

MAMA Exhibition Report

2012 was a year of major accomplishments for IMOW. The *MAMA* exhibition exceeded all goals and expectations, attracting over 200,000 visits and garnering acclaim from individuals including Melinda Gates and Marissa Mayer, as well as high profile media coverage in venues from major women's websites (such as Babble, The Stir, BabyCenter.com) to the Huffington Post. IMOW also successfully experimented with new models for converting art into advocacy and action – presenting 15,800 voices for maternal health to the United Nations in September, and creating a sequence of physical, high profile art and activism installations in eleven countries around the world.

THE MAMA EXHIBITION: REPORTING AGAINST GOALS AND OUTCOMES

1. Goal: MAMA exhibition: Launch final phases and galleries of the project, with completion in September 2012. Attract at least 100,000 visitors to the exhibition;

IMOW launched the online exhibition on January 25, 2012 and continued to develop, promote and add new content to the project through November 2012. During this period, *MAMA* reached 218,000 global online visitors, more than doubling IMOW's attendance goal based on past projects. As part of IMOW's collection of online exhibitions, *MAMA* continues to attract new visitors and, as of March 31, 2013, has attracted more than 250,000 total visits.

1.a. Outcome: Create a vibrant new website- an online exhibition, featuring a sequence of eight topic galleries, an art gallery and 19 original videos depicting the global experiences of mothers

MAMA explores the realities and ideas of a new global generation of mothers through art, multi-media, stories and powerful new voices. The online exhibition aims to turn inspiration into action, helping to fuel a worldwide movement of advocates for mothers' human rights and advances in maternal health. The *MAMA* exhibition features more than 200 media rich content pieces from over 60 diverse countries across the globe including 19 original videos.

The Website and Online Exhibition

Each of the eight *MAMA* topic galleries are introduced by a *Mamas Voices* video production and draw attention to issues of contemporary motherhood. The galleries comprise:

- *Mama to Be?* Who decides if, how, and when a woman has a child?
- *Healthy Mama, Healthy Baby:* What are the realities of 21st Century pregnancy and childbirth?
- *Mama Then & Now:* How do the experiences of mothers, grandmothers, and daughters compare?
- *Mama's Work:* How do women around the globe juggle work and motherhood?
- *Papa:* What is the changing role of the modern dad?
- *Mama in Many Ways:* How is the role of 'mother' evolving?

- *Mama & Me*: How do mothers' identities shift and change?
- *Mama Power*: What kind of power do mothers wield?

The *MAMA Art Gallery* features 100 selections of artwork from over 30 countries representing images of contemporary motherhood from across the globe, often confronting social expectations and norms of motherhood. The *MAMA* exhibition also includes *Mamas Voices*, featuring 11 video interviews with mothers from around the world, from Kenya to China, sharing their experiences, challenges, joys and opportunities, as well as introductory videos to each of the eight topic galleries.

The Making Mothers Visible Pop-Up Global Art Project

In addition to the powerful online presentation IMOW had originally conceived, IMOW went a step further to originate a major, multi country sequence of art installations to complement the *MAMA* project. Created in collaboration with TED and inspired by 2011 TED Prize Winner JR, *Making Mothers Visible*, is an on-the-ground large scale, global photography project that foregrounds the faces of mothers, draws attention to the value of mothers worldwide, and highlights the issue of maternal health. IMOW's *Making Mothers Visible* installations took place in 11 locations including Bonn, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Lagos, Cameroon, Latvia, Puerto Vallarta, Baku, Kyiv, San Francisco, and Ottawa-Gatineau. In each location, large-scale photographs of mothers were pasted on the sides of buildings in prominent public locations – from hospitals and museums to markets, shopping malls and public squares. A total of 280 mothers and midwives from around the world were photographed and featured. Community event leaders and mothers in each location highlighted an issue critical to mothers in their community to frame their action items and personal reflections on motherhood. For example, in Bonn the mothers chose to call attention to the challenges for single mothers in their community and convened their local action by drafting letters to local politicians. In Lagos, the community focused on maternal health as a pressing social justice issue. *Making Mothers Visible* created a unique opportunity to engage visitors beyond IMOW's virtual exhibitions and call local audiences to change their views on motherhood, and get involved in local actions. The photographs from *Making Mothers Visible*, along with personal statements from the individual mothers, are fully documented online and presented as a ninth *MAMA* gallery.

