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MEDIA RELEASE

Celebrated Filmmaker Deepa Mehta marks International Women's Day with PSA for YWCA Canada, urging women experiencing domestic violence to seek help

Toronto, March 5, 2009 –In recognition of International Women's Day on March 8, Genie-Award-winning and Academy-Award-nominated filmmaker Deepa Mehta has created a Public Service Announcement for YWCA Canada, the country's single largest provider of shelter services for women, urging women experiencing domestic violence to get the help they need.

"We are thrilled to have Deepa Mehta's support of our efforts on this issue," says YWCA Canada CEO Paulette Senior. "We know from our work on the ground that incidents of domestic abuse escalate as the economy falters, and we're experiencing the toughest economic times of this century. With jobs and affordable housing scarce, and a paucity of affordable childcare spaces, women tend to stay longer in shelter and require more post-shelter services."

"During research for my latest film, *Heaven on Earth*, one fact became very apparent to me: domestic abuse knows no cultural boundaries, no race, no class," says Mehta. "Women, men, children and families are affected every day by domestic abuse in our communities."

Mehta began investigating violence against women while working on *Heaven on Earth*, a poignant portrayal of a young woman struggling as a new immigrant while dealing with an abusive husband. The March 10 release of the DVD – part of Mongrel Media's Cinema for Social Change, an initiative to raise awareness on human rights issues through film - is timed with International Women's Day, a global event celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

This year International Women's Day arrives amidst a recession that has left the country ravaged with record job losses, mortgage foreclosures and the collapse of entire industries, translating into more tension at kitchen tables than politicians care to invoke.

And while the recession and unemployment do not cause domestic abuse in and of themselves, they do exacerbate situations where violence is already a factor.

“As household budgets grow tighter and tighter women are less likely to have the means and feel empowered enough to escape violence and lead independent lives,” says Senior, “Deepa Mehta’s message on International Women’s Day is a strong reminder to women that they are not alone and help is available. But broader assistance is essential, further investments in social infrastructure and social capital are necessary during these challenging times to ensure women, their families and communities have the supports they need to weather the storm.”

To view Deepa Mehta’s PSA online, please visit www.ywacacanada.ca . For more information about *Heaven on Earth*, visit www.mongrelmedia.com.

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For further information on YWCA Canada and its Member Associations, or to set up an interview with Paulette Senior, CEO of YWCA Canada, contact Laura Tilley, Communications & Marketing Coordinator at 416.962-8881 x 233.

For further information on *Heaven on Earth*, Deepa Mehta or Mongrel Media, please contact Jenna Cloughley, Marketing & Promotions Coordinator, Mongrel Media, 416.516.9775 x 230

About YWCA Canada:

YWCA Canada is the country’s oldest largest women's multi-service organization. With 33 Member Associations operating in more than 400 districts and communities across the country, our Turning Point Programs for Women™ - which address personal safety, economic security and well-being – reach out to 1 million women and girls in nine provinces and one territory. YWCA is the largest national provider of shelter to women, serving 25,000 women, children and teen girls including 6,000 fleeing domestic violence each year. We are the largest provider of literacy, life skills, employment and counselling programs in the country, and the second largest provider of childcare services. YWCA Canada is a member association of the World YWCA which unites 25 million women and girls worldwide and spans 125 countries. For more information about YWCA Canada and our Member Associations, visit www.ywacacanada.ca.