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## EDITORIAL

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On March 8<sup>th</sup> 2011, in order to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of International Women's Day, we launched the MEWC website. The MEWC team worked tirelessly to ensure that the website and content were ready to be launched on time. In the past year the website has achieved and expanded far more than we could have hoped. It is with the MEWC website that we successfully celebrated the 101<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of International Women's Day.

To celebrate this year's International Women's Day, MEWC hosted a poetry festival. Beginning at 8:00am GMT, we published one poem every hour written by men and women from across Africa and the world to commemorate Women's Day and explore this year's theme: "Connecting girls, inspiring futures." In total we posted fourteen poems for a total of fourteen hours. It was hard work, but well worth it to promote the day that garners international appreciation of women. If you happened to miss the poetry festival and are interested in the poems, you can view them on our [Poetry Festival Page](#).

Numerous countries joined in to participate in the celebration of International Women's Day. In Eritrea, a seminar and a photography exhibition was held discussing the theme of women's role in traditional society. Ghana celebrated International Women's Day with an art exhibition and concert with the theme "Young African Women, Inspiring Futures." Tanzania took it a step further and prolonged the celebration for an entire week, highlighting gender-based violence in East African Countries and gender mainstreaming topics. It was Rwanda however, that initiated a month long campaign was dedicated to women and girls highlighting issues such as malnutrition, emancipation, and education with each week. It truly was an International Women's Day.

On a side note, you may have noticed that over the past month MEWC presence in social media has surged. If you want a daily recap of some of the headlines posted on the MEWC website, without the hassle, then our social media pages are for you. On these sites we post a highlight of news articles throughout the day and update you on events happening with MEWC. So, If you haven't yet done so, head over to our Facebook page and like [Make Every Women Count](#) or follow us on our twitter page [Make Every Women Count](#).

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## INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

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### [AFRICA: INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH WITH CHANTAL BINWAASSUMANI](#)

Chantal Binwaassumani is a 30 years-old human rights activist from DR Congo, she is married with four kids. Chantal hold a degree in rural development, she has been working with The Association des femmes pour la Promotion et le Développement Endogène is a Congolese (AFPDE) since 2005 as the project coordinator.

**Your organization has now been active on the ground for over 10 years. How has the situation changed over the past 10 years for women? Have they become more vulnerable or rather stronger through empowerment strategies? Has the number of women coming to your organization increased?**

It's true that our organization exists and works for women, girls and children in difficult situation for over 10 years. Throughout this period we have observed that the women's situation has been mixed. It has improved a little in urban areas and it hasn't changed at all in rural areas.

With the education, sensitization, advocacy, accusations and monitoring that are made by human rights activists in urban and semi urban areas in order to stop abuses against women, the situation has improved somewhat. Cases of sexual violence have declined for fear of being denounced by women themselves and the organizations defending women's human rights. Apart from that, I can say that in urban and semi urban areas, according to the actions that are realized, women have gained some power and that contributes greatly to the fight against the abuses that they are victims of.

Else in rural areas, the situation remained the same and is increasingly degraded. This is primarily due to the lack of advocacy, awareness, education and monitoring for the promotion of women's rights and the fight against sexual violence.

Other than that, armed conflicts in these environments are among the major causes of rape and sexual violence against women and girls. These barbaric acts are committed by the government militaries, armed groups and other uncivil persons.

In these areas, women are considered like objects and animals, which can be abused without being protected by someone. For example our supervisor visited Bijombo administrative grouping in order to realize the monitoring of sexual violence cases. He was arrested, beaten and put in jail by armed militiamen of FRF that control this part of the highlands of the Uvira Territory. His life was in danger, and he was liberated after two days by giving 120 \$ to these militiamen.

Thus, I can say that the number of women who come to our organization is growing. At times, we have small number of women who come to our organization and at other times, the number increases. But when we make the annual total, we find that the number has increased compared to previous years.

## **How do you feel about DRC being cited as "the Capital of Rape"? What can actually be done about VAW around the world and especially in the DRC?**

To be cited as the capital of the Rape, I think it's a disgrace to women and Congolese authorities. For me, this qualification should challenge Congolese authorities and urge them to do everything to end this scourge.

It is in this sense that, at our level, we can ask the international community to do everything to put an end to an armed conflict, which continue in the eastern part of DRC. In addition to that, the international community can support organizations that are helping women and girls who are victims of sexual violence in order to ensure them with medical care, psychological and socio economic rehabilitation.

Regarding the DRC authorities, I can suggest they mobilize all the means at their disposal in order to combat all armed groups that spread death and desolation to women in this part of our country. And that concrete steps are taken to combat impunity, corruption and amicable arrangements that characterize Congolese justice.

Apart from some measures to reintegrate socially and economically, victims must be taken and strategies implemented to strengthen women's power and restore their human dignity.

