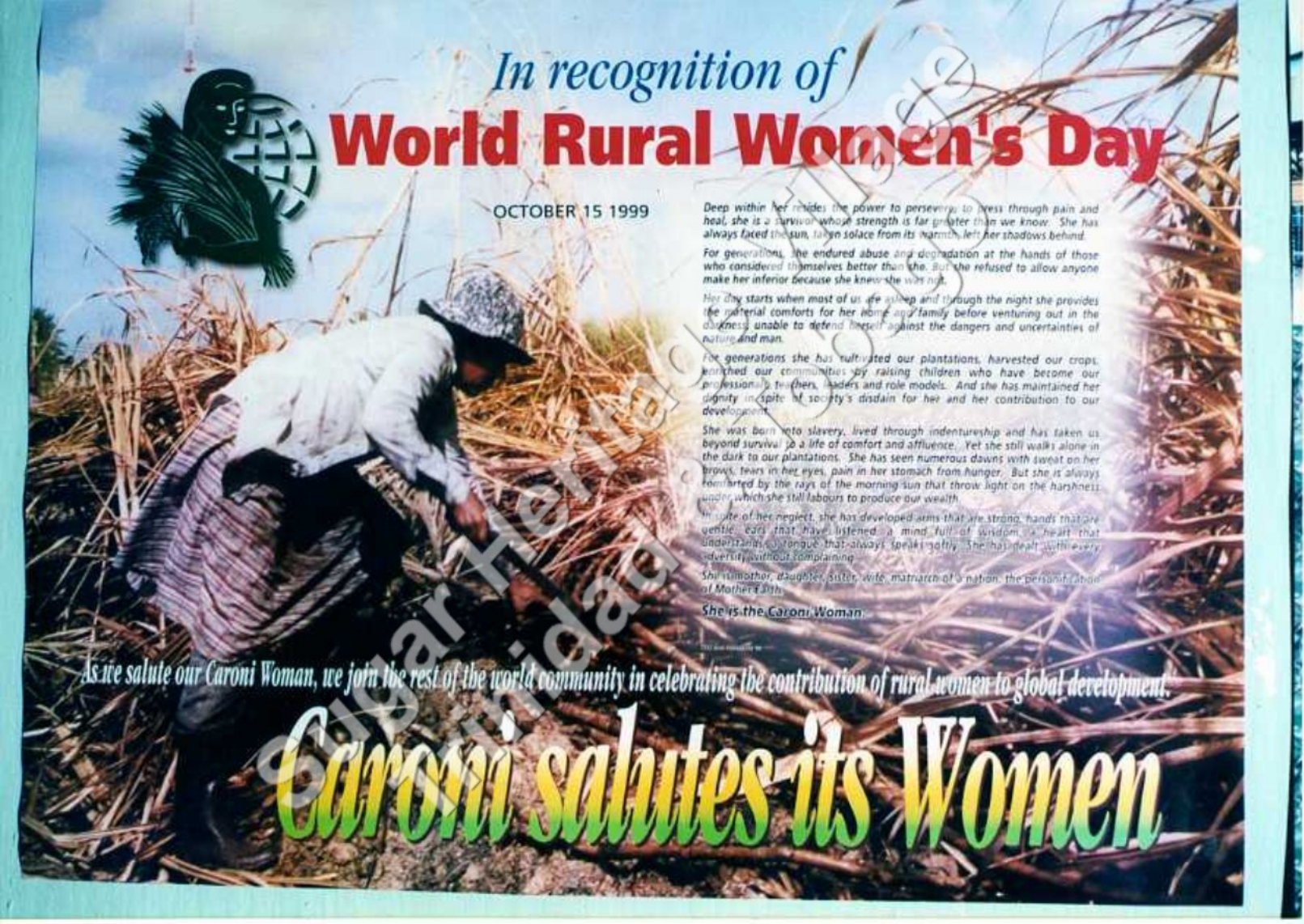




In recognition of **World Rural Women's Day**

OCTOBER 15 1999

Deep within her resides the power to persevere, to press through pain and heal, she is a survivor whose strength is far greater than we know. She has always faced the sun, taken solace from its warmth, left her shadows behind.

For generations, she endured abuse and degradation at the hands of those who considered themselves better than she. But she refused to allow anyone make her inferior because she knew she was not.

Her day starts when most of us are asleep and through the night she provides the material comforts for her home and family before venturing out in the darkness, unable to defend herself against the dangers and uncertainties of nature and man.

For generations she has cultivated our plantations, harvested our crops, enriched our communities by raising children who have become our professional teachers, leaders and role models. And she has maintained her dignity in spite of society's disdain for her and her contribution to our development.

She was born into slavery, lived through indentureship and has taken us beyond survival to a life of comfort and affluence. Yet she still walks alone in the dark to our plantations. She has seen numerous dawn's with sweat on her brows, tears in her eyes, pain in her stomach from hunger. But she is always comforted by the rays of the morning sun that throw light on the harshness under which she still labours to produce our wealth.

In spite of her neglect, she has developed arms that are strong, hands that are gentle, ears that have listened, a mind full of wisdom, a heart that understands, a tongue that always speaks softly. She has dealt with every adversity without complaining.

She is mother, daughter, sister, wife, matriarch of a nation, the personification of Mother Earth.

She is the Caroni Woman.

As we salute our Caroni Woman, we join the rest of the world community in celebrating the contribution of rural women to global development.

Caroni salutes its Women