



DEMOCRACY

With Women, For Women

Seven grants that helped change the face of governance
The UNDEF-UNIFEM partnership: first-round results and lessons



Grants Profiled in This Publication

UNDEF Round I, 2006-2008

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Youth Claim Their Rights

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Cover photo: Women in Sudan celebrate progress on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (UN Photo/Tim McKulk).

AN OVERVIEW

Results and Lessons

This publication presents an overview and brief analysis of the first round of grants issued by the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) in partnership with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Both organizations are engaged in advancing gender equality and democratic governance around the world. The following pages probe, in a concise fashion, what was achieved through seven grants to improve women's political participation in a diverse set of countries and regions.

A series of project profiles, drawn from reports and independent evaluations, summarizes objectives and activities, results, challenges, lessons and ideas for future work. Collectively and individually, the profiles shed light on effective strategies in implementing gender and governance programmes. This information may be useful for people carrying out or funding similar initiatives, or for gender advocates, governance specialists and researchers interested in a concise overview of recent experiences illustrating advancements in women's political participation.

Since 2006, UNDEF has provided grants to strengthen democratic governance in over 100 countries. UNIFEM works with about 10 percent of UNDEF projects to inject its long-standing expertise in gender equality and governance. While all UNDEF projects contribute to realizing gender equality goals, UNIFEM puts deliberate emphasis on ensuring that women have an equal voice in all aspects of governance, peace and security and public decision-making. Globally, progress towards a gender balance in politics is being made, but the pace of change is slow, and the number of women in political offices remains low.

In 2006, the first round of UNDEF proposals awarded \$36 million to 125 projects. Grant awards ranged from \$50,000 to \$500,000. UNIFEM assisted 10 projects in Argentina, Cambodia, Ecuador, Haiti, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania participated in a Great Lakes regional project, while Inter Press Service International implemented an Africa regional project in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Swaziland.

Round 1 grants assisted government agencies, civil society groups, and regional and global organizations. They were implemented in 2007 and 2008, with many linked to elections or political reform processes. Most initiatives pursued a combination of strategies on the premise that altering political systems to achieve gender equality will require efforts on many fronts. These typically involved developing skills among women candidates, advocating for steps such as quotas to bolster women's participation, assisting with the formation of women's networks, engaging political parties to bring gender into their platforms and conducting media campaigns. The project in the Occupied Palestinian Territories focused on youth, while the Africa regional project trained journalists to bring gender perspectives into political reporting.

In reviewing the seven projects highlighted in this publication, some common points and indications for future directions emerge. One immediate impression is how much dedicated gender ad-

vocates can achieve even in relatively fragile and unstable political systems. In some cases, strong partnerships with UNIFEM were particularly effective in connecting women's priorities with political processes, since UNIFEM, as part of the UN system, had access to a variety of political and governmental actors. It was also able to help forge the diverse partnerships required to push forward increases in women's political participation, drawing on sometimes longstanding connections with women's groups, women politicians and national gender machineries.

Some of the most effective projects had multiple partners working on different issues, but these efforts were also sufficiently connected and orchestrated to produce significant impacts. Timing was critical. Successful projects were closely aligned with electoral processes, and built on opportunities provided through decentralization reforms, changes in laws, gender-responsive policies, and constitutional revisions. Another factor enhancing project outreach was the willingness to work across the political spectrum, presenting gender equality as an objective consistent with multiple political ideologies.



Women exercise their political voice in many ways. Josefa Kai-bete does so as a voter and a candidate in Timor-Leste's Second National Village Council (sucos) elections in 2009 (UN Photo/Martine Perret).

Much work on women's political participation has focused on legal and policy initiatives, such as reservations for seats or equality provisions in the law. These provide an important framework for progress on women's participation and can rapidly escalate progress. But several project assessments stressed the need to connect these strategic interventions to concrete results and benefits that the majority of people can see and will find convincing. The case for gender-responsive government needs to include arguments for women's rights, but to inspire wider buy-in, it also should clarify the benefits for political institutions and societies at large. These have not always been obvious just from having more women in office or more gender commitments in political discourse.

