



MADRE

Spring/Summer 2010 www.madre.org speaks



Stories
of our
Sisters
2010



MADRE

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

121 West 27th Street, # 301
New York, NY 10001
Telephone: (212) 627-0444
Fax: (212) 675-3704
e-mail: madre@madre.org
www.madre.org

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From the Executive Director

VIVIAN STROMBERG

Dear Friends,

We launched the year with an urgent response to the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti. We used your support to bring life-saving medicines and supplies to survivors and to raise a call for human rights to be the guiding principles of relief efforts.

As always, we made sure that your contributions not only provided humanitarian aid, but strengthened local women's organizations, leaving skills and resources in the hands of community members. We asked tough questions about how and why Haitians were made so vulnerable to this disaster, recognizing that Haiti was devastated long before the earthquake of January 12.



©Harold Levine

In fact, Haiti was devastated by some of the very policies that the US and other powerful actors now seek to accelerate in the name of reconstruction. These policies have prioritized foreign investment over Haitians' basic human rights.

The women of our sister organizations don't just want to see Haiti rebuilt; they want to see it transformed. They have a vision of another country grounded in human rights and environmental sustainability. And they've got some concrete plans for realizing that vision.

What they don't have is a voice in policymaking. That's why we helped launch an international initiative to ensure the effective participation and leadership of Haitian women in the reconstruction process. We campaigned at the UN Donors' Conference for Haiti for a process that is Haitian-led, locally determined and compliant with human rights.

I've promised our sisters in Haiti that we'll continue to work with them to meet urgent needs in their communities and ensure that their perspectives are heard by policymakers. I was only able to make this promise thanks to your commitment to MADRE. So I hope you feel proud reading this issue of *MADRE Speaks*. None of this work, whether in Haiti, Nicaragua, Afghanistan or any of the other places that we are making a difference, could happen without your support.

With a big thank-you from me and our sisters in Haiti and around the world,

MADRE Speaks Volume XXIV, #1

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 inter-relationships between the various issues we address and by a commitment to working in partnership with women at the local, regional, and international levels who share our goals. ■ Since we began in 1983, MADRE has delivered over 26 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 EDITORS: Yifat Susskind and Irene Lew; DESIGN: Amy Thesing
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© Muxil



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Stories of Our Sisters 2010

This year, with your support, we've recommitted ourselves to building the world we all want to live in. By being a part of MADRE, you become an unstoppable force for women's human rights. None of us can do it alone, but working together, we can:

- **Save lives**
- **Build lasting solutions to violence and poverty and**
- **Join the world's bravest women in working to make human rights a reality for everyone.**

HAITI: Emergency Relief for Earthquake Survivors

Our partners at the International Feminist Solidarity Camp told us the story of Crista, a young mother in Port-au-Prince:

“One day, we received a telephone call. ‘We don't know what to do,’ our contact, Martin, told us. ‘A young woman has just given birth on the sidewalk in the middle of town. She cannot move because she has a broken leg and hipbone from the earthquake. She has a cast over half her body.’ Our health teams sprung into action to help Crista and her baby, Carlitos. We pulled together an emergency package of food, water, diapers, baby clothing, a lantern, a sleeping bag and plastic sheets to create a shelter until we could find a tent. It touched our hearts to see the new mother smile at us, even through her excruciating pain. Eventually, we were able to get Crista to a clinic where she underwent surgery on her hip. ‘It was incredible—with so much death around me, I brought life into this world,’ Crista told us, smiling. ‘I thought there was no one to help me, but then you came.’”



© Flavia Cherry

MADRE-supported midwives are providing critical health care to pregnant women who survived the earthquake in Haiti.



©Flavia Cherry

Thousands of women and their families are living in makeshift shelters, vulnerable to both sexual predators and torrential rains.

Crista is one of the many women that your contributions have enabled us to help. In the critical days following the earthquake, MADRE worked with Partners in Health to support Zanmi Lasante and provide emergency medical care. MADRE also partnered with women's rights groups to distribute tents, medicine, clothing, hygiene products and baby formula for orphans. And MADRE has supported multiple delegations of Creole-speaking midwives who are providing critical reproductive health care to women in Haiti and training midwives to deliver ongoing care.

