

MADRE

Spring/Summer 2011 www.madre.org

speaks



GETTING STRONGER

EVERY GENERATION



MADRE

**Demanding Rights,
Resources & Results
for Women Worldwide**

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Vivian Stromberg

From the Executive Director

YIFAT SUSSKIND

Dear Friends,

2011 has been a year of transformations. We have all been captivated by the mobilizations of people across the Middle East, demanding a voice in their own futures. Yes, the waves of protests rolled at lightning speed. But these transformational moments didn't come out of thin air. Great popular change is the result of years of organizing, education and activism—the very work that MADRE does with women worldwide.

There is no strict formula for what moves people from outrage to action. But it starts with a feeling of profound injustice. It builds with an understanding of the political roots of oppression and the possibility of change. It reaches a tipping point when people choose to confront power with the voices of many.



©Jessica Alderman

It's the tipping points that usually grab our attention, but lasting change is a long-term proposition. To sustain it, people need to organize across generations. That's why MADRE is committed to cultivating young women's leadership and providing spaces for women of different generations to work together.

The importance of multi-generational organizing is something I learned from Vivian, who was MADRE's Executive Director for 20 years. She has always worked to ensure a rich exchange of principles and strategies between activists of different ages. And it's a value that's shared by our sister organizations, as you'll see in this issue of *MADRE Speaks*.

The essence of what we do with our sisters is to cultivate and sustain positive social change. We help women survive crisis, addressing poverty, disaster, violence and discrimination. We cultivate the conditions that allow women to act on their sense of injustice, through human rights trainings and advocacy. We work with women to develop their skills and play leadership roles in their families, communities and countries.

This ongoing work is what enables those dramatic tipping points of social change. The women of our sister organizations often tell us that they couldn't do this crucial work without MADRE. And I know we couldn't do it without you.

Thank you for your enduring support,

MADRE Speaks Volume XXV, #1

MADRE's mission is to advance women's human rights by meeting immediate needs and building lasting solutions for communities in crisis. MADRE works in partnership with community-based women organizations in these program areas: peace building, women's health/combatting violence against women, and economic and environmental justice. ■ Since we began in 1983, MADRE has delivered over 28 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.

Newsletter Staff

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COVER PHOTO: Three generations of women in Peru. ©Maria Trimble

Getting Stronger Every Generation

In our 27 years, MADRE has helped to lead an evolving global women's movement. Today, that movement embraces four powerful generations of women and girls. This diversity fuels our ability to build on the past and create the future. Generation by generation, women of all ages are building a movement that promises to tilt the course of history towards justice and human rights for all.

Just one year ago, women were still struggling to counteract years of neglect of women's human rights issues at the United Nations. Now, a brand new UN agency devoted to supporting women's initiatives and leadership, UN Women, is up and running.

Five years ago, policymakers all but ignored rural women, whose work on small, organic farms sustained their families and communities. Since then, shocked by the economic and environmental crises that roiled the globe, an emerging movement has realized the need for small-scale and sustainable solutions to global challenges—like those pioneered by rural women.

Twenty-five years ago, women's rights were still excluded from the broader human rights agenda. Activists mobilized with the common demand: "Women's rights are human rights." Now, women's human rights are the rallying cry for thousands of women's organizations worldwide.

These accomplishments have been made possible by multiple generations of women, working together towards shared goals to make human rights a reality around the globe. Even as we engage in debate and acknowledge our differences of perspective and experience, we understand that winning full human rights for women around the world is a long-term proposition. All we can do is our



© Bradley Parker

At a recent MADRE training in Guatemala, a grandmother and her granddaughter learn about their human rights together.

own lifetime's share of the work. Then we must pass on what we've learned to the next generation. To ensure this continuity across time, we need strong institutions like MADRE that serve as a bridge for women across geography and across generations.

When you support MADRE, you help sustain community-based women's organizations around the world. You help nurture the institutions that give young women opportunities for leadership and give long-time activists a way to pass down lessons and strategies. By facilitating relationships between generations of women, we build our movement's resiliency over time.



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Yifat and Vivian, MADRE

"Since the first day that Yifat walked through the doors at MADRE 14 years ago, I knew that the values, the commitment and the energy of MADRE were already a part of her." Vivian remembers, "We were from different generations but had the same passion for this work."

Vivian became Yifat's mentor, and together they built campaigns that raised the voices of MADRE's sister organizations and that called on US policymakers to account for their impact on women and families worldwide. Over the years, they developed a friendship built on respect, a shared sense of humor and a powerful commitment to social justice.

After 20 years as MADRE's Executive Director, Vivian prepared to move out of that role. She knew that the relationships she had nurtured with our partners all over the world and the continued strength of MADRE's work depended on the woman who would fill her shoes. And she knew that Yifat—who had long been a driving force behind MADRE's work—would keep the organization's momentum going strong.

