intention and collapse at the end.

We need to change into environment-friendly agriculture to extend biodiversity.

This is possible through alternative production and building consumption system. (environment-friendly agriculture, resource circulation agriculture, agriculture based on regional production and regional consumption, urban agriculture)

We need to establish community education and culture. Also we need to find regional community which is based on regional production and regional consumption. Community doesn't mean only towns or villages. It means that urban and rural areas begin to communicate and try to get rid of the gap between two.

Food Sovereignty is against imperialism which force us to adopt neoliberalism agricultural policies. Also it is the struggle to oppose warlike patriarchy

### **3. *Padi Salek* is our paddy**

**By Ms Marda Ellius FSPI Indonesia**

#### **Seed in Indonesia**

It is clear that seed as one of agrarian resources should be owned, managed and controlled by peasants. Awfully, for Indonesian peasants, seed just become a source of problem. Seed make the peasant as an exploitation

object to generate profit for big agribusiness company. In international level, there are Dupont, Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Limagrain, Dow and Aventis which have threaten the peasant's livelihood all over the world. This several companies also control seed market in Indonesia through national/domestic company acquisition.

To gain an enormous profit for the company, the peasants being enticed by productivity of hybrid seed. Though hybrid seed can not guarantee for big profit, peasants get more dependence day by day. Even for some case, ministry of agriculture and several agriculture field trainers just become a sales agent for the company and force the peasants to use the product (seed and its packages). Usually, the peasants become more dependent not only for seed, but also for fertilizer and pesticide that have been packed in same packages with the seed. According to Federation of Indonesian Peasants Union (FSPI), seed, pesticide and fertilizer expenses will absorb 45.4 percent of total capital especially in paddy farming system. So that, it is not surprised if there are many peasant bounded by debt because of this farming system. Food crisis that have threaten Indonesia has support governments to increase national paddy production. Government set up many things in order to increase paddy production for 2 million tons amount in this year. To promote this program, the government has import hybrid paddy seed to provide it for the peasants. This policy, clearly threats our sovereignty, make the peasants more dependence day by day, threat the existence of biodiversity and also can erase local wisdom and local value that have maintained by the peasant.

In economical terms, in the past, agriculture didn't need so many capital and cash money. By controlling all the agrarian resources in local level, the peasants can effectively and efficiently manage their family based agriculture. This thing still remain and hopefully maintained in Kuro Village where the peasant who become member of FSPI managed their agriculture and their life.

## **Kuro: The remaining places**

Kuro is a village in Pampangan district. The location is very isolated, it lies about 120 KM from Palembang main capital of south Sumatera, and 80 KM from Kayu Agung city one of big city in south Sumatera. We can use motor vehicle through the land to access the location, but if the water level increase, we need to use Speedboat or *ketek* (traditional boat) to cross the water.

The main source of income for Mata Kuro's community is peasants and fisher folk. Agriculture commodities were dominated by paddy as the main commodity. But, most of the peasant use hybrid seed in their farming system named IR 64, IR 42 and *Ciherang*. This situation is the impact of green revolution implementation on Soeharto's regime. Green revolution has forced people to eat the same staple food that is paddy. Before, the peoples also consume wheat, sweet potatoes, maize etc, but after that they only consume rice from hybrid paddy seed. As the impact, Indonesian peasants have lost more than 10.000 local paddy varieties.

Whereas there are big amount of hybrid seed utilization, there are several peasant which joined in Melati peasant group, member of South Sumatra peasant union (SPSS) member of FSPI-- still use and maintain their local seed named *Padi Salek*, *Sawah Kanyut*, *Padih Puteh*, and *Padi Sibur*. From these mentioned local seed, the peasants mostly use *padi salek* in their farm. It is because it very applicable in Kuro village which have temperature for 30 degree of Celsius. *Padi salek* also has big tolerance both with drought or being submerged in the water. *Padi salek* have taller stalk and has more leaves. Weeds can not grow because the leaves are dense, so the peasants don't need any herbicides to combat the weeds. Historically, we can not trace the place and its discoverer, but peoples say that the paddy has already cultivated for along time and it becomes an inherited property from their ancestor.

## **Conserving the Seed**

There are several obstacle should be faced in order to conserve the seed especially in Kuro Villages. The biggest challenge is come from Agribusiness

Company. Through agriculture field trainer they market their product. The slogan is very tricky: by telling that their hybrid seed is “the best quality seed” to make the peasants buy their seeds and its packages. The peasants promised for high productivity seed so, they force to leave their genuine farming system unconsciously. They didn't realize that their inherited farming system which very underlined collectivity, democracy, and fertile land and environment for next generation will be erased soon.

But, this condition didn't make Melati peasants group feel surrender. We campaign about the importance of conserving our local seed and our local farming system by formal and informal meeting. We also try to conserve our local seed by cultivated it. In every harvest, we save 2-4 can of paddy seed (4-24 Kg) and we plant it in 0.75 – 1.5 hectares of land. We do this thing to conserve and to reduce our production cost. Its been proved that production cost get lower if we use *padi salek*, 1 hectare rice field will make cost for 60.000 rupiah (3 cans of seed) if we use *padi salek*. This is costless when we compare with the cost if we use hybrid seed for 480.000 rupiah

### **Seed preserving step**

1. Paddy that will be used for seed harvested with particular way using anai-anai (traditional rice cutter) so the grain didn't fracture
2. Paddy separated by set foot on it
3. Separated paddy grain should dried using sunlight for one day
4. Let wind fly the empty paddy grain
5. Put paddy grain in to bag, keep in an isolated box and put in dry place for more less 6 month

### **Women peasants' role in local seed conservation**

The real farming system can not separated from family farming system that always involved mother as a women peasant. The role of women peasants is very complex; they involved in all activities in their farm. Start from preparing land up until harvesting the crops. The main thing that women peasants always do is to prepare the seed.

In the past, women peasants always take responsibility to manage the seed. They collect, select, keep and plant the seed. This role only done by women peasants. For that reason, women peasants become a main factor to implement seed conservation agenda. As we said before, all activities chain in preparing seed are dominated by women. This specialization of role happens naturally in other activities like to dig the land mostly dominated by men (peasant).