1.b. Outcome: Publish an e-Book of global fiction and memoir, featuring diverse stories of contemporary motherhood

IMOW published *MAMA: Stories of Motherhood*, an e-book anthology of global fiction and memoir, featuring the diverse stories of contemporary motherhood by renowned authors from across the globe. This e-book marks IMOW's first literary arts publication. The anthology includes all seven literary stories available in the *MAMA* exhibition plus three additional stories by acclaimed authors Laila Lalami (Morocco), Nadia Rahman (USA), and Mecca Sullival (USA). The e-book features is accompanied by full color illustrations by artist Andrea Arroyo and an introduction by Clare Winterton, Executive Director of IMOW, who curated the collection with guidance from award winning

novelist, contributor and IMOW Global Council member, Aminatta Forna.

1.c. Present 100 curated stories and over 100 artworks from women worldwide
The *MAMA* exhibition features 114 curated multimedia stories and 100 works of art from around the world, representing 66 diverse countries, including India, Sierra Leone, Brazil, Australia, Morocco, Canada, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Taiwan.

1.d. Reach 100,000 exhibition visitors

Since its launch in January 2012, *MAMA* has attracted over 250,000 visits to date (figures as of March 31, 2013).

1.e. Instigate measurable opinion change and activism

IMOW gave its audience the opportunity to speak out and take action on behalf of mothers' rights globally by asking exhibition visitors to sign a maternal health pledge, presented in partnership with the maternal health advocacy campaign Every Mother Counts. The pledge received 15,800 signatures, significantly exceeding IMOW's original goal of 10,000 signatures. People from all over the world participated in the *MAMA* project and not only signed the pledge, but elected themselves to seek out the signatures of others. These Maternal Health Ambassadors from 15 countries mobilized thousands of people to sign the Maternal Health Pledge.

The following sentiment summarizes the comments many left after signing the maternal health pledge: "This is one of the worthiest causes to be part of! Every woman should have adequate care- before- during and after child-birth!" Another supporter remarked, "I can relate to the sufferings of mothers in Africa. I lost a sister and a friend to childbirth. Your work and commitment to support and improve the lives of women and children is very important to all of us."

On September 25th, 2012 in New York City, the names of the thousands of men and women who signed the pledge were jointly presented to United Nations Assistant Secretary General Robert Orr by IMOW Executive Director Clare Winterton and Christy Turlington Burns, founder of Every Mother Counts. The exhibition was also recognized as a commitment to the United Nation Foundation's *Every Woman, Every Child* campaign. As part of that campaign, IMOW was honored to be invited by the United Nations Foundation to further the *MAMA* project's reach and impact by exhibiting a multi-media presentation from *MAMA* at the campaign's event for global leaders and heads of state at MOMA in New York in September.

IMOW conducted an online survey of 234 *MAMA* exhibition visitors to assess the level of opinion change and activism instigated by engagement with the exhibition. All survey respondents indicated that they experienced increased knowledge and awareness of at least one issue related to motherhood as a result of their exhibition visit. The most frequently cited areas of change were: increased awareness of the acute need to advance global maternal health (53.4%), increased awareness of organizations working

on behalf of mothers and women globally (53%), increased awareness of the need to be involved in women's human rights (44.9%), and a sense of feeling more powerful being part of a community committed to creating a better world (44%). Survey respondents were also asked what specific actions they have taken as a result of something they saw or learned during their visit to the *MAMA* exhibition. The majority of respondents reported taking at least one action. The most frequently cited actions were signing the maternal health pledge (50%), sharing content online for example, via Facebook (50%), telling a friend or colleague about the exhibition (48.3%), and talking to someone about an issue or theme in the exhibition (30.8%). When asked to share what actions they will take in the future an additional 40.2% of respondents cited that they will get involved or increase their own activity working towards women's human rights and maternal health, and 31.2 said they will share materials or ideas from the exhibition with a class, club or group.

THE MAMA EXHIBITION: REPORTING AGAINST OVERARCHING GOALS

- Present diverse global perspectives on motherhood from global thought leaders, as well as women whose voices often go unheard.

MAMA provides exhibition visitors with new sources of information on motherhood from a diverse cross section of women including highly influential thought leaders and ordinary women who were given a chance to have their voices heard.

In the 'Big Ideas' series, fifteen global thought leaders from seven countries, including Nigerian activist [Hafsat Abiola](#), Global Fund for Women CEO [Musimbi Kanyoro](#), Miss Representation Founder and Filmmaker [Jennifer Siebel Newsom](#), presented provocative and innovative ideas on topics ranging from what makes a good mother, to intergenerational differences, to how to support working mothers effectively.

