

Tribute to Marie Aminata Khan



From: The GEF Small Grants Programme

To: Charles and Frederick

Dear SGP Family,

It is with a heavy heart that I share with you the sad news that a member of the SGP Family, Marie Khan, had just passed away. The information we received was that she got sick on the way to Durban to attend the climate change COP 17 from Johannesburg. Many of us still cannot believe it as we had just recently seen her in New York, quite healthy and happy as is usual with her.



Marie was with SGP at the very start of the programme. She was the CPMT Programme Assistant and then was selected to eventually take the professional post of Knowledge Facilitator when this post was first opened in SGP. For the NCs and PAs who have started at SGP before she moved to the CBD Secretariat in Montreal, you know that she had always been like a big sister, ever helpful and concerned with the welfare of everyone in the SGP Family. She can always be relied on to fight for SGP and what the programme stands for. For me as a new SGP Global Manager in 2003, she was a mentor in the ways of the UNDP and gave me good advice on the various people and groups that we have to build partnerships and alliances. Even as she later joined the CBD Secretariat, her heart was still with us in SGP and she continued to advocate for SGP in her new capacity in the Secretariat,

Marie will thus be sorely missed.

May I request the SGP Family to offer special prayers for her. And as we had done with those great members of the SGP Family that had passed, can the NCs and PAs either by yourselves or with our grantees plant a tree in her memory.

Thus, in response to this e-mail, can NCs and PAs please send a photo of the tree/seedling (or a coral as may be done in the case of an SGP "coral regeneration" project in Bali, Indonesia), in the next week or month, that has been planted in Marie's memory. These we will send to her two boys to tell them that their mother had done great work and is well remembered.

Best regards,

*Delfin Ganapin,
Global Manager
GEF Small Grants Programme*



Dear colleagues,

With great personal sadness, I write to tell you of the sudden death today of one of our UN environment colleagues. Marie Aminata Klian died in hospital this morning in Johannesburg, South Africa. She had fallen ill with what we understand was severe pneumonia on the way to the international climate change negotiations in Durban. She was hospitalized while transferring through Johannesburg and was making a recovery until her unexpected collapse and death this morning.

I know this will come as a huge shock to many of you, as it did to me. Marie was the most wonderful friend and colleague, full of life, humor, and great energy, working till the end to help safeguard the environment. She made her UNDP home in the BDP's Environment and Energy team with the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) which she served with great commitment and dedication for nearly a decade, initially as Programme Assistant and later as Knowledge Facilitator, before moving to work with the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Montreal.

I know you will join me in expressing our deepest sympathies to her two sons in Montreal as well as all her family and all her friends.

We do not have more information on this tragedy yet but promise to keep you updated.

Olav,

Olav Kjørven

*Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy
United Nations Development Programme*

“This is a real sad story but blessed is the memory of a great person as has been reiterated by everyone though I never met Marie. I pray to the good Lord to give her family and even the SGP family the fortitude to bear this loss. My condolences!

*Ibironke Favour Olubamise, National Coordinator, GEF SGP **Nigeria**”*

“I haven't had the chance to meet Marie. I feel that her death is a great loss for all those who knew her. In Haiti, we have a corner for those of the SGP who passed away. Her picture will be added. My deepest condolences to all of us. Ankoraje

*Ronel CERAN, National Coordinator, GEF SGP **Haiti**”*

“This is indeed shocking and sad news for us. We convey our condolences to her beloved family. We pray that the Almighty God strengthen them during this difficult time. As advised, we are going to liaise with one of the grantees in the KwaZulu Natal Province to plant a tree in remembrance of this soldier. May her soul rest in peace.

*Khathushelo Neluheni, National Coordinator, GEF SGP **South Africa**”*

“For me Marie was a real sister, we shared good professional and personal memories, she visited me in Jordan not long ago, what a loss.

*Munir Adgham, GEF SGP **Jordan**”*

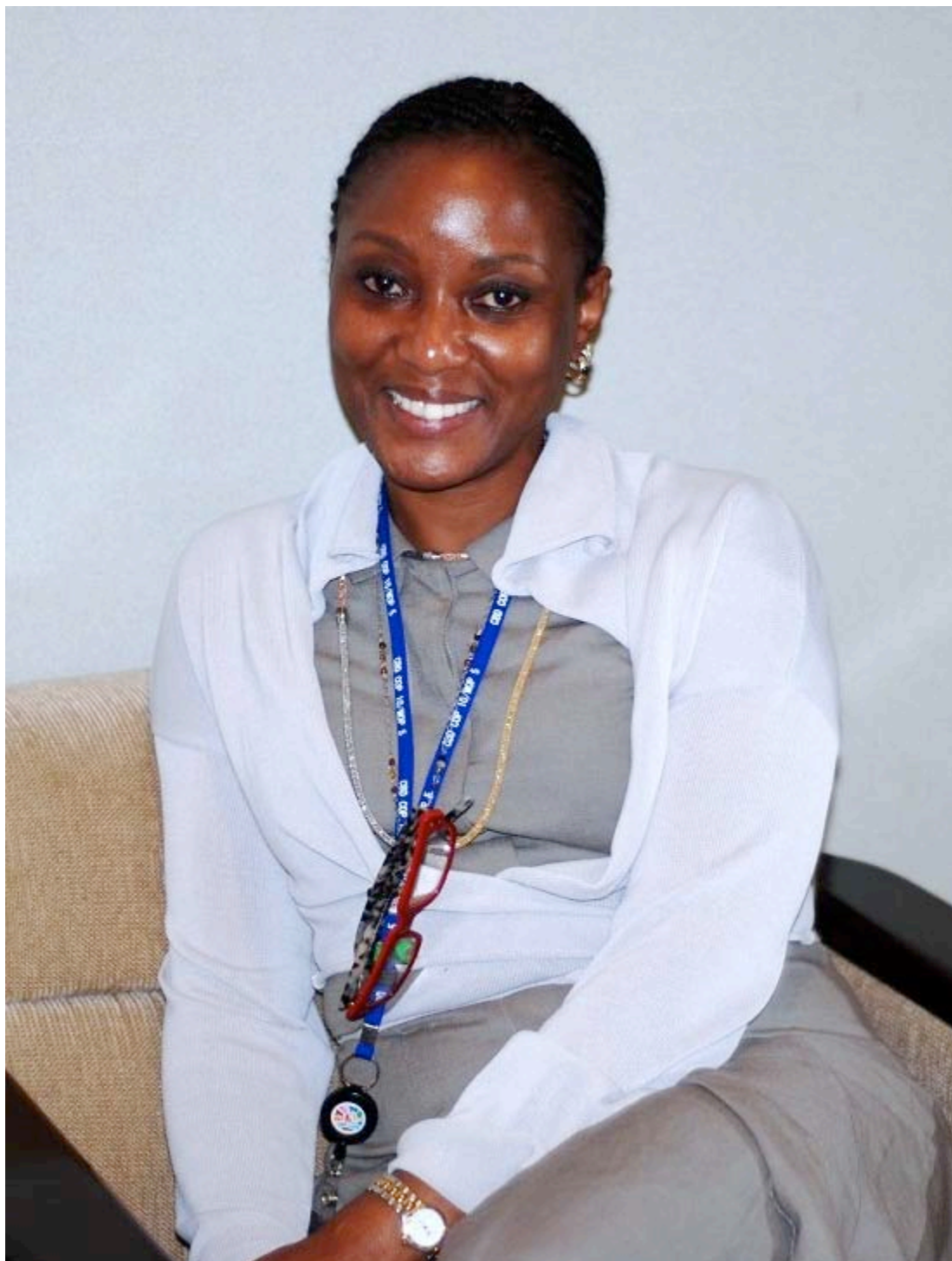
“What a loss for Environment at global level and SGP family. We will all miss Marie. Allah Yarhamha. Our sincere condolences to her family. We shall plant trees in her memory here in Tunisia.

