

The world in 2014 looks considerably different. From the deadly outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, to terrorist group Boko Haram's abduction of 300 schoolgirls in Nigeria, to the rise of fundamentalist organisations such as ISIS in Iraq and Syria – **the women served by Women for Women International (WfWI) live in some of the world's most dangerous places.**

Where extremism and conflict take root, the livelihoods, freedoms, and security of individuals suffer – and it is women and children who bear the brunt.

It may seem all too easy to become despairing in the face of such challenges, however, I believe 2014 has shown us that there is also much to be hopeful about. Take for example the Ending Sexual Violence In Conflict Conference in London in June and global campaigns against violence against women and Female Genital Mutilation, which all received global attention and are leading to concrete changes for women and girls around the world.

Media coverage and high profile events go hand in hand with the work done every day by WfWI staff in countries such as Afghanistan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Together they are instrumental in changing the lives of some of the most marginalised women.

I learnt from my colleagues in DRC that communities where we work have adopted a new expression: **"tutokeshini" – meaning "awake" in Swahili.** It refers to women within the community "waking up" after seeing how participants in our programme are improving their businesses and quality of life.

For me, this expression encapsulates what Women for Women International is all about – making a real difference to the most marginalised women and creating a ripple effect throughout her community to ensure lasting change. **This simply would not be possible without your support – thank you.**

Brita Fernandez Schmidt, Executive Director,
Women for Women International – UK

2014 HIGHLIGHTS

BOSNIA WEEK

In February, we held a week of events focused on our work in Bosnia, including a screening of *In the Land of Blood and Honey* at BAFTA and a parliamentary briefing at the House of Lords. Bosnia is the first country Women for Women International worked in, and since 1993 we have served over 60,000 women in 50 different communities.

ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT CONFERENCE



Iliriana Gashi speaks with Angelina Jolie at the WfWI stand

In June, Women for Women International participated in the ESVC conference hosted by William Hague and Angelina Jolie. We ensured that women survivors, who are so often without a voice, were at the centre of the discussions. We were able to voice their needs and demands to the world, through media coverage including CNN and BBC Radio 4. WfWI – Kosovo Country Director Iliriana Gashi attended the conference and spoke to Sky News: "It's been an unprecedented opportunity to end... sexual violence in conflict at the global level. We will not be able to address the issue before we change attitudes and gender equality becomes real."

SHARE 2015 RECIPE CALENDAR

Inspired by Share: The Cookbook, each month features a recipe from a world renowned humanitarian and Women for Women International supporter such as Annie Lennox, Mary McCartney and Zainab Salbi. The calendar is being sold exclusively through Marks & Spencer – available in-store and online.

WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL SUMMER EVENING

This fundraising event was held at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, to raise vital funds for our work to help women survivors of war. The event was co-chaired by Alexandra Meyers and Hikari Yokoyama. Special guest Lily Cole performed 'Song of the Lonely Wives' from Simon Armitage's play *The Last Days of Troy*.



Lily Cole performs at the WfWI Summer Evening
Photo: Cristina Rossi

"For me, this song gives a voice to the women left behind by war – the voice of the wives, the mothers, the sisters, the daughters – of the less visible faces and scars of war." Lily Cole

VOICES OF WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

"I hope that I can help women to change and to be self-motivated, financially independent, contributing to economic growth, and to grow their businesses to a higher level."

Rawaa Rajib Ubaid - Income Generation Officer, Women for Women International - Iraq

