

MADRE

Fall 2023 *speaks*



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With your generous support, MADRE resources and uplifts women and girl leaders and their movements. We work with grassroots feminist organizations in **Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and the US** to advance the rights of women and girls who strengthen their communities in the face of gender-based violence, armed

conflict, disaster, and the climate crisis. Your support allows MADRE to push forward our goals to promote the leadership of women and girls who are usually forgotten and often live in the most challenging contexts. We're working to change harmful policies and attitudes toward women and strengthen progressive movements.

Continuing to Support Women in Afghanistan

We've all heard stories about the horrific gender-based violence committed by the Taliban in Afghanistan. To live in that reality is another thing altogether.

Across the country, Afghan women are experiencing growing intimidation and harassment, threats to their lives and physical safety, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrest, and torture. MADRE is working hard with our partners to advance the human rights of these Afghan girls and women. Resourcing Afghan women starts with effectively reaching those who are most at risk — in real time. In fact, we were often the first organization to provide our partners with funding in the wake of Kabul's fall — getting those funds directly into the hands of trusted partners as the first responders when crisis strikes. In the past 18 months, we supported these activists to provide life-saving cash assistance, medical care, clothing, blankets,

food and water to more than 4,340 women and family members in Kabul and rural provinces. When most organizations leave and the news cycle shifts, MADRE remains in close connection with partners who are still responding to their community's needs.

There's another group that is often forgotten in times of crisis: the women activists themselves. As they work to make change happen, they face unimaginable stress, a hazardous environment, and restrictions on their movements.

This year, we provided 250 human rights defenders, including 50 staff of our Afghan partner, with much-needed support. Sometimes we provided things like VPNs, Internet, and phones. Other times our support came in the form of counseling and wellness services because of the psychological demands and stress of activists' work under occupation.

Feminist Emergency Response



One of the many reasons friends like you have told us they support MADRE is our ability to swiftly provide local activists funds to help women as a crisis unfolds. Perhaps nothing exemplifies MADRE's agility more than our recent Feminist Emergency Response in Ukraine.

When the Russian invasion began early last year, MADRE leapt into action. Since that time, we've distributed \$1.38 million in grants to local activists, community-based organizations, and women/human rights defenders in Ukraine and its border nations, to meet the basic needs of displaced people and refugees.

Just before the conflict escalated, we rapidly funded a grassroots organization so they could purchase a bus.

to evacuate more than 4,000 women and families to safer areas of Ukraine. The vehicle also transported more than 120 tons of food and fuel, benefiting more than 6,000 displaced persons. We also partnered with a local group to strengthen women's and girls' roles as critical first responders by funding 36 local women's organizations in Ukraine, extending our reach to hyper-local groups involved in crucial relief efforts. The women and youth activists we supported were able to meet the immediate needs of over 34,500 women and families in conflict-affected communities. With MADRE's support, another Ukrainian women's group supplied free hot meals for more than 5,200 displaced women and families.

Your support has had a significant impact on the lives of women devastated by war and violence. One woman described just how much the food assistance she received meant during this time:

"After three weeks under fire, it was more important to make porridge than to hide from air strikes or to stay under a blanket at night rather than [sheltering] in an icy basement."

With your generosity, MADRE allocated emergency funding to a local organization to provide humanitarian aid, evacuation, and psychosocial support for more than 1,000 LGBTQIA+ community members. They opened a shelter for gender non-conforming people trapped in Ukraine, who were prevented from leaving the country because the gender marker on their passports did not match their gender identities.

Over 600 displaced women activists also received the support they needed to move from crisis and poverty to some measure of stability.

One activist and teacher was forced to seek assistance from one of MADRE's local partners when the Taliban threatened the lives of her and her family. After MADRE partners helped her relocate to the relative safety of Kabul, she said:

“My plans for the future are to play an active role in defending women's rights, to help the oppressed women of my dear dead country Afghanistan ... I will not withhold any kind of sacrifice.”

Her determination inspires us every day, and we hope she inspires you to continue to support MADRE's life-changing work.



