



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RURAL ADULT CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS

# VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

2007/02 N° 86

## SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

PÉRIODIQUE TRIMESTRIEL 2007/2 • BUREAU DÉPÔT 5330 ASSESSE • IMPRIMÉ À TARIF RÉDUIT • P505253

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BBRUBEBB

**Mise en page:**  
FIMARC aisbl

**Photos & Dessins:**  
FIMARC aisbl  
sauf mention spéciale

**Abonnement:**  
15,00 €/an

**Parution:**  
27<sup>e</sup> année

**Impression:**  
IMPRIBEAU  
Beauplateau 1  
6680 SAINTE-ODE  
BELGIQUE  
www.impribEAU.be

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*Coverpage: Integrated Culture  
Uganda, February 2007*

Periodical published by FIMARC in 4 languages which  
highlights the rural world's life and activities of the member  
Movements belonging or not to to Federation.

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*Australia, region of Melbourne, January 2007*

*Over the past few years, food sovereignty has been often touched upon, as well as the necessary good governance to change the existing system for this project to come true. Faced with market economy becoming global, dismantling ever more millions of people's lives and the environment, the time has come for action.*

*Real food sovereignty can only exist unless real economic and financial sovereignty are there. Changing only a few things to reach sovereignty cannot be imagined in a system which is completely unsuitable for sovereignty itself. In order to reach food sovereignty, a dramatic shift is necessary and our own sovereignty needs to be built right now because sovereignty is the 'right for action'...*

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*Our submission is to change capitalist neo-liberal economy into solidarity economy: a system that stems from culture, respect for human dignity and nature, based on life universality, its values of peace, brotherly love, solidarity, based on ethical and moral values, while respecting every population's culture, faith and religion.*

*This VRW dossier will deal with this issue. Millions of projects and achievements in solidarity exchanges are taking shape around the world. They are rooted in the territories, supported by the grassroots. These initiatives often arise to offset the shortcomings that the existing system created. But these experiences remain isolated, and if they are spread they tend to shift to the existing system. The challenge ahead is to structure, develop solidarity economy system, and comparing it to food sovereignty.*

*Under the heading 'Actions of the Movements', some of these solidarity economy experiences can be found, and they tend to be set up, to develop a structure and become true political projects. The interview is devoted to Andrea Tronchin, from Italy, who participates in his region, his country in the structuring of a solidarity economy network which aims at proving that this system consisting of doing economy 'differently' is indeed possible.*

*In the next VRW issues solidarity economy aspects will be further deepened, with a fair trade, micro-credit and social businesses analysis and it will be probably needed to tackle notions such as decrease, parallel currencies... A major project is on the go, it is up to us to believe in it and to join forces so that solidarity economy is not a project by default to compensate for capitalist economy shortfalls, but rather, little by little, a reality.*

*Enjoy this VRW issue reading and feel free to contact us, to contribute to this review which is yours.*

*Daisy Herman  
Secretary General*



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## Action of the Movements

### Zambia

CARAM groups in Zambia organize awareness-raising meetings around the concept of good governance and its implementation. Bribery issues, imposed governance by international organizations in Zambia do not really enable the population to develop.

Farmers are subject to prices laid down by the government and buyers who are much more powerful than small farmers. CARAM action is about raising awareness and educating groups so that they can try to directly negotiate with political representatives in their country.



*Regional meeting of English speaking countries of Africa,  
Kenya, January 2007*



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## Senegal

The 'Association Sénégalaise de Producteurs de Semences Paysannes' (ASPSP – Senegalese Association of Farming Seeds Producers) organized at the end of March 2007 a fair on traditional farming seeds in the village of Djimini, in the region of Upper Casamance. 19 farmers' organizations presented about thirty traditional rice varieties: several traditional millet, sorghum, maize, acha varieties, as well as a great diversity of market garden species, any color tomatoes, many sweet and sour eggplants, different gourds... Producers could then rediscover traditional varieties that had disappeared from their area. One of the objectives of ASPSP is to contribute to farmers' seeds autonomy, through traditional varieties conservation, for food safety and sovereignty.



