



MADRE

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speaks

Nurturing
the Future



MADRE

Fighting for Feminist Futures

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Think Like a Mother

Excerpts from Executive Director Yifat Susskind's TED Talk



To watch Yifat's full TED Talk, visit madre.org/thinklikeamother.

My oldest son turned 18 last year, along with the thousands of other children who were babies on 9/11. In that time, we've all crossed into a dangerous new territory of climate breakdown, of endless war, of economic meltdowns, of deep political division, of the many crises that blare at you from your newsfeed every day or, worse, that you're living.

What I've learned in my 18 years of parenting and in my decades of work leading MADRE is this: there's a way to face these crises without feeling overwhelmed and despairing. It's simple, and it's powerful. **Think like a mother.**

To be clear, you don't have to be a woman or a parent to do this. Thinking like a mother is a lens that's available to all of us. The poet Alexis De Veaux writes, "Motherhood is not simply the organic process of giving birth, it is understanding the needs of the world."

It's easy to focus on all of the obstacles to making this the world we want: inequality, greed, violence. But there's also the option to plant a different seed and cultivate what you want to see grow — even in the midst of war and disaster.

Majed from Iraq understands this. He's a house painter by trade and someone who believes in equal rights for women. When ISIS took over northern Iraq, he helped build an Underground Railroad — an escape network for women's rights activists targeted with assassination. When I asked him why he risked his life to bring people to safety, he said, "If we want a brighter future, we have to build it now, in the dark times, so that one day we can live in the light." That's social justice work and that's what mothers do: act in the present with an idea of the future we hope for.

All the best ideas seem implausible at first. But just in my lifetime, we've seen the end of apartheid, the affirmation that women's rights are human rights,

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Top: In December 2019, Yifat Susskind presented the vision of MADRE's work to a room of activists and leaders as part of the TEDWomen Conference. © TEDWomen 2019

Above and at right: ©MADRE

On the cover: A MADRE partner in Nepal picks tomatoes from a farm run by local community women. ©Ruhani Kaur



the overthrow of dictators who ruled for decades, marriage equality, and so much more. These things seemed impossible until we took action and made them happen. Then they seemed inevitable.

When I was growing up, no matter if we were stuck in traffic or dealing with a family tragedy, my mom would say: “Something good will come. We just don’t know what it is yet!” So when people ask me, “How do you deal with all the suffering that you see in refugee camps and disaster zones?” I think of my mom and that sense of possibility she planted in me. When you believe that something good is coming and you’re part of making that happen, you start to see beyond the suffering to how things could be.



MADRE partner, Fatima Ahmed, left, from Zenab for Women in Development. ©Zenab for Women in Development

A few years ago, East Africa was gripped by famine. A quarter of a million people died — half were babies and toddlers. Women I know from Somalia walked for days carrying their hungry children in search of food and water. And while this catastrophe unfolded, too much of the world looked away.

A group of women farmers in Sudan, including Fatima Ahmed, did not. When they learned what was happening, they pulled together the little money they had from their harvest and asked me to send it to those Somali mothers. **They did what mothers do: they saw themselves as the solution, and they acted.**

We’re not used to thinking of subsistence farmers as philanthropists. But those women were practicing the root meaning of philanthropy: love for humanity.

What’s at the core of thinking like a mother shouldn’t be a surprise. It’s love. Love isn’t just an emotion; it’s a capacity. A verb. An endlessly renewable resource. And not just in our private lives. We easily recognize hate in the public sphere — hate speech, hate crimes — but not love. What is love in the public sphere? Cornel West, who isn’t a mother but thinks like one, says it best: “Justice is what love looks like in public.”

When we position love as the leading edge of policy, we get new answers to fundamental questions like: What is the economy for? What is our commitment to those in the path of the hurricane? How do we greet those arriving at our borders?

When you think like a mother, you prioritize the needs of the many, not the wants of the few.

