

February 16, 2012

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

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(Call for Applications) 2012 Land for Life Award

UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) is currently inviting applications for 2012 Land for Life Award with the aim of rewarding and recognizing the leadership for sustainable land management. This award is an initiative to honour sustainable land management efforts that foster gender equality, cultural diversity and social inclusion. The winners of the award get support from UNCCD to expand their work towards sustainable land management in any region of the world. The efforts which help in reducing land degradation through sustainable land management, or are outstanding examples of political leadership, policy, business, advocacy campaigns or scientific research become the proud winner of the award.

Award Objective

- Recognize excellence and innovation in sustainable land management
- Provide winners with visibility and support to expand their work
- Inspire leadership for the restoration of soils' natural health and the transformation of degraded land
 - Encourage international cooperation in support of sustainable land management, particularly in the drylands
 - Encourage political measures that foster sustainable land management and enhance soils
 - Raise awareness of the global benefits of soil generation and preservation

- Promote understanding that the drylands are part of the solution to today's most pressing problems

The Prize

The award will be given to up to three outstanding applicants based on the selection criteria. The winners will receive:

- A healthy soils medal
- Three awards will be granted from a total prize fund of up to USD 100,000.
- Free travel and accommodation to attend the award ceremony.
- In the case that the award is granted to an underage person, free travel and accommodation to attend the award ceremony for one accompanying family member.
- A "Healthy Soils Gold Medal" label to use on related products and communications.
- A video will be made of the winning projects and published on the UNCCD website.

The jury reserves the right to award the prize without providing a monetary reward. This would occur if the honor is bestowed to a business or other organization that is not in need of financial resources to scale-up their initiatives. In this case, the prize would include a medal and the honor and publicity that accompany winning the Land for Life award. It would also include, where appropriate, flights and accommodation to the award ceremony and the creation of a video about the project.

Selection Criteria

Selection criteria includes:

- Innovation: fresh thinking and practical solutions to the problems of land degradation
- Inspiration: shows leadership and inspires others to change behavior
- Impact: measurable improvements to the land, soils and livelihoods
- Replicability: lessons learned for sustainable land management can be reproduced by others

Demonstration of results is required in any of the following areas:

- Technical implementation
- Policy Measures and Leadership
- Business Practices
- Advocacy, Education and Empowerment
- Scientific Finding and Knowledge Sharing

Deadline for submissions: February 29, 2012.

For more go to: <http://www.unccd.int/land4life/menu.php>

(Call for Nominations) Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life 2012

Nominations are open for the 2012 WWSF Women's World Summit Foundation Prize honoring women and women's groups around the world exhibiting exceptional creativity, courage and commitment for the improvement of the quality of life in rural communities.

The Prize aims to draw international attention to laureates' contributions to sustainable development, household food security and peace, thus generating recognition and support for their projects. While rural women are vital in providing examples of sound practice in their communities, they still do not have full access to tools needed for development, such as education, credit, land rights and participation in decision making.

By highlighting and awarding creative development models, innovations and experiences enhancing the quality of rural life, WWSF participates in addressing the eradication of rural poverty, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.

Eligibility

- Nominees should be women and women's groups currently active in rural life whose efforts have not yet been acknowledged by other awards. They may not nominate themselves.

- The nominating organization or individual must have direct experience of the nominee's work. The nominator may not nominate a family member, be a member of the nominated organization, nor can an organization nominate its senior officer (i.e. founder, president etc.). No more than 3 nominees may be presented by the same person/organization in the same year. The nominator commits to organize an award ceremony if the candidate is selected for the Prize and invite the media.

Deadline for Submissions: 31 March 2012.

For more go to: http://www.woman.ch/index.php?page=nomination-guidelines&hl=en_US

(Call for Applications) The Welsh Government seeks Applications for Wales4Africa Health Links Grant Scheme

The Welsh Government is currently inviting applications for the Wales4Africa Health Links Grant Scheme for the 2012-13/2012-15 period. These grants are available for health links with sub-Saharan Africa and are meant to support the professional development of staff through their participation in health links with a sub-Saharan African territory. The grants can serve as part of Continuing Professional Development for NHS staff.

Grant Provisions

Applications for funding should be between £5,000 and £15,000 per annum, but all funding applications will be considered. In order to promote sustainability, the Welsh Government is offering a proportion of the funding for three year programmes (circa £25,000 per annum to cover 2 or more proposals).

