



Newsletter



WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

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THE WORLD RELAY CROSSES AFRICA

Democratic Republic of Congo

A thousand Congolese women mobilize

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a thousand women from all its provinces mobilized in Goma, where they marched with the Minister of the Status of Women and Families. Afterwards, they discussed their views on the Charter, the Quilt and the Relay, in addition to discussing the role of Congolese women in the electoral process. The event concluded with speeches and a reception for the Relay. The local media covered all the activities.

On September 13, Congolese women once again gathered to go to the border at Gisenyi where they relayed the Charter to Rwandan women. They decorated their beautiful *pagnes* (women's dress) with symbols of the World March and expressed their joy by singing hymns to peace and dancing with their Rwandan sisters.

Rwanda

The Charter crosses Rwanda from one border to the other

On the morning of September 13, numerous Rwandan women travelled to the border to welcome the Congolese women who had come to relay the Charter to them. The event was enlivened by dancers and drummers who accompanied the women during the length of their one-kilometre march, also singing songs in Swahili and Kinyarwanda.

When they reached Gisenyi, the Congolese and Rwandans participated in the official ceremony to hand over the Quilt and listened to speeches delivered by attending dignitaries. COCAFEM was warmly appreciated and encouraged to organize further solidarity actions to unite the women of the Great Lakes. After a reception, the Rwandan women accompanied the Congolese women back to the border crossing. Other activities were held in Rwanda to raise awareness about the Women's Global Charter for Humanity before it was relayed to women in Burundi.

Burundi

Burundi advocates peace, solidarity and women's leadership!

The Charter and Quilt arrived in Burundi at the Kanyaru border point. Rwandan and Burundian women then went on to Kayanza. Two rows of women stood at the entrance of the conference room exchanging songs of peace and solidarity in two closely related languages: Kinyarwanda and Kirundi. The Quilt and Charter were then officially relayed between the countries and Burundi's quilt square was immediately sewn on to the Quilt. The speeches reiterated the Congolese women's message of peace—a central value of the Charter that is represented on the three quilt squares of the region—and the Rwandan women's call for solidarity, appealing to all the women of the sub-region and the entire world to stand together.

Further activities were held in Bujumbura on September 16. The Quilt and Charter were presented to nearly 160 women from all the communes in Burundi who had gathered to constitute a women's network for good governance. CAFOB held a workshop on women's leadership in the afternoon.

South Africa

A Celebration of Women is held in Cape Town

A "Celebration of Women" was organized to receive the Charter & Quilt in Cape Town on September 23. Over twenty organisations participated in the celebration. There was great anxiety and excitement as the courier only delivered the package a half hour before the

celebration was scheduled to start. Women of the informal sector, who had been very involved in making the South African square, dressed up in traditional Xhosa dress and led the procession of the guests and the Charter singing, chanting and dancing, the traditional South African way.

Present were the Consulate of Mozambique together with two sisters from Mozambique who brought their country's square to add to the Solidarity Quilt. The women were also honoured to have Awa of Burkina Faso present, who was tasked with personally accompanying the precious cargo to Cameroon and other West African countries. The evening was filled with women's voices raising women's issues through poetry and song.

Everybody present participated in reading aloud the Charter committing themselves to the five values in the Charter. The Charter was adopted and handed to The South African Commissioner of Gender Equality who received it on behalf of the South African government. The Commissioner pledged her department's support for the World March of Women's actions. It was an extremely emotional evening with the sisters from Mozambique sharing their experiences with the South African women. South Africa and Mozambique pledged to work closer together in building the movement of the World March of Women in Southern Africa. The evening was indeed very memorable for all women present as the evening brought together women from Francophone, Lusophone and Anglophone Africa.

Cameroon

Activities unfold in Yaoundé to the beating of drums

After setting out from Capetown, South Africa, the Women's Global Charter for Humanity arrived in Douala (economic capital of Cameroon) on September 24. A delegation accompanied it the next day, September 25, 2005, to its destination in Yaoundé (political capital) where various events were planned.

On September 26, visits were organized to two urban anti-poverty groups that were founded by women: COFERBA, a poultry farm initiated by a women's group, and the Mvomindaf Foundation, and an elementary school and kindergarten in the suburbs and central district of Yaoundé.

The reception and presentation of the Charter and Quilt was held on September 27. These activities were followed by a lecture forum on the Charter. Nearly 100 people participated in the event. The Charter and the Quilt were unrolled accompanied by drums, dancing and *youyous*, all of it under the eye of the media. Women's ululating cries—*youyous*—a typically African symbol, heralded the procession of the Charter and Quilt. Before the lecture forum commenced, the Charter was read out by participants and the Cameroonian quilt square was formally sewn to the Global Quilt.

