

# **MEWC Annual Report 2011**



**Make *Every* Woman Count**

*Promoting the Empowerment of African Women & Girls*

***“I welcome the work of Make Every Women Count to develop a comprehensive online resource to support women’s empowerment in Africa. This will be a useful tool for the Department for International Development (DFID) as it designs and implements new programmes to support girls and women in the poorest countries.” Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State for International Development (DFID), UK***

## **ABOUT MEWC**

Founded in December 2010 two months after the launch of the African Women's Decade, Make Every Woman Count (MEWC) is a young women-led organisation committed to promoting and advocating for the empowerment and rights of African women/girls ; and monitoring the African Women's Decade.

The MEWC website serves as both a place for us as an organisation to advocate for our mission through our publications as well as a comprehensive online resource to support African women organisations and activists with informational tools to support their social and organisational objectives.

## **MISSION**

*Our mission is to provide timely and accurate information, resources and tools to support and strengthen the work of African women’s rights advocates, grassroots, activists to promote the participation of African women/girls in all areas of social, political and economic development; and to inspire and support young women to be the future generation of African leaders*

## **VISION**

Our vision is a world where women's rights have been achieved so that they can participate and influence decisions that affect their lives; and to fully participate in the economic, political and social life of the continent. We believe gender equality must be mainstreamed at every level of society and requires a multifaceted and multinational approach, its achievement has enormous benefits for socio-economic development.

## **MEWC TEAM**

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Dear Colleagues, Friends and Supporters,

I am delighted to share with you Make Every Woman Count's first Annual Report 2011 which highlights the work of MEWC during the last year.

The achievement of gender equality and women's rights is a global agenda that poses challenges for every country, both rich and poor.

Gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society in Africa. Thirty years after the adoption of CEDAW, many women and girls still do not have equal opportunities to realise rights recognised by law. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. They are too often denied access to basic education and health care. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes. In the vast majority of African countries, women are denied the right to own property or inherit land. They face among other things social exclusion, "honour killings", FGM, trafficking, restricted mobility, crises of citizenship, and early marriage.



While many other organisations in the field focus on program implementation and policy formation, many times the voices of African women and girls are lost in the development language. Thus, what sets MEWC apart from other organisations is that first and foremost, we seek to strengthen the voices and promote the work of African women and girls. Our main goal is to become a hub of information for promoting the participation of African women in all areas of social, political and economic development.

We are achieving these goals through a number of resources: Daily news updates relating to gender issues in Africa, advocacy tools, fundraising and fellowship opportunities for African women, events publicity, social media campaigning, blogging, election and political participation monitoring, and finally, our own MEWC publications. We aim to create easy access to online resources for African women to make women's work in Africa easier and more successful, by providing the platform for these women to share ideas and find useful tools.

MEWC's vision is to build a world where women's rights have been achieved, so that they can participate and influence decisions that affect their lives, and to fully take part in the economic, political and social life of the continent. We believe gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement is imperative for socio-economic development. Empowering women and girls fuels thriving economies and spurs productivity and growth in Africa.

2011 has been a year of learning and challenges for MEWC; we started the year without access to any financial resources, but have succeeded in becoming a registered charity, and have been recognised and praised by other advocacy organisations for our work. 2012 represents an opportunity for our organisation to continue promoting the values we know can bring substantial change to Africa, and we are keen to see others do the same in this second year of the African Women's Decade.

The work of MEWC depends entirely the dedication, passion and motivation of its wonderful team and supporters, without whom it would be impossible for MEWC to reach its goals.

Thank you for your continued help and support.

In Peace and Solidarity

*Rainatou Sow*  
*Founder & Executive Director*

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## 2011 HIGHLIGHT ACHIEVEMENTS

On the following pages, you will find summaries of the major accomplishment of each of MEWC's areas of focus during 2011 along with activity highlights. It has been rather challenging for MEWC to realise these programs without the necessary resources.

## MEWC ANNUAL REPORT ON THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE

MEWC's Annual Review of the African Women's Decade (AWD) aimed to evaluate the progress, or lack thereof, made to include and promote the rights of women at the country, regional, and Pan-African levels. We evaluated each of the levels around our central gender issues, including Women, Peace and Security; Violence Against Women; Political Participation and Leadership; Economic Empowerment; HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health; and Human Rights of Women. The objective of the report was twofold: firstly, it was meant to be a reference to provide insight into the rights of women in Africa during the first anniversary of the AWD, during 2010-2011. Secondly, the report was meant to provide pressure on individual countries that either failed to make any progress on women's rights or repealed legislation protecting women.



