

MADRE

Fall 2011 www.madre.org

speaks



THE REAL MEANING

OF SISTERHOOD



MADRE

**Demanding Rights,
Resources & Results
for Women Worldwide**

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From the Executive Director YIFAT SUSSKIND

Dear Friends,

My son started the fifth grade this fall. Recently, he came home fired up to tell me what he had learned. “Did you know,” he began, “that a triangle is the most stable shape you can make?” He showed me how the three sides lock together, keeping the structure sturdy.

I thought about you. Together—you, MADRE and our sisters—we make a triangle that stands strong. That’s how we’ve changed so many lives and communities across the world.

Many organizations talk about having partners. But what does that really mean? I can tell you what that means for MADRE.



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It means that the women we work with are not “beneficiaries” of our programs or “aid recipients”: they are our sisters in the hard, joyful work of changing the world one community at a time. It means sustaining the work they do to protect their families and build healthier, safer communities. It means celebrating achievements with them. And it means being there when they call in an emergency and supporting them through the hardest times. It means friendship.

And it means providing you with ways to put your principles into action and support some of the most courageous women in the world.

In this issue of *MADRE Speaks*, I’m excited to share with you some of the ways that this is happening. The heartfelt messages of encouragement from supporters like you that have strengthened our sisters. The new relationships between our sisters in different parts of the world that we have made possible.

We are all searching for ways to build the world we want to live in—and we are getting there. We see signs of it all the time, through the wins that the women’s movement has helped create. These changes depend on joining forces with women in local communities worldwide. Individuals can galvanize others and provide leadership, but creating positive change requires movements of people. And in that vital work, we each have a role to play.

MADRE is so proud to be a hub in this vibrant network of activists worldwide—one side of the triangle.

Thank you for keeping us strong,

MADRE Speaks Volume XXV, #2

MADRE’s mission is to advance women’s human rights by meeting immediate needs and building lasting solutions for communities in crisis. MADRE works in partnership with community-based women organizations in these program areas: peace building, women’s health/combating violence against women, and economic and environmental justice. ■ Since we began in 1983, MADRE has delivered over 28 million dollars worth of support to community-based women’s organizations in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Balkans and the United States.

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COVER PHOTO: Lucy Mulenkei, Indigenous Information Network and Rose Cunningham, Wangki Tangni, MADRE’s sister organizations.
©Henry Chalfant



Women's Movement *Wins in 2011*

What were you doing on January 1, 2011? Perhaps you were looking ahead to the new year, making plans and predictions for what was yet to come. Since then, so much has happened. Some of it, nobody saw coming. Some things, people had barely dared hope for.

This year, thousands of people in the Middle East rose up to demand an end to repressive government and a say in their futures. The world welcomed the new country of South Sudan, the culmination of a years-long peace process. A global network of activists sprang into action to thwart a policy that threatened Afghan women.

What do all these things have in common? These successes, and others, were made possible by women—in their local communities and in global centers of power—who came together to demand change.

At MADRE, we often focus on the severe human rights violations that women face every day. We make sure that women have the support they need to survive abuse. And we work with our sister organizations to end violations of women's human rights for good. Making that kind of deep, lasting change requires joining hands with you, our sister organizations and allies around the world. Let's take a look at what we've accomplished together this year as we prepare to make even more progress in 2012.

Women Grow the Seeds of the Arab Spring

The protests of the Arab Spring took the world by storm. They upended regimes that had reigned for decades. But

most media headlines missed the role of women at the center of it all.

Despite Western stereotypes of Arab women as one-dimensional victims of oppression, women played a crucial leadership role in all of the Arab revolutions—demanding labor rights, civil and political rights and more.

And women, often young women, sounded the call that brought people to the streets. In Egypt, Asmaa Mahfouz posted a video calling on people to demonstrate on January 25—and it went viral. It started a wave that could not be stopped. And that wave continued, day after day, spreading through the region, because women kept its momentum going. Our partners at the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq have defied threats and violence to continue their months of protest, demanding real democracy and an end to corruption.

Women know that their work is not over when an old regime crumbles. It continues as they confront the rise to power of conservative forces whose vision for their countries leaves no place for women as leaders. Our work ahead is to stand by the brave women who helped topple dictatorships and help them protect the gains they've made.