[READ MORE](#)

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## **HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH**

### **[HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH WITH THE FORUM FOR AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATIONALIST \(FAWEMA\)](#)**

[The Forum for African Women Educationalists \(FAWEMA\)](#) is a registered non- governmental organization (NGO) headquartered in Lilongwe, Malawi, which unites educationalists, with the aim of supporting and promoting girls and women's education. They seek to empower women and girls through gender responsive education and envision a Malawi where all girls and women have access to education. The organization firmly believes that by empowering women and girls through education, the livelihoods of entire communities are improved and civic education and liberties are enhanced from local to national levels. FAWEMA is confident that educated girls will become tomorrow's leaders, given the opportunity to excel and learn in their educational pursuits. They believe that empowerment is crucial to sustainable and equitable development in Malawi and that girls and women have the utmost potential in refining the direction of their society and reshaping a better future for all with enthusiasm and leadership.

[READ MORE](#)

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## TOP WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY NEWS

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### [RWANDA: 70 FEMALE POLICE OFFICERS COMPLETE TRAINING](#)

*Source: The New Times*

A group of 77 police officers, 70 of them women, were yesterday commissioned after completing a three-month Police basic training at Police Training School in Gishari, Rwamagana District.

### [GHANA: YOUNG WOMEN URGED TO JOIN ELECTION 2012 PEACE CRUSADE](#)

*Source: Public Agenda*

The Executive Director of Ark Foundation, Mrs. Angela Dwamena-Aboagye, has called on young women in the country to add their voices to the crusade for peace and security for the 2012 elections.

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## TOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NEWS

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### [DRC: WHEN PROTECTORS TURN PREDATORS ARMY REFORMS NEEDED TO COUNTER SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE CONGO](#)

*Source: Africa Renewal*

"A dead rat is worth more than the body of a woman." Those were the words of one distraught young woman whom I met in Walikale in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2010. As the world was once again outraged at the reports of mass rapes in early June 2011 in the DRC's South Kivu, her words came back to me. Those attacks marked the fourth incident in a series of mass rapes which took place in the previous 18 months in the country. Hundreds of children, women and men have been left to recover with little or no assistance.

### [TANZANIA: NEW OUTFIT KEEN ON ENDING VIOLENCE](#)

*Source: Tanzania Daily News*

Tanzania has recorded immense success in the "We Can" campaign that was launched in the country in 2008 and has spread to several regions.

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## TOP POLITICAL PARTICIPATION NEWS

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### [NIGERIA: PDP AND THE CHALLENGE OF WOMEN LEADERS](#)

*Source: Nigerian Tribune*

Questions have been raised in several fora, which seem hitherto elusive. Why are Nigerian women playing a second fiddle in politics? Why the male chauvinists in politics are confining the role of women only to rendering care of the families at home is a puzzle many of us can not yet unravel. As Sara H. Longue, a gender equity advocate once said, "women's endless toil, productive and reproductive contributions sustain families and communities."

### [NORTH AFRICA: QUOTA, WHAT QUOTA? HOW PARLIAMENTS LACK FEMALE TOUCH IN ARAB REGION](#)

*Source: Al Arabya News*

Across the Middle East, countries are witnessing parliamentary changes under newly-installed governments which have been credited as a result of the Arab Spring.

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## **TOP ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT NEWS**

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### **[AFRICA: WOMEN FARMERS DENIED EQUAL RIGHTS](#)**

*Source: Voice of America*

A humanitarian group says if women farmers had the same rights as men much more could be done to reduce world hunger. Bread for the World says equal access to agricultural resources would help ensure food security and boost economic growth. Bread for the World's new report – Empowering Women in Agriculture – says women are “active players” in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. But Faustine Wabwire says they receive little compensation for toiling in the fields. Wabwire, a Kenyan, is the group's foreign assistance analyst.

### **[RWANDA: LOCALS WEAVE THEIR WAY TO SUCCESS](#)**

*Source: The New Times*

Empowered with a needle and thread, Rwandan women, Emelienne Nyiramana and Therese Iribagiza have changed their lives.

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## **TOP HIV/AIDS & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

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### **[SOUTH SUDAN: SAVING MOTHERS' LIVES ONE MIDWIFE AT A TIME UN SOUTH SUDAN](#)**

*Source: IPS*

Martha Borete Angela's gaze sinks to the ground as she admits neither of her two children was delivered by a midwife or doctor. The 28-year-old South Sudanese woman shared this fact in front of her classmates: first-year students in a programme for midwives at the Catholic Health Training Institute in Wau, a city in the western part of the country.

### **[COTE D'IVOIRE: MEN STILL MAKE DECISIONS ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN COTE D'IVOIRE](#)**

*Source: IPS*

"I would like to use contraception, but my husband is against it," says Bintou Moussa\*. The 32-year-old mother has just given birth to her sixth child at the Abobo General Hospital in Cote d'Ivoire's commercial capital Abidjan.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

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### **[SENEGAL: "I WILL LISTEN TO WOMEN AND PROMOTE THEIR RIGHTS," SAYS SENEGAL'S PRESIDENT-ELECT, MACKY SALL](#)**

*Source: UN WOMEN*

In an exclusive discussion with women's organizations the day after he emerged as the winner of Senegal's Presidential election on 25 March President-Elect Macky Sall outlined his vision for improving the lives of Senegalese women.