Profiles include twelve 'Heroes' from eight different countries who are working to advance the rights of mothers and children. For example, one of the Heroes in the *Mama's Work* gallery is [Um Ala](#), a mother and successful businesswoman in Jordan, where female business owners are rare. As the family's primary breadwinner, Um employs her husband and sons. She exemplifies how the *MAMA* exhibition highlights diverse global perspectives on motherhood to IMOW audiences.

The 'Meet the Mamas' series of videos features eleven individual interviews of mothers from around the world, from Kenya to China, each talking about the many diverse forms of motherhood, challenges and opportunities, joys and setbacks, and personal experiences of motherhood. These eleven mothers are featured in eight thematic 'Mama's Voices' video productions which serve as an engaging and multimedia introduction to each topic gallery.

The voices and stories of over 200 mothers from 11 countries are also made visible in

the *Making Mothers Visible* global photography project— and were showcased in communities around the world as well as online. Through their portraits and stories, global audiences were educated about issues from workplace discrimination against mothers to inadequate medical facilities for pregnant and delivering women in communities around the world.

- Engage artists and young women in creative self-expression and dialogue

In order to engage artists and young women in creative self-expression and dialogue, IMOW circulated a global call for submissions. IMOW asked artists, writers, photographers, and filmmakers around the world to submit their creative work on critical issues related to motherhood from maternal health to image and identity and workplace challenges. Nearly 600 global submissions were received. The result is “Your Voices” a juried selection of 35 works from 24 countries that showcase the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of motherhood from all over the globe. An example of a “Your Voices” selection is a short film by *Alexia Nye Jackson*, *All Day*, illuminating the economic value of mothers’ work, and calling for policy changes in the U.S. that would allow mothers to balance both work and mothering. Another selection from prize-winning photojournalist *Sarah Henderson* tells the story of Etaferaw, a woman who suffered from fistula after a complicated childbirth, and who was treated at the renowned Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia. The piece raises awareness about fistula and highlights the work of organizations like Hamlin and other people who are making great strides in fistula repair and prevention services. The *Cesarean Quilt* by fabric artist Renee Hoffman was created as a way to process and release the pain and anger she experienced around her traumatic labor and delivery. In addition, the *MAMA Art Gallery* contains 100 pieces of art from sculpture to photography, drawing, and painting, from artists around the world who are using their creative talents to express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and observations related to motherhood.

- Raise awareness, provoke critical thinking and dialogue about the half million preventable maternal deaths that happen every year in pregnancy and childbirth, and be a catalyst in providing audience members a chance to take meaningful action on the topic.

The *MAMA* topic galleries, *Mama to be?* and *Healthy Mama, Healthy Baby* were curated to raise awareness and provoke critical thinking and dialogue about the half million preventable maternal deaths that happen every year in pregnancy and childbirth. For example, when those surveyed were asked what content in the *MAMA* exhibition was most interesting to them 52.1% of respondents answered ‘stories about maternal health and experiences of pregnancy and childbirth,’ and 53.4 % of respondents also answered “I am more aware of the acute need to advance global maternal health”, when they were asked how *MAMA* has impacted them in terms of knowledge and awareness. As outlined above, nearly 16,000 people signed an online pledge to hold their governments accountable to meeting the UN Millennium Development goal to reduce the global

number of maternal deaths.

Global NGO advisors to the project and partners from organizations including the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, the Fistula Foundation and Women's World Health Initiative were critical to framing issues and creating awareness through their outreach efforts. Through these strategic partnerships, IMOW was able to elevate awareness of the issues and reach a more diverse and global audience.

- Promote cultural change, measured through changes in attitudes and behaviors and changes in ways women are represented and ways women represent themselves

As stated above, the survey results reflect a documented change in attitudes and behaviors in IMOW's *MAMA* exhibition visitors. Additionally, when asked what content in the *MAMA* exhibition is most interesting, the two most frequently cited types of content were: ideas about motherhood and women's rights (65%) and stories about how the 'role' of motherhood is changing (56.8%). These responses indicate a heightened interest among audiences in exploring how mother's rights and roles are evolving in contemporary society.

One of the *MAMA* topic galleries, *MAMA and Me* specifically addresses how mothers' identities shift and change. This topic gallery provides a space for women to reflect on how they are represented by others and how they may choose to represent themselves as women and mothers. For example, IMOW Global Council Member and Nigerian activist Hafsat Abiola, contributed an essay entitled, "*What Makes a Good Mother*" in which she discusses why moms should look beyond their performance at home to evaluate their worth. Hafsat writes,

First, I believe that child rearing calls for a village (an enabling community, if you like) and should not be made the sole responsibility of one or two individuals. The challenge in our globalized economy is to be able to craft stable communities out of the soil in which we live....And second, I believe that motherhood is not a call to martyrdom. Just because a woman is a mother does not mean that she should give up on or delay her dreams; such an approach might foster resentment towards one's children. Instead, it is an opportunity to model interdependence within the family and in the world, for just as men have historically had the opportunity to be fathers and citizens, so also should women have the same right and responsibility.

