In March 2010, the Women’s Mediterranean Fund organized a photographic competition. Over a hundred photos were sent from France, Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Portugal, Italy, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and even from the Arab Emirates, Romania and Poland. The jury, which was composed of photographers Reza, Marie-Paule Nègre, Souad Belhaddad, Janet Danel-Helleu, Elizabeth Sayers, Philippe Grangeau, selected three photos which seemed to them to best reply to the instructions: breaking away from conventional ideas about Mediterranean women. We are pleased to show you the three winning photos in this issue of the Newsletter.

1st prizewinner
Arno Brignon

UN WOMEN IS BORN!
Member states should allocate 500 million dollars in 2011 to fund projects working against gender inequality. This is excellent news for those who defend women’s rights especially since the total budget allocated in 2008 to UNIFEM (the principal United Nations women’s organization) amounted to 258 million dollars.

At last all of the countries have agreed to increase the means to help put an end to the social injustice of which women are victims.

We should think about this side of things if we want to keep ourselves cheerful, and not think about the other side of things where worldwide military expenses, with their 1464 billion dollars in 2008, which adds up to 700 years of the total UN budget and 2928 years of financing for the new women’s agency, all of which clearly illustrates where the priorities lie.

Whereas the public is now relatively aware of the issues concerning women’s rights, the financial support needed to establish and guarantee these rights does not necessarily follow. The women’s issue is still not considered to be an essential issue for the harmonious development of human society. Unfortunately, even for women themselves.

Several studies indicate that they give generously to a variety of causes such as those concerning children, peace and environmental issues, and for human rights in general: women represent for example 60% of the donors to Amnesty International and Greenpeace. But they are more reserved when it comes to supporting the one cause that directly concerns them: brought up from birth to be altruistic and not to make themselves the priority, they can’t imagine that those very issues which concern them as women are of crucial importance, nor do they insist that they should be.

But it is necessary that they should be asked as well.

Brought up within the same values, those women who work for the recognition of women’s rights are, in general, very uneasy when it comes to asking for money to fund their own collective action. Whereas they are used to giving their time and energy to work for the common cause, they rarely ask for more than a minimal budget in order to get their projects off the ground, and in their budgets their own time and energy are rarely accounted for. Hence the average annual budget for women’s organizations throughout the world is only 3700 dollars and women’s organizations describe themselves as “in a survival or resistance mode” (in “Where is the money for women’s rights?”, AWID’s survey, 2007)

What is needed first and foremost is a change in women’s attitudes and behavior concerning themselves: when are we at last going to really value what we are and what we do?

Caroline Brac de la Perrière

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AWARENESS AND INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS:

TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS

IndyACT – The Independent Activists’ league, which was created in 2006, aims to put into action a campaign to improve the legal, political and economic status of women in Lebanon, paying particular attention to previously ignored communities including migrant workers from South-East Asia and Africa. According to IndyACT, women’s rights should include not just Lebanese women but also all women who are resident in Lebanon. However the living and working conditions of domestic workers coming from other countries to work for contracts in Lebanon are appalling, close to slavery.

A number of studies made by organizations show that the death rate of domestic workers in Lebanon to be more than one death a week, half of which are considered to be suicides. The majority of domestic workers report that they work up to 18 hours a day and that they are enclosed in the house. More than a third of them say that they are not allowed to have a regular day off. At least 15% report being hit by their employers. One in three domestic workers does not have their own bedrooms. Many employers limit the quality and quantity of food that they give to their employees. Withholding salaries is one of the most common abuses against domestic workers in Lebanon.

IndyACT has therefore decided to organize a campaign to highlight the situation of those women who migrate to the Lebanon under contract and then find themselves doubly discriminated against both sexually and racially, an extremely violent experience. The campaign calls for the respect of their social, economic and cultural rights and reinforces the creation of a network which will allow them to overcome their isolation.

TO OBTAIN EQUAL RIGHTS

The “Kif Kif devant la loi” Collective (equals before the law) was started on 10 March 2010 by the organizations Tharwa NFadhma N’Soumier, Amsnasw, Djaizourma, the Women’s Black Spring Collective, Wassyla Network, AVIFE and FARD. All of these organizations, each with their specificities, are concerned with fighting for equal opportunities between women and men. They are currently working together to organize a campaign which aims to reclaim the repeal of the existing Family Code and its replacement by more egalitarian civil legislation.

Since the passing of the family legislation in 1984, women’s organizations have not ceased to denounce the nature of its discrimination against women and to insist on changing these laws. Despite amendments passed in 2005, the Algerian Family Code remains discriminatory and goes against the international conventions and treaties ratified by Algeria. In addition the applications of these laws are left to the evaluation of judges are not always favorable to women.