Because of that, to conserve our local seed is an obligation for us to cut off the peasant's dependence on "the best quality seed" and to protect and to stop the eradication of women peasants' role as productive labor in agricultural sector.

#### **4. Seed in Timor Leste**

**By: Ms Maria Joana do Rego HASATIL Timor Leste**

##### **Production**

Timor Leste is an agriculture country which is 80% of the population live from agriculture. Farming is not only feed the population but also develop the culture of the people like the *tebe-tebe* dance, poems, and with the agriculture people can increase the healthy by planting the medicine plants and herbs.

Because of the fertile soil made Portuguese came and imperial the territory, for 450 years Portuguese colonialism had destroy the agriculture system of the Timorese. Portuguese built huge plantation for export like coffee, rubber and vanilla and exploited the Timorese as the labor for the plantation. Portuguese developed the mono culture farming and this caused the Timorese become poor and destroyed the local farming that practiced the sustainable agriculture.

After several years under Indonesia occupation, Timor Leste liberated and independent because of the international lobby not because of the armed struggle of the people. The new government of Timor Leste now become more open and give big opportunity to the foreign investor to exploit the land and the

natural resources in the country. Although the Timorese are poor but they are survive and able to fight for independency.

Agriculture is livelihood of the People and capital to achieved welfare, development and genuine independency. The national development plan of Timor Leste should base on this reality. By the development of the agriculture sector state will be able to rise fund needed to develop the country.

### **Seed in Timor Leste**

We had various local seed that until today we conserve for generation such as:

- **Paddy**, *varieties of Hare Rai Maran: hare mean, hare mutin, hare metan, hare cameli.*
- **Maize**, *varieties of Batar Mutin Kiik, Batar Mutin Bo'ot, Pal laten pulen, pal laten balis.*
- **Vegetables**, *Kobi, Agriao, Kangkung, Tomate, Baria, Lis Mean, Lis Mutin, Brinjela, Alfase, Bayam, Mostarda, Repolho.*
- **Fruits**, *Nu Modok Nu Mean, Nu badak, Sabraka, Tanjarina, Has, Markujas, Kulu Jaka, Kulu, Ai-ata bo'ot, ai-ata kiik, Ai-dila, Ai-nanas, fataka mutin, Hudi Singapura, hudi tambang, hudi labarik.*
- **Cassava**, *Ai-farina mentega, Ai-farina Mutin, Ai-farina Lesso, Talas, Kumbili mutin, Fehuk mutin, fehuk mean, fehuk makerek.*
- **Peanuts**, *Fore rai, fore sekoti/naruk, fore bo'ot, fore keli, fore munggu metan, cih, fore bo'ot fuik.*

**Beside the local seed that we conserve in Timor Leste, we also have local seed which wild grow in the forest such as:**

- Kumbili
- Uhi

**In Timor Leste there are few varieties that introduce in recently such as :**

Paddy: IR 8, IR 5, Java, GH and Dimas

## **Food Sovereignty in Timor Leste**

In HASATIL as peasant organization and the network of several NGOs, we are promoting the food sovereignty from the grass root level until the national level. With the peasant we are conducting various training on seed conservation and protecting the local food. The food sovereignty concept implement by to fulfill the basic need of the family by eat our local food.

For HASATIL the seed conservation will be an opportunity to gather our local seed because:

- Many peasants in Timor Leste still keep their local seed because do not have money to buy the seed from the company.
- The Peasant still have the knowledge on how to keep the seed and save them.
- The local food still populer among the people especially the cassava and the wild beans.
- The awareness of the local people on the importance to keep the local food for feeding the family.
- In the villages and remote area, peasant do not have access to the conventional farming because of lack information and infra structure.

Beside the opportunity, HASATIL aware on the threaten that face:

- Many local seed no longer exist.
- Governman policy oriented to the modren farming that destroy the local seed as well as the agriculture itself.
- The foreign intervention to the food policy in the country become strong.
- Various international research introduce foreign seed which is not suitable for the local consumption or local farming.
- The high dependency of people in the city to the imported food.
- The market opportunity for the local product is very minimum.



## **5. Women protect the seed in Cambodia**

**By: Oeum Sarann FNN Cambodia**

### **1. Cambodia's Context**

Cambodia is in south east Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, between Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos with area of 181 035 square kilometers, land is 176 520 square kilometers, 21.6% is cultivated land area, with 2 700 square kilometers has irrigated system. The population is about 14 million people (51% are women), and among of them 68.5% are agricultural population. Main agriculture products are rice, rubber, corn, vegetable, cashew, etc. Industries are tourism, garments, rice milling, fishing, wood and wood product, rubber, cement, etc. (Cambodian profile, April 2007).

Rice is the main crop for Cambodian people as well as Asian people, besides this vegetable is also important crop for basic need of human. Rice is Life and Culture of the world. Right now rice and vegetable crop in Cambodia and in the world are changing vigorously because of applying pesticide and that cause the climate change. Chemical fertilizer and pesticide using are affected to economic and environment issues. As example in Prey Veng province, farmers who apply System of Rice Intensification (SRI) with using too much chemical fertilizer and pesticide became indebtedness and affect to human health and environment as well.

New evolution is issue on seed of rice and vegetable that farmers used traditional varieties are less than before, right now, due to new hybrid varieties discovered by the scientist-attracted farmers to use popularity. These new hybrid varieties can protect rice from insect pest and other pests; rice seed was hybrid with containing vitamin A to fill the need of majority of human. It is better, but most important of all is problem for the future, seed varieties belong to company or entrepreneur when the demand is high. It is result to disappear of local seed, we don't need to buy chemical fertilizer and pesticide because we have compost and botanical pesticide to replace, but when hybrid variety of rice become intellectual property rights of any company we must buy that seed to use forever.

As Cambodia, there are CARDI (Cambodia Agriculture Rice Development Institute), Aquip, and Golden Seed are playing important role in researching and producing new kind of hybrid on rice for selling to farmer with comprising of hybrid seed with other technology to get high yield. They sell to farmers in order to make them depend on and farmers themselves forget to maintain or conserve and use ancestor local seed.