General Guidelines

- The application must explain how the funded work (intervention) will contribute to either, or a combination, of the following Millennium Development Goals:
 - to reduce childhood mortality;
 - improve maternal health; or
 - combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.
 - Interventions must be primarily non-capital (i.e. not building work or equipment), although the delivery of a proportion of capital expenditure is acceptable if it is integral to the professional and skill development of the staff involved in the link.
 - The applicant must be the lead for the intervention, be based in Wales and work in the health field. However, the parent organisation may be based or work across any UK nation.
 - Applicants can apply for both the one year programme and the three year programme; In assessing the applications, the Welsh Government will consider three year proposals first, and any unsuccessful three year applications will be considered for one year funding.
 - The funding must support the delivery of specific aims and objectives.
 - The program can support either a work to develop a new link or work being taken forward by an ongoing health link.
- Applications will be assessed by a panel and you will know whether or not you have been successful by Thursday 5 April 2012.

Deadline for Submission: March 5, 2012.

For more go

to: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/intdevelopment/walesforafrica/wfafricagrantscheme/?lang=en>

(Article) Women Farmers Feed The World

It's harvest season in Burkina Faso. Throughout the West African nation's rural regions, small farmers—mostly women—are harvesting millet, rice, and sorghum to feed large families. After a full day gathering grains, each wife will continue the work, tending her own small garden to feed her children. The harvest marks the end of the “lean season,” the dangerous months after the year's food supply has dwindled and the next crops have not yet arrived—a time that leaves many women foraging for their children.

West Africa—and much of the rest of the world—is facing a food crisis. Nearly one billion people are hungry, according to the World Hunger Education Service, and farmers throughout the Global South are experiencing escalating anxiety over the appropriation and control of land, seeds, and farming techniques by foreign governments and corporations—manifested in “land-grabbing,” seed monopolization, genetic modification, and the imposition of high-tech, water-, chemical-, and energy-intensive monocrops.

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) is a Gates Foundation-funded initiative based in Nairobi and spearheaded by Kofi Annan, former secretary general of the U.N. It's a multimillion-dollar project that seeks to increase food production in Africa by implementing vigorous Western-style agricultural techniques, promising high-yield results for food-insecure populations. According to the Gates Foundation and other supporters, it's an African-led endeavor, modeled on the previous Green Revolutions of Latin America and the Indian sub-continent but placed in the hands of Africans. It sounds like a good idea.

But a growing movement of local farmers—largely led by women—argue that the surest path to food security is securing food sovereignty. It's a concept that was put forward in the early 90's by Via Campesina, an international alliance of peasant, indigenous, and women's organizations that advocates for communities' control over how food is produced, and who gets to eat it.

The original Green Revolution, beginning in the 1940's, pushed widespread use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and equipment whose expense was out of reach for most peasant farmers. Critics point out that years of water-intensive farming has depleted water tables, while increased use of chemicals has severely damaged soil in some areas. And while new seeds and tools may bring higher production in the short term, many Africans fear the consolidated control corporations exercise over the food supply, the precarious dependence on large amounts of water and energy inputs, and the environmental toll such methods may eventually take.

The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), sponsored by the U.N. and published in 2009, found that the adoption of agrochemicals and monocropping, among other technologies, have harmed more than the land. They've also hurt local communities and economies, benefiting transnational corporations with "near-total control" of food production.

Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, lead author of the IAASTD report, emphasizes instead the importance of agroecological farming, an approach that supports localized farming and draws on traditional agricultural knowledge. It not only considers productivity, sustainability, and resilience, but also equity.

This is good news for women. Women, according to Ishii-Eiteman, make up a huge percentage of the world's small food producers (who, she says, together grow about 70 percent of the food supply). They do the most to get food on the table, and they're usually the last to eat it.

Fatou Batta works with Groundswell International, an organization that partners with small-farmer groups across the world, including in Burkina Faso. She's helping to lead a broad grassroots alliance that shows that small farmers, and especially women, can feed the world if we give them the resources to control their food, and the right to eat it too.

Christa Hillstrom: Let's talk about food sovereignty. How do people in West Africa understand this concept?

Fatou Batta: In our context, it is related to the type of food we want to eat and produce, and having the ability to produce what we eat. It seems that in the U.S., food justice is much better understood than food sovereignty. But in our context, controlling the production of what we eat is key—not just get something that is imposed.

You talk about equity—economic equity, gender equity—as a key ingredient of sovereignty. I think a lot of people don't think equity when they think about food security. They think of resilience, sustainability, and high yields. Why is it important to include equity in building long-term security in food production? How does that bring women into the picture?

First of all, it's a question of rights. Women are key in producing food. They are working on the farm, they're producing through labor, and when it comes to using food, they are the last ones to be able to eat it. It's important to make sure those who contribute to producing the food also have access to eat equitably. In the family, usually males have the right to eat first. I think it's unfair. It's discrimination. So if we're talking about the right to food, we have to be looking at

the gender imbalance.

Could you give an idea of what it's like to be a woman farmer in West Africa?