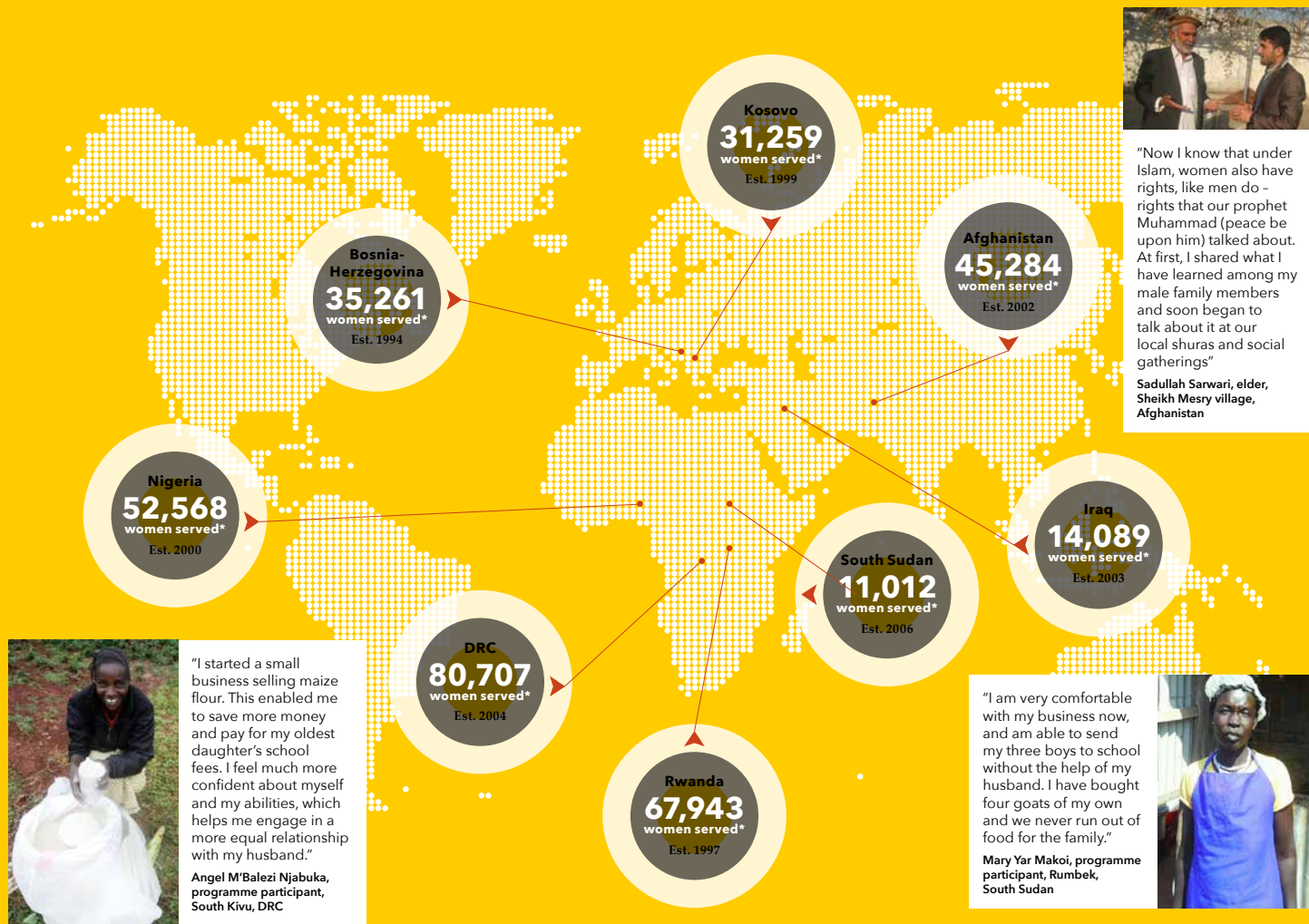
"The Channel is the ultimate challenge for any swimmer but one I always believed beyond my capabilities until I fell in with the Serpentine Swimming Club. My wife Madda chose my charity, and I am proud to have raised over £6,000 for their work with women survivors of war."

James Norton - UK supporter who swam the English Channel in August to raise money for our work

"What I have learned can neither be quantified nor measured. I learned how to write my name and this is what I never dreamed of in my whole life. I learned that a man and a woman have equal rights in the family...I can't stop telling people about equality in raising boys and girls!"

Roseline Mba Chnebonham - mother of seven and WfWI participant from Enugu, Nigeria

WHERE WE WORK



*correct through June 2014

AYA'S STORY: SOUTH SUDAN

After the death of her father when she was a baby, Aya's family could not afford to send her to school. As such, Aya was married at just fourteen, and now has five sons, who she works hard to provide for.

Since enrolling on the WfWI programme in April 2013, Aya can now calculate profit and loss and manage her household finances. She has also learned the importance of women's rights and preventing domestic violence:

"I realised that I have a role in advocating for other people in the community. There is a man in the community who is violent towards his wife. He often comes home drunk and becomes abusive. I have learned that despite any misunderstandings in the home, violence against women is wrong. One morning I visited my neighbours and counselled the husband. He agreed to reduce his alcohol intake to care for his family."

Aya's advocacy role goes even further, supporting a young orphaned girl who was expelled from school because her neighbours

could not afford the school fees: *"I went to the school and explained the girl's situation to the headmaster. I explained the plight of the girl and how important it is for girls to access education. The girl is now back in school learning, without having to pay school fees".*

No wonder the World Bank calls investing in women a "double dividend", since elevating women really does elevate and strengthen communities as they share their knowledge with others.



Photo: Brian Sokol

LOOKING AHEAD

3 KEY ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE IN 2015

- 1 Sponsor a woman through our training programme for one year for £22 a month. Visit www.womenforwomen.org.uk/sponsor to find out more.
- 2 Raise funds to support our training programmes – organise an event at home, work or in your community. Contact us on supportuk@womenforwomen.org to find out more.
- 3 Spread the word – join the conversation on facebook.com/WomenforWomenUK twitter.com/WomenforWomenUK