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## EDITORIAL

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November has been a very busy month here at MEWC. In case you haven't heard, we launched two new programs on our website: Election & Political Participation Monitoring, and our MEWC Blog. The Election & Political Participation Monitoring page, to be found under the tools section of our website, is an easy to use tool to follow the role of women in elections across Africa both before and after elections have taken place. So far, we have been able to track the process in the DRC, Gambia, Morocco, Liberia, Tunisia, and Cameroon, and will keep a close eye on any further developments in women's political participation on the continent. A long-term goal of this project is to provide a platform for female voters and candidates to expressed their own views and ideas, to raise their political profiles, and engage with the Pan-African women's movement via the MEWC Website.

To join the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we have launched the MEWC blog. For the 16 Days of Activism we will feature different entries from women in Africa, as well as the MEWC team, addressing this years theme "From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women." The main purpose of the blog is for women to be able to share their stories and perspective on different issues that affect them. We seek to make the blog an open forum where women can contribute not only articles, but comment on them and provide information one might otherwise not know. In addition our team will contribute articles relating to different current events as well as reviews on different events and media. We strive to make this blog as user-friendly and interactive as possible so that we can all gain from each other's knowledge and opinions.

These are ambitious projects and we can't wait to see how they will grow and expand to new dimensions. We hope you enjoy these new features!

Sincerely,

Emily Elizabeth-Anne Meyer  
Veerle Triquet

## **INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH**

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### **[INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH WITH MICHELLE BACHELET](#)**

*Source: Say NO – United to End Violence Against Women*

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 General Assembly. 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, despite the financial crisis. She recently spoke to Say NO–UNiTE about UN Women's commitment to ending violence against women and girls, and the strategies and innovations that help show the way forward.

#### **Why is ending violence against women one of UN Women's main global priorities?**

It is a priority for UN Women because violence against women is a global problem that requires urgent action. Every time a woman experiences gender based violence, her rights are violated. The phenomenon takes many diverse forms—among them, rape, domestic abuse, sexual violence as a crime of war, and harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation.

Until we stop all of these violations, in both the public and private domains, gender equality and women's empowerment will not be a lived reality.

#### **What are the consequences of violence for women and societies?**

There are obvious physical, psychological and economic consequences for women and girls who survive violence. What is not always so obvious is how much additional damage is being done to children, families, societies and economies. We need much more data on the scope of this problem, but where we do have it, we know that there are huge costs. Billions of dollars are being lost on extra health care and policing expenditures, and through lower productivity when women cannot work. About 150 million girls experience sexual violence each year, which extracts a price beyond calculation. Many will face a lifetime of limits to their hopes and abilities to become active members of society.

On one hand, we need to stop violence against women because women have the right to live free from violence, and because that is the correct action to take. On the other hand, we must recognize that doing so benefits everyone. Societies without violence would be healthier and more productive. They would be more stable and inclusive, because more women and girls could exercise their rights.

#### **What can we do to end violence?**

Countries have now adopted a historic number of laws to stop violence against women and girls, but these do not always translate into equality and justice, as our recent report, *Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice*, demonstrated. It found that laws contain loopholes, enforcement is often poor and women frequently encounter hostile attitudes from

judicial officials who are supposed to protect them. Too many perpetrators elude punishment.

We need to combat attitudes and behaviours that permit or even encourage violence, and we need to help women and girls unleash their capacities for empowerment and social transformation. Accessible, high-quality services, backed by adequate resources, would allow the millions of women and girls who survive abuse every year to recover and secure justice. Intensified prevention efforts could mean that someday we will no longer need to campaign for ending violence against women and girls. The best way to put an end to this universal human rights violation is to stop it from happening in the first place.

One of UN Women's main avenues for action on these issues is through the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Administered by UN Women, it is leading global provider of grants for innovative strategies. As a recent example, a grantee in Guatemala is using mentoring and training so that indigenous girls—many of whom live in areas where prevention services are non-existent—can start to lead advocacy for an end to violence in their communities. A community mapping exercise with GPS technology has graphically illustrated safety concerns, and pushed community leaders towards agreeing to address factors propelling young men towards violence.

About half of UN Trust Fund-supported projects engage men and boys in some fashion, because they are integral to protection and prevention. In Nepal, for instance, a UN Trust Fund grantee reached out to men in local communities so they could reconsider their notions of masculinity and learn skills such as partner communication. The project encouraged them to become champions of gender equality, including through a “Most Understanding Husband Campaign” that featured on national radio. By the end of the three-year project, surveys found that the number of men supporting interventions to end violence had increased by five times.

