



# Newsletter

## WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN



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## ***Relay in the Far East and Middle East***

After travelling through the Americas and Europe, the Relay stopped over in Oceania in late June and then continued on to several countries in Asia and the Middle East/Arab World. Unfortunately, not all women along the route were able to admire the patchwork quilt, which was lost for part of the journey. The problem, however, revealed the extent of solidarity between women on all continents since everyone pooled their efforts to find this symbol of the 2005 Relay!

The Relay has now entered the last stretch as it wends its way through several African countries. Celebrations will be held to signal the end of the journey in Burkina Faso on October 17 of this year.

### **Australia**

#### ***Charter on Display in Parliament***

In Australia an exhibition was mounted in Parliament with photos, posters, articles of clothing and other objects amassed in the course of 20 years of feminist battles. An entire wall was given over to the WMW. The Charter was placed as the centrepiece, offset by large photos of the actions in the year 2000 in Washington and New York. The images also reflected the diversity of the movement of women who share the same values.

The event, planned to last one day, was extended to a whole week thanks to the support of the Minister for the Status of Women, who received the Charter on behalf of Australian women. She then reminded MPs of the goals of the World Relay and expressed the hope that the five values in the Charter will continue to be consolidated in the community.

After the Charter's brief stop in Oceania, the Australian Relay coordinator travelled to Japan to deliver in person the patchwork quilt square to her Japanese sisters, whose work she found deeply inspiring.

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### **Japan**

#### ***Relay against Militarization***

Japanese women gave a warm welcome to the Australian delegate who brought the Relay to Tokyo. An evening of solidarity was held, attended by over 40 women from 23 organizations. The organizing committee had held a contest previously to choose the Japanese quilt square. Fortunately, all the participants' squares were displayed for the women to admire.

Activities were also held in Kyoto, before the big march in Osaka where more than 600 women assembled on July 2, the rain notwithstanding! The women gathered in a park and

launched their appeal to support the non-militarization of their country, enshrined in section 9 of the Constitution. They were asking the Japanese Government to refrain from amending this section and therefore not to proceed with rearmament. The demonstration continued with a march in Midosuji Street, where some 100 women, dressed in *yukatas*, danced to folk music.



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## **Republic of Korea**

### ***Marching for Peace***

The women of the Republic of Korea also marched in early July, around City Hall in Seoul. Numbering over 200, they were accompanied by some 40 Japanese women, who passed the Relay to them, and by a representative of the Philippines, the next stop. They tied their purple scarves together, and danced and shouted as many people who came to support their demands looked on.

They also organized a public lecture: “NO to poverty, NO to violence against women; women make peace.” The Korean women’s quilt square was adorned with an ideogram meaning “Peace.”

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## **Philippines**

### ***Relay Despite Political Turmoil***

As mentioned, a delegate from the Philippines had made the trip to Korea and returned home to hand over the Relay to her colleagues at Kilos Kabaro 2. The Relay’s arrival was marked by a news conference and a public presentation of the Charter at the University of the Philippines. Workshops and a forum were also held despite the political turmoil gripping in the country in early July.

## **Lao People's Democratic Republic**

### ***Promoting the Charter***

Lao women invited members of NGOs and government representatives to admire the patchwork quilt. They also handed out t-shirts promoting the Charter and the World March. The Relay then continued on its way to Thailand.

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## **Thailand / Burma**

### ***Joint Contribution***

To mark the arrival of the Relay in Bangkok, Thai and Burmese women prepared to add their squares to the solidarity patchwork quilt. Their coordinating teams met face-to-face for the first time when they sewed their squares together. Women working to promote women's rights in Thailand were also able to meet their counterparts from the Women's League of Burma thanks to the collaboration between Altsean Burma and Forum Asia.

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## **India**

### ***Monsoon Couldn't Stop the Many Events***

The Relay arrived from Thailand/Burma in Kolkata (Calcutta) for the first event on July 18. The demonstration was a huge success, with the participation of over 800 women and men from rural Bengal; activists from Kolkata; dignitaries, including the mayor of Kolkata; and representatives of the Women's Commission. Indian women took the occasion to honour Andhari Majhi, an Advasi (Aboriginal) woman struggling for Advasi rights, particularly to land, water and forests.

Other events took place across the country, despite the monsoon. In all, six regional events were organized in different states. A beautiful edition of the Charter, printed on handmade silk, travelled through Delhi before a delegation of Indian women took it to their Pakistani sisters.