## **2. Intervention of FNN-CEDAC in Local Seed Protection**

### **2.1 Back ground**

- Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) is the main partner of FNN in rural development through promoting sustainable agriculture technique, build capacity of farmers to protect rights and benefit with net work since grass-root level up to national level or we call Federation.
- Goal of FNN is to reinforce the institutional development and the expansion of FNN so that it can effectively represent the interest of small farmers, provide leadership and capacity building support for the improvement of socio-economic conditions of farmer association members in Cambodia.
- Up to now, there are 1131 Village based Farmer Associations (VFA) in 1126 villages, 11 provinces of Cambodian, there are 30 084 members (15 792 are women) with total of capital is \$397 471 (\$351 per VFA). Besides, there are many kinds of groups were set up under the umbrella of VFA such as 338 of Women Group with average saving capital is \$48 per group, 257 of Young Farmer groups, etc.

## **2.2 Activities intervention by FNN-CEDAC**

### **2.2.1 Promoting Sustainable Agriculture**

The entry point of our activity is build capacity to community on agriculture technique such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI), Home Gardening, Compost, Botanical Pesticide, System of Chicken Raising, Multi-Purpose Farm, etc. In term of sustainable agriculture, we promote them to use existed resources such as local rice variety, vegetable variety, especially local seed. It

is very important to increase awareness to farmer to use and conserve local seed.

Besides, we also worked with other network to strengthen ecological agriculture network comprising of Network of Ecological Agriculture Development in Cambodia (NEDC), Prolinnova (Promoting Local Innovation), etc, with organizing campaign to support local products in order to increase awareness to people to value to local product, and extension and promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development.

### **2.2.2 Activity of Women in Local Seed's prevention**

Normally, women peasants are active involve in seed selection and storage, but most women who are member of groups or VFAs are better done of this activity because they got experience and knowledge through group meeting and training, workshops.

#### **a. Reason and Purpose**

Through group meeting and training, exchange visit committee of village based farmer association and committee of women group jointly discussion on this issue, then they decided to organize this group. Some main reasons are 1. Buying seed from outside is very expensive. 2. Distinction of local or ancestor seed because of applying new hybrid variety. 3. Chemical toxic. 4. Unpurified seed causes decrease of the yield from year to year (food security), quality and taste are decrease as well; It also change in growing stage of crop. 5. Local people are not open mind to share experience to others broadly yet (selfish). 6. Farmers cannot keep rice seed for next season because of license from company. Therefore, seed purification Women group was set up in purpose of

1. Share experience and ideas related to ecological agriculture and women affairs
2. Local seed prevention and share to others both inside and outside villages
3. To be self-reliance (produce to supply inside and outside)

4. Teach to young generation
5. Maintain identity of local seed
6. Build capacity to women in participatory activity such as speaking out, fulfill their roles, communal development planning, small infrastructure improving, etc

**b. Process and Result**

1. Monthly meeting organized and facilitated by group leader to share and learn experience
2. Women play important role in family development through innovation adaptation of saving for self-reliance, health and nutrition, ecological agriculture to reduce daily expense.
3. and social development (planning and small infrastructure improvement)
4. Women applied different kind of seed purification according to their interest. Many kind of local varieties were done by group such as rice seed (Malis rice, Kraham, Kong Malis, Kraharm, etc), vegetable (wax gourd, pumpkin, egg plant, bitter gourd, cucumber, wing bean, long bean, sponge gourd, etc)
5. There are many way of seed distribution such as free provided, borrowing each other, share each other equally but in term of purified seed, and selling.

**c. Participation of women and men in seed selection and purification**

1. Harvesting
2. Select healthy seed and dry out
3. Packaging
4. Storage

Women are much more involved in this work than men according to Khmer tradition on role of women in household management (property, things), seed selection and storage are women work, and heavy work is for men.

**d. Work plan for the future**

1. Make deepen cooperation between women group and village based farmer association to share experience

2. Learn more on good experience related to seed purification
3. Try to search for purified seed to increase yield to disseminate to farmers
4. Expand more members
5. Strengthen and promoting farmers to aware on advantages of local seed
6. Community wants young generation can get knowledge on this technique
7. Community wants to become an entrepreneur of rice seed and vegetable seed to deliver inside and outside village

### **3. Conclusion**

Local seed is very important for farmers 'live without its means that farmers will rely on outside resources and result they will reach to lost their identity. Most of farmers need the seed or something give them result immediately, they do not understand about the result in the future or what will happen in the future. Therefore, Community or Farmer Group is playing important role to increase awareness and promoting this activity to community, especially, women is the main dynamic to protect and prevent local seed varieties.

### **6. The role of woman peasants on protecting the local seed and conserve the seed experience of Assembly of the poor and Karen ethnic minority in Thailand.**

**By: Ms Pinee Monkeow AOP Thailand**

Assembly of the Poor (AOP), a member of La via Campasina, has 7 networks of grassroot people in Thailand in which the Alternative Agricultural Network (AAN) has worked intensively on native seed conservation more than five years. We attempt to conserve local seeds by exploring and gathering the varieties of local seeds through several activities, such as the regional forum for exchanging local seeds among peasants from different provinces, cultures, and ethnicities.

Basically, AOP does not distinguish our activities by gender as we concern the equality of all gender rights, and the implementation of one another. However, we cannot deny that in the most cultures, women have an important role in selecting, purifying, conserving, and protecting local seeds which are delicate

works and meant food security for a family and community. Nevertheless, woman roles, as well as native seeds are often overlooked in the policy making. Small numbers of high productive varieties are promoted to replace native seeds which suitable to local geo-cultural conditions. And only men are pulled to the modern commercial farming with mechanized technologies.

At the present, Thailand has approximately 20,000 rice varieties in the seed bank. But we believe that there are many times more than that in peasants' farms. However, we have lost numerous varieties also. A key cause is the market orientation promoted by the Thai state policies. Both domestic and export markets have promoted only long grain rice varieties, such as Jasmine rice, while the numbers of short and round rice varieties are abandoned. Consumers taste is also influenced by the market and has an effect to farming.