Strategies like these have proven successful, and we must be able to scale up our investment in them. Demand always far exceeds the supply of UN Trust Fund resources, which come from voluntary contributions. In 2011, the Fund received grants requests of US \$1.2 billion, but could offer only US \$17.1 million to 22 initiatives in 34 countries. The UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign has set a target to raise US \$100 million for the Fund's annual grant-making by 2015.

### **What's the role of social media and new technologies in mobilizing people to end violence?**

Technology is increasingly important for connecting all the different people around the world to end violence against women. This is particularly true for young people, with a majority linked to online social networks. If they start acting differently now, they will lead us to a better future.

Online platforms like UN Women's Say NO-UNiTE to End Violence against Women bridge gaps between what is happening in local communities, and activism globally and online. Anyone can come to the website—whether you are a government official, a religious leader, an advocate for gender equality or simply a person who wants to learn more. You can exchange ideas, take action, make your voice heard and have your actions known worldwide.

Today is the second anniversary of Say NO–UNiTE. In just two years, we have recorded over 2 million actions and have over 600 partners. But we need even more actions and more partners. The annual 16 Days to End Violence against Women at the end of November is one opportunity for taking action and accelerating momentum, and then letting the world know by posting actions on [saynotoviolence.org](http://saynotoviolence.org).

### **Are you personally committed to saying no to violence against women?**

Yes. I first signed on to Say NO as President of Chile because everyone should be involved in ending violence against women and girls. My mother was a very strong woman, who always told me to develop my own capacities so I could make choices in my life and decide what I want to do. Violence destroys both capacities and choices. I would like every woman and every society to live free from violence and discrimination.

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## **TOP WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY NEWS**

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### **[GHANA: WOMEN, CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS IN PEACE BUILDING](#)**

*Source: Ghana News Agency*

The West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), on Thursday called on women to voice out their concerns as they were critical stakeholders in community peace building.

He said “WANEP believes that for peace building to be effective, it must be all inclusive and take into account the voices and contribution of women, who make up more than half of the population of the sub-region”.

### **[SUDAN: UNAMID ORGANIZES DIALOGUE ON WOMEN AND PEACE IN DARFUR](#)**

*Source: UNAMID*

UNAMID organized today in El Fasher, North Darfur, an open day on the progress in the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security under the theme “Women count for peace”. More than 100 women from Darfur’s three states participated in the event, including officials from the state governments, legislators and UN agencies.

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## **TOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NEWS**

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### **[LIBERIA: LIBERIAN WOMEN STALKED BY RAPE](#)**

*Source: The Express Tribune*

As a young girl, Garmar Murphy was forced into a child soldier’s life, serving as a sexual plaything for Liberian rebels between battles — a tragic norm in the country’s savage conflict. She was 13 years old, and rape was not criminalised.

### **[SOMALIA: RAPE CASES SOAR IN GALKAYO CAMPS](#)**

*Source: IRIN*

Deteriorating security, a culture of impunity and an increase in attacks on internally displaced people (IDPs) in the central Somali town of Galkayo, Mudug region, have resulted in a sharp increase in rape cases, gender activists told IRIN. “Attacks on women have gone up dramatically in the last two months and the severity of the attacks has become worse,” said Silje Heitmann, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) gender-based violence (GBV) specialist for south-central Somalia.

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## **TOP POLITICAL PARTICIPATION NEWS**

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### **[EGYPT: WHERE ARE THE WOMEN CANDIDATES?](#)**

*Source: The Egyptian Gazette*

The forthcoming parliament, which the Egyptian nation is looking forward to as a first step on a thorny road to democracy, is likely to have poor female representation. Women running in the elections on party lists complain that they have been placed at the bottom of the lists, which means hardly any chance at winning.

### **[LIBERIA: SIRLEAF WINS DISPUTED POLLS](#)**

*Source: allAfrica*

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was confirmed the victor of a run-off poll boycotted by the opposition, and vowed to reach out to her opponents and reconcile the divided nation.

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## **TOP ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT NEWS**

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### **[WEST AFRICA: USING LAW FOR RURAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN WEST AFRICA](#)**

*Source: IPS Gender Wire*

Agriculture is key to women's livelihoods in rural West Africa and to the survival of the national economies. But despite women's crucial work on the farms women's rights to land ownership, control and access to land continues to be neglected.

### **[ZIMBABWE: IS INDIGENIZATION DRIVE FOR MEN OR WOMEN](#)**

*Source: The Zimbabwean*

The ongoing indigenization and economic empowerment drive, launched last year and the subject of much debate, is a potential avenue through which Zimbabwean women can be empowered to claim their rightful place in the economy.

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

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### **[CAMEROON: FEMALE CONDOMS FREE IN THE COUNTRY](#)**

*Source: allAfrica.com*

In order to popularise female condoms in Cameroon, local organisations promote them through hair salons, workrooms and other small shops. But instead of selling the condoms, the managers are giving them away to the clients in order to clear their stocks.