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Making Lasting Change Possible

From cultural stigma to denial of access to education, girls and young women with disabilities can face staggering challenges. Your support is helping to drive our growing network of disability justice and girls' rights movements.

We know from experience that positive change happens when we work with partners to identify problems and to find the best ways to solve them.

For example, we learned that deaf girls in Uganda disproportionately face stigmatization and prejudice for simply using sign language. In their early years, they are deprived of the linguistic skills and tools they need, leading to literacy issues and inaccessible education. That's why we've partnered with Deaf Girls Rescue. This remarkable organization is hosting workshops to teach



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Ugandan sign language — working directly with families to help them find solutions for living with hearing-impaired children and providing educational opportunities that will help these girls have a brighter future and greater self-determination.

MADRE also uplifts visually impaired girls and women to be more fully engaged in society. With your support, we provide funding to the Nationwide Organization of Visually Impaired Empowered Ladies in the Philippines. With you by our side, MADRE helped fund their groundbreaking workshops with young girls and women on themes of human rights, gender equality, and disability inclusion — setting the foundation for a four-part documentary series to raise awareness on the experiences and challenges of girls with disabilities.

In Ukraine, the situation for girls with disabilities is dire. MADRE provided an emergency grant to a Ukrainian organization that safely evacuated more than 2,000 people with disabilities and helped implement a crisis hotline for those with disabilities.

Thanks to friends like you, MADRE is also working with **partners like The Global Resilience Fund and Mobility International USA**, sharing experiences, challenges, successes, and strategies to create stronger activist networks and better integrate disability justice into programs and initiatives. When we work together, we ensure that social change includes women and girls with disabilities!

Raising Awareness and Promoting Change

For Iraqi women who are survivors of gender violence, torture, rape, and other atrocities committed by ISIS, the road to recovery is a difficult one. When they return to their communities, they often experience additional forms of violence and are stigmatized for their captivity. That's why MADRE is committed to working with our partners to change mindsets, make these stories heard, and provide long-term support.

We recently co-hosted community hearings in Iraq along with the **Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) and the EMMA Organization for Human Development, and the Jiyana Foundation**. Each hearing had over 50 participants, including survivors of ISIS captivity. Other participants included judges, community groups, and representatives from the Iraqi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and community police.

For example, at one of the hearings, a Sunni woman from Kirkuk and her children were imprisoned in Mosul by ISIS. During their captivity, the mother was tortured and raped in front of her children, and her children were beaten. Thankfully, her

father rescued the family, but their problems were far from over. When she returned home, she was beaten and rejected by her husband because she had been touched by ISIS. She is currently living in an OWFI safehouse, where the organization is helping her reintegrate into a new community. The hearing gave her the opportunity to demand her rights and accountability. Her testimony shows how determined she is to seek justice:

"I am from a tribal community, and my tribe prevented me from returning to Kirkuk-Zab province because they do not accept what has happened to me. I demand my rights and those of women who have lost everything they have, and I hope that my voice will reach the highest entity in the country. I call on the State to provide housing and salary for my children and me to live a normal life."

The hearings had a tremendous impact. The testimony of 17 survivors was not only powerful for those who were present, it was a way for these women to finally feel heard. There was a ripple effect of awareness-raising, as survivors



and attendees went back to their communities and shared the women's experiences.

The hearings opened the minds of Iraqi government officials and judges, as they expressed their support for survivors and recognized that the State had failed them. The fact that they expressed the need to strengthen and increase access to services, justice, and actual reparations is remarkable and gratifying.

Here at MADRE, we're so grateful to be part of the life-changing work our partners make possible. If not for the hearings, many women would have continued to live in the shadows. But now they are reaching out to our partners to have their stories documented. It really makes it obvious that this work is critical.

Thank You

We are incredibly grateful for your generous support of MADRE and our partners.

Together, we have advanced the priorities of women and girls and trusted their leadership to meet their own and their communities' needs. We have worked in solidarity with marginalized communities to drive long-term change. With your support, we will ensure that activists and organizations have the immediate and long-term resources to continue advocating for their vision of the future.

