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MAKE EVERY WOMAN COUNT NEWSLETTER

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## EDITORIAL

Two celebrations took place in October, one was the one year Anniversary of the African Women's Decade, and the other one was the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the [UNSCR 1325](#) on Women, Peace & Security.

One year ago, the African Union declared 2010-2020 as [African Women's Decade](#). The theme of this year is "[Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV/AIDS](#)". This decade is a promise from African governments and the African Union to promote women's rights and achieve gender equality in Africa. The African Women's Decade is quite significant and unique. It officially puts women at the center of every initiative or work that will be undertaken in Africa by the African Union, and its member states in the next 10 years.

To mark the one year anniversary of the AWD, MEWC has released a Report [African Women's Decade: One Year On](#) which summarises the progress made by African countries regarding women's rights and gender equality on the continent during the first year of the African Women's Decade

In the past years, there has been some encouraging progress regarding gender equality in Africa. Some states have made considerable advancements in protecting women from sexual violence and encouraging women to participate in politics and election. Most have gender policies or some kind of national women's mechanism, such as a ministry of Gender or ministry of Women's Affairs. There are aspects of gender equality in many constitutions and some countries have passed other laws on different aspects of women's rights.

Despite growing numbers of women's parliaments, women's participation in politics is still far from adequate in Africa. However, according to the [UN MDG's 2011](#) report, Sub Saharan Africa has registered an increase from 13 percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2011, with North Africa also seeing a similar increase, with 3 percent in 2000 up to 12 percent in 2011. Women's representation in parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa is now higher than in South Asia, the Arab states or Eastern Europe. In April, the president of Mali appointed Cisse Mariam Kaidama to be the country's new prime minister. Kaidama is the first woman to take on the top job in Malian politics.

In July 2011, Angola took a step forward for Women's rights by enacting a Law to criminalise domestic violence and offer protection and support to victims and their families. Kenya and Guinea-Bissau have become the latest countries to make genital mutilation illegal by passing a law prohibiting the practice, and Equatorial Guinea ratified the Maputo Protocol and so became the 31st country to do so.

African governments need to back up their commitments with actions to ensure the development of women on the continent. We need to empower African women and girls with the tools they need to become agents of change. In 10 years, we need to look back at the African Women's Decade and be proud of what we have achieved as individuals and as a global community.

Eleven years ago, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325, the first resolution

on women, peace and security. Resolution 1325 is a landmark legal and political document which calls for participation of women at all levels of decision-making, protection of women and girls in conflict, prevention of violence against women through the promotion of women's rights, accountability and law enforcement, and the inclusion of a gender perspective in peace operations in conflict and post-conflict zones. MEWC evaluates the 11th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in its report [UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Eleven Years of Implementation](#)

Despite its binding legal character upon all United Nations Member States Resolution 1325 has made little progress in its eleven-year history. Only 24 states have created National Action Plans as called for by the United Nations Secretary General to monitor the implementation of Resolution 1325. Six states are in Africa.

Ban Ki-moon commented on the anniversary of Resolution 1325: "Women's participation remains low, both in official and observer roles. This has to change." Although some positive changes have been made: the number of women leading UN peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions had gone up over the past year to six out of 28 missions.

Women need to be fully integrated into conflict prevention and mediation efforts. The establishment of government quotas for women's participation in decision-making is vital, as is a trained and effective government security force and judicial system that protects women and girls in times of peace as well as times of conflict. Moreover, The President of the Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), Lazarous Kapambwe, stressed that women must be integrated into post-conflict reconstruction programs as key players to rebuild societies, negotiate peace and participate in national reconciliation and recovery programs. In order to change the way women are viewed culturally, they must be fully incorporated into every aspect of peace and security; and this is the primary function of Resolution 1325.