UN Photo

The MEWC final report, "African Women's Decade: One Year On" was a great learning project for MEWC and was met with plenty of obstacles and challenges to overcome. The major challenges were time and poor access to information (something we hope the existence of our report improves). Although the efforts to create the report were initiated months in advance, the lack of information available delayed the entire process of the report. As mentioned earlier, our efforts to obtain primary research from governments was not successful. Therefore, in order to research accurate information we relied heavily from NGO reports and news articles. Although news articles were a good source of information, the information from NGOs reports was more dated and not always related to progress made in 2010-2011. Furthermore, particularly for North Africa, many governments were dissolved the same year, making accurate information and reports difficult to obtain. Many of these countries were in revolution or transition and the only solid information found came from news articles.

Our first annual report of the AWD, "[African Women's Decade: One Year On](#)", was a great success for MEWC. The report has been publicized as a credible resource on websites such as Legal Empowerment of the Poor (Lepnet.org) and Landportal (landportal.info), as well as a featured resource on the Association for Women's Rights in Development website (AWID.org).

The first annual report of the anniversary of the AWD has taught us how to approach our second annual report of the AWD. It is indeed a great challenge, taking on a report of this size, reporting on women's rights in every country in Africa, including the regional level and the pan-African level. We hope that our second annual report on the AWD will be just as interesting and factually sound. In order to overcome our issues with lack of information we have started a database to store relevant information for the next report. This will help save time, but also serve as an online file storing the most important news occurring in our gender areas. Additionally, we are looking at new ways to include primary information and hope once again to solicit governments to provide information. However, for the next report, we hope to have more information from local women's organizations on the ground. The second annual report will surely rival our initial report in information, format and organisation.

*"You have done such an amazing job with the report! A massive well done to MEWC, it makes my heart warm that we have available such resourceful material thanks to you"* Minna Salami

# AFRICAN WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & ELECTION MONITORING

Not only during the middle-eastern uprisings have women repeatedly been seen at the forefront of the revolution, they have also regularly taken part in countless demonstrations and protests throughout Africa. Over the years, women have taken to the streets to protest against a variety of issues affecting them, from rising food prices, to the lack of female political and economic participation, demand for peace negotiations, or to call for the departure of a long-time dictator. Through such actions, women have continuously demonstrated their commitment and their willingness to see their country change for the better. However, when it comes to seeing women in established positions of political power, such as parliamentarians, members of government or even as heads of state, the numbers seems to stall at merely 20%.

Female candidates often lack political support as a result of unequal access to campaign resources, media coverage and public exposure. In 2010, many women contenders for political office suffered from a shortage of both media coverage and public appearances. It is with those ideas in mind that MEWC started in 2011 a new and exciting project "African Women Political Participation & Election Monitoring"

So far, MEWC has monitored over 20 elections that took place in Africa in 2011. We hope that this monitoring will help increase women's leadership so that they can participate and influence decisions that affect their lives.

Our aim is to provide a deeper analysis, in the form of briefing papers that will incorporate primary sources: the views and voices of parties and voters on the ground.

The first objective is to provide an easy to use tool to follow the role of women in elections across Africa by covering the position of female candidates before and after the elections have taken place. The accessibility of current and reliable data on women's political participation, access to leadership is even more difficult to find and compile. Without this information it is difficult to construct an objective view and analyse and interpret the position of women with regards to political participation. By providing this data in an accessible, easy to read framework, MEWC hopes to maintain an information gateway for researchers, policy makers, students women's organisations and even local voters.

In the long run the objective of the project is to provide a platform to female voters and candidates to express their views and ideas and raise their political profile and possibly engage with the Pan-African women's movement via MEWC. MEWC hopes to provide a platform to female candidates and women-led political parties to share their experiences with our readers, policymakers, politicians and other women organizations. By sharing these lessons MEWC hopes to contribute to improving women's access to information, encourage communication and highlight the prevailing obstacles that prevent gender parity within the context of leadership and political representation.



# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN

This year, Make Every Woman Count participated for the first time in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign with the theme *"16 Days of Activism in the Words of Young African Women"*. MEWC decided that the Campaign was in line with its mission to support and strengthen the work of African women's rights activists and its vision of a world where African women and girls are empowered, equal and exercise their human rights.

Combating violence against women is one of six priority areas that MEWC considers crucial to advancing women's rights and gender equality and therefore it was imperative that the organization participate in the Campaign in a manner that reflects its mission. In this light, throughout the 16 days of activism MEWC featured articles written by young women passionate about women's rights in Africa from the continent, the diaspora and the world exploring this year's theme: "From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!"

Each day of the Campaign, which runs symbolically from 25 November, International Day Against Violence Against Women to 10 December, International Human Rights Day, in order to underline that violence against women is a violation of their human rights, MEWC published an article.

To attract contributions MEWC circulated a call for writers for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign, this year's theme, MEWC's plan to participate and outlining the style guidelines for the pieces. The call for writers was published on MEWC's website, Facebook, twitter, circulated by MEWC staff and AWID.



In response we received courageous first person narratives from survivors of domestic violence, passionate calls for action from government against GBV, analysis of rape as a weapon of war, and tales of women from all corners of Africa dealing with violence day in and day out.

Through participation in this global campaign, MEWC gave the writers a platform to share their stories, thoughts and analysis, an action that was in line with the organization's mission. Given that this was the first year that MEWC participated in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence and is the first year of its existence there were some minor challenges in putting together the series. Firstly, attracting enough writers proved to be problematic. Many were unable to meet their commitment to contribute due to last minute scheduling difficulties and this left MEWC scrambling to find replacements. However, overall we were able to attract the needed amount. More time and wider circulation of the call for writers would have solved this problem. Secondly, coordination between the editor and webmaster was at times difficult. Many of the communication problems, such as publishing pictures etc. that we had will be avoided next time as we've learned from these difficulties. And lastly, presentation of the series was a challenge because we were not sure how best to showcase it. In the end we decided on a blog format that would allow readers to comment on the pieces. From the feedback MEWC received from the writers and readers it is clear that these contributions were welcome.

MEWC is convinced that militarism and violence shatters women's lives, destroys their environment, and endangers their health and the health of their family. It also undermines democracy, human rights and economic development all of which MEWC attempts to build through its advocacy efforts.



# SPECIAL SECTIONS AVAILABLE ON THE MEWC WEBSITE

## DAILY NEWS

One of the main goals at Make Every Woman Count is to keep up to date information on current events within the Gender issues field with a particular focus on African women. Throughout the day, the MEWC team posts the most recent news related to women's issues in Africa and around the world. We post news articles that relate to our key theme areas: Women, Peace and Security; Violence against Women; Political Participation and Leadership; Economic Empowerment; HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health; and Human Rights of Women.

Our main challenge is a lack of resources and team members to stay on top of the news cycles. While we have been able to maintain a fairly up to date daily news section, it has been a struggle on some days to keep it updated.



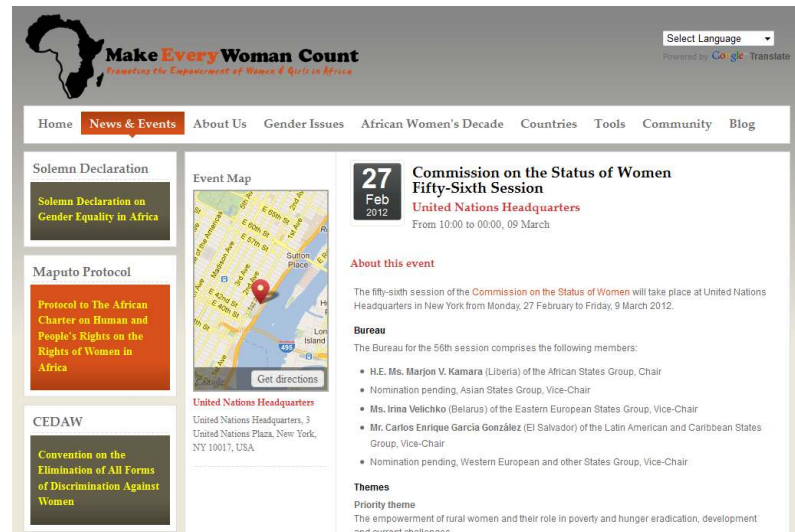
The screenshot shows the MEWC website's 'News' section. The header includes the MEWC logo and navigation links: Home, News & Events, About Us, Gender Issues, African Women's Decade, Countries, Tools, Community, and Blog. The main content area features two news items:

