



MADRE

speaks

Spring/Summer 2007



INDIGENOUS WOMEN: Fighting for Rights, Creating Change





MADRE

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From the Executive Director

VIVIAN STROMBERG

Dear Friends,

In April, I visited the communities of our sister organizations on the North Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, home to most of the country's Indigenous Peoples. I witnessed firsthand the incredible work that women there are doing with MADRE's support.



HAROLD LEVINE

One of our local partner organizations, Wangki Tangni (meaning "flower of the river" in the Indigenous Miskitu language), has launched income-generating projects for women—in a region with 90 percent unemployment. Wangki Tangni is cultivating organic family food gardens—in communities where 75 percent of children suffer from malnutrition. Now the women of Wangki Tangni are speaking out against

local government maneuvers to sell communally owned Indigenous land—in a region where Indigenous women's voices have historically been excluded from political debate. And Wangki Tangni is developing new systems of natural resource management—to protect communities and ecosystems that are threatened by both climate change and corporate greed.

The women who are part of Wangki Tangni's flourishing programs are empowered by the energy that is generated when people join forces to tackle problems—and taste success. This success would never have been realized without the concrete support, technical assistance, and political accompaniment that your contributions to MADRE have made possible.

And success is possible. We know that from experience—in Nicaragua, Peru, Kenya, Guatemala, Sudan, Iraq, and everywhere that MADRE support has been able to give wings to our sisters' determination to live just and dignified lives. Because of your support, we're able to strengthen our partnerships with women and families whose dreams resonate with our own vision for the world.

During my trip to Nicaragua, I was taken on a tour of the beautiful and fragrant MADRE-supported organic gardens that are helping to feed families and preserve traditional Indigenous agricultural techniques. Since we began the *Harvesting Hope* program two years ago, it has grown from serving eight families to supporting nearly 50. Thank you for helping to make those gardens grow and for all of your crucial support to MADRE—in Nicaragua and around the world.

Sincerely,

MADRE

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MADRE is an international women's human rights organization that works toward a world in which all people enjoy the fullest range of individual and collective human rights; in which resources are equitably and sustainably shared; in which women participate effectively in all aspects of society; and in which people have a meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives.

MADRE's vision is enacted with an understanding of the relationships between the various issues we address and by a commitment to working in partnership with women at the local, regional, and international level who share our goals.

Since we began in 1983, MADRE has delivered over 23 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.

We occasionally exchange mailing lists with other organizations. If you do not want your information shared, please write to us at the address listed above.

Newsletter Staff

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FRONT COVER PHOTOS (clockwise from upper left): © ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT, HELEN MARDEN, CHIRAPAQ, ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT

BACK COVER PHOTOS (clockwise from upper left): © MADRE, CHRISTY RUPP, MARRIANNE CLAUDIA OSTERMANN

THANK YOU TO OUR INTERNS!

Marga Dorao, Maren Hill, Christine Kim, Helen O'Connor, Ashley Skiles, Alexandra Ward, Sylwia Wewiora

INDIGENOUS WOMEN: Fighting for Rights, Creating Change

Long-time MADRE supporters may recall that our first partnership—formed in 1983—was with Indigenous women in Nicaragua. Ever since then, MADRE has worked with Indigenous women who are organizing to promote women’s rights within their communities and the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples internationally. In fact,

because all human rights are interrelated, Indigenous women’s rights depend on winning collective rights. As Dr. Myrna Cunningham, an internationally recognized Indigenous leader and MADRE’s initial partner, says, “For Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous women, exercising our rights—both as Indigenous Peoples and as women—depends on securing legal recognition of our collective ancestral territories, which are the basis of our identities, our cultures, our economies, and our traditions.”



ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT



ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT

Rebecca Lolosoli with Indigenous Samburu women at a MADRE-supported human rights training in Archer's Post, Kenya.

Indigenous Peoples have fought for centuries against genocide, displacement, colonization, and forced assimilation. This violence has left Indigenous communities among the poorest and most marginalized in the world, alienated from state politics, and disenfranchised by national governments. In the Americas, Indigenous Peoples have a life expectancy 10-20 years less than the general population. In Central America, Indigenous Peoples have less access to education and health services, are more likely to die from preventable diseases, suffer higher infant-mortality rates, and experience higher levels of poverty than non-Indigenous Peoples. The same general pattern holds internationally, and because of gender discrimination, the pattern is most entrenched for Indigenous women. Today, the human rights—and very survival of—Indigenous Peoples are increasing-

ly threatened, as states and corporations battle for control of the Earth's dwindling supply of natural resources—many of which are located on Indigenous territories.