Benin

March and a people's celebration in Benin

After Cameroon, Benin hosted the Relay from September 29 to October 3. A small celebration was held for the unpacking of the parcel with the quilt and Charter. On October 1, the Charter was brought to the commune of Porto-Novo for a lively reception given by the women in that city and the delegation was treated to skits, songs and dancing. The delegation then went to the rural commune of So-Ava, where the people live on the water in the direst poverty. A peaceful march on October 3 brought the Charter and Quilt to the Department of Families, Social Protection and Solidarity. The Minister herself committed to supporting the March so that the Charter can be distributed and made known throughout Benin.

Guinea

Ceremony and awareness-raising in Conakry

The delegate of the WMW national coordinating body of Benin voyaged from Benin and was welcomed by the women of Guinea on October 4. The Charter and Quilt were presented to the event's sponsor, the governor of the city of Conakry. This was followed with formal presentations to the various government departments and the presentation of the president of CONAG-DCF, who was there on behalf of the members of the Guinea's national coordinating body (composed of women's NGOs, trade unions, etc.). The national coordinator of Guinea called for greater participation by Guinean women in the actions of the March, among other things, because they are often absent from the regional, sub-regional and international actions, despite their great commitment and consciousness.

During the ceremony, women were happy to observe how massively Guinean women had supported the event, an eloquent illustration of the extent of their participation in feminist initiatives. The March has always denounced violence against women, one of the worst expressions of which is still excision, which continues to be practised in Guinean society despite huge efforts by the government and civil society.

As part of the lobbying component, between October 5 and 7, 2005, different activities were held to raise awareness and offer civic education and information. One of these was the lecture forum held in the Palais du Peuple, where participants enjoyed a theatrical presentation by the "Taïbo" troupe on the values of the Charter. Other activities were held, including a relay march, traditional performances and visits to women's groups.

Senegal

Senegalese women congratulate women around the world

Women in Senegal consider that the Relay was very successful in their country. The President and Prime Minister were on hand to personally welcome the Charter and Quilt, symbols of the 2005 Relay. They were joined by the Ministers of the Status of Women and Institutional Relations. They joined the Senegalese women in chanting: *"Congratulations to women of Senegal and the entire world!"*

Mali

Women in Mali celebrate the Charter despite the religious fast!

The plaza outside the Palais de la Culture in Bamako was the site of the ceremony in which the Senegalese representative of Siggil Jigeen relayed the Charter and Quilt to the women of CAFO. Presiding over the ceremony were the First Lady of Mali, female ministers and other dignitaries from the capital.

After the mayor of the fifth commune of Bamako delivered a welcome speech, children from an orphanage presented diplomas to five mothers in acknowledgement of the importance of their work. Women's role in society was highlighted in poetry before the second to last quilt square was sewn to the Solidarity Quilt. All these activities unfolded to the rhythm of the Women's Hymn, performed by the Musical Ensemble of Mali.

Relay events were also held in Sudan and Mozambique.

A CHAIN OF SOLIDARITY ACTIONS ON OCTOBER 17

Crowning Event in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

After its planetary journey, the Women's Global Charter for Humanity touched down in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso, on Monday, October 17, 2005. At this final destination of the Relay March, nearly 5000 World March of Women delegates gathered in the name of feminist solidarity. Thousands of women from 25 countries and the 45 provinces of Burkina Faso celebrated the conclusion of the Relay March with a March for Peace, the dedication of public monuments, an appeal for peace and an action of feminist solidarity.

The procession for peace gradually formed in front of the headquarters of the Marche mondiale des femmes/Action nationale du Burkina Faso (MMF/ANBF) in Wemtenga. Armed with their determination and will, women braved the sun's scorching rays to express their desire for a more just and peaceful world. They marched toward the new traffic circle (formerly Boinsse-yaar) in a festive atmosphere accented by the city clamour, drumming and the chanting of slogans. The traffic circle is now called *Place de la Femme pour la Paix* (Women's Peace Square).

During the colourful official ceremony organized for the occasion, marchers in Ouagadougou, like their sisters around the world, marked the hour of solidarity. At noon, they issued an appeal in several languages for peace in the world. A tangible gesture of feminist solidarity followed, when a young woman was given a scholarship to pursue her studies in communications.

Burkina Faso's Minister for the Promotion of Women attended this solemn ceremony, and received from the hands of a young girl the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. Speaking on behalf of all children, the girl expressed the desire that the values defended in the Charter be incorporated into their school curricula and teaching. The demonstration that was punctuated by speeches and diverse presentations finally concluded with the release of doves.

