

Dining for Women



Program Fact Sheet

Program: MADRE

DFW avoids aligning itself with any religious or political organization or affiliation. However, we sometimes choose to send our support to women who need our help through faith-based organizations and in this particular case an organization that is politically oriented. The DFW staff does not necessarily subscribe to the political activism, which is such an integral part of this month's organization. This month we are directing our donations to programs specific to Iraq. (These programs are highlighted in green.)

Web Site: www.madre.org

Mission: MADRE is an international women's human rights organization that works in partnership with community-based women's groups worldwide. They work with women who are affected by violations to help them win justice and, ultimately, change the conditions that give rise to human rights abuses. And we challenge US policies that undermine human rights. MADRE provides humanitarian aid, supports community development programs, enables sister organizations to respond to immediate needs, and educates its members and the public.

Who They Serve: Since they began in 1983, MADRE has delivered over 22 million dollars worth of support to community-based women's groups in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa, the Balkans, Asia and the United States. **DFW's donations will be directed to MADRE's programs in Iraq.**

History: MADRE was born out of a belief that together we can make a difference. In 1983 a group of women activists, poets, teachers, artists and health professionals traveled to Nicaragua to witness the impact of the US sponsored contra war. What they saw horrified and angered them. They met with women who showed them day care centers, schools and clinics that had been bombed by contras supported by the US government. These women returned to the US with a mandate from the women of Nicaragua: to bring the stories of Nicaraguan women and children to the attention of the US public and mobilize people to demand a change in US government policy.

MADRE's Founding Director, Kathy Engel, and the women she brought together had a vision of a unique women-led, women-run international human rights organization, dedicated to informing people in the US about the effects of US policies on communities around the world. MADRE resolved to build real alternatives to war and violence by supporting the priorities of our sister organizations and linking them to the needs of women and families in the US through a people-to-people exchange of direct relief and understanding.

How They Work: Since 1983, MADRE has nurtured more than 30 innovative health, education, and economic development projects that foster long-term solutions by empowering women with the tools they need to build a better future for themselves and their communities. MADRE projects meet the immediate survival needs of women and families by providing emergency shipments of food, medicine and other material aid. MADRE cultivates community development and training programs that enable women to play leadership roles in their homes, communities, countries, and the international arena. MADRE also campaigns internationally to make human rights law relevant and accountable to the people it is meant to serve, empowering women from local organizations to take an active role in the process of creating and improving international law and human rights standards. Through a Public Education program, MADRE educates and mobilizes its members in the United States to demand alternatives to destructive policies.

MADRE's Programs in Iraq

MADRE's work in Iraq dates back to the first Gulf War, when MADRE delivered ten tons of milk and medicine for Iraqi families.

In March of 2003, MADRE again worked in partnership with UNICEF/Iraq; to provide approximately 25,000 people with emergency relief, including essential drugs and medical supplies, powdered milk for children and water purification tablets to treat contaminated drinking water.

In 2004, MADRE spearheaded efforts to bring public attention to death threats made against Yanar Mohammed, founder of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI). MADRE continues to

work with OWFI, supporting their network of women's shelters in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Erbil, and Nasariyeh, which provide a safe haven for women in Iraq's current environment of gender-based violence.

Since the US invasion and occupation of Iraq MADRE reports a sharp rise in violence against women, including "honor killings." OWFI and MADRE recently launched a new campaign to combat "honor killings:" **The Underground Railroad for Iraqi Women. Just as enslaved African Americans relied on a secret network of courageous individuals to help them make their way to freedom, Iraqi women who are threatened with "honor killings" need an escape route.**

Brief explanation of "Honor Crimes"

Human rights abuses committed against women in the name of "family honor" are called "honor crimes." These crimes, including murder, are intended to "protect the family honor" by preventing and punishing women's violations of accepted behavior. Women who have been abducted arrested or raped may also be targeted for "honor killing" because they are considered to have shamed their families. The underlying purpose of "honor crimes" is to maintain men's power in families and communities by denying women basic rights to make autonomous decisions about issues such as marriage, divorce, and whether and with whom to have sex. A woman who is targeted for an "honor killing" is often hunted down by her family—even years later. For that reason, relocating completely, even changing her name, is often the only way for a woman to save her own life. Yet few women have the resources to take such measures on their own. *The Underground Railroad for Iraqi Women* provides women who are threatened with "honor killing" with the means and social support to escape and begin to build a new life. MADRE and OFWI have opened five shelters in Iraq in the past two years. The only shelters in the country, they serve women who are under the threat of an "honor killing" and other forms of violence.

For a more in-depth understanding of "honor killings" in Iraq, please visit

http://www.madre.org/articles/int/summer06nl_honorcrimes.html

How They Measure Their Success: For the programs in Iraq, due to the anonymous and concealed nature of the Underground Railroad program and the five women's shelters in Iraq, MADRE does not have exact numbers of women served by these efforts. They estimate that eleven women have made it through the Underground Railroad and that hundreds have been assisted at the shelters (ranging from bus money, counseling and shelter). The programs have their own newspaper and while the director speaks tirelessly on behalf of their efforts, she has also been the recipient of death threats.

In cooperation with their sister organizations, MADRE provides technical assistance for program adjustments, conducts a site visit during the program year to ensure that projects meet their objectives, and participates in formal organizational strategy and planning discussions with their partners and community leaders. MADRE receives monthly reports from their partners that detail the development and implementation of the projects. Evaluations are based on a set of 11 questions that address how the project deepened people's understanding of human rights and improved their access to information about leadership development and women's health and well being, such as: How has the project increased women's ability to function as decision-makers in their families, communities, and society as a whole? How will the project continue to grow and how can it be adapted and replicated in other communities? What is the scope of the project's influence? Has it affected local, regional, national, or international policy-making and, if so, how?

Financial Profile: MADRE operates on a very efficient level, with 92.5% of total expenses directly toward women's programs and only 7.5% being spent on administrative and fund-raising costs. While overall, MADRE operates on a \$1.5 million dollar budget, **the Iraq programs operate on a small budget. In the last two years, \$49,500 has been directed to Iraq for five shelters and the Underground Railroad program. Our October donations will be directed to this fund.**

DFW Giving History with Program: \$800 given in March, 2005 for Tsunami relief efforts.
