Dear Colleague

WFP invites you to celebrate International Women’s Day with women farm workers and dwellers

**WHEN:** Saturday, 9 March 2013  
**TIME:** 09:00  
**PLACE:** Cloetesville High School, Stellenbosch  
**MARCH:** 12:00  
**PLACE:** March starts at Office of Women on Farms Project, c/o Bird & Molteno Streets, Stellenbosch

On 8 March, women across the globe celebrate International Women’s Day to not only celebrate women’s victories, but also to highlight persistent gender inequalities. This year, the international theme for the day is “Empower Rural Women – End Poverty and Hunger.”

The UN World Food Programme indicates that gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty, estimating that 60% of chronically hungry people are women and girls. According to UN, if rural women had equal access to productive resources, agricultural yields could reduce the number of chronically hungry people by between 100 and 150 million.

In South Africa, 18 years into our democracy, rural women still struggle to access productive land, which contributes to the hunger they experience and their dependence on commercial farmers. The recent farm worker strikes were an overdue response to the slow pace of land reform, low wages, and increased job insecurity in the agricultural sector. Despite retribution from farmers and violence from police, women bravely downed tools, and joined other farm workers to say: “Enough is Enough.” The recent increase in the minimum wage is still woefully below a living wage, and means that women will still be unable to feed their families.

Rural women will never be fully empowered while they continue to experience high degrees of male violence. The rape and murder of Anene Booysen touched farmwomen because it focused national attention on an issue which they confront daily on farms and towns not dissimilar to Anene’s Bredasdorp. Despite the high incidence of violence against women on farms, the service and treatment they receive from police is usually disrespectful and inadequate. The police are dismissive or discourage them from reporting such cases; alternatively, they do not go to a farm when a woman reports an assault. Police often do not enforce interdicts or release a man a few hours after arrest.

On Saturday, 9 March, women farm workers and dwellers will discuss and march to demand:
  - Land for food production  
  - A living wage for women farm workers  
  - An end to hunger  
  - An end to violence against women  
  - Respect and accountability from the police

Women on Farms Project, partner organisations and rural women will discuss these issues, before marching to the Stellenbosch police station to hand over a Memorandum.

Yours in the struggle for a just countryside,

Colette Solomon  
Acting Director