"I wouldn't trade anything in the world for all the years that I have worked with Vivian," Yifat says. "Every day she demonstrated how to lead MADRE with tremendous integrity, purpose and joy."

Monica and Mirna, Nicaragua

The little girl, barely seven years old, looked up at the women who had come to visit her mother. Maybe a few of them had an inkling of what that moment meant to the girl, as she watched them discussing the impact of the still-raging Contra war on her community in Nicaragua. She would grow up to be a women's human rights advocate—just like her mother.

The little girl was Monica Aleman. Today, she is a leader in the movement for women's rights and the founder of MADRE's partner organization, the International Indigenous Women's Forum. Her mother is Mirna Cunningham. When we tell the story of the founding of MADRE, Mirna is at the heart of it. She was one of the Nicaraguan women who invited a group of US women to see how US support for the Contra war destroyed communities.

Trained as a surgeon and a teacher, Mirna's leadership has been indispensable to her community through difficult times. She was elected to national office, serving as a Minister of Health and Governor of the North Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua—demanding guarantees for the human rights of all at every step. She was one of the mothers who built MADRE.

Together, Mirna and Monica have been leaders in social movements to demand their rights both as women and as Indigenous people. They worked to build momentum at the United Nations for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights in a landmark human rights declaration that finally passed in September 2007. Through their tireless work and collaboration, they have created new spaces for Indigenous women to speak out and to demand their rights.



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Najla and Fatima, Sudan

When Fatima Ahmed founded Zenab for Women in Development, an organization fighting for the human rights of Sudanese women, her inspiration was her mother. “When I think of every opportunity she gave to me to become a leader and when I think of her dedication to young women, I know that I have a responsibility to keep that legacy going,” Fatima explains.

That legacy lives on in young women like Najla. Like Fatima, Najla was trained as an agronomist and came to work with Zenab for Women in Development in order to win rights for women farmers in Sudan. Today, she travels to visit the hundreds of women farmers supported by MADRE and Zenab, hearing their stories, documenting their needs and distributing seeds. “She is becoming a leader in Zenab, among the women farmers and in the Sudanese women’s movement,” Fatima says. “Because of her dedication, our work is growing, and I know that I can rely on her to continue our work into the future.”



© Zenab

Hind and Dalal, Iraq

One day in 2006, when a team of women from the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), a MADRE sister organization, were visiting women in Kadhimiya Prison, one woman walked up to them, her eyes determined. She said her name was Hind and that she needed to get out to care for her nine-year-old son.

Hind had gone through so much. At 16, she had been raped. After the attack, she could not go home, fearing that her family would kill her in order to restore their “honor” after the shame of her rape. For ten years, she lived and worked in a Baghdad brothel. Eventually, she met a man and left the brothel. But not long after her son was born, the father left her. She turned to sex work again to support herself and her son.

Eventually, she was arrested and sent to prison. This is where OWFI found her. They helped to secure her release and offered her a small room for her and her son—next door to Dalal, an OWFI activist in her 50’s. Hind began to accompany Dalal to OWFI meetings and activities, hearing women who dreamt out loud together of a better Iraq.

“It was the first safe place I could remember,” Hind says. “I saw women who were strong and who took care of each other. They weren’t afraid to take action.” Today, Hind is the head of OWFI’s anti-trafficking program, traveling to the most dangerous parts of Baghdad to ask women living off of sex work what they need to protect their rights. Now it is her turn to open the door for women to a new life.

Planned Giving

Transmit your commitment to the next generation.

You can support young women leaders who will continue the spirit and the work of the global women’s movement. 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 a lasting impact on the world in this way. Join the special group of supporters who have included MADRE in their wills or estate plans. Please call us at (212) 627-0444 for more information.

TRIBUTE TO

Vivian



Vivian, you have been at the heart of the movement to which we have devoted our lives. Your fierce dedication to social justice for women and families across the world is expressed by the friendship and support you offer boundlessly. You created a family that extends around the world. You are a model for us all, and you re-inspire us to continue this work every day. Thank you, Vivian.

— From MADRE's Board Members

Thank You, Vivian!

Through Vivian's 20 years as MADRE's Executive Director, we have all been awed by her dedication to our grassroots partners, her determination to mobilize MADRE to confront women's human rights violations worldwide, and her warmth in building lasting friendships with women across the globe. She will always be a part of MADRE.

As she moves into a new role as Senior Advisor, we would like to share some loving messages of support from our MADRE family.

Inset photos, top: Vivian before MADRE as campaign manager for Bella Abzug; reading to refugee children; right, driving trucks filled with milk and medicines to Iraq. Above, Vivian in Nicaragua.



We thank Vivian for her great work with MADRE. Her support for Africa has motivated many of us to continue working with force and with passion for our Indigenous Peoples and communities.

