



MADRE

Spring 2019

speaks

Fighting for
Girls' Futures





MADRE

Fighting for Feminist Futures

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Dear Friend,

In this work, I've learned not to be afraid of the unknown. When the world seems to be upside-down and unpredictable, it can be unsettling to think about what the future might bring.

But our courage and capacity to embrace change is what creates the impacts you'll see in these pages. We can't know what tomorrow will bring, but we can still shape the future.

With worsening news about climate change and environmental disaster, we don't despair. Instead, we mobilize, supporting women climate defenders like our partners in Sudan who are inventing new farming techniques, adapting when climate change makes planting cycles unreliable. They are organizing their communities and speaking out for just climate policies—on the international stage.

We seize the possibilities for peace, no matter how endless wars might seem. In Colombia, more than two years after a peace agreement was signed, violence and poverty still mar people's lives. That's why we're joining with our local partners to help communities to heal from trauma, connect survivors of violence to vital services, and advocate for policies that promote lasting peace.

This is the kind of change your MADRE membership makes possible. Thanks to you, we can do the vital work of saving lives and strengthening communities. And we can grab those moments to transform an unknowable future into one we want to live in: with peace, justice and sustainability.

In that spirit, we have launched two new initiatives that you can read about here. First, we've kicked off a new initiative called the Feminist Foreign Policy Jumpstart that brings grassroots women's voices and solutions to advance progressive policymaking in the US (page 10).

I'm also excited to tell you about VIVA Girls, a new way for you to uplift the next generation of feminist leaders and to support girls' organizing today. We named it in memory of Vivian Stromberg, a founder of MADRE and a constant champion for young women and girls (page 3). I'm lucky enough to count myself among the many young women she mentored.

We can do all this—support vital grassroots organizing and advance initiatives like these to strengthen our movements—because we are propelled by people who rise to the occasion to shape the change we want to see: our partners worldwide and members like you. Thank you for all you do, and I hope you'll be inspired by the stories you find here.



©Terry Allen

With hope,

Yifat Susskind
Executive Director

*On the cover: Girls heal through dance in a performance as part of Taller de Vida's art therapy program sponsored by MADRE.
© Taller de Vida*



VIVA

A **MADRE** initiative for adolescent girls

GIRLS



Above and at left, ©MADRE

The seeds of the feminist futures we seek are already here. And they're being planted by girls.



That's why we're excited to announce our new initiative: **VIVA Girls!** Together with our partners worldwide, seeded with funding from the NoVo Foundation, we will uplift girl-led programs, cultivate adolescent girls' leadership, and co-create space for girls' voices in our movements. We will ensure girls can thrive and advance social justice—as the next generation of feminist leaders.

How does VIVA Girls work?

- **RESOURCE:** We make new and larger grants to support community-based, girls-led work that protects rights and strengthens our movements
- **PARTNER:** We offer training and mentorship to girls, and foster networks where activist girls can support each other
- **ADVOCATE:** We create opportunities for girls to advocate for laws and policies that secure their rights today and fulfill their hopes for tomorrow

What Makes Our Approach Different?

- While girls need space, resources and protections of their own, that's not enough. We also know that our movements are stronger when we bring girls more into leadership spaces. They know best the needs of girls in their communities and how to mobilize others of their generation to action.
- Girls are more than a "leadership pipeline." They're not just waiting in reserve until their turn for leadership comes up. Our chance to secure feminist futures depends on girls' leadership today and that's why we're mobilizing our resources and networks in support.
- Similarly, we know that protecting girls is about more than shielding them from immediate harm. Girlhood is a critical time for girls to develop the resources and resolve they need to create feminist futures. We must equip girls to resist social norms and systems that value them for their sexuality, labor or reproductive capacities—instead of who they are and who they want to become.
- We focus on work with queer, trans, Afro-descendent and Indigenous girls and those who are disabled, refugees, enslaved or conscripted by armed groups. These girls are not only especially at risk of human rights abuses. They also hold valuable perspective to generate solutions that work for all.
- We see social change as the work of generations. This means that we're in it for the long haul, and we bring people of all ages to work together. We run a network of learning and support across generations of women in five countries—and we're growing the participation of girls in that exchange.