## Central African Republic

The 'Mouvement des Foyers Chrétiens de Centrafrique' (Central African Movement of Christian Homes) celebrated from April 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> the Golden Jubilee of the movement. This movement which has been existing for 50 years now first and foremost works on autonomy, self-care and good governance. These principles are implemented within its team since the Jubilee and the national session were an opportunity to renew national Bureau members as well as the Women's National Coordination members.

## Argentina

Intensive soy production causes substantial damage in Argentina. Last April, in the province of Santa Fe, downpours flooded 60 thousand hectares of land during one week, equivalent to 3 months of rains. These floods made it very difficult to live in the country, as well as in the surrounding areas of major towns where populations have no social security coverage. On top of this environmental damage, cancers are continuously increasing because of the agrochemicals necessary for this crop.



*El Salvador, April 2007*

## **El Salvador**

On its website presentation section, Caritas El Salvador talks about solidarity that changes. In this solidarity effort for change, Caritas is about to publish an educational document for farmers, which deals with fair trade and solidarity economy. The group organized very recently a 'regional fair on fair trade, solidarity economy and seeds exchange' to which about 800 producers attended.

## **Bolivia**

On April 29<sup>th</sup> 2007 Bolivia, Venezuela and Nicaragua announced their decision to withdraw from CIRD (International Centre for Investments Dispute Settlement). They declared that they withdrew from CIRD in order to 'safeguard countries sovereign right to settle foreign investment on their national territories'. They explained that multinational companies were using CIRD after having dismantled the structure of 'constitutional rules, national acts, contract obligations, environmental regulations and resolutions on labour law'.

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## **Thailand**

### **South Korea**

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> American and Korean governments signed a free trade agreement between both countries. This agreement gave rise to criticism in South Korea, notably amongst farmers who fear that they would lose their economic livelihoods if borders are opened to American rice. According to a report from the Korean Rural Economy Institute the large-scale arrival of agricultural products coming from the United States would lead up to 130,000 jobs shed in this sector. Furthermore even if the agreement is not related to beef, both parties acknowledge that American members of Parliament will block it as long as Korea's embargo on beef is not abandoned. At the beginning of April, about 6.000 people demonstrated in Seoul to ask the Parliament to reject the agreement. In May, a delegation made up of thirty or so Korean farmers was present in Paris for the 75<sup>th</sup> session of the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) to try to keep on blocking beef imports to South Korea.

From February 27<sup>th</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup>, Naiyana Vichitporn and her colleague Nanthaporn Bunprasom participated in the Pan Asian Conference on the right to seeds, organized in Bali, Indonesia. 30 people coming from 10 countries took part in this programme which took stock of the general situation in agriculture, food sovereignty and saving seeds in the different countries. The next conference should be in Thailand, next July.

### **Nepal**

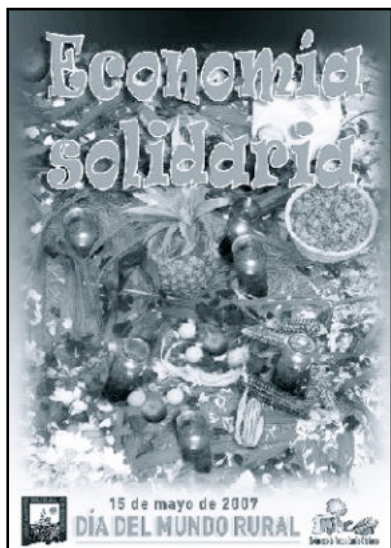
2006 will be a red letter year for rural people in Nepal. After many demonstrations asking for radical changes, the summer coincided with the end of the monarchy's uncontrollable power, Parliament restoration and Maoists' decision to stop the armed conflict. In this climate of restored peace, Caritas Nepal and NGOs around it could implement the IPM plan (Integrated Pest Management). This training programme to organic agriculture and natural insects and diseases management enabled farmers to improve their production and then to improve their food safety.





## France

In the last VRW issue, rural dwelling-related problems in Belgium were touched on. Today CMR France is looking into this issue and will focus on it during its 'holiday training' session held from August 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>. Inhabiting is not only about having a home of one's own. It is also a way of life, about being broadly part of a human environment, a territory, wondering about the environmental impact of our choices... living on solidarity...