In some projects, political empowerment was perceived as delinked from economic empowerment. Several evaluations underscored that, especially in poorer countries, this perception lessened interest in project goals. Political participation needs to be presented for what it can achieve across all aspects of gender equality, not as an end in itself. Greater emphasis on connecting political and economic empowerment in particular would include the recognition that access to resources is often a precondition for women's political involvement, especially as elections globally become more competitive and expensive.

Many projects combined initiatives to increase the number of women in politics with those to improve the quality of women's participation. This combination is important, given experiences with women in office who are not effective, either in operating as politicians or in advocating a gender equality agenda. From the perspective of the United

Nations and multiple international agreements, quality implies the transformative politics inherent in gender equality. What this means in individual nations and for the democratic expression of diverse points of view might deserve more thought and debate.

In future projects, more attention may need to go to the quality of political institutions. Globally, there is growing disenchantment with political systems that are unresponsive, marred by rampant clientelism and distorted by massive infusions of resources. Women themselves have expressed concerns about the meaning of participation in these kinds of environments, but for the most part, questions about the nature of institutions were overshadowed in the projects by a preoccupation with women's position within them. Even so, several projects came up against these issues. One found that women can do much in working for gender equality from within political parties, but in the end are bound by party positions that may or may not support gender equality. Projects that engaged with parties to make party platforms more gender responsive encountered problems with parties actually supporting new commitments. Very little was said in project reports about widespread scepticism of current political systems based on poor performance, except in one case where women trained as potential candidates acknowledged at the end that they would take a wait-and-see approach to deciding to run for elections.

Capacity development initiatives were common to most projects, but those that combined professional and psychological skills (such as those to build self-confidence) were very well received. Political competency requires both; women who have both may be more willing to venture into politics and be more effective once there. Greater understanding of how gender discrimination operates and the mental qualities needed to overcome it may be particularly relevant for women in politics because many gender stereotypes overtly

Among the more remarkable achievements of the grants were:

- Sweeping provisions for gender equality in Ecuador's new Constitution.
- Women comprising 33 percent of the representatives in Nepal's Constituent Assembly, a historic number for Nepal and the South Asia region.
- Significant increases in women in local and national political positions in Cambodia, with political party leaders acting on commitments to place women candidates higher on party lists.
- The insertion of gender perspectives in Morocco's reconciliation process, highlighting for the first time the toll taken on women by political violence.
- New national actions in the Great Lakes region to implement the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence.

work against women as leaders, people with self-confidence, people who deserve a public voice, and so on. Projects in conflict countries may need to account as well for the psychological barriers, including feelings of powerlessness and isolation, that can stem from experiences with violence and trauma, including those forms linked to gender.

Despite the risks inherent in working in the political arena, especially during elections and more so in countries with any recent history of instability, none of the projects appeared to have carried out a detailed risk assessment. All had to manage these risks and seemed to cope well, including by adjusting activities and objectives, and building strong relationships within political systems. But a clearer understanding of risks at the beginning might have improved project design and

implementation by mapping out the most efficient and effective responses to emerging issues. Similar considerations might apply to organizational capacity assessments. Two grantees recognized, not long into their projects, that capacity development measures were needed. These were taken, and improved the project work and outputs. In two cases, tensions among different groups working on projects seemed to fester without being fully resolved, suggesting that more should have been done in developing capacities for collaboration and conflict resolution.

On the operational end, several project reports and evaluations noted that the timeframes and resources for grants, while generous, were insufficient given the scope of issues involved in advancing women's political participation. There were also challenges with multiple initiatives that duplicate each other within a given country. The complex issues at stake underscore the importance of linking and coordinating political participation initiatives. Political momentum for gender equality and women's participation is subject to many variables, from changes in government to shifts in electoral laws. Maintaining it requires multiple, interconnected efforts and a longer time frame.