*Abdelkader Baouendi, GEF SGP **Tunisia**”*

“The transition of our sister Marie Khan is indeed sad, but we are happy for the great work she has done for mankind most especially for the SGP fraternity. She died whilst still serving mankind. Marie was affable, loving, happy going, easy to blend and will make you feel at home. She appreciated little and always encouraged you to press on. We shall forever remember her. As we shall plant a tree in her memory, we pray that the Almighty God will grant her eternal rest. AMEN.

*George Ortsin, National Programme Coordinator, GEF SGP **Ghana**”*

Para todos aquellos que no conocieron a esta maravillosa amiga, les añado una foto, Raul Murgia, National Coordinator, Mexico



“Marie Khan will be sadly missed. She had a large heart and always willing to help. We thank God for all the work she did and she leaves an indelible mark in the SGP family. May her soul rest in peace.

Tsitsi Wutawunashie, National Programme Coordinator, GEF SGP Zimbabwe”

“Marie was a truly inspiring, caring, loving, generous and wise woman, friend and colleague. I too got to know SGP when Marie was already a long-timer in the programme; she was always patient, helpful and very professional about her work; but more than that, she had this way of making me feel at home far away from home.

Though I was initially only one of her colleagues, Marie invited me to her homes in Senegal, New Rochelle and Montreal without even knowing me much; she just lovingly welcomed me to her home. I was a young professional when I joined the SGP and Marie would always take the time to give me advise about the programme, about the UN, about life in the US and about life in general; she cared for me from sister to sister. I admired her for the way she had raised her 2 boys and for how in every situation she remained kind and generous. In many ways, she was and will remain a person I have learned a lot from and who inspired me. I was looking forward to seeing her in Montreal soon. I will deeply miss her.

A piece of her heart always was and will remain with the SGP and its communitites. SGP is a privileged family for having had Marie as one of its members.

Rest in peace Marie. Thanks for your kindness and generosity and for all the smiles we shared.

With love,

Rahel Steinbach”

“Sincere condolences to the SGP and Marie’s family! May The Almighty God strengthen her children, family and friends. A tree will be planted in her memory in Antananarivo

GEF SGP Madagascar Team”

“On behalf of the SGP Team in The Gambia, we wish to extend our condolences on the passing away of Marie Khan whom we never met but heard a lot of good things said of her. May her soul Rest in Peace.

Kebba Bojang, National Coordinator, GEF SGP Gambia”

“The GEF SGP Pakistan team, partners and communities sincerely condole with all of you this tragic loss. We are planting a Neem tree today in our SGP office Hyderabad. I had never met her but after seeing her beautiful picture with those deep merciful eyes I can say how beautiful her soul was!

This world is a temporary aboard. All of us have to go sooner or later. SGP will remember you Marie always!

Masood and Pakistan team”

“We are deeply saddened by this sudden departure a true warrior. SGP Lesotho will certainly plant a tree in her memory. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

GEF SGP Lesotho”

“Our sincere condolences to her family and her loved ones. Although we (GEF SGP-Ethiopia team) haven't had the chance to either meet or work with her, we learned from everyone's e-mail that her passing away is indeed a great loss both as a colleague and a friend.

May God rest her soul in perfect peace.

SGP Ethiopia Team (Zelege & Tigist)”

“This is indeed very sad and shocking news. Marie was one of the loving SGP matriarchs that warmly welcomed me to the Small Grants Family so long ago. The world has lost one of its best. She and her family will be in our thoughts.

Kristoffer Kappy, UNOPS”

“We are deeply saddened with the sudden passing of Marie Khan. She will be recalled as an example of strength, hardworking and helping hand to the GEF/SGP Family. Even after moving to the CBD Secretariat she continued to share her knowledge management facilitation with the GEF/SGP Family. As Delfin says our prayers will be with her in this moment of sorrow and we shall liaise with our grantees to plant a tree in her beloved memory. God give strength to her family in this difficult moment.

Her soul rest in peace,

GEF/SGP Mozambique Team Augusto and Paula“

“Estimadas/os, es increíble la noticia! Tuve oportunidad de conocer a Marie cuando yo recién ingresaba al PPD, en el taller de Curitiba y con sólo esos días de convivencia sentí una gran empatía con ella, recuerdo mucho su calidez y alegría. Les adjunto algunos fotos.

Abrazo apretado a todos uds y lo extiéndiendo a sus familiares. Sandra Bazanni, GEF SGP Uruguay”



*“Amigas y amigos,
Siento una profunda tristeza por esta inesperada desaparición de Marie, quien , sin embargo sobrevivirá en nuestros corazones con su calidez, su profesionalidad y su eterna sonrisa. Abrazos,*

Hugo Iza, Coordinador Nacional, PPD Argentina”

“Marie Khan was a very good friend and we mourn her passing. She had a way of making everyone feel so special with her superb attention to work related issues and our personal wellbeing. We will never forget Marie!

Philip Balderramos, GEF SGP Belize”

“For us, it is still hard to believe and understand the bad news reported. Those who had the chance, luck and pleasure to know Marie Kan, can attest to professional quality, but above all human, she was always willing to listen, talk and seek alternative solutions to any problem, also always had a smile who accompanied her everywhere. This Marie happy, loving and friendly person is that we will remember forever!

From SGP Bolivia, we join and support during this time of sorrow to this family and a prayer for her to rest in peace.

