

DOWN THE GREEN FEMINIST ROAD

Our Path to
Environmental
Peace



RESPECT OUR EXISTENCE
OR EXPECT RESISTANCE



The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) brings together people from around the world who are united in working for peace by nonviolent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.

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GLOSSARY

Environmental justice

is at the intersection of human rights, infrastructures and the possibilities for people to survive and prosper. Within International Human Rights Law there is potential to provide solutions for victims of environmental degradation and climate change, but this framework needs strengthening. Of the 17 principles of environmental justice, principle 5 succinctly states that environmental justice "affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples". A safe, clean and sustainable environment must be recognised as a universal fundamental right.

Feminism

is a critical perspective on social, economic and political life that draws attention to the ways in which human actions and ideas around gender create injustices. These injustices are experienced differently by different groups of women because of the way in which gender norms interplay with race, class, ethnicity, geography, immigrant status, age, sexuality, disability, nationality, and other power relations. Most importantly, feminism aims not only to understand the world and how it operates but rather to change it.

Indigenous peoples

is an umbrella term used to describe indigenous peoples as a collective. Indigenous peoples are indigenous in the sense that they are the original inhabitants of a geographical region before this was colonised. Indigenous peoples have distinctive social, cultural and economic systems strongly revolving around natural resources. Indigenous peoples are protected in international or national legislation as having a set of specific rights based on historical and cultural ties to a particular territory and their cultural and historical distinctiveness from other populations.

Militarism and militarisation

are the processes through which war becomes normalised within and across societies and states. Militarisation starts early with the socialisation of children and youth, especially boys and young men, with war toys, video games and a bravado attitude. Militarism is enabled by the drastically unequal distribution of resources and prestige between defence and military spending on the one hand, and peace education and intercultural literacy on the other. All these processes continually prepare societies for fighting wars and constructing threats and enemies.

Welcome to this JOURNEY

In times of uncertainty, people look to each other for comfort and reassurance that things will turn out fine. As we write this, reaching out to others has been made more difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic – a zoonotic disease that now threatens the global community.*

As political leaders have made little progress on international environment and peace agreements, it becomes evident that the work for a clean environment and sustainable peace requires a grassroots approach – sustainability built from the ground up.

It is imperative for women and girls to recognise and embrace their power and capacity as diplomats for peace. Peace diplomacy is very much at the forefront of environmental issues, especially as we witness the impacts of climate change on the Earth and in our communities. We all know too well the conflicts that arise from struggles over natural resources such as land and water, and the impacts of militarisation on human health and sustainability of communities.

There is currently an increase in authoritarian regimes, and international mechanisms and diplomacy channels are failing. Now, it is more important than ever for women to rise to the challenge and call for action. We must be effective and resilient agents of change, drawing on our collective experience and knowledge, adapting to the environmental challenges that affect women in very specific ways.

These lessons in mobilising go beyond simply meeting basic needs. It is about equitable participation in decision-making and leadership and expanding social and cultural boundaries.

The message is loud and clear:
If we want peace, we
must prepare for peace.

Principle 25 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) declares that peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. This principle is woven into the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in that establishing peace and inclusive institutions is essential for sustainability to occur at all.

As WILPF, we stand in honour and admiration of what women and girls do every day to advance peace and justice. We are honoured that many choose to do this as part of the WILPF movement. In this zine, you will find stories of hope, courage, and strength from women and girls on the frontlines of social change and political turmoil, mobilising for justice and building the foundations for peace. These women are you. They are us.

In solidarity,

Dawn Nelson

Convenor of WILPF's
Environment Working Group

Margrethe Kvam Tingstad

WILPF International
Vice-President

** Zoonotic diseases are diseases that normally exist in animals but can infect humans. These are made more likely by humankind's indifferent disregard for preservation of natural ecosystems and wilderness.*

nature gives

and we must give back!

In Afghanistan, decades of conflict have had an immense toll on the environment.

The collapse of local and national governance enabled the harmful extraction of resources without considering the impact this would have on people's welfare. Militias have used wood for fuel in their fighting and chopped down trees to avoid being ambushed. Illegal harvesting, as well as excessive grazing of animals, have come at the expense of sustaining forests and woodland resources.

Yet much of Afghan life relies heavily on timber to sustain existence. Up to 80% of people in Afghanistan depend on the land to live.