So far, Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN) has collected about 130 rice varieties by the sustainable agricultural system emphasizing for household consumption rather than market orientation. At the first stage, we try to purify the varieties and regenerate them through cultural techniques. Moreover, in some areas, the farmers experiment to breed rice varieties by themselves in order to regenerate characteristics of the variety they want. Certainly, women peasants have a key role in so doing.

There are three important factors making local rice seed existent. First, the consumption culture; many varieties are not produced for sale, but for household consumption. Hence, the farmers select the varieties according to flavour, spiritual belief, ritual, cultural objectives, and so forth. Second, ecological condition; the breeding seeds promoted by the state are not suitable for all ecological systems. Most market-oriented varieties are for wet rice farming, whereas the plenty of native dry rice varieties have been produced suitable for specific ecological conditions. Finally, heritage conservation, the numerous farmers realize that seed varieties are heritage of ancestors. They try hard to conserve this valuable heritage and descend to younger generations by continually growing them.

Fortunately, the market-oriented seed varieties are promoted intensively in flat areas, whereas upland areas are not the main target. Therefore, plenty of native seeds have been conserved by upland farmers through traditional cultivations. In Karen communities, an ethnic minority in northern Thailand, native varieties of rice, grain, vegetable, and herb, have been conserved in rotational cultivation system. The ancestors instruct us to grow at least 30 varieties a year. Karen women have a main role to select and keep seeds for cultivation. We keep the seeds in a kitchen.

The smoke from fuel woods will protect them from humidity, insect, and deceases. Each family has different varieties of seeds depend on their flavours, spirits, and basic element of their bodies, as we believe that some kinds of seed can be flourished by somebody only.

We always borrow or exchange seed varieties among community members or neighbours. And we often get new varieties from relatives, friends, and other ethnic minorities, even from distant communities. Therefore, each Karen communities have more than a hundred seed varieties. Moreover, some Karen communities have more than 300 seeds varieties. This diversity of varieties can be conserved as long as we can continue the rotational cultivation system.

Unfortunately, upland farmers are increasingly threatened by the Thai state policies. Twenty years ago, numerous farmers in the Northeast, South, and also the North have transformed their upland sustainable agriculture to cash cropping for exportation, such as feed corns, cassava, sugarcane, and coffee. And recently the commercial rubbers are widely promoted to the northeastern and northern farmers in addition to the southern farmers who have grown it for many ten years before.

Additionally, the forest conservation policy of the Thai state has threatened upland farmers fiercely. Many uplanders, especially ethnic minorities in the North, have been evicted from the forests which are established as protected areas.

Due to a long negotiation of AOP, Northern Farmer Networks (NFN)<sup>1</sup>, and alliances, we have not been relocated. Nevertheless, we are forced to reduce land use, prohibited to get access to forests, and threatened to stop practicing rotational cultivation since it is seen as an improper cultivation and a cause of deforestation. Since the fallow period of rotational cultivation is reduced from up to 7-10 years to be 2-3 years, we have a big trouble of intense weeds and lead to chemical usage as we have not much labour for weeding. Many upland villagers have transformed the rotational cultivation to cash cropping, such as feed corn, ginger, peanut, etc., those be supplied for distant market governed by transnational corporations. This commercial agriculture has been promoted by government agencies through upland development and conservation projects, and dealers of business enterprises.

The new pattern of land use and chemicals destroy many native food seeds, which must be planted in a proper land, about 5-7 years fallow, with the traditional techniques and without chemicals. The loss of seeds means the loss of food which burdens women who have responsibilities to look after food security of a family and community. As we can produce not enough food and be prohibited to gather food from nature, cash is increasingly necessary. In many villages, men migrate to work as low wage labor in urban areas in order to gain money, whereas women are left to do farm and look after children alone. Moreover, in some villagers, both men and women left their children with old people while they are working in cities. This is a crucial cause of social problems.

We realize that the seeds conservation is important not only for food security and food sovereignty, but also life sovereignty since the loss of seeds is the loss of power to determine our lives. More than ten years, we have been struggling with the conservation policy of the Thai state and demanded state agencies and the public to respect our customary rights, cultural rights, and human rights through several activities. We insists that we must have the

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<sup>1</sup>NFN is a member of AOP, consists of northern Thai and ethnic minorities who are affected by the conservation policies of the Thai state. NFN has struggled with the state's establishment of protected areas more than 10 years and tried hard to protect native seed varieties by defending the rotational cultivation.



rights to continue our traditional cultivation, rights to get access to land and other natural resources. In so doing the rights of farmers, women, and ethnic minorities on their motherland and on their lives must be respected. We can no longer let the states, dominated by supra-state organizations and transnational corporation, determine our ways of life. We need to empower small peasants by globalizing our networks to defend our rights on native seeds and natural resources.

## **7. Rural women-farmer as protector of the seed of life**

**By: Elvira Baladad PARAGOS Philippines**

Like a mother who gives life to a child, nurtures and sustains, loves and protects, a Filipino woman farmer does the same to the seeds that gives life to her family. The mother instinct of a woman-farmer is manifested in the delicate care and patience in choosing or selecting the good seeds to ensure good harvest, the same way that she would provide the best care for her children to make sure that they will grow well.

In the multi-faceted life of a woman- farmer, one of her arduous task is to nurture, gather, select, propagate, conserve and preserve seeds that will be needed in the next planting season to provide continuity in her family's struggle for survival. This task is oftentimes overlooked and taken for granted, not only in the immediate household, but also by the government who perceived rural women-farmer's contribution to the farming system are just support roles and her actual involvement in the farm work like planting, weeding, harvesting and seed conservation is rarely recognized.