One key concern of all of MADRE's sister organizations is violence against women. For Indigenous women, violence doesn't only stem from gender discrimination and women's subordination within their families and communities; it also arises from attitudes and policies that violate collective Indigenous rights. That understanding has enabled Indigenous women to create anti-violence strategies that address the connections between issues as diverse as women's human rights, economic justice, climate change, and collective rights. These connections are reflected in MADRE's programs with Indigenous women around the world.

The Indigenous Information Network

In Kenya, a group of 16 Indigenous Samburu women developed a bold strategy to meet the needs of women forced to flee their communities because of gender-based violence: they founded an independent, women-run village for survivors. The women were survivors of rape by British soldiers stationed for training on Samburu ancestral lands. Because of the rapes, the women's husbands ostracized them. Many of them were forced from their homes for having "shamed" their families. Led by Rebecca Lolosoli, the women joined together and appealed to the local District Council, which governs land use. They were granted a neglected field of dry grassland, where they have worked hard to create a unique and flourishing community, which they named Umoja, or "unity" in Swahili.

As members of the Indigenous Information Network, the women of Umoja have worked with MADRE to bring human rights trainings to their community. These trainings have fortified women's

"I have to be the first person to show my community that I will not circumcise my girl or pressure her to marry."

-REBECCA LOLOSOLI, leader of MADRE's sister organization in Umoja

“For us, our traditional culture holds the seeds for condemning violence against women.”

—ROSE CUNNINGHAM, Director of MADRE’s sister organization Wangki Tangni

political mobilizations against gender-based violence. Referring to the Beijing Platform for Action, introduced to local women in a 2005 MADRE training, Rebecca Lolosoli commented, “Now that we have seen it in writing—and seen that even our own Kenyan government has signed this—we know that we are not asking for pity or kindness but for our basic rights when we demand an end to our husbands’ beatings.”

In 1999, when the women of Umoja participated in their first human rights training, none of them had ever spoken in public. Today, they are active participants in local government and are recognized as leaders in their district. The women of Umoja are currently organizing to demand an anti-violence unit in the local police force and trainings for women police officers that enable them to address gender-based violence. These anti-violence strategies are part of the Umoja women’s broader efforts to create a better life for themselves and their community—in other words, to defend the full range of their human rights. To that end, the women have developed a system of resource sharing, a communal sickness/disability fund, and a modest but successful cooperative cottage industry selling traditional Samburu beadwork to tourists. In cooperation with MADRE and the Indigenous Information Network, the women work to defend Samburu rights to land, water, and health and education services. Through their political mobilizations, the women have found confidence and hope that facilitate their work against gender-based violence and fuel their conviction that ending violence against women is indeed possible.

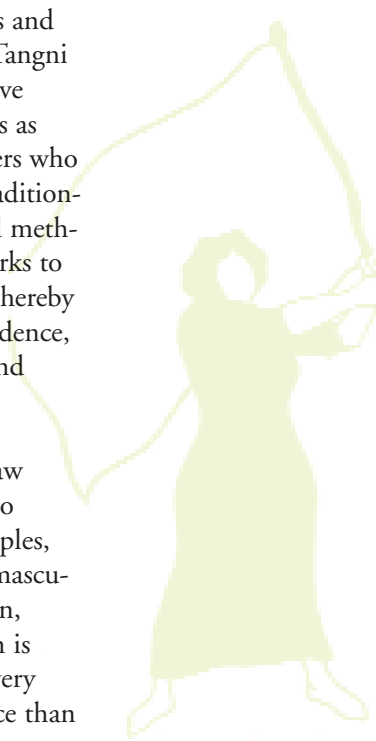
Like women everywhere, the women of Umoja see economic autonomy as key to avoiding dependence on abusive men. Though they remain deeply impoverished by most people’s standards, the women have succeeded in making sure that their daughters (as well as their sons) attend school. And they have freed themselves of the economic pressure to circumcise

and marry off their daughters at a young age. In fact, Rebecca Lolosoli’s 12-year-old daughter, Sylvia, openly declares her refusal of circumcision and has every intention of going to university after high school. As Rebecca Lolosoli said, “I have to be the first person to show my community that I will not circumcise my girl or pressure her to marry.”

