

The ACWW supports and connects women worldwide. It has a membership of over nine million women in seventy four countries throughout the world. These can surely be voice for change, when united.

The Association aims to raise the standard of living for rural women and their families through education, skills development and providing practical support to members in setting up income generating projects. It also aims to give women a voice at international level through its links with the UN, other bodies and governments.

The Triennial conference held in Warwick England in August was attended by 600 delegates .Area representatives from the different regions presented reports on issues of concern to women, for example education, health, safety and general welfare.

Prior to the conference the area representatives and the chairs of committees for example agriculture gather information from the membership on the most serious issues. Resolutions and recommendations are prepared and then put to the conference for adoption. An adopted resolution is a mandate to work on an issue and adopted recommendation suggests a line of action which a society may choose to follow.

Seven resolutions relating to international concerns were adopted.

Food Sovereignty was proposed by The National Farmers Union of Canada, their speaker who incidentally came from an area named Westmeath in Canada, emphasised the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food production. It advocates full and equal access to resources for women on farms and in rural communities.

Fructose; this resolution urges ACWW and its member organizations to strongly lobby their respective governments to ban food and drink manufacturers from claiming their sweetener products are healthier if they use fructose as a sweetener. However fructose is metabolized differently from other sugars. High intakes of fructose may lead to metabolic health complications.

There were other resolutions adopted on Sustainable energy and on protecting the supply of water.

In the discussion on protecting the supply of water, we were told that it takes fifty four buckets of water to produce one chicken breast, and twelve buckets to produce one tomato. Over the years ACWW has supported drilling wells and providing clean water in poorer countries. The society from the USA urges all countries to vigorously protect the supply of potable farming and industrial water, using the best technical information available that will provide sustainability of life.

The Netherlands membership succeeded in having a resolution adopted, that strongly urges Governments to adopt a gender perspective in their policies to create an enabling environment for economic and social development especially in rural areas. One must bear in mind that food care and health are in the hearts of women.

The focus in the discussions on the recommendations has been chiefly on refugees from war torn countries, particularly the plight of women and children. Undocumented and unaccompanied children are crossing borders daily fleeing violence and persecutions. These are most vulnerable and often trafficked into the sex trade. Member societies are asked to lobby governments to develop comprehensive plans to identify and ensure their care and safety.

Overall there was a great deal of commonality in the issues and concerns raised by the diverse speakers even though the intensity and level of need varied between the developed and undeveloped areas of the world.