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## **Iran**

### ***Delegation Welcomed in India***

Iranian women representing 21 women's groups around the country spent four months collecting quilt squares. They organized an exhibition and then held a vote to choose the one that would represent their country in the March's patchwork quilt.

After that, three representatives travelled to India, guided by their wish to build a better world. Welcomed with open arms by their Indian sisters, they said how proud they were to

be able to greet all women in this way. They launched an appeal for the abolition of racial discrimination and anti-women legislation.

What emerged from this rich experience was a renewed determination to strengthen unity among women's groups and continue their struggle together, supported by the five values in the Charter.

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## **Pakistan**

### ***Actions from Morning to Night***

On July 24, the Indian delegation arrived on foot at the border of Lahore Wangha to pass on the Relay. Hundreds of Pakistani women and men were on hand and warmly received the Charter.

The next day a seminar was held on violence against women, a play was presented and a cultural program ended the evening.

A group of women then boarded a train bound for Karachi, following a send-off by their Sindh sisters. The media covered the arrival of the Charter in the metropolis, where three seminars were held: one on resistance movements, another on women's role in democracy, and the third on poverty and violence. Then 600 women and men marched, armed with banners and posters, to close the busy days of the Relay.



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## **Lebanon**

### ***Five Values Are Showcased***

The actions in Lebanon were staged over a two-day period, but the number five was at the core of speeches and ceremonies. Five children released an equal number of doves and five boats set sail while five artists did paintings representing the values contained in the Charter. Many women's groups marched—and then marched again. They planted five olive trees in a park in Tripoli. On marble plaques were engraved, for all time, the five values of the Charter: freedom, equality, solidarity, justice and peace.

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## **Jordan**

### ***Women from the Region Converge on Jordan***

Women from Tunisia, Palestine and Lebanon attended activities organized in Jordan and delivered their messages. Women from 12 regions of the country also represented different women's groups and organizations. Members of the Upper House of Parliament and officials from some municipalities were present for the activity along with a representative of the Arab League, who was in Jordan at the time. The Arab League representative assured the women that she would write a report to present the March and the Charter to the League!

On leaving, the Palestinian women took the Charter to Ramallah, before Women in Black held a workshop in Jerusalem.

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## **Jerusalem / Ramallah**

### ***Solidarity among Women in Black***

In mid-August, hundreds of Women in Black from some 40 countries gathered in Jerusalem for their 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference. They presented studies on armed conflict, oppression, resistance and women's role in these issues; their views on peace; challenges to tackle; and strategies of peaceful struggle in the Middle East and elsewhere. At the same time, the city's streets echoed with the cries of settlers opposed to their forced removal from the Gaza Strip.

On the third day of the Conference, many delegates went to Ramallah to meet with Palestinian women activists who were unable to obtain permission to enter the Holy City. The animated meeting included accounts on the cost of the resistance, the effects of the occupation, the construction of the separation wall and other restrictions on freedom. It was in Ramallah that Women in Black received the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, which Palestinian women brought home from Jordan.

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**Texts written by Martine Sénécal, Liaison, Burkina Faso**

The relay also stopped in Azerbaijan and Tunisia



## ***Let's mobilize for the 24 Hours of Feminist Solidarity***

On October 17, women in all time zones will successively take to the streets at noon to stage actions for one hour. This is how they will show their support for the blueprint for society depicted in the Women's Global Charter for Humanity.

In the Pacific Islands (New Caledonia, Samoa, etc.), the women of Asia will kick off the relay, followed by the women of Africa, then Europe and so on.

This call to action goes out to all women's groups who belong to the World March of Women and to those who wish to join us. **Let's all act together on October 17 by organizing public events.**

The watchword is to be simple, positive, in touch with one another, to show that, with our differences and similarities, women are united.

Groups in various regions of the world have begun to organize their activities. Some will ring bells and alarms in cities and villages to alert the population that women are mobilizing throughout the world to vigorously defend the values in the Charter. Others will organize vigils or actions during which women will form human chains of solidarity.

Tell us about the actions you are planning for October 17 to: [24hrs2005@gmail.com](mailto:24hrs2005@gmail.com)



## ***Solidarity with Burkina Faso's women***

By deciding to end the Relay of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity in Burkina Faso on October 17, 2005, we wanted to express our solidarity with the women of Africa. To translate our solidarity into a concrete gesture, we plan to give a young Burkinan woman a scholarship to study journalism. We want to underscore the role the press can play in women's emancipation if more young women become actors and producers of news.