Sufficiency in seeds can lead to the empowerment of the agricultural sector and the role of women-farmers in this endeavor cannot be overlooked or underestimated. One shining and inspiring example is a 35 year old woman farmer, Lydia Macaya, a community leader, rice breeder and trainer in organic agriculture and member of MASIPAG, (Magsasaka at Siyentista para sa Ikaunlad ng Panakahang Agham or the Farmers and Scientists'Partnership for Agricultural Development). Her educational attainment or being only an

elementary graduate did not deter her from fulfilling her dream of going back to her community and work in the farm. She first planted and experimented on 20 different varieties of rice, to test which is the most locally adaptable and pest resistant. She persisted because ultimately, she knew it would benefit her family and her community. "That is all I cared about," she said. The limited area (1/2 hectare) did not stop her from further testing new methods of growing organic rice, trialing 60 different varieties and developing new strain of pest resistant, high yielding, locally adapted rice.

Replicate the Lydia Macayas in the entire Philippines and pretty soon we will achieve sufficiency in rice.

But rice alone does not complete the Filipinos' meal. There must be vegetables at least and this can be gauged by the proliferation of different leafy vegetables and beans in the market ready for consumption at affordable prices. These vegetables are locally grown and again thanks to the industriousness of the Filipino women-farmers for the protection and conservation of these native seeds endemic to their particular area. Even without the agricultural extension and farming programs from the government, the women-farmers, using traditional methods of conservation, were able to protect the viability of the seeds, to ensure a bountiful harvest.

It goes without saying that a good farmer must feel his or her land and must know what to plant at any given time. But without the seeds that pass through the careful hands of the woman farmer, there cannot be any plant growth. Despite the gender inequality shown by government program implementors with regard to access of women to land, credit, education, training and technology transfer, women-farmers persist to do what needs to be done to ensure there's enough and continuous supply of food on the family table.

Given the meager resources of the farming household and lack of credit/financial assistance and the diminishing farm support services to the farmer, a sustainable seed conservation, development and use of indigenous

or native seeds should be enhanced. Also, the rights of farmers to save, store, exchange and use seeds should be protected.

In the Philippines, the passage into law of the **Phil. Plant Variety Protection Act or Republic Act 9168** in 2002 was vehemently criticized by farmers, NGO, Scientists and other stakeholders because it violates the basic, inherent and traditional rights of farmers to seeds. There is a consensus view that the law is a threat to biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and food security. Also, it was believed that it will harm the research and innovation and further strengthen multi-national and transnational corporations' control over Philippine agriculture.

That the law is not about enhancing food security nor agricultural research and development in the country but it is more about organizing, marketing and distribution of corporate controlled seeds and technologies for greater corporate profits.

More importantly, the stakeholders said that the law will push small farmers deeper into the sinkhole of dependency on seed companies and will curtail farmers' right to seeds.

Many believed that the passage of this law was brought about by the enormous pressure from the industrialized countries to allow the Intellectual Property Rights on Plant Varieties in order to comply with the agreements embodied in the Trade Related Agreements on Intellectual Property Systems (TRIPS) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

The threat of Globalization and the International Corporate Interest in the production of seeds is real. There should be no mistaking that these two international policies are greatly affecting the rights of farmers to seeds. Of the two, the TRIPS is the most controversial agreement in the WTO since it promotes the patenting of life as a requirement among member countries. One of the most contentious provisions in the TRIPS agreement is the

institutionalization of the patenting of life form including seeds and this provision directly contradicts the rights of farmers to save, store, exchange and use seeds.

The institutionalization of the patenting of life form including seeds as provided in the TRIPS had already happened in the Philippines through the enactment of the **Phil. Plant Variety Protection Act in 2002**. We are already in the sink hole of dependency on the global seed industry.

But not everything is lost yet especially if remedial measure can be undertaken by the government with the support of the farmers who would be directly benefited. Initially, the local farmers' seed systems should be strengthened. This can only be accomplished with the full participation of the intended beneficiary. Second, to curb the bad effects of the law, damage control in terms of state policies and legislation can be provided to support farmer's initiatives in the propagation, conservation and development of seeds. Another measure is the breeding and development of locally adapted seeds to be pest and drought resistant and high yielding. If successful breeding and propagation of native seeds can be achieved, it could alleviate fears of seeds shortages and low yield.

Programs can be instituted and test farms should be provided to test different varieties of seeds and to develop methods for organic farming to lessen the dependency to chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Equally important is the extension of proven and tested training programs and technological transfer for breeding and preservation of seeds to different farming communities.

Last but not the least is the adoption and dissemination of sustainable agriculture methods and techniques to increase agricultural production.

Seed sufficiency would ultimately lead to seed sovereignty and this would redound to reduce the dependency of the farmers to imported and

commercially available seeds and enhance the freedom to be able to choose indigenous seeds suitable for optimum within a given locality and the right to make use of the seed which is the product of natural breeding and selection. In all these endeavors to achieve seed sufficiency in a farming community , the role played by the women farmers that start in the nurturing, gathering, and selection of the good seeds and end in the conservation/preservation to attain maximum germination efficacy, must be recognized and given utmost importance. **Rural women-farmers, resilient and patient as they are, persevere despite all odds to accomplish her primary role of nurturing her offspring and help in the preservation of the seeds that would bring life to her family.** These tasks, though hard as they are, have been practiced thru generations and will continue to the next for the survival of the whole nation.

A SALUTE TO ALL RURAL WOMEN-FARMERS FOR A JOB WELL DONE NOT ONLY IN THE HOME BUT MORE SO IN THE FARM.

### CHAPTER III

## SEEDS SOVEREIGNTY AND OTHER BIO-DIVERSITY ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN-PEASANT AS SEED PROTECTOR

The need to conserve and preserve the traditional seeds was highlighted in the forum thru the presentation of Position Papers of each country which very well provided insights on how women peasants gather, select the good seeds and preserve it in their own traditional way to ensure that there will be available seeds for the next planting season.

Important quotes summarized the importance and the need for Seed Preservation/Protection. Ms. Pinee Moonkaew of AOP-KAREN (Thailand) said *“The loss of seeds means the loss of food which burdens women who have responsibilities to look after food security of a family and community. We can no longer let the states, dominated by supra-state organizations and transnational corporations, determine our way of life. We need to empower small peasants by globalizing our networks to defend our rights on native seeds and resources”*

Ms. Oeum Sarann of FNN (Cambodia) concluded her report by stating that *“Local seed is very important to farmers' lives. Without it, farmers will rely on outside resources and in the process loose their identity and culture.*

*“Rural women-farmers, resilient and patient as they are, persevere despite all odds to accomplish her primary role of nurturing her offspring and help in the preservation of the seeds that would bring life to her family. These tasks, though hard as they are, have been practiced thru generations and will continue to the next for the survival of the whole nation”* was quoted by Ms. Elvira Baladad of PARAGOS- Philippines.

