

Save the date!

May 7th 2010

The Mediterranean Women's Fund invites you to a gala, in partnership with "Cabaret Sauvage"

THE EVENT WILL BE HELD AT THE CABARET SAUVAGE, PARC DE LA VILLETTE, 59 BOULEVARD MACDONALD, PARIS 19, FROM 7PM.

GALA EVENTS

The evening will consist of (short!) speeches, songs, dance, drama, comedy and circus acts. Several entertainers from different regions of the Mediterranean have already agreed to take part, including **Angelique Ionatos and Katerina Fotinaki** (songs), **Agnès Jaoui** (songs), **Yalda Younes** (dance), **Lori Baghdassarian** (dance), **Soud Massi** (songs), **Guillaume Mera and the "Pas d'Ici" Company** (drama), the **"Petit Tour de Cirque"** (circus)...

PHOTO COMPETITION

On this occasion the Mediterranean Women's Fund will organize an important photo competition on the theme "Mediterranean Women: getting away from everyday issues". The photos will be exhibited and prizes awarded by a prestigious jury at the gala. The competition begins on February 22nd 2010.

More information about the competition and reservations for the gala evening will be available from our website www.medwomensfund.org

EDITORIAL

The international day to stop violence against women on November 25th, instigated by the United Nations in 1999, has celebrated its tenth birthday. Following this, on December 10th, the International Convention to end all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) celebrated its 30 years of existence.

Despite all the efforts undertaken on an international level to take into account the condition of women and to incite nations to take actions in their favor, the World Health Organization continues to alert us to the fact that "violence against women is a real pandemic. Throughout the world, during her lifetime, on average one woman in three will experience domestic violence, will be a victim of sexual violence or otherwise mistreated by an intimate partner". Added to this are acts of violence by people outside the woman's personal environment, such as at school, at work, in the streets and in different public places.

Kofi Annan, the ex-secretary of the United Nations, has also declared that "there is no doubt that violence against women constitutes one of the most flagrant violations of human rights. It is certainly the most insidious. It ignores geographic, cultural or economic frontiers. As long as it exists, we cannot pretend to have accomplished real progress in creating equality, development and peace."

What is the most difficult task for us all is without doubt to perceive the extent of the violence against women, since it is like an iceberg. Whether it be beatings,

rape, sexual abuse or insults, all of these forms of violence which are recognized today are merely the visible part; the invisible part, which is much more extensive as it affects the smallest details of social life is the symbolic violence, which insidiously begins with the training of young girls to accept limited roles, situation and horizons which imply that throughout their lifetime women are restricted to a subordinate role in their families, in school, at work, within political organizations, etc. But these two parts are indivisible: the threats of physical violence are used to make women accept such training, and what Nicole Claude Mathieu calls the "invasion of consciousness", operates in order for men to allow themselves the right to take life and death decisions over women, and for women to convince themselves that men have the right to do so.

We therefore support, with your help, all of those women – and men – who by their courage and their tenacity defy this coerciveness in order to build a world based on equality and justice.

The actions undertaken to melt the iceberg of violence against women (the only iceberg we can heartily hope to melt!) are varied and in October 2009, thanks to your donations, we began to support six of them. Our decision has been to make a modest support (the grants do not exceed 2 000 euros) to a variety of projects in several countries around the Mediterranean.

In 2010 we hope to be able to support a greater number of actions and these more substantially: we are counting on your help in order to achieve this aim!

Therefore the Mediterranean Women's Fund team wishes you a happy New Year, full of hope for 2010!

Christine Brac de la Perrière

WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT THE FIRST PROJECTS THAT WE HAVE HELPED TO FINANCE

IN JULY 2009, THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND BEGAN ITS SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR PROJECTS INITIATED BY WOMEN FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION. THESE INCLUDE....