Wangki Tangni

Wangki Tangni (“Flower of the River” in Miskitu) is a community development organization on Nicaragua’s North Atlantic Coast that addresses violence against women in the context of defending Indigenous rights. Wangki Tangni offers women’s leadership development programs and promotes women’s political participation in the community and beyond through sustainable development projects, human rights trainings, income-generating projects, and healthcare programs that integrate Indigenous and “western” perspectives on medicine. Wangki Tangni recognizes that many Indigenous women derive identity and power from their traditional roles as midwives, advisors, spiritual guides, and leaders who are principally responsible for transmitting traditional knowledge, cultural values, and agricultural methods in their communities. Wangki Tangni works to preserve and develop these roles for women, thereby strengthening women’s social status and confidence, which in turn fortifies their capacity to demand rights and confront gender-based violence.

The organization’s anti-violence strategies draw directly from Indigenous culture. The Miskito cosmology, like that of many Indigenous Peoples, describes an egalitarian duality between the masculine and feminine realms. In Miskito tradition, women are revered and violence against them is considered deviant. This worldview offers a very different starting point for combating violence than





HENRY CHALFANT

Bibidilia Parista is an Indigenous farmer, traditional healer, and community organizer with MADRE's sister organization, Wangki Tangni.

worldviews in which religion or custom is used to sanction male violence. As Wangki Tangni's Director, Rose Cunningham, says, "For us, our traditional culture holds the seeds for condemning violence against women." Colonization, Christianity, and cultural assimilation have eroded egalitarian Indigenous traditions. Yet, these traditions continue to shape the identity and worldview of many Indigenous Peoples, and provide a foundation for Indigenous anti-violence strategies. For example, Wangki Tangni organizes intergenerational community dialogues, in which elders share traditional stories of women's power and reinforce an

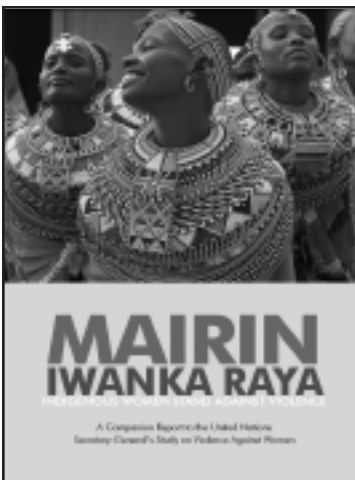
understanding of violence against women as inherently dysfunctional. "The dialogues help us to fight violence against women," says Rose Cunningham, "and preserve our traditional stories and the role of our elders as transmitters of Miskito culture and wisdom." Wangki Tangni's programs mobilize culture in opposition to gender-based violence, linking strategies against violence with strategies to maintain Indigenous identity and cultural rights.

Indigenous Issues are Everyone's Issues

Today, many of the policies that most threaten Indigenous Peoples are the same policies that threaten the health of the planet itself, jeopardizing our collective future. One example is global warming, caused in large part by the unsustainable use of fossil fuels. In contrast, Indigenous cultural values prioritize community cohesion over individual advancement, and emphasize reciprocity, balance, and integration with the natural world. These values—traditionally enacted, transmitted, and thus created by Indigenous women—offer a basis for policies that can support sustainable economic and environmental practices.

Our best hope of protecting the Earth's biological (and cultural) diversity is to adapt and institutionalize those knowledge systems and technologies that have succeeded in preserving diversity for millennia. These are Indigenous knowledge systems, which embody the principle of sustainability. In fact, as the stewards of environmental, technical, scientific, cultural, and spiritual knowledge, Indigenous women hold the keys to creating and implementing strategies for sustainable development at all levels of policymaking. Clearly, much remains to be done for Indigenous women's perspectives to be reflected in public policies. Yet, that is precisely what our current global economic and environmental crisis demands and what MADRE's programs work toward. ♦

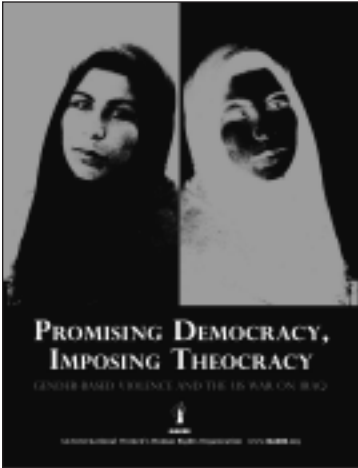
— BY YIFAT SUSSKIND,
Communications Director



Since 1999, MADRE has hosted the Secretariat of the International Indigenous Women's Forum (known by its Spanish acronym, FIMI), a network of Indigenous women leaders from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In 2006, FIMI released a groundbreaking report, *Mairin Iwanka Raya: Indigenous Women Stand against Violence*.

