



Make
Mothers
Matter

MAKE MOTHERS MATTER

*With mothers
for a better world*

ACTIVITY REPORT **2016-2017**



For this edition, we chose to organize the presentation of Make Mothers Matter's Activity Report around our 3 thematic priorities: Mothers and the Economy, Mothers and Health, Mothers and Peace. The role of mothers is fundamental in almost all areas of life. If we chose to focus on these three important areas, it is because they have always been at the heart of the concerns and work of MMM. MMM never stopped researching, conducting surveys, organizing meetings, challenging political and economic decision-makers on issues related to these same thematic areas, in order to inform and work with mothers, work with them and for them.

1950 in Paris: *"The economic value of mothers in their families": about the way their activity in the family impacts on the national economy, the ignorance of the place held by mothers in laws and customs, the importance of social costs when it comes to replacing a mother, the economic difficulties that mothers face.*

1954 in Bonn: *About the difficulties of young mothers juggling their new family responsibilities and professional work, the Right of every child to be raised by his mother, the means of influencing national and international laws and institutions to facilitate the presence of mothers with their children.*

1961 in Abidjan: *"Women and mothers of Africa": health, housing, nutrition, traditions and customs, education... the economic and social role of African women and mothers.*

1972 in Strasbourg: *"We all belong, through our children, to a century that we will not be able to see, and the world changes in such a way that today, nobody can stay out; all of us and each one of us are involved in the one same world, and the action of each person has an incidence on all of us... Tensions, conflicts and their tragic consequences incite us to declare forcefully that nor violence, nor oppression, nor selfishness, will ever promote a fraternal society".*

In 1974, MMM conducted a study about "Safe birth... intended to collect accurate information on the experiences of mothers before, during and after the birth of their children".

1980 in Paris: *The crucial importance of the first years of life starting from conception for a global personal development.*

1999 at UNESCO: *"The Family and Social Dynamics of Mothers' Work": the investment of mothers in the human capital of their children is one of the most important contributions to economic and social life. It is very unfortunate that these contributions are not included in the calculation of the income and wealth of the nation¹.*

2003 Beirut: *"The Role of Mothers in Peacebuilding": beyond our diversities, what brings us closer together, we mothers of the world, is to ensure a world in peace for our children.*

MMM's dynamics is rooted in the long-lasting continuum of these issues; we have been addressing them for years, and they are still totally relevant today.

I wish you a good reading, hoping that you will have a thought of gratitude like me, for all those who have worked with courage and conviction for so many years and are still working at MMM, to promote the importance of the role of mothers worldwide.

Anne-Claire de Liedekerke

¹.Special message addressed to MMM by Pr. Gary S. Becker, professor at the Chicago University, Economy Nobel Prize 1992

Make Mothers Matter

Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created at UNESCO in 1947. Its mission is to support and raise awareness about the essential role of mothers in ensuring the social, economic and cultural development of societies.

MMM contends that mothers, when they are listened to, supported and informed, are key partners and must be considered as such. They have to be actively involved in development goals, especially the ones relevant to them. Despite the diversity of their lives, circumstances and cultures, mothers around the world share many concerns, starting with the state of the world they will pass on to their children. This powerful driving force is MMM's strength.

Make Mothers Matter has two main fields of action: advocacy work and a grassroots network.

ADVOCACY

MMM asserts the importance and universality of the economic, social and cultural role played by mothers, which is based on their skills and responsibilities as the primary educators of their children.

MMM's advocacy work addresses three main areas which are particularly relevant for mothers:

- Mothers and the Economy
- Mothers and Health
- Mothers and Peace

Working with its member associations, MMM aims to influence policies to bring about positive and concrete changes in their lives. Working with mothers and for mothers, and associating them to development projects, has a positive impact on their children, their family, and society at large.

Promoting the interests of mothers also entails doing research and political analysis, setting-up communication plans and public campaigns.

MMM takes action at various levels:

- International at the **UNITED NATIONS (UN)**, the **EUROPEAN UNION AND UNESCO**;
- National, where **"NATIONAL MMM ASSOCIATIONS"** voice the concerns of mothers within the institutions of their own country.

The 'General Consultative Status' is the highest Consultative Status at the UN. It is only granted to international NGOs whose interests cover the majority of the agenda of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). These organisations are able to address the delegates, disseminate statements of up to 2000 words, and add points to the agenda. Every 4 years, they must provide a report on their contributions to the work of the UN.

MMM WAS AMONG THE FIRST CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ACCREDITED BY THE UN IN 1949. IT IS ONE OF THE 132 NGOS GRANTED GENERAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS WITH ECOSOC, WHICH STAND OUT FROM THE 4862 NGOS IN CONSULTATIVE STATUS.



"WE FACE MULTIPLE CHALLENGES IN OUR CHANGING WORLD, BUT ONE FACTOR REMAINS CONSTANT: THE TIMELESS IMPORTANCE OF MOTHERS AND THEIR INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION. BY REWARDING THEIR EFFORTS AND ENHANCING THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS, WE CAN SECURE A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL."

BANK KI-MOON: SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UN 2007-2016

At the **United Nations**, Member States commit to peace and security, social development and progress, the improvement of living conditions, and the respect of Human Rights. MMM's UN Delegation is active in New York, Geneva and Vienna, where it works to ensure recognition and support for the participation of mothers in this global mission, by bringing a «mother» perspective to the discussions.

MMM denounces the discriminations and obstacles they face, heightens awareness to their contributions to society, and calls upon States to implement policies to value, support and include them as partners for development. The delegation takes the opportunities of UN conferences and meetings, to make oral or written statements. It also answers surveys and organises side-events, usually in collaboration with other NGOs. MMM's activity is in line with the 2030 development agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by Member States at the United Nations in 2015.

The **European Union** adopts legislative and non-legislative initiatives that have a direct impact on the lives of European citizens. It is also very influential at international level, notably for the protection of Human Rights. It is an important partner of the United Nations and the biggest donor for development aid. MMM's European delegation advocates European policies and legislation to bring positive changes in the lives of mothers.

MMM representatives also voice mothers' concerns at **UNESCO**, a specialized UN agency whose mission is *"to build peace through cooperation in education, sciences, culture, communication and information"* (Irina Bokova, general director of UNESCO, 2009-2017). MMM closely collaborates with its member associations by making their actions known in speeches or written statements, and by helping them establish partnerships and implement projects, which are in line with UNESCO programmes.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



THE MMM NETWORK FOR A WIN-WIN DYNAMIC

The MMM network mobilises mothers through:

- National MMM associations, which are emanations of Make Mothers Matter at country or state level
- MMM member associations, which are independent organisations working for the benefits of mothers and their families, and whose mission conforms to all or part of those of MMM.

National MMM associations:

- Federate local associations with a similar mission to MMM
- Implement grass-roots activities to benefit mothers
- Actively present the concerns of mothers to national and regional authorities (advocacy).
- MMM national associations active in 2016 and 2017 are : MMM Belgium, MMM England, MMM France, and MMM Lebanon.

Through mutual commitment and complementary approaches, MMM and its member associations keep each other informed of their activities, thus enabling the spread and exchange of good practices. Members of the network also pool their advocacy work, their experiences and their contacts when the opportunity arises.

MMM works to highlight its member's activities and to widen the scope of their activities. Members are also offered an international forum when their action is relevant to the issues, which are being discussed. MMM can also facilitate grassroots projects undertaken by its members within the framework of specific programmes, particularly within UNESCO.

By bringing their experiences and on-the-ground expertise, members in turn fuel and direct MMM's work of representation and advocacy with international institutions.



Basket work in Bangladesh
(Photo Rural Reconstruction Foundation)

Mothers' Day in 2016

MMM celebrated Mothers' Day with a video in which men, women and children of different generations and cultures describe their mother and her place in their lives. This video was widely disseminated via the newsletter and social media.



Working on the Mothers' Day video in Brussels

MMM's advocacy work

"The significant and persistent gaps between men and women in the sharing of unpaid work and care in the home are an important factor of gender inequality in the field of economic opportunity. [...] Even when men and women enter the labour market with an equal status, women are more likely to move to part-time work or to quit paid work completely when they have children".

Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment - October 2016.

MOTHERS AND THE ECONOMY

Every mother, whether she has a professional activity or not, makes an essential contribution to her country's economy through her commitment to her family and her children.

One of MMM's main focuses is calling on UN Member States to recognise the value of this unpaid family care work, which is still a major obstacle to the emancipation of women. MMM is concerned by mothers' exposure to poverty, which comes from this predicament, and promotes the necessary reconciliation of family and professional life. We also denounce the discriminations hitting women, and mothers even more, in the economic sector. In developing countries, the lack of infrastructures and public services heightens this issue and it is difficult for mothers to ensure a minimum of financial independence.

AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Unpaid family care work

Unpaid family care work responds to the material, educational and emotional needs of the members of a family, notably children, but also people affected by a handicap, illness or old age. Globally, more than 2/3 of this work is undertaken by women, notably mothers. This work is indispensable for the well-being of individuals, their community and society as a whole. Yet, it results in **time poverty**, limiting women's ability to participate fully in economic life, particularly in developing countries where they must also deal with poor infrastructures and public services (water, energy, transport, health care, childcare, etc.). As they lack time to fully engage in earning activities, women often stay in subordinate positions and suffer disproportionately from poverty



© UN Photo / Milion Crant (Zimbabwe)

Recognise, Reduce, Redistribute unpaid family care work... How to address this issue with the "3R" framework?

Recognise : every mother works

- Make unpaid family care work visible to politicians and public opinion. Conduct regular Time Use Surveys, and include this data in labour statistics and in GDP.
- Give unpaid carers status and rights: social protection, training; take into account unpaid care work periods in the calculation of pensions ("care credits").
- Raise awareness of the value of this essential stay in subordinate positions early childhood development and to education: today's children will be the citizens and the workforce of tomorrow.

Reduce – thanks to infrastructure and specific public services

- Invest in infrastructure and accessible public services, both geographically and financially (water and sanitation, electricity and other types of energy, public transport, health services, information and communication technology and services, etc.).
- Target the most remote regions with the clear objective of reducing women's time poverty and their burden of unpaid domestic work.

Redistribute – between men and women/between families and all parts of society

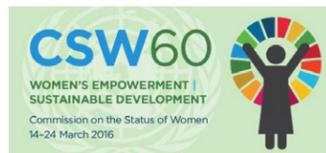
- Support fathers' involvement and promote a better sharing of domestic and parental responsibilities:
 - Involve fathers from the start ; put in place special leaves for pre-natal visits, paternity leave, shared parental leave.
 - Combat stereotypes of the roles of men and women through awareness campaigns, targeting mothers as well.
 - Address occupational segregation and the undervaluing of jobs within the care and educational sectors, by encouraging men to join these professions.
- Make care work a priority. Apply coherent policies across the board involving work, education, health, social and family affairs, taxation, and the status of women – including policies to reconcile family life and professional life, targeting men as much as women (see the work of the European delegation).

"Unpaid care work sustains economic growth, social development and wellbeing. MMM calls on States to recognise its economic and social value, and to implement reduction and redistribution policies in order to ensure the right of women to work."

MMM Statement on the Right to work, at the Human Rights Council in March 2016.



© Memisa/Géraldine Saey



MMM's written statement to the UN's 60th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, called on States **to recognise the value of this vital work**. Its monetary valuation, inclusion in GDP Satellite accounts, access to certain social benefits (such as social security, training and retirement pensions), as well as the implementation of reduction and redistribution policies, would all contribute to the economic empowerment of women and sustainable development, which was the theme of this session in March 2016.

The specific case of Morocco was raised by MMM during an event organised in March 2016 by the NGO OCAPROCE International, parallel to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on "The status of equality and parity in Africa: the example of Morocco". This country recently estimated the economic value of unpaid family care work to be from 34 to 62% of its GDP, depending on the calculation method. In Morocco, 90% of this work is done by women. This example shows that women's contribution to the economy - although statistically invisible - can be considerable. MMM also emphasized that mothers can do a lot to change mentalities. By making their sons and daughters sensitive to this issue, and by giving men enough room for domestic work and the education of children, mothers can also contribute to change.

The panel organised by MMM in October 2016 in Geneva, at the Forum of the NGO Committee of the Status of Women on the economic empowerment of women showed that a more equal sharing of care at home leads to a more equal sharing of managerial responsibilities at work. Antoine de Gabrielli, founder of the "Happy Men" Networks made a point of it; a better balance at home increases chances for mothers to access higher managerial functions in business and to break the "glass ceiling". Just as men, who get frustrated with staying out of the loop of their family life, are not obliged to give an absolute priority to their careers any longer.



Panel on unpaid family care work organised by MMM at the Forum on the economic empowerment of women at the UN Geneva.