© Tiffany Easthom

Working for the Peaceful Creation of South Sudan

A generation of Sudanese people grew up in war. Women bore the brunt, struggling to sustain their families through violence. But through it all, they organized to demand peace.

The years-long peace process peaked with the creation of the world's newest nation in July—South Sudan. With communities still recovering from decades of conflict, many worried that the split would trigger a slide back into war. But women's organizations refused to let that happen.

Sudanese women worked tirelessly to preserve peace in the months leading up to the vote that created South Sudan. Doing their part, our partners at Zenab for Women in Development educated voters, trained women as election monitors and spoke out for peace.

People are still at risk. In the past months, violent attacks have wracked communities. But peace is more than just a one-time goal—it must be nurtured and lived. So the Sudanese women's movement continues to work for peace and for protection of women's human rights—on both sides of the new border. Now, Zenab for Women in Development is hard at work advocating for women's human rights in the review of the Sudanese constitution.

Protecting Women's Shelters in Afghanistan

Naseema ran away from her husband after she saw him murder a woman in broad daylight. She knew that he would kill her for having reported him to the police. Thanks to your support of MADRE's Afghan Women's Survival Fund, she and her children found refuge at a shelter. Then, the brave women there helped her escape out of the country—to save her life.

Under a law proposed by the Afghan government earlier this year, Naseema would have been forced to return to her husband.

The new law would have removed control of women's shelters from the courageous women's organizations that now run them. Instead, government officials would decide which women would be permitted entry to shelters. They would force women to undergo virginity tests and even send them back to abusive husbands.

Women's rights activists, in Afghanistan and beyond, mobilized to prevent this terrible move. They pressured government leaders worldwide to take a stand. MADRE Executive Director Yifat Susskind published a letter to the editor in *The New York Times*, highlighting the shelters as a crucial safe haven for women fleeing violence.

And we won: the bill was changed, allowing shelters to remain under the control of women's organizations. Thanks to the mobilization, Afghan women still have the freedom to turn—no questions asked—to shelters where they can escape life-threatening violence and abuse.

Launch of UN Women

For decades, advocates fought for the full recognition of women's human rights. The United Nations was a key site of this struggle. There, women negotiated landmark treaties to address violations of women's human rights and demanded a space for women's voices at decision-making tables.

Yet women's human rights endeavors at the UN were chronically underfunded. UN bodies set up to address women's issues were small, disjointed and lacked authority.

All of that began to change this year with the launch of UN Women, an agency dedicated to guaranteeing women's

human rights. For years, activists worldwide had organized to make UN Women a reality. Finally, the pressure reached a tipping point.

Many challenges lie ahead. Countries have been slow to direct funding to the fledgling agency. This is a serious blow to an agency mandated to improve conditions for half of the world's people. But just as we fought to create UN Women, we will stand by the agency to keep it strong—for the sake of women worldwide counting on it.



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Indigenous Movements Win Human Rights

In Peru, Indigenous Peoples successfully confronted years of exploitation of their land, resources and communities. This year, they won a new law guaranteeing their right to be consulted in all matters that affect them. This right is known as “free, prior and informed consent.” It means Indigenous Peoples must be given sufficient time and information to make decisions about how their land

is used, without coercion of any kind. Indigenous women have demanded this right for years.

If “free, prior and informed consent” were respected worldwide, the results would change all of our lives. Much of the world's natural resources are on Indigenous territories. Indigenous Peoples have mobilized as a last line of defense against harmful environmental practices like deforestation and unsafe oil drilling.

Before the Peruvian law was passed earlier this year, Indigenous women and their families confronted oil corporations by laying their bodies in front of company trucks and shutting down oil fields. Now they've won the protection they deserve, and we need to make sure the new law is upheld.



With each win, the forward momentum continues. You should be proud to be part of a movement that pushes toward a better future. Over the years, the issues may change, but the commitment to peace and justice remains the same.

We work so that our daughters and sons can live healthy and fulfilling lives, guaranteed of their human rights. We fight for our own sakes, so that we can see glimpses of the world we want to live in, in our own lifetimes.

With our sister organizations and with you, MADRE builds a network of thousands of women who rise up to demand rights and secure their futures. We're honored to be a part of this with you. ♦

What do you think was the biggest victory of 2011? Email us at madre@madre.org, and let us know. We'll share some of your suggestions on our website.