FIMI's report is available at www.indigenouswomensforum.org

Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy: Gender-Based Violence and the US War on Iraq



A MADRE Report

MADRE has released a groundbreaking report on the incidence, causes, and legalization of gender-based violence in Iraq since the US-led invasion. The report documents the use of gender-based violence by Iraqi Islamists brought to power by the United States, and highlights the role of the US in fomenting the human rights crisis confronting Iraqi women today.

Read the report online at
www.madre.org/articles/me/iraqreport.html

Long-time MADRE friend and Board member Laura Flanders has published a new book!



BLUE GRIT:
True Democrats Take Back Politics from the Politicians

This is crucial reading for all of us concerned about reclaiming our right to have a meaningful say in US policies.

MADRE and Our Sister Organizations *in the news...*

Free Speech Radio News
 "Human Rights Group Signals Iraq is becoming a Theocracy"

Foreign Policy in Focus
 "Curing AIDS Policy of Greed and Dogma"

Democracy NOW!
 "Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy: Gender-Based Violence and the US War on Iraq"

Radio Nation with Laura Flanders
 "The Women Baker-Hamilton Forgot"

The New York Times
 "Nicaraguan Legislature Passes Total Ban on Abortion"

National Public Radio
 "Baghdad Poets Find an Oasis from Violence"

Essence
 "It Takes a Village"

The Observer
 "Hidden victims of a brutal conflict: Iraq's women"

Yahoo! News
 "Human rights groups demand UN probe of Sri Lanka abuses"

Washington Post
 "Widows Often Find Help Elusive in Iraq"

Time Magazine
 "Stolen Away"

TomPaine.com
 "Violating Iraqi Women"

Counterspin
 "Yifat Susskind on World AIDS Day"

Chronicle of Philanthropy
 "Charity's Barrier Island: U.S. restrictions hamper nonprofit efforts in Cuba"

Naples News
 "The Guatemala connection: Impoverished nation the root of human trafficking"

Between the Lines
 "Women Suffer Untold Violence and Repression in U.S.-Occupied Iraq"

Women's Media Center
 "Playing Politics with Women's Lives in Nicaragua"

To access these and other news pieces featuring MADRE's work, visit
www.madre.org/press/index.html

MADRE program highlights

KENYA

Indigenous Information Network

With MADRE's support, the women of our sister organization, the Indigenous Information Network (IIN), held a three-day celebration and human rights training for women. The event attracted more than 1,000 women from groups in Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan.

NICARAGUA

CADAMUC Clinic

MADRE's partner organization, CADAMUC Clinic, is expanding! We are supporting the construction of a new operating room and two recovery rooms and recently helped the clinic acquire a new ultrasound machine. This spring, a MADRE-supported mobile medical team in Waspam brought healthcare to communities along the Coco River, where people have little or no access to health services.

Center for Indigenous People's Autonomy and Development (CADPI)

Recently, MADRE provided CADPI with a delivery of food and educational materials for three primary schools, and 10,000 packages of women's clothes and children's toys to distribute to families in 14 neighborhoods. At the same time, MADRE supported the drafting of a CADPI report about racism and discrimination against Indigenous People on the

North Atlantic Coast. The report was submitted to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

Wangki Tangni

MADRE supported a celebration of International Women's Day for hundreds of Indigenous women. A special activity was dedicated to the elders of the community, who play the crucial role of transmitting knowledge of healthcare and natural resource management to the next generation of women. The elder women sang, told stories, and danced during the celebration.

In March, a MADRE delegation traveled to Nicaragua. During the delegation, MADRE supported Wangki Tangni in organizing trainings for women on human rights and women's rights. The participants prepared a report on their rights as Indigenous Peoples and local conditions, which they will present at the upcoming session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May 2007 at the United Nations.

IRAQ

Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq

NEW! Art Action, an Iraqi Youth Peace Project! MADRE and our partner, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), are supporting a brave group of Sunni and Shiite youth who are coming together to demand peace. According to the logic of the civil war, these young people from warring



ELIZABETH RAPPAPORT

Women in Kenya celebrate International Women's Day.



CADPI

A child in Nicaragua receives a toy from a MADRE delivery.

TALLER DE VIDA



To: madre@madre.org
From: Miguel Macias

The philosophy of Taller de Vida has an extremely positive effect on these teens, who are excited to help their community, develop their self-awareness, and learn from their experiences. MADRE is making this possible. I feel truly honored to have had the opportunity to work with Taller de Vida, thanks to MADRE.