Habi Ouattara, World March of Women – Burkina Faso

24 Hours of Feminist Actions

From Amman to Ankara, Brisbane to Bamako, Bogota to Brussels, Marseille to Mexico, Montréal to Manila, Rabat to Rio de Janeiro, Dhaka, Tehran, Cotonou, Quito, and Hyderabad women's voices were heard at noon on October 17, 2005. Women's mobilization was not restricted to the capitals and major cities; women took to the streets and organized actions in Tambogrande, Peru, Chelyabinsk, Russia, Kirundo and Busoni, Burundi, Guayaquil, Ecuador, Oakville, Canada, Korogocho, Kenya, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Tarija, Bolivia, Ouyiaca, Argentina, Gaspé, Québec—the list could go on and on.

We marched, organized conferences, encampments and vigils; we made radio and television broadcasts. We made ourselves visible by plastering signs all over the streets, wearing vibrant colours, and handing out pamphlets. We made ourselves heard by chanting slogans and ringing bells. We came out of our kitchens and factories to stand in solidarity and publicly express our rage against patriarchy, war, free trade agreements, the impoverishment of women, rape, incest and sex trafficking—and to summon all our creativity for the construction of a world of peace, justice, equality, freedom and solidarity.

We highly recommend a visit to the special section of our Web site on the 24 hours of solidarity (<http://mmf.lecarrefour.org>) for a portrait of the actions women organized in every region of the world on October 17.

Nancy Burrows, International Secretariat of the World March of Women

Solidarity is Expressed from One End of the Planet to the Other

Between October 15 and 18 women were able to use a "solidarity blog" on the World March's Web site to convey their wishes of solidarity to women of the world. These are a few examples.

"Together we are making a new life, moving, building, transgressing and weaving together solutions and meeting points." (Galicia)

"Yes! Another world is possible! A world of hope, love and life where everyone can live well." (Québec)

"Greetings and love to my African sisters and friends. Before the WMW we could only share our sorrows, but now we may also share our dreams for the other world we want to build. Women for so long have tried subordination, submission, all kinds of phobias, and imitating male violence. Now it's time to try persistence in solidarity. We will win sooner or later." (Iran)

"A special message of solidarity with African women, whose land today is the rallying point for women from all over the planet. Today we all speak with your voices and declare that we reject this world and are determined to change it." (Spain)

"Our message in these 24 hours of feminist solidarity is one of compassion and hope. Because, however long the night, the sun will return, the world will change and so will women's lives." (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

"We particularly hope that the Charter and its principles will contribute to strengthening feminist solidarity with lesbians and others who are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, and fights for rights to full and worldly citizenship." (The LGBT South-South Dialogue)

"From the South to the North of the country, in different places in the cities and countryside, women—indigenous, Métis, of African descent, young and adult—are in the streets and public squares with our feminist message. We stand with all of you, carried by the energy of solidarity to transform the world." (Ecuador)

"Women are born to be creative and innovative fighters; we do everything possible to achieve our place in society, despite the absence of democracy, equity and justice. Solidarity, my sisters, solidarity forever, because in unity is strength. (Tunisia)

"I'm dreaming of the day when patriarchy will be just a word in a dictionary from the long distant past. We know that today's dream is tomorrow's reality. So let's dream and never be impatient."

"The creativity, hope and the beauty of this work are a reflection of the magnificent work accomplished by our sisters in all the countries." (Guinea)

"Feminist actions make the world better. Encouragement and strength to continue defending the demands that will make us free." (Spain)

"We must act collectively to defeat the injustice and abuse to which women are subjected worldwide, and work for women's integration into society. We say to women around the world, the path of success involves sacrifice, so women must constantly join forces to defeat violence, marginalization, injustice and abuse of all kinds." (Haiti)

"With love from a man who is aware that without women's advancement, NOTHING will really change, I send you warm hugs of solidarity."

"We congratulate the WMW at the event of completing successfully its Relay of Global Charter for Humanity at Burkina Faso... In spite of the fact that we are passing through a very tragic period due to the earthquake disaster in Pakistan and doing relief work, we are

holding a 24 Hours of Feminist Solidarity day and we feel that at the event time we will not be forgotten and our presence will be felt in Burkina Faso." (Pakistan)

"Our solidarity with all women, from one end of the universe to the other who devote themselves to the struggle for justice. This is the only path to light, in defence of the rights of all and for the future happiness of all peoples." (Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Argentina)

"Warm greetings in solidarity to all of you who are struggling to achieve a better and more just world, a world of liberation of all our potentials and the abilities to create peaceful and prosperous communities across the Globe." (Former Yugoslavia)

"The successful conclusion of this step in the WMW's agenda gives us the certainty that distance unites us, that nothing is impossible when we are together; the accomplishment of 24 hours of feminist solidarity confirms the pledge of our feminist activism, as political actors, that we will never back down from our struggle." (Colombia)

Allies and Witnesses to our Commitment to Changing the World

On October 17, we presented the Women's Global Charter for Humanity to five custodians from the different regions of the world who represent the movements that are actively working for a world based on equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace.

