



MADRE

Fall 2019

speaks



**More Powerful
Together**



MADRE

Fighting for Feminist Futures

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A Message from Yifat

Dear Friend,

We all need community — it's an essential part of being human. That's especially true today, in a world of rising autocrats, worsening climate change and war. The problems we face are too big for any one person to take on. These urgent times demand that we reach out across barriers to build a larger and more powerful global community of changemakers.

Your support of MADRE is a crucial part of that work. You help us create spaces for women leaders, who gather and exchange ideas, across borders and experiences. When they come together, they tell their stories and build strategies, cultivating solidarity and lasting change. They foster friendships and hone solutions that help them transform their communities.

In this newsletter, you'll see just what this global community-building looks like. You'll learn about our recent Indigenous women's delegation to North Dakota, where women from around the world discussed the threats extractive industries pose to their communities and deepened their work together to confront this danger.

You'll also read about our partner Muna Luqman, from Yemen, who mediated between armed groups to save an orphanage of children and organized an exchange between local women and youth to bring peace and clean water to communities embroiled in violence.

Your MADRE membership makes these and other achievements possible. Your generosity creates opportunities for women to step up as leaders in their communities, to learn from each other, and make innovative change.

Thank you for standing with us as we realize our vision of a just, peaceful and sustainable world. With you, we will continue to support grassroots women as they create lasting solutions in their communities — and worldwide. I hope you find inspiration from these women. I know I do.



©Terry Allen

In solidarity,

Yifat Susskind
Executive Director

*On the cover:
The women of MADRE's
partner organization in
Kenya, the Indigenous
Information Network, work
together to build stronger,
healthier communities
where all people thrive.
©Poppy Miyonga*

Power in Unity: Confronting Extractive Industries

Indigenous partners from around the world gathered together in North Dakota — rediscovering their connections and revitalizing their strength. (left to right) Rose Cunningham, Nicaragua; Ana Ceto Chavez, Guatemala; Sana Ibn Bari, Israel; Kandi White, Indigenous Environmental Network Native Energy and Climate Campaign Director; Yasso Kanti Bhattachan, Nepal; Lucy Mullenkei, Kenya; Remedios Uriana, Colombia. ©Ayse Gursoz

When we come together to exchange information, activist strategies and moral support, we strengthen our movements for social change. This approach has guided MADRE's work from the very beginning, and over our 36 years, we have been inspired by the leadership of Indigenous women facing down the ravages of climate change and mobilizing to sustain their communities.

In April, MADRE organized an international delegation of Indigenous women — from Kenya, Israel, Nepal, Colombia, Guatemala and Nicaragua. We partnered with the US-based Indigenous Environmental Network to bring them to North Dakota. There we met with local leaders confronting the devastating impact of mega oil and gas projects on the Fort Berthold Reservation, home to the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara nations.

We saw the oil pumpjacks that scarred the land, rising and falling relentlessly. We saw the natural gas flares that burned through the days and lit up the nights, venting noxious fumes into the air. We saw the site of a 2014 pipeline spill of brine — the water byproduct from fracking operations — that corroded an entire hillside where today almost nothing can grow. We heard from local Indigenous women caring for communities amidst worsening health threats and environmental dangers.

< Ana Ceto, of our partner organization MUIXIL in Guatemala, knows firsthand the devastation that hydroelectric dams create and how communities must organize to respond. ©Ayse Gursoz



Above, Lucy Mullenkei (right), our partner from the Indigenous Information Network in Kenya, shared a statement of Indigenous women's solidarity, alongside Rose Cunningham from Wangki Tangni in Nicaragua. ©MADRE



Our partners shared their knowledge, expertise, and climate-resilient strategies with Indigenous activists and leaders in North Dakota. They highlighted the ways they have addressed extractive mega projects in their home communities around the world.

For example, Ana Ceto, our partner from the Indigenous women's organization MUIXIL in Guatemala, explained how communities have been displaced by hydroelectric dams, robbing them of their homes and offering no compensation. Or Lucy Mulenkei of Indigenous Information Network in Kenya, shared how gold mining was endangering clean water supplies. Activists exchanged resistance strategies — from legal advocacy to youth organizing to electoral strategy to data gathering and beyond.