Cooking and heating are supported affordably and sustainably through wood, branches and bushes. Native pistachio and almond trees contribute to many families' economic livelihoods, but new trees and crops cannot flourish in environments of destruction. To support life in the long-term, we must look inwards at our own role in giving back to nature!

Up to 80% of people in Afghanistan depend on the land to live

Branching away from conflict

Thanks to efforts led by Afghan women, regrowth may foster roots of stability for generations to come!

Recognising the effects of militarism on the climate, local women, men, and youth were brought together by WILPF Afghanistan to start a nationwide tree-planting campaign. Ms. Toorpakai Momand, Director General of Female Education in Afghanistan's government, helped to connect the campaign with schools to get enough space for planting. She also reached out to women school teachers in Kabul to lead and monitor the process. Additionally, over 100 people received training on how to get others involved in tree-planting in their areas.

Together, important ties were forged from building awareness to taking action for the environment. As a result, over one million trees have been planted across the city of Kabul! Now 100 teachers, scholars, activists and youths are part of this initiative, and a manual on the environment, training materials, and brochures have been given out amongst the public of Kabul.

Women, men, and youth alike have been empowered to protect their environments and strengthen peace and stability in their communities. "A Tree for Green Afghanistan" provides an inspiring campaign of natural remedies embedding social and environmental progress into the core of Afghanistan.



LAND RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Agriculture is highly vulnerable to the fluctuations of the climate, and we need everyone involved in managing our response.

Out of all households in Burkina Faso, a huge 90% rely on agriculture for their livelihoods.

If women have ownership of their land, they also gain ownership of their lives!

Yet many women in Burkina Faso are still denied ownership of the lands that they care for. Women play an especially big role in market gardening, but must do this work alongside male relatives because only men are granted land ownership; a case-in-point of the patriarchy. Even though by law men and women have equal land rights, the practice prevents women from accessing these rights ... and worse still, many women are not told their rights in the first place.

Preventing women from exercising these rights means reducing our ability to address climate change together!

DID YOU KNOW?
Market gardening is a practice of dry season agriculture in Burkina Faso. By stimulating crop growth, this practice makes it possible to adjust to weather hazards and to guarantee the availability of food.

LANDING IT RIGHT ...

Members of WILPF Burkina Faso decided to address this issue. They teamed up with *Groupeement Mixte des Apprenants* – a local grassroots association – to build awareness in the rural community of Kyon.

"WE ARE DETERMINED TO CHANGE OUR SITUATION TO BETTER CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT."

Véronique Kanyala, women's representative from Groupeement Mixte des Apprenants

FIRST THE FACTS

Members of the community were invited to attend an open information session on the laws concerning land rights, as well as a session on women's contributions to food security. The leaders of the session managed to capture the attention of women and men, young and old!

THEN THE ACTION

A multipartite platform was set up – meaning everyone from traditional leaders to administrative authorities came to discuss the most prominent issues holding women in the community back from accessing land. By opening spaces for what might be difficult discussions to have, this was a step towards establishing an important dialogue.

UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES

UNDERSTANDING OUR PLANET

UNDERSTANDING OUR RIGHTS





WE ALL HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT WE
(CHOOSE TO TEACH TO FUTURE GENERATIONS
AS BEING "NORMAL".

Unfortunately, a culture of militarism is a prominent part of education in Italy and has therefore become a normalised part of life.

An agreement between the Ministries of Defence and Education allows the army to visit schools and promote their build-up of arms. High school students are also able to work in army stations. Infiltrating the minds of young people at an early age hides the harm that militarism inflicts ...

WILPF Italy's members thought it would be important to speak to schools in particularly militarised areas that have a higher risk of environmental destruction. Cities such as Livorno, Trieste and Palermo host nuclear equipment in their ports. This poses a radioactive threat at a local and global scale, but the Italian government shows little concern about the consequences.

We need to show the military institutions that sweet-talking their way out of their social and environmental responsibilities will not work with the thinkers of the future!



TEACHING LESSONS IN PEACE

WILPF Italy wanted to build on the following idea: How different would the world look if we taught young people to think critically about tools of violence?

Collaborating with schools, members of WILPF Italy held a series of workshops focused on helping teachers and students understand the links between climate change and militarism. They travelled all across Italy teaching lessons about thinking through the lens of peace.



Their journey

14-19 Jan 2019

In **Puglia**, over 1000 students from kindergarten, elementary, secondary and high school were all part of a peace education workshop. They got to hear about important ideas from women experts in the field of climate activism!

