

*Annual global awareness campaign to increase knowledge and empowerment
In synergy with World Food Day - 16 October & International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - 17 October*

Open Letter to Rural Women of the World 2005 Hold your Leaders to account! Demand that promises are kept! Keep on moving forward!

Dear Sisters,

2005 is a special year, because we are celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the UN, the 10th Anniversary of the Beijing Women's Conference and the 5th Anniversary of the UN Millennium Declaration. "The future of the planet depends on women", said Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General. We agree and add, "The future belongs to those who give it the most hope". You, rural women of the world, are the hope for a better future in your country. Let's be realistic: *you* are the ones who feed your communities and care for their wellbeing. The truth needs to be told and credit given where it's due. We therefore encourage you that you use this special year and unique opportunity of the World Day to remind your Government of all the promises made in your name and hold them to account. Your rights can be met and promises honored.

Your message to your government must be clear and unambiguous: Keep the commitments made to the women of the world!

"We, the Governments, ensure the full enjoyment by women and the girl child of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective action against violations of these rights and freedoms." (1995 Beijing Declaration).

No country or government is allowed to deny universal human rights.
Among key areas where you need to claim that your acknowledged rights become a reality, let us mention
*the right to an adequate standard of living
the right to development
the right to fair and safe conditions of work
the right to education
the right to land and inheritance
the right to food, clothing and housing
the right to adequate health care
the right to special services regarding pregnancy and family planning
the right to participate in decision-making and the right to Information and Communication Technologies ICTs*
among others guaranteed by the International Bill of Human Rights.

Ten years ago,

World Rural Women's Day was created at the Beijing Women's Conference and since then WWSF advocates your right to full recognition of your invaluable contribution to household food security, development and peace, and calls for concrete implementation of the **Beijing Platform for Action** to

❶ Protect and promote your rights and those of the girl child as an integral part of universal human rights ❷ Eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women ❸ Remove obstacles to your full participation in public life and decision-making, at all levels – including the family ❹ Promote your economic autonomy, and ensure your access to productive resources, and ❺ Encourage an equitable sharing of family responsibilities.

Five years ago,

the United Nations embarked in an ambitious empowerment program for the world by adopting **eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*** which include, in part, the Beijing Promises made to the women of the world, and which are crucial to achieving a balanced development for all. **You are key** in reducing by half the number of the poor and hungry in your country in your role as producers and consumers in the food economy. Your invisibility in spite of your contribution to farming needs to be reversed and people need to see you as major food producers in terms of volume, value and hours worked. In adopting the Millennium Declaration, all UN Member States resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease, to stimulate development that is truly sustainable, to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

* The Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015 are a call to action to ❶ Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger ❷ Achieve universal primary education ❸ Promote gender equality and empower women ❹ Reduce child mortality ❺ Improve maternal health ❻ Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases ❼ Ensure environmental sustainability, and ⓓ Develop a global partnership for development.

So what can you do?

Empower yourselves! Become vital actors for change! Inform yourselves and connect with others! Mobilize for action!

Keep on moving forward! Demand that your Government

- Links the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and MDGs
- Amends or adapts constitutional legislative provision in line with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, and ratifies CEDAW if not done yet
- Prepares national action plans and increases the involvement of social partners and NGOs
- Extends financing for education
- Strengthens gender mainstreaming
- Gives priority to improving overall access of women to health care
- Strengthens legislation addressing causes and consequences of violence against women
- Increases women's participation at all levels of decision-making
- Provides access to credit and financial resources
- Formulates or implements national strategies or plans combating trafficking and exploitation of prostitution
- Includes programs to control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS
- Takes action to improve women's access to information and communication technologies and their active involvement in the information society
- Incorporates a gender perspective into national poverty reduction strategies.

Dear Sisters,

We salute your creativity and courage. You are examples of hope the world is waiting for. We hope that this year's message continues to empower you in lobbying your government to proclaim **15 October a NATIONAL RURAL WOMEN'S DAY** for you to show your contributions to the world and to remind your Head of State to keep his promises. The first duty of a government is to honor its promises and it is your right to expect that it remains faithful to its commitments. It is every citizen's privilege to participate in the realization of their national plans. Many of the unfulfilled commitments are due, not to a lack of means, but to lack of a firm and clear political will. You can help create the needed political will.

We also invite you to nominate candidates for future Prizes for women's creativity in rural life. Nomination Guidelines are published on Internet www.woman.ch and are available via email wrvd@wwsf.ch

Elly Pradervand, World Rural Women's Day-15 October campaign coordinator and WWSF Executive Director

Announcement!

Prize for women's creativity in rural life

20 Laureates receive the Prize on 15 October - World Rural Women's Day 2005

(303 prizes awarded since 1994 - US\$ 500 per Laureate)

www.woman.ch / wwsf@wwsf.ch



WWSF Women's World Summit Foundation honors with its Prize women and women's organizations that exhibit exceptional creativity, courage and commitment for the improvement of life in rural communities. The Prize aims to draw international attention to the Laureates' contribution to sustainable development, household food security and peace, thus generating recognition and support for their projects. By highlighting and awarding creative development models, innovations and experiences enhancing the quality of rural life, WWSF participates in the eradication of rural poverty and in increasing gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. 2005 Laureates' profiles are also featured on Internet www.woman.ch and 2005 winners are presented below.

By honoring a woman, we honor a whole nation!

AFRICA

*Dem. Rep. Congo
Mali
Mali
Togo*

Esther OPANGA-NDJOWO
Association ESSEM
Association IDL JEUNESSE DEGUENA
Agnelé Delali Christine MENSAH

Good survival first
Healing ills of rural exodus
Preventing ills of rural exodus
Educational sketches for development

ASIA

*Armenia
China
China
India
India
India
Indonesia
Kyrgyzstan
Kyrgyzstan
Nepal
Nepal
Pakistan*

Mariam GRIGORYAN
Wang SHUXIU
Zheng BING
Dhuliben Bhavanbhai KHANT
Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti INSTITUTE
Revaben Jatanbhai BARIYA
Tisna Sutisnawaty NANDO
Mairam OMURZAKOVA
Elmira Sultanovna IBRAIMOVA
Sohorati THARU
Tara Aryal KARKI
Dure-e-SHAHWAR

Business to encourage rural traditions
Self-made millionaire returns to village roots
A strong rope is made from many strands
A grassroots engineer beats the pros
Empowering traditional rural healers
Grassroots forester shows the way
At the heart of the tsunami
Nomadic tourism and sustainable development
Commitment and integrity challenge nepotism
Empowering women to fight for justice
Reporting for change and dignity
Establishing women's self-help groups

MIDDLE EAST

Palestine

Maryim SHADEED

Empowering rural women

LATIN AMERICA

Nicaragua

Elba Rivera URBINA

Biological agriculture for the poorest

EUROPE

*Poland
Romania*

Barbara BURZYNSKA
Geta HEREDEA

From political slogans to functioning reality
Building hope with hands and hammer



Organization: WWSF Women's World Summit Foundation – women and children first

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Poster, Open Letter and Laureates' profiles can be downloaded. Internet www.woman.ch