Fighting for Sexual Rights Worldwide

Human rights are more than just words on paper. They are alive and evolving through the work that activists do every day. This work allowed sexual rights activists worldwide to achieve major successes this year.

In Uganda, activists denounced a proposed bill that would have imposed the death penalty on gay people, triggering a wave of international pressure that scuttled the bill. There are still those in government looking for the chance to reintroduce this heinous legislation, but they have been dealt a major blow.

And in June, the Human Rights Council issued the first UN resolution to ever focus specifically on violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It recognized that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people are especially vulnerable to discrimination and violence. With this move, the global human rights framework bends towards justice. The same week, in New York, gay couples were finally granted the right to marry, making New York one of six US states to affirm marriage equality.



©Red Lac Trans

“Democracy does not exist without respect for our sexual diversity.”

Letters to Our Sisters

You are part of a vibrant global women's movement. MADRE connects you to the women of our sister organizations in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, and we connect our sisters to one another. Here are just a few ways you've helped make that happen this year.



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In Guatemala, Yifat comforts Betty at her daughter's memorial service (above). Betty, a member of the Women Workers' Committee, has been seeking justice since her daughter was murdered two years ago.

Nearly 5,000 Guatemalan women have been raped and murdered in a decade-long wave of killings. Betty Gonzalez of our sister organization in Guatemala City lives with this horror. Two years ago, her 17-year-old daughter Rosemary was murdered. Our partners at the Women Workers' Committee rallied around Betty, joined by MADRE members who asked us to relay their messages of support.



©Bradley Parker

Dear Betty,

I am thinking of you, in the loss of your daughter Rosemary, the violence and the pain of missing her presence in your daily life. Even though I am very far from Guatemala in miles, I am by your side in spirit. I give you my support from the bottom of my soul so that you will have success in your fight for justice. You are an inspiration for the world.

A warm embrace,

Sue Greene
Lompoc, California

Dear Betty,

I am very moved by your story. You need and deserve justice for your daughter, and I admire your strength and perseverance in getting it. I hope that one day you find peace and can feel a ray of light in your heart when you think of your lovely daughter.

There are people all over the world thinking of you, who share your pain and want justice for Rosemary. I am going to show your photo to my daughters, who are half Guatemalan, so that they can see the strength that Guatemalan women have and feel proud of being Guatemalan.

Pauline Kranendonk
Mother of Nympha and Mayari
Pietershoek, Luxembourg



As famine struck East Africa, our partners at Womankind Kenya mobilized to provide emergency food and water to refugees. Meanwhile, the members of the Women Farmers Union in Sudan, founded by our sister organization Zenab for Women in Development, knew they had to do something.

To Our Sisters at Womankind Kenya,

We stand with you in this time of tragedy and hardship. As women farmers of Sudan, we know what it is like to wait months for rain and to watch our children grow hungry. Every year, when we plant our crops, our families depend on us. Without rain, we have no harvest—we have nothing.

We made our Women Farmers Union so that we could support each other. Before that, the government did not recognize women farmers and gave tools, seeds and training only to the men. So we came together to share our resources and to demand that the government respect our rights.

In eastern Sudan where we live, farming has always been part of our lives. But recently, the droughts have gotten worse, and they come more often. We had to adapt how we farm. This is because of climate change, a danger created mainly by those in the rich countries.

Our friends at MADRE have helped us through the years, when the harvests have been good and also when the rains failed to come. They told us how refugee women and families are fleeing Somalia to Kenya. They told us that what you need are the resources to buy emergency food and water to help them live.

And so we are sending you the money that we saved after our last harvest. Usually, we use these savings to improve our communities. Last year, we put a roof on the local school. But this year, your needs are greater than ours. We are able to send you this money because we joined together as women farmers and made ourselves stronger. We hope you will be able to use this gift to feed your children and strengthen yourselves as women.

We send this to you with our blessings. As mothers and as farmers, the future depends on us.

