

Message 3 for the Empowerment of Rural Women in the World

A Tribute to the Courage of Rural Women!

For the past 17 years, the Women's World Summit Foundation WWSF works to make rural women's contributions visible around the world via its annual Prizes for women's creativity in rural life, its annual 'Open Letters to rural women of the world' on the International Day of Rural Women and via its micro-credit sheep project.

On the occasion of the 56th sessions of UN Commission on the Status of Women and its priority theme: **The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges**, we wish to salute the unbelievable courage you manifest daily:

- The courage to get up long before anyone is awake and to go to sleep long after the rest of the family
- The courage to walk for miles to go to the fields with a child on your back, work all day long, pick wood on the way home, and start preparing the evening meal the minute you arrive
- The courage to continue raising your family often alone because your husband has immigrated to the city, sometimes leaving you for years
- The courage to walk a whole day during the dry season to fetch a little rather muddy water to survive
- The courage to walk ten miles to the nearest health station with your sick seven year old on your back
- The courage to start learning to read and write at the age of 40 or 50
- The courage to fight against all odds so that your children may survive and go to school
- The courage to defy certain traditions despite opposition from family, village elders and even the clergy
- And above all, the perseverance to start again and again, every day, without ever seeing a light at the end of the tunnel because there simply is no other way.

Rural women of the world, we salute your indomitable spirit.

Let me end with a poem by Frederico Mayor, former Unesco Director

“...Woman,
you brought with you a new song,
but we did not let you speak out
although yours is the voice
of half the earth.

Woman,
your eyes saw the world another way,
But we did not want to know
the meaning and the warmth
of your vision.

Woman,
with no other master but yourself,
live from now on equal and free,
now as companion sharing
the same dream for ever..." *unquote*

Thank You.

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Endorsements:

The African Commission of Health and Human Rights - CAPSDH
International Movement for Fraternal Union Among Races and Peoples
The Lama Gangchen World Peace Foundation - LGWPF
OCAPROCE International
Women of Spirit and Faith