THE STRENGTHENING OF WOMEN'S CAPACITIES

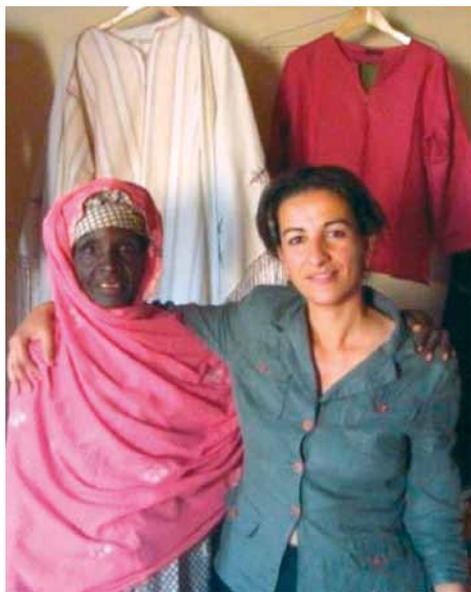


Res'art is a network of craftswomen who produce high quality craftwork. It was created in 2003 in order to enable craftswomen to communicate with each other about their activities and to increase their competence by exchanging practices and techniques between different Algerian regions.

Since then, Res'art has extended its activities to include the training of craftswomen, helping them to realize their socio-professional insertion in the formal economy and in the revalorization and the modernization of Algerian women's craftwork, previously undervalued.

By making their work more visible and by reinforcing their competence, Res'art allows craftswomen to assert themselves and to make projections for their lives beyond the four walls of their homes. It also valorizes women's participation in the improvements made to their families' living conditions and to local development.

At the end of 2009, Res'art includes 71 craftswomen throughout the 10 administrative regions of Algeria (Adrar, Tiaret, Alger, Oum and Bouaghi, Tizaza, Oran, Ghardaia, Illizi, Naama and Mascara).



A craftswoman from Tizi Ouzou with a craftswoman from Mauritania, during the participation of Res'art at the SAFEM in Nigeria in November 2009, on the Res'art stand.



Exhibition gallery – sales by Res'art, Victor Hugo commercial center, 5 Boulevard Victor Hugo, Algiers.



A necklace created by Wardia Sokri from Tizi Ouzou, made from pumpkin shells, with polished olive stones and coral, decorated with Berber symbols.

In order to measure the difficulties met by craftswomen in Algeria, we can take the example of Nozha who lives in a small town in the Algerian interior. She is a painter, whose creations use traditional natural materials without artificial preservatives (for example pumice stones, hand-sewn and decorated gloves and loufas) along with her own beauty products. She decorates her own packaging along with the additional accessories she produces (wooden and cardboard boxes, small bottles of massage oil...).

Her label "Zahia" has been very successful with both European and African clients. Despite this success Nozha, who is married to a doctor who forbids her to leave the house, has to do everything by distance. She maintains contact with Res'art by email or telephone and her mother and sisters bring her the materials she needs and deliver her products to Algiers.

Creating is for her today a way to escape from her situation and provides a link with the outside world: it is up to us to ensure that the social network of craftswomen will also be the means of her liberation.

CREATING BRIDGES BETWEEN WOMEN: AT A REGIONAL LEVEL, FOR AN ACTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN FEMINISTS NETWORKS FROM BOTH BANKS



The network **European Feminist Initiatives (IFE-EFI) and the Arab Women's Forum- Aisha** organize a meeting in January 2010 to bring together their experience of working for women's rights throughout the whole Euro-Mediterranean region.

IFE-EFI was created in 2003 by women from France, Spain, Sweden and Belgium. The Aisha Arab Women's Forum was created in 1990 by women from the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Since 2007, members of IFE-EFI and Aisha have met up on several occasions during international meetings but have never had the opportunity to organize a real working meeting together in order to compare their points of view along with the practical ways in which they can cooperate with each other on a longer term basis.

For the members of this network, it is necessary to create channels of communication and of solidarity as well as places in which they can share experiences, knowledge and views concerning women's rights beyond their geographical, political and cultural borders.

In this way they hope to develop the possibility to share their values concerning equality and to have an impact on the dominant way of thinking.

With the help of these meetings they can support each other, and they hope to develop projects in common around human rights, particularly concerning questions about safety issues and domestic violence and to contribute to the revitalization of the political decisions concerning women from European and Middle Eastern countries.