Valerie Bichelmeier, MMM UN representative, speaks at the panel organised by Switzerland on unpaid family care work at the UN in New York (CSW61)



Finally, at the panel discussion on unpaid family care work organised by Switzerland during the 61st Commission on the Status of Women, MMM made the point that every mother "works", whether she is paid or not; their contributions should appear in the national statistics. MMM also insisted on the value of this essential work, which should not always be considered as a burden. Expenses related to family support policies should be regarded as an investment in the future generation, not just as a cost.

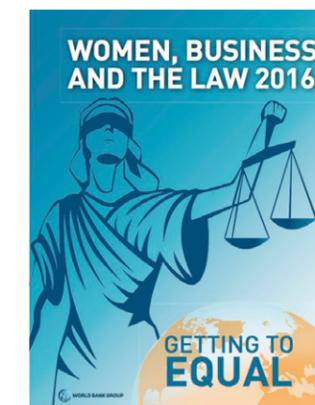
The motherhood penalty in the work place

Besides being disadvantaged when they care for people, women, and especially mothers, face legal and discriminating barriers when they want to work.

World Bank Report: a few figures on the legal obstacles impeding women's economic empowerment - a tool for MMM advocacy

In 2016, the World Bank Report "Women, Business and the Law" showed that 90% of the 173 countries whose legislation had been examined, had at least one law discriminating women:

- Only 18 countries have no law discriminating against women
- In 35 countries, women who outlive their spouse do not have the same inheritance rights as men, and therefore, do not have the same access to property
- In 18 countries, women must get their spouse's permission to work
- In 16 countries, the tax system directly favors men
- Only 9 countries have promulgated laws requiring that at least one woman sits on the board of directors of listed companies
- In 167 countries, maternity leave is mandatory; 86 countries have also implemented a paternity leave, but only 51 countries offer parental leave.





“BECAUSE OF UNPAID FAMILY CARE RESPONSIBILITIES AND WORK, MOTHERHOOD REMAINS ONE OF THE MAIN STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT. THIS SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AS AN OBSTACLE BUT AS A REALITY THAT THE LABOUR MARKET HAS TO ADAPT TO, NOT ONLY AS A MATTER OF EQUITY, BUT ALSO FOR THE WELLBEING OF FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND THE FUTURE OF OUR SOCIETIES. [...] MOTHERS’ EXHAUSTION, STRESS, SINGLE MOTHERHOOD, INCREASING MOTHERS AND CHILD POVERTY ARE ALREADY PART OF FAMILY LIFE IN MANY COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. IT IS A SOCIETAL CHALLENGE THAT IS WORSENING AND THAT URGENTLY NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED”.

MMM’s written statement for the 61th Commission for the Status of Women

On the labour market, women and mothers continue to face discrimination in many ways, whether it is in the recruitment, salary, promotion or access to decision-making positions within the company. This **“motherhood penalty”** is more and more documented and recognised. In 2016, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published a study on the pay gap linked to motherhood for the first time. In fact, these pay gaps exist, not only between men and women but also between mothers and women without children - and they increase with the number of children.

MMM regularly denounces this situation in its presentations and statements. The “motherhood penalty” was specifically addressed in written statements that MMM submitted to the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (with the support of 10 other NGOs), and at the 35th session of the Human Rights Council, during a discussion about the Right to work.

The **pension gap** between men and women, which is a consequence of the “motherhood penalty”, was the theme of MMM’s presentation at the OCAPROCE International Forum in 2017 at the UN Geneva. It results from the combined effects of career breaks due to childbirth, informal work, salary discriminations, the glass ceiling, and more significant periods of part-time work. The fundamental question here is the right to a retirement pension : it isn’t acceptable that two-thirds of people over 65 who do not have a pension are women. Moreover, there is a gap in the amount of the retirement pensions: women receive on average 28% less than men in OECD countries.

The business economy is stronger when diversity is encouraged and when more women are present in decision-making positions. Studies by organisations such as the World Bank, the World Economic Forum or McKinsey show that **gender diversity at work improves managerial and financial performance**, if flexibility for career management and working conditions is provided. MMM pointed out those arguments at the OCAPROCE 2016 forum on “The effective implementation of equality within economic, social, cultural and political sectors: reality and perspectives in 2030”.



OCAPROCE forum

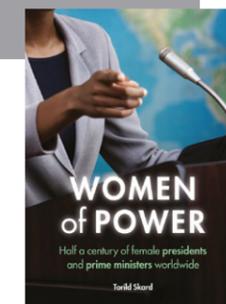
For the first time, in June 2016, MMM participated in the International Labour Conference (ILC). Hosted annually by the International Labour Organisation, the ILC gathers employers, workers and representatives from 177 member States. During discussions on **Decent Work in the Global Supply Chains**, MMM exposed the negative impact of cost and time pressures that ripple down the supply chains on mothers, resulting in low wages and little availability for the family. This was done in collaboration with one of MMM’s new member associations, Awaj, which promotes the rights of women workers in the Ready-Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh.



Opening of the 105th International Labour Conference - Photo ILO - Crozet / Pouteau / Albouy

Mothers’ influence

MMM was pleased to support the International Alliance of Women (IAW) in the organisation of a conference in October 2016 in Geneva. On this occasion, Torild Skard, a Norwegian politician, came to present her book “Women of Power - Half a century of female presidents and prime ministers worldwide”. Having analyzed the life of 73 women who became heads of States, Torild Skard highlighted the fact that most of them shared the fact of having energetic and determined mothers, who were very involved to, both within their families and communities.



At the European Union

The results of the survey **“What matters to Mothers in Europe”**, which was conducted in 2011 with the participation of 12,000 mothers across Europe, still guides the delegation’s advocacy work: mothers expressed the lack of time for their family, their need of recognition, and their desire for real choices in terms of work and family life reconciliation.





“A career break for participating in the care economy should be considered as a productive spell of work experience. It is not a ‘break’: its is the passing from one type of production to another”

*Joy Deshmukh-Ranadive,
Tata Consultancy
Services - Article posted
on the website of the
World Economic Forum,
October 2016*

In the field of the Economy, MMM’s European delegation works on the same topics as the UN delegation, but adapted to EU issues. MMM promotes concrete policies in order to foster a better work life balance for both men and women and more equality within the family, in society and the workplace. In collaboration with other organisations, the delegation continues its intense advocacy work in order to make policymakers take its recommendations into account. For example, the delegation responds to public consultations initiated by the European Commission, follows the debates and reports reports at the European Parliament and proposes changes.

MMM recommendations at the European Union

- Enable parents and carers to dedicate time to their families
- Promote flexible working conditions for women and men: the Right to request flexible working arrangements (such as telework, time-shared work, part time work, flexible working hours)
- Extend paid leave and make it more flexible to enable parents, notably fathers, to spend more time with their children without jeopardising their careers
- Take into account unpaid family care work, and the number of children in pension calculations (care credits)
- Recognise and validate skills acquired by performing unpaid family care work to facilitate re-entry into the labour market after a career break
- Reduce VAT for basic childhood products and services (such as nappies)
- Conduct accurate Time-Use Studies to measure unpaid family care work and its distribution between men and women
- Promote family friendly companies



Unpaid family care work: a challenge for gender equality

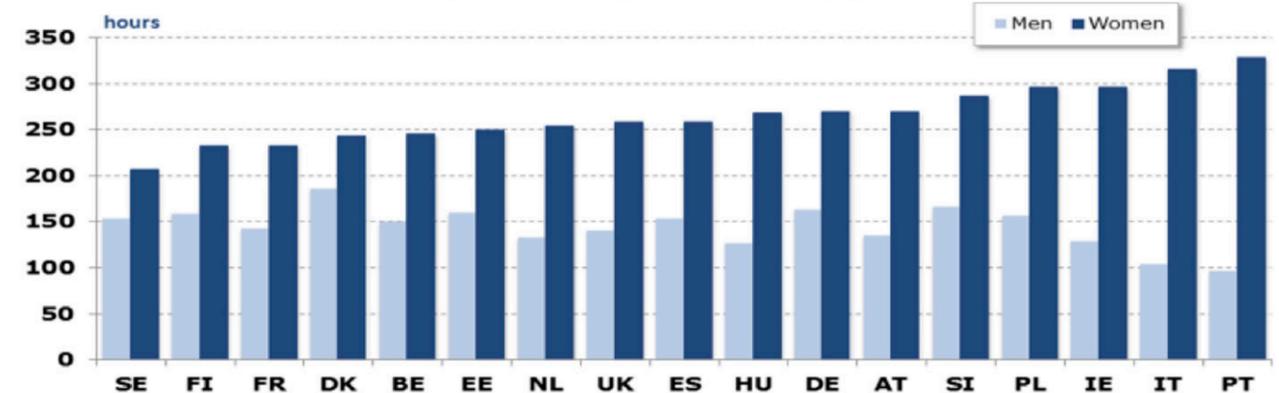
The Gender Equality Index proposed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) measures the performances of EU countries.

The data focuses on 6 core domains: work, knowledge, power, money, time use, health. Violence against women is also analysed. The last report showed that the inequality of power - i.e. women’s representation in the decision making of politics and the economy - has improved the most. But on the other hand, the inequality of time use – i.e. the time which women and men commit to daily family activities and free time - lags behind: it has even regressed.

In the EU, men work an average of 39 paid hours per week and women work 33. On the other hand, women take the lion’s share when it comes to unpaid family care work: working women devote 22 hours per week to unpaid care work while men do less than 10. However, there are significant gaps between countries. Domestic tasks and care work are shared more equally between men and women in Nordic countries, even though parity in these countries is not yet achieved.

At the annual consultation of EIGE in Vilnius, which took place in January 2017, MMM reaffirmed the importance of unpaid care work as a key issue for gender equality, during a session on the gender equality index. Interestingly and for the first time, the meeting gathered all the organisations concerned with gender equality (the European Women’s Lobby, the MenEngage network and other members of the Social Platform which MMM is part of). The aim was to share synergies and reinforce collaboration between the stakeholders. Thorough discussions about issues selected by EIGE took place: gender challenges in the field of education, the gender equality index, violence against women and gender budgeting.

Time spent in unpaid work by gender



Source: OECD Gender data portal

#evidenceinfocus

Reconciling work and family life

After the withdrawal of the Maternity Leave Directive in 2015, the Commission had announced that an initiative with a broader approach would be taken to tackle the challenges of work-family life balance. The proposal for a Directive was finally published in April 2017. It intends to modernise and adapt the current legal framework and policies to let parents and carers have a better work-family life balance.

Throughout 2016, MMM mobilised policy makers in charge of this initiative and joined efforts with other stakeholders in order to make its requests heard. During the public consultation that was held by the European Commission in February 2016, the delegation notably pleaded for the inclusion of the Right to request flexible working arrangements, and that parents and carers should be granted “care credits” in pensions calculations.

MMM also worked with members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on a report to impart recommendations to the Commission about this future initiative: “Creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance”.

The report, adopted in September 2016, takes into account the needs of families presented by the networks of European NGOs working on the issue, and which MMM is part of, with the following recommendations:

- Publish an implementation report of the parental leave Directive
- Reform paternity leave at European level and bring forward a new initiative for a paid carer’s leave
- Propose the revision of the maternity leave Directive
- Give workers the Right to request flexible working conditions
- Gather relevant statistics to map the situation in Member States concerning how the Right to request flexible working conditions stands at European level
- Ask Member States to introduce “care credits” for parents and caregivers, in order to include care work in the calculation of their pensions.

About the Right to “request flexible working arrangements”

Make Mothers Matter continues to actively support this Right as it exists in the UK for parents since 2003. This legislation was so successful that it was extended to all British employees in 2014, and adopted by the Netherlands in 2016. MMM advocates that such legislation be adopted in the other EU countries.

In April 2017, the European Commission made a proposal for a Directive within the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which aims “to reconcile work-life balance for parents and carers”. It was sent to the EU Council and Parliament for feedback on their positions. After having advocated for such an initiative for years, MMM welcomes this proposal. Indeed, the existing legal framework falls short of meeting the needs of parents and carers. In addition, it does not offer appropriate solutions to the realities and issues of today’s society (ageing population, gender pay and pension gaps, etc.).

To ensure that this Directive would be adopted, MMM worked closely with decision makers. Meetings and contacts were made with the European Commission, with social attachés in charge, working for permanent representations at the EU Council, and with the European Economic and Social Committee. Likewise, MMM met with MEPs of various groups (the Greens, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, the Confederal Group of the United Left, the Christian Democrats and the European Conservatives). The delegation also mobilised MMM members and associations dealing with these issues at national level.

In addition, MMM is part of an informal alliance supporting this Directive proposal, which includes 9 other networks and organisations of civil society, and represents about 9 million people. In a common statement in December 2017, this alliance asked the Council to continue the negotiation on this proposal without watering it down, and to lift oppositions to its adoptions



Informal alliance supporting a directive proposal on-work-life balance

The comparative table on the following page details the present legislative framework of the European Union, the actions that are considered in the initiative proposal of April 2017 and MMM’s recommendations.

