

Under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI
#Mothers4Peace



International Conference
#Mothers4Peace
Acting with Mothers for a culture of peace
3-4 May 2018, Casablanca, Morocco

Mothers, at the heart of change for a culture of peace
Showcasing examples at family, community, national and international level

Conference report



Organised by Make Mothers Matter
in partnership with CARE International Morocco

The #Mothers4Peace conference highlighted the role of mothers for the promotion of a culture of peace as well as conflicts' prevention and resolution. Mothers are not only victims of violence, conflict and forced displacements, they also are agents of peace, within their family, their community and their country.

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Introduction



Her Royal Highness Princess Esmeralda of Belgium, author of *Nobel Peace Prize Women*, opened the conference: "Women are rarely the cause of wars. There are some exceptions but they are rare. On the other hand, they are among the first victims... In our time, conflicts affect 90% of civilians. Three quarters of the displaced are also considered to be women and children."

"Women and girls suffer violence the most: they are kidnapped to become slaves, forced into marriage, raped... And yet, as soon as weapons are laid down, it is the women who repair communities, villages, and families. Thousands of women act in the shadows, often in insecurity and fear. They do not receive recognition, support, or honours, but they carry on their mission relentlessly, with determination."

Referring to the lives of some Nobel Peace Prize women, Princess Esmeralda also emphasized the importance of the role of the father, for example in their determination to raise their daughters with the same requirements as for their boys.

Peace begins in the home and within each one of us



Dr Rima Salah, professor at the Yale Child Study Centre, former Deputy Director-General of UNICEF and special advisor to the UN Secretary General, calls for governments to invest in early childhood development, which is fundamental to people's development.

"Advances in developmental neuroscience are causing a revolutionary shift in the way we think about child development, as we learn about the impact of both positive and negative experiences – and the interplay of experiences and genetics on the developing brain... While an individual's genetic endowment is fundamental, parenting provides a legacy that transcends our genes. How a child is nurtured and cared for early in life has a direct impact on brain structure and function. This new knowledge holds significant implications for the future of millions of children living in fragile contexts worldwide, as well as on our thinking about creating a culture of peace and about sustaining peace in the world. It heralds in a new era with **windows of opportunities to contribute to sustainable peace through investment in the positive early development of young children...** It further highlights the importance of positive parenting and reinforces the evidence that stimulation, caregiving, attachment, bonding and creating safe contexts for children, all have positive influence on their brain development and can help children grow, learn and thrive."



Director and founder of the Promundo Institute, world leader in justice and gender equality for the prevention of violence, involving fathers and boys, **Gary Barker** brought essential data from studies on the involvement of fathers in caring for children to the conference. Gary Barker emphasized the importance of promoting co-responsible, positive and non-violent fatherhood to future fathers.

A positive fatherhood education with 1,700 fathers in Rwanda has resulted in a 50% reduction in violence against women and a 30% reduction in violence against children. Reducing domestic violence is a necessity around the world. For Gary Barker the solution is also in the involvement of fathers in the work of Care.

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Peace at community level

Due to the last minute absence of **Edith Schläffer**, founder of Women without Borders, the « Mothers' schools » were finally presented through a film. They aim at raising awareness among mothers about their skills and their capacity to transform wherever they are. Focus is on a prevention program on violent extremism involving mothers.



Yasmina Sarhouny from Creative Associates and director of the project « Fostering Peaceful Communities in Morocco » presented one of their actions in Salé in Morocco: « fighting against extremism for a peaceful community ». Young women, mostly mothers, are trained to recognize the first signs of radicalisation to prevent their loved ones from joining violent extremist organisations.

Whilst contributing to strengthen the role of mothers within their communities, the program must not load down mothers with too many responsibilities. Their role must not be reduced to being “peacekeepers” versus the role of decision making... warns Yasmina Sahrhouny; mothers cannot be held wholly responsible in case of violent extremism in their families. They already have so much to do and often, with too little support, especially when they are vulnerable and poor. Mothers must be recognized and supported for their role as catalysers of positive change within their communities.



Care International Morocco presented activities addressing women and mothers such as the economic inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable women, the promotion of positive parenting and the raise of awareness in households about gender based domestic violence. Some mothers benefiting from these programmes gave heart touching testimonials, focusing on their transformation after being educated and trained.