The world that I want for my kids is one that loves every child — no matter where they come from, or who they are, or which side of a wall they’re on.

We know how to repair the world and ease its suffering: Think like a mother. Thinking like a mother is a tool we can all use to build the world we want. ♦

Today, there’s a new set of necessary ideas that feel impossible but will one day feel inevitable: that we can end violence against women, make war a thing of the past, live in balance with nature before it’s too late, and ensure that everyone has what they need to thrive.

Of course, being able to imagine a better future isn’t the same as knowing what to do to bring it about. But thinking like a mother can help with that too.



©MADRE

PUT YOUR LOVE INTO ACTION!

You don’t have to be a woman or a parent to think like a mother. This Mother’s Day, make a gift in honor of someone whose love and care made you see what a better world could look like.

Please make your gift here madre.org/mothersday or mail your support to: 121 West 27th Street #301 New York, NY 10001



MADRE Executive Director, Yifat Susskind, center, meets with mothers and children on a visit to partners in Kenya. ©Henry Chalfant

Pushing for a Feminist Green New Deal



We live in a moment of both immense threat and vital opportunity. All around us, we see the signs of climate breakdown, with frontline communities confronting its worst dangers. But we also face a new possibility: to think like a mother, and use this moment of crisis to plant the seeds for a just and sustainable world.

The proposed Green New Deal sparked an important national conversation around the urgent work needed to confront the climate crisis. In this vital moment, MADRE partnered with critical feminist and climate justice voices to launch the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal. We know that those most impacted have contributed least to climate breakdown: women, Indigenous Peoples, and frontline communities. We're calling for US climate policy that accounts for this historic injustice and uplifts grassroots women's solutions.



Congresswoman Barbara Lee joined the briefing on a Feminist Green New Deal, sharing her reflections on gender justice, confronting environmental racism, and tackling climate breakdown. ©MADRE

Here, we've borrowed a lesson from mothers: to see the world through the eyes of those made most vulnerable. And we're sharing this perspective with policymakers, ensuring they ask: who's most impacted? What solutions do they offer? How can we center them in policymaking?

To spark this conversation, we traveled to Washington, DC and held a Congressional briefing to share why gender and global justice is key to an effective Green New Deal.

We're building on these efforts. We're creating opportunities for women from communities in the

Global South and US to share their expertise with policymakers. Women climate defenders know what policies are needed to end this crisis — and have long been mobilizing to make their visions a reality. We'll ensure that legislators learn from their solutions.

Together, we're acting to secure a future we dream of — to make our foreign policy more feminist and our planet more sustainable. ♦

"I'm here to help them claim their future. I want to see their future radically changed. Let's do something big here!"



Mothering at the Global Youth Climate Strike

On the day of the Youth Climate Strike in September, MADRE hit the streets and met many powerful moms out marching with their kids. Like mom Laura Fischer, featured above with her two children, demanding climate justice for her kids and the next generation.

Defending Her Community and Our Planet

Naiyan at an exchange with IIN in Kenya.
© Poppy Miyonga



Naiyan Jebet Kiplagat knows firsthand the dangers of environmental crisis. She sees it every day in her community in rural Kenya — in the deforestation that strips the land bare and in the years-long drought that threatens people's livelihoods.

She joined with MADRE's partner organization, the Indigenous Information Network (IIN), to confront these threats head-on. Because she knows that land and water mean life.

Indigenous communities like hers rely on their land for crops and to sustain the cattle their communities depend upon. When water is scarce, women and girls, who are responsible for gathering water for their families, must carry this water from up to 12 miles away. These long distances women and girls walk puts heavy strain on their bodies, especially for those who are sick or pregnant. And when these water sources aren't reliably clean, women and families are at risk of serious illness.