Ms. Marda Ellius a member of FSPI (Indonesia) reiterated the importance of women peasants in the protection/preservation of seeds by saying the *“women peasants always take responsibility to manage the seeds. They collect, select, keep and plant the seeds. This role is only done by women*

*peasant (in Indonesia). For that reason, women peasants become a main factor to implement seed conservation agenda. All activities chain in preparing seed are dominated by women and this specialization of role happens naturally to women peasants.”*

The South Korean delegate, Han, Young-Me of Korean Women Peasant association summed it up by saying *“Indigenous genetic resources (seeds) are material heritages that have shared their fate with our people for thousands of years. They have inseparable connections to people's basic needs (e.g., housing, food and clothing) and form the foundation of our body and spirit. To save indigenous seeds therefore is to preserve our environment and culture.”*

*It is said that those who govern seeds will govern the world in the future. Seeds are the results of production as well as the means necessary for the following year's cultivation. Therefore, seeds are the foundation of food sovereignty. Seeds are crucial in agriculture as in an old saying that “farmers die but seeds will only do so after bearing.”*

The threat of globalization and the international corporate interests of the Transnational Corporation (TNC) to dominate the production and distribution of seeds are **real**. A concerted effort from all nations to conserve seeds is quoted in the motto which has been adopted internationally by organizations who believed that **“SEED, HERITAGE OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY.”**

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE**

### **1. Korean Women Peasant Association. (KWPA)**

**Country of Origin: South Korea**

KWPA as a women peasant organization has been in existence for the last twenty years and has about ten thousand (10,000) members more or less, that come from nine (9) provinces, fifty(50) cities/villages and members of Women Peasant Association in their own locality.

### **2. Assembly of the poor (AOP)**

**Country of Origin: Thailand**

Northen Farmer federation (NFF) is an ethnic minority peasant association affiliated with the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) base in Thailand. AOP has seven (7) networks of grassroots people and each network has many local organizations under its umbrella. The networks are based in the north, south, and northeast, west and central which are the five regions of Thailand. The numbers of affiliated members are so numerous per region which is more or less a hundred thousand.

### **3. Federation of Indonesian Peasant Union (FSPI)**

**Country of Origin: Indonesia**

FSPI was organized in 1998, first in twelve (12) provinces in Indonesia. It has affiliated fourteen (14) provincial organizations with a total number of members approximately one million individual members.

### **4. Pagkakaisa para sa Tunay na Repormang Agraryo at Kaunlarang Panganayunan- PARAGOS-Pilipinas**

**Country of Origin : Philippines**

PARAGOS-PILIPINAS is an offshoot of DKMP-PARAGOS

Its membership/affiliated organizations are scattered in fourteen



provinces (14) provinces with about 20,000 members. PARAGOS is a mixed organization of men and women, farmers and fisherfolks living mostly in rural areas and foreshore land.

## **5. HASATIL**

**Country of Origin : Timor Leste**

HASATIL or ? was organized in 2002 and in its five year existence, it has organized thirteen (13) district level peasant organization under its wing.

## **6. Farmers and Nature Net (FNN)**

**Country of Origin : Cambodia**

FNN was formally organized only in 2002, and presently it has one thousand one hundred thirty one (1,131) village based farmer associations with mixed memberships. Its area of influence is in eleven provinces (11) provinces in Cambodia with a total of fifteen thousand (15,000) farmer members.

## **7. ANAMURI**

**Country of Origin : Chile**

ANAMURI as a farmer organization based in Chile started twenty years ago (1987). It has ten (10) affiliated organizations in ten (10) regions of Chile. It has a ten thousand (10,000) approximate number of affiliated members.

## **ISSUES AND CONCERNS ON SEEDS COONSERVATION AND PROTECTION.**

### **1. Korean Women Peasant Association. (KWPA)**

The National Development projects during the post-war era under the slogan of “lets thrive” has affected and completely restructured the organic relationship between farmers and nature and the Korean agricultural communities turned into market economies for profit making, thereby totally forgetting the thousand of years' wisdom and harmony.

Peasants started to abandon the traditional seed collection methods which were transferred to them thru generations and instead of practicing seed preservation resorted now to purchasing their seed requirements from seed companies and to the National Seed Council. Due to the farmers' dependence on seed companies, more money now is required and farmers with no available cash during the planting season can no longer plant. They have lost their traditional knowledge of preserving seeds and the use of indigenous seeds is no longer attractive to peasants who are mostly into commercial agriculture and farming.

Though there are still local seeds in every locality, most of the Korean farmers are not practicing seed preservation. Some of those who do are doing it for personal consumption. Korean women peasants are not free from the market-oriented agricultural system, so they experience difficulties in paying sufficient attention to their small beginnings in indigenous seeds cultivation. But since there is already a recognition that seed preservation can no longer be postponed for years because of its less profitability, KWPA has already embarked into some projects that would find ways to secure peasants' rights to seed savings, the right to sustain and develop plant genetic resources, and involve everyone in the course of action to protect bio and cultural diversity.

## **Methods of Seed Preservation/Conservation**

Korean peasants select and develop indigenous seeds according to regional characteristics. Indigenous seeds are resources that contain peasants' toil and culture and it is their heritage kept in harmony with the surrounding ecosystem. To a Korean peasant, protection of the indigenous does not only mean the protection and development of seeds, but it is also mean to materialize peasants' rights to continue, and share their cultural traditions and preserve the biodiversity that ultimately will redound to food sovereignty of the Korean people.