Journalist Kimberly Seals Allers shared her experience dealing with prejudices as an African American mom in the United States, and argues that broader representation of black mothers in the media is long overdue. Allers explains,

...the slow demise of black motherhood began in slavery where we were viewed as breeders producing commodities, not as real humans, and therefore we had no control over our experience in motherhood or our children. As slaves, our children were often ripped from our bosoms and sold, as we stood helpless in despair. What followed was a long tradition of pathologizing black motherhood. As a result, mainstream culture still sees black motherhood as a distortion of true motherhood ideals, and therefore

unworthy of true parity with the white woman's experience.

Shira Richter, an Israeli artist and a mother of twins, uses her own body as a medium for her art. She discusses the message she's aiming for, and the surprising responses she receives:

Our culture celebrates several transitions: a Bar Mitzvah or a Bat Mitzvah celebrates the transition from childhood to adulthood. Then there are weddings to celebrate the transition from being single to being a couple. And when you have a child there is a Brith- which has nothing to do with the woman, or couple. There is absolutely no event that celebrates a woman's transformation into a mother, which is one of the biggest and most physical in her life. The Mother, Daughter, and Holy Spirit is a powerful monument that celebrates and acknowledges the meaning and depth of this transition.

- Create a bridge between popular presentations of motherhood (e.g. through popular media and blogs) and the global social justice movement.

Content strategies, partnership initiatives, and outreach projects enabled IMOW to meet its goal of creating a bridge between popular presentations of motherhood and the global social justice movement. By curating interviews, heroes, and art, the *MAMA* exhibition makes difficult subjects accessible and engaging through a democratic platform that global visitors can visit at any time. IMOW invited its global online audiences to vote for their favorite piece of community art on the subject of motherhood. Over a thousand women and men voted for **the winning piece**, a stark sculpture series on the theme of miscarriage by Pakistani/American artist Humaira Abid. Her piece depicts how much miscarriage remains a painful and often unspoken taboo for women all over the world.

A partnership with the Huffington Post Global Motherhood campaign gave IMOW the opportunity to expand its reach into a greater popular audience. IMOW's Executive Director Clare Winterton joined the campaign as a blog contributor, and created nine timely blog posts related to *MAMA* exhibition content. For example, Ms. Winterton's blog post, "Why is Miscarriage Still One of Motherhood's Greatest Taboos? Art Award Winner Humaira Abid Illuminates a Global Issue" on Huffington Post is an example of how IMOW generated dialogue around a difficult subject using art and online media. Another blog post entitled "Jessica Simpson and the Acceptable 'Shape' of Modern Motherhood" generated over 200 comments. One of the readers commented: "*Truly an inspiring piece for any woman battling the thoughts and fears of her post-baby body. Today was the first time I felt proud of my body in over two years. From the bottom of my heart, thank you!*"

IMOW's blog posts on Huffington Post generated over 5,800 referral visits over the course of the *MAMA* exhibition. These posts helped generate important dialogues and movement in online communities that promoted the social and cultural change message of *MAMA* to a wider mainstream audience and helped fuel the unanticipated level of

success of the *MAMA* Pledge.

The *MAMA* exhibition was well received by mainstream media and mommy bloggers both in the local Silicon Valley community as well as in the arts and museums field, which also served to increase attendance and grow awareness and engagement. A few examples of [press and blog](#) mentions include “Stunning Motherhood Site Shared Universal Joy of Moms Around the World,” Café Mom presents The Stir, “Mama: Motherhood Around the Globe,” Pregnancy & Newborn Magazine, and coverage in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Muse Magazine, SF Chronicle Business Times, TLC’s Parentables, and many others. The *MAMA* exhibition was also supported through a media partnership from [BabyCenter.com](#), which has over 27 million unique visitors each month, and which resulted in targeted online and e-promotions throughout calendar year 2012. The engagement of global partners also helped IMOW further its bridge between popular presentations of motherhood and the global social justice movement. Lead partners for *MAMA* include Every Mother Counts, The White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, CARE, and the Global Fund for Women. Additionally, 22 other prominent organizations joined us as outreach partners, extending the reach of the project.