- INTERNATIONAL: Quotas for Women's Political Participation**  
Wednesday, 11 January 2012  
Source: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)  
Quotas for women seem to be the hot thing in the Middle East these days. Libya just announced a 10 percent quota for women in its new election law. Tunisia used a form of quotas to enhance women's participation in its recent election.  
[Read more](#)
- INTERNATIONAL: Human Rights and the UN: Progress and Challenges**  
Wednesday, 11 January 2012  
Source: UN Chronicle  
Enduring structural improvements in human rights are very difficult to achieve. Global indices suggest that the world is little different today

## EVENTS

MEWC aims to be a vehicle through which activists and advocates for women's issues in Africa can network and share ideas. The events section is integral to this goal. We post events hosted by our organisation or other organisations in this section in an effort to publicise events within the gender and development community.

While we hope to be the central site through which people can find upcoming and past events as related to women's rights in Africa, the events section is one that we are struggling to keep up to date. As our organization grows and as more and more people use it as an informational and networking site, we will have more opportunities to post event listings and foster a community of shared ideas and a shared mission.



The screenshot shows the MEWC website's 'Events' section. The header is identical to the News section. The main content area features an event listing for the 'Commission on the Status of Women Fifty-Sixth Session' at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 27 February to 9 March 2012. The event details include:

- About this event**  
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.
- Bureau**  
The Bureau for the 56th session comprises the following members:
  - H.E. Ms. Marjon V. Kamara (Liberia) of the African States Group, Chair
  - Nomination pending, Asian States Group, Vice-Chair
  - Ms. Irina Velichko (Belarus) of the Eastern European States Group, Vice-Chair
  - Mr. Carlos Enrique García González (El Salvador) of the Latin American and Caribbean States Group, Vice-Chair
  - Nomination pending, Western European and other States Group, Vice-Chair
- Themes**  
Priority theme  
The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges

## ADVOCACY TOOLS

Our advocacy tools section is where we make available a wide variety of Advocacy Tools from Civil Society, Academics, Governments and the United Nations Bodies. These tools provide women's rights organisations, grassroots, and activists with cutting edge advocacy tools and strategies aimed at strengthening and supporting their work.



As our main goal is to be the a hub for resources for those interested in women's rights in Africa, we hope to be able to provide a wealth of information for organization leaders and advocates for women's rights. Our main challenge to completing this section is our lack of time and resources. This will be on the top of our list in MEWC's second year.

## RESOURCES

Our resources section is where we make available useful resources such as studies, reports from other organizations and other important documents such as copies of the Maputo Protocol and UNSCR 1325. We have been able to gather together important and useful information while at the same time fostering information sharing among other organizations working for women's rights.

## FUNDRAISING & FELLOWSHIPS

In this section, we aim to be a centre of information for women, especially African women, seeking opportunities to further their studies or pursue their interests. We also aim to provide helpful tools and information for women who are running and are creating organizations that address women's issues. We maintain an updated list of fellowships and fundraising opportunities for this very purpose.

## MEWC PUBLICATIONS

MEWC's publications are perhaps our most important achievements. Our publications are meant to encourage discussion, challenge the status quo, and provide a new approach to gender issues in Africa. Some of our publications are the first of its kind in the field, namely our publication report on the first year of the African Women's Decade *"African Women's Decade: One Year On"*, which reviewed every African country in regards to progress made, or lack thereof, in the area of women's rights.

While challenging to compile without many resources, our larger reports were a huge achievement for our first year. With the reports entitled *"African Women's Decade: One Year On"*, and the *"Election Monitoring and Political Participation Reports"*, which is an on-going project, we have been able to create two user friendly informational tools that can be accessed by any visitor to the site. We received positive feedback for both reports from prominent organizations in the field.