©Elizabeth Rappaport

A Snapshot of VIVA Girls

- **IN COLOMBIA**, we support Afro-Colombian and Indigenous girl survivors of war. Many of these girls have been exploited as child soldiers and abused by armed groups. With our partners at Taller de Vida, girls have mentorship and support to imagine new lives and to demand change from their leaders.

- **IN KENYA**, MADRE partners with the Indigenous Information Network to uplift girls as leaders to confront harmful practices like female genital mutilation and forced early marriage. They build solidarity with older generations, who support their calls for an end to harmful traditional practices while strengthening their culture and community.



Above: ©Elizabeth Rappaport; far right: ©Dalia Association

communities. Girls are trained to identify the issues that matter most to them, determine how to allocate resources to solve problems and implement their ideas.

- **IN PALESTINE**, we support the Dalia Association's efforts to empower school-going girls to drive change in their



Above: ©Taller de Vida



For more information, visit www.madre.org/VIVAgirls

VIVA Girls! VIVA Girls! VIVA Girls! VIVA Girls!



In Honor of Vivian Stromberg

Whenever our partners called, Vivian was ready. She'd knock down every obstacle to rally urgent aid and lasting support for women and girls facing war and disaster. And she knew that girls' leadership was central to achieving our shared vision of feminist futures.

In her life, Vivian worked hand-in-hand with girl leaders to demand peace and justice. And thanks to Vivian's guidance and mentorship, a generation of women leaders will propel her activist legacy today.

That's why we're proud to name this initiative in her memory.

Vivian in Haiti in 1994. ©Laura Flanders



Your Support in Action



Afro-Colombian and Indigenous girls, from the community of Pereira, gather to heal and tell their stories. ©Taller de Vida

Building a Just Peace in Colombia

Healing from War

When MADRE first partnered with Taller de Vida (Workshop for Life) in Colombia in 2001, the war there had already been raging for decades. The prospect of peace seemed impossible to many—but not to our visionary grassroots partners. They have always kept peace in sight, even in the worst days of war. They work to meet people’s urgent needs, to build resilience and to bring healing through creative expression and community gatherings, focusing on helping children exploited as soldiers. Some of the young women our partners work with were just girls when they were

forced into armed groups.



A Taller de Vida staff member

offers care and reassurance to a young woman. ©Taller de Vida

When Yina was barely 12 years old, she ran away from home, escaping an abusive family life. She joined one of the armed groups active in her community’s region and became one of Colombia’s many children exploited as soldiers. It seemed like the only option for her.



Yina met her husband, also a former child soldier, through MADRE-sponsored Taller de Vida programs. Here she is today with her beautiful family! ©MADRE

When she finally was able to leave the group, after almost five years, she felt lost. Her childhood had been stolen from her, and she didn’t know how to rejoin her community. After years in an armed group, she had no outlet to express what she had gone through. But then, she found Taller de Vida, and she found other young people who shared her experience. She discovered her talent for theater and began performing in plays that told people’s stories of surviving the war.

Yina’s story shows the real impact of the work that you help make possible. Thanks to the support she found at Taller de Vida, she found a new community and purpose. Today, Yina is a social worker at Taller de Vida and a leader for young people following in her footsteps.

A New Start in a New Home

Now that Colombia's peace agreement has been signed, MADRE works with local partner organizations to reach out to communities healing from war, to build reconciliation and trust, and to give people what they need to start a new future.

That work takes time, and that's why we are so grateful to have you by our side for the long haul. Here's a story of the impact we can make with our partners—and with you.

Over years of war, the Usme neighborhood just outside of Bogotá filled with families fleeing the violence in rural areas, in hopes of finding safety in the city. But the housing they found there was often flimsy, metal shacks built into hillsides. Taller de Vida organizes in those communities and knew that they deserved better, more

secure housing. And with MADRE support, they launched a years-long advocacy campaign to push for their government to act.

