



13TH AWID INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Feminist Futures: Building Collective Power for Rights and Justice

Costa do Saúpe, Bahia - Brazil • 8-11 Sept. 2016

At the 13th AWID Forum in Brazil, WIDE+ took part with a workshop „Revisiting our strategies for reclaiming a social, gender just, democratic and peaceful Europe“. The session was prepared by Christa Wichterich, Kinga Lohmann and Jelena Lenggenhager.

Our session

The goal of our session was to gain new insights and ideas on feminist strategies in responding to the multiple crises escalating in Europe – crises linked to democracy, migration, transnational economic agreements, austerity, and more - and to discuss how to embed the strategies in global alliances. Our input concentrated on 2 thematic parts: part 1 dealt with the threat to democracy and women human rights, and how civil society and women mobilization can respond to these challenges, while part 2 looked into European policy crisis related to current waves of refugees and its impacts and challenges for feminists.

Our workshop was attended by 10 participants from mainly European countries. The discussion was lively and centred around the following points: the need to raise feminist voices to deal with roots of migration and its interlinkages with economic injustices (« where are feminists at TTIP&Co. negotiation tables? »), as well with global European policies - foreign relations, development, economic, and postcolonial discourses and practices. Further points raised were the need for a gender-sensitive European migration policy of participation and inclusion that will give voice and political and economic participation space to migrants, based on partnership and respect.

Together with concerns raised by all about the fierce backlash of conservative forces in all parts of Europe and beyond, it was strongly stressed that feminists should get political, much more than we are now. It was recognized that rightwing political parties often mobilize and manipulate voters through simple and simplified messages, and there was an intensive discussion on what kind of ‘simple messages’ feminists could try to mobilize with (such as «get political », « feminist solidarity beyond borders », « they are here cos we were there » etc).

Forum focus themes

We felt that the following aspects were some of the dominant in the discussions and impressions of the Forum:

- back lash against women's rights almost everywhere in the world; situation of women refugees and migrants, including internally displaced in the Middle East, Africa and the regions of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan; increasing militarization and securitization; need to challenge an enormous rise of corporate power and private capital concentration in the hands of few .

There was a strong representation of vulnerable social groups' movements at the Forum, such as transgender and intersex, disabled women and black feminists movements, highlighting their firm alliance with feminist movements and our common struggle for human and women's rights.

We took back home numerous impulses for concrete goals in WIDE+ network and for feminist action in our home countries, for example:

- to strengthen battle against violence on women, incl effective implementation of CEDAW
- to ensure respect of rights of women refugees and migrants, join the human rights based campaigns on migration and make visible the roots and causes of migration.
- to engage in actions to curb securitization and militarization in our countries, and disclose their patriarchal, colonial and profit-oriented discourse and goals.
- to challenge corporate power: raise feminist voices against it and join other forces that work on this task (for example through treaty alliance), as well as demand respect for women's' human rights on all fronts (esp. human right over investors rights).

Contacts

Networking was an important part of our participation at the AWID Forum. It was also an opportunity to make WIDE+ visible (e.g. spreading information about WIDE+/EWL conference in October) at this global feminist gathering with more than 1800 participants from 130 countries. .

We also met representatives of donors community: the Oak Foundation and the Global Fund for Women. The meeting with the OAK Foundation seems to be promising. The Director of women's programme confirmed the foundation's interest to consider the possibility of funding WIDE+ within one of its priorities and stressed that women's movement building would be the most relevant point for WIDE+'s application.

Moreover, we joined a meeting organized by AWID on economic literacy, with regional feminist networks experienced in economics programmes for women, in order to develop a joint programme for feminist capacity building in economic related themes e.g. to strengthen rights of women workers , or to curb corporate power.

Inspiration

Participation in the feminist global forum brought us closer to the current trends of the feminist global debate. The most valuable gift we are taking with us from Brazil is the overwhelming positive energy, and the power of women from all over the world that will provide a lasting inspiration and a powerful impulse for our engagement with WIDE+.