Participants promised to continue their solidarity. The very next week, the same delegation traveled to the United Nations, speaking out on what they had just learned, shining a spotlight on the dangers of extractive industries, and presenting policy solutions guided by the expertise of Indigenous women. With your support, MADRE will continue to help sustain Indigenous women's coordinated activism. ♦



Our Indigenous partners at the United Nations, speaking on strategies they discussed during their delegation to North Dakota. ©MADRE



Above, Yasso Kanti Bhattachan, from Nepal, speaks on a panel in North Dakota with fellow MADRE partners and activists. They shared stories and strategies of how their local communities confront extractive industries. ©MADRE

At left, Kandi Mossett (center), from the Indigenous Environmental Network, standing in solidarity with other young leaders from North Dakota. ©Ayse Gursoz

Visit our website at www.madre.org/northdakota to learn more about this delegation — and see powerful photos and videos!

Sharing Stories, Making Change

No Choice but to Resist

In 2016, Colombia signed a peace agreement with the armed rebel group FARC to end decades of war. But the violence isn't over: marginalized communities are still under siege. In particular, Afro-Colombians face immense discrimination, dispossession from their lands, and human rights abuses — and those who speak out are continually at risk. They encounter death threats from armed groups vying for control over their land, while their own government criminalizes their human rights activism.

MADRE recently joined with our local partners at Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN — Black People's Process) to publish *No Choice But to Resist*, a collection of testimonies of Afro-Colombian women human rights defenders. We know that amidst these dangers, broadcasting the voices of these brave women is a powerful way to help keep them safe.

Here are excerpts from Afro-Colombian human rights defenders Julia, Luz and Danelly. View more of their stories and others' at madre.org/nochoicebuttoresist, and learn how to spread the word about their vital work.

Danelly (below right) has been stalked, surveilled and photographed by unknown men because of her activism, and she is forced to travel with bodyguards. MADRE calls on Colombia's Public Prosecutor Office to launch an immediate investigation into this harassment and ensure Danelly's protection.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Write an appeal to Colombia's Public Prosecutor's Office.

Tell them to launch an investigation into the harassment of Danelly Estupiñan. Let them know she deserves protection.

Sr. Fabio Espitia Garzón
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"In some of these regions, people have accepted violence as a natural way of life. [...] Women human rights defenders risk their lives to protect their communities when no one else is doing so. This is why I continue my own fight to protect and help them."

-Julia Eva Cogollo Cabarcas

"You have to be in a reality different from your own [when advocating for just policies]. You have to enter this society's world, this government's world, in order to defend your own world."

-Luz Mary Rosero Garces



"In Colombia, all human rights defenders are considered criminals."

-Danelly Estupiñan



Your Support in Action



©Food 4 Humanity

Mobilizing Urgent Aid in Yemen

“I didn’t think about the risks. I just knew I had to do something,” said Muna Luqman, MADRE’s partner and founder of Food4Humanity, as she shared the harrowing story of her mediation between armed groups in the city of Taiz, Yemen.

Muna described how children were trapped in an orphanage in the crossfire between the rebels and the military. They had run out of food and water, and their caretakers desperately called on Muna for help. With MADRE’s partner

organization, Food4Humanity, Muna had previously supported the orphanage, so they knew they could count on her.

Muna jumped into action, spending days going back-and-forth between the armed groups, who gave little thought to children trapped in the fighting. Determined to find a way to bring these children to safety, she won concessions from the fighters. First, she was allowed to bring the children food and water; next, she secured safe passage to evacuate them to a safer area.

As Muna’s story shows, time and time again, women take the lead to protect communities and secure peace. They know firsthand who is in danger and what they need — and what it will take to achieve lasting peace. That’s why MADRE is proud to partner with women like Muna.

“You can just imagine the trauma that these children went through. It’s things like this that keep me saying: I have to do something, I have to do something.”

Women Take the Lead

When the Yemeni civil war started, many foreign humanitarian organizations fled, leaving gaping holes in resources and aid for communities. Soon civilians were trapped in Taiz. As Muna described, “People didn’t have water or food. There was bombing from the sky and fighting on the ground.”

As a longstanding community leader, “it was normal and natural for me to step up and take initiative,” Muna told us. She founded the organization Food4Humanity, our partner, to push for peace and meet immediate humanitarian needs.

MADRE became the first international organization to provide Muna’s organization with funding. Thanks to members’ support, we sent food, water and mosquito nets to protect against deadly malaria. And together, we helped Muna and Food4Humanity bring clean water and peace to two struggling communities.

In the remote area of Taiz known as Al-Haymatain, those two communities stood in conflict: the water station both relied on was broken, and the men in each area refused to

work together to solve this life-threatening problem. Thankfully, Muna stepped in. With MADRE’s support, she brought together women and youth from the two communities to strategize and rally the support needed to fix the water station. With the guidance of these grassroots activists, community leaders signed a local peace agreement and formed a council to prevent future conflicts.

