

State and local governments, held hostage by corporations seeking tax relief and subsidies, are strapped for funds to meet social program obligations, with much of the resulting slack taken up by already overworked women.

The same phenomena are infinitely more disastrous for women in the debtor nations on which the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have imposed Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) policies. SAPs demand that nations reduce their own economic planning in favor of a commodity-based, export-oriented economy and a "liberalization" that includes deep cuts in expenditures on social programs, the privatization of state-run industries and services, and increased labor flexibility.

When SAP policies result in recession, wage and job cuts most drastically affect women, for whom the "informal economy" is their last resort. Alicia Sepulveda, Foreign Secretary of the Mexican Telephone Workers Union, describes the "explosion in the number of street sellers, most of them women," with nearly a quarter of employed women earning less than the daily minimum wage of \$3.50. Women who migrate as domestic workers, caregivers, or farm workers are particularly vulnerable to sexual as well as financial exploitation.

Reduced social services add to women's responsibility for the functioning of their families and communities. Throughout the world women work more hours than men — the so-called double burden — but much of their labor is not reflected in official statistics; according to a recent United Nations Development Program's Human Index Report, women contribute \$11 trillion annually in unpaid "household work" to the global economy.

Most of the sweatshop workers in developing countries are women, who put in long hours for below minimum or living wages and receive no overtime pay, sick leave or medical benefits. Susan Tompson of the Colombia Justice and Peace Society says: "You can see it in Mexico, in Honduras, and in a number of other countries where women—particularly young women—are working in the maquiladoras, the factories that put together clothes or electronics. Because the country desperately needs export dollars, officials often turn a blind eye to the abuses suffered by the women in the factories."

Author, activist and researcher Vandana Shiva declared that "All domestic issues have been drawn into the global economy, bringing women into direct collision with global patriarchal institutions." Because patriarchal economic institutions are international, so must be people's movements to resist and replace systems that benefit a few at the expense of the majority of the world's populations. The quest for the rights and powers

of self-governance requires us to grapple with who we are as human beings. Do we really believe that power over others is so embedded in "human nature" that the best we can do is picket sweatshop owners, one by one, imploring them to respect voluntary codes of conduct? Or can we rise to the challenge of being self-determining, exercising authority over the institutions and policies that affect our lives?

Vandana Shiva points out that "For more than two centuries, patriarchal, eurocentric, and anthropocentric scientific discourse has treated women, other cultures, and other species as objects. Experts have been treated as the only legitimate knowers. For more than two decades, feminist movements, Third World and indigenous people's movements, and ecological and animal-rights movements have questioned this objectification and denial of subjecthood."

The late 20th century growth of a global feminist movement has brought women together in common cause. A widespread expression and tool of women's organizing is the Beijing Platform for Action, which, if examined plank by plank, is a solid indictment of corporate oppression and is a democratic agenda for people and their institutions of governance.

From village centers to U.N. forums, women's ideas, processes and relationships are important models for the world we seek to create. As African-American lesbian poet Audre Lorde put it, "You can't dismantle the master's house using the master's tools."

Molly, Virginia and Mary are members of the leadership team for Challenging Corporate Power, Asserting the People's Rights, one of U.S. WILPF's three current national campaigns. The first phase of the campaign has featured study groups that grapple with the corporate usurpation of our authority to govern ourselves. The study group packet has been used by some two dozen WILPF branches and by other organizations.

The second phase of the campaign is developing local campaigns. In March, a campaign design packet was sent to branches, study group convenors, and members of the Committee on Corporations, Trade & Democracy, which created this program. The packet, as well as the paper, "Gender and Global Corporatization," is available through the national office, and branches are encouraged to contact committee co-chairs Mary and Virginia for help in designing local campaigns directed toward putting human beings in charge of our communities and their institutions, contact (508) 398-7367; people@poclad.org.