That's why Naiyan, with help from IIN and MADRE, took action:

- She helped install water tanks in her community. They now have safe and easy access to potable water sources.
- She organized with local women to plant seedlings — they have planted over 100,000 seedlings since 2009! These tree nurseries protect clean water, help reforest the land and protect biodiversity. An added bonus is that women can harvest the tree product — including mangoes, oranges and medicinal plants — to feed their families and sell for income.
- With your support, Naiyan holds workshops to teach women how to care for chickens, enabling women to sell the eggs at local markets to generate income to support their families. Extra income allows families to keep their daughters in school, rather than relying on child marriage to secure a dowry.
- We ensured that Naiyan could help install over 100 sustainable cook-stoves in her community, an Indigenous design known as a jiko stove, which uses 80% less firewood than commonly-used stoves. This allows Indigenous women and their families to cook meals with stoves that give off less smoke that can make families ill.

Naiyan is dedicated to spreading her knowledge across communities and generations. This inspiration comes from her mother, who created spaces for rural women to come together, discuss problems and find shared solutions. At a recent exchange between Indigenous women who live in remote communities, Naiyan demonstrated how to make the jiko stoves and gave some away to women who participated. These women have new environmentally-friendly stoves and can take what they learned to teach other women in their communities. Naiyan is also always sure to include young people, and even her own children, in this learning.

Together with MADRE, our local partner IIN, and you, Naiyan is propelling grassroots women's solutions to climate change and developing sustainable ways of living. ♦

"We involve young women — the new generations — in our reforestation efforts because they are the ones to face climate change now and find solutions."

-Naiyan



Naiyan finishing a jiko stove.
© Poppy Miyonga.



Your Support in Action

Girls Make It Happen

THROUGH OUR VIVA GIRLS INITIATIVE, we ensure young women and girls have access to healthcare, knowledge and the tools necessary to lead healthy lives. Here are some recent highlights, one year into our new initiative!

- In Tanzania and Cameroon, MADRE funds Indigenous young women leaders who organize workshops encouraging girls to express their views on topics like girls' education and mental health. These young women leaders share their knowledge with members of their community, including parents and religious leaders, so that they can learn from girls' perspectives.
- In Mexico, our partner, Ciarena, creates space for young Indigenous girls to lead. They organize youth collectives to address sexual and reproductive health in their communities, giving young people accurate information and the support they need as they grow and learn. Ciarena equips youth with the tools they need to stay safe and informed of their rights.

The VIVA Girls Initiative recently encouraged girls around the world to share their ideas that need funding. MADRE received over 4500 applications from girls in over 150 countries! We are excited to share more about our new VIVA Girls grantees in the months to come.

- In Yemen, MADRE partner Food4Humanity brokered peace between two communities at war. Our partners then went even further to cement the trust and collaboration between these communities: they worked with them to build a new school for their girls that opened in November 2019. The school opens a path to learning for girl survivors of war and demonstrates that peace is possible, even among communities mired in conflict. ♦



MADRE partners at a workshop in Tanzania. ©MADRE



Girls at the local school in Yemen. ©Food4Humanity

LETTERS FROM OUR PARTNERS:

Our Syrian Partners Are Grateful for You

When Idlib province in northwest Syria was recently bombarded, our local partners at Women Now for Development (WND) — whose staff work in many of the hardest-hit areas — reached out to us. They shared the extreme toll the conflict is taking, and why they value the solidarity of MADRE members like you so much. Below is an excerpt of a message from a WND partner.

I'd like to thank you for your feminist solidarity and support that is very precious for us.

We have been very paralyzed and traumatized by recent attacks. What happened in Idlib revived lots of trauma for our team from previous attacks.

*Since your email, we have been forced to close two of our centers, and the teams are displaced. We follow their movements on a daily basis and are trying to provide as much material and psychological support as we can. We have rented apartments in a safe zone far from recent attacks. **It is very hard for people to accept that they may never return to their homes.***

In response, MADRE made an emergency grant to Women Now for Development. This will help them relocate two centers in Idlib to safer areas. It will also provide trauma counseling support for staff inside Syria who have been displaced as a result of recent attacks. On behalf of WND, we thank you for your support that makes this possible. ♦

What MADRE Means to You



Left to right, Jane Biberman with MADRE partner Lucy Molenkei on a MADRE delegation to Kenya. ©Poppy Miyonga.

