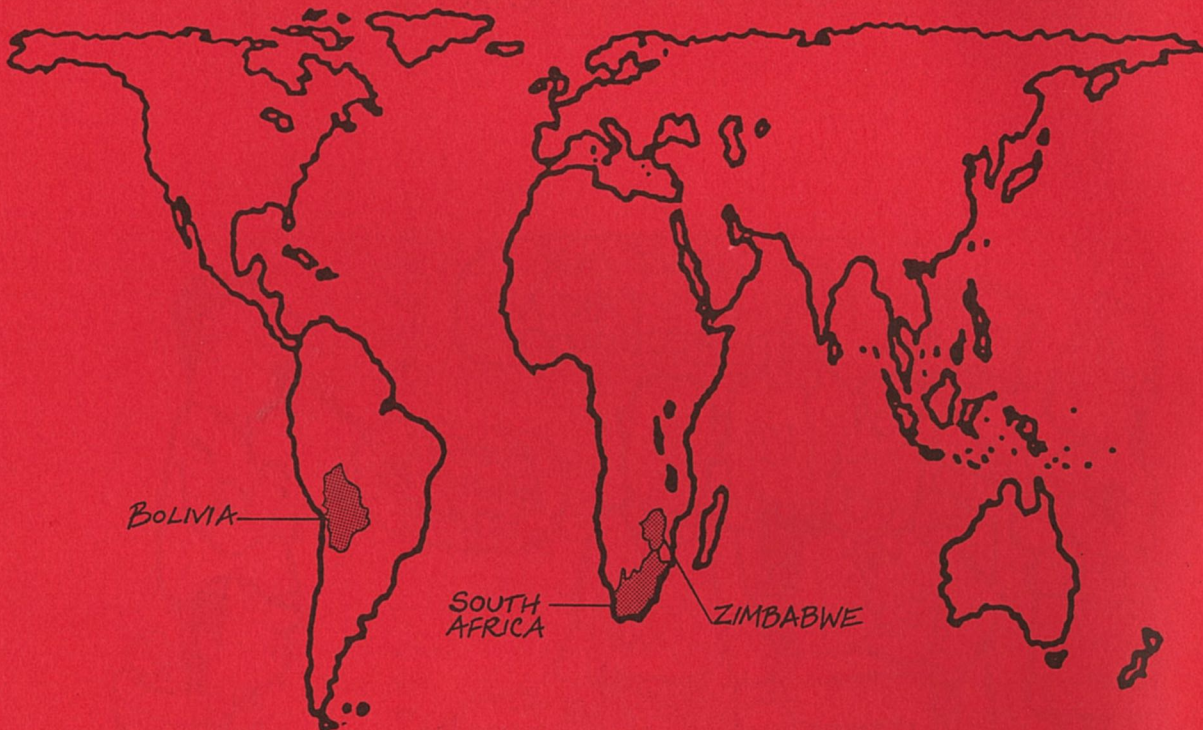




Women Working Together



This booklet is one in a series of eight. Together they make up a women's kit. Each booklet is made up of material about women's lives from the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and England. The themes of the booklets are:

Women's Days
Childcare
Health
Housework

Finding Paid Work
Working Conditions
Violence in the Home
Women Working Together

The kit is intended for use by women in English as a Second Language classes, literacy groups and other women's groups. We hope the kit will help women to get together to think and talk about their lives.

The following women put together the kit: Gwen Davies, Amy Gottlieb, Jenny Horsman, Linzi Manicom. With help from: Rachel Epstein, Maureen Simpkins and Lynda Yanz.

Produced: June 1987 ISBN: 0-920907-22-9

Cover graphic from: Women have a way, Gregoria Apaza Women's Centre, Bolivia

In all the books in this kit there are stories from women who are talking together and supporting one another. As women work together they find ways to make changes.

This book shows what some women from Boliva, Zimbabwe and South Africa think about organizing classes for literacy and popular education. They are working to make conditions better.

Some women from Bolivia talk about it this way.

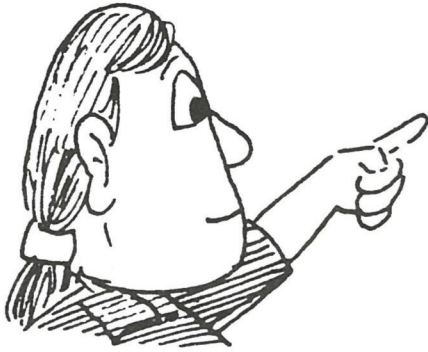
From: Women have a way, Gregoria Apaza Women's Centre, Bolivia

What do we women want
to get organized for?

To share our common experiences.



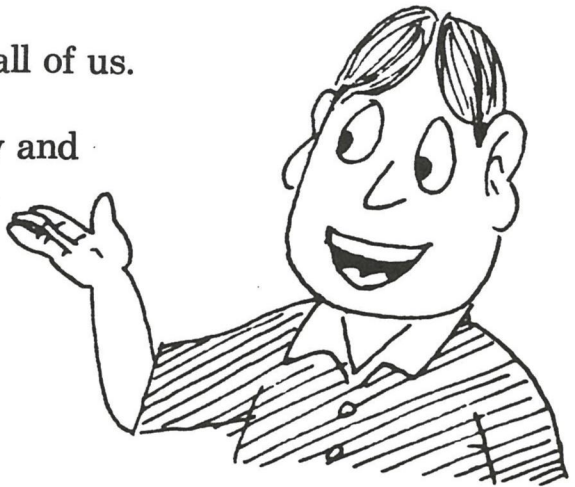
Together to find out how
we are all controlled by others.