NICARAGUA: Harvesting Hope

"We are Indigenous People, so the forest has always been our source of food," said Patricia, who lives in a remote region along Nicaragua's Coco River. "When our land was taken from us, we became hungry. My eight-year-old daughter stopped laughing. We did a survey with doctors and found that we had a 75 percent malnutrition rate in my community. We had to find a solution and with MADRE we did." Patricia was one of the first to sign up for MADRE's Harvesting Hope organic farming and livestock-management trainings. After the training, which was offered through MADRE's partner, Wangki Tangni, Patricia received chickens and learned how to care for them.

Through Harvesting Hope, MADRE and Wangki Tangni have trained thousands of women in small-scale organic farming and livestock-management. We provide seeds, ongoing training and farm animals.

MADRE and Wangki Tangni recently provided organic watermelon, cabbage, squash, tomato and cucumber seeds for 125 small organic farms and coordinated four farmers' markets. "I now have a small business selling eggs," said Patricia. "My children are eating everyday and my daughter is laughing again. It is the best sound in the world."

Harvesting Hope organizes local markets where women farmers sell their produce.



©Britt Wiley



AFGHANISTAN: The Afghan Women's Survival Fund

“I feared for my own life and wanted to protect my three children but I knew that I could not stay silent,” said Naseema, who bravely reported her husband to the police after she saw him kill a woman in broad daylight. Her husband was arrested, but used his criminal connections to track Naseema down. “I was at a women’s shelter with my children but we had to leave because he kept making threatening phone calls to me,” said Naseema. “And he didn’t stop there—he had my sister shot. When he was released from prison, I moved to another shelter, but he found me.”

Working with Women for Afghan Women in Kabul, MADRE was able to activate our Afghan Women’s Survival Fund for Naseema. The Fund provides shelter, secret transport and other life-saving necessities to Afghan women who are threatened for trying to exercise their most basic human rights. Most recently, the Fund helped to provide housing, transportation and passport fees for Naseema and her children. Thanks to MADRE member support, the family has now been safely relocated in Pakistan.

GUATEMALA: Farming for the Future

“Everything changed when the soldiers arrived,” said Rosa, an Indigenous Ixil woman living in the Quiché region of Guatemala. “They burned our homes and killed many of my friends and neighbors.” It was 1982, the height of the Guatemalan civil war. Although Rosa fled with her family to the mountains, they were eventually captured by armed forces. “When I was imprisoned, I will never forget the sight of soldiers raping the young women,” recalled Rosa. After six months, Rosa and her family were released. However, they remained displaced from their home and faced extreme poverty and hunger. Then Rosa joined MADRE’s Farming for the Future program, which is run in partnership with our sister organization, Muixil. Farming for the Future empowers women by supporting the establishment of small-scale, sustainable chicken and pig farms. The communally owned farms generate food security and income for families who would otherwise go hungry. “I am grateful to MADRE and Muixil for helping us rebuild our communities after years of war,” said Rosa. “My family is eating better because we have eggs and meat. I am learning about human rights and teaching other women in my community to recognize their rights as Indigenous women.” With MADRE’s support, 135 women have received chickens. MADRE and Muixil hope to expand the Farming for the Future program to 350 women this year, supporting a total of 2,450 people.



Women who take part in MADRE’s Farming for the Future project work together to combat hunger and poverty and defend their human rights.



© Maya Bogdanow

Miguel Macias (far right), a MADRE member and media producer, encouraged former child soldiers to chronicle their stories through writing and producing their own videos.

COLOMBIA: Protecting Children of War

In Colombia, children are forced to become soldiers. “We never experienced a childhood,” said Marta, who was kidnapped and trained to fight for a paramilitary group when she was 11. “We exchanged our dolls for rifles, our games for combat.” Marta was eventually released onto the streets of Bogotá but she could barely read and was haunted by the killings she had been forced to commit.

Marta found MADRE’s partner organization, Taller de Vida. Today she helps other young people heal from the wounds of war and build real alternatives to lives of violence. “Taller de Vida gave me *una nueva vida* (a new life),” said Marta. The organization provides trauma counseling and art and play therapy to former child soldiers and children who are at high-risk of being recruited by armed groups. MADRE member and youth media producer Miguel Macias recently conducted a series of multimedia workshops at Taller de Vida. Miguel gave former child soldiers like Marta the tools and skills to tell their stories. Please visit <http://madreblogs.typepad.com/mymadre/colombia-child-soldiers/> to see video highlights of their work.

For Maryam, finding clean water for her family is a daily challenge.