[Make Every Woman Count](#) believes that Resolution 1325 is first and foremost about the *inclusion* and *integration* of women and girls in peace and security institutions and programming. As long as society *victimizes* women in conflict situations, they will not be seen as essential to the post-conflict reconstruction effort but simply as people who need saving. Resolution 1325 is important because it aims to undo the depoliticisation and victimisation of women's roles in conflict and post-conflict situations. It sees the success of peace and security as absolutely contingent on the inclusion and integration of women.

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## INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

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### [AFRICA: OUR INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH WITH WANGARI MAATHAI](#)

Source: [The Green Belt Movement](#)

**Wangari Muta Maathai (1st April 1940 – 25 September 2011)** was a Kenyan environmental and political activist environmental and political activist. She was educated in the United States at Mount St. Scholastica and the University of Pittsburgh, as well as the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

In the 1970s, Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement, an environmental non-governmental organization focused on the planting of trees, environmental conservation, and women's rights. In 1984, she was awarded the Right Livelihood Award, and in 2004, she became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for "her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace." Maathai was an elected member of Parliament and served as Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in the government of President Mwai Kibaki between January 2003 and November 2005. "In the world there is a new collective force of people mobilising around the issue of peace but linking it to the need to protect the environment. But we must assert our collective vision and responsibility to shape that peace not only for our country but also for the whole of Africa."

"This year, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has evidently broadened its definition of peace still further," the chair of the committee, Ole Danbolt Mjøs, said during the award ceremony in December. "Environmental protection has become yet another path to peace."

"As the first African woman to receive this prize, I accept it on behalf of the people of Kenya and Africa, and indeed the world," Maathai said in her acceptance speech. "I am especially mindful of women and the girl child. I hope it will encourage them to raise their voices and take more space for leadership." She exhorted African leaders to "build fair and just societies," and asked for the release of fellow Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest in Burma. Maathai also criticized "the extreme global inequities and prevailing consumption patterns" and called on corporations and global institutions to "appreciate that ensuring economic justice, equity, and ecological integrity are of greater value than profits at any cost."

Maathai launched the Green Belt Movement in the 1970s and mobilized Kenyan women to plant trees throughout the country. In the past three decades, that movement has helped plant thirty million trees.

For her work, she faced persecution. Her activism brought her into increasing confrontation with the Kenyan authorities, especially when she began to demand good governance and democratic reform. She was beaten a number of times, including once when the Kenyan police bludgeoned her unconscious. She received death threats, and was forced into hiding in the early 1990s. Seven of her colleagues were killed, and her organization was almost banned. She was repeatedly jailed. "It is dehumanizing," she told *The Washington Post* of her experiences in prison. "It is filthy. It is crowded. You are put in areas where people will mock you—guards and even prisoners. You are put there to humiliate you."

Her fortunes switched in December 2002, when the reigning regime of Daniel arap Moi was defeated in elections. She won a seat to parliament—with an incredible 98 percent of the vote—and was appointed the assistant minister for the environment, natural resources, and wildlife.

While growing up, Maathai got a lucky break. Her brother persuaded their parents to send her to school, something that was far from the norm for girls in Kenya in the 1940s. She seized the opportunity and was such an exceptional student that the U.S. government gave her a scholarship to study in the United States. She received her bachelor's from Mount St. Scholastica College (currently Benedictine College) in Atchison, Kansas. She went on to get a master's in biology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1966 and then did doctoral work in Germany. But instead of staying behind in the West, she decided to go back home. She completed her doctorate in veterinary anatomy from the University of Nairobi in 1971, becoming the first East African woman to get a Ph.D., and she taught microanatomy at the university.

Besides the Nobel, she has been awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize, the Right Livelihood Award, often referred to as the Alternative Nobel Prize, and the U.N.'s Africa Prize for Leadership. She currently serves on the board of several international organizations, including the U.N. Secretary General's Advisory Board on Disarmament and the Jane Goodall Institute.

