

The name Clara Zetkin may not seem instantly of note, but in 1910 she proposed that for one day, every year, and in every country, there should be a celebration of women, an International Women's Day that recognises their economical, political and social achievements. Skip forward 100 years and women's roles in society have transformed – less a case of women's rights, more a case of human rights. Thanks to Clara and others like her, women have long-since played a pivotal role in world affairs, and nowhere is this more evident than the United Nations' halls of power where businesswomen, royals and luminaries alike are the United Nations representatives of choice. And so, in honour of International Women's Day (March 8) *Aileron* profiles the leading United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors.

AMBASSADOR APPEAL

AS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IS CELEBRATED THIS MONTH, *AILERON* HONOURS THOSE WHO HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE, NOT JUST FOR THEIR OWN GENDER BUT FOR HUMANKIND

**HER MAJESTY QUEEN RANIA
AL-ABDULLAH**

FROM: JORDAN

AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITE FOR
CHILDREN (UNICEF)

With supermodel good looks and a mesmerising charm that can silence men, it's no surprise the world's youngest Queen, Rania Al-Abdullah, was voted the 76th most powerful woman by *Forbes*. Well-educated (she graduated from Cairo's American University with a business degree), a fashion icon and ardent humanitarian, the mother-of-four is an international role model. Unafraid to take risks, she tackles taboo subjects, including child abuse, and is a fervent campaigner for women's rights. In November 2008, she issued a statement marking World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse. The 39-year-old is using her regal status and tireless work ethic to help make the world a better place.



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LIYA KEBEDE
FROM: ETHIOPIA
AMBASSADOR FOR: WORLD
HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

An exclusive contract to work on Tom Ford's Gucci Fall/Winter 2000 show saw model Kebede become "super". A prominent figure in the fashion world, Estée Lauder signed her as their ethnic face and she has twice featured on the front cover of *Vogue*. It's no surprise then that she claimed 11th spot on *Forbes'* 2005 Highest Paid Model list. However, Kebede's ranking has since dwindled after sidelining her career to concentrate on her role as an ambassador. Kebede, a mum-of-two, is renowned for working tirelessly to reduce maternal and child mortality and to improve the health and well-being of mothers and children worldwide. So anxious to help, she's also launched the Liya Kebede Foundation, which she links to the WHO initiatives to help save lives.



MARIA SHARAPOVA
FROM: RUSSIA
AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Thanks to her powerful on-court play, striking looks, alluring personality and an eye for endorsement deals (she's the face of Nike, Colgate-Palmolive, Canon and Motorola), Sharapova is still one of the highest paid female athletes in the world, despite being sidelined with injury for much of the last two years. Proving to be a worthwhile representative, on the day of her 2007 appointment she generously donated US\$100,000 to Chernobyl recovery projects. "Poverty and lack of opportunities pose the greatest threat for young people in that region," said the star whose family has roots in Chernobyl. Sharapova's work with UNDP also includes achieving measurable improvements in the lives of the world's poorest people.



HANNE-VIBEKE HOLST
FROM: DENMARK
AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITED NATIONS
POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

A modern-day suffragette Holst is a columnist and author whose work examines women's positions of power (or lack thereof) in society. Well respected in her homeland as an outspoken campaigner for women's rights, Holst also serves on the board of governors of the Danish Family Planning Association and is a personal appointed member of the Danish UNESCO National Commission. Her novel *When I Got Angry* was inspired by one of her UN trips to Africa. The book contains in-depth portraits of 15 women and girls from five developing countries.



LARA DUTTA
 FROM: INDIA
 AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITED NATIONS
 POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

She was the first Indian representative at the 1997 Miss Intercontinental pageant (at which she won first place). She also won first place at Miss Universe in 2000. As such, Lara Dutta is used to having the world look at her, making her an ideal candidate as a Goodwill Ambassador. Working with the Face to Face Campaign for Women she hopes to increase global awareness of women's lack of rights and access to reproductive health services. As a successful woman from an ethnic minority, Dutta, a trained journalist, plans to use her UN position to empower women and teach adolescents in her homeland about how to avoid HIV infections.

“She set up two foundations, Barefoot and Pies Desclazos, both provide displaced and underprivileged children in her native Colombia access to education”



HSH PRINCESS STEPHANIE OF MONACO
 FROM: MONACO
 AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITING THE
 WORLD AGAINST AIDS (UNAIDS)

In 1982, Princess of Monaco, Grace Kelly was killed in a car accident and with her was her daughter, Her Serene Highness Stephanie. As a survivor, Stephanie decided to live life to the max, subsequently embracing a hedonistic lifestyle. She garnered a reputation as the *enfant terrible* of the Grimaldi family, but while managing careers as a model, fashion designer and pop singer, the headstrong rebel wasn't without a conscience. In 2004 she set up Fight AIDS Monaco, a foundation offering information, HIV prevention and support to people living with and affected by HIV. Her charitable work was recognised by the UN, who in 2006 made her a representative. On her first assignment she visited AIDS-affected families in South Africa.



SHAKIRA MEBARAK
 FROM: COLOMBIA
 AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITE
 FOR CHILDREN (UNICEF)

Whenever, wherever, world-famous singer and songwriter Shakira works to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, education and child protection. Recognising that while she may be able to belly-dance her way to chart success, charity work requires something extra, Shakira set up two foundations, Barefoot and Pies Desclazos, both provide displaced and underprivileged children in her native Colombia access to education. Since accepting her ambassador role in 2003, the 33-year-old has been involved in powerful projects. In November 2006, she addressed students who marched the streets of El Salvador's capital as part of UNICEF's campaign to protect children from violence.

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SELENA MARIE GOMEZ
FROM: USA
AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITED NATIONS
FOR CHILDREN (UNICEF)

Joining an elite line of Hollywood do-gooders that includes Sarah Jessica Parker, Orlando Bloom and Lucy Liu, Disney teen star Selena Gomez knew she had made it as an international celebrity when she was appointed as a UN representative. At 17 she’s the youngest ambassador in the history of the organisation, but that’s not to say the work set for her by the UN is any less challenging. The actress and singer has already visited poverty-stricken Ghana in Africa where she worked to bring children clean water, nourishment, education and access to healthcare.



GERI HALLIWELL
FROM: UK
AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITED NATIONS
POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

Made famous for her flame-coloured hair and Union Jack micro dress, the UN surprised everyone when, in 1998, they appointed former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell as an ambassador. Thankfully her platform trainers and glaring outfits are in the past. Today Ginger Spice is a mother-of-one, a successful children’s author and a well-respected philanthropist. Her campaign to provide universal access to family planning received such a tremendous reaction that Philippine President Joseph Estrada actually changed his country’s education policy to be in line with it.

WORDS: ALEXANDRIA GOUVEIA PHOTOS: GETTY/GALLO IMAGES AND REUTERS



ANGELINA JOLIE
FROM: USA
AMBASSADOR FOR: UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
REFUGEES (UNHCR)

Regardless of your opinion of Jolie – and her constant presence in the press makes it difficult not to have one – most refer to her as “Saint Ange” for her prolific charity work. Since her appointment by the UN in 2001, Angelina has ditched her hedonistic ways and taken advantage of her Hollywood status to highlight the plight of refugees. Mesmerising beauty and acting accolades aside, she is the most well-known UN ambassador due to her persistence to raise awareness of UN issues. She donated US\$1m toward the Darfur crisis and recently visited Haiti to meet survivors of the earthquake. Angelina has even adopted three orphan children – Maddox, Zahara and Pax from Cambodia, Ethiopia and Vietnam respectively.