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African Advocates Use Quilts to Lobby UN Summit on Women and Girls



Sabina, 17, worries about the cost of girls' education in Kenya.

In an exciting example of advocacy quilting, twenty-three women from under-served communities of Nairobi are using embroidery to lobby a major UN conference on empowering women and girls.

Their quilt, *A Woman's World*, will be unveiled at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, which opens tomorrow and is expected to attract over 5,000 participants. The conference will review progress on the landmark plan of action adopted in 1994 by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

As part of the contribution by civil society, the Advocacy Project (AP) will exhibit 18 advocacy quilts from AP partners. Eight quilts are from Africa and cover themes that range from sexual violence in Mali to the recycling of plastic straws in Uganda. Thirty-three women have registered for the AP team.

A Woman's World captures some of the themes of the conference and is a true product of North-South collaboration. Twenty-three artists from the communities of Kibera and Kangemi produced embroidered squares after receiving training from Christine Kibuka.

"This is the first time I have stitched and I love it!" said Sabina Mutiso, 17. Sabina's square looks at the cost of girls' education. (photo)

Bobbi Fitzsimmons, a leading American quilter and member of the AP Board, made an embroidered map of the world to serve as backing.

A Woman's World is one of three new quilts that will be exhibited for the first time. On Tuesday, [Children Peace Initiative Kenya](#) will show *The Kenya Cow Quilt*, which describes the importance of cattle to pastoralists in northwest Kenya. Artists from the Samburu and Pokot tribes who produced squares for the quilt will explain their designs.

On day 2 (Wednesday) Constance Mugari, founder of the [Women Advocacy Project](#) in Harare, will present the *Zimbabwe Child Marriage Quilt*, which poignantly describes the pressure on girls to marry before the legal age of 18. The squares were produced by girls from Harare.

The highlight will come on the final day, when the 23 Kenyan artists will present *A Woman's World* to Dr Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) at the closing ceremony.

AP will provide daily updates throughout the conference. Special pages on each quilt will be posted on the AP website after the conference.

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