In solidarity,

Fatima Ahmed, Director of Zenab for Women in Development
& the Women Farmers Union, *Sudan*

When I recently traveled to Kenya, I met with Hubbie Hussein Al-Haji (top left), director of Womankind Kenya, MADRE's newest sister organization. I carried with me a gift from our sisters at Zenab for Women in Development and a letter that the director Fatima Ahmed (below) had asked me to deliver. I felt so honored to be able to connect these two women—and to be able to share their story here. -Yifat



Our recent trip to Kenya brought so many of our friends together. Rose Cunningham of our Nicaraguan sister organization Wangki Tangni joined with Lucy Mulenkei of the Indigenous Information Network to lead human rights trainings with Indigenous women. Longtime supporter Henry Chalfant documented the trip in photos and videos.



©Henry Chalfant

Dear Lucy,

I am back in Nicaragua and thinking a lot about everything I learned when I visited you in Kenya.

Indigenous women in Nicaragua and Kenya may live far apart, but we are close in our hearts. We fight in the same struggles. We may be denied the right to clean water, to our land or to a voice in policies that affect us—but we never stop working to make change.

One of the things I am always thinking about is exchange. It is so important to share information and experiences among Indigenous women around the world. Often I see that Indigenous women know quite a bit, but they don't believe they know it. But once we start to discover and reveal all that we know, we can achieve great successes.

Thank you again, Lucy. When we put our hands together, we become stronger. Thank you for strengthening Indigenous women in Kenya and worldwide.

Rose



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Dear Yifat,

I looked forward to the visit to Kenya with confidence that I would come away with new knowledge and with some measure of hope that, in spite of our current seemingly insurmountable difficulties, it might still be possible to change some things for the better. I was not disappointed.

MADRE approaches this work with great sensitivity, careful to follow the initiative of local women. You partner with women who have seen the possibility for a more fulfilling life for themselves and their families. You work to help them implement reforms and in their struggle for their rights.

Thank you,
Henry

Top: Rose and Lucy share a moment with Yifat during a human rights training for Indigenous women in Kenya.

Bottom: Henry Chalfant, longtime MADRE friend and supporter, plants a tree in Kenya.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS Fall 2011



©Andre Lambertson

Introducing a New MADRE Partner **KENYA: Famine Relief**

MADRE is proud to announce our new sister organization, Womankind Kenya. Based in northeastern Kenya, they come from the same Somali pastoralist communities that are most affected by the current famine. Together, we are making sure that refugee families receive lifesaving aid. With your support, Womankind Kenya has been able to reach nearly 2,700 of these families, providing them with emergency supplies of water, maize, beans and cooking oils.



©Womankind

With the MADRE support you make possible, Womankind Kenya was able to deliver emergency food aid to Somali refugees fleeing the famine.

NICARAGUA: Harvesting Hope

With our partners at Wangki Tangni, MADRE recently delivered seeds to nearly 150 Indigenous women. With training and support provided through MADRE and our sister organization, the women had a great harvest. They were able to feed their families and sell surplus produce to pay for necessities like children's school fees.

Shoes for Haiti: In July, we delivered nearly 900 pairs of shoes to women and girls at KOFAVIV, MADRE's sister organization. Without shoes, many young girls who live alone in the camps are unable to walk to the KOFAVIV Center for a warm meal and for other services they urgently need. The generosity of the Avon Foundation helped us to change all of this. Now KOFAVIV can offer these girls an essential circle of support.

HAITI: Women's Voices in National Legislation

Since the earthquake, MADRE and our sister organization KOFAVIV have demanded that women's voices be heard in policymaking. We recently enjoyed a great success: KOFAVIV was invited by the Haitian Women's Ministry to provide input on new legislation to address and prevent violence against women. By participating in this process, KOFAVIV can help ensure that the bill protects *all* Haitian women from violence, including the poorest women who are still living in the dangerous environment of the tent camps.

SUDAN: A Tractor for Women Farmers

With MADRE support, the Women Farmers Union of our sister organization Zenab for Women in Development has purchased a tractor! Farm work that took days by hand will now take only hours. The women will be able to raise bigger harvests of nutritious, organic crops and earn more income to invest in their communities.



©Zenab



©MADRE

GUATEMALA: Indigenous Women's Political Participation

For the recent elections in Guatemala, MADRE worked to amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples with Muixil, our sister organization. Reaching out to women in the rural region of El Quiche, MADRE supported Muixil in organizing a series of trainings on political participation. Indigenous women learned about their fundamental rights, including the right to vote.