Rubén Salas, GEF SGP Bolivia”

“I think many of us have warm and loving memories of dearest Marie, the beautiful and bright woman we were fortunate to meet. She is one of the now legendaries strong, bright and courageous women of the early days of SGP. Enclosed you will find a photo during the Istanbul Global Workshop.

We will really miss her!

Armida Heredia, GEF SGP Mexico”



“I did not get to meet Marie but from your expressions of loss I missed knowing a wonderful person. It is very striking to know that this one woman meant so much to the SGP family. We in Dominica offer our thoughts and special prayers for her and her family. To the SGP family we say be strong and live on for Marie.

We will be having our final NSC meeting for the year with the outgoing OP4 NSC on Tuesday December 20, followed by a Grantees Forum immediately after. I am arranging that we do our tree planting in Marie's memory on that day in the presence of NSC members and grantees on the compound of our NHI. The tree will be Dominica's national flower the Sabinea Carinalis locally known as Bois Kwayib or Carib Wood.

Agnes ESPRIT, GEF SGP Dominica”

"I have been hugely shocked and saddened by the terrible news about Marie Khan. I did not have a chance to overlap with her at SGP, but heard so many great things about her from you all. I understand that although she moved on to CBD, she was still on loan from SGP. Let me join you in expressing our deepest condolence and sympathies to her families.

Fumiko Fukuoaka, UNDP"

"We at SGP Kenya are greatly saddened and shocked by the demise of Marie. When I first met Marie, at the SGP global workshop in Kenya in 2003, I really liked her unpretentious and joyful personality. She has returned to Kenya a few times thereafter, and I have always enjoyed our get-togethers.

We will miss her, and we pray that the Almighty will provide strength and guidance to her family, especially her sons, at this very difficult time.

Nancy Chege, GEF SGP Kenya"

*"Estimados Colegas:
Esta es realmente una lamentable pérdida, nuestra querida Marie nos ha dejado.... Siempre te recordaremos con cariño por todo lo que compartimos.... Ruego a Dios que fortalezca a su querida familia por su pronta partida. Agradezco a Dios por permitirnos conocer una mujer muy especial!!!
Un abrazo,
Marita, GEF SGP Peru"*

"I am still shocked. I met Marie last time in NY in December 2005. She was so beautiful and energetic. I talked with her and Terence about our usual SGP things. And now...

My cordial condolences to all of us.

Muratbek Koshoev, National Coordinator, GEF SGP Kyrgyzstan"

"I am really shocked at this news. We first met Marie in Kenya and thereafter in Istanbul. She was so full of life, so into SGP like all of us and so keen on her work, I find it hard to believe she is gone. We knew Marcella was sick for some time before the ultimate news came but Marie was so hail and hearty.

We shall certainly plant a tree, trees in her name and Marcella's. Our condolences to the family too,

Shireen Samarasuriya, GEF SGP Sri Lanka"

"Dear SGP Friends,

I was so shocked when I heard this awful news this morning. My first contact with Marie was years ago, it must have been 1997, when I was still with ISPEN and SGP Brazil. Later we met in New York and then had the opportunity to work together again. I think back of her laugh and good humor, her bright and outgoing personality. Since leaving SGP we stayed in touch and met again for the last time just over a year ago, and now this...

Marie will be terribly missed by her sons, and for them this must be such a difficult moment.

We'll miss you Marie.

*Marco van der Ree
Chief, Partnerships Section, Partnerships and Communications Division
United Nations Volunteers"*

"Dear SGP Family,

It was with both shock and great sadness that I heard early on Monday morning of the untimely demise of Marie Khan and then I had to convey that sad news to SGP management - to Tehmina who then informed Delfin. Marie was with SGP for over nine years before leaving in early 2007 (if my memory is correct) to join the CBD Secretariat in Montreal working on gender and biodiversity.

I knew Marie from the time I was appointed as UNDP-GEF Executive Coordinator in Oct 2001. At that time Marie was part of the small SGP team headed by Sally Timpson, and that small team pushed hard to establish the role of SGP within GEF. Marie was a critical part of that team. When Sally retired and Delfin was appointed SGP Global Manager in 2003, Marie continued her critical effort as Knowledge Facilitator to get SGP known far and wide and she ably assisted Delfin in his efforts to expand SGP significantly.

Marie was a good friend and colleague. She was a hard worker, an innovator, and a team player with an infectious laugh and a good sense of humour. She loved her SGP family and provided motherly advice to all new NCs as they struggled to learn how to deal with GEF procedures and UN bureaucracy.

Marie was from Sierra Leone and was only 48 when she expired at the prime of her career. My heart goes out to her two sons, Frederic and Charles, who have so suddenly lost their mother. Rest in peace Marie my friend, and may you be forever blessed.

*Frank Pinto
Senior Consultant on Climate Change and Development, UNDP
Former GEF Executive Coordinator, UNDP*

To Marie, my beloved sister, my friend, my mentor! – Mi amor!



WHEN AN ANGEL SAYS GOOD BYE

*“When an Angel says good bye,
sadness comes to Earth
and Heaven lights up!*

*When an Angel says good bye,
leaves an immense emptiness
that will never be filled.*

*When an Angel says good bye
Heaven opens with great joy to receive her;
and winter comes to those who loved her
and feel aimlessly lost,
picking up the pieces of a broken heart.*

*My heart be lifted
giving many thanks to the Lord,
for let me know and love you Marie
while you light up my life.*

*My broken heart be lifted,
giving many thanks to the Lord,
for the wonderful gift of being your friend.”*

Ana Carmona, GEF SGP Costa Rica

13 December 2011

Marie!



Yesterday I was stunned into silence by the devastating news about your passing and kept hoping it was a nightmare from which I would awake. You were so full of life that your departure is simply unimaginable! But I got up this morning to find all of the beautiful messages from people fortunate enough to have had you in their lives, whether directly or indirectly, and realized that I had to face up to the idea of a world without you, however impossible that seems. Now I can only be forever grateful for the privilege of having had you as a close friend and colleague on a daily basis during our four years together in SGP and subsequently, as we stayed in touch both

in New York and Montreal and met at conferences and on your visits here. You accompanied me through thick and thin and I could never have managed without you. I only hope you recognized how much you meant to all of us.

Dear friends and colleagues,

During those first years it was simply a delight to come to the office every day and find Marie's beautiful smiling face, her warmth, sensitivity, grace and elegance that informed everything she did, creating an aura that brightened the small space where the SGP team was then located. Her knowledge about the programme, its country teams and other partners, familiarity with the kinds of conditions it was trying to address and her devotion to its mission were invaluable, not only for those of us in the small central programme management team of which she was such a key part but also for those responsible for SGP around the world. Marie's wide range of contacts and the fondness and esteem in which she was held opened so many doors that might otherwise have been shut, smoothing responses from a bureaucracy that sometimes seemed to put up barriers rather than facilitating action. She helped to make the challenges seem surmountable, to resolve difficult problems and to celebrate every achievement.

