



OPEN LETTER 2006

Circles of compassion + World Day for Circles of compassion – 2 November 2006

Creating compassionate societies - a world that works for a

"Compassion is a mental attitude based on the wish for others to be free of their suffering and is associated with a sense of commitment, responsibility and respect towards others." - HH Dalai Lama

WWSF Annual Report: Circles of compassion

Dear Friends around the world,

To mark the third year of the World Day for Circles of Compassion, WWSF is happy to inform you about developments of this initiative. Hundreds of Circles of compassion have sprung up spontaneously in a series of other countries on the basis of information given on our site and/or information sent to WWSF members and partners.

In this world of almost frantic and often superficial and meaningless communication, deep communication - based on alert, open and totally respectful listening – is rare. When in addition communication in a Circle aims at the creation of a world that works for all and the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals MDGs*, you have a Circle of compassion.

The **World Day for Circles of compassion** exists to remind us every year of the power of circles with heart-to-heart communication, share circle guidelines and the emergence of a culture of community circles. Created in Geneva three and a half years ago, and inspired by the Millionth Circle (www.millionthcircle.org) the WWSF Circles of compassion initiative not only constitutes a rare experience in communication, but has so far birthed three circle groups in Geneva and other places, that have profound links of friendship and solidarity among its members. Each one knows that he/she can count at all times on the other members of the circle. Each circle invites its member at each meeting to make a donation towards the **WWSF Mali sheep project**, enabling the purchase of one or two sheep for rural women and enabling their families to have two meals per day. For more information about the Mali sheep project, visit (<http://www.woman.ch/women/4-mouton.asp>). WWSF can send on World Day for Circles of compassion – 2 November 2006, more than US\$ 3000.- to its micro-credit NGO partner in Mali. This is a humble contribution to help meet the UN Millennium Development Goals MDGs. www.un.org/millenniumgoals

Among the many themes so far discussed by Geneva Circle groups, we can mention *forgiveness, the family, handling anger, what does it mean to be a world citizen, letting go of fear, among others*. Circles are a space of non-hierarchical communication and complete absence of any judgement. All members share the facilitation and there is no circle leader per se. Complete confidentiality and mutual trust characterise communication in the circle and each one speaks and listens from the heart, never telling others how they should behave, but simply sharing their own experience in solving problems or facing specific challenges. A powerful tool for authentic listening is the American Indian « talking stick » which participants hold while speaking in the circles. No one can be interrupted while holding the stick.

For those of you who are new to the Circle initiative, we reprint the basic circle guidelines to help you start your own:

Create and maintain a Circle with a sacred centre; Begin with a period of silent reflection; One person speaks at a time (a talking stick may be used); Share leadership and remember that all in the Circle are equal; Speak from the heart and from your own experience; Listen for wisdom with compassion and with discernment instead of judgement; Invite silence and reflection when needed, in you and in the Circle; Take responsibility for your experience and your impact on the Circle; Make decisions, whenever possible, by consensus; Encourage and welcome diverse points of view; Agree to hold the tension, instead of rushing in to fix things; Keep the confidence of the Circle and respect the trust relationship; Feel free to add other guidelines if need be.

Erwin Laszlo, one of the most brilliant minds in the world today and the founder of the Club of Budapest, which aims at strengthening the awareness of the urgent need of a global change in consciousness, states in his most recent book, **The Chaos Point**, that humanity has only a few years to set in motion the changes needed to avoid a planetary catastrophe. « We are in a unique window of opportunity that will not renew itself », he writes. Let us seize this opportunity. The multiplication of Circles of compassion and other community circles are one of the numerous examples of citizens' initiatives that will set in motion the new win-win paradigm of right human relations, which alone will enable our civilisation to survive.

WWSF also recommend that you read and share the powerful text by Mahbub Ul Haq, « **Toward a compassionate society** » Copies in English, French and Spanish can be found on www.woman.ch

WWSF gives **Circle training workshops** in partnership with Vivre Autrement. However, these trainings are not a precondition to launch or take part in a Circle of compassion. A **2-day workshop (in French) on "How to create Circles of Compassion" will take place in Geneva, 2-3 December 2006**. For more information and workshop program, etc., please contact wwsf@wwsf.ch



With warm greetings from Geneva, **Elly Pradervand**, WWSF Executive Director and Circle project coordinator

An international, humanitarian, non-profit, non-confessional, and non-governmental NGO with UN consultative status, serves the implementation of women and children's rights and the UN Millennium Development Goals www.un.org/millenniumgoals/