Lifeline Member Jane Biberman Shares What MADRE Means to Her

I inherited my passion for MADRE from my aunt, Beatrice Biberman Nava, who was active with MADRE since its inception 37 years ago. I give to MADRE every month, through their Lifeline giving program, and have had different opportunities to connect with the organization on many levels.

In October 2018, I participated in a trip with MADRE to Kenya where I saw first-hand how the organization has improved the lives of women and their families. In Kenya, with the Indigenous Information Network (IIN), MADRE works knowing that local women best understand the needs of their community.

While I expected to visit villages where MADRE has had an impact, from gifting water tanks to fighting female genital mutilation, I had no idea that we would be interacting daily with Kenyan women from various tribes, who traveled as many as 15 hours to meet us. And not only did we meet them, but we ate, danced and exchanged stories. In short, we made friends with women whose lives seemed so different from ours, but who shared the problems and concerns of many women — taking care of loved ones and working to sustain their families.

We only stayed a week, but it was enough to convince me and my fellow travelers that MADRE was worth an ongoing financial commitment.

I give monthly to MADRE because it ensures my ongoing support and investment in their programs, and allows me more flexibility financially so I can give larger support to programs I believe in over the course of the year. For me, supporting MADRE is a lifelong mission I am happily a part of. ♦

Interested in making your support monthly too? It's easy and so vital to maintaining MADRE's life-changing programs. Please go to [madre.org/LifelineSpring](https://www.madre.org/LifelineSpring) to learn more and support MADRE today.



Louisa Shipnuck Jones, MADRE board member

Board Member Louisa Shipnuck Jones: Helping Steer MADRE into the New Decade

I am thrilled to introduce our newest board member, Louisa Shipnuck Jones, Senior Vice President of Brand Strategy at FX Networks. I look forward to her sharing her valuable insights and knowledge to help guide MADRE's growth.

A blue handwritten signature that reads "Yifat".

Yifat Susskind, MADRE Executive Director

"I was moved by hearing Yifat speak of the MADRE support and partner network that has enabled women on the ground to make supersized impact in their community and towards education, safety and equality," Louisa shared recently. "While I have worked with groups supporting women and girls for over 20 years, it has primarily been on a local level, and I welcome the chance to work across borders (real and imagined)."

Take Action



MADRE staff members and Board Member Elz Cuya Jones, third from right, took to the streets in September 2019 to lend solidarity to the Global Youth Strike. ©MADRE

Add Your Name to the CEDAW Campaign for Indigenous Women and Girls

Join MADRE's campaign to ensure that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) upholds and represents the rights and needs of Indigenous women and girls.



The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a treaty often referred to as an "international bill of rights for women," laying out the obligations that countries must uphold.

But Indigenous women have alerted that CEDAW doesn't do enough to recognize and protect their rights. It neither mentions Indigenous women specifically, nor does it offer sufficient protections for racist discrimination against women. That's why we've launched a campaign to add new protections to CEDAW.

And we're ensuring that Indigenous women in their communities all around the world have a leading voice. We're mobilizing with our partners in Guatemala, Nepal, Nicaragua and beyond to bridge the gap between what is happening in international advocacy spaces and the lived experience of local women.

You can take part! Go to madre.org/CEDAW4IWG and learn how you can take action.

(At left, detail of CEDAW campaign illustration by Kakikasi)

Learn More about Women Climate Defenders

Learn more about our work to advance climate justice with grassroots women worldwide. MADRE partners with women climate defenders protecting their communities and advocating for their rights locally and globally. To learn more about our work to organize with Indigenous women for clean water in Kenya, to support women farmers in Sudan, and more, visit madre.org/climate.

Sign up to receive all the latest news and actions from MADRE:
madre.org/signup