
UNIFEM AT A GLANCE

Women's Human Rights

All UNIFEM programmes support women's human rights, because women suffer from the denial of these rights in all regions of the world. Women's rights are violated wherever they are poorer than men, confront discrimination in access to land and employment, or don't participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Other obstacles to rights arise when women are prevented from going to school or attaining health care, or are subject to harmful traditional practices.

UNIFEM Responds: Strategies That Make a Difference

The principles enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights infuse UNIFEM's work on women's human rights. These milestone commitments call for women's equality in all spheres of life. The fund also taps into the far-reaching commitments of other international treaties, including those on civil and political rights, children's rights and the elimination of racial discrimination.

Programmes based on rights: UNIFEM's support for advancing women's human rights starts with consistent connections to rights across its four fundamental programming areas: reducing feminized poverty, ending violence against women, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and achieving gender equality in democratic governance. Programming based on rights implies that attention should go first to the most marginalized groups, even within women at large, and that a top priority is the continued expansion of women's participation and empowerment.

CEDAW: With women in every region turning to CEDAW as a human rights tool, UNIFEM assists projects that help women map discrepancies between national laws and the convention, and look for ways to claim what the treaty promises. UNIFEM works with governments to improve their ability to pursue policies and laws that uphold CEDAW, and to monitor progress. Collaborations between governments and women's groups help identify gaps in implementation, while bringing women's everyday experiences into national decision-making.

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 helped women across the region ensure that when the African Union adopted the Additional Protocol on Women's Rights, it reflected CEDAW's standards. In Kenya, UNIFEM assisted women's groups with a constitutional review that ushered in sweeping new provisions related to property, marriage and citizenship rights. The UNIFEM-supported Southern African

Women Judge's network aims to correct gender biases in judicial systems, increase women's representation in the judiciary and encourage the national embrace of international human rights standards.

Arab States

Heeding the concerns of the CEDAW Committee and with UNIFEM assistance, Morocco has amended its family law to emphasize the equality and joint responsibilities of husbands and wives. In six Arab countries, UNIFEM has drawn together a network of experts on women's human rights and CEDAW.

Asia and the Pacific

The Samoan Ministry of Women's affairs turned to UNIFEM to convene key national officials, community organizations, representatives of local governments and women's groups to develop a National Plan of Action on CEDAW. In Nepal, where women migrant workers have faced routine rights violations, the government has now established mandatory pre-departure orientation sessions. These inform women of their rights under labour laws and where they can turn for assistance.

CEE/CIS

In Kyrgyzstan, rural women are among the most vulnerable segments of society, but embedded forms of discrimination have barred most from the benefits of land reform. UNIFEM has worked on a number of fronts: helping to draft policies and amendments to the Land Code; training local government officials to extend support to women, and assisting rural women to learn about and claim their rights.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Continued UNIFEM assistance has helped the Latin American Social Science Facility annually calculate the compliance of governments with their commitments to gender equality; women's groups in the region use the "Índice de Compromisos Cumplidos" for discussions with national officials. The Brazil Racial Equity Project links race and gender in initiatives that encompass budget analysis, policy planning, affirmative action plans and disaggregated data.

Globally

The Global to Local programme brings women's NGOs to CEDAW Committee meetings at the UN in New York. Women learn about the convention and its reporting process, and submit their perspectives to the committee on the status of CEDAW in their countries. UNIFEM field offices also assist women in individual countries to prepare shadow reports in the years when their governments present updates to the committee.