We acknowledged five groups or individuals who are our allies in the struggle for another world: the Women in Black network for peace; Via Campesina for solidarity; the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo for justice; Nawal El Saadawa, Egyptian writer and feminist for equality; and Aung Saan Su Kyi, Burmese anti-dictatorship activist for freedom.

When the Relay of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity concluded in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, we presented the Charter to the representatives of Via Campesina and Women in Black in attendance. The other custodians will receive the Charter in the coming year.

We decided to present the Women's Global Charter for Humanity to five custodians because we believe that it is through actions like those of these individuals and groups and their solid commitment to changing the world that we can move forward. In a period when the international community and its institutions do not have the courage to act, which is unfortunately the case right now, it is crucially important to recognize the necessity of "bottom up" action.

The *Women's Global Charter for Humanity* is a political instrument. It is the product of a process in which women at the grassroots named the values in which we believe and that guide our actions. It is also a tool that reminds us that feminist analysis and the women's movement it has produced are tools of social transformation that address society as a whole.

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity is an invitation to strengthen our alliances with the actors of these changes. The custodians are, and will continue to be, allies and witnesses of this commitment on our part.

Diane Matte, International Secretariat of the World March of Women

COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS ON OUR 2005 WORLD ACTIONS

Worldwide Mobilization of Women at Grassroots

The start of the WMW World Relay in Brazil on March 8 immediately provided the impetus needed for the initiative to continue at all of the focal points established in our timetable. The tone was set by 30,000 women in the streets of São Paulo, convened by the World March of Women under the banner of the World Charter values, interwoven with the demands of all active sectors of the Brazilian women's movement. The Relay continued in the Americas, bringing together women in large urban centres and border towns. Once again the March showed it is able to speak to the hearts of women by devising a form of action in which they feel a bond of solidarity within a global feminist movement.

The Relay went on to Europe, where in several countries it provided an opportunity for different sectors of the women's movement to renew their ties and stage mass actions, as in Belgium, for instance, or actions of strong symbolic and political impact such as those organized jointly by Greek, Turkish and Bulgarian women.

The Relay's trip to Oceania and Asia was an occasion for a number of countries to work together and cement the ties between feminists from different milieus. Take, for example, the significance of a Filipino delegate's participation in actions in South Korea, or the deep emotions experienced by the Indian delegation when they crossed the border with Pakistan on foot to share with their sisters in that country activities marking the importance of peace in that part of the world. The theme of peace was also the centrepiece of actions by groups in the Middle East when the Relay passed through.

The mobilizations in Africa gave women on the continent the occasion to demonstrate their solidarity with women from neighbouring countries and to call attention to their concerns over their continent, the poorest in the world and so ravaged by war. To adopt the Women's Global Charter for Humanity in the African Great Lakes region and to end our world actions on that continent showed in a concrete manner the solidarity of feminists from around the world with African women.

Clearly the ability to mobilize also depends on political context and the women's movement's opportunities for expression in each country. This is why the presence of three

Iranian women at the Relay in India was so significant. For the first time in 27 years, a delegation representing 40 Iranian organizations was able to take part in a world women's movement by breaking the barriers thrown up by the theocratic regime.

The WMW international web site has also contributed to our mobilization capacity. It has turned out to be a powerful tool, not only in mobilizing members and sparking their enthusiasm but also in tracking, step by step, the Relay's progress and the assembly of the patchwork quilt.

The capital of Burkina Faso, which hosted the last stage of the Relay, was filled with a melting pot of delegations of all colours, hailing first of all from neighbouring African countries but also from Europe, Asia and the Americas. They joined the many groups of rural and urban women who came from all over Burkina, thereby showing the ability of the March in that country to root itself in the needs and hopes of women at the grassroots—women who suffer and fight all forms of violence and poverty, their feet firmly planted in their villages and their eyes turned toward the world.

Nadia De Mond, World March of Women - Italy

Denouncing Poverty and All Forms of Violence against Women

The denunciation of poverty and all forms of violence against women—the World March of Women's main objectives—was at the core of the Relay of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, held from March 8 to October 17, 2005, in some 50 countries.

Against neoliberalism and all forms of social discrimination

The South and Central American women who responded to the March's call for the Relay unanimously denounced the effects of neoliberal policies on women. In Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia, where the terms of a free trade agreement with the United States are being discussed, they rejected any form of foreign control over their natural resources. The women from El Salvador focused on the migrations provoked by these agreements, which force impoverished women and men to go abroad in search of work in very difficult conditions. In Mexico, which has been part of a free trade zone with its northern neighbours for ten years, eco-feminist Ursula Oswald pointed out that, in ten years, NAFTA had “stunted children's growth by one centimetre on average.”

