

# UPDATE FROM THE RESOURCE CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS - SPRING 2007

## MARCH 2007

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day is celebrated all over the world on March 8<sup>th</sup>. This year the global theme for the day was Ending Impunity for Violence against Women and the RCWP held a conference on the subject of how harmful practices could be resolved through policy. The conference was attended by female members of the Wolesi and Meshrano Jirgas and Kabul Provincial Council, representatives of six Afghan women's NGOs, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), the AIHRC and UNIFEM.

**Ms Mazari Safa, Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs addresses MPs on International Women's Day**



The event was opened by Ms Mazari Safa, Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs who spoke about MoWA's aim to create a secure environment for women outside of the home. The group of 6 NGOs, identified five areas where

women suffer particularly high rates of violence in Afghanistan; *Bad* and *Badal*; elderly abuse; child and forced marriage; self immolation; and elopement. Dr. Sobrang of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission introduced their report on Self Immolation; copies are available in the RCWP.



The majority of the participants in the conference agreed that these matters should be discussed more often and MoWA is hoping to establish ongoing dialogue relating to women's safety outside of the home.

### TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

UNIFEM partnered with the Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) in organising workshops on

'Transformative Leadership'. Three groups participated in the workshops that took place in RCWP. The first group consisted of prominent women working in Government ministries; the second the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Elimination of Violence against Women; and the third included members of Kabul, Logar, Nangahar, Kapisa and Parwan Provincial Councils. During these workshops, the participants were introduced to various tools and strategies for the promotion of women's rights in their daily work. In the second stage of these workshops, 80 members of these three groups travelled to the Philippines to participate in the second stage of workshops. The strategic plans that were developed in the Philippines are now being turned into concrete action and UNIFEM is supporting this process through follow-up sessions with these groups in Kabul and the surrounding provinces.

## APRIL 2007

### **MEDIA LAW**

At the start of April the Parliament released its legislative calendar for the period up to the summer recess. One Legislative decree which caused some concern amongst members of Afghan Civil Society, the International Community and many MPs was the Media Law.



UNIFEM facilitated discussions among CSOs at the RCWP on the implications this law would have on Women's rights in Afghanistan and also facilitated a meeting in Parliament between CSOs and MPs on the subject.

UNIFEM joined UNESCO, UNAMA, UNDP and Internews among others in supporting the Afghan National Journalists Union in holding a one day conference on Democracy and Freedom of Speech in Afghanistan. Parliamentarians, Government officials, the international community, the media and other CSOs participated in this conference.

UNIFEM was pleased to invite Zhila Baniyaghoob, Iranian journalist and women's rights activist, to hold an event specifically related to women's rights and the media and how to use the media as an effective tool for lobbying on women's rights issues. Zhila is one of the founders of the 'one million signatures campaign' which aims to raise awareness and put pressure on the authorities to alter legislation which is detrimental to women in Iran: [www.we-change.org](http://www.we-change.org)

### **MEDIA TRAINING**

Continuing on the theme of the importance of the media to politics in Afghanistan the RCWP began a series of courses on using the media as an advocacy tool. UNIFEM partnered with the NGO, NAI to deliver two week long media-seminar to members of CSOs, students of Kabul University, members of Kabul Provincial Council and some members of the Meshrano and Wolesi Jirgas.

Once the theoretical work had been completed with the media experts, practical sessions were organised with NAI and Voice of Women radio where the participants were able to put their

media-communication skills into practice.

The media-seminars are ongoing and anyone who would like to participate can contact the RCWP [0700274124 / [caroline.hames@unifem.org](mailto:caroline.hames@unifem.org)]

## MAY 2007

### COMPUTER SKILLS

In May UNDP and UNIFEM joined together to provide ongoing computer support in the RCWP. Members of Parliament, Provincial Councillors and CSOs are welcome to make use of this facility at a time convenient to them.

### GENDER BUDGETING

The Women's Network of MPs and CSOs asked UNIFEM and NDI to facilitate a deeper understanding of the processes required to carry out Gender Budgeting in Afghanistan. Initial sessions involved representatives from SUNY who have been working on the budgeting process in Afghanistan for some time. UNIFEM then invited Ms Rashmi Verma, a specialist from India, to come and assess the requirements for effective gender budgeting to be carried out in Afghanistan. Ms Verma, who has worked with the Indian government on gender budgeting for many years met with a number of members of parliament and worked with them on gender budgeting.