Our smaller publications often serve to address particular issues we feel have gone underrepresented. For example, in September, we highlighted the two year anniversary of the stadium massacre in Guinea entitled: *"End Impunity in Guinea: Two Years on, Still No Justice for Victims of the Stadium Massacre"*

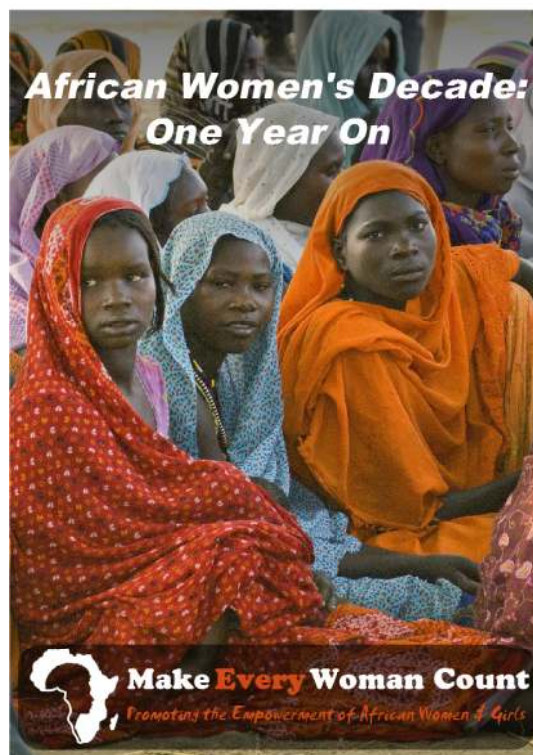
These events in Guinea had essentially fallen off the map, while justice has yet to be served to the women who suffered rape, sexual assault and even death. We hope to continue publishing articles on events such as the one in Guinea that have fallen off the radar.

We have also written pieces to review the 11th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 *"UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Eleven Years of Implementation"* as well as International Human Rights Day *"International Human Rights Day: Women's Rights are Human Rights Too"*. Monitoring the progress made in the National Actions Plans for UNSCR 1325 is at the foundation of our work for which more reports will be made. We believe that commemorating International Human Rights Day was complementary to our vision in achieving human rights for all African women.

While we have managed to achieve a great deal in MEWC publications, our main challenge is the lack of resources needed to gather as much information as possible to create useful informational documents for people working in the field. The success of the publications is thanks to the time, effort and overall drive of the MEWC team to write meaningful and honest reports.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNING

Our social media campaigning is integral to our goals for sharing ideas and encouraging networking. We use Twitter, Facebook and Blogging to share news pieces, upcoming events, and opportunities for women in the field, and to generally spread the word. We



MEWC

see social media as a great medium through which MEWC can expand its advocacy campaigns and resource sharing projects. MEWC is still developing its social media strategy and hopes to take on an intern and/or a communications associate to refine the MEWC social media presence.

## MEWC'S MONTHLY INITIATIVE

MEWC's of the month initiative aims to advance awareness, discussion and ideas of feminist movements in Africa as well as issues surrounding women's rights and empowerment on the African continent. Each month MEWC publishes one interview with a female leader, one highlight of an organization working in one of our theme areas, and one video. Each of these aims in different ways to provide a focused and sometimes new perspective or view on issues regarding women's rights and empowerment in Africa. The highlight especially is meant to encourage networking and discussion amongst women who are grassroots leaders in their own communities and who are working for women's rights in Africa. Moreover, the aim is to give a broad array of ideas that are all connected to the themes that MEWC work with: Women, Peace and Security; Violence Against Women; Political Participation and Leadership; Economic Empowerment; HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health; and Human Rights of Women.

### INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

In the interview of the month MEWC aims to ask questions where the respondent can elaborate on issues regarding women's present situation in Africa. The interview of the month also gives room for individuals who are doing important and varying work for women's rights in Africa to express their ideas and answers to some of the pressing current issues. At MEWC we believe that it is important to listen to different aspects and provide room for discussion, and so we post the interview on our home page to encourage debate. But perhaps most importantly, we strive to make the interview of the month a space where women who might otherwise not be heard, share their views.

Since we started in March we have featured interviews with different women, from different countries, who have brought forth different aspects and thoughts on women's rights in Africa. While we strive to give voice to women who do not normally have the platform, we have posted interviews with prominent women in

the field such as Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Former Chilean President and Executive Director of UN Women, and Wangari Maathai, the leader of Kenya's Green Belt Movement. We have also posted interviews with African women whose voices are rarely heard such as our interview in September 2011 with Marie-Louis Pambu,

a Congolese widower and Social Studies teacher; Alice Ukoko, a human rights defender and founder of Women of Africa (WOA); and Khadiga Hussein, a 71 year old Sudanese grassroots leader and founder of Sudanese Mothers for Peace.