Finally, project evaluations varied widely in quality, suggesting that there should be clearer standards and guidelines for evaluation, as well as the necessary funds to carry these out. Some common



Women candidates need skills to run for office, such as those related to constituency outreach. Here a woman candidate for the 2009 provincial council elections in Afghanistan makes her case to other women (Kabul Film & Photo House for UNIFEM)

problems included statements without evidence, data without analysis, and limited exploration of why certain strategies are or are not effective. Ideally, evaluations could serve not just as assessments of whether or not the project complied with its objectives, but also as learning tools. They could be an accessible source of practical knowledge—what works best, why and how—that could be used by organizations implementing other UNDEF grants and groups embarking on similar initiatives.

As the following pages show, there is much to be learned from what women politicians and gender equality advocates have been able to achieve so far under the UNIFEM-assisted UNDEF grants. They have paved a way that, with the right investments, could be further extended and sustained towards the goals of women's equal role in politics and society at large.

AFRICA

Raising Women's Media Visibility In Elections

Quick Facts

Coverage of women politicians by the media is often limited or biased. To correct these imbalances, the Inter-Press Service (IPS) worked with journalists to improve the quality and quantity of their reporting on women in politics through over 100 new published stories. It reached out to women politicians to cultivate their abilities to engage the press.

Aims and Achievements

In 2007, the project selected 11 out of the 19 African countries undergoing electoral processes, as these provide openings for expanded political coverage. Over 50 journalists from IPS and national media were chosen to begin producing stories on women in the elections, guided by a reporter's checklist for integrating gender into their coverage. A thematic editor provided mentoring in the drafting of stories.

Over 100 stories were produced by the reporters and appeared in media in 26 countries. They included a greater number of profiles of women politicians, and featured analyses of women's election participation in Kenya, reports on protests by women's organizations in Zimbabwe and an investigation of the reduction in female Cabinet members in Benin. Stories highlighted women's perspectives and explored the impacts women have on political processes. After publication, they were circulated on the IPS newswire, uploaded to an interactive section of the IPS website and reworked into a "rip and read" format for use by radio stations across Africa. By the end of the project in 2008, the website, called "From Polls to Polls," had attracted over 400,000 pageviews. Aside from the stories, visitors could access an elections calendar map, and resources for reporters on gender and elections.

In late 2007, reporters from seven countries and women politicians from four countries participated in a joint workshop on gender, politics and the media in South Africa. The training sought to make reporters aware of gender biases in media coverage, to equip women politicians with skills to engage the press, and to cultivate links between the two

What's the Difference?

Coverage of women politicians and women's political participation increased, with over 100 stories appearing in the media in 26 countries.

Journalists gained new skills to cover women in politics.

Women politicians acquired new abilities to engage the media.

Easily available resources specific to African countries are available to support better coverage of gender and politics.

groups. A workshop survey found that participating reporters planned to increase their coverage of gender and politics, and were using new knowledge to mentor their peers. Based on their interactions at the workshop, several reporters wrote profiles of women politicians. Women politicians reported that they came away from the session with greater confidence in dealing with the media.

An electronic handbook for journalists and women politicians was created. Entitled “Women in the News: Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women in the African Media’s Coverage of Elections, Politics and Governance,” it was later provided to trainers and more than 40 media organizations, such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa. Media leaders endorsed the handbook as a resource, with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) uploading it on its Intranet. IPS Regional Director Paula Fray profiled it on two current affairs shows on SABC. Women politicians have used the handbook as a media training resource.

Challenges

- IPS intended to hold training sessions for women politicians in four additional countries, but was unable to do so for reasons that included slow response times by potential national partners and the need for additional funding.
- A heavy reliance on electronic media to disseminate stories and information did not sufficiently reflect the communications challenges faced in much of Africa. Many people surveyed for the project evaluation reported problems with accessing project materials on the web.
- Nuances in different countries could not be reflected in the reporting and evaluation of the project, as these took a regional approach. Further, the project collected no initial baseline information to inform the eventual evaluation.
- Weaknesses in administrative processes as a whole underlined the need for a qualified project

What’s Next in Africa?