-Lucy Mullenkei, Indigenous Information Network, MADRE sister organization, Kenya

Vivian, we cannot forget that in times of great difficulty for our organization, you were always there for us, helping us overcome those moments. You have always shown us the meaning for the word "compañera" in our history and in our fight.

-K'inál Antsetik, MADRE sister organization, Mexico



© Laura Flanders

Vivian—I am so happy for you. I know you would never transition away from MADRE without someone really terrific to take over the reins.

-Devon Fredericks, MADRE member

Twenty years! Such amazing work you have done. I remember our years of closeness very well, and that time means so much to me. I learned a tremendous amount from you, Vivian.

-Susan Freundlich, MADRE member

I think of you, Vivian, every time I see this photo. I remember seeing the little girl shyly looking up at me in that displacement camp in Haiti and knowing just what to do to make her smile. I thought of a little game you taught me. I took out my pen and drew a happy face on the tip of my finger, and I was rewarded by her laugh.



Thank you, Viv. You taught me how the smallest, human gestures can bring joy and laughter into the saddest situations. You showed me that the friendships we build across communities and across generations are the most powerful force for change in the world. You taught me these things because you live them every day.

Now I have the chance to pass on everything that I've learned from you. You've been a mentor to so many women around the world, strengthening MADRE, our sisters and our movement.

-Yifat

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The Vivian Fund

You can add your support to honor everything that Vivian has stood for in her years of activism. Give to the Vivian Fund for Young Women in Crisis. Vivian strongly believes that young women who are emerging leaders in their communities and globally are the future of our movement. But they face obstacles that threaten their dreams.

Your support for the Vivian Fund will help:

- Cover tuition fees for young Kenyan girls who are seeking an education as an alternative to forced marriage.
- Provide trauma counseling for Colombian girls who have been exploited as child soldiers.
- Give shelter to young Iraqi women facing the threat of "honor" killings.
- Respond immediately to the urgent needs of young women human rights defenders worldwide who face death threats because of their work to demand justice for women and girls.

To support the Vivian Fund, go to
www.madre.org/VivianFund



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS Spring 2011



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SUDAN

As Sudan prepared for a historic secession vote in January, our local partner, Zenab for Women in Development, helped secure a peaceful outcome. They conducted two three-day trainings and facilitated ten voter education workshops for women. Forty women were trained as election observers. Contrary to many grim predictions, the referendum process was peaceful, thanks in part to the efforts of grassroots organizations, including Zenab for Women in Development.

When MADRE's Executive Director, Yifat Susskind, recently traveled to Guatemala, she met with Indigenous women who are genocide survivors. "Despite the horror these women have faced, they have a fierce determination to make their children's lives better than their own," Yifat said.

GUATEMALA

In March, MADRE staff visited our partners at Muixil, an Indigenous women's organization. Many of the women of Muixil are survivors of genocide and continue to face severe discrimination, violence and poverty. With MADRE support, these women have started small chicken farms, selling eggs to raise money to send their children to school. We visited three rural communities, bringing support from MADRE members to help them buy chickens and sustain their families.



©Zenab

A member of the MADRE-supported women farmers' union in Sudan receives seeds.

IRAQ

Through MADRE's Underground Railroad for Iraqi Women, we provide a means of escape for Iraqi women facing death threats. Our local partner, the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, sheltered over 30 women in 2010. This included three 16-year-olds facing "honor killing" by their families. With support from MADRE and OWFI, these young women are receiving job training and starting new lives.

NICARAGUA

Recently, intense rains flooded the Coco River, contaminating water supplies, destroying small farms and increasing



Children in the Kisalaya community gather around a well MADRE built.

people's vulnerability to devastating landslides. MADRE worked with our partner organization, Wangki Tangni, and with engineers to repair wells and install water pumps in two Indigenous communities. The initiative will help combat deadly waterborne illnesses in the community.

PERU

Every week, nearly 60,000 radio listeners in Indigenous Peruvian communities tune in to the MADRE-supported human rights radio show "Sapinchikmanta" ("Voices for Justice"). Led by our partner organization CHIRAPAQ, this weekly radio show is run by Indigenous women and broadcasts in Quechua and Spanish, promoting respect for the identity and culture of Indigenous Peoples. Programs cover a wide array of human rights issues, including sexual and reproductive rights, and are often accompanied by health workshops in rural areas. With MADRE support, a group of young Indigenous women who have little access to health care recently received training on sexual and reproductive health. Thanks to "Voices for Justice," the women were able to share what they learned with thousands of listeners in remote communities.

CURRENT CAMPAIGN

In Guatemala, a human rights emergency is raging, and no one is paying attention.

Women and girls are being raped, tortured and murdered, their mutilated bodies gruesomely discarded in public places. In the past decade, nearly 5,000 young women have been murdered in this way, some as young as ten. We need your help to end these atrocities.