It is often very difficult for us to secure interviews with women's rights activists mainly because we are a small organisation. Many prefer being interviewed by bigger organisations where they can get publicity. On several occasions, we have to send multiple emails in hopes of receiving a response, but more often than not we do not receive a response.

#### Interview of the Month



Former Chilean President, Ms. Michelle Bachelet is the first Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, which was established on 2 July 2010 by the UN GA. Ms. Bachelet most recently served as President of Chile from 2006 to 2010. A long-time champion of women's rights, she has advocated for gender equality and women's empowerment throughout her career. One of her major successes as President was her decision to save billions of dollars in revenues to spend on issues such as pension reform, social protection programmes for women and children, and research and development [read more](#)

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

The highlight of the month presents different initiatives taken by African women's groups or initiatives that relate to African women taking place on local, national, regional and international levels. Our aim is to highlight an organization that is working for women's rights and empowerment and is largely run by African women. We hope to use the highlight section as both a good publicity tool for the organization being highlighted as well as a way for viewers to comment on the organization's work, address their challenges and share successes. We hope to foster a community of African and international feminists alike and create a space to share successes, ideas and challenges.

We have received some good feedback from organizations that have been featured as a highlight of the month. Petite Soeur à Soeur, an organization that helps to rehabilitated young female sex workers, has received responses from other regional organisations and partnerships are beginning to form. The Namayiana Women's Group in Kenya is another great example. This group originated out of a desire amongst women of the Maasai community to educate girls in their community and prevent the practice of Female Genital Mutilation. Their story is both inspiring and inventive and we hoped to help spread the word to other women's groups doing similar activities.

*"We are very proud for being MEWC highlight of the month. Thank you for the support you are doing for NUWA. We already, have started getting some connections with other organizations interested to work with us, after you posted our profile in your website. We feel grateful. We are hoping that we will get more friends and links at the end". Pendo Cuthbert Mbilinyi, Chairperson, Njombe Usawa Women Association (NUWA) in Tanzania*

### Highlight of the Month



The Association des femmes pour la Promotion et le Développement Endogène is a Congolese feminine organization located at South Kivu Province in DR CONGO. The mission of the organization is to encourage and support the autonomous and independent efforts of Congolese women in the promotion and protection of their human rights whilst also improving their social, health and economic situation. The organization was created by the militants' women at KILIBA on October 16th 1999 with the hope of helping women, young girls and children that are victims of war and sexual violence.....[read more](#)

## VIDEO OF THE MONTH

The main purpose of the Video of the Month is to provide a source of information and provide a perspective in another form than written text. It is also a way to show images from the real world where situations are displayed as they are. With videos information and perspectives becomes available in an alternative form, where pictures and audio provides the viewer with insights in the current situation for women in a particular location. To access a video is often easier and the combination with images can make it more real and understandable. Recent videos have been reposted from UN Women showing work being done in the field to achieve the Millennium development goals related to women.

Usually these videos are reposted from other women's organizations in an attempt to foster a community of ideas in a multimedia environment. In the future, we hope to be able to politically engage our viewers by perhaps linking the video to a comments section or to our blog section.

### Video of the Month

**LIBERIA: MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

Source: UN Women

Liberia was a country engulfed in war, its women bearing the brunt of the conflict. While peace finally did come, the legacy of violence against women continues to haunt the country. But Liberia's women are now taking positions of power and filling roles usually dominated by men. We look now at how women in decision-making positions are helping to pave a new path to their country's future.





## CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As a small start-up organization only beginning our second year, it is often difficult to maintain our month monthly section. However, we strongly believe that it is integral to our mission to be a place of ideas, a place to network, and a place to give voice to African women leaders.

With these three sections MEWC wants to accomplish a wide and diverse insight into initiatives, ideas and aspects of women's situation and human rights across the African continent. We have successfully been able to post videos, share interviews, and publicize the work of large and small organizations, women's groups and individuals. As we enter our second year, we have a wealth of knowledge and an ever-growing list of individuals and organizations we hope to highlight in the months to come.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The announcements page of MEWC aims to provide information on an array of initiatives all over the world. The section includes call for papers, calls for nominations, call for submissions, and petitions. The section aims to be a resource for all different types of opportunities to engage women in women's rights issues.