For MMM, it is fundamental to enable parents and carers to benefit from a sufficiently flexible framework to take leave or make work arrangements suited to the particular needs of their families.

CURRENT EU LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK	PROPOSED DIRECTIVE	MMM RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Paternity leave No paternity leave at EU level</p> <p>Parental leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 months of parental leave 1 month cannot be transferred between parents • Not paid • Guideline on uptake until the child reaches the age of 8 • Possibility of flexible uptake to be decided by the Member States <p>Carers' leave No carers' leave at EU level beyond time off on grounds of force majeure</p> <p>Flexible working arrangements Currently at EU level, the right to request exists only for parents coming back from parental leave</p> <p>Protection against dismissal and unfavourable treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exists for maternity, parental, paternity and adoption leave (in those Member States which have paternity or adoption leave) • There is no EU-level protection against dismissal and/or unfavourable treatment for carers' leave and for workers requesting flexible working arrangements (except for part-time work) 	<p>Paternity leave 10 working days when the child is born paid at least at sick pay level</p> <p>Parental leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 months of parental leave per parent • Paid at sick pay level • To be taken up at least until the child reaches the age of 12 • 100% non transferable • Possibility of flexible uptake <p>Carers' leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to 5 days of carers' leave per year per worker. • Paid at sick pay level • To take care of seriously ill or dependant relatives <p>Flexible working arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to request flexible working arrangement for parents and carers • Take up till children reach the age of 12 • For a period "with reasonable limits" • Includes: reduced working hours, flexible working hours, and flexibility regarding the workplace <p>Protection against dismissal and unfavourable treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where workers choose to take, or apply to take, leave or request flexible working arrangements 	<p>Paternity leave 10 working days paid at 80% of pay level. To be taken independently from maternity leave, and not to be shortened in any way</p> <p>Parental leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 months per parent with possibility of a 25% or 50% transfer between parents • Paid at 80% of pay level • Take up till the child reaches the age of 12 • Possibility of flexible uptake <p>Carers' leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to 5 days of carers' leave per year per worker. • Paid at 80% of pay level <p>For any leave related to Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Care credits": any leave taken, due to care activity, should be considered as an assimilated period. • Accessing paid leaves for all, including self employed <p>Flexible working arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to request flexible working arrangement for parents and carers • Take up till children reach the age of 18 • MMM supports the introduction of the Right to request for all the parents and workers, including self employed <p>Protection against dismissal and unfavourable treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where workers, choose to take, or apply to take, leave or request flexible working arrangements. • The introduction of a non-regression clause to protect higher levels of social protection (some governments could be tempted to reduce them to align themselves with countries with less generous social protection)

Source for two first columns of the table : the Europa.eu website.

Parental Leave

While the "Arena report" on the application of the directive on parental leave was being written, MMM met with Maria Arena, MEP and Member of the Belgium Socialist Party, to ask for the extension of the leave from 4 to 6 months, and for take up after the child reaches the age of 8. MMM advocates a more flexible implementation of this Directive and the possibility of having a financial compensation (essential to fathers who will be more likely to take their share). All this was taken into consideration in the final version of the report, published in May 2016.

In June 2017, about 100 participants, researchers and practitioners from some 50 countries gathered at the MenCare Global meeting in Belgrade, Serbia. The aim of the MenCare alliance was to develop new strategies to improve the commitment of men to Care work and gender parity. MMM organised a panel to present the work-life balance Directive proposal launched by the European Commission in April 2017 and asked the participating associations to support it.

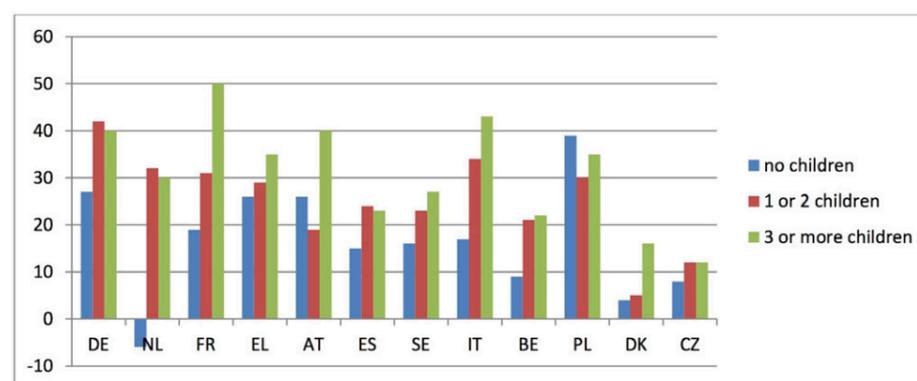
The MenCare report "The State of the World's Fathers: time for action" presented during the conference, highlights the value of unpaid family care work and calls for fathers' engagement. If men have a crucial role to play to achieve this beneficial change for all, implementing support policies is paramount for this to become a reality.



Reducing gender pension gaps

Poverty in old age, which stems from inexistent or insufficient pensions for women, and mothers in particular, is a real societal challenge. The average gender pension gap amounts to 39% in the EU, and reaches 45% in Germany.

In the public consultation launched by the European Commission about the implementation of gender equality in social security systems, the delegation underlined the indirect discriminations suffered by many mothers. They result from the combined effects of career interruptions due to motherhood, gender pay gap, and the unbalanced distribution of family care work, which pushes women to work part-time. These inequalities accumulate when it is time to retire.



Gender pension gaps in the EU according to the number of children

Furthermore, the European delegation asserted MMM's position in a meeting with Constance Le Grip, Member of the European People's party (EPP), who wrote a draft report on **"The need for an EU strategy to end and prevent the gender pension gap"**.

This report, which was published in September 2016 and adopted in June 2017 calls on the Member States to :

- *"Consider employees being given the possibility to negotiate voluntary flexible working arrangements [...] thus allowing women and men a better work-life balance, such that they do not have to favour one over the other when assuming care responsibilities."*
- *"Introduce "are credits" to offset breaks from employment taken in order to provide informal care to family members [...] and to count those credits towards pension entitlements fairly"*

In March 2017, MMM also took part in a consultation organised by EIGE on gender discrimination in education, training and the labour market. It is essential to work to reduce pay and pension inequalities. In line with its position, EIGE also recommends measures to improve work-life balance.

The European Pillar of Social Rights

MMM participated in a wide consultation launched by the Commission in December 2016 on the European Pillar of Social rights. This pillar defines a certain number of fundamental principles and rights in order to guarantee the proper functioning of the labour markets and social protection systems.

The European Pillar of Social Rights includes 20 principles including gender equality, equal opportunities, work-life balance and pensions.

It therefore touches upon a number of relevant themes for families in Europe, including their chances to better reconcile work, family, care and personal life.

In January 2017, MMM joined a group of NGOs to issue a statement asking MEPs to honour their pledges about work-life balance as they stand in the pillar ; the statement called on them to reaffirm position in favour of reconciling work and family life and stop amendments watering it down, by excluding the call for legislative initiatives at EU level.

At the UNESCO

Mothers and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

Access to digital information on education, health, hygiene, and the economy is a vital challenge for mothers to benefit from new opportunities, a broader education and better empowerment. This is what MMM conveyed in its intervention at the International Conference of Non Governmental Organisations held at the UNESCO in December 2016 on "The challenges of the digital revolution for NGOs".

ZOOMING ON THE NATIONAL MMM ORGANISATIONS

In Belgium

The pension reform

MMM Belgium took action in the current pension reform. Given the societal challenges and the intergenerational impact of this reform, it was widely discussed in a public debate and at political level. In meetings with different political cabinets, the employer's federation and other public instances, MMM Belgium asked that the role and rights of mothers be considered by those instances, and be reflected in the legal framework.

The Directive on work-life balance was presented within the framework of this European pillar. It argues that parents and carers should benefit from leave systems, adapted to them so that they can look after their children and other dependant family members. It also contends that parents should benefit from Care services. Regarding pensions, it asks that measures be taken to reduce pension gaps. MMM requests that the time dedicated to unpaid family care work, be accounted for in pension settlements in order to increase them.

There is no simple solution on the side of pensions!

An exchange with Beatrice Cantillon and Frank Vandenbroeke, two members of the Commission for the Reform of Pensions (2020-2040) at the meeting on “Modernizing the family dimension in Belgian pensions” in October 2017, highlighted the difficulties of this reform.

The challenge of pensions is intrinsically linked to the challenge of work and family life reconciliation. Some mothers are totally destitute and with no rights at all, having spent most of their lives at home bringing up their children and then being left on their own. Other mothers, the greatest majority, work and contribute to the pension system, but might have to interrupt their careers sooner or later, to look after their children or other family members. Lastly, some mothers pursue a full career... How to reconcile these different situations? How to recognise and measure these care periods without creating a windfall effect? Why only mothers? To multiple questions, there are multiple answers and solutions... Though Saskia van Uffelen, who is both CEO of a large company and a mother of 5 doesn't have a typical profile, she held our attention by claiming strongly that family and professional life reconciliation is impossible without the help of the children's father...

And what if the best solution rested with fathers?

In 2017, MMM Belgium got involved with «Assez is Genoeg». This new platform gathers many women's organisations. Its aim is to organise spectacular actions against policies that increase women's precariousness and widen socio-economical gender gaps. MMM Belgium is considering joining this group to propose background work on all these issues with the political instances.



MMM Belgium and the MMM European delegation holding a stand together



In France

In 2017 as in 2016, the Senate Commission of Social Affairs auditioned MMM France, as it was working on the family section of the Social Security budget's vote. It has been an opportunity to discuss family policies with senators and to present concrete amendments to existing proposals. This process has strengthened our bonds with these elected representatives.

In 2017, MMM France warned against a planned reform which would have reduced allowances for the poor and middle-class parents of 1,7 million families; 70 000 families could have their allowances suppressed.

MMM France also alerted on the country's declining birth rate, which dropped for the 3rd consecutive year. Beyond the short-term demographic impact, such decline will, in the long run, affect the French pension system.

Safeguarding parental leave and proposals to expand childcare options with a limited budget

After the implementation of the reform of shared parental leave in 2015, MMM France closely followed the negative consequences for families and mobilized parents on its “Rebel Babies” Facebook page.

The first review of the reform confirms what MMM France had projected: it falls short of the government's expectations as only 5 % of fathers took a parental leave in 2016. Worse, the Court of Auditors reported a drop in the professional activity for mothers of 2 children and more. This can partially be attributed to insufficient childcare options.



MMM France Mobilized in front of the Senate for the «Rebel Babies»

During 2017, MMM France met elected national and local representatives to promote childcare solutions for young children and a more flexible use of parental leave.

During the presidential elections campaign in 2017, MMM France continued to make proposals to develop childcare options with less spending. A Senate hearing and several meetings with elected representatives enabled us to present them. MMM France obtained an amendment and was able to pass a written question to the government on its family policy.

Reconciling work and family life

As mentioned earlier, MMM France made proposals to support work and family reconciliation without generating extra costs, which included the Right to request more flexible working conditions as it is already successfully implemented in the UK. These proposals were welcomed by some of the candidates for the primaries in the French presidential elections. Over the last few years, MMM France has been engaged with MMM's European delegation to promote flexible working conditions for both mothers and fathers, based on the UK's "Right to request" model. MMM France is pleased that the European parliament adopted a report recommending the adoption of this type of legislation in European countries. In 2017, the Council of Childhood and Adolescence has also for the first time recommended to pass this type of legislation in France.

Doing better with less

- Develop and diversify childcare options (shared custodies, nursery assistants, day nurseries, private day-nurseries, etc.)
- Rationalize and optimize access to child care options with a seamless communication on the number of places available
- Make the careers of nursery assistant, which are losing momentum, more attractive
- Encourage flexibility at work
- Facilitate part-time work when it is sought
- Respect the Right to get a parental leave: for nearly 70 % of the families which would like to take a parental leave until the child reaches the age of 3, it is a free choice.

Defence of the "tax household" principle

In 2014, MMM France mobilized against the income tax individualization project because it threatened the principle of family quotient. This project evolved in 2016, towards taxation at source. With the Union of the Family Associations, MMM asked elected representatives to protect the family quotient, a social tool for family solidarity, in their new tax system.

"Mothers' questions": MMM France calling out to candidates in the French presidential election

In the Autumn of 2017, MMM France, in partnership with SOS les Mamans and Enfance sans Drogue

(Childhood without drugs), developed a questionnaire tackling 12 particularly important themes to mothers : child care options, work/life balance, unpaid family care work, equality between men and women, violence against women, child protection, etc.

This questionnaire was sent to each of the candidates for the French primary elections (of both conservative and socialist parties). Some of the answers were very detailed, showing awareness about these issues. Many of the elected representatives seemed to be well informed about the importance of free choices for childcare, of a better work/family life balance, of supporting single mothers, of preventing violence against women etc.

With this questionnaire, MMM France and its partners have raised awareness about the concerns of mothers, and held political parties accountable for their family and social policies.