Formerly abused **Betty Batoul**, elected “woman peacemaker” 2012 in Belgium and president of the association Success in Morocco shows that victims can become a driving force by sharing their experience and prevent violences. Developing self confidence and educating to respect are privileged prevention means. To put mothers at the center of the discussions will lead to more peace. We can all be peacemakers; small actions to install respect, and learning to forgive (what she did) are already part of peace building.

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At national level



Parity between men and women, peace, security and development are interdependent and cannot be addressed separately. **Benoît Bichon**, project manager for Asodamas, an MMM member association in Columbia, presented two actions illustrating this: *Casas de la Mujer* and the Observatory for Peace. Their respective objectives are to restore the social links thanks to women and their economic empowerment, and to study and measure its consequent impact for the reconstruction of the country in a post conflict situation.



For Khadija Moufid, president of the center of studies on family and research on values and laws in Morocco, an international march of mothers for peace and security would allow to mobilize them and heighten their awareness about their power of action and their skills, whilst calling on decision makers to act and promote justice beyond any rifts.



Sidibé Kadidia Cissé, in charge of gender equality for Care International Mali gave a testimonial about the deep impact of women empowerment and education programmes. Her community experience also allows her to confirm the positive impact of the father programmes, presented earlier in the conference by Gary Barker.

At international level

#Mothers4Peace builds on a conference organised in September 2016 in Rabat by the Moroccan government about the importance of a gender perspective in all the actions promoting peace, including prevention, conflict resolution and peace building. These are the recommendations of the 1325 resolution adopted by the UN Member States in 2000. Many countries must still adopt a National Action Plan to implement the resolution.

In her introduction, Princess Esmeralda mentioned UN resolution 1325: “voted unanimously in the year 2000, this resolution was an important step to affirm the change of mentalities and the need to introduce a gender perspective in conflict issues. Indeed, the resolution proposes a larger representation of women at all levels in peace processes, as UN observers in conflict zones and in peace maintenance operations... but where do things stand today, 20 years later? In peace processes at world level, women represent 4 % of the signatories and 9% of the participants! It is imperative that countries invite women to join the negotiation tables and participate at decision-making level.

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In this perspective, **Maria Mundt**, Adviser on Women, Peace and Security to the Atlantic Treaty Association, Bettina Gambert of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Chris Donnelly, Director of the Institute for Statecraft, emphasized the importance of transcribing the recommendations stemming from the research and experiences mentioned during the conference, in terms that can be used by policy makers.



Lastly, **Pauline Ambrogi**, Doctor in Contemporary History, writer, representative of MMM at UNESCO on issues of education, gender equality and peace, concludes the conference by sharing some words of mothers, interviewed in the framework of the preparation of her book, "Mothers for Peace".

A mother's word: "When one works to build peace, there is no small or big action. A mother who gets up every morning to encourage her children to go to school, who educates them to the will, is as worthy as the one who organizes a march for peace, who builds a house to welcome mothers in distress or who goes into politics and runs for an election. Every action counts. It's a chain that goes from the home to the nation and from the nation to the home."

She concludes with a statement of Irina Bokova, former Director-General of UNESCO: "Peace is more than the absence of war, it is living together with our differences – of sex, race, language, religion or culture – while furthering universal respect for justice and human rights, two principles on which such coexistence depends."



"Mothers are part of the solution to more peace. We must work not only for them but also WITH them. We are calling on decision-makers to recognize that mothers are a resource that is too often untapped and that it is necessary to use the strength of mothers to build a better world", concludes Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, President of Make Mothers Matter

Make Mothers Matter will develop recommendations from this conference and present them in different international institutions and in different countries. You will be kept informed about these events via www.makemothersmatter.org

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Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO with no political or religious affiliations, founded in 1947 at UNESCO with General Consultative Status at the UN. Its mission is to promote and support the essential role of mothers for peace and for the economic, social and cultural development of societies.

MMM emphasizes the universality and importance of this role, based on their skills and responsibility as primary caregiver and educators of their children. MMM is active around two poles: advocacy and grass-root work via its network. In collaboration with its member associations working in the field, MMM acts to influence policy and public opinion in order to bring about positive changes in the lives of mothers. Working for and with mothers by involving them in development projects has beneficial effects on their children, their families and more broadly on society.



CARE International Maroc is an association whose mission is to support individuals and families in the poorest communities by fostering equal opportunities. With its diversity, resources and experience, it promotes innovative solutions for sustainable change and currently works in the following areas: Education, Economic Empowerment and Governance

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