Rubiela was one of the local women working with Taller de Vida to raise the call. She had fled with her children from her town, Putumayo, after one of her sons was recruited by the rebel group FARC. She made a new life for her family in Usme and enrolled her children in Taller de Vida's youth programs. After her son managed to leave the armed group and rejoin his family, she brought him to Taller de Vida's counseling workshops to give him support to reintegrate into the community. And Rubiela knew that better shelter—a house that could be a real home—was key to their future.

So she joined Taller de Vida to



Rubiela holding a kite she made as part of an art therapy workshop made possible through MADRE member support. ©Taller de Vida

advocate for better housing, backed by MADRE and by you. **And together, we won! One hundred families displaced by the war will now receive new, safer housing.**

Rubiela's story shows how women local leaders' guidance and perseverance brings strength to not just their families, but to their communities.

Ending Gender Violence in Nicaragua



At left, men discuss strategies to uplift women's rights during a MADRE-sponsored training. ©MADRE; Inset, MADRE and Wangki Tangni share useful resources, like the guide this young man holds, to deepen learning and community discussions around gender justice and healthy masculinity. ©MADRE

Working Together with Men and Boys

Women and girls have vital allies—in the men and boys who step up to embrace gender justice.

Together with MADRE, our partners at Wangki Tangni, an Indigenous community development organization, work with men and boys to change negative behaviors and attitudes towards women and girls. For example, they've partnered

with local traditional judges, known as "wihtas." These are trusted leaders, and when they speak, people listen—spreading the important message of these workshops.

In this work, Wangki Tangni uplifts traditional Indigenous values of non-violence and peaceful relations between women and men. This helps people connect their action for gender justice with their desire to preserve their Indigenous cultures.

Wangki Tangni and MADRE also use radio broadcasts and community workshops to promote positive models of masculinity. And we're gaining momentum! Sixty-two wihtas, trained by Wangki Tangni, have now held their own workshops with men and adolescent boys all across the region.

This creates a ripple effect—more and more men and boys learning from each other, talking about women's rights, and working to support gender justice in their communities.

*"The new masculinity trainings help us be better men."
—a traditional judge from the community of Adris Tara*

From Emergency Action to Lasting Partnership

We're excited to tell you how our partnership with the National Indigenous Women's Forum (NIWF), a grassroots organization in Nepal, is expanding!

In 2015, a terrible earthquake devastated communities across Nepal. With the support of our members we acted immediately to bring emergency aid like food and shelter, partnering with NIWF to make sure it could reach Indigenous communities off the radar of most large aid agencies.

And we stood by them for the long haul. With your support, we funded rebuilding efforts and local sustainable farming. Now that our partners are back on surer footing, we are creating a shared strategy to advance the rights of women and girls in rural Indigenous communities denied access to fundamental rights, like education and land ownership.

First, NIWF and MADRE organized local women from around Nepal and collected valuable testimonies. We asked them: what are the biggest challenges you face? What needs to change? We made sure that we included the voices of women often ignored, like women with disabilities.

Then, we supported NIWF to advocate at the UN, presenting their demands to guarantee equal rights for Indigenous women and girls in Nepal. Together, we made progress! The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) endorsed these demands. For example, now with UN backing, our partners are calling for the Nepalese government to amend the Constitution to explicitly recognize the rights of Indigenous women and girls.

This was a historic victory for NIWF and Indigenous women in Nepal, including those with disabilities. Now, our Indigenous partners will push forward a strategy to hold their government accountable. They are launching a strategic campaign that will connect to local communities, inform them of their internationally-recognized rights, and build pressure on their government to act. ♦



Yasso Bhattachan, from the National Indigenous Women's Forum delivers humanitarian aid provided by MADRE to communities recovering from the earthquake. ©NIWF



At the UN, women from NIWF speak about their fight for Indigenous rights in Nepal. ©NIWF



Words from Our Members

I'm writing to express highest praise for your extraordinary work on behalf of Indigenous women and underserved women in general around the world. I find it astounding that MADRE can be so effectively involved in so many projects at once in difficult global hotspots or neglected areas. A resounding thank you for your ongoing incredible work. Helping girls and women is the most important and most radical kind of assistance that can be offered in today's still-patriarchal world.