MOTHERS AND HEALTH

Maternal and child health remains one of the main challenges in global health, starting with the drama of maternal mortality and morbidity, which in 99% cases, is preventable. MMM also denounces obstetric violence and violations of mothers' dignity during perinatal care. Moreover, MMM is concerned about maternal mental health, as well as stress and fatigue caused by poor reconciliation of family and professional life and the unequal distribution of family and household responsibilities.

MMM emphasizes the essential role of mothers in early childhood development, and for the health of their families generally, including better nutrition for children. MMM is concerned, for example, with childhood obesity, which is a major challenge around the world.

MMM believes that mothers who are well informed, educated and supported are part of the solution to promote sustainable health for themselves and their children.

Conference “Mothers and Health”

Make Mothers Matter celebrated the International Women’s Day with a conference on this theme on 7 and 8 March 2016 at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels.

Some 150 people from European institutions, UN agencies, Universities and NGOs from all over the world exchanged views on challenges and good practices, showing how mothers can act for their own health and that of their children.

All the participants agreed to reaffirm that mothers can be supported to be actors in their communities, actors for change and not for conformity: they are a resource, which is still untapped.



“Mothers are also part of the solution and should be considered as stakeholders both to identify problems and to work out solutions. Collaboration with mothers leads to systemic progress because, through their role with their children and at the heart of the family, they are the basis of so many developments”.

Anne-Claire de Liedekerke, President of MMM, Introductory speech at the conference

Dr Marleen Temmerman (Aga Khan University, Kenya), Anne-Claire de Liedekerke (MMM), Madi Sharma (EESC) and Irene Nkosi (Mothers2Mothers, South Africa)



Aliette Abraham, President of Otitsara (Madagascar)



Bolly Kouassi, President of AJAD (Ivory Coast)

The Untapped Potential of Mothers for Health

*“BE THE CHANGE
YOU WANT TO SEE IN
THE WORLD -
NO EXCUSE”.*
GANDHI, REPHRASED
BY MADI SHARMA

Round-up of the interventions

Mothers must be informed and taught about their rights to maternal health, and more generally, to the economic, social and cultural Rights which are connected to maternal health. Maternal health is a matter of political, social and cultural will: it is a question of building societies where women are valued **(Dr. Marleen Temmerman, Aga Khan University, Kenya)**.

Mothers must be free to refuse intrusive medical practices and to decide upon their own birthing plan **(Mame pentru Mame, Romania)**. The ill treatment of mothers during childbirth must be denounced and replaced with a care system, which respects their dignity **(AIMS Ireland)**.

In developing countries, the maternal mortality rate is an indicator of the quality of a health care system. It is urgent to deal with access to care, notably by improving transport and developing access to medical assistance regarding prevention **(Memisa, active in Burundi, Benin, India, the DRC and Mauritania)**.

Mothers' health involves both mental health and their well-being. Too many women are victims of violence and pressures of all kinds. The health of mothers demands a global approach addressing, all at once, the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social aspects. There has to be a place where mothers can talk about anything: home, school, the workplace and religion **(Otitsara, Madagascar)**.

Mothers and pregnant women must be listened to more, including by health professionals. The research sector should involve more women and people from poor countries; find solutions with them and not only for them **(European Commission)**.

This is particularly important for young single mothers in Africa, who are neither considered nor listened to, and too often rejected, whereas they have to manage both their adolescence and early pregnancy at the same time **(AJAD, Ivory Coast)**.

Women, if trained, can become mentors for other women and help them with issues that they have faced themselves. This is the case in South Africa where women with AIDS are trained to help other women not to pass on the virus to their children, and to cope, not only in order to survive, but to live a full life **(Mothers2Mothers, South Africa)**.

In some developing countries and in remote rural areas, mothers should receive basic health education in order to become actors of their own health, express their needs, and for example, be part of local hospital committees **(RRF, Bangladesh)**.

Any initiative encouraging exchanges and solidarity between women is positive, whether it is by sharing experiences over a cup of coffee **(Mama Café, Netherlands)**, or getting over traumatic experiences such as rape and working towards a speedier recovery in self-help groups **(Memisa, Democratic Republic of Congo)**.

The role of parents, especially mothers, is vital for the development of young children, right from pregnancy. There is an urgent need for investment in this field in order to bring the necessary support to mothers and families **(UNICEF)**.

Inclusive and across the board actions must be privileged: stakeholders at all levels have to be mobilized in the fields of health, education and society **(CEPPS project and “The First 1001 Critical Days”, UK)**.

A global approach is also used to prevent childhood obesity in some French towns. The entire population is involved in one way or another to encourage the leverage of information and good practices **(Vivons en forme, France)**.

Childhood obesity is a significant problem in Europe and good habits should be learnt at the youngest age. However, education and prevention have to continue well beyond, into adolescence **(European Child Obesity Group - ECOG)**.

Another example is the role that parents, especially mothers, can play against drugs. They are often best placed to detect the first signs of malaise in their children, and to intervene at an early stage **(Enfance sans drogue, France)**.

Similarly, when mothers learn to manage the psychology and the emotions of their children affected by AIDS, the current attitude of rejection is considerably lessened **(WIPGG, Nigeria)**.

Mothers should trust themselves: let us help them change the way they look at themselves... and at other mothers. Each mother is unique and imperfect in her own way; but all mothers are fabulous! **(Fabuleuses au Foyer, France)**.

Each problem is a different challenge: but they all point to the preventive role that mothers can play, both for themselves and their children.

*“GIVE A MAN A FISH,
AND YOU FEED HIM
FOR A DAY. TEACH
A MAN TO FISH, AND
YOU FEED HIM FOR A
LIFETIME.”*
CONFUCIUS



"It is thanks to the love and compassion of our mothers that we can survive.

There is a strong bond of interdependence between a mother and her child; a reciprocal bond based on the deep tenderness which binds them together".

Dalai Lama.

"In addition to benefiting children (and their parents), the benefits of early education extend to society as a whole. Such so-called "positive externalities", include reductions in crime and lower expenditures on health care and remedial education".

Joint statement of MMM and OMAEP for the 55th Commission on Social Development

At the United Nations

Early Childhood Development

Advances in scientific research and the implementation of important programmes have increased awareness about the importance of early childhood education for the optimal development of children, who will be tomorrow's citizens. Neuroscience studies prove it: in addition to healthy nutrition and basic health care, love, security, responsive and nurturing care are also crucial for the physical, cognitive and emotional development of young children. Parents, and in particular mothers, play a central role in this development, especially during the critical period starting from conception to the child's third birthday. What they need is training in positive parenting, and support.



Mothers at Home Matter (MAHM)

Convinced of the importance of being pro-active about the well-being of mothers and children, MMM has developed an interest in the Childhood and Early Parenting Principles project (CEPPS), initiated and managed by Valérie Unite, former representative of the World Organization of Associations for Antenatal Education, (OMAEP), a member association of MMM.

This project, inspired by the "1001 Critical Days" initiative in Great Britain, proposes a complementary approach to current initiatives at international level regarding maternal health and early childhood development by:

- Including the antenatal stage in early childhood development,
- Putting the role of parents and other caregivers in the forefront, especially mothers whose role is crucial during pregnancy, childbirth and the first months. It is vital to raise awareness with parents and to support the most vulnerable families in this educational role.



Panel organized during the UN Commission on Social Development in New York in February 2017

- Putting in place multi-sectorial across-the-board collaboration, including grassroots stakeholders, in order to develop these projects at a wider scale, and complement the "top-down" approach of government policies.

Make Mothers Matter contributed to structure the project, to lay out the perspective in the "Manifesto", and to create communication tools.

In February 2017, during the Commission of Social Development session at UN Headquarters in New York, MMM and CEPPS co-organized a side-event to demonstrate the link between early childhood development and the eradication of poverty, with an inter-generational perspective.

MMM and OMAEP also jointly replied to the consultation of the World Health Organization (WHO) on early childhood education, underlining that pregnancy has to be taken into account, and insisting on the central role of mothers and the family.

Lastly, various subjects discussed at the Human Rights Council have enabled MMM to stress the link between the well-being and mental health of mothers and their impact on the development of their children, from the onset of pregnancy. A call was made to Member States to prevent and address various kinds of violence and abuse which mothers are subjected to in health services, as well as post-natal depression - an illness more widespread than generally admitted. Finally, refugee mothers need even more support; their extreme living conditions can impose a huge stress which also affects their children, especially when those mothers are pregnant or with very young children.



Karen Thorsen, MMM representative, making a statement at the Human Rights Council (UN Geneva)



"Early Childhood Care and Education - starting during pregnancy - and empowering mothers and other caregivers in the essential role of upbringing children is the best investment a country can make. Not only it is a matter of child Rights, it is key to the realisation of sustainable Goal 1, Eradicating Poverty, and more generally the 2030 Development Agenda"

MMM's written statement for the high level annual ECOSOC meeting in July 2017

Breast milk substitutes

During preliminary discussions at the UN in Geneva on the elaboration of a Convention on transnational corporations and Human Rights, MMM co-signed the statement issued by IBFAN (International Baby Food Associations Network). This statement denounced repeated violations by the food processing industry of the international code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes, which was adopted in 1981 by the World Health Assembly.

Environment and Health

Pregnant women and very young children are particularly vulnerable to toxic products and waste. The resulting handicaps have a human, economic and social cost, which affects societies now and will affect them in the future. Stressing the inter-generational aspect of this problem during the session with the Special Rapporteur on dangerous products and waste at the Human Rights Council in September 2017, MMM called on States to raise awareness in families, and to address the problem of the management and elimination of dangerous products and waste with a human rights-based approach.

At the European Union

Maternal health is not only a problem in developing countries. In 2013, 1,900 mothers died from pregnancy or childbirth in Europe, and one woman in 10 had no access to antenatal care. In Europe, the challenges Make Mothers Matter deals with are :

- Obstetric violence
- The prevention of obesity
- The promotion of maternal mental health.



© EU / Francois Walschaerts

Advocating health services which inform and respect mothers and their choices

In June 2016, MMM was invited by WHO European regional bureau to a meeting dedicated to “Strategy on women’s health and well-being in the WHO European Region”. The objective was to encourage the adoption of measures to reduce inequalities regarding the health of women at all stages of life.

Make Mothers Matter, together with some of its members and other European NGOs, advocates maternal health services which respect mothers’ Rights, ban violence and over-medicalisation. Too many women, particularly when they are already in a situation of vulnerability, still suffer disrespectful, abusive or negligent treatments at one point or another in their pregnancy, birth or postnatal care. It is vital to raise public awareness about this under-estimated issue.



Olalla Michelena, Secretary General of the MMM European delegation, spoke at the conference “Birth without Risk - Maternal Health : fighting the gap in care for mothers in Europe today” organized in September 2016 by the political group of conservatives and reformists (ECR) at the European Parliament in Brussels.

MMM’s European delegation was also a co-organizer and speaker at the **4th European Summit of the NGO Human Rights in Childbirth**, held in October 2016 in Strasbourg, during the conference on “Birth - a challenge for Human Rights” initiated by **Midwifery Today**. National organisations working on maternal health in 14 countries presented an evaluation of the situation of mothers’ Rights in this context. They explained the current legislation relating to the system of maternal care in their countries, but also the real situations that mothers have to face. It was reasserted that the basic rights of women must be respected when they are pregnant. They have the right to access personalised health care so as to give birth in the best possible conditions.



On 25 November 2017, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, MMM joined the Italian Observatory on obstetric violence and two other Italian associations, La Goccia Magica and CiaoLapo, to call governments to stop all forms of obstetric and institutional violence against women. An initial Italian survey, requested by national women's civil society organizations and led by the Doxa Institute in September 2017, revealed that 1 in 3 Italian women felt excluded from fundamental choices related to childbirth.

Regarding obstetric health, MMM urges governments to:

- Support research and data collection in order to measure the prevalence of obstetric violence during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, and investigate its impact on women's health and autonomy
- Adopt national strategies to engage maternal health care users in the decision-making process, at individual and policy levels
- Implement accountability and transparency policies in health care facilities allowing users to make informed decisions
- Support women's choices for childbirth (including for homebirth and midwifery-led birth centres), as part of a regular offer within maternity care
- Set up channels for women to report their childbirth experience without stigma or fear
- Regulate a system of remedies and monetary compensation for human rights violations during childbirth and postpartum
- Design educational programmes raising awareness of human rights in childbirth, both for health care providers and users, starting from schools to universities
- Include women and mothers in educational programmes intended to teach health care providers how to treat a childbearing woman and babies with dignity and respect.

Maternal Mental Health

On the occasion of World Health Day, whose theme in 2017 was "Let's talk about depression", Mental Health Europe (MHE), Make Mothers Matter, and the European Women's Lobby got together to break the silence around post-partum depression.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), some 10-15% of women in Europe and throughout the world suffer post-partum depression after giving birth.

