

the trust fund to eliminate violence against women

UNIFEM, founded in 1976, is the women's fund at the United Nations that provides financial support and technical assistance to innovative programs promoting women's human rights, their economic and political empowerment, and gender equality in over 100 countries. In 1996, the UN General Assembly, in recognition of UNIFEM's pioneering role and leadership in the effort to end violence against women, established a unique trust fund within UNIFEM (Resolution 50/166) to support actions to end violence. The **UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women** is the only multilateral grant-making mechanism that supports local, national and regional efforts to combat violence. Since it began, more than \$8.3 million has been disbursed to programs around the globe in more than 96 countries. Raising awareness of women's human rights, these UNIFEM-supported efforts have:

- linked activists and advocates from all parts of the world,
- shown how small, innovative projects impact laws, policies and attitudes, and
- helped break the wall of silence, moving the issue onto public agendas everywhere.

With grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000, trust fund projects conduct public education and awareness campaigns, build coalitions, involve law-enforcement, judicial and government agencies; and train educators, healthcare personnel and police officials to respond to and prevent violence. Many projects strive to alter community attitudes and involve men as allies.

UNIFEM's analysis of the overall trends of gender-based violence confirms that it remains an unacceptable reality in women's lives: violence within families exacts a high cost, and harmful traditional practices exert its toll. Failing economies

- coupled with discrimination and inequality - heighten women's vulnerability to violence, keeping them dependent, their options limited. In conflict and post-conflict countries, women are singled out for sexual abuse and human trafficking by competing armed forces.



resources for action

Contributions from the governments of Japan, Italy, Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Iceland as well as from Zonta International, UNIFEM National Committees, Johnson & Johnson and others enable UNIFEM to award approximately \$1 million in grants each year. But demand far exceeds available funds. For example, last year UNIFEM received 270 proposals with funding requests of more than \$15 million. The overwhelmingly response demonstrates the commitment worldwide to expand work on the ground to combat gender-based violence. But the challenge is clear: the lack of resources severely constrains the scale and scope of comprehensive activities to change attitudes and laws, build constituencies and accountability, provide shelter and services.



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trust fund projects: reaching women at risk, generating change

In **Rwanda**, women ex-combatants and community groups are learning to address gender-based violence through prevention, protection and support mechanisms. **Women's peace networks** in **Serbia** and **Montenegro** are being strengthened to promote reconciliation. In **Peru**, the recommendation of the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** to raise awareness about gender-based violence is being implemented. Women in **Nepal** are using **radio and community discussion groups** to create a space where women can speak against violence.

The Trust Fund awarded the International Association of Women's Judges a small grant to train judges in **Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe**. A year later, four cases brought by women complainants in **Tanzania** were decided in their favor.

One of the biggest challenges in the work of eliminating violence against women is documenting its incidence and prevalence. A Trust Fund-supported project reversed this trend in **Yemen**, by building capacity among law enforcement officials and the judiciary and informing women about their rights.

Economic and social difficulties suffered during the transition period contributed to heightened violence in **Kyrgyzstan**. A Trust Fund project mobilized rural women to create self help support groups and linked them to law enforcement bodies and educational institutions.

A coalition of NGOs working with the **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights** succeeded in increasing international attention to the assassinations of women in **Ciudad Juárez**, where over 270 young women have been brutally murdered since 1993.

Projects are selected annually through a competitive request for proposal process publicized through UNIFEM's field offices and other networks. Project appraisal committees that include UN-agency representatives, non-governmental organizations working in related areas and UNIFEM determine the final selection of grantees.

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UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, is raising the profile of the issue of violence against women, highlighting effective strategies, and urging that resources be invested to reduce gender-based violence.

Individuals, philanthropic institutions, organizations and corporations can support the UN Trust Fund for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. For details contact the Public Affairs Specialist, Joan Libby-Hawk, 212.906.6390, joan.libby-hawk@undp.org.

For Trust Fund application guidelines, visit the violence against women section at UNIFEM's website.

For UNIFEM publications and more information on its work on violence against women, please visit the website at www.unifem.org.

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supporting local innovation for global impact

In **Zimbabwe**, UNIFEM's Trust Fund supports a rare organization - the *Network for Zimbabwe Positive Women (NZPW+)* - specifically for HIV positive women. Three years ago, the doors opened and no one walked through them. Women needing help were too afraid or too ashamed. Executive Director Angeline Chiwetani says "It was very difficult to get them to break the silence." UNIFEM's grant supported NZPW+'s launch of the *Memory Book* project that helps women learn the skills and find the strength to break their silence about the disease. A training project called *Stepping Stones* helps shatter the stigma and involve the community - including some men - into caring for infected people. "Now people realize that HIV/AIDS is a problem that impacts every community," explains Chiwetani.

Chief Justice of **India**, A.M. Ahmadi, told his colleagues, "We all carry biases within us and reflect them in the quality of justice that we make available to women." He recommended that they participate in a week-long training conducted by *Sakshi*, an Indian Women's NGO. Through the program supported by UN's Trust Fund, the judges met survivors of rape, dowry-related violence and domestic abuse in women's shelters, not in the courtroom. They heard first hand what the women experienced, and what barriers they confronted in any attempt to find protection or justice. To prepare for training judges, *Sakshi* researched women's rights in the judicial system finding that in India less than 10 percent of the defendants in rape trials are convicted, and those who are, received mild punishments. While the real results take place in the courtroom, the training program succeeded in jumpstarting a process to sensitize Indian judges. After the *Sakshi* experience, the judges requested a training of trainers and are now educating their peers.

Unlikely as it seems, combining gender-based violence prevention with men focused on football resulted in changing attitudes in one community in **Honduras**. The plan was part of a UNIFEM-funded project to prevent domestic violence submitted to UNIFEM by the mayor's office. The men in the room gathered for the training after agreeing to the mayor's offer to purchase new equipment in exchange for their help in educating the community. While it took some time, eventually some of the men participated and then some more. In the weeks that followed, local trainers facilitated sessions with the teams every Sunday morning - discussions ranged from domestic and sexual violence, to machismo behavior and women's human rights, and then football. Women and children became involved, going to the games with signs, "We want a Life Free from Violence." And the football players requested more training after the project's end, and formed a peace group to educate others in the community.

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"We are learning how to stop the violence. These projects reflect the increasing commitment that exists worldwide to protect women's rights, provide services for victims and punish crimes of violence against women and girls."

Noleen Heyzer
Executive Director, UNIFEM



United Nations Development Fund for Women