Maathai is full of energy and good cheer and is amazingly nice for someone of her stature. I spoke with her on a March morning in her hotel room at the Alex Hotel in New York City. She sipped tea while she good-naturedly answered my questions. Wearing a bright, multicolored African dress and headscarf, she seemed to still be basking in the afterglow of the Nobel.

The following day, she gave a talk at the Cooper Union. She spoke on poverty in Africa and the need for an aid program for the continent modeled on the Marshall Plan. She ended with the story of a hummingbird that tries to put out a forest fire. When mocked by other animals, the hummingbird replies, "I'm doing what I can."

[Read more](#)

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## TOP WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY NEWS

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### [INTERNATIONAL: UN Security Council Members Debate Progress and Challenges to Women's Participation in Peacebuilding](#)

*Source:* [UN WOMEN](#)

On the anniversary of the [Security Council Resolution 1325](#), on Women, Peace and Security, the UN Security Council is holding an [Open Debate](#) today on the theme of "Women's Participation and Role in Conflict Resolution and Mediation."

### [KENYA: KENYAN WOMEN SOLDIERS AT THE WARFRONT](#)

*Source:* [The Standard](#)

Are there Kenyan women soldiers battling Al-Shabaab? Curious people may want to know and the answer is yes. Scores of women combatants have been deployed into Somalia, where they are fighting alongside men in the campaign to dislodge the al-Qaeda-linked militants.

### [AFRICA: AFRICAN WOMEN PREPARE FOR A BIGGER ROLE IN PEACE MAKING](#)

*Source:* [AFRICA REVIEW](#)

African women who bear the brunt of the continent's conflicts now demand to play a defining role in peacekeeping. A resolution to foster women's political participation in the domain of peacekeeping and conflict management was accepted on Friday at the 2011 Women's Platform for Action in Africa (WPAA).

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## TOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NEWS

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### [SENEGAL: SENEGAL CURBS A BLOODY RITE FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN](#)

*Source:* [New York Times](#)

When Aissatou Kande was a little girl, her family followed a tradition considered essential to her suitability to marry. Her clitoris was sliced off with nothing to dull the pain.

### [ANGOLA: ARMED FORCES MEMBERS DISCUSS LAW AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE](#)

*Source:* [Angola Press](#)

Staff of the second infantry division of the northern military region of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) Wednesday in Malanje were informed about the Law Against Domestic Violence, during a lecture sponsored by the provincial department of family and women promotion.

### [SOMALIA: RAPE - THE HIDDEN SIDE OF THE FAMINE CRISIS](#)

*Source:* [IPS](#)

When Aisha Diis\* and her five children fled their home in Somalia seeking aid from the famine devastating the region, she could not have known the dangers of the journey, or even fathom that she would be raped along the way.

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## TOP POLITICAL PARTICIPATION NEWS

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### [GHANA: POLITICAL PARTIES CALL FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION](#)

*Source:* [MyjoyOnline](#)

Women organisers of the various political parties in the country have welcomed the idea of increasing women's participation and representation by pledging their support for the Affirmative Action Bill.

## **CAMEROON: WOMEN RUNNING FOR CAMEROON PRESIDENCY BREAK POLITICAL GLASS CEILING**

*Source: TrustLaw*

The two women running for the presidency of Cameroon have broken a psychological barrier among women about aspiring for high political office, says a campaigner for women's participation in politics.

## **EGYPT: FIRST WOMAN CANDIDATE BEGINS CAMPAIGN**

*Source: IPS*

When post-revolution Egypt holds presidential elections next year, Buthaina Kamel is set to become the first woman in the country's modern history to run for the highest office. Although she knows her chances of winning are slim to none, she says she's doing it out of principle.

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## **TOP ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT NEWS**

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### **NIGERIA: 'ONLY ONE IN 100,000 WOMEN HAS ACCESS TO FUNDS'**

*Source: Daily Trust*

Only one in 100,000 women has access to funds for economic empowerment, according to statistics. This means that women are more vulnerable and constitute over 60 percent of the entire population of people living below the poverty level in Nigeria, the wife of the Vice President of Nigeria, Hajia Amina Namadi Sambo has said.