Miguel Macias is an independent radio and video producer, sound designer, and musician based in Los Angeles.

communities should be enemies. But instead, they are joining together, using music and spoken word to call for an end to the civil war and promote human rights—including women's rights and freedom from occupation and religious coercion. In Baghdad, OWFI hosts *Freedom Space* gatherings—public performances where people come together to share their poetry and music. These gatherings have been banned by Islamists. Several members of Art Action have been attacked, but Iraqis who want peace are flocking to these gatherings despite the danger.

COLOMBIA

LIMPAL

MADRE is supporting a community center in the department of San Juan for women and families who have been uprooted from their homes by Colombia's armed conflict. Because 80 percent of displaced families live in extreme poverty, the center offers free, nutritious meals for children.

With MADRE support, LIMPAL is providing women who have been displaced with counseling to address domestic and sexual violence and offer leadership

training for women. LIMPAL has trained a team of six women leaders from the community, who are organizing other women and developing strategies to combat violence and demand rights.

Taller de Vida

MADRE provided video production and editing equipment and computers to our sister organization's *Reinventing Life through Art* project for young people displaced by war. MADRE volunteer Miguel Macias traveled to Colombia to train 16 young people to use professional digital cameras and video editing systems as part of this program, through which young people document the stories of children and young people affected by the ongoing armed conflict.

Human Rights Advocacy

As part of the 2007 UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), MADRE and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI) co-organized a panel using the findings of FIMI's 2006 report, *Mairin Iwanka Raya: Indigenous Women Stand against Violence*, to explore Indigenous women's anti-violence strategies.

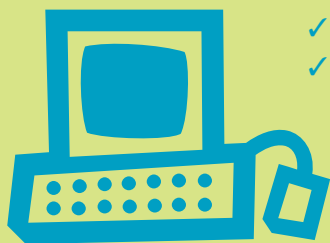
Indigenous women and their allies have been using the FIMI report in workshops, discussions, and panels. The report articulates an Indigenous women's critique of the human rights framework; explores strategies to combat violence against Indigenous women; and bridges gaps between the global women's movement and the international Indigenous women's movement.

MADRE, FIMI, and Mulabi (Latin American Working Group on Sexual Rights) facilitated a roundtable discussion between members of the sexual rights and Indigenous women's movements. The dialogue led to the creation of a joint plan of action, and the incorporation of Indigenous women's views into the planned Convention on Sexual and Reproductive Rights in the Americas.

You can help strengthen women's rights

workshops in Colombia by contributing to MADRE's **Laptops for Leadership** campaign. Donate a laptop to help MADRE's sister organizations bridge the digital divide and build their capacity to defend women's rights.

We are looking for laptop computers with:



- ✓ Windows OS 2000
- ✓ 800 MHz Pentium 3 Processors
- ✓ 128 MB of RAM
- ✓ 20 GB Hard drive
- ✓ CD-ROM



MADRE 2007 membership campaign

Help Us Grow the MADRE Family



As a member of MADRE, you are a part of an international movement for peace and justice that honors the unique role that women play in creating positive long-term change. In May, MADRE will launch our 2007 membership campaign. Your ongoing membership enables us to build long-lasting relationships with our sister organizations and deliver the training, support, and resources they so urgently need. We hope we can count on your continued support.

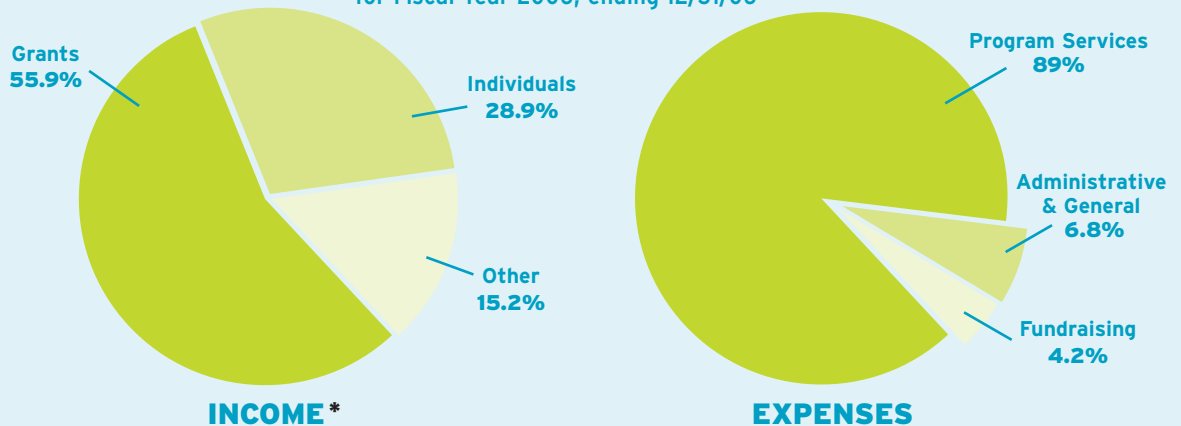
This year, please consider inviting a friend to join MADRE so that we can extend the circle of people committed to combating injustices and winning human rights for all.