22 Feb 2019

In **Trieste**, 74 students and 5 teachers took part in a workshop to further build a culture of non-violence.

31 May 2019

In **Accadia**, students were inspired to march for peace.

Mar 2019

In **Livorno and Pisa**, the lessons of peace were taught to students of the arts, enrolled in schools for music, dance and other art forms. Let's get the artists involved in changing the culture!

And their journey continues at www.pacefemministainazione.org

Behind the scenes, WILPF Italy's honorary president Giovanna Pagani was meeting with everyone from official ministers to local activists in order to build the movement along the way.

We hope this will teach the military industry a lesson or two about the power of youth mobilised for peace!

Women Supporting Women

In the struggle for our rights, we are more than just individuals ...

Women in Kenya's rural and slum areas face multiple barriers to sustaining themselves and living comfortably. Gender inequality, including violence, stereotypes and attitudes towards women, poses a serious challenge to women's economic survival.

While facing a myriad of challenges, many women have found innovative ways to thrive in their environments. The key ingredient? **Community.**

The lack of stable income, for instance, has led communities of women, called **mama boma** in Swahili, to pool savings. Once a month, the women of the community give the money to a member among them who needs it the most.

Mama bomas stand as proof of the power in communities to find ways to improve economic and social livelihoods. But how can we make solutions more sustainable together?



Communities of Change

WILPF Kenya's *Mama Boma* project grew from this idea: Let's empower one another with informed tools of change!

Existing *bomas* of women from Nairobi's slums and rural areas gathered with peace activists from WILPF Kenya. They took part in training sessions on civic education, financial literacy and environmental sustainability. Through the community-building initiative, they considered how to use accessible resources within their reach in an environmentally conscious way for their own betterment.

Some women thought of banana trees growing nearby. Many parts of the trees were falling to the ground and going to waste. Instead, the branches could be used to make mats to be sold at local markets.

One of the women who had received training went on to organise earth-bag building workshops. These soil bags are made of the eco-friendly materials from which homes can be built, and sharing these solutions means sharing sustainable ways of living!

By building on each other's knowledge, filling gaps where needed and learning from one another, we are stronger. Indeed, change can often feel like a Do-It-Yourself project ... but taking a **Do-It-Together** approach takes us all even further.



CONNECTING GLOBAL ACTIONS TO THE LOCAL PICTURE

While we speak about impacts and initiatives in local contexts, we should not forget that on the global scale, countries from the global South are those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. These countries are most at risk of being affected by floods, droughts, poor air-quality, hunger and displacement.

Historically, extractivism has been carried out mostly by countries and companies from the global North for their own benefit. Environmental protections and human rights are being sidelined in the quest for profit. Through interacting with systems of racism, sexism and classism, already vulnerable communities are now having to bear the burden of climate change. We must put the knowledge and experiences of frontline communities at the centre of climate justice action!

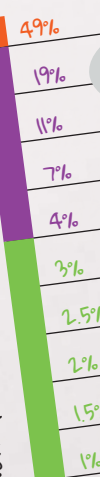
This is not a coincidence, but rather, the legacy of a global capitalist structure of domination. We witness this particularly through extractivism – meaning the extraction of natural resources for export into global markets. This includes deforestation and the extraction of fossil fuels and minerals, among other acts of ecocide.

FOR EXAMPLE

With rising sea levels and environmental disasters, what once were people's homes will soon become uninhabitable. More than 143 million people will become climate migrants – the majority of them currently living in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

Percentage of CO₂ emissions by world population

World population arranged by income (deciles)



Poorest 50% responsible for only around 10% of total lifestyle consumption emissions

Source: Oxfam

NO REFUGE FOR REFUGEES

In Lebanon, over 900,000 Syrian refugees have been forced to flee from civil war in their home country. While they embark on often life-threatening journeys in order to seek a place of refuge, too often their longing for shelter is unmet when arriving at refugee camps.

This is largely the case for two camps for Syrian refugees in Saadnayel. A small river that runs through the camps has become a dumping ground for everything from used diapers and debris to plastic bottles and animal carcasses. This transforms the camps into homes for bacteria and mosquitoes ... but what of the homes for refugees?

Moreover, both camps are run by a *shaweesh* – a person nominated to supervise the activities of the settlement. The *shaweesh* rules akin to a dictator, and most of the *shaweesh* in Lebanon's camps are men. Women are thus rendered powerless in making decisions about their lives and the environment they are living in.