-Jynx Houston

Seed Grants to Help Grassroots Organizations Grow

MADRE has recently made seed grants to budding initiatives in the Philippines, Uganda, and Tanzania to defend Indigenous communities and to support the rights of women and girls.

Our seed grants are designed to nurture innovative, new work and give it the resources it needs to grow. Read on to see what your support has made possible.

©MADRE



Defending Young Women's Rights in Tanzania

MADRE partners with the Pastoralist Information Development Organization (PIDO) in Tanzania to defend rights and provide opportunities for Indigenous Maasai girls. Prolonged droughts in the region on the border of Tanzania and Kenya have led to an increase in forced child marriages, as families take their daughters out of school and turn to dowries as a source of income and survival.

Our grant to PIDO will advance climate justice and the rights of adolescent girls, by investing in their work to fund girls' education, economic rights and leadership opportunities. This helps ensure that present and future generations of girls can play a key role in community decision-making, including on how to defend against climate change.

"This partnership with MADRE will enable us to teach women and girls their rights and collectively improve the lives of Indigenous women and girls."

**-Martha Ntopio,
PIDO Founder**



PIDO members gather at a MADRE-supported workshop to share stories on how to fight climate injustice and to defend the rights of girls in their communities. ©MADRE

Urgent Aid for Indigenous Lumad Peoples in the Philippines

Entire communities have been displaced by the systemic and cruel persecution of Indigenous Lumad Peoples by President Rodrigo Duterte's regime. The Lumad are denied security, food, water, medicine, and other basic needs, as the government deepens its repression of Indigenous Peoples. MADRE has partnered with the local organization Karapatan to provide immediate support, like food, for people fleeing violence.



This grant will also help us to identify new partners and ways to advance our work with Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines.

Left, Karapatan provides food made possible by MADRE members. Right, Karapatan ensures that children can continue their education, despite being forced to flee their homes. ©Karapatan



Launching a Network: Women's Human Rights Defenders in Uganda (WHRDU)

Women human rights defenders in Uganda face sexual and gender violence in retaliation for their work to demand rights. And the perpetrators often enjoy total impunity for their crimes.

Our seed grant to WHRDU will help to convene a new network for activists, where they can create shared activist strategies and protect each other against dangers facing women human rights defenders in Uganda.

This network will be critical in building connections between activists, amplifying their voices and maximizing resources through better coordination.



Women from our partner organization, Zenab for Women in Development, gather around a seed harvester purchased with help from MADRE members. ©Zenab



Najfa, a young woman leader with our Sudanese partner organization, holds farming tools that your support helps purchase. ©Zenab

How a Seed Grant Grows: Looking Back Over a Decade in Sudan

Our grants plant the seeds of the future. And we are so proud that a MADRE seed grant to our partner organization Zenab for Women in Development helped to found Sudan's first and only Women Farmers Union, over a decade ago.

With your support, the union has grown from 200 women to 5000 women since MADRE started working with Zenab in 2006. These women organize together, exchange organic farming techniques and distribute seeds to other women farmers and their families. Through their farming collective, they have become a powerful voice for women's leadership and environmental justice, in Sudan and internationally.

Feminist Foreign Policy **JUMP** **START**

We are happy to share with you that MADRE launched a new initiative—called the **Feminist Foreign Policy Jumpstart**.

We face escalating crises around the world and right here in the US. Right-wing authoritarians are on the rise. These forces seek to enact policies that threaten lives: gutting climate regulations, attacking migrants, launching new military attacks.

Women are leading the resistance to these threats. That means they have vital solutions that can guide our leaders. But when it comes to foreign policy, grassroots women's expertise is rarely heard—and **that's where the Jumpstart comes in**.

With you by our side, we'll advance a feminist foreign policy agenda built in partnership with grassroots women worldwide. We'll create the space for progressive policymakers to hear directly from women whose communities are impacted by US policies and who offer solutions to some of the most urgent crises of our time.