Future projects of this type should have a more realistic budget and well-formulated mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

- More workshops should be held, including at the grass-roots level. They should be adapted to different skill levels and languages. Formal partnerships with national and regional organizations could help disseminate tools and training designed by IPS. New training modules should have the capacity to “cascade” down to different countries and groups within them.
- Sustaining the project’s advances will require encouraging media houses, not just individual journalists, to provide space for women politicians.
- Media coverage of gender needs to continue increasing in quantity, and be of better quality.
- The use of the handbook could be extended through pullouts and checklists suitable for everyday reference, translation into new languages, simplified descriptions and regular updating. It could also be expanded to cover issues in politics beyond the electoral process.
- More editors should be deployed to provide mentoring as part of journalists’ everyday work.

coordinator with administrative expertise, beyond gender and media qualifications.

- According to the project evaluation, the project budget of \$216,000 was inadequate for the project objectives and activities, as originally planned.
- The late disbursement of funds, hung up by a process of certifying administrative procedures, meant that more costly project activities had to be postponed. This affected the training activities in particular.

Lessons

- Having a thematic editor ensured that coverage consistently featured a strong gender perspective. The model of linking reporting tools with mentoring was proven to be effective, and has been adapted for other IPS Africa projects to develop the capacities of journalists.
- Mentoring ensured the accurate use of tools such as the checklist, and guided the practical application of new skills. It was widely praised by journalists as helping them in looking at their work in new ways. The project evaluation highlighted mentoring as a cost-effective and accessible methodology that could be used to transmit a variety of skills.
- The project handbook attracted wide interest, despite the lack of training sessions to popularize it. Journalists said that they have used the handbook as a reference on gender even for reporting not directly connected to politics, implying that the potential for the broader application of project materials could be explored.
- A survey of coverage prior to the project found that while a number of articles presented gender issues, most of the sources quoted in the stories were men. This changed after the project; sources for articles became more diverse.
- Originally, the project intended to build links between women politicians and journalists through joint training workshops. When this did not happen, the project encouraged journalists to reach out to women politicians in their countries, which enhanced coverage, produced new contacts between the two groups, and exposed women politicians to opportunities to engage with the media.
- The project did not account for one aspect of the political context in many countries: politicians are expected to buy media time. Women politicians said they often do not have these kinds of resources.
- IPS Africa picked up on several trends through engaging with women politicians, such as their willingness to work across party lines on issues affecting women and in efforts to achieve reconciliation.

CAMBODIA

Changing Attitudes About Who Makes Decisions

Quick Facts

On the eve of local and national elections in 2007 and 2008, a coalition of non-governmental organizations empowered hundreds of women to become more visible and effective political candidates and office-holders. It also fostered support for women's political participation across political parties and the general public. Significant increases in the numbers of women in office were one result; changed attitudes about what women can contribute as political leaders was another.

Aims and Achievements

The project sought to increase the number of women in politics and their abilities to influence policy decisions. It aimed to improve public support for women politicians. Multiple strategies to achieve these objectives included training, advocacy and dialogue, civic education and the development of peer support networks. Before and after local and national elections in 2007 and 2008, the project was active in 12 of Cambodia's 24 provinces, with UNDEF funding supporting activities in 3 provinces. Additional funds were secured from the World Bank.

To institutionalize a non-partisan network to foster women's political participation, seven local non-governmental organizations had come together under the umbrella Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP) in 2005. CPWP created a secretariat to implement the UNDEF project in 2007. Some initial capacity development was required to clarify structures and responsibilities, and standardize internal procedures. The committee became the only active group of non-governmental organizations seeking to make an impact on the 2007 and 2008 elections.

CPWP members developed 20 training sessions for 170 potential women candidates from the four leading political parties. The sessions stressed skills for campaigning, fundraising and governance.