### **[MOROCCO: RAPED WIFE SUICIDE COULD CHANGE MOROCCO LAW](#)**

*Source: IOL News*

The Moroccan government is considering changes to women's rights legislation after the suicide of 16-year-old Amina Filali, who was forced to marry her rapist and whose story has shocked Morocco.

## **GENERAL**

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### **[AFRICA: SECURING RIGHTS FOR WOMEN FARMERS](#)**

*Source: VOA*

Despite the large role women play in agriculture in the developing world, experts say they continue to face discrimination, gender inequality and a lack of access to credit. A global partnership is campaigning to secure rights for women farmers.

### **[DRC: CONGOLESE REFUGEES HAIL LUBANGA VERDICT](#)**

*Source: IRIN*

Congolese refugees in Oruchinga camp, southwestern Uganda, have welcomed the International Criminal Court's (ICC) guilty verdict against former Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) rebel leader Thomas Lubanga. Some of the refugees are survivors of attacks by Lubanga's forces.

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## **FEATURED RESOURCES**

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### **[GUIDANCE FOR MEDIATORS: ADDRESSING CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CEASEFIRE AND PEACE AGREEMENTS](#)**

*Source: Relief Web*

The United Nations today unveiled new guidelines to help mediators address the problem of sexual violence in conflict by placing the issue high on the agenda when brokering peace agreements and ceasefires.

"The use of sexual violence to degrade and intimidate men, women or children in war is an intolerable practice," said the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, at a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York. "Our mediators must be sensitized to the problem and have the know-how to push for agreements at the peace table that can help stop it and to prevent its recurrence."

Developed by the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the guidelines – formally known as "Guidance for Mediators on addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements" – complement efforts by other UN entities to combat the problem. Since 2008, the Security Council has considered sexual violence a threat to security and an impediment to peace.

### **[THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION: VOICES FROM THE GLOBAL FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS](#)**

*Source: Human Rights Watch*

Respect for women's rights has progressed significantly, but as we celebrate International Women's Day, we recognize we have further to go.

In *The Unfinished Revolution*, more than 30 writers from around the world – including leading activists, policymakers, former victims, and experts from Human Rights Watch – weigh in on the global struggle for women's rights, proposing solutions to end gender inequality.

Two Nobel Peace Prize laureates contributed: Shirin Ebadi writes how Islamic law weighs on women while Jody Williams addresses the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Other chapters tackle religious dress or headscarves in Europe, uncertain access to birth control in Latin America, unequal property laws that oppress women in Africa, and the failure of US state governments to test essential DNA evidence from rapes.

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## MEWC BLOG

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### [PROTECTING WOMEN'S SECURITY IN COTE D'IVOIRE?](#)

*Author: Veerle Triquet*

It is not uncommon to see women portrayed as the victims and spoils of war. Used to justify military intervention on the basis of the "need to protect", to highlight the impact and destructive nature of war through reports written and published by organizations from Human Rights Watch to UNICEF.

What is far less common is the illustration of women as warriors, rebel soldiers, army generals or security forces. Women are rarely acknowledged as active in the process of war making. This inability of mainstream/conventional security studies to acknowledge the participation of women in the practice of war has direct consequences on the perception of women's involvement in peace.

### [DON'T LET EGYPT BECOME THE NEXT IRAN: HOW SECULAR AND NON-SECULAR EGYPTIAN WOMEN ARE DEMANDING FOR THEIR RIGHTS](#)

*Author: Amy Bisno*

Images of Tahrir square this year brought déjà vu to the minds of Iranian women. After the Iranian revolution in 1979 and protests in 2009, Iranian women saw an absolute reversal of women's rights under Islamic real and the Ahmadinejad regime. When Iranian women look at the revolutions in Lybia, Tunisian and especially Egypt, they see references to their own pasts; and all they can do is send a message to revolutionary women of the Arab Spring: Don't let history repeat itself.

This message was widely circulated last year in the YouTube video entitled: "Message from Iranian Women to Tunisian and Egyptian Women." There were and still are undeniable links between the oppression that ensued after the Iranian revolution and what is happening in Egypt today. Upon seeing this video, Egyptian women fretted over history – the woman's experience in the Iranian and Egyptian revolutionary moment are unquestionably similar.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### [THE 12<sup>TH</sup> AWID INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT](#)

*Source: AWID*

*Date: 22 April 2012, 09:00-17:00*

*Location: Halic Congress Center; Istanbul, Turkey*

Transforming economic power... are you up to the challenge?

Are you willing to move beyond your comfort zone? To question your usual thinking? To engage with actors outside of your every day activism or workplace? Are you ready to build alliances across boundaries so that together we can transform economic power?

Through the 2012 AWID Forum, we aim to explore how economic power is impacting on women and the planet, and to facilitate connections among the very diverse groups working on these issues from both human rights and justice approaches so that together we contribute to stronger, more effective strategies to advance women's rights and justice.