AT A LOCAL LEVEL, IN ORDER TO GATHER MARGINALISED WOMEN



Kayan puts into action her project Jusur (bridges)

in order to develop and organize local Arab women's groups in Israel.

Kayan is the first organization for Israeli Arab women which has concentrated its action on women's rights and on feminist social changes. It is interested in Palestinian women who are Israeli citizens, who form part of a minority of 1.3 million people, that is to say 20% of the population. Living as they often do in rural areas, these women are kept away from public life as a result of their role in a traditional patriarchal society, and are therefore doubly marginalized.

Kayan has encouraged them to share their experiences and their perspectives, and to demand a greater awareness of their needs and the accomplishment of their rights within their communities.

The project aims to create and support an independent network of Arab women who are able to combine individual efforts with small groups in order to work towards the awareness of women's needs and their rights. It aims to break down the



First conference help by Jusur (bridges) – "Developing and institutionalizing local groups of Arab women in Israel" held in Mghar in December 2009. This event brought together the program's local initiatives from Mghar, Arabeh, Dit Hanna, Eilaboun, Ein Mahel, Ma'ale Eron, Zarzir, Nahaf, Karmiel, Usifiya, Haifa-Wadi, Nisnas, Haifa-Kababir, Majd al Shams and Jaffa.

psychological and social barriers which prevent Arab peasant women from having access to training centers run by associations.

This movement should enable marginalized women to organize themselves, giving them public visibility and a common voice. Through this they can be more influential in the public sphere, have a stronger position and better access to decision-making structures and to positions of influence as well as to resources.

The Jusur program held a first conference under the title "Women build bridges to promote change" which was held in Mghar on December 29 and was a great success. Nearly 300 women from 14 different communities took part: the leaders and members of all the local projects got together for the first time and were able to exchange their points of view concerning their different actions and projects. By meeting together they were able to create a fantastic energy and to promote real changes.

INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS



Voix de Femmes (Women's Voices)

from Agadir whose mission is to protect and promote universally recognized women's and children's rights.

The association aims to assure the teaching of the principles of human rights and to work towards legal action and lobbying. It undertakes work at a grass-roots level for women unable to read, women who are victims of violence, young people (girls and boys) in precarious situations, for those responsible for associations and for teachers.

The project has now begun to provide a women's rights information and documentation centre in the Souss Massa Draa region, where at the moment there are no documentary resource centers for those wishing to work on gender issues...



Training workshops for young girls.



Participant in Jusur Program.

THE FREEDOM TO MAKE LIFE CHOICES



Aswat-Palestinian Gay Women

is one of the first feminist organizations to have brought to attention the needs of Palestinian lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexual women (LGBTI) in Israel and in the Palestinian occupied territories.

By questioning the current views concerning Palestinian LGBTI women living in Israel and in the occupied territories of the Gaza strip and the West Bank, Aswat is both a courageous voice and a landmark for those women living under multiple forms of oppression : as Palestinians, an indigenous minority living in Israel fighting for the equality in their human and civil rights, as women in a conservative and patriarchal Palestinian society, struggling to have access to decision-making processes and for their equal rights to be recognized and finally as lesbians in an extremely homophobic society, struggling to be included in the Palestinian society.

Giving Aswat the possibility to continue its work towards changing these mentalities and defending sexual rights is a way to prevent an ever more dangerous homogenization of their society. ■

MORE TO FOLLOW!

■ **THE NATIONAL GRAND CAUSE OF 2010**

instigated by the French government is concerned with the struggle to prevent all forms of violence against women. The proof – if it's needed- of the importance of the work of women's associations and of the necessity to give them even greater support, the French prime minister has himself recognized, in his speech on November 25th 2009, that it is "above all the recognition of the work undertaken by associations". In fact for several dozens of years women have been mobilized to denounce domestic violence and to create places where women victims of violence can take refuge and begin their process of reconstruction. They have continually complained about the absence of government interest in this area and the consequent lack of financial support to put a stop to this dramatic situation. The statistics are still as alarming: a woman is killed approximately every two days by her male partner and yet training programs and public communications haven't yet begun to reflect on their participation in this violence which is considered to be banal. Will the National Grand Cause be the occasion to treat the problem at its source?