The Korean women peasants are still using the traditional methods in the gathering and selection of the good seeds. Theses seeds are later on sun dried or frozen to be used for the next planting season. Corn cobs are usually hung under the awning of the house or on top of the stove. Some seeds are preserved by freezing, especially during winter time. The dug holes in the ground and place the seeds inside plastic containers and bury it to be covered by snow later on. They removed it when spring comes and use it during the planting season. They also use bottle preservation but they do not use insecticide to help protect the seeds. Seeds are also kept inside wooden containers and place inside hay stacks.

Seeds preserve the traditional way can last for about seven (7) months but those that were frozen can last up to five to six (5-6) years.

Almost all seed requirements are purchased from the National Seed Banks, National Seed Council and from seed companies like Singenta, Monsanto, Seminis, Pioneer, Novartis, Takii, Limagrain etc... USA and Japan are the two top suppliers of seeds.

### **Efforts being initiated for the Protection of Native Seeds.**

Since there is already the recognition of the fundamental importance of the indigenous seeds for the protection of biodiversity and the traditional

knowledge of farming, and that indigenous organisms are the symbol of biodiversity and human beings can only survive only when indigenous organisms are preserved and this ultimately help in the continued supply of stable food, KWPA in 2006 embarked, organized and participated in the North-South Korea reunification vegetable garden project in 2006, and this year the project was selected as the central project to share indigenous seeds (maize breeds) nationally.

Also KWPA initiated a Seed Saving Plans in 2007 that would incorporate the following:

1. Conduct workshop on food sovereignty-the meaning of seed sovereignty.
2. Create an online network of consumers and producers who actively participate in the seed saving project.
3. Secure and share indigenous seeds. (all seeds that are self-obtained.
4. Share cultivation methods to care for the seeds. (KWPA national headquarter to distribute the first round of seeds.
5. Participate in the food sovereignty discussion during the week of Korea Social Forum-Presentation on sewed sovereignty and KWPA's seed saving project.
6. Organize a small festival with consumers. Display indigenous seeds, share them and experience traditional foodstuffs during the international forum on seed sovereignty.
7. Collaborate projects with regional communities to save seeds to be used for the following year and for the surplus seeds to be collected regionally.
8. Seeds sales to regional consumers.

There are also other organizations in Korea who are implementing diverse activities. One is the Urban Agriculture Committee who is designing programs to facilitate seed savings in cities. The Indigenous Seeds Studies Center, a non governmental organization is playing a critical role in seed preservation/protection being undertaken by the Agricultural Development Corporation. Sinlim Agricultural Association has developed a regional specialties product with indigenous grains. A consumer-based Anti-GMO

Citizens' Network was founded and the provincial government in Chulanamdo is implementing policies geared toward protecting indigenous agricultural products.

On top of the chemical fertilizers and the use of micro organisms for eco-farming, organic fertilizers made from rice hull, grass, hay, tea leaves and animal waste are also being used by the Korean farmers.

Since Korean farmers are dependent on the National Seed Council for their seed requirements, KWPA has no seed banks on their area of influence but the women peasant members of the association is practicing seed exchange. There are also women farmer rice breeders in their association which were able to develop a variety of rice adaptable to their locality.

It is notable to mention that the United States government had returned thirty four (34) breeds and 1,679 items of indigenous seeds (soy beans, red beans, sesames, chili peppers, cabbages) which were believed to have been extinguished in Korea during the war. Many are concerned though that companies and developers may claim exclusive rights over these returned seeds and use them for experimental purposes and developed new breeds, patented them and claim their rights over these indigenous seeds through the international agreements like the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), thereby disregarding the rights of the Korean peasants to seeds which in the first place rightfully belongs to them.

## **2. Northern Farmers Network (NFN)- Assembly of the Poor (Thailand)**

In Thailand, numerous farmers believed that seed varieties are heritage of ancestors, so they try hard to conserve this valuable heritage and descend to younger generations by continually growing them. There is a growing realization on the part of Thai farmers that seeds conservation is important not only for food security and food sovereignty, but also for life sovereignty since the loss of seeds is the loss of power to determine their lives.

Thai agricultural state policies are geared towards market orientation, both domestic and export markets, not only in rice but also in other agricultural products like corn being used for animal feeds, cassava, sugarcane and coffee. In the last twenty years, farmers from the North, Northeast and South of Thailand, because of the increasing threat of Thai state policies, have transformed their upland sustainable agriculture to cash crops for exports and market oriented and high productive seed varieties are promoted intensively in flat areas to replace native seeds which are suitable to local geo-cultural conditions.

Numerous native seeds have been conserved by upland farmers through traditional cultivations. In Karen communities, an ethnic minority in Northern Thailand, native varieties of rice, grains, vegetables, and herbs have been conserved with the use of rotational cultivation system. It is a belief in the community that their ancestors instructed them to grow at least 30 varieties every year, that's why seed conservation to them is a necessity for the continuation of their cultural heritage. Right now, each Karen community has more than 100 seeds varieties and other has as much as 300 native seeds and this diversity of varieties can be conserved as long as they can continue the rotational cultivation system.

Presently, Thailand has approximately 20,000 rice varieties in the seed bank but it is believed that there are more than this in peasants' farms since Thai farmers has experimented to breed rice varieties by themselves in order to regenerate characteristics of the variety they want. **Women peasants have a key role in purifying the varieties and in the regeneration using their own cultural techniques.**

### **Methods of Seed Preservation/Conservation**

There is recognition that Thai women farmers play an important role in the selection, purification, conservation, and protection of the local seeds which are considered delicate works that would bring food security for the immediate family and to the community.

Native seeds are propagated and produced based on its suitability to specific conditions. Women farmers collect the good seeds, sun dry it and later on wrap it in cloth and keep it in the kitchen. They believe that the smoke from wood fuel will protect the seeds from humidity, insects and diseases. Sometimes, they put wood ash and mix it with the seeds and later wrap it in paper or plastic and hang this on top of the stove. Pesticides or insecticides are not being used by Thai women farmer in seed preservation and under normal conditions, seeds would last from three (3) months up to one year.