Your support makes stories like these possible! ♦

Facts on the War in Yemen

■ In late 2014, rebels took over government institutions in Yemen’s capital. In March 2015, a US-backed coalition of states led by Saudi Arabia launched a military offensive against the rebels in support of the Yemeni government.

■ The US has played a devastating role in escalating the war in Yemen, providing the Saudi coalition with intelligence, fuel, technical assistance, and billions of dollars’ worth of arms. The US and Saudi-led blockade has prevented essential aid, including food and medicine, from reaching starving and sick communities, and the war has claimed thousands of civilian lives.

■ Saudi-led airstrikes, which have benefited from US support, have caused the majority of civilian casualties. Many of these attacks — which strike homes, weddings, schools, and hospitals — could constitute war crimes, in which the US is complicit.

■ The conflict has caused a severe humanitarian crisis, destroying infrastructure, schools, and hospitals and pushing the country to the brink of famine.

■ This year, the conflict has intensified in Taiz, which has been under attack for more than three years, causing thousands of deaths and injuries, and worsening the region’s water shortages.

■ An estimated 16 million people lack access to clean water and sanitation. In Al-Haymatain, a remote area in Taiz, women and girls must often walk for up to 8 hours each day simply to access water.



Women dance together at a MADRE-organized exchange © MADRE

Reflections on Our Interconnectedness

©Jeyhoun Allebagh



By Elyse Lightman Samuels, MADRE Board Member

“We are all connected,” said Lucy Mullenkei, Executive Director of the Indigenous Information Network (IIN) in Kenya and longtime partner of MADRE, who spoke at a gathering hosted by MADRE Board Co-Chair, Anne Hess.

When Lucy meets with women from rural Indigenous communities to talk about climate change and human rights, she leans into the theme of interconnectedness.

The message that we are more powerful when we work together was woven through her remarks as she addressed a small gathering of MADRE members.

Lucy described how women experience climate crisis firsthand, such as the severe weather that causes droughts and decimates crops. IIN teaches women to work together to plant trees around their homes and sustain small farms. They also help women build roofs that can harvest rainwater, so water is available for farming and livestock.

These are huge steps forward: instead of spending nearly two-thirds of their time gathering muddy water from the river, women can grow nutritious food from their family farms. They can raise money by selling vegetables and send their daughters to school, rather than trading them for a dowry in early marriage to make ends meet.

Lucy reminded us, thoughtfully and directly, that our actions in the US impact climate crisis the world over, with particularly harsh impacts on rural and Indigenous women. Policymakers in the US and worldwide must hear from women experiencing climate crisis firsthand in their communities. Women have the solutions, declared Lucy, and we must uplift their voices.

“True partnerships begin with trust,” Lucy said, referencing MADRE’s long-term partnership with IIN. “When we began working with MADRE, it was like a sister-to-sister way. They became family. Everybody is important, and everybody has a place. That’s why we feel comfortable, and why we have worked together for over 15 years.”



Our partner, Lucy Mullenkei, and MADRE board member Anne Hess. ©MADRE

Many of us wonder what difference we can make, as one individual, to help communities under threat or to confront global emergencies like the climate crisis. Without question, providing our financial resources, when we’re able to do so, matters a great deal. So does listening, learning, lending our voices, and standing with one another.

When we recognize and embrace our interconnectedness, we move closer to MADRE’s vision: a world where all people enjoy the fullest range of individual and collective human rights; where resources are shared equitably and sustainably; where women participate effectively in all aspects of society; and where people have a meaningful say in policies that affect their lives. This vision starts with each of us. ♦

Gatherings

MADRE’s close-knit gatherings offer the chance for members to connect and provide supporters an insider’s view on our work.

You, too, can get involved! If you would like to host a MADRE gathering, please email Megan Richardson at madrespeaks@madre.org for more information!

MADRE

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Be a Lifeline

Our partners around the world count on the MADRE support members make possible. To make a difference each month, join our Lifeline program and sign up to be a recurring donor. You choose whatever amount is meaningful to you, and MADRE will automatically receive your contribution each month. It's a simple — but powerful — way for you to create lasting change for women worldwide.

You'll join the circle of supporters we count on to maintain our vital work to meet urgent needs and create lasting change worldwide: from sending humanitarian aid for Syrian women and families, to providing seeds, tools and training to women farmers in Nicaragua confronting climate change, to sustaining the work of our partners across the globe.

To become a Lifeline member please visit <https://www.madre.org/lifelinetoday> or email Megan Richardson, Membership Coordinator, at madrespeaks@madre.org.