Women like our Indigenous partners in Kenya who dig wells and build greenhouses to guard against drought and fight for just climate policies ... or our partners in Iraq who bring shelter and care to women escaping violence ... or all our brave, dedicated partners worldwide who defend their communities and their rights, with determination and often against all odds.

We know that when we listen to women and girls at the grassroots, we can create rights-based policies that are better for everyone, including by:

- offering a global gender justice perspective on the Green New Deal
- raising the voices of women peacebuilders on the frontlines of war to bring lasting peace and stability
- confronting the crisis of gender violence against migrant women.

To learn more about the Jumpstart go to www.madre.org/jumpstart.

Getting a Jumpstart on Progressive US-Colombia Policy

In 2016, the Colombian government and the rebel group known as the FARC signed a landmark peace agreement to end decades of war. Afro-Colombian women's rights advocates won key provisions in the accord to secure justice for their communities.

Yet, today, Afro-Colombian communities continue to face violence, and women and girls face heightened threats. Many have survived gender violence in war, including sexual violence, and they deserve justice. What's more, they've spent years sustaining their communities and know best how to meet pressing local needs.

That's the perspective we brought to US policymakers. We brought Charo Mina Rojas, from our partner organization Proceso de Comunidades Negras, to lead a briefing in Congress to spotlight the crises faced by Afro-Colombian women and human rights defenders and the need for women's leadership in implementing the Peace Accord.

We also spoke about the importance of ensuring justice, accountability and healing for women and girls, and the need to abandon failed US policies, from the militarism of "Plan Colombia" to the "war on drugs."

Learn more at www.madre.org/jumpstartcolombia.



"There is a war on women today in Colombia."

*-Our partner Charo Mina Rojas, from Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN), to policymakers and advocates in Washington, DC.
© Maureen Drennan*

Rose Mulenkei's Story

Rose Mulenkei has literally known MADRE since the day she was born. Our Kenyan partners recently shared with us updates and pictures of this lifelong friend.

Eight years ago, MADRE facilitated an exchange between two of our partners. We brought Rose Cunningham, from our partner organization Wangki Tangni in Nicaragua, to Kenya with us to lead a workshop to share strategies with Lucy Mulenkei who leads our Kenyan partner organization, the Indigenous Information Network.

At the workshop, one of the participants went into labor on the first day! That evening, she walked across the road to the local clinic to have her baby. She was so inspired by Rose Cunningham and Lucy Mulenkei's words from that day that she named her new baby girl after them—Rose Mulenkei. The next day, MADRE's Executive Director Yifat got to visit the new mom and baby Rose.

Today, Rose Mulenkei is a vibrant girl attending school. Thanks to the leadership of our partners like Lucy and Rose, we are realizing the rights of girls and empowering new generations, like little Rose.



Top, Yifat holding baby Rose just days after she was born. ©MADRE; At left, Baby Rose today! ©IIN



Above, Board member Anna Kennedy and her mother, longtime MADRE member and supporter Eleanora Kennedy; inset: Eleanora and baby Anna Kennedy.

Hand in Hand, Across the Generations

Our work would not be possible without our wonderful board members. We are so grateful for all of the ways our board members participate in our work—and some even get their families involved too!

Eleanora Kennedy is a longtime MADRE supporter and her daughter, Anna, grew up a part of the MADRE family. This mother-daughter duo share a passion for human rights activism, so we were thrilled when Anna joined our board!

And Blaine Bookey, MADRE Board Co-Chair, also shares her MADRE membership with her family! Her mom is a longtime MADRE supporter, and Blaine brought her two sisters to our 35th anniversary celebration last December. There, they forged new and deeper ties with our partners, MADRE staff and other members.

We celebrate all of our board members and their commitment to MADRE. We are so grateful for all they do for women's rights and for MADRE!



Board member Blaine (right) and her two sisters. © Luisa Madrid

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Stella Duque, the director of our Colombian partner organization Taller de Vida, laughing with children who participate in art therapy workshops your membership supports. ©MADRE