### EXCHANGE TRIP TO TURKEY

16 female members of parliament were selected by the Committee of Immunity and Privileges of both houses of the National Assembly to take part in a trip to Turkey, which was partly funded by UNIFEM. The MPs took part in pre-departure orientation sessions regarding the Media and Legislation.

During the visit to Turkey, the MPs exchanged experiences with leaders in

Turkey on legislation, leadership, caucusing and media relations and were hosted for dinner by the Afghan Ambassador to Turkey.

## JUNE 2007

### INTERNATIONAL GUESTS

On 18<sup>th</sup> June 16 Norwegian MPs were invited to take part in a lunch-meeting with female members of Afghan Civil Society. The topic of the discussions was the space for women to exercise their rights in Afghanistan today. Many raised the problem of threats women in prominent positions are currently facing.

### UNIFEM and HBF PARLIAMENT PROJECT

UNIFEM and the Heinrich Boll Foundation are working with visiting academic, Dr Andrea Fleschenberg to conduct a research study.



UNIFEM and HBF training researchers.

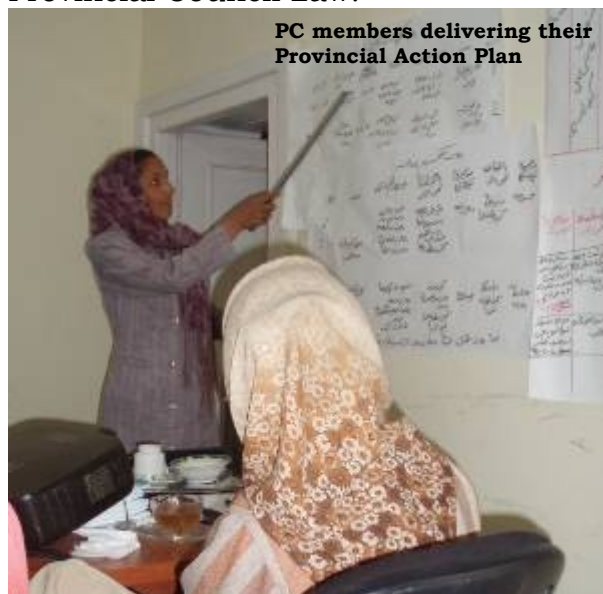
The study will be carried out with all women parliamentarians represented in both the lower and the upper house of parliament. We would like to learn about the experiences of women MPs in Afghanistan, how effectively they feel they can exercise their mandate and what differences they feel they could make in current Afghan politics. We hope that our findings and recommendations will provide not only insight into the efforts undertaken by female politicians, but will also indicate possible avenues for more effective and

efficient work with Afghanistan's newly established political institutions for the future development of Afghanistan and its people. The project started in June and we aim to complete it by September.

## JULY 2007

### PROVINCIAL COUNCIL WORKSHOPS

Following on from the lessons learnt from their Transformative Leadership Training in the Philippines, members from each of the Provincial Councils involved participated in further workshops in order to prepare them to pass on their knowledge gained to their colleagues. UNIFEM is now facilitating follow up workshops with PC members in their provinces with the aim of assisting each Provincial Council to develop their own action plan in line with their mandate under the Provincial Council Law.



## ONGOING WORK

### TOOLKITS

UNIFEM has been working on a number of Toolkits for use by Members of Parliament, Provincial Councillors and CSOs in their work. The first Toolkit to be produced concerns

*International Instruments for the Protection of Women's Rights.* You will find a copy in your parliamentary pigeon holes, feel free to collect further copies from the RCWP.

Future toolkits will focus on Legislative processes, drafting legislation, gender budgeting and politics. If there are particular topics that you would like to see covered in these toolkits, please contact the RCWP.

### LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

The RCWP aims to provide support to MPs in legislative processes through a network of legislative experts who can analyse legislation from a gender perspective and support the process of drafting and amending legislation.

### PUBLIC AWARENESS

The RCWP would like to assist MPs and PC members to publicise the good work they carry out both in Parliament and their constituencies. We invite Parliamentarians and Provincial Council Members to bring information on the work you are doing to the RCWP in order that we might help you to publicise your work.

One way of doing this will be through the production of a newsletter containing information about the political activities of women in Afghanistan including information about all your good endeavours.

### NETWORKING

Through the centre's broad network of contacts we are able to facilitate meetings in the centre with CSOs, PCs, Ministry representatives and members of the international community for Members of Parliament, please get in contact if you would like assistance in this matter.