Aware of the fact that the lack of knowledge concerning the current legislation by the population in general deprives them of the support of the civil society and in particular support for women, those organizations who have joined together collectively have adopted the strategy to reinforce the legitimacy of claims for equality within the society at large. An information campaign is planned concerning the new Family Code, with examples of cases where women have been victims of its application, aimed at young people, women and the members of those professions particularly concerned by the legal and educational sectors.

These organizations aim to obtain the support of informed people which will be necessary in order to succeed in the defense campaign. The second part of the campaign aims to alert the administrative and decision-making powers including elected members of government. The Collective “Kif kif devant la loi” aims to bring before parliament a proposition of legal reform based on equality between women and men, in conformity with the Algerian constitution and those treaties and conventions ratified by Algeria.

In Its program for the first half of 2010, The Mediterranean Women’s Fund has supported a dozen projects, these include:

LOBBYING INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc is an organization working towards increases in women’s rights as well as gender equality in Morocco. Its main actions include arguing for changes to laws which discriminate against women.

On February 27th and 28th, several members of ADFM took part in the “NGOs Forum for Beijing+15” which was held on the sidelines of the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, coinciding this year with the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Action Platform. This forum, which consists of hundreds of NGOs from all over the world, came together to share the work concerning the 12 problem areas treated by the Beijing Action Plan.

For ADFM this was an occasion to reinforce the capacities of their members, to make known its actions and to create links and contacts with other NGOs with the aim to work together on the issues they have in common; to explore new questions and above all to join their voices to those of other participants in order to demand a real equality between the sexes.

INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION ON WOMEN’S RIGHTS

InfoTEKA is an organization started in 2009 with a view to developing equality between women and men and a life free from all forms of violence and discrimination for women and girls in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It takes part in various networks against the trafficking of human beings and the use of rape as a war crime.

It’s principal aim is to improve the quality of life for women and girls in working towards the achievement of legal rights guaranteed by the Constitution, a law concerning gender equality and other laws and treaties to be ratified by parliament. The organization needs administrative help in order to achieve these projects which are, firstly, actions to denounce all forms of violence and discrimination caused by the family, gender differences, sexual orientation, religion etc. Secondly it works towards supporting equality in education, in the workplace, freedom of speech, political participation, health etc. Its information center plans to develop training sessions, conferences, publications and research on women’s condition in Bosnia.
Thanks to the generosity of the artists, volunteers and audiences who attended our Gala on May 7th at the Cabaret Sauvage in Paris, this was a great success (www.medwomensfund.org/fr/gala.html)

The Mediterranean Women’s Fund has contracted to attribute all of the funds raised on this occasion to a French project which aims to support the end to violence against women (a nationally important event “la grande cause” for the French government in 2010). The takings were given to the organization AFRICA whose actions are aimed at preventing violence towards women in popular areas by passing on egalitarian values and respect for human beings whatever their sex or origins.

THE TRANSMISSION OF FEMINIST AND SECULAR IDEAS

AFRICA has taken on the fight against two important problems: sexism and racism. This organization has developed many activities to promote social relationships:

• A plan of action concerning information and access to legal rights through the setting up of many drop-in centers providing access to social workers and groups concerning legal rights as well as language workshops in the areas of the Courneuve, Saint Ouen and Drancy;

• Proposing women’s groups by means of a shared breakfast, as well as a drop-in center specifically dealing with issues around violence;

• Proposing educational support for young people including help with homework and tutoring for secondary school pupils;

• Awareness action programs against sexism and racism by the use of a Cultural Café where anti-sexist artistic workshops for children take place alongside other artistic activities and mixed manual workshops as well as conferences and debates on issues concerning racism and sexism.

Their current project is to work on the transmission of feminist struggles since, according to the leaders “this is the means to inform young women about feminist ideas; effectively the majority of them know nothing about the struggles that their elders have fought and imagine that everything has been handed to them automatically; for example concerning fights against religious intolerance many girls think that this is only a fight against Islam. Showing them the struggles that other feminists have undertaken, for example in France for the legalization of contraception and abortion, against Christian fundamentalists, illustrates this point”.