To learn more about our selves
and our lives, and how to
share what we learn.

To find answers that help all of us.

To help us understand how and
why our society works the
way it does.



Women often do not speak in a group where there are men and women together. When women do speak men often do not listen to them. This story was written to help women in Zimbabwe think about this problem. The women act out the story and then use the questions to discuss how to solve the problem.

From: Women's Problems, Zimbabwe Publishing House



Story to Act

Mai Mubaiwa, Mai Gombo and Mai Moyo go to a parents' meeting at the village school. A parents' committee is elected. All those elected are men. The parents discuss the need for new classrooms. The three mothers have a lot of ideas as they have already helped to build one classroom, and they are keen to improve the school. But they are too shy to speak in front of the men.

After the meeting the women feel frustrated as they weren't given a chance to speak. They don't think the committee will do its job well, because the men elected are clever talkers but lazy when it comes to work. The women wonder why men always decide everything.

Discuss Together

1. What did you see happening in the play?
2. Why didn't the women speak at the meeting?
3. Have you had similar experiences at meetings?
4. Why are women often shy and afraid to talk in front of men?
5. How can we help women to be confident enough to become decision-makers?

"Mai" means mother which is a polite way of talking to a woman.

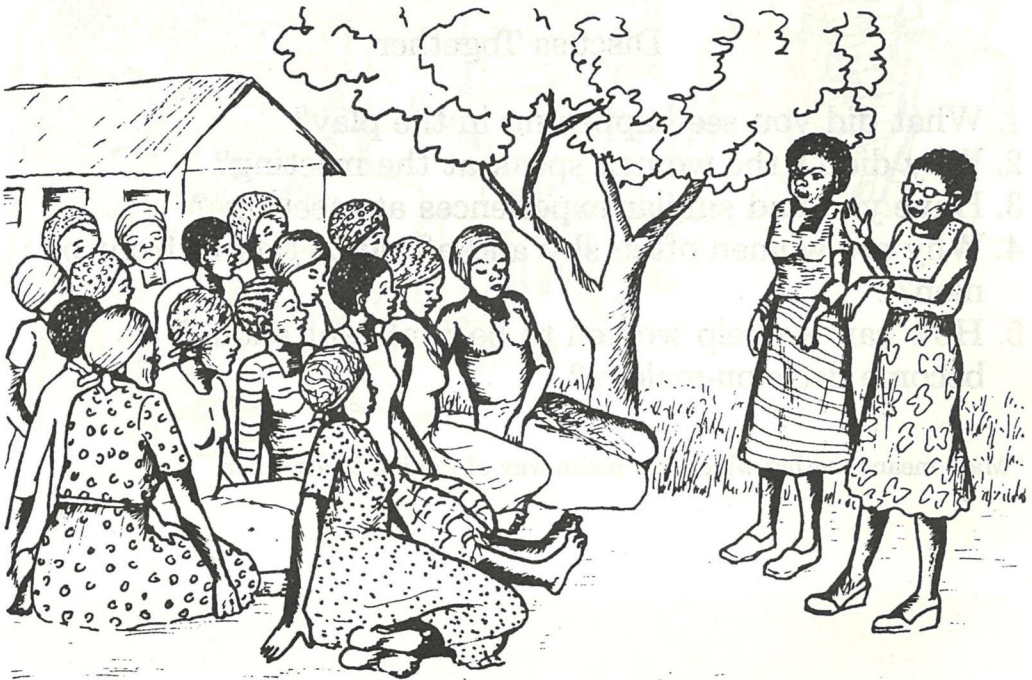
Working together is not always easy. We have to learn ways of sharing the work and deciding together what to do.

Women's groups in Zimbabwe act out the story and use the questions to help them discuss the problems.

From: Women's Problems, Zimbabwe Publishing House

Story to Act

Mai Mubaiwa, Mai Gombo and Chiute decide that they need to discuss their problems with other women. They ask Mai Moyo if they can discuss these problems at women's group meetings. Mai Moyo agrees, but she tells them the women's group itself is having difficulties. At meetings the



shopkeeper's wife, Mai Geza and the headmaster's wife Mai Dziva decide everything. Other group members don't get much time to speak. They just have to follow their leaders. Also although the women's group has started some projects, none of them have succeeded. So now they have stopped doing projects and they are just doing the same things they have done for the last ten years: sewing, cooking, handcrafts, childcare, nutrition, singing and netball.

Mai Moyo says that although the women's group is having difficulties, her friends should come and discuss their problems with other women. Perhaps together they could improve the women's group.