This depression, which can have serious consequences for the women and their families, should not be confused with "baby blues", a term often used to describe the worry and tiredness which many women experience after giving birth. Like WHO, MMM requests further research on this subject, and on the impact of obstetric violence, as well as the setting up of awareness campaigns on these two issues.

Prevention of mother/child obesity

Obesity is taking on epidemic proportions. In OECD countries (including Europe), 22% of children are obese or overweight. Following up the DORIAN project, the European delegation came to the conclusion that **parents were not sufficiently involved in combatting the scourge of obesity**. MMM's objective is to ensure the role of parents in this struggle.

MMM was invited to speak at the 27th annual congress of the European Childhood Obesity Group - ECOG on 15 November 2017.

More than 200 experts, from over 30 countries and the most renowned research centres, gathered for three days in Rome, to discuss how to prevent and treat overweight and obese children. MMM, in collaboration with ECOG, presented a project to conduct a European survey to analyse and understand the attitudes and behaviours of European mothers and families faced with the issues of obesity and overweight on a daily basis.

A mother-to-mother programme in socially disadvantaged schools in southern Italy drew MMM's attention. Mothers are trained in the schools of their children, and then mentor other mothers to tackle obesity, which affects almost 40% children in that region

Olalla Michelena, Secretary General of the EU Delegation of Make Mothers Matter speaking at the ECOG congress





Surrogacy

"We are convinced that there is no difference between the commercial practice of surrogacy and the sale and purchase of children".

Stop Surrogacy Now
Statement,
www.stopsurrogacy-now.org

In coherence with the position adopted at its General Assembly in 2013 on the issue of surrogacy, Make Mothers Matter became a co-signatory of the campaign "Stop Surrogacy Now", which calls for the immediate halt of the practice of surrogacy.

MMM Belgium against surrogacy

At end of November 2016, MMM Belgium sent a letter presenting the well-argued position of MMM against surrogacy to the Hilton Hotel chain, which was holding a "men having babies" show in Brussels. A copy was also sent to the political party Humanist Democratic Centre, which also expresses reservations about this issue. Although there is no political will to legislate about surrogacy in Belgium yet, MMM Belgium remains vigilant.

ZOOMING ON NATIONAL MMM ASSOCIATIONS

MMM Belgium

Longer maternity leave for improved maternal and child health.

In 2016, MMM Belgium took part in the presentation of a study led by Gezinsbond, showing that the people of Flanders thought the current maternity leave - 15 weeks, including one mandatory week before birth - was insufficient, especially when the mother, for medical reasons, has to stop work some time before the birth. Furthermore, doctors have produced scientific studies showing the benefits of extending maternity leave for breastfeeding and for the well-being and health of both baby and mother.



Flyer for the maternity leave campaign in Belgium

Zwangere vrouwen die ziek of arbeidsongeschikt zijn tijdens de laatste 6 weken van hun zwangerschap, hebben een kortere moederschapsrust na de geboorte.

Vind je dat logisch?

Ziek worden tijdens je zwangerschap, daar kies je niet voor

Laat je stem horen: teken onze petitie : www.14weken.be

Zodat elke pasgeboren baby 14 weken bij zijn moeder mag blijven.

Met de Steun van MMM Belgium

NIET OP DE OPENBARE WEG GOOIEN - VERANTWOORDELIJKE UITGEVER VALÉRIE LOREAU, RUE DE L'HARMONIE 18, 6700 ARLON, BELGIË

MMM Belgium therefore asks that maternity leave should be extended to 18 weeks (this duration was put forward in 2015 at European level) and mostly that the weeks "lost" by mothers before the birth should be considered as sick leave and not be deducted from the 14 week leave after the birth.

In these circumstances, MMM Belgium supported a campaign launched in 2017 by a young mother, Valérie Loreaux. She initiated a petition addressed to the Health Minister Maggy de Block and the Employment Minister Kris Peeters, asking them to secure a postnatal maternity leave of 14 weeks. MMM Belgium did the translating into Flemish, thus enabling the promotion of this campaign in both parts of Belgium. At the end of 2017, the petition held more than 44,000 signatures.

Fighting obesity

MMM Belgium, together with the European delegation, continues its work to disseminate the results of the DORIAN study about the impact of obese pregnant mothers on their children's health, up to adulthood. This work includes raising awareness about healthy nutrition in schools, and giving out flyers for the promotion of healthy eating.

Together with the European delegation, the European Children Obesity Group (ECOG) and the Italian pediatrician Margherita Carolli, MMM Belgium contributed to the draft of a survey project whose objective is to analyse how to better prevent child obesity with the help of parents. The project should start in 2018.

MMM Belgium is part of the platform "Women and Health".

In April 2017, MMM Belgium joined the Platform for the Promotion of Women's Health (PPSF) to take part in the project "The stigmatization of maternity in a neoliberal society; between idealized representations and social devaluation, is there a choice for women?"

The Platform, which gathers associations from the Brussels and French speaking areas, has been analysing the relationship between women's health and the workload linked to unpaid domestic and care work over several years. In 2016, a study titled "Care, Gender and Women's health" showed that motherhood brought about a break in women's lives due to the considerable work increase with the arrival of a child. It is planned to develop the analysis further by reflecting on the representations and stereotypes linked to motherhood, and assessing the current situation. Twenty-three feminists were interviewed for this research, including six by MMM Belgium. The report will be published in 2018.



MOTHERS AND PEACE

“If non violence is the law of our being, the future is with women. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than women?”

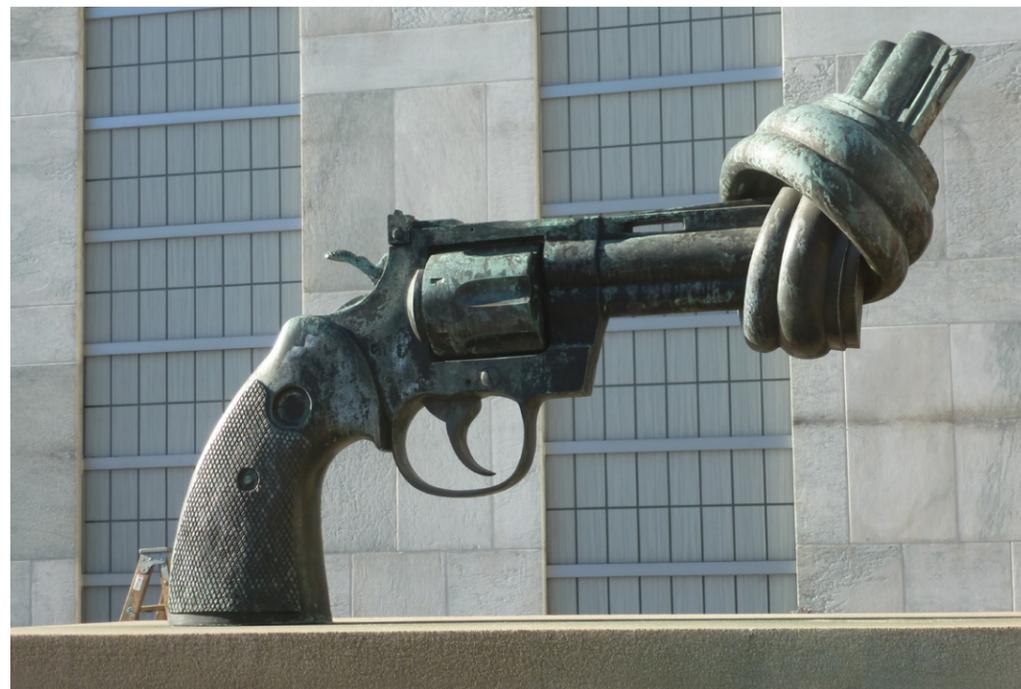
Gandhi

Peace isn't just the absence of violence or conflict. Peace operates at all levels: peace with oneself, peace in the family, equal opportunities and a place for everyone in society. Social injustice is one of the main ferments of social unrest.

The role of parents in education, especially mothers, is critical. It is within the family that emotional health develops and where values that shape individuals are passed on. It is in the family that children make their first experiences concerning security or distress, that first lessons are learnt regarding community life and peaceful or violent conflict management.

Mothers must become aware that they represent a powerful force to fight the multiples influences undermining society. The Public authorities must recognize them as such and consider them as stakeholders.

Through the activities of its member associations and in its advocacy work, MMM shows how mothers can take action in society for more social justice, for the protection of human rights and the implementation of practical solutions: whether against discrimination and exclusion, or for equal rights in education, access to property (land in particular), heritage, access to credit and other resources.



Governments cannot keep up with the rapid technological and economical changes of society, and find it harder and harder to bring appropriate solutions to the issues that arise from these changes.

Sustainable Peace will not be achieved without the equal implication of women in society. Like any other actors of civil society, mothers must gain self-confidence and in their own skills, to fulfil their responsibilities and contribute to the development of a healthier and safer society for themselves and their children.

At the United Nations

Engaging fathers against violence through a better redistribution of care work

During a panel of the Human Rights Council on the role of men in the fight against violence against women in June 2017, MMM affirmed that a better redistribution of unpaid care work within the home contributes to reduce this violence. Involving fathers and sharing domestic work and family responsibilities is not only beneficial for mothers, but also transformative for children and fathers themselves.



© Jean-Marc Ferré

“There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”

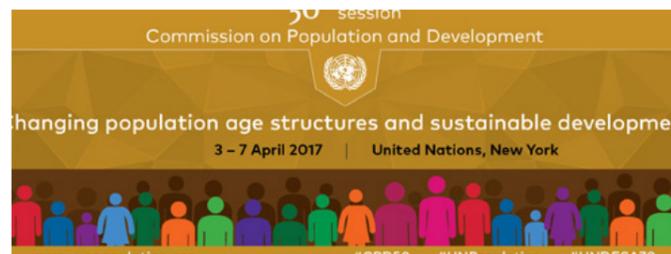
Preamble, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by UN members States in September 2015.

Mothers and the 2030 development agenda – The condition for sustaining Peace

The written statement made by MMM for the annual ministerial review meeting of ECOSOC calls for recognizing mothers as key actors in the implementation of the 2030 development agenda and its 17 Sustainable Goals. Mothers are real vectors of transformation; provided they are educated and supported in their various roles as mothers (educators, caregivers, organizers, etc.), citizens and professionals.

Mothers are also at the heart of demographic change, including the decline of fertility in developed countries, or the ageing of the population around the world.

This was highlighted by MMM in its statement to the 2017 UN Commission on Population Development. Only an intergenerational perspective will mitigate its effects and contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development agenda: this means investing in maternal health and early childhood development, eradicating poverty, particularly affecting children, supporting policies for parents and carers, etc.



From the Right to Peace to a Culture of Peace

MMM is among the NGOs that have been supporting the recognition of a Right to Peace in recent years. The UN General Assembly finally adopted a declaration enshrining this right in 2016, although some countries disputed it. The challenge is now to make this right become a reality; and mothers are best placed to promote a culture of peace.

“The declaration of the right to peace is a step in the right direction, but it is not an end. We must now take steps to implement the right to peace, first of all by developing a culture of peace and non-violence at all levels.”

Oral statement supported by MMM and 20 other NGOs on the occasion of the 34th Human Rights Council

Mothers and the fight against violent extremism

No one is safe from being confronted, in one way or another, to violent extremism in his or her closest environment, in particular within one's own family. The malaise of a teenager, which is manifested by signs that are similar whatever the cause (harassment, radicalization, drugs, sexual abuse, etc.), usually provides the first clue.

Valérie Bichelmeier, representative of MMM at the UN in Geneva, speaking at the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council



Mothers often have unique access to their children, and they are well placed to detect these signs of malaise, something no government can do.

At the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, an oral statement by MMM underscored the crucial role that mothers can play in preventing radicalization and countering violent extremism - provided they are empowered to do it, recognized and trained.

Promoting Peace – The crucial role of Early Childhood Development

Early childhood development also carries high potential to break the cycle of extreme poverty, to promote peace and build safer and healthier societies. Children growing up in a healthy and violence-free family, which will allow them to reach their potential and hold their place in society, are the basis for sustainable peace. It is therefore vital to support mothers, fathers and other caregivers in their primary role as educators. This was MMM's message at the Human Rights Council in June 2017.

“Scientific evidence in the field of early childhood development has clearly demonstrated that early intervention can lead to lasting change in intergenerational relationships. The young child must be the focus, the foundation from which the cycle of violence can be broken, on which the promotion of peaceful societies can be established.”

“Ecology of Peace” in “Pathways to Peace: The Transformative Power of Children and Families”
J. F. Leckman, C. Panter-Brick, and R. Salah, 2014



Mothers must be able to pass on their nationality to their children

For the World children's day in November 2017, Make Mothers Matter urged the governments of 22 countries to change their law in order to ensure equality for mothers regarding birth registration and the capacity to pass their nationality to their children. MMM took the example of the Iraq case; more than 130'000 stateless people dwell there, including the many children born of Iraqi women and non-national fathers. Deprived of identity, these children have no existence and cannot access health services, education etc. MMM had already worked on this issue with MMM Lebanon.