■ **EVER MORE WOMEN AND MEN MOBILIZED**

to give financial support for those actions in favor of equal opportunities between women and men and for women's emancipation, but it remains little compared with the money contributed to other causes... In this way UNIFEM, the United Nations Fund for equal opportunities between the sexes, has announced that it has accorded more than 9 million US dollars to support 27 initiatives in 26 countries. Of the most important feminist international funds, The Global Fund for Women has announced that it has allo-

cated 8.5 million dollars and Mama Cash 3 million euros. By comparison, in France the Telethon collected 90.1 million euros in 2009 and the League against Cancer collected 74.8 million euros in 2008. A questionnaire has shown that the most important part of the funds allocated to women's issues concern human rights – women's rights, reproductive and sexual rights, followed by health issues and violence against women. The majority of the grants are concerned with financing groups and projects. They are mostly small grants, on average 8 000 euros (we are just at the beginning!). 80% of the grants are given explicitly to women and girls and most of the funds are directed towards economically and socially vulnerable women.

■ **THE CONVENTION FOR ENDING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)**

celebrated its 30th birthday in 2009. This convention is the convention for which national representatives had the greatest reserves. A government can oppose certain articles which appear to them to be contrary to their state's cultural or religious principles or – more rarely – when national laws are more favorable to women than the articles in the proposed convention.

In our beautiful patriarchal world we could expect to see that reservations against according women's rights continue to flourish, which is effectively the case: in the Mediterranean region, they concern 15 out of the 21 countries. On the southern banks of the Mediterranean the coalition "equality without reservation" was formed three years ago and regroups dozens of women's and human rights associations in Arab countries in order to demand that those countries involved lift their reservations which are incompatible with the aims and objectives of the Convention, and ratify the optional protocol and to harmonize their legislation suggested by the CEDAW. Things are gradually moving! Several positive measures have been taken these last years: the reservation held against article 9-(2), concerning the possibility for mothers to transmit their own nationality to their children have

been removed by Egypt and Algeria and those made against article 15-(4) concerning the liberty of movement and the choice of residence for married women have been removed by Jordan and Algeria. The Moroccan government has also announced at the end of 2008 its intention to remove all its reservations, but up to the present time women are still waiting for this to happen. On the other hand, Libya and Tunisia, whilst not removing their reservations, have ratified the CEDAW's optional protocol.

■ **MORE ABOUT CONSIDERATIONS OF THE CONDITION OF WOMEN BY MEMBER STATES**

government ministers from countries in the Euro-Mediterranean zone met at Marrakech in November 2009 in order to discuss those joint actions which have been undertaken since the first inter ministerial conference on the reinforcement of women's role in society, held in Istanbul in 2006. More clearly, since 2005 when the Barcelona declaration which stated that partners "take steps to ensure that equality between men and women would be instituted, to stop all forms of discrimination and to guarantee the protection of women's rights", certain mechanisms should have been taken by member states.

During the meeting in Marrakech, ministers congratulated themselves on the efforts undertaken but nevertheless they underlined that "considerable efforts must still be undertaken to ensure, in a concrete and integrated manner, a common framework of action in 2006-2011". It is a fact that, at a local level, the efforts made are not very visible!

The ministers also stressed "the importance for independent national institutions to be concerned by human rights and support non-governmental organizations, notably those which work to promote the possibility for women to be able to fully exercise their fundamental rights and their sexual equality". Let us hope that this verbal recognition of the work of women's associations will be followed by acts and sufficient means to implement their work. ■

I WISH TO RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER

BY EMAIL

BY POST

NEWSLETTER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORES

Information letter from the Mediterranean Women's Fund (MedWomenFund)

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Biannual newsletter

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I WISH TO DONATE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN'S FUND
Apt 74 - 47 place du Millénaire - 34000 Montpellier France

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