If you wish to read about the other projects, please visit our information page on www.medwomensfund.org
**THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF WOMEN’S FUNDS MET IN MAY AT OULAN-BATOR IN MONGOLIA.** The international network for women’s funds (INWF) is a unique network of women’s funds from both the southern and the northern hemispheres committed to a world of equality and social justice. This included 35 funds for women distributed over all five continents, including the Mediterranean Women’s Fund which is a member of this network, plus four other associated groups. The INWF presented the principles and values which bring together all of these members as follows:

- **Philanthropy is a shared responsibility and opportunity for each of us to give, to receive and to make a difference.** We consider financial resources to be an instrument of social change.
- **We share a common commitment to the redistribution of wealth and financial resources to enable women to fully participate in all aspects of society.**
- **As women’s funds we share a “broadly feminist perspective” within the framework of the universality of human rights.**
- **We believe that listening to women and valuing their experiences is critically important.** We believe that women themselves know best how to design solutions to the problems with which they are faced. We trust and respect their abilities to do this. We have respect for women’s voices and women’s choices.
- **Member funds acknowledge that the world in which we live is deeply divided and unequal in terms of access to resources both within and among nations.** Being funds situated in different parts of the world, we acknowledge the unequal distribution of power, wealth and resources and we are committed to working towards a just and equitable world.

Since its beginnings the Mediterranean Women’s Fund has benefited from the advice and support of more experienced funds. In joining the International Network of Women’s Funds it has gained essential aid for its development: hearing about the different experiences and the discussions on the strategies necessary to be able to reinforce the global women’s movement provides support for its own analyses and opens up new paths of action and reflection.

**THE V-DAY WAS CREATED BY EVE ENSLER** following on from the world-wide success of her play “The vagina monologues” which she wrote after interviews she made with over 200 women of all ages and different origins. It is an international women’s movement which fights against violence perpetrated against women. In Montpellier the takings from a performance on April 27 in the Town Hall were shared between the local Hérault branch of Family Planning, the CIDF, Amnesty International-Women and the Mediterranean Women’s Fund.

**THE CREATION OF UN WOMEN** has just been voted unanimously by the UN General Assembly on July 2nd 2010. This aims to accelerate the reduction in gender inequality and to develop aid for women and girls. The new group comes from the fusion between several programs and funds which are already dedicated to gender equality. The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the office of the special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) will be combined to form UN Women. By uniting together and coordinating their actions with those in favor of women throughout the whole of the UN, UN Women will enable the system as well as governments to improve gender equality, women’s autonomy as well as women’s human rights.

A particular interest of this new group should be directed towards the paragraphs of the resolution concerning the importance of the participation of those in civil society. This should have an increased operational capacity within each country, particularly by cooperating with women’s groups and other organizations working towards gender equality and increased autonomy for women.

The creation of a UN entity for gender equality and women’s empowerment is the result of years of negotiations between member states. It is also and above all the result of the GEAR, the Gender Equality Architecture Reform campaign, which is a network of more than 300 women’s groups and organizations working for human rights and social justice throughout the world, which for four years has been trying to persuade member states and the UN secretary’s office to create a coherently coordinated agency in order that the UN can better achieve its mandate to work towards gender equality.

The actions and means of this new structure will depend on the voluntary contributions of member states. These have agreed that 500 million dollars will be the minimum starting budget required. UN Women will be operational from January 2011.

**THE UNITE CAMPAIGN** to end violence against women, which involves working for several years towards the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, was launched in 2008 by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The campaign calls for governments, civilian society, women’s organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the whole of the UN systems to join forces in order to confront the world-wide pandemic of violence against women and girls (at present approximately 70% of women throughout the world experience physical or sexual violence at least once in their life-time). The initial aim of the “Say NO – Unite” campaign is to reach 100,000 actions by March 2010 and to have a million actions by the end of the year. The actions which are highlighted could include for example awareness programs in schools, defense actions or financial support for programs aiming to combat violence against women and girls. For the moment the heads of state and ministers of 69 governments have added their names to the UN campaign.

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**WHY DO WE NEED A MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN’S FUND?**

Belonging to the same cultural area, under the influence of three monotheistic religions, women from the Mediterranean region are subjected to a common form of patriarchy and despite living in apparently very different situations, share many similar aspects of their condition. Whether they come from the southern or the northern shores of the Mediterranean, women know that they must not only fight to obtain equality but also to strengthen their existing rights which have been obtained thanks to their tenacity and their struggles.

They act in a climate of general regression which is the effect of radical conservative movements in societies undergoing changes and they are experiencing many difficulties in finding the necessary funding for their actions at a local or regional level. This is why two years ago women from North Africa and Southern Europe have taken the initiative to create a Mediterranean Women’s Fund whose aim is to help with improving women’s condition and to promote gender equality throughout all those countries in the Mediterranean region.
I WISH TO DONATE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN WOMEN’S FUND  
Apt 74 - 47 place du Millénaire - 34000 Montpellier France

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