### **AFRICA: TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

*Source: All Africa*

Secretary of State Hilary Clinton admits she is surprised when she speaks with male economists and government leaders who doubt the ability of women to contribute to economic growth.

### **INTERNATIONAL: THE WORD ON WOMEN - WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: THE GLOBAL ECONOMY'S BEST BET**

*Source: TrustLaw*

Last week held the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (October 17<sup>th</sup>) and was an opportunity to reflect on what opportunities women's economic engagement pose for global efforts to make the world a more prosperous place.

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

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### **SWAZILAND: WOMEN LEAD THE WAY IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SWAZILAND'S HIV CRISIS**

*Source: The Guardian*

A support campaign for Swazi women living with HIV is transforming lives, but needs international backing. Siphwe Hlophe's shrewd, enterprising spirit is apparent within moments of meeting her.

### **INTERNATIONAL: UN CHIEF CALLS FOR SUSTAINED SUPPORT OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH IN DEVELOPING STATES**

*Source: UN News Centre*

*Secretary-General* Ban Ki-moon urged developing countries today to not lose momentum in their ongoing efforts to improve women and children's health and warned there is still much to be done to tackle this issue.

### **MADAGASCAR: WOMEN TACKLE POPULATION GROWTH**

*Source: IRIN News*

Daniel Soadava and Samoela Razafindramboho are known as "the mean women" in Antalaha, a small town on the east coast of Madagascar. "Men complain that we are always saying bad things about them," they laugh.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

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### [INTERNATIONAL: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CONTINUE TO BE THREATENED AROUND WORLD, UN EXPERT WARNS](#)

**Source:** [AWID](#)

Human rights defenders continue to be harassed, attacked, killed and ‘disappeared’ around the world more than a decade after the adoption of an international declaration meant to protect them, a United Nations expert warned today.

### [SUDAN & SOUTH SUDAN: REPORT EXPRESSES CONCERN FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN THE TWO SUDANS](#)

**Source:** [Sudan Tribune](#)

*A report published in conjunction with a human rights conference to be held in Gambia from 24 October to 7 November paints a bleak picture of the plight of women in North Sudan, reserving caveated optimism for South Sudan.*

### [AFRICA: ECHOES OF OUR PAST, VISIONS OF OUR FUTURE: IN TRIBUTE TO MAATHAI, SIRLEAF AND GBOWEE](#)

**Source:** [Huffington Post](#)

Every so often in the course of our daily lives, momentous events emerge reminding us of the power of everyday people to shape history and our collective future. The burial of Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and the joint conferring of the [2011 Nobel Peace Prize](#) to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee of Liberia and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen

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## FEATURED RESOURCES

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### [AFRICA: AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE: ONE YEAR ON](#)

**Source:** : [Make Every Woman Count \(MEWC\)](#)

This report summarises the progress made by African countries regarding women's rights and gender equality on the continent during the first year of the African Women's Decade. This is done by presenting each country on the continent with a background and a presentation of progress and developments made within different areas, with importance for the human rights of women and gender equality. The report is divided into sections according to regional visions of the African continent, and the countries are then presented individually. MEWC will publish one report yearly throughout the 10-year duration of the African Women’s Decade.

To read the full report, please click [HERE](#)

### [UN SECRETARY-GENERAL RELEASES REPORT ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY 2011](#)

**Source:** [UN WOMEN](#)

The UN Secretary-General’s [annual report to the Security Council on women and peace and security](#) has been released ahead of the [Open Debate](#). The report analyzes progress in implementing Security Council resolution 1325, which was passed in 2000, along with related commitments on women, peace and security. It is based on contributions from 38 Member States, four regional organizations and 27 entities of the United Nations system. The report covers findings in five areas of the women and peace and security agenda — prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery, and coordination and accountability for results — and provides baseline data on several of the indicators presented in the Secretary-General’s report to the Security Council last year. It also includes information on the strategic results framework developed by the UN system as a tool to support national efforts to address implementation gaps and challenges.