Portuguese women asked the political parties to “take measures to fight poverty, unemployment and lack of job security, which are phenomena that mostly affect women; to respect and implement the constitutional prohibition of gender-based discrimination and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, ethnic background and origin.”

In Thailand and Burma, women demanded “the elimination of poverty and guarantees for a fair distribution of the planet’s wealth among rich and poor and among women and men.” Mozambican women protested “against the feminization of poverty and against AIDS.”

Denunciation of violence

The Relay was also the occasion for many women’s groups to remind others that women experience violence in many different ways: rape, wife assault, sexual assault, discrimination in society, in the workplace and even in sport, as denounced by Galicia’s women rowers.

The Québec coordinating body demanded (as it has done for a long time) a ten-year information and awareness-raising campaign on violence against women. Before the Relay took place, women in Turkey had presented a list of demands to the National Assembly. Among the demands was one to implement a national action plan and special measures to fight violations of their rights such as “honour” crimes in the country.

In Greece, the focus was on women who are victims of sexual trafficking. In the port of Patras, where many ships pass as they sail back and forth between Greece and Italy, “Much solidarity was expressed with a Ukrainian woman who was trafficked and dared denounce the traffickers’ practices,” Sonia Mitralias explained.

Seminars organized in Pakistan and India dealt most particularly with the issue of violence against women. Meanwhile, women in Portugal asked the political party representatives they met with “to set up mechanisms to protect women who are subjected to domestic violence.”

In Haiti, the Coordination Nationale de Plaidoyer pour les Droits des Femmes (CONAP) restated its “commitment in the fight for Haitian women’s rights to live their lives free of violence, with dignity and in an independent and sovereign country.”

Peace, a value extolled especially often

Peace was also a very important value.

When the Charter was taken through Colombia, Ecuadorean leaders Doris Trujillo and Blanca Chancoso expressed their deep concern over the militarization and authoritarianism their countries’ peoples are experiencing.

Angela de Pérez, the wife of a senator kidnapped three years ago, stated that the mobilization helped make the government aware that the armed conflict in Colombia will only be resolved once all sides—the government, groups outside the law and civil society—sit down together to talk.

In Cyprus, Turkish and Greek Cypriot women from the March staged an action together, and each one made a patchwork quilt square. The press described the event as having international importance!

In Switzerland, women organized a debate on women soldiers. In Italy they discussed the role of women in peace building.

In Japan, women voiced their opposition to the remilitarization of the country and denounced a revision of Article 9 of the Constitution. As for Korean women, the sign appearing on their quilt square is a peace symbol. This highlights the importance they attach to this value.

Women from India and Pakistan also came together, as a delegation of Indian women travelled to Pakistan to stage “an event on behalf of peace and hope,” as Shashi Sail, coordinator of the March in India, remarked.

Arab women also launched an appeal for peace in their region during the Relay of the Charter, whether in Lebanon, Tunisia or Jordan. At a Women in Black conference held in Jerusalem in late August, a group of participants journeyed to Ramallah to meet with Palestinian women.

“The Charter is a declaration on behalf of all the women of the world to demand equality, justice and freedom,” said Salwa Abu Khadra, General Secretary of the Union of Palestinian Women.

From Jerusalem the Relay went on to Sudan and the Great Lakes region of Africa, where women from Burundi, Congo and Rwanda have collaborated for many years to build a society free of conflict and war.

The Relay has ended but not the mobilization. Many women decided to meet again to organize joint actions and maintain the bridges built. “The European meeting in Marseille allowed many women from the region and from other countries (especially in North Africa) to join the meeting. This was possible because the World March of Women is a movement for which, above all else, solidarity with women all over the world comes first and those who suffer the most come before anyone else,” the European women noted.

Brigitte Verdère, International Secretariat, World March of Women

Allied Women Change the World

The World March of Women acts on the national, regional and international levels in alliance with social movements such as Via Campesina, ATTAC and other feminist networks like Women in Black. We conceived of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity as a discussion tool and means to call on those other movements to act with us in 2005. In January 2005, at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, we presented the Charter and our world

actions at the social movements' meetings. Our World Relay of the Charter was therefore marked down on these movements' calendars, along with the 24 hours of feminist solidarity on October 17. The October 17 action closed a week of actions by social movements that included events by the Latin American network Cry of the Excluded on October 12 and Rural Women's Day on October 16. The Relay of the Charter and patchwork quilt allowed us to give concrete expression to our alliances through the actions staged and to deepen our discussions on topics such as food sovereignty, public control of biodiversity, peace and demilitarization. For example, joint actions were held with women from the Women in Black network in Jerusalem and Ramallah, and women from Via Campesina participated in actions held for the Relay, in particular in many countries in Latin America and Europe.

