
UNIFEM AT A GLANCE

Achieving Gender Equality in Democratic Governance

One of the pillars of UNIFEM's work is women's political participation, a fundamental prerequisite for gender equality and genuine democracy. Around the world, however, in times of peace and especially of war, women's participation continues to be extremely limited. As a result, laws, policies and government institutions fall short, neither reflecting the needs of all citizens nor supporting progress on women's rights.

UNIFEM Responds: Strategies That Make a Difference

UNIFEM works on four strategic entry points that can rapidly advance the status of women by catalyzing wide-ranging, long-term impacts.

Using CEDAW to frame new laws: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women offers comprehensive global standards on women's rights. UNIFEM programmes equip women with the skills to translate the convention, now ratified by the majority of the world's governments, into legal guarantees of gender equality.

Building partnerships for participation: UNIFEM draws together women's organizations, governments, the United Nations and the private sector to foster women's roles in governance. Programmes help bring more women into all levels of government, train women leaders, and equip women with the skills to actively participate in elections as candidates and voters.

Bringing equality into reconstruction: As conflicts draw to a close, the process of building a new government begins. UNIFEM works to advance gender equality by supporting new legislation, backing women's leadership and equal representation, and widening the space for women's participation at peace tables.

Pursuing gender justice: Gender justice requires every dimension of justice to incorporate gender perspectives. It rests upon the full participation of women in shaping legal institutions that promote their rights, equality and inclusion. UNIFEM supports women's efforts to change discriminatory laws, address violations of human rights and war crimes, and eliminate the injustices stemming from political, economic and social inequalities.

At Work Around the World

UNIFEM promotes women's empowerment, rights and gender equality globally, and through 15 sub-regional and two national offices that support programmes within and among individual countries.

Africa

UNIFEM nurtured two years of concerted lobbying by women's activists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that resulted in a Constitution guaranteeing women's full participation in peace-building. Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission now includes a witness

protection programme to help women report gender-based violence. In Southern African countries holding elections, the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus is partnering with UNIFEM to advocate for the fulfilment of a 30-per-cent quota for women in politics agreed by the Southern African Development Community.

Arab States

Years of sustained UNIFEM support bore fruit when Morocco introduced progressive, gender-sensitive changes to the Labour Code, the Penal Procedures Code, the Penal Code and the Civil Registration Law. The new measures combat forced prostitution, sexual harassment, honour killings, domestic violence and rape. In Syria, the fund has backed a media campaign on CEDAW in major newspapers

Asia and the Pacific

In Timor-Leste, UNIFEM has helped organize political skills workshops that have encouraged women to run for office; a new NGO active on women and politics is now training women candidates for village elections. In Afghanistan, UNIFEM worked closely with women delegates to the Constitutional Loya Jirga, brokering broad-based alliances and bringing in an expert on Shari'a law and women's rights from the Arab region. The Constitution that resulted recognizes women's equality and guarantees women a minimum number of seats in the legislature.

CEE/CIS

UNIFEM partnered with six countries in Central and Eastern Europe to see how the use of CEDAW could improve women's limited political presence. The Czech Republic subsequently agreed to pursue a law introducing a 30 per cent quota; Croatia adopted gender equality legislation. A UNIFEM-supported Women's Peace Council in Georgia brought together women leaders from the Georgian and Abkhaz communities — the first step women had taken to re-establish trust amidst lingering instability.

Latin America and the Caribbean

With UNIFEM's assistance, women's groups have convinced Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to declare that rape is a weapon of war. The commission has now agreed that victims of sexual violence are entitled to reparations. Ongoing work with the Government of Colombia emphasizes the compliance of national legislation on women's rights with Security Council Resolution 1325.

Globally

The Security Council's groundbreaking resolution 1325 marked the first time the council made a serious commitment to dealing with the impacts of conflict on women. Passed in 2000, the resolution now guides UNIFEM's global Peace and Security programme and other activities related to conflict prevention and peace-building. Since the resolution highlighted the gap in information on women and conflict, UNIFEM set up a Web portal, www.WomenWarPeace.org. A rich resource, it features timely information on women in current conflicts and the ways that women are participating in peace processes. The site has already received several million hits from around the world.