## Switzerland

Those who struggle might lose; those who do not struggle have already lost it all. In the light of this maxim, ACAR members in Switzerland struggle at their level to defend farmers' agriculture, by allying themselves to the farmers' trade union Uniterre, by setting up direct sales centres for country products or by raising awareness amongst members on fair trade products such as coffee or cocoa.

## Spain

Last May 15<sup>th</sup>, MRC movement in Spain organized the 'Rural World Day' around solidarity economy. The movement finds its way around in the slogan 'another world is possible', and does not make do with joining protest movement, but looks for alternatives. Talking today about another economy means thinking and creating economic alternatives, being on the way to social commitment, developing our own imagination and counting on our greatest alternative: hope.

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## **The Solidarity economy in 7 points**

At the international seminar MIJARC-FIMARC, held in Belgium, in May 2007, participants, after analyzing several solidarity economy achievements agreed on 7 reference criteria to define what solidarity economy is:

- Service to people and /or to community
- Management autonomy
- Democracy and participation
- People and people's work primacy over the capital
- Local development
- Education, training and awareness raising
- Focus on fairness, future generations and the environment.



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# Another economic system, solidarity economy

*Is another economy possible today, other than the predominant one, the liberal and capitalistic economy? Millions of solidarity exchange projects and achievements are taking shape all around the world. They are deeply rooted in their territories, supported by the grassroots. But can they serve as a viable alternative to current capitalism?*

*In the face of our planet's destruction, given the fact that liberal economy 'sucks up to the last drop of our blood', to use Filemón's expression, a farmer from Mexico, can rural people implement another economy, called solidarity economy, to meet their needs and enable them to live a dignified life? Food sovereignty is a concept that FIMARC has been developing for many years. How can it be included in solidarity economy, for rural people's and future generations' sake? The following pages offer a first approach to this reality of solidarity economy.*

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## UNEQUAL WORLD

We live in a world with a blatant paradox: rich countries have never been so rich; societies have never been so unequal. In Europe, just to take an example from this continent, thousands of millions of men and women experience poverty and marginality. A vast majority of populations in poor countries – amongst which rural people – live in precarious situations, very often survival. To get out of these ruts, new avenues must be explored, those of solidarity economy.

### **Can everything be dependent on financial profit?**

Liberal economy, indeed, leads to unequal development, which brings increasing impoverishment around the world. Nearly 70% of Southern countries' population and increasing sections of rich countries' population are strongly marginalized. The solidarity economy movement started from this fact: the liberal economic system does not meet the essential needs of populations, in particular the most disadvantaged ones.



*Marie Caroline Collard (SAW-Be) and Laurent Mortreuil (UNIAPAC)  
Resource persons at the Brussels Seminar, May 2007*



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Liberal economy frees itself from any social constraint. More must be produced, to make more profit, to the detriment of people and human communities. It produces wealth in impressing quantities, unequally distributed, to the advantage of a minority of the world's population. It generates precariousness, insecurity and exclusion for people and entire human communities. Decisions are made in the name of financial requirements. And hence men and women's future, jobs, income, role in the city, depend on financial decisions: profit above all.



*Slum in Nairobi, Kenya, January 2007*

### **Human beings as a priority**

In this context, millions of families have put in place alternative economic activities. These are the result of a wealth of ideas and individual and collective initiatives, to survive and increase income. For example, in one of the shanty towns around Nairobi, Kenya, young people got organized to collect household waste and refuse in their neighbourhood; they bring it to the landfill, where they sort it and keep anything saleable; consequence: their neighbourhood is cleaner and healthier, and young people have a small income. This initiative does not meet all challenges for this shanty town's dwellers. But it gives an opportunity to young people to prove to themselves that they are able to act and change the course of their lives and those of their neighbourhood.

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Solidarity economy activities are very often well known: companies adapted for disabled people to work there; housing for the excluded; people's education; people's support; access to leisure activities for the most underprivileged; recycling and economic waste recovery; environmental protection; economic and social inclusion for workers; fair trade which supports small producers in the South; service activities launched by women in their communities, etc. These activities are often on the dividing line between social and solidarity economy, but always at odds with the liberal economic system.

