

## Appeal

### **Nobel Peace Prize 2011 for African Women**

**W**omen are the backbone of Africa. They have never known life to be different, accustomed throughout the ages to a responsibility, that they must cope with the problems of daily life and their families' struggle for survival.

Every day hundreds of thousands of women walk the length and breadth of the continent in search of dignity and lasting peace. Countless numbers walk as far as 20km to bring water to their families. They then continue to the market in the hope of selling what little they own to earn enough to provide for their children. And their cycle of life continues unabated.

The markets in African cities teem with women, who form a rainbow of vibrant colours as they exchange their goods and share their joy of life with convivial warmth. Often they will be carrying younger children and be circled by the movement and sounds of the older ones. But these children are not necessarily their own. In the Africa of war and disease, fate often entrusts women with the welfare of orphans that are left in its wake.

Women in Africa are responsible for seventy percent of agricultural production; they produce eighty percent of Africa's consumer goods and sell in the region of ninety percent of these. However women are almost always prevented from owning the plot of land that they work, simply because they are female.

With the help of microcredit, African women run tens of thousands of small enterprises in sectors ranging from agriculture to trading and cottage industries. Then there are thousands, possibly even tens of thousands, of women's organizations that deal with political and social issues, the provision of healthcare and the establishment of peace. And in a continent beset by misgovernment and corruption, it is the women who are most resolute in their hope for democracy and transformation. It is the women of Africa who continue to defend and feed their children, fight against sexual mutilation and take care of the weakest and most vulnerable of their communities, despite sexual discrimination, polygamy and the lack of interest or absence of their menfolk. In the face of such abuses of power, the women of Africa rise up to defend their violated rights.

During the course of many wars, African women have had to endure the massacre of their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons and are forced to watch as their children are taken from them and obliged to fight. While they themselves may be spared death, the fate of women is often worse as their soul must endure its loss forever.

Women are indeed the backbone of Africa. In all the areas of life; from homemaking and raising children to the economy, politics, culture, the arts and the environment. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of any human future in Africa without their essential, active participation. Without their far-reaching contribution today, there can be no Africa of tomorrow.

There is no doubt that African women have made significant progress in political, economic and cultural life at all levels. However these achievements are but a drop in the ocean when one truly recognizes their contribution and commitment.

It is for these reasons that we wish to launch an international campaign, to formally recognise the forgotten role women play in African life. It's further reaching than just this. In our modern world, plagued by human as well as (the well documented) economic crisis, we believe that the humble woman of Africa and the pivotal role that she plays can help pave the reconstruction of a more just human society – not just in Africa, but across the globe.

The international community must find a way to make a crucial difference. This includes awarding the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 to the African Woman so that her daily struggle might be better publicized, appreciated and held as an example to facilitate human growth in Africa and the world.