For National Coordinators and their teams Marie and Marcella Marcimino, who has also so sadly left us, were the caring friends who provided constructive advice and support on problems brought to them both big and small, personal and professional. So many of you benefitted as Marie went out of her way to be open, welcoming and helpful whenever she could. For all of these reasons she was the obvious choice when Delfin was looking for an SGP knowledge facilitator, gathering together many of the important lessons learned by the global team over the years. Even when she headed north to further her professional career at the CBD, Marie left a unique legacy; in fact I think she felt she had never really left SGP behind.

Together with all of this, Marie was an adoring and wonderful mother to Frederic and Charles, so proud of their choices, achievements and aspirations, their adaptation to the unique demands of their lives and the adults they were becoming. They have now been thrust prematurely into this terrible time of grief and mourning, surely made even worse by the coincidence with their mother's birthday when they should have been

celebrating her life. Marie was a loving daughter, admiring of and inspired by her own mother's example as a professional woman with a long career associated with the UN, and especially attentive to her needs as she struggled against the illness that finally claimed her life. Her father and mentor, who Marie loved and esteemed, was formerly with UNDP and had travelled to South Africa to be with her during her illness. Finally Marie was a loyal and committed child of the African continent and faithful follower of the Islamic traditions in which she was raised. She represented the best of both.

It is with profound distress in our loss that we pay tribute to the exceptional person who we were privileged to have had in our lives. Although the ground here in New York is now too frozen for planting, as soon as the spring allows I will put in a flowering tree at my place in the country and count on it to thrive as one more lasting reminder of the physical and spiritual beauty of Marie Aminata Khan. Her soul lives on in the many all over the world whose lives she touched.

In tribute and deeply shared sorrow,

Sally Timpson”



“The tribute from Sally to Marie is very beautiful and fully reflects what Marie meant to all of us who worked with her and had the privilege of being her friends. Her premature departure leaves behind a huge emptiness that cannot be filled with any amount of tears.

Carmen Tavera, Former Deputy Global Manager of the of GEF SGP”

“For those that may wonder where the “widening circles” of the SGP family draw their spiritual roots, one needs look no further than the exceptional human qualities that Marie embodied for so many of us. For another close friend and colleague whose life Marie touched all too briefly, Marie’s soul indeed lives on.

In loving memory,

Terence Hay-Edie, Biodiversity Specialist, GEF SGP”

“Marie embodied human nature in all its’ goodness and love. She was a friend always sending a gift for me and I for her when someone would travel to Mauritius or to her place. She was a counsellor in bad times and a cheerful happy go-lucky person in all our SGP Global/Regional meetings. She indeed never left SGP and would keep sending me material on IBD celebrations each year. The news of her demise is a huge shock to me as it is for all of us. Please convey to her sons and relatives how exceptional a person she was and how she will be missed. An African patriot and a fine citizen of the world is gone...

*They shall grow not old,
As we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning...
We will remember them
(Extract of poem on Remembrance by Laurence Bynion)*

Pamela Bapoo-Dundoo, GEF SGP Mauritius“

“It was with a great sense of loss when I heard of Marie death. My heart is truly saddened. Marie was more than just a wonderful person, I remember her when we met in Tunis and then in Kenya, we exchanged a lot life experience, she was always so kind and considerate in her advice. Marie will always remain within my heart, and I will included Marie in my daily prayers and plant a tree to remember her . May God give strength to her sons and family during this hard time. We pray for her soul to rest in peace

Victoria Anthony Nderumaki, (M.Eng), Local Coordinator, GEF SGP (COMPACT), Tanzania”

“Marie, my sister,

I was very sad to hear that you were very sick and heartbroken ever since I learned about your demise. 16 years of friendship/sisterhood cannot be erased with your demise. Words are not enough to express my feelings. However, I want you to know that you will always have a special place in my heart, and without any doubt, I know that when it is my time to be with the Lord, you would have saved a special place for me too. For your children that you loved so much, I will be there for them whenever they need me; you would have done the same for mine, who love you too and who, like me, are also devastated. Thank you for everything.

I love you very very much, Marie, until we meet again.

Marie-Claire Angwa, UNDP”



“The outpouring of grief from around the globe at the news of Marie’s sudden loss is an enormous loving testament to her remarkable warmth and extraordinary humanity and the effect she had on all of us with her intelligence, concern and commitment. It was indeed a privilege to have been able to work with her but also to have simply shared a meal, a drink, a few moments of her time in laughter or simple conversation. Perhaps our biggest tribute is that she was so deeply loved and will be so intensely missed. When I think of Marie I will remember more than anything her sense of humor, her insights and advice, her laughter, and that dazzling smile. My heart goes out to her two boys, her father, and all who feel this tremendous sense of loss.

Nick Remple, UNDP”



"I am still deeply shocked by the sudden departure of that great friend and beloved human being that will always be Marie. She was an incredibly important person in our 6 years in NY and remained in our memories, hearts and souls since then. She meant smile, strength, courage and enormous good will for the big and small things of our lives. She will continue to be in our lives forever. A Chilean native tree will grow very soon in our country place (Caleu) in her loving memory. But nothing will replace, from our hearts, the love she gave us, and the great moments we shared. This world is a sadder place without her being here.

With love for all who share the loss and particularly for Frederick and Charles,

Rafael Asenjo"

"Con gran pena nos hemos enterado del fallecimiento de Marie, tuvimos la suerte de conocerla en Turquía donde tal cual todos han mencionado fuimos testigos de su gran profesionalismo, entusiasmo, cariño por lo que hacía y siempre con una gran sonrisa, así la recordaremos en Chile. Enviamos nuestras condolencias a su familia en especial a sus hijos.

Alejandra Alarcon, GEF SGP Chile"

"It is with much shock and sadness to learn of the sad news about Marie Khan. SGP Botswana to convey condolences to the family and friends. May God see them through this difficult time.

Elsie Mvimi, SGP Botswana"

"I remember Marie Khan. She was a great support in CPMT for Knowledge management, and her human quality is incomparable. In name of SGP Dominican Republic our to her family and friends.

Alberto Sanchez, GEF SGP Dominican Republic"

"Marie Khan was part our SGP family, our deep condolences from GEF SGP El Salvador to her family en friends.

Juan Rene Guzman, GEF SGP El Salvador"

"Our condolences to her family and friends from SGP Guatemala, she was really a great person, it is so sad news.

Liseth Martinez, SGP Guatemala"

“It is very sad news for all the SGP family and especially for all the ones of us who had the opportunity to share with such a special person. Our condolences from SGP- Costa Rica to her family and friends, and a big hug in this difficult time.

