



**Chairperson, Annette Costigan,  
Writes about the launching  
of the  
Women's Issues Group in Comhlámh**

Women's Liberation, Feminism, call it what you like, (I prefer justice myself) has, at some level, permeated all strata of society in Ireland — whether it is equal pay for equal work, the equal rights amendment, equal access to pubs and pints, access to contraceptives or £9.60 transfer earnings for being a housewife. So it really comes as no surprise to hear that the Women's Issues Group was formed at Glencree Reconciliation Centre on 17th October 1981 — the result of the workshop entitled "Women in Development — Comhlámh's Stand?"

Many people within Comhlámh felt that there was a need to study and highlight the amount of work done by woman in the Third World — and attendance at the Debate, "Women's Rights — the Same the World Over?", the number of people that sat in on the Women's Issues Workshop at Glencree (it had the second largest attendance next to the White Paper Workshop) and the number of people who have become actively involved in the Women's Issues Group since October, are all indicators of the high level of interest in this area.

What are the issues which the group wishes to highlight? We wish to highlight the amount of work done by women in the Third World — and her lack of return in relation to this work, her lack of access to education, her special health problems, her low status in spite of the contribution she makes to the home, family and the economy. We wish to highlight woman's double oppression in the developing world, that of traditional as well as colonial society. We wish to highlight development programmes which have failed, and continue to fail, because of failure by development planners to recognise women in developing countries as farmers.

Woman in the South carries the primary burden of childbearing/minding, housework, cooking, fetching of water and fuel, subsistence agriculture (weeding, manuring, harvesting, winnowing, shelling and storing of crops) and marketing, to mention but a few of her tasks. Yet woman is regarded as inferior, is bought, sold, often mutilated, is often illiterate (60% of the world's illiterates are women) and receives little or no recognition for work done (invisible labour). She is also overlooked in Development Programmes (women farmers? You must be joking — farmers' wives perhaps).

We in the Women's Issues Group see true development as that which seeks to give women more control over their situation in terms of education, health and earned incomes. Until women gain this control, the South will never develop as well, as rapidly, or indeed as equitably as it should. Women's Issues are a separate but integral part of development. We invite anyone to dispute this, we invite contributions from all interested parties on any aspect of Women in Development, and we would greatly welcome new members to our group.

I would like to emphasise that we are a Group on Women's Issues, and not a Women's Group on Women's Issues. In other words, membership of the group is not confined to females, although, so far, only females have actively participated in WIG. An outline of the aims and objectives of the group and further information is available from The Secretary, Comhlámh Women's Issues Group, Comhlámh, 4 — 5 Eustace St., Dublin 2. Meetings are held fortnightly at the Comhlámh Office.

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