The way it works is, there is land for the whole family. On that land, it's the head of household—the man—who manages it. But the labor is largely produced by the women and children. In many places in Burkina, the woman has a small plot of land with which to produce something like okra because she has the responsibility of feeding the family using extra ingredients. The whole family produces staples like millet and sorghum. But they still have to make some type of sauce—like a soup with vegetables. This is the responsibility of individual women.

For more go to: <http://awid.org/News-Analysis/Issues-and-Analysis/Women-Farmers-Fed-the-World>

(Article) Communication project launched to empower teenage girls

Girl Hub Rwanda launched Ni Nyampinga, a new girl-focused magazine and radio show, so as to empower teenage girls.

Girl Hub is a joint venture between the Nike Foundation and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to ensure that girls in developing countries are involved in the design and implementation of policies and programs that affect them. Jessica Thornley, brand manager for Girl Hub's Rwanda office, explained that the project is designed to provide adolescent girls with tools that will enable them to exploit their potential while strengthening self-belief and make good decisions for themselves.

“Ni Nyampinga is about fostering a culture for girls that gives them the space, time and tools needed to experience their teenage years in the most positive way,” Thornley explained. “We believe the magazine and the radio programs will be great motivators for girls, give them greater voice, while also having a positive impact on their parents and brothers.”

Thornley added that the new platform for Rwandan teenage girls will be connecting them with other girls by offering them role model stories and advice to share experiences and inspire them with great ideas for future improvement. The bi-monthly magazine will cover topics such as Rwandan culture, health, English, development and economic empowerment, while the weekly radio program will be hosted by a team of Rwandan girl journalists who will make shows about

issues that matter most to them and their peers.

Both platforms will prompt audiences for feedback and input through social media, mobile and suggestion boxes in the community, encouraging girls to connect with Ni Nyampinga, each other and decision makers, mentioned the platform designers. The magazine will initially be freely distributed in Kigali as well as the Northern and Southern provinces at the end of November, and nationwide in early 2012; while commencing November 26, the radio show will be broadcast on five radio stations countrywide.

Girl Hub's Rwanda office is part of initiative already operating in Ethiopia and the north of Nigeria among other countries so as to unleash the 'Girl Effect' – offering the chance to grow into healthy mothers, active citizens and educated members of their societies and transform their families, communities and nations along the way.

For more go here: <http://focus.rw/wp/2011/11/communication-project-launched-to-empower-teenage-girls/>

(Report) Don't Stop Now: How Underfunding the Global Fund Impacts on the HIV Response

Millions of people will now have to go without HIV services and many may die waiting for treatment as a result of the funding cuts the Global Fund has had to make, according to the Alliance's report, 'Don't Stop Now'. You can download the report here: <http://www.aidsalliance.org/publicationsdetails.aspx?id=90566>

Alvaro Bermejo, Executive Director of the Alliance said: "The Global Fund's achievements are one of the greatest triumphs of the HIV/AIDS response and we should be celebrating its 10 year anniversary this month. Instead, these cuts will have dramatic consequences for country HIV responses. In South Sudan 80 per cent of its national AIDS plan remains unfunded and in Zambia an estimated 131,971 people in need of life saving treatment will not have access. "We are already seeing the impact at the Alliance. In 40 per cent of the countries we work in, partners are faced with cutting critical HIV prevention, treatment and care services. This will affect over 1.5 million people. If this is the impact for the Alliance and it is the tip of the iceberg, it raises serious questions about the impact globally," he added.

'Don't Stop Now' reviews the impact of the cuts in five countries that will be particularly hard hit: Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Sudan, Bangladesh and Bolivia. The report highlights that groups most affected by HIV are likely to be hit hardest. Sex workers, men who have sex with men and people who use drugs are populations that have traditionally struggled to access HIV funding as many governments are often unwilling to spend money on groups whose practices are often unpopular and/or criminalised. The Global Fund has traditionally been the main sources of funding for HIV services reaching these groups. In Bangladesh the 20 per cent planned increase in coverage of HIV services for most affected groups such as sex workers and men who have sex with men will not now be possible and in Bolivia lack of funds to expand prevention services means increased rates of HIV transmission amongst these populations.

Other important services including legal assistance, care and support services, psychosocial and nutritional programmes will be seriously affected by the cuts. They are critical for people to get tested, access treatment and live a positive healthy life with HIV. "After 30 years our joint efforts were turning the HIV epidemic around and for the first time it became conceivable to plan for a world without AIDS. But in just a few short months the situation looks very different and we are in serious danger of losing the gains made. We urgently need donors to replenish the Global Fund and for national governments to step up and deliver funding for their HIV/AIDS response or we face a collective responsibility of failing the weakest in our society and betraying the promises that were made to the families and people affected by HIV around the world," Bermejo said.

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org.