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR RETIREES!

A 2007 IRA rollover provision allows retirees over age 70 1/2 to transfer up to \$100,000 to MADRE without reporting the withdrawal as income on your federal tax return. Please speak to your accountant or financial planner about this limited-time opportunity.

MADRE income & expenses

for Fiscal Year 2006, ending 12/31/06



* \$442,776 is the value of "in-kind" medical shipments and services donated to MADRE during this fiscal year. This category is not included in the above totals and is not considered income by the Internal Revenue Service, but it is a very important source of support for MADRE.

Turn your Outrage into Action:

Support MADRE

Sign up for **MADRE Speaks Online** and receive emails with action alerts, updates on MADRE's programs, and articles from women fighting for human rights worldwide.
MORE INFO: www.madre.org/madrespeaks ■ madrespeaks@madre.org



TALLER DE VIDA

Donate School Supplies to MADRE's Helping Hands Campaign and provide children in Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, and Kenya with books, school supplies, and other educational materials. **MORE INFO:** www.madre.org/helpinghands ■ helpinghands@madre.org

Organize a Fundraiser for MADRE. Host a walk-a-thon, bake sale, movie night, concert—the ideas are limitless. We'll help you plan. **MORE INFO:** fundraising@madre.org

Host a MADRE Speaker! Spread awareness about US foreign policy and women's human rights struggles around the world, and raise support for MADRE's programs. **MORE INFO:** speakers@madre.org



MADRE

Four Easy Ways to Give to MADRE

JOIN OUR SUSTAINER PROGRAM. A no-hassle, tax-deductible way to support MADRE's work. Give a fixed amount on a monthly or quarterly basis through a secure, automatic credit card deduction.



ARRANGE A MATCHING GIFT. Many employers will match your gift to MADRE, doubling your contribution at no cost to you. Ask at work; many employers have a simple form that you can fill out.

HONOR A LOVED ONE WITH A CONTRIBUTION TO MADRE. We will send a beautiful card to the person you are honoring. It's a wonderful way to give an anniversary or graduation gift, just say "I'm thinking of you" to a special person, or honor someone's memory.



DONATE YOUR MILES. Your frequent flyer miles can facilitate human rights trainings for women in conflict zones around the world. (25,000 miles minimum)

Contact MADRE at (212) 627-0444 or by email at fundraising@madre.org.

ENSURE THAT YOUR VALUES LIVE ON

Including MADRE in your will is simple and powerful, and guarantees your continued support for women's human rights for generations to come. Dozens of other MADRE members have chosen to make an impact this way. Please consider MADRE when planning your estate. For more information, call us at (212) 627-0444.

MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT

The Estate of Jocelyn Edelston has generously offered to match donations to MADRE's Emergency and Disaster Relief Fund, which supports communities in crisis. Thanks to this match, every dollar you contribute will double.

Jocelyn Edelston had a passion for justice that was unconditional and was a devoted friend to those close to her and to people in need.

To contribute, please visit <http://madre.kintera.org/emergencyfund>



TRAVEL WITH MADRE: Women's Human Rights Delegations



Visit a women-led Indigenous Samburu community in Kenya, dedicated to ending gender-based violence.

Learn how Indigenous Peoples are protecting ecosystems and promoting food security through a synthesis of traditional knowledge and innovative community organizing.

Meet with women *maquila* (sweatshop) workers organizing for labor rights in Guatemala City.

Travel with MADRE on one of our women's human rights delegations! Visit our sister organizations to learn more about their work for human rights and justice, and examine the impact of US policies on women's and families' daily lives.

For more information, visit www.madre.org/travel/voyages.html

Upcoming delegations to: Argentina, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru



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