At the end of the Relay in Burkina Faso, in a symbolic act, we gave the Charter to a Women in Black representative, who affirmed our joint struggle against the militarization of the planet, and to a woman from Via Campesina, who spoke of our fight for food sovereignty. She pointed out how important it was for African countries like Burkina Faso, which are agricultural producers, to resist pressure at World Trade Organization (WTO) talks. We will continue to strengthen our alliances with other movements and networks in preparation for the WTO meeting in Hong Kong in December and the Polycentric Social Forums to be held in January 2006 in Bamako (Mali), Caracas (Venezuela) and later in the year in Karachi (Pakistan).

Miriam Nobre, World March of Women - Brazil

Impact of 2005 Actions in Africa

The Women's Global Charter for Humanity was adopted on December 10, 2004, in Kigali, Rwanda, a country that experienced the ravages of genocide and continues to have a pressing need for international solidarity. Women of the World March of Women showed this solidarity by bowing their heads before the giant vaults housing the human remains that were recovered. Non-African women were thus able to see with their own eyes some of the problems women in this part of the world face.

Eleven African countries had the pleasure of being focal points and therefore hosted or led activities as part of the March Relay. This brought with it the advantage that many coordinating bodies were reactivated, not because they had the means to conduct the activities, but mainly because they wished to be deserving of the trust the women of the world placed in them and because they believed in the March Relay as a strategy to appropriate the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. They weren't mistaken, for the impact is becoming evident; for example, in his speech to the United Nations, the President of Cameroon praised the Charter's relevance and made the commitment to assist women in their search for a fairer world.

On October 17, the Burkina Faso coordinating body had the honour of hosting the Relay's close. Apart from the visibility the event gave the WMW/ANBF, we can state without a

doubt that this was also an occasion to prove to the world that women are able to show solidarity with their gender in multiple ways. In Ouagadougou, this solidarity was manifested in the physical presence of over 400 women from other countries, of whom almost 300 were from Africa; in the evident joy on everyone's face despite the harsh weather; and in the gesture of solidarity in the fight against poverty in the form of a journalism scholarship for a young woman from Burkina. Since the television broadcast, we have received one message of congratulations after another. This is proof that, rather than a utopia, our action is a *vision* widely accepted throughout the world.

From the political point of view, we can say that the Ouagadougou action had a three-pronged effect:

- by drawing in young people (the Charter was handed over by a child) we extend our struggles not only to children and their parents, by also to policy makers, since history will catch up with them (the scholarship has already built a bridge between the WMW and the student world);
- by asking the African Union to be aware of it, we harbour the secret hope that the Union's member countries will study the Charter and discuss it, even summarily, but we do believe that policies will be marked by it (in Burkina Faso, more than one politician has used some assertions in the Charter in their speeches during the presidential election campaign in November);
- and by strengthening African women's determination to work at the regional level.

In short, we are sure that the 2005 actions will serve as a springboard for many groups to jump back aboard the WMW ship. The World March of Women is and will continue to be an irreversible movement!

Awa Ouedraogo, World March of Women - Burkina Faso

A TIME TO REFLECT AND PLAN

We have just completed a period of intense activity on the national and international level. The World Relay of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity was a success and an opportunity for several thousand women's groups around the planet to talk about equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace. A number of groups took advantage of the Relay's momentum to put their demands to change women's lives and change the world, back on the agenda.

You have seen in these pages how we took up the challenge of getting more and more women to subscribe to the Women's Global Charter for Humanity and to sensitize public opinion to the issues of neoliberal globalization, militarization of our world, exclusion and intolerance. Our action led new women among the grassroots to become involved in the women's movement, thereby increasing the impact of what we did. By emphasizing commitment at the grassroots level, by reaffirming that it is women in movement who change the world, the

World March of Women against poverty and violence against women sets a course of activism fuelled by local and global analyses and worldwide action. We want more action, more concrete change in women's lives, and less hollow or post-modern speeches, even within feminist ranks.

With the gains of our 2005 actions in mind, we've decided now to take some time to think about what our next actions will be. Last December, we decided to begin a strategic planning process following our actions. The process has begun and will help us evaluate the impact we have and review our structure, alliances, priority issues, strategies and actions. More than ever before, we want to consolidate our world network of feminist actions against poverty and violence against women.

Why have a strategic planning process?