We must step up our actions in environments that leave people disempowered!

It is hard to feel at home in an environment which rids you of choice



LENDING
AN EAR
OFFERING
A HAND

WILPF Lebanon's starting point was the creation of a safe community centre. By creating a functional space for workshops, women began to feel like they were finally being heard.

At these meetings, improved with newly-purchased technology, women could easily come together to address pressing issues in the community as a feminist collective. For many of them, this was the first time they had been able to come together to discuss their experiences, building new friendships along the way!

WILPF Lebanon supported the women's collective leadership in identifying two key challenges of living with dignity: education for their children and a clean living environment.

Because school is far away from the camp and some children had been out of school for several years, the project arranged for classes to be taught at the community centre, providing basic reading and writing skills. The children's enthusiasm was obvious, as they ran to show their notebooks full of writing when WILPF Lebanon's members returned to the camp.

The community centre also ran workshops on caring for the environment and stressed the importance of using designated bins, instead of dumping garbage and waste into the river. Offering a hand and lending an ear can improve lives far beyond what the eye can see ...

Socio-economic injustice is Syrian refugees' daily bread



RISKING **Lives** FOR THE **Environment**

Mexican soil has long been a contested site of struggle.

Due to abundant natural resources, the land has been exploited by groups both inside and outside of Mexico's borders. From illegal logging in protected forests to foreign mining and fracking, environmental injustice is far-reaching. Indigenous and rural persons who have cared for these natural environments for generations and rely on these lands for their survival, are being bulldozed out of their rights for the sake of profits but also for conservation efforts done without involving indigenous peoples in the decision-making process.

Indigenous peoples account for one sixth of Mexico's 127 million population

And what of the defenders of the land? Their lives are at risk as they stand in the face of corporate greed.

Many have seen their friends killed simply for putting forward the idea that our relationship with trees and animals shouldn't be characterised by exploitation. For indigenous and rural women, this risk is heightened. They face double the amount of violence from living in a region with the highest rate of femicides (women killed because of their gender) in the world.

We need to put an end to these cycles of violence!

While money and private interests are killing lives, nurturing nature and communities is key to our resistance.

Approaching the violation of indigenous and rural rights with solidarity, members of WILPF Mexico met with five indigenous women's organisations in the North-eastern and Mixteca Sierra of Puebla. The women came together to discuss environmental and socio-economic justice, through the lens of feminist peace in mind.

The room was buzzing with ideas, and this propelled WILPF Mexico to hold more meetings within the region. Indigenous community elders, young university students and other groups of women spoke on how to tackle issues which affected them all.



PLANT LIFE NOT DEATH

By the end of the project, the women's groups and youth who were part of the talks decided to put their ideas into action! In the municipality of Tuzamapan de Galeana, they organised a community fair on the construction of peace. Authorities from the community took part and each pledged to monitor and care for women's rights and promote actions against gender-based violence. As day turned into night, young people lit lanterns with their hopes for peace tied to them.

Ensuring we are safe in spaces of resistance and activism is just one step towards ensuring our existence ... and that of the planet!



THE GREENWASHING EFFECT

The lack of action towards the environment is rarely because people do not care. Rather, it is because we aren't told the truth.

Norway's Ministry of Defence has claimed to be concerned with environmental issues. They have planned more energy-efficient buildings, less flights for staff members travelling inland and even published an environmental report on the Norwegian Defence Sector. At surface-level, it would seem that things are getting better ... right?

Diving deeper, Åse Møller-Hansen from WILPF Bergen (Norway) discovered the military industry's practice of "greenwashing" and its destructive behaviours. For example, their measures do little towards stopping the nuclear submarines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

from plaguing Norway's

delicate fjords and underwater life with radiation. Commitments to environmental practices need to be a commitment the whole way through!

Åse's journey went from the bottom of Norwegian fjords to conferences, meetings and public events where she could expose the truth about the military's greenhouse gas emissions. From building papier mâché submarines to allying with grandmothers, her campaign to spread awareness highlights our need to engage creatively with all sectors of society to inspire action.

LET'S CONTINUE TO EXPOSE TRUTHS ABOUT THE MILITARY'S DAMAGE TO THE CLIMATE!

BUILDING COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

First came the research. Åse spent several months studying and preparing a working paper as a foundation for leaflets, presentations, a short book and an exhibition. She then spread this knowledge all across Norway and beyond.

