



International Women's Day: The State of the World's Women and Why We feel Hopeful

Recent global protests against women's rights violations and renewed interest in women's rights have laid the foundation for major advancements for women. International Women's Day 2013 is the chance for Canadians to decide if they are going to join the movement, or let the opportunity slip away, MATCH International said today.

"Canadians have historically engaged at a very deep level in the women's rights movement both here at home and across the globe," said MATCH International Executive Director Jessica Tomlin. "If we are indeed at the tipping point for a more equal reality for men and women, what side of history will Canadians find themselves on once this moment has passed?"

There have been some major and remarkable international high level commitments recently. We have seen global outrage in relation to violent acts against women, including protests of the gang rape of a University student in India and the attempted assassination of 15-year-old anti-Taliban crusader Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan. On Valentine's Day, one billion women men and children danced in protest of violence against women. Young women across the world are charting a new course to advocate for their rights using social media and technology.

This is all in light of the staggering reality that the average women's rights organization has an annual budget of \$20,000 per year.

Despite these movements, women in the world continue to face grave challenges. In the Democratic Republic of Congo – which is known as the worst country in the world to be a woman – 60 per cent of rape survivors were gang raped by armed men. In South Asia, women face the constant threat of acid throwing, honour killings and dowry deaths. The insurgency in Northern Mali is believed to be responsible for 211 reported cases of rape, with countless more presumed to remain unreported.

In the face of such tragedies, there are millions of women and men demanding these issues take centre stage. The issues fundamental to the realization of equal rights for women have begun to penetrate the mainstream consciousness.

"We feel strongly that Canada has a greater role to play in advocating for what is just," said Tomlin.

"Canadians can be supporting the women who are leading this movement across the globe and

demanding that countries of wealth, such as ours, do whatever it takes to ensure this 'moment' is indeed a tipping point for a more equal world."

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MATCH International is a Canadian international organization that has been working with women's rights organizations in the Global South for 37 year. This year, MATCH will launch an International Women's Fund, the first of its kind in Canada.