© Zakher

PALESTINE: Clean Water for Gaza

NEW PARTNER Like many Palestinian women living in the Gaza Strip, 40-year-old Maryam struggles to provide safe drinking water for her family. Israel has restricted the movement of people and goods into Gaza since 2007, resulting in a severe shortage of clean water. Gaza’s water supply is contaminated by salt and toxic nitrate. Broken water pipes allow raw sewage to leak into the groundwater supply. “Since the blockade began, my house only has water once a week,” said Maryam, who has 11 children.

“The rest of the time, we have to buy water at four times the cost of water from the municipality.” Maryam purchases water from desalination stations in Gaza City and stores the water in plastic containers, which cover nearly every corner of her house, including her bedroom. “I only use the water for drinking and cooking,” said Maryam. “I need more water for washing and other household chores, but it is too expensive. My husband Talal works as a cleaner collecting garbage with his horse. But after rent, water and food for the horse, we have very little money left.”

MADRE is working with the Zakher Association to ensure that Maryam and her family will have reliable, affordable and clean water. The Zakher Association, founded and run by women in Gaza, works in Gaza’s most impoverished communities to alleviate suffering and strengthen the role of women in addressing the medical, economic and social crises that Palestinians face. With MADRE support, the Zakher Association is installing 25 water filters in Gaza City to provide clean drinking water to nearly 52,500 people. Smaller water filters will also be installed in several primary schools, and provide 1,500 children with clean water.



© Zakher

The cost of purchasing clean water strains Maryam’s daily household expenses, which include caring for her children and buying animal feed.



With clean water scarce, families must collect and store water when they can afford to buy it.

© Zakher

IRAQ: An Underground Railroad for Iraqi Women

When Sabeen was 16 years old, she was raped by an Iraqi army officer. “I had been trying to bargain with him for the freedom of my two brothers who were his prisoners,” Sabeen recalled. After the rape, Sabeen knew that she could never go home again. She would surely face “honor killing” by relatives seeking to expunge the shame of her rape. So Sabeen took a bus to Baghdad. What little money she had soon ran out and she turned to prostitution to survive. Sabeen eventually made her way to one of Iraq’s only women’s shelters, co-founded by MADRE and our partner, the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI). Sabeen learned about MADRE’s Underground Railroad for

Yanar Mohammed (left) has worked with MADRE to build an Underground Railroad for Iraqi Women. The program offers women who are threatened with “honor killing” the resources to escape danger and begin to build a new life.



© Daniel Smith

Iraqi Women, a special program to help women like her escape “honor killings” and build a new life for themselves. “I resolved that no one should have to suffer what I had suffered,” said Sabeen. “So I worked with the OWFI women and they showed me how to be strong and how to defend my rights.” Sabeen is now a key OWFI activist, working to empower other women who have faced violence, including those who are incarcerated, widowed, displaced or battered.

This year, MADRE will help Sabeen and the women of OWFI reach out to even more women through Al Mousawat (“Equality”) Radio, founded by OWFI just last year. MADRE will work with OWFI to create programming focused on women’s everyday struggles against sexual violence and discrimination.



© Zenab

SUDAN: Women Farmers Unite

Hadija is a 47-year-old farmer. Like many women in Sudan, she grows most of the food that her family eats. Yet, the Ministry of Agriculture refused to recognize Hadija as a farmer and has excluded her from government programs that benefit male farmers.

That is, until MADRE and our partner in Sudan, Zenab for Women in Development, launched the first-ever Women Farmers’ Union in the country. MADRE and Zenab provide seeds, tools and training in organic farming and human rights. The results are powerful. Hadija and the other women farmers are increasing their yields and demanding their rights—as farmers and as women.

“Without the Women Farmers’ Union, I would never have earned enough to afford school fees for my children,” said Hadija. “I am so proud because this year, I was able to send my youngest daughter to college with the income from my crops.”

One group of women farmers have pooled their extra income to fund literacy training in their village, where 95 percent of the people cannot read. In another village, the women are using their earnings to bring electricity to the community. “Before, women had no hope, no access to seeds or the tools to grow food for themselves and their families,” said Hadija. “Now we are feeding our families and making things better for our communities.”

Legacy of Hope

Zenab Mohamed Nour: How one woman's passion changed thousands of lives in Sudan

Zenab Mohamed Nour never dreamed of being a hero. As a young woman, she simply wanted to learn and teach others—and that meant defying tradition and becoming the first woman to attend the Omdurman Institute for Teachers in eastern Sudan. As a teacher, she challenged beliefs that girls' education was anything less than essential, and worked with the Ministry of Education to open dozens of schools for girls.