To read the full report, please click [here](#)



## **[LAUNCH: YOUNG FEMINIST FUND \(FRIDA\) LAUNCHES ITS NEW WEBSITE!](#)**

**Source:** [AWID Young Feminist Wire](#)

We are pleased to announce the launch of the website of FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund! The website is available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#). FRIDA is a new initiative that funds and strengthens the participation and leadership of young feminist activists globally. FRIDA complements existing support for women's rights work by providing small grants, networking, and capacity-building opportunities tailored to the particular needs of young feminist activists. Over the last year, the FRIDA team has been working to put together the resource mobilization, communication, capacity building, and grantmaking strategies for the Fund. This website marks just one important step in FRIDA's journey!

To find out more about FRIDA, please click [here](#)

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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### **[WOMEN AND FILM IN AFRICA CONFERENCE: OVERCOMING SOCIAL BARRIERS](#)**

**Source:** [Westminster University](#)

**Date:** 20 November 2011

**Location:** Westminster University

This is a 1<sup>st</sup> Call for Papers for a conference on the contemporary and historical role played by women in the film, television and video industries in Africa. From the Arab North Africa, West Africa, Central and East Africa, through to Southern Africa, women have emerged from the double oppression of patriarchy and colonialism to become the unsung heroines of the moving image as producers, directors, actresses, script writers, financiers, promoters, marketers and distributors of film, television and video in postcolonial Africa. Sadly, such immense contributions by women are underrepresented, both in industry debates and in academic research. There are now many cases in which African women in front of and behind the camera have overcome social barriers and yet this is sidelined. This conference invites students, practitioners, academics and researchers to debate how women have contributed to film, television and video markets in Africa from pre-colonial, colonial to postcolonial periods. Existing industry and academic work should also discuss the ways female audiences in Africa have engaged with film, television and video texts. The conference will include a session with leading female filmmakers.

### **[CLOSING THE HEALTH EQUITY GAP: PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION AND PRACTICE](#)**

**Source:** [Phase 2011 Conference](#)

**Date:** 30 November 2011

**Location:** Sandton Convention Centre

There is global evidence of the widening international, intergroup and interpersonal inequalities in all dimensions of health and human well-being.<sup>1</sup> The 2011 PHASA conference will have as its focus, a scientific debate and discussion on health inequities and the role of public health leadership, education and practice in reducing health equity gaps. Equity is defined as: *"the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among populations or groups defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically. Health inequities, therefore, involve more than inequality- whether in health determinants or outcomes, or in access to the resources needed to improve and maintain health."*<sup>2</sup> An exciting programme of local and international speakers is being put together. Speakers will include policy-makers, leading local and international academics and representatives of international organisations, such as the World Health Organization and the World Federation of Public Health Associations. Parallel workshops will precede the main conference, with participants spoiled for choice, and with topics ranging from "Achieving equity through inter-sectoral action on health"; "Monitoring and evaluation of health inequities" through to "Intermediate epidemiological and biostatistical methods".

### **[COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION](#)**

**Source:** [United Nations](#)



***Date:*** 20 November 2011

***Location:*** United Nations Headquarters

The fifty-sixth session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from Monday, 27 February to Friday, 9 March 2012.

**Priority theme**

The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges

**Review theme**

Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women ([agreed conclusions](#) from the fifty-second session)

**Preparations**

UN Women in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and World Food Programme (WFP) will convene an [expert group meeting \(EGM\)](#) on 'Enabling rural women's economic empowerment: institutions, opportunities and participation' from 20 to 23 September, 2011 in Accra, Ghana.

[» More information](#)

A preparatory expert panel on the priority theme was held during the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Thursday, 24 February 2011.

[» Watch the video](#)

[» More information](#)