They are the visible and tangible sign that another form of economy is possible: one that puts Mankind at the centre of its concerns and decisions.

*Suggested questions for groups and movements work:*

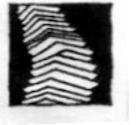
- *Are there any activities around you, linked to solidarity economy?*
- *Who created them, who animates them, what are their objectives?*
- *What are the obstacles faced to make these initiatives a reality?*

## **HUMAN BEINGS AND COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE OF SOLIDARITY ECONOMY**

Do these numerous activities have common features? Three main factors characterize solidarity economy-based actions and activities.

Given the ever increasing economic exclusion of the population, something else ought to be pursued.





Its main features are autonomous activities, creating local life and local wealth, through cooperatives or other forms of collective work, and also through mutual assistance of people, groups, communities.

Given the ever increasing dissatisfaction for anything related to market economy culture – in the literal sense of the word – solidarity economy can find alternative means to produce and offer services adapted to real local needs. These activities are based on cooperation, autonomy, self-management with the participation of all players.



*Seminar MIJARC - FIMARC on solidarity economy  
Brussels, May 2007*

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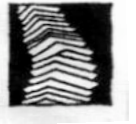
## Economy 'differently'

Solidarity economy is a wide movement which gathers thousands of local initiatives aiming at producing, consuming, hiring people, saving money, deciding 'differently'. This word 'differently' is key, because it means that solidarity economy works aspiring of course to some economic efficiency, within the public service to better live together, implementing forms of democratic governance, while respecting people.



*Indonesia, preservation of seeds*

Solidarity economy does not seek to maximize profit, nor does it give priority to return on invested capital. It aims at meeting needs that the traditional neo-liberal market economy could not meet. It combines in a balanced way different market activities resources (by selling performed services), non-market activities (among others by redistributing wealth), and non-monetary activities (by people's voluntary contributions).



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By denying separating the economic, political and social levels, solidarity economy features reference parameters: aiming at serving communities and not making profit at the service of capital; managerial autonomy; democratic decision-making, women having a place in the whole process; favouring,

in the field of income and wealth distribution, work over capital; sustainable development prospects. In doing so, it is a powerful resistance mechanism to market individualism which undermines our societies and crushes the human person. It is then 'another' economy, where cohesion, solidarity, community projects are reference values.

### **Local dynamics**

It is an alternative, fair and human way of doing economics, on the basis of solidarity, work, mutual support and cooperation. It requires a new type of alternative, overall, human, and sustainable development. It is rooted in territories, with activities adapted to local needs and local cultures. It can broaden the area of freedom in civil societies, hence for citizens. It broadens individual, group and community capacities, it maintains life diversity.

Solidarity economy creates new bonds between economic players, based on reciprocity and cooperation. It implements means for justice and respect for people: working conditions, health, training, social inclusion for all and above all for the most excluded and weakest ones, ensuring essential means for people and communities' needs.

It makes sure that the environment is respected and that nature is protected for the future. Democratic participation enhances the status of self-management, dialogue and debates to reach common decisions. It takes root in local economy through its links with all human activities in this environment.

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## Overcoming fate

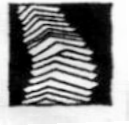
So a new economy is the most powerful weapon to fight against negative globalisation in today's society. It takes into account food sovereignty requirements.

Solidarity economy prompts its players to think globally, to the global dimension of economy and human relations, by acting locally, in an enabling solidarity perspective. It enhances the positive aspects in each individual and community.

Solidarity economy tackles issues for the sake of the most disadvantaged, meets individual and community needs. It is a resistance mechanism against fate, faith in social progress and participatory democracy. It puts human capital at the core and at the service of all and of the community.

*Suggested questions for groups and movements work:*

- *How do solidarity economy activities that you know meet the real and essential needs of people and communities?*
- *What are the essential Human Rights promoted by its achievements?*
- *How do these achievements implement in practical terms the food sovereignty concept?*



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## WEALTH OF INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In many countries, initiatives and actions are undertaken to put Mankind at the centre of economy and any economy-related activity.