Eduardo Mata, GEF SGP Costa Rica”



“May Allah rest her soul in eternal Peace. Marie Khan (RTD) will shall remember you forever. We shall plant trees in her memory here in Uganda.

Abu-Baker S. Wandera, National Coordinator, GEF SGP Uganda”

“We in SGP-Yemen are shocked by the news of Marie Khan departure. She was a great friend and supporter of the SGP team. I met her for the first time in Istanbul when she showed me how to use the SGP data base. It’s really a loss for our global family. However, let’s continue her working esprit and pray that God bless her soul, place her in heavens and give her children and family all the strength tolerating missing her. Marie Khan will remain in our minds and hearts.

Omar Alsaghier, GEF SGP Yemen”

“It is with shock and sadness to learn of the sad news about Marie Khan. SGP Niger to convey condolences to the family. I meet Marie Khan on Global workshop in Istanbul. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Dans Magaria Bassirou, SGP Niger”

“Although SGP Lao PDR has very little time contacting her, I learnt that SGP family gained huge benefits from Marie throughout the time of her services to SGP. We SGP Lao PDR would like to express our sincere condolence to her family and her love ones.

GEF SGP Lao”

“It's very sad news for every one of us. Marie Khan was a very positive and supportive colleague. Our deep condolences from GEF-SGP Nepal to her family and friends.

Gopal Sherchan, GEF SGP Nepal”



“On behalf of the SGP Team in Zambia, we wish to extend our sincere condolences on the passing away of Marie Khan whom we never met and worked with, but heard a lot of good works done by her. May our good lord rest her soul in perfect Peace.

Gertrude Chiholyonga, GEF SGP Zambia”

“We are deeply saddened with the sudden passing of Marie Khan. Our sincere condolences to her family and her loved ones. God give strength to her family in this difficult moment.

May God rest her soul in perfect peace!

Gadiry Soumah, GEF SGP Guinea”

“I cannot hold back my tears while reading this message. My condolences to Marie Khan who was like a sister to me and guided me the few times that has been on the phone and at the workshop in Dakar in 2004 whose image has remained with me. May his soul rest in peace. Such is life. Marie sleeps in peace.

Aïssata Maïga Koïta, GEF SGP Mali”

“It is with heartfelt grief and sorrow that I would like to add my voice also to all the messages of condolence. Marie was a beloved colleague and friend, and I have so many special memories of times spent with her, and stories and laughter we shared. She impressed everyone with her sharp intelligence, her kind and gentle soul, a wonderful sense of humour and joie de vivre, and her grace and beauty. A truly special person has left this world too soon, but we were all so lucky to have known her.

I have on my office wall a huge world map, one of the things Marie bequeathed me as she was leaving for Montreal, "you should be able to look up and see the world my dear". Thank you dear Marie, for having been a part of my world, I will never forget you.

My deepest condolences to Frederic and Charles, and to the rest of Marie's family and extended circle of friends, may you find the strength to bear the loss.

Tehmina Akhtar, Deputy Global Manager GEF SGP

We will miss Marie very much. Marie was an exceptional person and all the mails that we have shared are full of love, consideration and admiration for her. For all she shared, all she knew and all she gave to the program, to the people and to each of us. Her departure is very sad and we will all miss her. Although her presence will not be anymore within us let us keep in mind and in our hearts, her values and all the positive attitude she always had. Let us remember how inspiring she was, how we appreciated her smile, her generosity, her friendship and try to keep this values in our daily work with the communities and with nature. She will remain with us in all the trees we will plant on her name in the many birds that will come and sing in these trees and in all the energy these trees will bring to the people and to the planet.

We accompany her family in these very difficult moments of sadness and sorrow and from Ecuador we send them love and embrace them with solidarity.

*Anamaria Varea, GEF SGP **Ecuador***

"Many thanks for making Marie continue to live on in our hearts and souls, Sally's message is quite clear in the wonderful feelings that Marie have had always share with us, the ones that have had the blessing to count on her in bad and good times, and all the love that she has been able to put in her endeavours and our lives. Simply, I am sure that we have another angel to look after all of us, a very beautiful, loving, smiling, happy one, indeed.."

God bless you all, with my warmest regards,

Oscar Murga



“On behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago team we would like to convey our deepest condolences. We did not know Marie but she is in our thoughts and prayers. We wish her family strength and serenity.

*Nesha Berry, GEF SGP **Trinidad and Tobago**”*

“I’m also very shocked by this terrible news. I had met Marie once in Istanbul and I had recognized her human qualities, friendship and simplicity. I wish to share my deepest sympathy and my sincere condolences with her two sons, family and friends, at this bad time. With my sincere condolences,

*Badia SAHMY, Programme Assistant, GEF SGP **Morocco**”*

“We deeply mourn the loss of our SGP family member Marie Kfian whom we have never met and had a chance to talk to her. May her soul rest in peace and our sincere condolences to her family.

Tshering Wangdi, Programme Assistant GEF SGP

“On behalf of SGP Bulgaria I would like to say that it is so sad and it is a shock to have such a young and extraordinary person disappear all of a sudden. Let her soul rest in peace and let all the people, who loved her, remain with the wonderful memories of her great life.

*Veslava Abadzhieva, GEF SGP **Bulgaria**”*

"As we can all see the loss of a human being is difficult, especially for those who have known Marie Khan. I never met her before or even have a chance to discuss with her but the pain of each other confirms that her passing is really a great loss for her family, colleagues, friends and the whole vulnerable people that she devoted herself. All our sincere condolences to you all.

Kamga Fogué Aimé, Program Assistant, GEF SGP Cameroon"

"Since I got the message, I'm unable to believe, unable to hold back my tears, unable to write any message. I'm just able to read the answers of our colleagues. I met Marie Khan for the first time in 1999 at Costa Rica during one of our global workshop. Since this, she was my "so loved young sister and friend" and I was her "so loved elder and friend" We exchanged a lot of messages, smiles and secrets. I can't find relevant words to express what she was for me, to talk about her, to express how much I'm. Now, I agree that there are moments where silence is more expressive. I'm sending my message now because we have to send our message before, this noon. So I would just like to send to my "so loved young sister and friend Aminata Marie Khan" this last message in the attached file. We will never forget this dignified daughter of Africa and this brave soldier of the nature and the CBOs.

Of course, we will plant tree for her because here, in Africa, we believe that the people died are never died but they remain with us, in the trees, in the wind, in the rivers. On behalf of all Burkina Faso SGP family's members and stakeholders, our deep condolences and sympathy to all of us and to Marie Khan family. May her soul rest in peace.



