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Millennium Goals Conference and a Gala Fundraiser for Women's cause

BACKGROUND

One of the United Nations Millennium Goals was to cut hunger by half by 2015. In reality the number of people going hungry has actually increased worldwide. Want to know why? Then come and listen to the Father of Green Revolution. Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, the world famous Indian agricultural scientist, scholar and humanitarian, will be honored by McMaster University with an Honorary Degree at the Faculty of Science Convocation to be held June 14, 2011.

The late Mexican geneticist, Norman Borlaug's miracle wheat combined with Swaminathan's genius in mobilizing Indian government, scientists, farmers and public opinion is credited for solving India's massive food problem and for increasing food production worldwide. These two men started what is commonly known as the Green Revolution which saved hundreds of millions from starvation during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Professor Swaminathan has won many awards and honors including world food prize and honorary degrees from over sixty universities from around the world including Canada. He is nominated for Nobel Prize.

Professor Swaminathan is Chair of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (Chennai) and currently a member of the Indian Upper house (Rajyasabha).

At McMaster, Professor Swaminathan will speak at the Millennium Goals Conference on June 11th, attend a major Gala Fundraiser for Women's cause on June 12th, deliver Annual Bertrand Russell Peace Lecture on June 13th and will receive honorary degree on June 14th at McMaster's Science convocation at the Hamilton Place.

The Gala Fundraiser is for Mahila Shanti Sena (MSS), a grassroots social movement centered on Gandhian principles of peace and non-violent action. The MSS has been organizing and rallying women to assert their needs and secure their political and social rights in the Indian states of Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Tripura, and West Bengal over the last 10 years.

The training camps that work to teach women skills and tactics for non-violent conflict resolution and change rely overwhelmingly on volunteers and the small financial contributions of the women themselves. The MSS women have peacefully managed the great victory of organizing themselves in ways that cut across caste, class, religious, political, and socio-economical differences within small and rural communities.

While the gala is intended to showcase and celebrate the great successes pioneered by the women of Mahila Shanti Sena, it is also meant to encourage an inter-cultural understanding of the struggles women face in the 21st century and facilitate local community partnerships.

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