The main challenge for the Announcements section of the MEWC website is information. Over the past few months MEWC has made an effort to utilize different websites to find announcements that fall into both our gender issues and announcement type.

## MEWC'S E-NEWSLETTER

The MEWC eNewsletter is an online publication released once a month. The newsletter aims to be a quick resource highlighting important and interesting developments in our six gender topics: Women, Peace and Security, Violence against Women, Political Participation & Leadership, Economic Empowerment, HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Rights, and Human Rights of Women. Additionally, the newsletter provides information for upcoming events, featured resources, and our interview of the month. The typical readers of our eNewsletter are individuals who want to have the highlight of the month's news at their fingertips in one document, for those who want a quick version of longer news articles, and for those who are interested in events and resources. Our newsletter is currently distributed to over 600 people.

Starting off as a small publication distributed to less than 100 people, the eNewsletter has grown how many times to be distributed to how many email addresses.

In the future, we plan to revamp the MEWC Newsletter. The integrity of the content will remain the same; however we hope to modernize the layout of the newsletter to make the content easier to read.

*"We are very grateful for the MEWC newsletter that you sent us previously. It's a very essential highlight for us and other stakeholders for women development. Above all, we are very proud for being a highlight of the month in the Newsletter for it will make our activities more known to people and supporters, as well as act as a lesson to other women organisations".* Pendo Cuthbert Mbilinyi, Chairperson, Njombe Usawa Women Association (NUWA) in Tanzania

# MAKE EVERY WOMAN COUNT OFFICIAL LAUNCH EVENT

*“.... As I mentioned to you at the launch; The name of the website contain four wards and I can sum it up in four words too by saying " Very Impressive and Educational" I will keep looking at your website and would like to be in the loop of emails for news, improvement and ongoing success.” Perri Mahmood*

MEWC was officially launched on 9 March 2011. On the 19th July 2011 MEWC hosted a celebratory event to launch its website and organisation. The launch event was supported by the United Nations Association London and South East Region as well as The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (UK WILPF).

The launch was held at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in London, UK, and chaired by Professor Nadjie Al-Ali, current chair of the SOAS Centre for Gender Studies.

There were over one hundred guests in attendance, all eager to hear of this new initiative aimed at supporting the continued work of African women’s organisations and individual female activists.

MEWC founder Rainatou Sow gave the guests a guided tour of the MEWC website as well as speaking about the importance of altering the prevailing perception that African women are victims, when in fact they are survivors. ‘Unfortunately African Women are the face of poverty, this needs to be changed and the real strides women are making to transform their societies needs more support and recognition, we need to strengthen the voice and promote the work of the brave African Women’. Rainatou Sow, Executive Director and Founder, MEWC



*“Thanks for the very interesting talk and for having created such a resourceful website. I am full of admiration for you! I will spread the word about your website ....” Mafalda Marchioro*

We were honoured to have been joined by Marie-Claire Faray who is a women’s rights activist, specialising in advocating for the rights of Congolese women. Marie-Claire Faray is a member of Common Cause-A platform for Congolese women in the UK and UK WILPF’s Voices of African Women (VoAW) campaign.

Ms Faray reflected on the achievements of her fellow African women’s rights advocates. She spoke about the achievements of the Voices of African Women (VoAW) campaigners in the past year. They include, a Sudanese woman taking a seat at the Darfur peace talks in Doha, Qatar. A Congolese advocate travelling to Bukavu, DRC to participate in the World March of Women and lobby officials on gender equality and women’s empowerment, and an Eritrean advocate travelling to a refugee camp in Ethiopia on a fact finding mission. Ms Faray gave a moving speech about the role of ‘African women holding their families, communities and continent together.

There was an overwhelming number of young African women in attendance, as well as several non-African women and male supporters. The launch event served to reinvigorate the MEWC team and demonstrated the amount for good will and support there is for the promotion and upholding of African women’s rights and empowerment.

*“Congratulations on the website. It was great to be at the launch and also to hear form yourself as an inspiring, empowered woman.....” Manju Nair (UN Women UK, London committee)*



*"I was at the launch yesterday and I want to congratulate you on holding such a great event and for the resourceful website. I am sure I am going to use it in my work and would be advertising it on our newsletters and send it to my contacts" Nisan Z. Kesete*