What's the Difference?

Triple the number of women commune councilors in two provinces in 2007; double the number nationally by 2008.

Double the number of women in the top ranks of national party lists.

A rise in the portion of women parliamentarians from 19% to 22%.

More skilled women politicians; stronger links between women at the local and national levels.

Increased awareness and support for women politicians by political leaders and voters.

Eleven courses for existing women commune councilors to strengthen their effectiveness in office were followed by on-the-job mentoring to work through scenarios faced in council meetings. Peer networks of 75 women leaders each were established in three provinces.

Simultaneously, CPWP held regular meetings with political party leaders from the four major parties at the national, provincial and district levels. A key advocacy message was the need to place female candidates higher on party lists. CPWP emphasized flexibility and the multiple routes for enhancing women's role in parties, rather than pushing for a single approach such as a mandatory quota system.

National conferences further highlighted the importance of women's participation, and drew together civil society and party representatives, along with officials from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Women's Affairs and National Election Committee. An event held after the national election attended by the Deputy Prime Minister welcomed successful women candidates. It became the first opportunity for local and national women leaders to network and explore future collaboration.

Building on the results of a media survey, the project developed TV and radio spots and broadcasts of roundtable discussions advocating for women's political participation; these ran nearly 400 times on radio and television. Brochures, T-shirts, posters and other materials were widely disseminated—over 72,000 items were produced. Public forums on women's political participation—mostly held at night so more people could attend—brought together citizens and political representatives, attracting over 23,000 participants.

The project fostered the emergence of strong women's coalitions in Cambodia, both through CPWP and the peer support networks. Assessments of participants in the training showed improvements in knowledge and skills, with more

saying they are now equipped to take a leadership role. According to the project evaluation, women in office are more active in raising issues related to gender, and are working across party lines to promote women's political participation.

In two of the provinces where UNDEF supported activities, the number of women commune councilors tripled. Across Cambodia, the percentage of women councilors rose from 9 percent to 15 percent in 2007, and reached 20 percent in 2008. On the national level, the number of women in the top three ranks of party lists doubled, and the percentage of women parliamentarians rose from 19 percent to 22 percent in 2008. A woman became Deputy Prime Minister, and women were appointed as deputy governors in all provinces. Cambodia is now close to its national Millennium Development Goal of parliamentarians being at least 24 percent women by 2010.

Increased awareness of voters was captured in surveys and contributed to the greater number of elected women. The outreach efforts to citizens also became part of breaking Cambodia's culture of silence, where people are expected not to question or claim their rights. The public forums allowed people to discuss issues they deal with in their everyday lives and express what they think to elected representatives, an unprecedented opportunity for many.

Challenges

- The timeframe of the project was short, given the large systemic challenges at stake. Long-term progress in women's political participation will require long-term actions and investments. While some mechanisms for sustainability are in place, such as the peer support networks, the lack of follow-up activities may over time diminish interest in and commitment to the project objectives.
- At the start of the project, the CPWP secretariat benefitted from various institutional strengthening

exercises, such as an organizational development workshop and manuals to carry out trainings and public forums. Tensions within the CPWP related to roles and responsibilities persisted, however, compounded by staffing and workload concerns. Difficulties arose from CPWP's reliance on the staff of member organizations for project implementation, since CPWP itself serves mainly in a coordination role.

- Monitoring consultants hired to provide a series of four reports during the project helped overcome some identified weaknesses in the project and in the CPWP's functioning. But capacity gaps lim-

ited coherence in data collection. More clarity was needed about why and when information should be collected, and by whom.

Lessons

- Increasing space for women to have a voice depends on actions in the political, cultural, social and administrative arenas, all of which offer different leverage points. Involving people at many different levels recognizes that the position of women in society needs to be dealt with from the household up to national politics.

What's Next in Cambodia?