In the preservation of seeds, each family has different varieties of seeds to conserve depending on the favors, spirits, and basic elements of their bodies. It is belief among Thai farmers that some kind of seeds can only be propagated by only one farmer and if there is a need for this particular variety then, other farmers can always borrow or exchange it with another variety. This type of seed exchange is being widely practice among neighbors and community members. Oftentimes, there are also seed exchanges of different varieties among relatives, friends and other ethnic minorities from distant communities.

### **Efforts being initiated for the Protection of Native Seeds.**

Assembly of the Poor (AOP) has seven (7) networks of grassroots' people, one of which is the Alternative Agricultural Network (AAN) which has worked intensively for the last five years for the conservation of native seeds by exploring and gathering of different varieties of local seeds by conducting activities such as regional forum for exchanging local seeds among peasants with varied cultures and ethnicities from different provinces of Thailand.

Right now AAN has collected about 130 rice varieties by using the sustainable agricultural system and promotes household consumption rather than for market use. The new pattern of land uses specifically the forest conservation policies of the Thai state has greatly affected the ethnic minorities and threatened the upland farmers who are practicing rotational cultivation and seed preservation. The **Northern Farmer Network (NFN)** who is also a member of Assembly of the Poor has been continually helping for the last ten

years, the northern Thai farmers and ethnic minorities in their struggle to keep their land, get access to forests and stop the eviction, practice rotational cultivation, and discourage the use of chemicals that can destroy many native seeds and in lieu, promote the traditional techniques of planting with the use of organic fertilizers.

Commercial agriculture is being aggressively promoted by the Thai government through upland development and conservation projects and in the last ten years, upland farmers have transformed the rotational cultivation to cash cropping and market oriented production wherein seeds are supplied by Transnational Corporations (TNC) like CP, Monsanto and other seed dealers selling seeds coming from Japan and China.

There is a growing clamor and the struggle continues against the conservation policies of the Thai state and a demand that state agencies and the public to respect the customary rights, cultural rights and human rights of the farmers and ethnic minorities. Also, the rights to continue to practice traditional cultivation get access to land and other natural resources are being pursued by NFN and AOP through the conduct of several activities and forging of alliances with other farmer organizations.

### **3. Federation of Indonesian Peasant Union (FSPI)- Indonesia**

*Padi Salek, Sawah Kanyut, Padih Puteh and Padi Sibur*, are native rice seed varieties that even the Soeharto Regime-Green Revolution was not able to terminate because the Indonesian farmers continued using because of its wide tolerance to drought and so much water. It has a tall stalk and dense leaves that prevent the growth of weeds. These paddy seeds are resilient like the Melati peasants who believed that the seeds are the inheritance of their ancestors. Despite the proliferation of hybrid seeds being promoted by the government to increase national rice production, the Indonesian farmers did not surrender and the struggle for seed conservation continued thru campaigns and formal and informal meetings to educate farmers about the importance of local seed conservation and the inherited farming system. Local



seeds conservation can be done thru cultivation and it has been proven that the use of *padi salek*, would result to a lower production cost which will redound to the farmers in the end since they will have bigger income. **FSPI** is very active in providing technical assistance and technology transfer thru the creation of demonstration plots/farms to be planted with different varieties of seeds in the village where the organization has influence, to find out which is the most adaptable, high yielding and pest and water resistant.

It is very clear that seed should be owned, managed and controlled by the peasants, but in Indonesia, seed is becoming the object of exploitation of the farmers because it is being controlled and managed by big agribusiness companies that have tie-up with Trans National Companies like Dupont, Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, Limagrain, Dow and Aventia, to generate profit to these multi-national corporations.

Farmers are slowly becoming a dying breed because their productivity is being sucked by these TNC. The promise of high yield using the hybrid seeds/varieties did not materialize and the farmers sunk deeper into debts because of the high cost of fertilizers and pesticides. In the study conducted by Federation of Indonesian Peasants Union (FSPI), 45.4 percent of the total capital of the farmers is being used to buy the hybrid seeds, pesticides and fertilizers.

The Indonesian governments in its effort to increase rice paddy production because of the threat of a food crisis imported the hybrid seeds and distribute it to the farmers, making them more and more dependent on these seeds. This policy is a clear threat to the seed sovereignty and biodiversity and if it won't stop, it can erase the local wisdom, the value of the inherited farming system that has been maintained by the peasants for so many generations.

### **Efforts being initiated for the Protection of Native Seeds.**

Because of the unabated hybrid seed importations, ten thousand (10,000) local paddy varieties have been lost but efforts to preserve the traditional

paddy seeds are still being practiced and the role of Indonesian women peasant's productive labor in the agricultural sector cannot be ignored. Indonesian women peasant is responsible not only to her farming family but also in the preservation/management of seeds. They are the ones who collect, select store and prepare the seeds for planting. The following steps are being followed in the Seed Preservation:

1. The paddy seeds that will be preserved can only be cut by *anai-anai* (traditional rice cutter) so the grains won't fracture.
2. The paddy is separated from the stalk using the feet.
- 3 The paddy grain should be sun dried.
4. The empty paddy grain is separated by shifting it in the wind.
5. The good paddy grain must be placed in a bag, kept in an isolated box/rice sacks and stored in a dry place for more or less six (6) months.

With regards to vegetables seed, most of preservation techniques entail sun drying. For maize and beans, the Indonesian peasant-women usually hang them on top of the stove. They also use bottle preservation and for chili seeds, they wrap it first in plastic while other seeds are wrap in paper or cloth. They do not use pesticide in there seed preservation.

Some vegetable seeds, like string beans, water melon and cucumber are being purchased by the farmers from seed stores imported from China, India, United States and Germany. The hybrid rice seeds are coming from China, while hybrid maize seeds are imported from India.

With the help of Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Program women-farmers are being trained as rice breeders and they are using organic fertilizers like Bokashi and compost. They have developed other rice varieties using the indigenous seeds which are adaptable to their locality. To propagate these new varieties, they are practicing seed exchange since there are very few seed banks. The struggle for seed sovereignty for Indonesian farmers is still long and hard but with the help of women-farmers, being considered as the protector of the seeds, nothing is impossible.



La Via Campesina delegation on international seed forum in Korea, September 2007



Korean Local rice