### **[ANGOLA: WOMEN REGISTER GREATER NUMBER IN HIV/AIDS INFECTIONS](#)**

*Source: allAfrica.com*

The director of the National Institute to Fight against HIV/AIDS, Dulcelina Serrano Monday in Luanda said that women register a greater number of HIV infection than men especially in rural areas.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

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### **[NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF NGOS ON THE GENDER AGENDA](#)**

*Source: Daily Trust*

Non-Governmental Organizations have been playing crucial roles in the gender issue in Nigeria. They have been networking, sharing strategies, best practices and lobbying the various levels of governments to encourage them to implement resolutions, treaties and

international conventions and agreements on women's rights and the advancement of women and girls.

### **[TUNISIA: WHAT PRICE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN TUNISIA'S NEW DEMOCRACY?](#)**

*Source: RT*

Tunisia's first free elections have been won by an Islamist party whose leader is set to head the country's parliament. Now concerns are rife that women's rights will be eroded as the country is gripped in the vice of narrow Islamic traditions.

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## **GENERAL**

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### **[UGANDA: SINGLE MOTHERS LEFT BEHIND IN FLOODED SWAMPLAND](#)**

*Source: IPS*

Life in Bwaise – a slum on the outskirts of the capital of Uganda – has never been easy. But increasingly erratic rains over the last three years have brought constant floods to the former swampland.

### **[GHANA: NO PENSIONS FOR MAJORITY OF ELDERLY WOMEN](#)**

*Source: IPS*

On the grubby edge of Old Fadama, Accra's infamous illegal slum settlement, 67-year-old Mariana Sayitou sits under a parasol and tends to her livelihood – selling several dozen kola nuts and a few piles of bagged beans to passers-by.

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## **FEATURED RESOURCES**

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### **[ORGANIZED CRIME AND INSTABILITY IN CENTRAL AFRICA: A THREAT ASSESSMENT](#)**

*Source: ReliefWeb*

Post-conflict Central Africa threatened by organized crime. Conflict in Central Africa appears to have declined markedly in recent years. According to the UNODC report *Organized Crime and Instability in Central Africa: A Threat Assessment*, the current instability and violence, mostly affecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo, increasingly seem to be the result of criminal acts occurring in a context of persistent lawlessness and weak State institutions rather than the product of war. This situation makes it difficult to provide the criminal justice response that crimes such as murder, rape and trafficking in children require.

### **[MANUAL: MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA](#)**

*Source: UN WOMEN*

Even though many African governments have ratified international and regional human rights treaties and have made commitments to respect, promote and protect women's rights and to eliminate discrimination against women, the translation of these commitments into national laws, policies and programmes remains a challenge.

As a response, UN Women has developed this manual as a methodological tool to promote the adoption and use of a multi-sectoral approach to achieve women's rights. Through practical guidance, the manual aims to support the African Union and its member states to fast track delivery on commitments to women's rights and empowerment. It introduces an implementation framework that promotes the integration of women's rights into all sectors of government and development endeavours. The framework also calls for inter-ministerial

coordination to ensure improved efficiency, accountability, and communication across sectors; the establishment of a strong technical and advisory services unit at the regional and national levels; and an important and strengthened role for national machineries for women's affairs. Overall, the manual stresses the important role of government-led partnerships, such as with the African Union, donor countries, the United Nations system, civil society, organizations and unions, to make women's rights a reality.

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

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### **[ACCOUNTABILITY NOW!](#)**

*Source: AIDS Accountability and Ford Foundation*

*Date: 07 December 2011*

*Location: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

As part of the *Monitoring the MPOA* project AIDS Accountability International (AAI) is committed to increasing the dialogue around accountability and improving the response to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) needs in Africa. Thus, AAI and Ford Foundation are hosting an evening event at the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA).

### **['MOBILISING YOUNG AFRICAN WOMEN IN THE UK': AN AFTERNOON OF INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS](#)**

*Source: Forward*

*Date: 3 December 2011*

*Location: London, England*

Are you fed up with the negative images of Africa especially of women and want to promote a positive view in the diaspora community? Do you want to contribute towards the development of African women and girls but don't know how?

This afternoon of workshops and panel discussions will explore ideas on how young African Women in the Diaspora can mobilise to take action on gender equality and rights of African girls. It sets out to provide a platform for discussion on policies, issues, challenges and strategies for engagement and action. We will look at the positive and negative images in the media surrounding Africa. We will hear from young inspirational African women and look at what can be done to contribute towards the development of girls and women in Africa and provide the skills and information to be part of creating this collective voice for action.