Like this baobab tree, our sister and friend Aminata Marie Khan will be in our heart and our life for ever. Pour toi ma regrettée petite sœur et amie, un extrait du poème du poète africain, Birago Diop

Les morts ne sont pas morts.

"Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais morts. Ils sont dans l'arbre qui frémit, ils sont dans l'ombre qui s'éclaire, ils sont dans l'ombre qui s'épaissit; ils sont dans le bois qui gémit. Ils sont dans l'eau qui coule, ils sont dans l'eau qui dort. ils sont dans la case, ils sont dans la foule. Les morts ne sont pas morts."

*Petite sœur, tu seras toujours avec nous, en nous.
Tu diras bonjour à papa bon Dieu et tu prieras pour nous.
Petite sœur et amie, dors en paix car Dieu veillera sur tes enfants chéris.*

Ta grande sœur et amie

Rosalie Congo, GEF SGP Burkina Faso"

"My God!!!!, what a sadness!!!!. We would have met in Durban during the COP17... Marie was so kind. The last time I met Marie was in Cape Town, she will certainly be dearly missed. Please convene my deepest sympathy and my sincere condolences to her family and to the whole SGP world. Attached is a picture we had with Jocelyn Diouf during the global retreat in Istanbul 2006.

Katiella Mai Moussa, UNDP"



"I never met Marie or even have a chance to read from her but the pain of each other confirms that her passing is really a great loss for her family, friends, colleagues and the whole vulnerable community that she devoted herself. My condolence to all!

Gerard MEL GBANDJO, GEF SGP Cote D'Ivoire"

"Like all new NCs it seems I missed the opportunity to meet an exceptional woman. The heartfelt eulogies express exactly what we have missed. Please pass on condolences to her family. I will personally plant that tree for Marie in view of her devotion to helping so many in her lifetime.

Veronique Bonnelame, GEF SGP Seychelles"

"Our deepest condolences to her sons, Frederic and Charles, and to the rest of Marie's family; may they find the force to accept the loss. Should be proud they had a mother like Marie Khan. Marie was exceptional person. She was very helpful with the start up of the GEF SGP Macedonia. Helping me as a brand new NC in person during the Global Workshop in 2005 in Istanbul. And later on, via emails, she was supporting me and assisting me while setting up the connections and access to Data Base and CPMT.

Magnificent person, always there to help and support. We will miss her. Rest in peace.

Zlatko and Melita, GEF SGP Macedonia"

“Knowing Marie Khian and become her friend is very easy. The first thing that comes to my mind her positive spirit expressed in her smile and laugh. It was great to laugh together and “do environment with fun”. Once i read this saying “It is better to fall in love with someone and lose him than not to fall in love at all” Sometimes I question this..... Losing Marie Khian is very difficult to accept. I do not have the words to express my feelings.... God be with her family. Attached are some of her photos in Istanbul and Damascus.

*God bless her soul.
Adnan Melky, GEF SGP Lebanon”*



“ Marie was my sister. I can't find words to express my feeling. Une bonne eau ne dure jamais dans le canari. Marie fait partie des élus qui apportent la vie partout où il y a malheur. Une grande perte. Dieu donne et Dieu reprend. Marie repose toi en paix

Oumar Salim Mohamed Kaba, National Coordinator, GEF SGP Mali”



“Unfortunately I have never had a chance to meet late Marie. But with all the messages pouring in I see that she is going to be missed dearly. On behalf of Malaysia SGP – our deepest condolences to the family.

*Muthusamy Suppiah, National Coordinator, GEF SGP Malaysia”
“Dearest Marie,*

We will always remember you as our most lovely SGP colleague and friend. Rest in peace Marie.

Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, GEF SGP Viet Nam”

“On behalf of Cambodia SGP team and NSC members, we would like to convey our deepest condolence to the family, friends, colleagues and beloved of Marie Khan. We are writing to offer our deepest sympathies at this sad time. With sincere condolence,

Navirak Ngin and the GEF SGP team in Cambodia”

“On behalf of SGP China team, our NSC members and other partners, we would like to convey our deepest condolence to the family, friends, colleagues and beloved of Marie Khan. Although we didn't have chance to meet her personally, we know her beauty of heart, spirit and appearance from our colleagues. Even the God envied the elite and took her back. We feel so sad to lose her as a dear member of our SGP family. We sincerely thank her great contribution to the entire SGP family and we believe her spiritual legacy will still benefit us. She will be continuously in our thoughts and prayers. We share our deep grief with her family and send our love. Wish her family could find courage to bear the loss.

With sincere condolence,

Liu Yi, National Coordinator, GEF SGP China”

“Una mujer bella de cuerpo y alma, con espíritu latino.

Lilliam Jarquin, GEF SGP Nicaragua”



"It happens sometimes in the life a situation where we have a great shock so that we can't express anything. But, it was said by the poet "you will be a man my son, when you will overcome such difficult situation".

May I express my sincere condolences to all of us in SGP and to Marie's family.

Here are attached 2 poems; one in French, the other in English as a tribute to Marie; Marie will live forever.

à Marie KHAN

Marie, mère de vie

Aimée des Maitres des cieux et du souffle suprême

Rayonnante de charme et d'énergie,

Imperturbable malgré les flots tumultueux du SGP,

Écoutée et admirée de tous !

K est l'âme de justice des peuples anciens

Hommage rendu par tes aïeux peulh à la puissance des Dieux,

Abattue par la tristesse, mais non vaincu !

Non, je dirai que tu n'es pas partie car ton énergie demeure.

A tribute for Marie KHAN

Mary, the mother of live

As it was given from the highest lord

River of so much energy in the job

Impertubable despite the waves of SGP

Encouraging each of us in difficult situations

K is the soul of justice from your Fullani name

Honorable is what you have done in the life

As now you are leaving for your last travel

Nobody in the SGP family will forget you!

Cyriaque N'GORAN,

A brother from Côte d'Ivoire

SGP Family "

"Despite not being able to meet Marie, by reading the emails and seeing her photos have allowed me to use this opportunity to also extend heartfelt condolence to Marie. We too are very appreciative of the great contribution that she made to the SGP which most, if not all, are now benefiting from. May her beautiful soul rest in peace and her great work and purpose continue.

Hyacinth Douglas, GEF SGP Jamaica Country Team"

“It is so sad to hear of her passing at such a young age. I didn’t know her but after reading all the messages posted she had to be a wonderful person because of her giving nature. I heard that she was always helping others, truthful and that she had a great sense of humor. By looking at her pictures you can see that she is always smiling and was radiating joy, peace and happiness. She has impacted and touched the lives of so many people around the world. She will be deeply missed. Rest in peace.