In Democratic Republic of the Congo, an NGO helps low-income women to get trained. Through solidarity micro-credit, they diversify their activities, which enables them to get out of marginality, to get an income and to have their rights as women known. In Bolivia, a farmers' organization helps farmers' communities to relaunch production from food crops, to manage and to market them, and to develop local alternative tourism. As a result, hardships are overcome collectively to succeed together, community interests are promoted, marginalized populations' organizational capacities are developed, and joint responsibility is valued.



*El Salvador, April 2007*

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## Right to land

In India, Dalits fight for their right to land, natural resources, education, means to develop their economic activities. Therefore the economic situation has evolved and, above all, Dalits regained their self-esteem and esteem for the community. In Peru, workers are supported to start micro-businesses, and follow practical and theoretical trainings. In Indonesia, struggling for land and supporting small farmers' community organization are at stake. This enables them to produce and market agricultural products, to get some income.

In Bangladesh, micro-credits give many extremely poor populations the opportunity to improve their economic situation, to gain some self-esteem. Mainly women. Micro-credits allow the poor to access the right to raise a loan in order to start and develop an economic activity. Which improves people's living conditions. Nevertheless a question remains unanswered: will micro-credits lead its beneficiaries to the dominant liberal economic system, or will it help them to develop the solidarity economy system?

Elsewhere a parallel currency – also called social currency – was created. It increases individual initiatives capacities, uses available resources to locally produce goods and services, reduces unemployment and results in new financial opportunities for populations.



*The Global Summit on Micro Credit was  
hold from November 12th to 15th of  
2006 in Halifax, Canada*





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## Utopia that stirs people into action

Solidarity economy allows to collectively take over the very concept of food sovereignty, through developing alliances, consolidating solidarity platforms and networks: local producers, consumers, wage earners, local credit or people's savings organizations. It is always about developing economy and local social life in order to meet the needs of people and communities involved in the economic process. In such a dynamics, peasant farming finds its main role back: respecting producing farmers, meeting the needs of populations and society thanks to healthy and quality products, protecting the environment, land management.

The solidarity economy system is a global system for radically changing production systems, relations between economic players, between local communities. A utopia that mobilizes people and communities' energies to find ways to better live together.

*Suggested questions for groups and movements work:*

- *What are the alliances that solidarity economy players enter into with other initiatives, in your country and beyond?*
- *Which human values are implemented in these solidarity networks?*

*How is your group/movement involved in these achievements and projects?*

## **Objectives of solidarity economy**

We state that social economy/solidarity economy is not meant to fill in political gaps; it is a political proposal which has to give an overall consistency to the many initiatives emerging in the field and offer an alternative to the neo liberal system.

Solidarity economy meets the needs of people and communities. Producers have to keep the situation under control, thanks to ongoing education and participative democracy. The emphasis is to be on people and their work, not on capital. Solidarity economy gives a greater importance to local and sustainable development, secures gender equality without damaging the resources of future generations. It secures fundamental rights for all (food, housing, education) while the neo liberal system guarantees their accessibility... to those who can afford it.

We are mobilized to promote our objective of solidarity economy and, through it, a genuine food sovereignty. That is why we call on our elected representatives to state in a tangible way their political will towards solidarity economy:

- offering sustainable prospects to the initiatives currently under way in the field;
- reversing the trend in favor of the neo liberal system which contaminates everything

*Extracts from the final declaration of the international seminar MIJARC- FIMARC, May 2007 - Belgium*



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**This interview is dedicated to  
Andrea Tronchin,  
Member of the Italian Rural Association  
Facilitator of rural groups acting in favour  
of solidarity economy.**

- *Andrea, could you introduce yourself to VRW readers?*

I am Andrea Tronchin, from the region of Verona, in the Northeast of Italy. I am 40 years old and I am an agrogeologist in economics, or more precisely an agro-economist. I am a member of the Italian Rural Association (ARI), of which I am the National Adviser. Along with my parents – I am single – I cultivate my land as a small olive producer, for local trade.



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More and more, I campaign for food sovereignty and solidarity economy. For I understand that these two concepts are the sole alternative to get to a deep social change in the rural world and in our society. It is the only way to reach an alternative to the current situation and face the present global social crisis.