At the European Union

Investing in mothers

Directly linked to the 2030 Development Agenda, the European Development Days organized in June 2017 by the European Commission brought together 8'000 people. This event illustrated Europe's commitment to sustainable development. It focused on investment in all its forms: the planet, people, prosperity, peace and partnership. In the discussions, Make Mothers Matter highlighted the potential of mothers to address challenges such as education, health and peace, and thus contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

At the UNESCO

From promoting to building Peace – The role of mothers

Sara von Moos represented MMM at the Sixth International Forum of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, which was held in Mexico in November 2016, on the theme "From promoting to building peace with NGOs". She carried a message from Maggy Barankitse on the role of mothers in peacebuilding.

Maggy Barankitse, "the angel of Burundi", raised thousands of children, orphaned during the 1993 and 1994 massacres. She managed to save 20'000 of them through her *Maison Shalom* network, which earned her many international awards. Through her support to MMM and her appeal to UNESCO and other nations to integrate mothers in peacebuilding, she gave a voice to those who struggle daily to ensure peace for future generations.

"Becoming a mother implies all at once, pain, joy and a mission. It is a joy to expand this great human family, when one thinks of these privileged moments where a child's smile simply makes you want to laugh, with no reason. Motherhood is a mission weaved with years of toil and on-going studies at the school of life. This is perhaps why mothers should be called to serve beyond the immediate environment of their families [...]"

The reason is simple. If we want a world with more love, tolerance, perseverance for peace and the resolution of conflicts, a world where women would represent 50% of the executive, judicial and parliamentary instances, 50% States representatives at the United Nations and at the African Union... then mothers are best placed to reach these objectives. Indeed, their lives provide mothers with the best Curriculum Vitae. Their children are the hardest government to contend with. Their families are the most difficult people to convince, to negotiate with, that they will always have to compromise with. Always! It is inherent to our nature as women and to our mission as mothers [...]"

If we want to build a new peace-loving generation capable of renunciation in this world of conflicts, the role of mothers is vital."

Maggy Barankitse – extracts from her message, voiced by MMM.





Education is at the heart of the mandate of UNESCO, which is in charge of SDG

4: Ensure equitable, inclusive and quality education for all, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning

Education

Make Mothers Matter considers that education is a crosscutting and fundamental activity that underpins the work of mothers in all fields, including the economy, health and peace, its 3 main areas of focus. UNESCO is responsible for leading and coordinating *Education 2030* as part of the 2030 development agenda. This is why MMM regularly reminds UNESCO and Member States of the vital role of mothers and families in education, especially in early childhood education and care. Parents must be given the means to educate future generations.

At the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000, the international community recognized the central role of civil society in achieving the objectives of *Education for All* (EFA). Since then, the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 participates in the implementation of SDG 4: taken into account in UNESCO's Regular Program, this allows MMM to follow the evolution of its work and to make recommendations.



© UN Photo/Harandane Dicko Mali 2017.jpg



Strengthening the cooperation links between formal and informal education

The education of children is a major lever for development and the eradication of poverty. As part of the recommendations made for the 2017 World Education Forum in Siem Reap (Cambodia), MMM called for inclusive, open and participatory dialogue at all levels, including with families. Such consultation involves promoting participatory programs for parents as educators, and strengthening the links between formal and informal education. MMM reiterated that on the ground, the recognition of the role of parents remains a challenge; informal and inclusive education, especially as provided by mothers throughout their lives in their communities, needs to be taken into account.

Parental education: a major challenge for the implementation of SDG 4 on education.

Global trends show that more than half of young children risk being deprived of quality parental support. It is urgent to analyse the reasons why some parents do not assume their parental responsibilities in education, or are unable to do so. Parental education and support programs exist; concerted efforts are needed to help parents play their role. This was the message of MMM in its intervention on the importance of parental education to the Commission on Education of the 39th General Conference of UNESCO in November 2017.

"Participation must start by the implication of families and communities in order to reinforce transparency and ensure good governance in the administration of Education"

Incheon Declaration adopted by UNESCO and Member States in 2015 (S79)

They make peace on a daily basis - Let's give them a voice!

Under the aegis of MMM and as part of our activities to promote peace, a book on Mothers for Peace is currently in preparation. This book portrays mothers from different cultures and countries, who found themselves in situations of conflict and/or violence, and decided to act to preserve or rebuild peace - within their family, in society or at country level. Pauline Ambrogi is the author of this book and Cécile de Laage, the photographer reporter.

Pauline Ambrogi interviewing a mother in Columbia



Zooming on National MMM organisations

Promoting integration

MMM England has been pursuing contacts with associations working to defuse tensions in communities and to help young people better integrate. Among these, Lotus Life helps young Muslim women develop their own potential to foster a better integration, while at the same time, harmoniously assuming their identity. Likewise, the Active Change Foundation is committed to helping young girls and boys and communities by providing professional training and support to acquire leadership skills.

A “Woman of peace” honoured by MMM Belgium

Every other year, the **1325 Platform**, created by the Vrouwenraad and the Franco-phone Council of Belgian Women, distinguishes women who, throughout their lives in Belgium or abroad, have worked for peace and the promotion of women’s rights around the world. In 2016, **MMM Belgium** submitted the candidacy of Françoise Bosteels, a missionary and nurse who has worked in India in rural areas for more than 40 years. She has been very involved in preventive health education programs for lepers, and also in empowering women in precarious situations. Today, as an artist, she continues to raise awareness on the values of peace and the role of women. Françoise Bosteels was elected “Woman of peace” and MMM Belgium represented her at an official celebration in the Belgian Senate in December 2016.

Celebration of the Women of Peace at the Belgian Senate



In this same role of representation, Laurence Vanden Abeele was also invited to the Royal Palace on March 8, 2017 with all the “Women of Peace” of 2014 and 2016. It was the occasion of rich encounters with women carrying magnificent projects. Several of them were contacted for the book project “Mothers for Peace”.

MMM Belgium supports refugee integration

Upon request of the European Parents Association, MMM Belgium participated in the project “Parent Help” to facilitate the integration of refugee families in Belgium. The project involved every European country with asylum seekers, and it will be presented in 2018.

In collaboration with the European delegation, two trainees from MMM Belgium have produced a booklet to help refugee families, providing very concrete answers to the practical questions that arise when they arrive, particularly on health, children schooling and administration.



The NGO Committee of the Family in Vienna

In Vienna, MMM regularly contributes to the quarterly bulletin of the NGO Committee on the Family, with Irina Palffy representing our organisation. These bulletins are the perfect occasion to periodically share information on MMM activities and its main statements regarding all topics that relate to the family.



PROSPECTS FOR 2018

MMM intends to continue its advocacy, awareness raising and follow-up work at every level on the topics and projects presented in this report. At the same time, MMM will adjust its work to the events, agendas and the topics that will be discussed by the various institutions.

Finally, in collaboration with CARE International Morocco, MMM is organizing an international conference, on the theme Mothers4Peace, to be held in May 2018 in Casablanca. Through practical examples of action, the conference will show how mothers are at the heart of change for a culture of peace, whether at family, community, national or international levels.

The MMM Network in action

MMM SUPPORTS THE ACTIVITIES OF ITS MEMBERS

UNESCO is the only UN agency that has created National Commissions with its member states as direct links between them and civil society. There are currently 198 National Commissions, which form a truly worldwide family. Established by their respective governments, National Commissions operate on a permanent basis, for the purpose of linking the work of UNESCO with that of national governmental and non-governmental bodies competent in issues such as education, sciences, culture and communication.

The exemplary partnership established in 2014 with the MMM member association, Aide à la Jeunesse Africaine Défavorisée - AJAD, based in the Ivory Coast - operates in this framework. It was continued in 2016 and 2017 under the responsibility of Gabrielle de Milleville, main MMM representative to UNESCO

The various on-going projects showcase how MMM can help its members for logistics organization, communication, fundraising and monitoring.



Gabrielle de Milleville, MMM representative to UNESCO with Bolly Kouassi (AJAD) et Her Excellency Mrs Denise HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY, Ambassador of the Ivory Coast to UNESCO



Ceremony of birth certificate awards to the children of the Songon district

101 children receive their birth certificates and become Ivory Coast Nationals

In partnership with MMM, AJAD initiated the process, addressing both the population and the legal authorities in order to establish substitute birth certificates for some hundred children living in Songon, a District Administration office and suburban area of Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. The ceremony took place on 20th October 2016.

101 children were thus given an official identity. Being no longer stateless, they can benefit from State services and protection. Enrolled in school from September 2016, they will be able to access further training to get qualified jobs and cater to the needs of their families. Moreover, many destitute and isolated mothers will benefit from their children's training and rise out of poverty. Indeed, when women are abandoned, they are left without any resources, especially when the break-up occurs in a non-marital situation.

The project also plans to implement a system to follow up births in Songon and incite parents to register their children before the legal deadline. AJAD volunteers intend to work with midwives and the community leaders to this end.

Education project addressing young mothers of the Ivory Coast: reproductive health, health and health protection of young children

This MMM project was prepared by AJAD in 2016. Financed by UNESCO and supported by UNESCO's national commissions of the Ivory Coast and France, it made possible the organization of two conferences and two training seminars in 2017. The beneficiaries were the 49,400 inhabitants of Songon, principally mothers, young girls and children. Its global objective was to give mothers the tools and training to:

Training seminar organized by AJAD



- Prevent malnutrition in pregnant adolescents and improve the nutrition of young children
- Stamp out harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation
- Stress the importance of hygiene, nutrition and early awareness of children
- Improve the balance between school life and family responsibility for adolescent mothers.

An initial conference on *Education on reproductive health and the fight against early pregnancies* took place in January 2017 and brought together more than 300 women and young girls. A training of instructors for the Health and Protection of young pregnant girls followed on 30 March and 1 April. The 6 people trained - 3 mentors and 3 nurses - are now responsible for informing and helping the population to reduce the number of early pregnancies as well as taking care of very young mothers. It is essential that they can get an education, thus securing their future and that of their children.

The second conference took place in June 2017 and focussed on *“Education for the development and protection of young children”*. It ended in August with a training seminar on the health and development of children for 44 mothers who will work in pairs in 22 villages. They were trained to pass on their knowledge of hygiene, nutrition and child development. They will also be expected to make parents aware of the importance young children’s schooling and to help them registering births, etc.

Continuation of the project Training of hydrology technicians in Ivory Coast

This project prepared in 2016 was carried out in close collaboration with AJAD and in partnership with *the Centre Catholique International de Coopération avec l’UNESCO* (CCIC) and the Government of Ivory Coast. It also had the support of the UNESCO national commissions of Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and France.

RONUCI, the NGO network in the Ivory Coast directed by AJAD, benefited from the support of CCIC and UNESCO for the training of 6 trainees, including 3 women, in February and March 2017 at the *Institut International d’Ingénierie de l’Eau et de l’Environnement (2iE)* in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. The title was “The training of water technicians belonging to local NGOs, responsible for access to water projects and the management of water in villages and towns”.

This training was intended to reinforce the knowledge and competence of trainees relating to the management of water issues within communities, the maintenance of existing water installations and the establishment of new drinking water points. This should reduce the number of daily trips women must take to fetch water.



Bolly Kouassy and mothers

In September 2017, the project was followed up with the Regional Council of the Belier district, to improve the operating of water centers, and to raise awareness among local people. This was done by putting into place management committees led by mothers, and by training local repairers.

This project is specifically aimed at empowering mothers. In addition to their responsibilities in the management of water committees, they will be trained to pass on their new skills to local families. Easier access to water will enable them to have more time to work, and become financially independent.

Scholarships for the secondary schooling of young girls in Madagascar

Thanks to the intervention and help of Valérie Bichelmeier in Geneva, a scholarship funding application prepared by Otitsara (Madagascar) was chosen in 2017 by the UN Women’s Guild in Geneva. These grants will allow some ten or so young girls to continue their secondary schooling for four years. An educated (future) mother means an educated family and healthier children.

Students of the Tantely College, which welcomes the scholarship holders



Laurence Bosteels-Vanden Abeele,
MMM Belgium President



MMM Belgium

Mothers' workshops

MMM Belgium continues to develop its workshops "Being a mother, let's talk" to help mothers share experiences and useful educational tips. 4,000 Euros from King Baudoin's Fund for Poverty contributed to the cost of these workshops. Its network of experienced and motivated facilitators is expanding. When trained in March 2016 by Jocelyne Le Pivain of MMM France, they all expressed a willingness to help conduct these workshops

Strengthening MMM Belgium's visibility and promoting the role of mothers

The role of the mother within the family and in educating children remains the focus of all MMM Belgium actions. This focus has been detailed in speeches and interventions at various conferences and events (Entrepreneur Moms, Job Day at the University of Louvain, etc.), and communicated with the press and social media.