Our departure point

The World March of Women experienced extraordinary growth between 1996 and 2000. The invitation made to women's groups the world over to act together to counter poverty and violence against women sparked an immediate interest and unexpected participation. In almost record time we managed to reach over 5600 groups in 164 countries or territories. Most of the groups are grass-roots organizations from countries in the South, although some regions are under-represented considering their demographic importance. We attribute this success to the following observation made by many women's groups: given neoliberal globalization, given the rising poverty of women and different kinds of attacks on our rights and dignity, we are forced to think more globally and pool our efforts. We proposed to the women's groups that we work with all the diversity and plurality of the women's movement in their respective countries to transform the world by transforming women's lives and vice versa.

After our actions in the year 2000, it was clear that we couldn't cut short the momentum of solidarity, the new alliances and the enthusiasm for an international feminism in action that had a clear discourse on the need to fight patriarchy, capitalism and racism. With the simultaneous rise of the anti-globalization movement, in which the March participated and actively participates still, we thought it necessary to continue our own women's movement of the World March of Women. That is why we consolidated the World March of Women network/movement as of 2001, when we adopted political objectives, strategies for action, a structure and way of operating, thereby allowing us to continue our work.

In 2003, we adopted an action plan for 2005. We also adopted as a principle that we wanted to carry out a worldwide action every five years, thereby leaving time for the national coordinating bodies and the participating groups to do more grassroots work when organizing actions. We also wanted the chance to deepen our alliances with the anti-globalization movement, and continue our analyses and discussions on a number of subjects. In 2003, therefore, we created three working groups whose mandate was to enrich our analysis on the

following subjects: lesbian rights; feminist economic alternatives; and violence against women, more specifically the question of sexual trafficking. Moreover, we set up three collectives with the purpose of being present in different forums where we thought the women's movement should be more visible and take on some leadership; these are the communications, peace and demilitarization, and alliances/globalization collectives.

At our 5th International Meeting in 2004, we saw that these working groups had not produced the expected results, and, although there were discussions and a meeting of the peace and demilitarization collective, the follow-up was not a sure thing. The same thing happened to the working groups, who produced documents but found it difficult to continue.

Funding—always a challenge

Right from the start, the World March of Women was faced with financing problems at several levels. At a national level, women obviously have the huge challenge of finding funding to carry out their own actions. Funding for groups is very diverse throughout the world, but generally speaking, it has always been difficult for women's groups to find funding to carry out actions such as those staged by the World March of Women. For many, this meant dipping into already limited funding sources to present new projects. Some were able to include the actions they wanted to stage at the national level, or their international work, in applications to funders with whom they had previous ties. Others worked, and still do, for no pay at all. The impact of this fact at the international level was, and still is, that it is difficult—even impossible—to ask participating groups or national coordinating bodies to help finance the International Secretariat. What is more, in the case of groups and coordinating bodies in Southern countries, how to justify sending money to a country in the North is not readily apparent.

Regarding the International Secretariat, until the year 2000, the work done by the team located in Montréal, Québec, was made possible thanks to the contributions of the two levels of government (provincial and federal), the commitment by international cooperation agencies, trade unions, religious communities, foundations, and donations made by individuals and groups. Since 2001, we have tried to diversify our funding sources, targeting the international level particularly, since it was difficult to find recurring sources among funders in Québec and Canada. We managed to establish new partnerships with some European organizations and foundations, and we developed ties with funders who support international organizations such as Montréal International, but we still haven't managed to develop a partnership for more than a year to guarantee our operations. We have to operate with funding per project. This kind of financing requires an enormous amount of energy and work, and makes it impossible to consolidate a team.

Thus, in August 2004, we were forced to conclude that we couldn't keep the International Secretariat functioning in this manner. We made some last resort attempts, but we did this at a time when we had an international meeting to organize and, as it turned out, none of the attempts was successful. In October, we had to lay off the whole work team. We wanted to

break our debt cycle and also to point out that the problem was very serious and that, although we had always managed to find last minute funding since 2001, it couldn't continue.

Thanks to the Secretariat workers' commitment, we were able to hold the December meeting in Rwanda. There we decided we would do a strategic planning exercise and make one last attempt to secure funds from the federal and provincial governments, which was successful. We were forced, however, to downsize the work team. Since March 2005, we have rehired three of the seven Secretariat workers for the transition period.

International Secretariat, transition and decentralization

The year 2005-2006 is crucial for the International Secretariat of the World March of Women. We decided at our 4th International Meeting, held in India in March 2003, that, after the actions in 2005, we wanted to move the International Secretariat to a country in the South. This would highlight the fact that the March is firmly rooted in the South, and we hope the move will facilitate funding of the Secretariat. Considering the financing problems we've had, we must carefully evaluate how we are going to conduct the transition. The strategic planning process will help us devise a good plan to move the Secretariat to a country in the South. We should be able to define clearly the directions of our work and our actions for the coming years, review our structure (including that of the International Secretariat) and our work methods at the international level, and build financial partnerships prior to the move.