Your support will help MADRE and our partner, the Women Workers' Committee outside Guatemala City, provide critical social services, support women organizing to protect themselves, offer legal aid services to the families of victims and help demand that their government bring murderers to justice.

Violence against women can be stopped. To join the fight, go to madre.org/endviolence.



Yifat joined young girls making beaded jewelry at the KOFAVIV Center in Port-au-Prince.

HAITI

Women and girls living in Haiti's displacement camps face an extreme threat of sexual violence. With our sister organization, KOFAVIV, MADRE has launched a center to provide urgent care, legal aid and psycho-social support to women and girls. Every day, more women who have survived rape arrive at the KOFAVIV Women's Center; many are girls under the age of 17. With MADRE support, KOFAVIV is also working to protect women within the camps by distributing flashlights and whistles and organizing volunteer community watch groups.

PAKISTAN

MADRE is responding to the ongoing needs after last year's flooding with our local partner, Shirkat Gah. With MADRE support, Shirkat Gah has set up six mobile clinics in northern Pakistan, where nearly 1,800 people, including more than 700 women, have received free health care and family planning. Nearly 100 of these women were pregnant and received delivery kits with essential pre- and post-natal supplies.



Two years after her daughter's murder, Betty Gonzalez, a member of the Women Workers' Committee, still speaks out in search of justice.



FOCUS ON ADVOCACY

Mobilizing International Law:

A Victory in the Campaign to End the Epidemic of Rape in Haiti

In the hundreds of displacement camps sheltering people in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, women and girls have been the targets of a widespread rape epidemic. Without security, lighting after nightfall or privacy, women and girls are routinely attacked in their tents or when walking about the camps. Nowhere is safe for women in Haiti's tent cities.

Since long before the earthquake, MADRE has partnered with KOFIVIV, a Haitian grassroots women's organization founded by and for rape survivors. After the earthquake, we worked with KOFIVIV to ensure urgent care for rape survivors, to document the rising levels of rape and to distribute whistles and flashlights to women in the camps to help them stay safe.

And we mobilized human rights advocacy at the international level. Working with a coalition of allies and KOFIVIV, MADRE submitted a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. We requested urgent "precautionary measures" to address the crisis.

We were successful! The Commission issued legally binding recommendations to the Haitian government, including demands for medical and psychological care for rape survivors, lighting and effective security measures in the camps. Crucially, the Commission stated that grassroots women's groups must be involved in creating policies to address sexual violence.

This is just a first step. Now MADRE is working with our partners to win implementation of these important measures and make sure that women have a seat at the table in policy-making. This major victory would not have been won without the support of MADRE members. **On behalf of the women of Haiti, thank you!**

MADRE & Our Partners in the Media

"U.S. abandons principle on child soldiers."

Letter to the Editor of the Washington Post, by MADRE Executive Director Yifat Susskind (October 31, 2010)

"This week, the Obama administration had a choice: Stand with children exploited as soldiers or with the militaries guilty of exploiting them. It opted for the latter."

"Afghan Women's Shelters." *Letter to the Editor of the New York Times, by MADRE Executive Director Yifat Susskind (February 19, 2011)*

"Afghan women's shelters are a crucial refuge for women escaping brutal violence—and these shelters are under siege."

"Open Letter to Michelle Bachelet on the Launch of UN Women" *(February 24, 2011)*

"Today, we attain a new milestone, one that women through the decades fought and hoped for. As UN Women sets forth, it must be more than another UN entity; it must be a powerful voice for global women's rights."

"An Epidemic of Rape for Haiti's Displaced." *Editorial in the New York Times (April 3, 2011)*

"Groups of Haitian women have been struggling to defend themselves, banding together to prevent assaults and now taking their case to a wider world. At a hearing March 25 in Washington before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a grass-roots group, KOFIVIV, joined other human-rights advocates in pressing for an end to what they called a rape epidemic."

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Virtual Delegations

Come with MADRE on a virtual delegation to visit our sister organizations! You can get updates via email from MADRE staff as they travel to the programs that your contributions make possible. You will be the first to see the photos we take, watch the videos we record, and hear the voices of our sisters.

Email: virtualdelegation@madre.org for updates from our trips.

Empower the Women of Tomorrow

MADRE is working with our partner, the Indigenous Information Network, to provide Indigenous girls in Kenya with access to quality education. Bright young girls in rural communities end up missing classes and even dropping out of school simply because they cannot afford sanitary napkins. By making this important donation, you can empower an entire generation of young women with the best gift of all—a quality education.

Your donations of sanitary napkins can help make this possible. *Please do not send tampons, as they are not culturally accepted, or reusable pads, which require access to clean water.*

Mail or drop off your donation at: MADRE

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