The March in Burkina is especially sensitive to the all too restricted place women have in the African media, the subjects they tend to be confined to (maternity facilities openings, assistance projects for mothers) and the stereotypes conveyed by the press. In 2004, it published a study on women stereotypes in Burkinan society (see our September 2004 Newsletter) and organized some training to raise journalists' awareness on this issue. Women's place in the electronic media is also weak.

Only a heightened presence of young women in the media will make way for more coverage of African women's lives, their difficulties (violence, exposure to the HIV/AIDS pandemic) and their successes (as business leaders, artists, politicians, etc.).

The scholarship we want to award is worth 5000 euros (\$6000 US). It would cover four years' tuition at the University of Ouagadougou and attendant expenses: books, room and board, travel.

**WE NEED YOUR SOLIDARITY TO OBTAIN THIS AMOUNT.** You can start a fund-raising drive among your members or organize benefits (dinners, cultural evenings, sale of promotional items, etc.). The scholarship is a concrete way of expressing our solidarity with the women of one of the poorest countries on the planet. We're counting on you!

We would like you to tell us what amount you will pledge (if we collect more than 5000 euros, we can offer a second scholarship). You can bring the money with you if you travel to Burkina Faso, or you can give it to the delegate of your national coordinating body if she goes. Otherwise, please send a cheque or postal money order payable to the World March of Women with the words "bourse d'études" (scholarship) written on it. The International Committee and the Burkina Faso coordinating body will be in charge of awarding the scholarship.

## ***Analysis of the Millenium development goals***

In September 2005 (14-16), in New York City, member States will meet at the UN (New York city) and conduct an initial assessment of progress in achieving the Millennium Goals (MDGs). The 8 MDGs were adopted in September 2000:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

Only one MDG specifically addresses women's unequal status when it should be integral to all the MDGs. Yet, we find it insufficient.

As feminists, we do not think that these Goals respond to all our concerns. Yet, most of them fall short of the international instruments adopted at UN conferences, especially those concerning women: the Beijing Platform (1995); CEDAW; Cairo Conference on the Population, and further still from the March's 17 world demands and the *Women's Global Charter for Humanity*.

Until 2015, more and more countries will devote their energy to achieving the MDGs. The Millennium Goals are also the subject of some meetings as it will be of the World Trade Organization meeting taking place this December in Hong Kong. That's why we wrote a critical analysis of the MDGs reflecting our thoughts about each MDG.

All member groups will received the document through regular mail. You can also download it in .pdf or in .doc on our Website.

*Brigitte Verdère, Communications Officer, International Secretary*

## **WOMEN FROM VIA CAMPESINA IN DISCUSSIONS**

Women members of the Via Campesina peasant movement met in the Dominican Republic from August 1 to 6, 2005. The session of the Via Campesina Women's International Commission was held at the same time as the 4<sup>th</sup> international meeting on human rights.

The meeting forcefully demanded the universality of human rights, which are individual or collective and belong to peoples, not capital.

Hundreds of women delegates from 15 countries the world over also discussed violence against women and food sovereignty, as seen from the vantage point of each country.

In her opening speech, Juana Ferre, general secretary of CONAMUCA (National Federation of Peasant Women, Dominican Republic) insisted on the need and importance of peasant organizations making their voices heard and clearly stating their point of view on trade agreements such as the free trade accords, which stifle their future.

The women delegates to the two events, representing millions of people who make their living from farming, want to lead coordinated actions to do away with neoliberalism and decisions imposed by the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other institutions whose trade policies endanger not only rural life but that of the planet and humankind as well.

Vía Campesina is an international movement that coordinates peasant organizations of small and medium farming concerns, women and Aboriginal communities in Africa, Europe, the Americas and Asia. The movement is committed to building a fair and equal world. It also struggles against patriarchy and adopts policies and recommendations on behalf of gender equality, diversity and the rights of rural women, whose access to equality is a priority.

*Sources: Minga Informativa de Movimientos Sociales, Pasa la Voz*

### **Collaborators**

We thank all the women from countries that have hosted the Relay for regular news updates. In some cases, information has been taken from national newspapers.

Thanks to the women who collaborated on this issue of the Newsletter:  
Élise Boyer (translation into English), Nancy Burrows (International Secretariat), Nicole Kennedy (translation into English), Diane Matte (International Secretariat), Magaly Sala-Skup (translation into Spanish), Martine Sénécal (Liaison), Brigitte Verdière (Communications).

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