Two years ago, we began to decentralize our work at the international level, which meant that certain national coordinating bodies took on mandates to work for the national coordinating bodies as a whole; for example, the collectives had the responsibility of finding funds and taking over the leadership of this part of our work plan. With respect to the 2005 actions, some coordinating bodies took charge of launching our actions and coordinating the Relay. We want to do an evaluation of this decentralized work and see what we need to learn from the experience. Decentralization should also be seen as a political choice that will allow women from different regions to take on the leadership of the analysis and action at the worldwide level.

Aims of the strategic planning process

As mentioned above, we made the decision to undertake a strategic planning process at our meeting in December 2004, in Rwanda. There we clearly identified the need to have prospects for common actions but also to examine our impact on the women's movement at the national and international level, and our impact on the change in women's lives. The process will lead us to take stock of what we have accomplished since 1997, to measure our impact, review our operations and alliances, and consolidate our world actions—without forgetting the question of funding.

Who will participate in the process

The World March of Women has shown the importance of the actions we have carried out and their impact at different levels. According to a progress report made in November 2004, 71 coordinating bodies are active in the world. A follow-up of groups results in their continually becoming involved in the March. The groups who were active in 2000 are concerned and participated in the 2005 actions. Thus we can count on a large network to enhance the planning process, which will last a year.

The International Committee is in charge of this important process. National coordinating bodies will be consulted on several occasions between now and June 2006. To assist in the process, we set up an advisory committee, made up of a woman from the Senegalese coordinating body (they proposed the idea of the strategic planning process), two representatives from the Québec coordinating body, a consultant and the International Secretariat coordinator.

Two stages

Two stages of work for the advisory committee and the International Committee were mapped out for between now and our next international meeting in 2006. The first work session was held in Senegal, right after our action on October 17, that is, from October 19 to 22, 2005. The second session is planned for March 2006.

The purpose of the first meeting was to identify the gains, shortcomings and challenges of our operations at the international level (working groups, collectives, decentralization, International Secretariat, alliances), membership and funding for the March at the international level. We came out of this meeting with a set of proposals on how to operate at the international level, including proposals and criteria on how to ask national coordinating bodies to receive the International Secretariat. We also discussed the need to clarify the World March of Women membership and consolidate the work to be done in the various regions. Proposals will be submitted to national coordinating bodies by mid-December.

For the second session, our December mailing will include questions on World March of Women issues and prospects for action in the coming years. A reflection on how to assess the March's impact will also be suggested. We are counting on you to enrich our thinking and guide our discussions in preparation for the 6th International Meeting of the World March of Women, scheduled for July 2006 in Peru.

Diane Matte, International Secretariat, World March of Women

MAR DEL PLATA

On the evening of November 1, World March of Women activists attending the 3rd Peoples' Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina, held a meeting to trade experiences and put forward suggestions of how to continue after the end of the 2005 world actions (the Relay of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity and the 24 hours of feminist solidarity). Present at the meeting were women from Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Mexico, Québec, Uruguay and others.

Addresses by March representatives from Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, and a woman from Via Campesina- Dominican Republic, were the starting point of an open discussion on the main themes that focus feminist actions on the continent: femicide and the increase in domestic and workplace violence, free trade, militarization, food sovereignty, political participation, inequality and class hierarchy among women, and the growing privatization of nature.

The meeting identified as major challenges from now on the need for training in political action and popular education aimed at women and based on the feminist values of solidarity, peace, equality, freedom and justice. The World March in different countries has also set itself the challenge of continuing to build real alliances between women's movements and in regions where common problems and struggles exist (such as the region under NAFTA or border areas experiencing conflict). The women voiced their resolve to build the WMW as a feminist movement in permanent struggle, to change the bases of gender relations and create new bonds of solidarity between men and women. They are also determined to continue being part of a broader movement opposed to neoliberal capitalist hegemony, having a comprehensive view of the pressing and necessary changes in the Americas and the rest of the world.

Another permanent challenge is to denounce the connection between the more specific and daily oppression of women and the economic processes that concern the whole continent. Femicide, the murder and disappearance of women on a mass scale, especially in the *maquilera* zones of Central America, is a theme requiring immediate mobilization; it reveals the direct relation between the increase in violence against women and processes of trade liberalization and the resulting deterioration in working conditions. The women of the March continue organizing campaigns in their countries against free trade at all levels: free trade agreements, the FTAA and the World Trade Organization. This was the subject of a workshop organized jointly with REMTE (Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy) and the CLOC Via Campesina. The focus of the discussion was the existing connection between free trade agreements and the deepening poverty and vulnerability of women, and the importance of uniting the struggles of rural and urban women.

Julia Di Giovanni, World March of Women - Brazil

COLLABORATORS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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