©OWFI

IRAQ: Women Demand Democracy

MADRE's partners at the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq have led months of peaceful demonstrations for real democracy, jobs and an end to corruption. Violent forces have attempted to silence them. In June, protesters suffered broken bones and knife wounds. Several women were violently groped and stripped of their clothing. MADRE launched an international petition gathering thousands of signatures. We denounced the use of sexual violence to terrorize women who dare to speak out.

PALESTINE: Meeting of Midwives

Thanks to your support, MADRE was able to bring more than two dozen Palestinian and Israeli midwives together for a workshop. These are women who refuse to be enemies, working together to share knowledge, skills and friendship. Some of the women traveled five hours to meet in a small town in the West Bank. There, they strengthened their work to ensure that every mother has a healthy, joyful birthing experience despite the conflict that surrounds them.



©Midwives for Peace

Palestinian and Israeli midwives thank you for your support in enabling them to promote the health and rights of women and create peace.

HAITI: Blow the Whistle on Violence against Women

MADRE and KOFVIV are working together to distribute whistles to women living in Haiti's displacement camps. Without secure shelter, lighting or police patrols, women face an epidemic of rape. But a woman with a whistle in her hand has a simple, powerful tool to call for help when she faces an attacker.

Donate whistles and help save a woman's life. Donations of items like bandages, over-the-counter medications, soap and more are also needed for health and hygiene kits. Visit www.madre.org/blowthewhistle to find out more.



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Thank You

Thank you for your enduring support—from me, from all of us at MADRE and from our sisters all around the world. You have stood with us in the hardest times, and you have been with us to celebrate achievements. That's what makes us all a part of the MADRE family.

Your gifts mean so much to the women worldwide who are fighting for their rights and for the survival of their communities. All of what we do, all of the successes we've described here and all of the victories that happen every day—none of it could happen without you. So thank you.

2012 is coming, and we're already mapping out more victories with our sister organizations. We're so excited for where our path will take us. Thank you for coming with us and making this journey possible.

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Looking for a secure, hassle-free way to support women's rights worldwide *without writing another check*? Become a MADRE Lifeline.

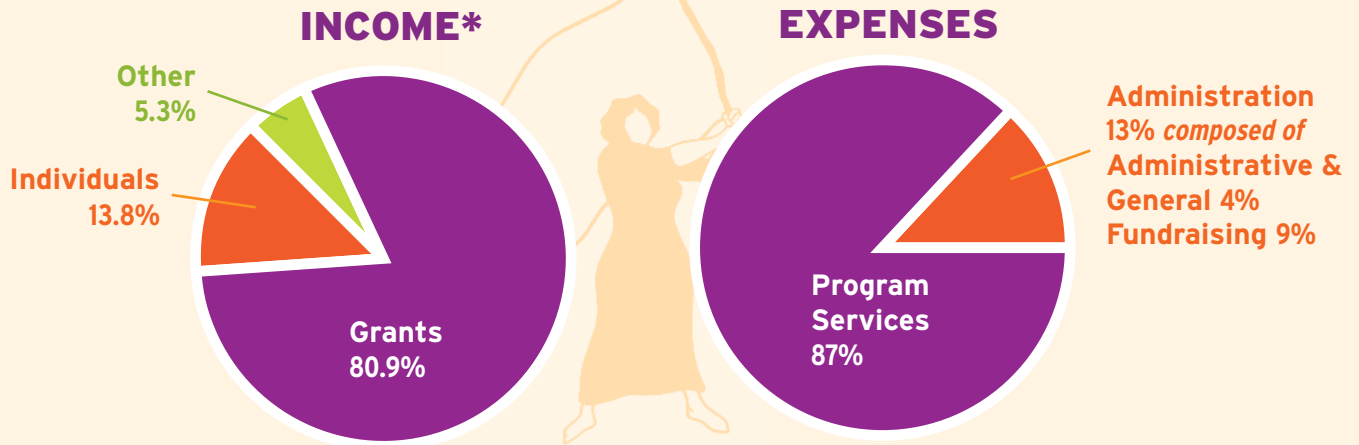
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Fiscal Year January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010



* \$1,108,889 is the value of "in-kind" medical and humanitarian shipments sent during this fiscal year. This category is not included in the above income totals as it is not considered income by the Internal Revenue Service; however, it is a very important source of support for MADRE.

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