Maria Jose Modelo, GEF SGP Global Team”

“Even though I did not overlap with Marie while she was at SGP, I have been lucky enough to witness her legacy not only in SGP (Communications, KM, Gender Mainstreaming) but in her latest role as Gender Focal Point for the CBD Secretariat. The first time I met Marie was in a side event she was organizing to showcase the process of mainstreaming gender in the CBD and I was impressed by her beautiful, yet powerful presence and her leadership. She also played a fundamental role in helping to mainstream gender in the GEF, the UNFCCC and the UNCCD, a legacy that will benefit women around the world.

Later that year (2010), Marie joined us in a site visit we organized to SGP projects in Mexico during the UNFCCC COP 16. In that occasion I was able to also see her human qualities, her joy, passion, commitment, sense of humor, camaraderie and her strong commitment to the SGP Family. In many of the events I attended Marie, made always mentioned the success of SGP in mainstreaming gender and working at the community level. I was looking forward to seeing her in Durban.

Even though she is not with us anymore, her legacy will always be with us. Attached are a few pictures from that site visit.

My deep condolences to her family and friends,

Ana Maria Currea, Communications and Knowledge Management Specialist, GEF SGP Global Team”



“People’s hearts around the world are filled with heaviness. So many kind words have been said, and I only find my clumsiness in expressing my sorrow and feeling of injustice for such an untimely and premature departure. Marie left CPMT one month before I joined, and I inherited the office from her. Therefore, I feel particularly connected with her somehow, and I kept some of the decorations of hers in the office. She came back to visit us frequently. I was charmed by her inner and outer beauty immediately. Later through a common friend, I learned much about her being a proud and model mother of two boys, and they were her life. She has never left SGP, and will always remain part of us. Until now, we are still using some of the materials and tools developed by her.

Marie, a truly indomitable spirit who has touched upon so many people’s life, will always remain as inspiration for us. May her honorable spirit, wisdom and strength lead the two boys and her family through the difficult time. Marie, rest in peace.

With deep condolence,

Sulan Chen, International Waters and Chemicals Programme Specialist, GEF SGP Global Team”

Below we have taken the liberty to include other tributes to Marie from other organizations:



United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

A Wonderful Life Cut Short

MARIE AMINATA KHAN



We are profoundly saddened to announce the untimely death of our very dear friend and colleague, Ms. Marie Aminata Khan, who passed away in Johannesburg on 12th December 2011 at the age of 47 years. Marie spent over 17 years of her professional career working with the United Nations, notably with UN-HQ in New York, UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, New York and, since 2006, UNEP-SCBD in Montreal, Canada.

Most recently, Marie served as Programme Officer for Gender at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Environment Programme, where she pioneered the recently adopted CBD programme of work on gender. In this capacity Marie worked closely with the UN Conventions on Climate Change and Desertification and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Marie will be remembered as a highly competent and dedicated colleague, as well as a very caring, lively and good-natured friend. She will be sorely missed.

Arrangements are being made by her family for Marie to be buried in New York beside her late mother at a date that will be communicated soon. She is survived by her two sons, Frederic and Charles, her father, step-mother, brothers and sisters.



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Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility, and the GEF staff join the secretariat of the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in mourning the loss of a highly respected colleague and dear friend, Ms. Marie Aminata Khan, of the CBD. Marie passed away in Johannesburg on December 12, 2011, at the age of 47. For more than 17 years of her professional career, Marie worked with the United Nations, serving at U.N. headquarters in New York, the U.N. Development Programme and the GEF Small Grants Programme, and, since 2006, in Montreal with the U.N. Environment Programme's Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In the latter assignment, Marie served as Program Officer for Gender, where she pioneered the recently adopted CBD program of work on gender. In this capacity Marie worked closely with the U.N. Conventions on Climate Change and Desertification and the GEF. Her friends and colleagues at the GEF will remember Marie as a highly competent and dedicated colleague, as well as a very caring, lively, and good-natured friend. She will be sorely missed. (see official message from CBD here: www.cbd.int)

Many of GEFSEC staff members who had the good fortune to work with Marie express some of their memories below in words and pictures.

Statement of Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility: *"I was very saddened to learn of the passing of Marie Khan of the Convention on Biodiversity. Marie was a trusted and beloved colleague of the staff of the Global Environment Facility, and a personal friend of mine. All of us at the GEF send our prayers and condolences to Marie's colleagues at CBD and to her family."*

Personal notes from GEFSEC staff:

"Marie was an instant inspiration from the day I first met her, and she kept inspiring me every time we had an exchange. We even started dreaming up ideas for our home country Sierra Leone. Her understanding of gender policy issues in environment and development were unrivaled. She will be missed dearly. May her soul Rest in Perfect Peace"

- Mohamed Imam Bakarr

"I knew Marie for the last decade through her career at UNEP and at the CBD Secretariat. She was always a delight to run into and one of the constants in the GEF constellation of actors. We always updated each other on the status of our respective families and marveled at how the children seemed to experience accelerating growth. I wish her family and friends solace as they handle the loss in their lives."

- Ramesh Ramankutty

"Marie was a very skilled communicator, she had the remarkable ability to build bridges between a number of institutions positioned across the wide spectrum of international environmental politics. I always appreciated how she managed to strike a work - life balance that was filled with joy for life itself, with passion for work and compassion for her friends. We have been waiting for her at the COP in Durban but she never made it there, and she never made it back home either, which is tragic. Her absence will be felt painfully wherever she was supposed to be in future."

- Christian Hofer

"Marie was a very dear colleague, a wonderful human being, and a real joy to be around. It was a privilege to have known her. She will be sorely missed."

- Gustavo Alberto Fonseca

"Marie and I would see each other working at the exhibits of the large COPs and during the Assembly. I will remember her sweet even disposition, a kind soul and a good sport. She was great company. I remember I would kid her whenever she needed something from me and I would ask her "What will you give me?" That always cracked me up. I would of course help her whenever I could and I thought of her as my little sister. Marie we miss you. Wherever you are we hope you're happy."

- Raul Rodríguez

"Marie, I've only known you for a few months but it was enough to learn what a beautiful person you were. I will miss you, RIP."

- Aziza Akhatova



Photo: Marie Khan with the GEFSEC delegation to the UNCCD COP 10 in October 2011, Changwon, Korea.

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UNCCD Secretariat sends condolences to family of Marie Aminata Khan and her CBD colleagues

It is with profound sadness that I learned of the passing away yesterday of Ms Marie Aminata Khan, Programme Officer for Gender at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). My secretariat shares the loss with the CBD.

Marie was instrumental in the development of the UNCCD Gender Policy Framework that was recently adopted at the 10th session Conference of the Parties in Changwon, Republic of Korea. Her ability to seamlessly fit into the secretariat during her secondment by the CBD to assist us at the UN General Assembly High level meeting in New York in September and at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties in October are testimony to her spirit of openness and belief in the United Nations as a family that delivers best when it works as one.