MMM Belgium follows several blogger-mothers and regularly contributes to their blogs. This method is a good way of understanding the "day-to-day" lives of Belgian mothers, and enables MMM to tailor its advocacy work to their needs.

Fundraising

To finance its projects both in 2016 and 2017, MMM Belgium also took part in "Music for Life", a solidarity event organized by the Dutch-speaking radio Studio Brussels benefiting numerous associations.

And in the beginning of 2017, an invitation co-organized with another association to a theatre play called Tossi brought in 8,000€ for the funding of MMM Belgium projects.

Presenting MMM Belgium activities to MMM England

In March 2017, Anne Michelle de Mathelin, representing MMM Belgium, spoke at a conference organized by MMM England to share its experience as an "national MMM organization" and to encourage the launch of MMM England in the London area.



The MMM Belgium team in action
for "Music for Life"



MMM Belgium and la Ferme du Monceau
at the Tossi show

MMM England

In March 2017, a conference took place in London, organized by Jill Donnelly to raise awareness about Make Mothers Matter amongst mothers of various origins, and to launch MMM England in the London area. The main purpose of this informal gathering was to provide a space for exchanges between participants and organizers. Many associations took part, including member-associations of MMM in the United Kingdom.

MMM's main objectives were outlined at this meeting as well as mothers' activities regarding the economy, health and peace. The central question was how MMM England could promote the role of mothers in the United Kingdom, as well as how to develop its actions and visibility. There were exciting exchanges: many young mothers present were extremely receptive to the MMM message.

With members and partners, many proposals were outlined for future actions ... Unfortunately, MMM England cannot fund such projects and pay people who would implement them. This situation demonstrates some of the issues facing MMM and MMM national organizations. Without fundraising, it will be difficult to finance staff needed for MMM's expansion.



In London,
Valérie Bichelmeier and
Marie-Liesse Mandula, with
Marie Peacock and
Anne Fennel of Mothers at
Home Matter.

MMM France

MMM Mothers' Workshops: bringing out the "tricks of the trade"

These workshops, designed by MMM France, are based on a positive facilitating model : in a structured discussion targeting a specific theme, mothers share what they have found really works to improve the quality of everyday life in the family. The facilitator guides the discussion to bring out "tricks of the trade" which can be then tested by each mother. Through this workshop, participants can recognize their own skills, the importance of their role as mothers, and gain from the know-how and experience of the others...

MMM France believes that "being a parent" is "a fantastic job" but must not be done alone. Exchanging with other mothers and parents, encouraging self-confidence to face daily challenges, and thus overcoming difficulties are the purposes of these workshops.

MMM Mothers' Workshops : change is underway

The course about “Being a mother, let's talk ” is progressively giving way to thematic workshops. They are often offered in the activity framework of other associations or municipalities, in a shorter format than the traditional workshops. Child-care facilities are provided to ensure that the participants are able to come. Most of them are multicultural: one aim is to contribute to the integration of mothers whose mother tongue is not French.

These workshops cover a wide range of subjects:

- Issues dealing with child education: emotions, anger, need for affection and tenderness, joy, the arrival of a new baby, mother/baby separation, siblings, empowerment of children, money etc.
- Workshops linked to schooling: learning how to read, how to manage homework and after-school time, adopting “good” habits, entering secondary school, school counseling...

MMM France held facilitator training sessions in Belgium (Brussels), and in France (Paris and Versailles)



To help mothers who cannot to commit to a 2 or 3-day training, MMM France is thinking of offering more flexible options:

- Training sessions of one-day modules, adaptable on request.
- Specific trainings focusing on brief exchanges, such as the ones held at MMM France dinners

Dinner meetings

MMM France dinners continue to provide mothers and fathers “coming from here and elsewhere”, a space for friendly exchanges inspired by the MMM workshop techniques. The issues generally relate to parenthood, education and society, and



MMM dinner in Argenteuil, a Paris suburban area

are relevant to MMM's axes: economy, health and peace. There always is a keynote presentation to add value to the discussions.

The dinners, in Paris or Argenteuil, usually gather about 60 mothers and fathers.

In 2016, the themes were:

- “How to make our children eager to learn, and to open up to culture”
- “Healthy, good and inexpensive eating in the family“

In 2017, dinners focused on :

- “How to deal with nerves... and not to break down altogether!”
- “Living with differences and building bridges between neighborhoods with different cultural backgrounds”. That dinner was organized with la Maison pour Tous and the municipality of Deuil La Barre near Paris.

These dinner events allow forging partnerships with other associations and municipalities. Local politicians attend them more regularly now, as they understand the benefits of supporting parenthood and improving social peace. It is what these dinners do, by encouraging bonds between parents of varied social and cultural backgrounds.

The “tricks of the trade” exchanged by parents are very much based on common sense. They are available on MMM France's website and can be relevant to most families.

Moms' elevenses

Discussions between mothers occurred once a month at a bookshop in Versailles with prevailing questions such as : How to deal with punishments ? How to set boundaries? How to talk about money with our children? What can one tell a child ?





MMM Lebanon

MMM Lebanon brings together members of associations from different parts of the country, represented by their presidents or senior officials. These associations and MMM pursue similar goals: improving the status of women and children, and advocating legislation to recognize the right to gender equality.

MMM Lebanon members represent the country's diversity: coming from all regions and communities, they seek to achieve a model of togetherness and tolerance



Nada Gaspard from MMM Lebanon at the conference Mothers and Health - March 2016 in Brussels

Organizations represented within MMM Lebanon

- Council of Lebanese Women, an umbrella NGO of more than 170 NGOs from all over Lebanon*
- Association of Parents with Disabled Children*
- Amnesty International, Lebanon*
- Association of Ladies of Charity Lebanon*
- Committee of Lebanese Mothers*
- Lebanese Ecological Movement*
- Foyer Saint Simon (Saint Simon Centre)*
- Al-Sadr Association*
- Civil Association for the Safeguarding of Lebanese Children*
- Women's Auxiliary, Haigazian University*
- YWCA Lebanon*
- Foyer de la Providence (Centre of the Providence)*
- Association of Lebanese University Women*

Together with these organizations, MMM Lebanon co-organizes activities and events to help extend their network and increase their influence within their respective communities. The goal is to reduce discrimination and violence towards women and their children. MMM Lebanon members meet once a month to coordinate their activities.

Advocacy

MMM Lebanon encourages leaders and other members of society to recognize the contribution of mothers in social and economic development and to further take into consideration their fundamental role towards building or protecting peace. Its actions always reflect the role and spirit of MMM.



MMM Lebanon calls on leaders to adapt laws and regulations to include the following objectives:

- Extend maternity leave to three months
- Fight the poverty of mothers
- Lower the voting age from 21 to 18
- Insist on a quota of women in government, parliament, local government, etc
- Establish a law forbidding marriage for girls under 16
- Improve the ecological and environmental situation in Lebanon.

The situation of Lebanon

Families are severely impacted by political instability, economic crisis and armed conflict in Lebanon and its neighboring countries. This difficult situation affects particularly the mothers and their children. Though it is a small country of 4 million people with hardly any natural resources, Lebanon has welcomed over 1 million Syrian refugees, as well as thousands of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. In addition to the basic necessities, which need to be addressed, Lebanon focuses on educating children with appropriate school programs.

Like anywhere else, Lebanese mothers face the challenge of reconciling family and work. Lebanon's child care system being poorly developed, one of the participating organizations of MMM Lebanon has set up a free child daycare center to enable women of modest means to earn a living.

Events organized by MMM Lebanon

In April 2016 a conference was organized on "The impact of genetic manipulations on families today". The keynote speaker was Mrs Georgette Mordovanaki-Karam, Doctor of ultra-structural cytology (University of Paris VI), and collaborating researcher with the Biotech Office of UNESCO relating to genetic manipulations. The conference was very well attended, and included a number of high-level officials (ministers and politicians), NGO representatives, law professionals and doctors. The conference examined the complex situations, which can result from genetic manipulations, both from a legal and a family standpoint. This event was well covered by the media (both television and the press).

In May 2017, MMM Lebanon organized a seminar at UNESCO's office in Beirut "A new start for the third age", under the patronage of Lebanon's Ministry of Health. Indeed, considering the economic, political and social situation in the country, family structures are experiencing radical changes.

Inter-generational solidarity is suffering badly from the departure from the country of young people looking for better opportunities.

Aged mothers find themselves alone, faced with illness, depression and poverty. The seminar debated the means to implement and improve their living conditions, including a law to guarantee the Rights of older people to have a dignified life. This is one of the claims of MMM Lebanon.



Seminar " a new start for the third age in Beirut.

The MMM European delegation celebrates its 15th Birthday !



In Brussels on 17th December 2017

MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS: NEW MEMBERS IN 2016 AND 2017

The AWAJ Foundation - Bangladesh

The Awaj Foundation, a women-headed organization, defends the rights of workers in the readymade garment (RMG) sector, in which women account for 85% of the workers. Awaj means "voice" in Bangla, and fosters a positive and cooperative approach: the foundation believes that factory work "can empower women by giving them more choices and opportunities".

Moreover, it denounces dangerous working practices and voices the needs for fairer treatments and more equal opportunities. Awaj also works to promote a safe and friendly environment, without gender discrimination or violence, where workers can breastfeed and enjoy decent working conditions, equality in health care, education, maternity and child care facilities.

Ultimately, Awaj works toward the financial and leadership empowerment of women workers. The foundation realises that meeting global challenges of work and family life reconciliation, maternal health and education are vital to improve the situation of society on the whole. "Our main motivation is to create a safe working environment for mothers, help them be healthy and have healthy children, thus contributing to the general health of families and of the nation for a brighter future."

In becoming an MMM member, Awaj hopes to reinforce its national network and contribute to an international network, thus better supporting working mothers. MMM and Awaj can both benefit from their mutual expertise.



<https://www.facebook.com/awajfoundation.org/>



Maternity Action - United Kingdom

Maternity Action organizes campaigns to better protect the rights of pregnant women, new mothers and their families, and to promote their health and wellbeing.

Regular updated online information and telephone advice on maternity rights in employment, maternity benefits, breastfeeding rights and access to services for vulnerable migrant women is delivered: over 2,500 advice calls are answered and the online information sheets are viewed by parents 600,000 times per year. Expertise is also available for companies employing pregnant women and young parents.

Maternity Action intends to change attitudes and policies; its work is based on rigorous research. There is a track record of successful campaigns raising awareness of the rights of pregnant women, young children and their families.

Training and consultancy is offered for community workers, clinicians and others working with vulnerable women and their families, providing them with any information needed and counselling. Research focuses on the experiences of vulnerable women, babies and families. Maternity Action works hand-to-hand with the people they want to help. They also work closely with service providers, inciting them to identify ways to improve the service they provide.



<https://www.maternityaction.org.uk>

Memisa - Belgium / Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Benin, India & Mauritania



Memisa is a Belgian medical non-governmental organization working in the field of aid development and cooperation. It works to promote access to health care for all, especially for the most vulnerable. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Benin and Burundi, Memisa supports 33 health districts, covering more than five million inhabitants. It is also active in Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, India and Mauritania.

Memisa offers professional support for a sustainable development in the health system in conjunction with local civilian partners.

In collaboration with its partners, Memisa:

- Improves the quality of care (training, medical equipment, infrastructure, medicines, etc.)
- Puts in place various systems to make care more affordable (insurances, solidarity funds, flat-rate payments), physically more accessible (emergency transportation systems: motorcycle ambulances, boat ambulances etc.) for the most deprived populations
- Consolidates the organization of the health system (health centers, hospitals, referral systems).

In the framework of its intervention policy, Memisa has made addressing maternal and infant mortality its top priority. Strengthened by field experience, the organization does not hesitate to campaign against the poor birthing conditions that women are often subjected to, and calls for international solidarity.

In joining the MMM network, Memisa hopes to continue an already on-going and successful collaboration with MMM, push its campaigns and messages at European and international level, boost a dynamic of meetings, exchanges and expertise which will be most useful both for the enlargement of Memisa's network and that of MMM.



<http://www.memisa.be/fr>



Asodamas – Colombia

This Colombian association supports and develops the work of social management in a country faced with a post-conflict situation. The wives of the running governors and mayors (“first ladies”), contribute to its mission, hence the name, Asodamas. Some 15 centers, called “Casa social de la mujer” have already been built in various provinces and Asodamas hopes to build another five before 2020. These houses enable vulnerable women (especially those who have been victims of violence, or isolated mothers) to reconstruct themselves after the war, to know more about their Rights, to develop income-generating activities and social links. By improving the living conditions of vulnerable women, Asodamas is working for the reconstruction of Colombia. Its projects also aim to promote the development of communities throughout the country.

Asodamas is in the process of creating an Observatory of Women to collect reliable data on the social predicament of women, to analyze the impact of their activity on society, to carry out quantitative research and develop social tools in order to fight the difficulties faced by the Colombian women more effectively.