Discuss Together

1. What did you notice about the women's group in the play?
2. Why wasn't it working well?
3. Do women's groups in your area have similar problems?
4. a) Are there different women's groups in your district?
b) What are the main aims and activities of these groups?
c) What are the differences and similarities of these groups?
d) Would it be possible for them to work together more?
5. What is preventing women's groups from being as strong as they could be?
6. How can we together improve our women's groups so that they can really solve our problems?

When women have the same problem they are stronger if they work together. This story from South Africa shows what can happen when they do.

Discuss Together

1. What did you notice about the women's group in the play?
2. Why wasn't it working well?
3. Do women's groups in your area have a similar problem?
4. a. Are there different women's groups in your district?
b) What are the main aims and activities of these groups?
c) What are the differences and similarities of these groups?
- 4) Would it be possible for them to work together more?
5. What is preventing women's groups from being as strong as they could be?
6. How can we together improve our women's groups so that they can really solve our problems?

From: SPEAK, South Africa

A Protest About School

In December 1977, a note came home with the children of Unit 5 in Chatsworth*. It said the children must go to a new school in New Haven. The new school was a long walk. It was too far for small or sickly children.

The mothers were angry. They came to the school alone. When they got there, they found other angry mothers. The mothers decided to work together. They decided to sit in at the school until they could talk to Mr. Krog, the Director of Indian Education.



*Chatsworth is a township for Indian people outside the city of Durban in South Africa.



One woman lost her factory job for taking time off. But the mothers were not afraid. They were fighting for their children.

Here, in their own words, is the story of how these women worked together.

During the week of the protest, about thirty to forty of us also met in the evenings to decide what to do. We had started off by each fighting on our own. But our struggle had become a united one. We were fighting together for the rights of all our children. So now we needed to plan together what we were going to do and say. After a few days some people from Croftdene Residents' Association, the community organization in our area, came and joined our meetings. They gave us support and helped us to plan our action. For example, we discussed how we should talk to



the Principal. We decided that soft politeness would get us nowhere — we needed to be very angry and force these people to answer our demands. At these evening meetings we also learnt a lot about organization. We each had a turn at being Chairperson at the meeting. This gave people encouragement and practise in talking in large groups. That helped us to get more confidence.

We were demanding to see the people responsible for this reasoning. We didn't pay much attention to the inspector who came to see us because we wanted to see Mr Krog. As Mr Krog didn't come to see us, we went to see him!

We chose four parents to see Mr Krog. They went to demand the immediate return to Astra of all those children who lived closer to it than New Haven. This delegation was asked to name these children. So, the names of the ten most urgent cases were given, mostly the sickly or very

small children. These children were then returned to Astra immediately. You see we hadn't been afraid to speak out because we were so angry and concerned about our children.

On the Monday of the second week we could all relax. We heard that all the children from the lower classes were allowed to return to Astra. Through our determination to fight hard together we had won our demand!

Many of us joined Croftdene Residents' Association after this because although we had won one battle, there were still many problems in our area that we needed to do something about. But now we knew that together we could win.



Women in many countries in the world celebrate International Women's Day. It is a day to support each other in the many struggles of women to end injustice.

In communities across Canada women celebrate International Women's Day. In Toronto women have demanded jobs, equal pay, better working conditions, housing, native rights, lesbian rights, the right to choose whether to have children.... Native women, women of colour and white women have been working together to demand an end to racism.



Women in South Africa write about the history of International Women's Day and why they remember the day:

From: SPEAK, South Africa

The eighth of March is International Women's Day. It is a day when women all over the world remember their common struggles, needs and hopes — and also learn from each other and support each other in their struggles. The very first International Women's Day started from a strike of women workers in Chicago, U.S.A. in 1909. Some years later women from many countries held an International conference. The conference was to talk about what they could do to achieve women's rights. It is in this spirit that on International Women's Day we strengthen ourselves for our fight for jobs for all, for decent housing, lower food prices, an end to unfair treatment of women.





**INTERNATIONAL
WOMENS DAY
8 MARCH**



Poster
by
Nadia

THANK YOU

Thank you to the many Third World groups who sent us material to use in the kit. Thanks also to the Writer's Voice group and Sally McBeth at East End Literacy; to learners, tutors and students at Parkdale Project Read and ALFA Centre; to English as a Second Language teachers: Pramila Aggarwal, Gay Bell, Nomi Wall, Brenda Duncombe and Maureen Hynes; and shelter worker, Susan Goodfellow, who all gave us feedback on the kit and helped us to improve it.

We would also like to thank CIDA, Public Participation Program for financial support.

ABOUT US

The Participatory Research Group (PRG) is a collective of activists, educators and researchers working for social change. Since 1976 we have produced a range of materials, including booklets, bibliographies and slide shows. We also produce a bi-annual newsletter, organize workshops and conferences and have a resource centre for public use. We work with literacy, women's and community groups, labour and native people.

The International Council for Adult Education, Women's Program is presently coordinated from the office of the Participatory Research Group, in consultation with representatives from various regions.

The Women's Program works with individuals and groups in different regions of the world who are exploring and developing popular forms of education which reflect and address women's issues. Our aim is to contribute to the development of a feminist popular education that makes connections between broad social struggles, and the personal issues and oppression women face daily.

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