©Peace Women Across the Globe

Fatima Ahmed with her mother, Zenab Mohamed Nour

Towards the end of her teaching career, Zenab began thinking about how her efforts to empower girls would be carried on in the future. She resolved to support her daughter, Fatima Ahmed, in launching an organization dedicated to promoting women's human rights throughout Sudan.

Fatima named the organization after her mother, founding Zenab for Women in Development, now MADRE's sister organization in Sudan.

Zenab proudly watched as the new organization flourished under the leadership of her daughter. Today, Zenab for Women in Development is one of Sudan's leading women's organizations, delivering humanitarian aid to refugees in

Darfur, providing literacy classes for women, facilitating workshops on HIV/AIDS prevention, working to combat forced female genital mutilation and spearheading sustainable agriculture initiatives for women.

Upon her passing in 2006, Zenab fortified her legacy by leaving a bequest to the organization.

"My mother knew that it takes more than a single lifetime to change the world. She was lucky enough to have some resources and she used them to carry her commitment to women's rights far into the future. Just look at what we have been able to do with my mother's gift. We are saving lives and defending human rights. I know my mother is at peace because she planted the seed to keep her dream of a better world alive."



©Zenab

Our partner, Fatima Ahmed, an agronomist by training, works with women farmers to help grow food and advance women's rights.



Provide Resources for Children's Education

MADRE's Helping Hands Campaign is collecting school supplies for children in Kenya, Sudan and Nicaragua. Please make an individual donation, create a collection box to put in a classroom, or start a school-wide collection drive for MADRE. Any donation you could make, however small or large, would make a huge difference in the lives of these kids.

THE CHILDREN NEED:

- Children's books in English and Spanish
- Notebooks, folders, binders
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, highlighters
- Pencils, pens, pencil sharpeners
- Puzzles and educational toys
- Math flashcards
- Glue, tape, glitter
- Children's scissors
- Classroom educational decorations in English and Spanish
- New children's undergarments and shoes



© Maya Bogdanow

HOW TO DONATE:

Mail or drop off your donation at:

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Attn: Helping Hands Campaign
121 West 27th Street #301
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If you're in Manhattan,
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(212) 627-0444

4 Easy Ways to Support MADRE

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DONATE APPRECIATED STOCK, ART OR REAL ESTATE. Claim a tax deduction for the full market value of appreciated stock, bonds and other securities or property that you have held for over a year.

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

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You can help ensure that MADRE's programs remain strong and vibrant without writing another check or making another trip to the post office. Sign up to give a fixed amount through a secure, automatic credit card deduction at

www.madre.org/sustainer

Becoming a Women's Human Rights Sustainer is one of the most powerful ways to help build the world you want to inhabit. Join us today.

MADRE gives you a critical feminist perspective of the global issues that affect us all. Visit our website for these recent MADRE articles:

Oh, Those "Disappointing" Iraqis, March 2010

Aid is Power. Who Do You Want to Empower?, February 2010

Women's Human Rights Are Key to Successful Reconstruction in Haiti, January 2010

Sex Workers' Rights are Human Rights, December 2009

Six Alternatives to a Troop Surge in Afghanistan, December 2009

What's Agriculture Got To Do with Climate Change?, November 2009

Women Need Rights, Not Rescue, September 2009

Afghan Democracy is Flat-lining—And Only Women Can Save It, August 2009

We would be happy to mail these articles to you. Please give us a call at (212) 627-0444 to request copies.

MADRE in the News

KPFA "Women's Magazine" radio program, interview with Yifat Susskind

"Haitian girls face increased vulnerability after quake," Reuters

"Las mujeres como socorristas en Haití," by Yifat Susskind, El Diario La Prensa

"After the Quake, Depend on Women," by Marie St. Cyr and Yifat Susskind, New America Media

"Helping Haiti," The Nation

"31 Days of Giving," Glamour Magazine

"Is a Benevolent Occupation Possible? Discussing Afghanistan." GRITtv

"Baghdad Underground," Ms. Magazine

"Underreported: Baghdad's Underground Railroad," The Leonard Lopate Show, WNYC

"The U.S. is Leaving Iraq but Where Are We Leaving Iraqi Women?," by Yifat Susskind, distributed by the National Women's Editorial Forum to local newspapers like The Capital Times (Madison, WI), The Daily Citizen (Dalton, GA) and the Johnstown Breeze (Johnstown, CO).

"Discord likely over ratifying global women's rights pact," Associated Press

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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 by joining the Jocelyn Circle, a special group of supporters who have included MADRE in their wills or estate plans. Please call us at (212) 627-0444 for more information.

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