By joining the MMM Network, Asodamas hopes that MMM will contribute to the development and the dissemination of the findings and data of the Observatory to other organizations and at international conferences. Asodamas also hopes to be able to benefit from the MMM network for exchanging and pooling the practices developed by mothers, to promote and sustain peace in their homes and communities.

<http://asodamasdecolombia.org/>

MMM in Colombia

One of the main objectives of the conference “Gestión social, Empredimiento y Paz” (Social, Entrepreneurial and Peace Management) organized by Asodamas in Bogota in November 2017 was to bring together more than 1,000 women from all parts of Colombia to explain their roles as women and mothers. Along with participants involved in peacebuilding in Colombia, and organizations from other countries, MMM spoke about “Mothers, pillars of social reconstruction and peacebuilders”.

This trip also enabled Pauline Ambrogi and Cécile de Laage to meet Asodamas members and to visit some of their achievements, especially the “casa social de la mujer”. Relating to the book project “Mothers for Peace”, they also heard the testimonials of mothers who have been victims of conflict and are now committed to peace.



A visit in Colombia



Empowerment of women: the sale of handicrafts at the side of the Asodamas conference



The inauguration of the Casa Social de la Mujer in Tacoma



Dining with the mayor of Cogua and his wife



The Memorial Centre in Bogota

MMM's institutional development

Governance

MMM teams meet very regularly, either in physical meetings once or twice a year or via Skype meetings. The Operational Team seeks advice from the Board of Governors and/or the MMM Officers when necessary. In 2016-2017, the Board met 5 times (including two physical meetings), and the Officers met 20 times.

Half of the Board was renewed during the Annual General Meeting on 8th March 2016.

These are MMM's main priorities for the coming years :

- Strengthening the MMM network of international and national members and partners
- Improving external and internal communications
- Fundraising
- Strengthening the MMM teams



In 2016, the new Board

MAKE MOTHERS MATTER BOARD 2016-2018

OFFICERS

President: **Anne Claire de Liedekerke** (Belgium)
 Vice-Presidents: **Jill Donnelly** (UK)
 Nectar Nasr (Lebanon)
 Secretary General: **Marie-Liesse Mandula** (France)
 Deputy Secretary General: **Florence Rentler** (France)
 Treasurer: **Françoise Blin** (France)
Valérie Bichelmeier, President of the UN Delegation ONU (Switzerland)
Ilhame Boirie, President of MMM France
 (replacing **Marie-Laure Des Brosses**)

OTHER MEMBERS

Aliette Abraham, President of Otitsara (Madagascar)
Philip Biswas, Director and Founder of the Rural Reconstruction Foundation - RRF (Bangladesh)
Nicole Deigna, President of ONG Repères (Ivory Coast)
Alain Englebert, President of 'En Avant les Enfants' - EALE (Belgium/Democratic Republic of Congo)
Bolly Kouassi, President of AJAD (Ivory Coast)
Gabrielle de Milleville, MMM representative at the UNESCO (France)
Latifa Mayou, President of the Cameroonian Movement of Mothers (Cameroon)
Sophie Pelissié du Rausas, President of 'Enfance sans Drogue' (France)
Laurence Vanden Abeele, President of MMM Belgium
Laetitia Wolkonsky, MMM European Delegation representative (Belgium)

The MMM Teams

The International General Secretariat: the pivot of MMM work

Four volunteers run the MMM General Secretariat in Paris. This Operational Team ensures the on-going administrative management of the association, particularly:

- The organisation and preparation of MMM statutory meetings
- The leadership and coordination of the MMM network
- The co-ordination of MMM internal and external communications
- The administrative work required by MMM for its work representing mothers at international institutions and organisations
- The support required for member associations to realise the objectives set by the Board
- The management and update of the MMM website
- The editing, promotion and diffusion of MMM products and publications.



The general secretariat in Paris - from left to right Françoise Blin, Cécile de Laage, Florence Rentler and Marie-Liesse Mandula



The European Delegation in Brussel – from left to right: Flavie Guérin, Véronique de Vaumas, Zeena Almaiahi, Anne-Claire de Liedekerke (President of MMM), Laetitia Wolkonsky, Johanna Schima, Anne-Michelle de Mathelin, Olalla Michelena, Sophie Rousseau

The UN Delegation in Geneva: Valerie Bichelmeier & Karen Thorsen (since 2016)



The UN Delegation in New York: Laurence Stip and Caroline le Gloan since 2016



The UNESCO team in Paris: Gabrielle de Milleville and Pauline Ambrogi



The UN Delegation in Vienna: Irina Palffy

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Make Mothers Matter

In 2016, Make Mothers Matter's income was 29,299 € of which:

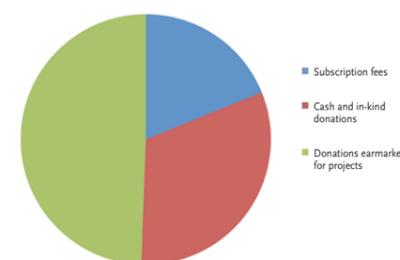
- A total of 14,800 € donations earmarked for projects: the substitute birth certificates for children of Ivory Coast (5,300 €), and a UNESCO payment for the MMM/AJAD training of mothers (9,500 €).
- 14,499 € of own income: memberships (3,870 €), cash and in-kind donations (10,328 €), financial products (301 €).

Total expenses were of 31 971 € of which:

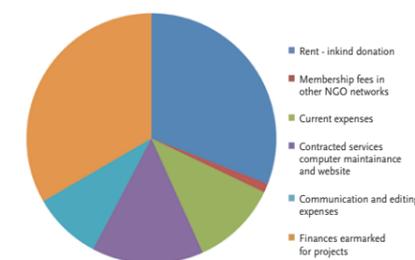
- 21,308 €, covering rent and maintenance of office premises (9,888 €), current expenses (3,575 €), subscription fees to other NGO networks (362 €), communication and publications (2,852 €), contracted services for computer maintenance and a first instalment for a new website (4,631 €).
- 10,663 € earmarked for projects: the substitute birth certificates for children of Ivory Coast (5,300 €), and a first payment for the MMM/AJAD project (5,363 €).

The financial statement is encouraging in a way. Financial donations have increased, in line with the completed or on going projects, which are described in the report. These are important sources of stimulation for MMM. However, the balance remains negative (2,672 €).

2016 REVENUE



2016 EXPENSES



In 2017, the total income was 16,445 € of which: memberships (3,055 €), financial donations (5,132 €), in-kind donations (8,000 €) and other income (257 €).

Total expenses were of 26,475 € of which: premises and rental costs (9,915 €), contracted services for the website and computer maintenance (6,315 €), computer equipment (1,441 €), balance of the UNESCO grant for the AJAD/MMM training of mothers (4,048 €), organisation of the panel on Early Childhood Development in New York (1,212 €), travel expenses (1,930 €), communication expenses (1,053 €), administrative expenses and other costs (560 €).

The balance for 2017 is very negative (-10,030 €).

Like the previous years the headquarters' current expenses are reduced to the very minimum. However, MMM had to face important expenses for the redesign of its website and a computing update. Without the in-kind donation of the premises, which is estimated 8,000€, surviving would be difficult.

It is an absolute priority to identify and find sustainable funding resources for the functioning of MMM. The very committed and run-on work of a few volunteers is no longer suited to our NGO.

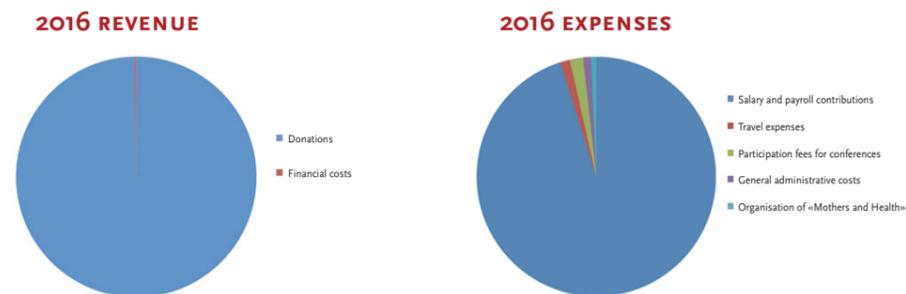


The MMM European Delegation

Through its legal identity as a Belgian asbl 'MMM Europe', the MMM European Delegation is funded independently from MMM. The issues, which are discussed in the European Institutions, are at the heart of MMM concerns, and we need a permanent expert; this is why the only salaried person in MMM is the General Secretary of the European Delegation.

In 2016, its global income was 30,657 € mostly from donations (30,580 €), and the remaining 77 € from the interests on a saving account. The Delegation managed to close its budget thanks to the carry forward of the previous fiscal years (2014-2015).

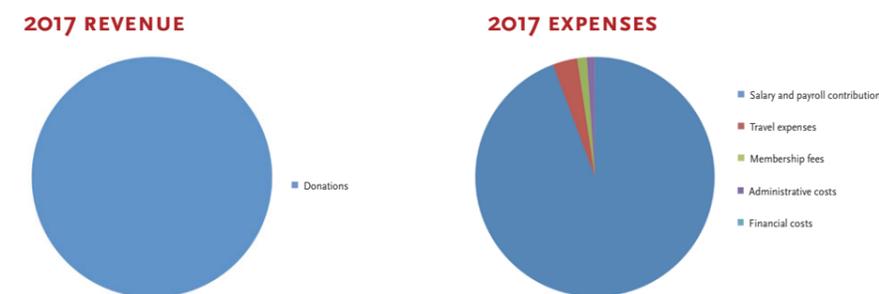
In 2016, its expenses were 65,400 € of which: salary and payroll contributions (62,297 €), travel expenses (859 €), participation fees for conferences and various subscription fees (1,187 €), general administrative costs (692 €), and organisation of the conference, "Mothers and Health" (465 €).



In 2017, the European Delegation received a donation of 15,000 €. The budget was closed, including the payment of a salary, thanks to the carry forward of previous fiscal years.

In 2017, total expenses were 56,301€ of which: salary et payroll contributions (53,063 €), travel expenses (1,866 €), subscription fees, to the Social Platform mainly (737 €), administrative costs (587 €), bank charges (24 €).

The European Delegation is part of several consortia which have asked for EU funding and we hope that we will win one research project. We nevertheless absolutely need to find other sources of funding in order to guarantee additional paid staff.



OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

For 70 years, MMM has always relied exclusively on volunteers whose work and commitment match those of professionals. But volunteers are more and more difficult to recruit and to replace when they leave.

This is why MMM would like to increase the number of paid staff, as securing positions with a salary would allow us to engage in long-term activities with confidence.

To this end, one of the MMM priorities for the near future is to identify new funding resources.

MMM is looking for partnerships with financial partners: institutions, especially the European Union, foundations and companies.

MMM also intends to develop support and collaborations for the funding of grass-root projects carried by member associations; this is globally a more promising perspective than raising funds for advocacy.

THE MMM NETWORK AROUND THE WORLD

AFRICA

Cameroon

Femmes et Enfants en Détresse (FED)
Mouvement Camerounais des Mères (MCM)

Democratic Republic of Congo

Association Congolaise d'Appui et de Développement Communautaire (ACADEC)
En Avant les enfants (EALE)

Ivory Coast

Association d'Aide à la Jeunesse Défavorisée (AJAD)
ONG Repères

Madagascar

Otitsara

Mali

MMM Mali

Mauritius

Mouvement d'Aide à la Maternité (MAM)

Nigeria

Women Initiative for Peace and Good Governance (WIPGG)

Rwanda

Vivre Heureux Ycyemezo

Zambia

Abantu Zambia

ASIA

Bangladesh

Awaj Foundation
Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF)

EUROPE

Belgium

Chant d'Oiseau
En avant les Enfants (EALE)
Parent Actif @ Home (PA@H)
Les Trois Pommiers
Memisa
MMM Belgium

France

Association Nationale pour l'Education Périnatale (ANEP)
Centre d'Education Pluridisciplinaire de la Personnalité (CEPP)
Enfance sans Drogue
Femmes Internationales Murs Brisés (FIMB)
La Maison de Tom Pouce
Mercredi-c-papa
MMM France

Germany

Verband Familienarbeit e. V

Italy

Donneurope Federcasalinghe

Luxembourg

Action Catholique des Femmes du Luxembourg (ACFL)

Romania

Mame pentru Mame

Spain

Accion Familiar
Association de FAMILIAS y Mujeres de MEDIO Rural (AFAMMER)
Mas Familia

Sweden

Haro

Switzerland

Organisation Mondiale des Associations pour l'Education Périnatale (OMAEP International)

United Kingdom

Volunteering Matters
Maternity Action
Mothers At Home Matter (MAHM)
MMM England

MIDDLE EAST

MMM Lebanon

AMERICAS

Colombia

Asodamas

Peru

Ades Perou

Uruguay

Ceprodih



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