FEBRUARY 2019

Travelling to Oslo, Åse attended Norway's annual conference "Bridge to the Future" which focuses on the climate emergency. There she distributed flyers on military greenhouse emissions.

MARCH 2019

Invited to speak at an event organised by WILPF Sweden in Gothenburg, Åse found herself extending her stay to exchange experiences, information and ways of working on the environmental costs of militarism with other women she met.

JULY 2019

Åse was a part of organising a peace symposium in Jondal, Norway. The WILPF branch in Bergen together with an artist, hosted a workshop on creating nuclear submarines out of papier mâché. The submarines were later displayed in a central bookstore to raise eyebrows and awareness!

AUGUST 2019

Åse travelled to the Arendal week in the south of Norway. This is an annual gathering during which members of government, political parties, companies and NGOs gather for political talks and lobbying.

WILPF Bergen shared a stand with the Norwegian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Grandmothers for Peace. Together, they passed out over 300 handouts and postcards about nuclear submarines endangering the Norwegian fjords.



PROTECTING WHO?



In "official" discussions around climate change, the impact of the military is rarely mentioned.

This holds true in Sweden, where some of the largest military operational exercises in the world are held. Beautiful natural landscapes have become contaminated by the instruments of war. These include NATO allies' aircrafts and marine vessels, which pollute the entire region around the Baltic Sea – a sea already contaminated to the point where it seriously affects ecosystems and wildlife.

However, all the carbon emissions from these multinational exercises go unchecked by regulations and the Swedish Defence Commission only plans to increase its military expenditure in the coming years. It is time for us to stop letting the military off the hook under the guise of "protection", and draw the curtains of lies back to reveal the grim realities.



Anita Wahlberg, Inger Gustavsson and Ingela Mårtensson initiated a project to ask these hard questions. Instead of grilling our planet, these women led the way in grilling those complicit with military institutions about their lack of concern for the environment.

Thirty-six different organisations, authorities, political parties in Parliament and the Swedish Armed Forces received the questionnaire. The line of questioning sought to expose glaring exceptions in environmental agreements which allow the military to discount and ignore the consequences of military activity, including weapons testing and large-scale training. Officials responded with vague justifications, dodged responsibility, or declined to answer at all ...

Who are we really protecting by not asking the hard questions about the military and the climate?

But we can speak truth to their silence and lies! Feminist peace organisations in Gothenburg who took part in planning the questions also gathered the responses and built on them to create a working paper on how military actions affect the environment. Their data and analysis can now be used to engage activists across Sweden – even Greta herself! – to get informed and take action.

Rather than building and training arms to fight for a presumed national defence, let us link our arms together in the struggle to defend our climate!

ANXIOUS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE PLANET?

Ready to
take action?
You are not
alone!

These pages have told the stories of women across the globe leading efforts to address the links between patriarchy, militarism and climate change. We hope you can draw inspiration from them about the myriad of ways in which you can help to tackle climate change.

Multiple sources of oppression – based on gender, ethnicity, geography, financial wealth, sexuality, and disability among other factors – work alongside one another and affect how we will feel the impacts of climate change.

Any actions we take for the climate therefore need to be led by frontline communities. This means giving centre stage to the voices of indigenous and rural women and youth. This means prioritising the solutions proposed by local communities in the global South. This means making international climate change events representative of the world, and not just filled with policymakers from the global North. This means listening and working together in a meaningful way.

So ... what can you do?

Raise awareness

Inform the people around you and discuss climate change in a meaningful way!

Build alliances

Find others that share your views and connect across movements. Use your collective power for influence!

Analyse

Engage in thinking critically on the links between climate change, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, neoliberal globalism, and militarism.

Connect local to global

Bring local realities to global discussions and hold states accountable for promises made in international spaces.

Advocate

Organise and campaign for change - whether that means speaking to community leaders, striking with indigenous folks or lobbying with civil society for changes to law, policies and norms.

Support others

If you are in a position to do so, support and invest into sustainable and equitable initiatives for climate justice and peace.

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READY TO TAKE ACTION FOR A BETTER FUTURE? YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

The negative environmental effects of capitalism and militarism are all around us.

Tired of seeing the environmental degradation in their surroundings, feminist activists all over the world are organising and taking the lead for change. By raising their voices, they inspire others to support the call for a clean environment and sustainable peace.

This zine is a collection of some of these stories of change. But this journey requires all of us. Together we can take steps forward on the path towards environmental peace.

Join US

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