- *Why such a personal commitment in this work?*

I believe in two things in life. First, as I have just said, the necessary change for the future of the rural world in Europe and in the South.

This can be done thanks to food sovereignty and solidarity economy. My second belief is that I am aware that I have a mission to fulfil. I am a believer in my deepest being. And I feel – without any arrogance – that God led me to understand food sovereignty and solidarity economy to work for this fairer world. God has given us the creation, to make it more beautiful and harmonious. And what can be seen is that men are shaping a world that goes against God's project for mankind. And I will not accept this.





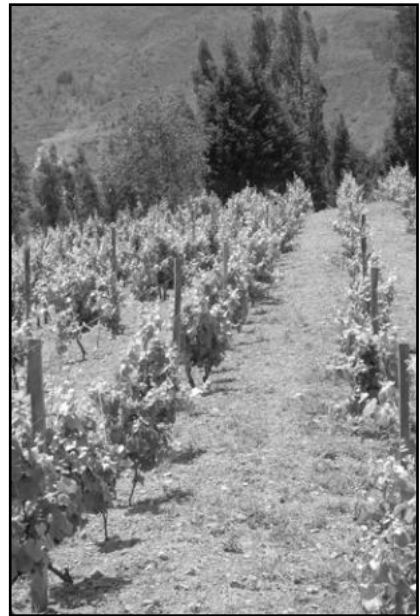
It is for this struggle that I feel entrusted with a responsibility, a kind of mission. Besides, I recognize this mission in FIMARC, supported on all continents, and I welcome this.

- *Let us come back to the solidarity economy concept. Could you explain what is happening in the Verona region? What is the type of work undertaken with rural people there?*

In Italy, 'sobreconomia' Districts were created, an expression that could be translated into 'sovereign economy' Districts. These are pilot laboratories, around which the solidarity economy system is structured. There are consumers' and local farm producers' groups, who show solidarity in their commitments and in local economy. Consumers and producers are directly linked together, to develop local production at the service of food requirements for families belonging to the groups.

Each group consists in 5 to 7 families, which means for the District about 750 people involved in this dynamics. There are currently about fifteen Districts in the country, linked together in the framework of a national network.

So at the local level, each group member puts their resources at the service of all, either for transporting purchased products, or for helping to produce. This solidarity goes beyond producing and consuming. Solidarity is also shown in case of health problems for instance, in case of a specific difficulty for a certain member.



- 
- *What are these local groups' objectives?*

First of all, agricultural production. Together we implement local agricultural production, at the service of local needs, for solidarity, sustainable economic development. As a result, the environment is preserved, because products are organic. For buyers, this system within reach reduces the price of purchased products, and allows them to understand local production mechanisms. Actions with local authorities are also developed; they help us to inform the population, to get meeting rooms, and to organize local alternative markets, where products are offered to all consumers, whether or not group members.

- *What are the obstacles encountered within the District?*

There are two major obstacles. On the one hand, raising awareness amongst the population. Significant efforts are made to inform, through meetings and alternative markets where the information is disseminated. But it is not easy to make people understand that another way of life is possible. Many people agree on the principle, but find it difficult to shift to real actions, to change their consumption patterns for example.

The second obstacle comes from agricultural producers. Few of them are involved in the groups thinking process. Twenty of them or so are ready to produce what consumers in the District need every week. But they do not want to get involved in any thinking process, which requires changing mindsets, producers' behaviours as well as living in real solidarity. Many have a neo-liberal attitude for 'reformism' and think that this type of action is a bit too radical.

- *Despite these obstacles, could you achieve positive results?*

Of course. First and foremost, solidarity groups work well. Hence this is going to last for sure, because people are getting more aware of the fact that the current way of life cannot last forever.

As far as consumers are concerned, results are substantial: improved consumption patterns, healthier life, local solidarity increased, let alone actions related to agricultural products purchasing. There are also other productions experienced, among others for household products such as soap. It requires further consolidation for solidarity economy system to be developed beyond food consumption only.





In Verona, the 'sovereign economy' District manages abandoned military buildings, and set up Peace spaces there: meeting and seminar spaces; spaces for alternative markets; spaces for social activities at the service of families. A decayed public building was taken over, to make out of it a real place for social life and Peace dynamics. It is important to put local actions in a global perspective to appreciate the world and its future.

