We live in a scandalous society...

...where a mother of a poor household walks an extra kilometre for a loaf of bread that is cheaper while a wealthy couple splashes out on fine dining

...where junk food is cheaper than nutritious food

...where the Government protects corporates and tramples people’s right to land, water and food

...where rising food prices escalate malnutrition and hunger, and drive people further into destitution

...where we ourselves have come to believe that our “friendly Spar” is a closer friend than our neighbour’s corner shop

This was the outcry at the Feminist Table held on 4 and 5 August 2014, organized by the Universities of Stellenbosch and Witwatersrand, and Women in Mining. Over forty women involved in - and supporting - struggles for social justice on the mines, farms and towns, gathered to debate the food crisis in South Africa, how it impacts on women, and what a feminist response would entail.

The food crisis was articulated as the historical outcome of the systematic dispossession of land, the denigration of indigenous people, their customs and practices, and the creation of a thriving white-owned large-scale farming class and industry.

The video “Crumbs: toppling the bread cartel” on the politics of bread, demonstrated the wrongs of the food system. It showed the ugly face of what Prof Jacklyn Cock called “the unjust, unsustainable, unkind food system” that was created and is perpetuated by structural inequalities and corporate powers.

Women at the Feminist Table felt moved to unite to challenge, confront, and push back with alternatives to overturn the food system. They recognized that momentum is gathering within civil society to address the food crisis, and argued for a feminist voice in support of Food Justice.

Principles of a feminist response would include:

- “No agro-ecology without feminism” as the AgroEcology Movement in Brazil says
- The need for solidarity and collective action
- New ways of organizing beyond “women’s issues” that can entrench gender roles
- Break down gender stereotypes and interrogate power relations and dynamics
- A holistic approach that makes connections to other sectors and across sectors
- Grounded in practical realities, embedding new knowledge, skills and practices
Ideas for campaigning around Food Justice included:

- The need to put a human face to the food crisis
- Political education on the wrongs of, and gender politics in the food system.
- Vary entry points of change and strategies to claim spaces based on interests and needs of different groupings of women/feminists
- Connect with other initiatives around food, land, gender and climate justice
- Mobilize around 15 Oct International Rural Women’s Day and 16 Oct World Food Day

The women left the Table with a full heart and strong conviction that they are the difference.

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