Marie not only made a distinct contribution to the partnership between UNCCD and CBD, but also brought a unique vibrancy and conviviality to our collective endeavors. Our heartfelt condolences go out to her immediate family, and to her friends and colleagues. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

Luc Gnacadja
Executive Secretary

In Memoriam - Marie Aminata Khan
CBD Tribute



Profile of Marie Khan by the Westmount Independent

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT
June 6, 2022
Westmount, Quebec, Westmount, Quebec
vol. 1, No. 1

Westmount sustainable?
City embarks on comprehensive social and environment development plan

Summit Park unleashed

Brickpoint will remain open


Cathy Moore Suffice
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Westmount Profile: Marie Aminata Khan
Furthering global biodiversity



Westmount Profile: Marie Aminata Khan
Furthering global biodiversity

Marie Aminata Khan is a woman of many talents. She is a mother, a professional, and a global citizen. Her journey from a small town in Nigeria to Westmount, Quebec, is a testament to her resilience and determination. She has worked for the United Nations, where she has been instrumental in advancing biodiversity and environmental conservation. Her work has taken her to various parts of the world, including Africa, where she has seen the impact of climate change firsthand. Despite the challenges she has faced, Marie remains optimistic and committed to making a positive impact on the world. She is currently based in Westmount, where she continues to work on global biodiversity issues while also enjoying the local community and lifestyle. Her story is one of inspiration and achievement, showing that with hard work and a passion for one's work, anything is possible.

“When a broken water main on Grosvenor left Marie Aminata Khan without water service one winter day this year, she was completely unfazed. “My neighbours were so amazed that I was going outside to collect snow and boiling it to wash in,” she recalls with a smile. “But this is reality in Africa, where you try to keep a couple of buckets of water in reserve.”

And for this resourceful mother of two, who has lived and worked in many lands, it was Marie’s turn to be surprised when Westmount began distributing bottled drinking water to the anxious residents. After 15 years in various UN positions, Marie is now settling into life in Westmount and her newest posting with he

United Nations as Information Officer for the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, located in Montreal.

“For me, Montreal is just an ideal choice,” she says. “Its lifestyle is midway between European and North American. “I love my home here and feel very safe. The people are extremely nice and my family is adapting well.”

Citizen of the world

And Marie can truly be called a citizen of world – a lifestyle she has inherited. As the daughter of parents working for the UN, she spent her first 20 years travelling between New York and England, Sierra Leone, Cameroon and Niger. So where does she call home?

“That’s a problem,” she says. “But everywhere I go, I make it home because I have no clue where I’m going next or where I will end up.” Marie is proud of her second name Aminata. “It comes from the name Mohammed’s mother, which is Amna,” she explains. “Aminata is also my grandmother’s name.”

Born in Manchester, England, Marie lived there for seven months until she moved to Sierra Leone, where she was raised by her grandparents until age 7 when her parents settled in New York City. Her father was working with the UN. Her mother was then an information officer with the African Union.

Marie attended boarding school on the Isle of Wight in England. “It taught me responsibility and independence,” she recalls. “I learned to count on me, myself and I. When I reached university, I was well able to handle my own finances. “In my turn, I’m trying to instill this part of my growing up in my own sons.” They are Frederick and Charles, both attending St. George’s School.

Marie also swam and played on school field hockey and netball teams, “always just for fun.” She also excelled at tennis, which she still plays. “Nowadays,” she muses, “the fun seems to have gone out of competitive sport.” After age 12, Marie spent a year in school in Sierra Leone, before completing high school at the International School in New York City.

A people person and humanitarian, Marie always wanted to be a doctor. “But that changed when I got to university,” she says. And a year at Plattsburgh University turned out to be a cultural shock. “For the first time, I was coming out a multi-cultural environment into a totally American one.” So, when Marie’s father was transferred to Cameroon, she accompanied him, studying linguistics, and obtaining a BA in translation in 1985. Immediately after, she went to Senegal to do her masters studies in English literature at the University of Dakar. “The student strikes were so disruptive that I returned to New York.”

The Nouvelle Frontière and the UN

There, she began working for a French charter tour organization called Nouvelle Frontière. Interestingly, it was that experience as a tour guide that led her to apply at the UN in 1989. “I had always said I wouldn’t join the UN because my father was there,” she says. “So I applied using a different family name. Actually, it was very funny. The recruiter – who happened to know my mother from the African Union before she joined the UN – recognized the resemblance.”

(Marie’s mother joined the UN to work as a civilian peacekeeper in Somalia. In the midst of the 1990s conflict, she was the director of one of the zones under fire.)

Marie was subsequently hired at the UN where she guided hundreds of people through the headquarters. She resigned in 1994 when her husband, also with the UN, was transferred to Niger in the Development Program. For the next three years, she freelanced for Etruscan, a Canadian mining company, doing translation and data entry, and later worked as a librarian for the American School of Niamey, capital of Niger.

Back to the UN

Returning to NYC in 1997, Marie rejoined the UN, “starting again at the bottom!” This time she worked in the Water Division of the Sustainable Energy & Environmental Division, progressing through several positions to become the program assistant to countries in development.

Increasingly, Marie became involved in different areas of the program’s work, latterly as Knowledge Facilitator for Knowledge Management & Information Outreach for the Small Grants Program of the Global Environment Facility.

She arrived in Canada last October on her current posting, moving to Westmount at the suggestion of a relocation consultant. “For me, the most important thing was finding schools for the boys within walking distance – and, living close to public transit.” Marie lives the role she works. Car-free, she enjoys being close to the YMCA where she swims and jazz dances. Also, she adds, she’s not far from New York where she visits her brother, a personal fitness trainer to VIPs, and to Washington, where her sister works with US government’s Millennium Program.

Work and home

Marie tries not to bring work home from office, she says. Among her responsibilities as Information Officer are preparing press releases as well as statements for the agency's Executive Secretary. Recently, she has been involved in the UN's International Day for Biological Diversity, May 22, celebrated in Montreal at the Botanical Garden.

While members of her team participated locally, Marie was at UN headquarters in New York for the occasion. "Now, with all the scientific studies," she says, "the evidence is that the changes in climate are affecting life on Earth – tough on plants and humans." And for Marie, her work is perhaps a reflection of her own upbringing that included an instinctive desire to care for the world environment and biodiversity.

"I think if you just live in one society, you tend to take things for granted," she says. "But when you see firsthand the conditions many people live in, you have to thank God every day and say, 'I really don't have anything to complain about'."

http://www.westmountindependent.com/Wst_Ind_v1.2_June6_lr.pdf (page 9)