I would like to clarify something. We have a Solidarity Economy Charter and each individual joining the group commits to abide by this Charter. It is indispensable to move forward together. Each group and each District are participatory democracy bodies, where each individual has a say, takes part in the debate and decisions. Everything is connected in solidarity economy: economic, social and political levels.

- *Have you formed alliances with other networks or groups?*

The first network is the one creating links with the other Districts in the country, since there are about fifteen of them. As far as I am concerned, I am available to represent the local District at the meetings with the other Districts. Within this network a national strategy for solidarity economy is mapped out.

At the local level, each District forms alliances according to its own environment: fair trade groups, disabled people's groups; women's groups for their own promotion, NGOs showing solidarity to Southern countries, solidarity tourism, etc. There is a wide array of alliances. These are indispensable, to relate in a global movement aiming at changing society and making real proposals for a viable alternative.





*FIMARC World Meeting  
Taejon, South Korea, May 2006*

And there is also the FIMARC network. Personally, being part of this network is important, because I meet there people and groups that share the same deep beliefs, and I can make there a global-scale analysis.

Together, thanks to the FIMARC network around the world, we make progress in the concepts of food sovereignty and solidarity economy. Working locally is a pre-requisite, but always taking into account what is being done throughout the world. FIMARC gives us this opportunity.



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## General Information

### Coordinations

The Bureau met in Assesse from April 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> in order to put the finishing touches to the Executive Committee meeting preparations. The Committee was held from April 28<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>, before the seminar on solidarity economy jointly organized with MIJARC.

One of the main items of this Committee's agenda was the appointment of a new chaplain for FI-MARC, since Father Didier Lefebvre's term of office ends in November 2007. Amongst the 3 proposed candidates, Father Abraam Maher from ADIM, Egypt, was qualified.



*Father Abraam Maher*



*Father Didier Lefebvre*

We are awaiting the Pontifical Council for the Laity's approval for this appointment to become effective.

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Continental coordinations had the opportunity to meet, at the Executive Committee and after that at joint coordination meetings with MIJARC to fine tune action plans and strengthen contacts between both organizations.

After 3 years of cooperation with FIMARC, Geneviève Mitsch, our administrative assistant, left us last May 12<sup>th</sup> to start new activities which better match her training. We thank her for all her work and wish her godspeed for her new projects.

Some members of the Human Rights working group of FIMARC have attended Brussels seminar on solidarity economy.

The Executive Committee members have renewed the double mandate of the group : to raise the voice of the rural people in the Human Right Council and investigation group on human rights issues in the rural world.



*The Executive Committee with FIMARC Human Rights Group*



## Citizen's Forum of the JICI

The 'Jeunesse Indépendante Catholique Internationale' (JICI – International Catholic Independent Youth) organizes in Benin its 2<sup>nd</sup> Citizens' Forum next July. The theme will be 'Promoting economic, social and citizen commitment of young adults in Africa in the light of the Social Teachings of the Church'. The coordinator for Western Africa and the international chaplain will attend this Forum, in the light of the experience they acquired at the seminar on solidarity economy, which will surely enable them to feed the debate with useful contributions. Before the JICI Forum, we hope we can organize a sub-regional meeting in Togo which would gather representatives from Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso and Niger.

## 'Imposing is not Negotiating' Campaign

The European Union (EU) is currently negotiating free trade agreements with the 76 Africa-Caribbean-Pacific countries (ACP). These 'Economic Partnership Agreements' (EPAs) will have terrible consequences on the economies and development of ACP countries.

Several months away from the end of the negotiations, while Europe is pressuring and threatening some of the world's poorest countries to restrain their access to the European market, we must join forces to demand that this pressure stops and that the necessary time is granted to negotiate, so that negotiations lead to an acceptable agreement for all, in favor of development.





*The Executive Committee members  
Assesse, Belgium, April 2007*



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Fédération internationale des Mouvements d'Adultes Ruraux Catholiques  
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Federação Internacional dos Movimentos de Adultos Rurais Católicos  
International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements

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