Future barriers to women's participation that may need more consideration include the lack of role models especially for women in villages, hindrances to decentralization and local government due to the reluctance of central powers to cede control over decision-making and/or resources, a lack of resources for women candidates, strong biases against women perpetuated by senior political party leaders and men's continued preference not to vote for women.

- Women's economic empowerment needs to be promoted in tandem with political participation. This would encourage more equality at home, empower women to have a greater say in private and public, and provide access to the resources required for political contests.
- CPWP should engage with non-governmental organizations working on other areas of development to build broader alliances and links between community organizations and the government. This could be part of pursuing a broader agenda for women that makes direct connections between women's political participation, and responses to other priority development needs and rights.
- Women's groups at the village level could be cultivated to provide a mass base of support for the peer support networks at the provincial level.
- Further leadership training could bring together women in local and national political positions, strengthening collaboration and building stronger links particularly in light of decentralization.
- CPWP's management procedures need to be further reviewed and standardized. There should be a common reporting system for all members, and secretariat staff coordination skills should be bolstered.

- Cultural expectations, particularly in terms of women’s roles at home, continue to be a barrier to political participation. These cause confusion among women themselves about the scope of their political engagement.
- Having supportive laws and policies lent momentum to the project. These included the targets for women’s political participation under the Cambodian MDGs.
- The project responded to potential tensions along political party lines by engaging all major parties, and by subsuming the political identities of CPWP members under a non-partisan mandate. Neutrality allowed the project to encourage women councilors to take up the sensitive issue of inconsistent government accountability to people’s needs, such as through proposals for better local services. At the same time, some behind-the-scenes political affiliations by CPWP members eased access to key officials.
- The project dealt with several anticipated risks, such as the lack of cooperation from local government officials and political instability, by building on relationships with provincial authorities that had already been formed, and by encouraging the peer support networks to create and maintain links with government and political party leaders at different levels.
- The timing of the project with Cambodia’s decentralization reforms has situated gender equality at the front of legal and policy choices, and equipped women to capitalize on emerging opportunities for local participation.

ECUADOR

Political Transformation Yields Rights Guarantees

Quick Facts

The project sought to strengthen women's political participation in Ecuador by working on multiple fronts: preparing a Women's Political Agenda, training women leaders, raising public awareness of women's role in politics and monitoring compliance with quota laws. It brought a record number of women into the Constituent Assembly formed in 2007, and successfully advocated for the inclusion of almost all of the Women's Political Agenda into the new Constitution.

Aims and Achievements

The project took place against the backdrop of political transformation, and in an environment where political institutions had historically downplayed women's political rights, including by disregarding established quota laws. Just after the project began in 2007, Congress was dissolved and a Constituent Assembly formed to draft a new Constitution. The project had not anticipated this sudden shift, but was able to adapt, successfully capitalizing on it as an opportunity to usher in new forms of institutional and legal support for women's rights.

The first component of the project, the Women's Political Agenda, had been intended as a more general exercise to promote consensus among diverse women's groups, but was strategically re-directed towards the constitutional drafting process. Under the umbrella of the National Council on Women (CONAMU), diverse women's groups worked on proposed articles for the new Constitution, covering issues such as respect for cultural diversity, sexual and reproductive rights, access to gender justice and parity in representation. National and regional conferences mobilized women's leaders to contribute ideas to the agenda and advocate for its adoption. When the new Constitution was adopted, it included 98 percent of the proposals that women put forward.

The second project component involved the Andean Human Rights Program of Simon Bolivar Andean University training women leaders, from different levels of government and civil society, on both interpersonal and political skills. The training emphasized practical techniques for incorporating gender and human rights into governance. Deliberate attempts to extend the training to women who normally do not benefit from this kind of opportunity included a national call for participation. A partnership with the Association of Women on Rural Parish

What's the Difference?

A new Constitution integrating 98 percent of proposals in the Women's Political Agenda.

A record number of women—35 percent—in the Constituent Assembly.

More women running for office, and more women politicians taking steps to advance gender equality.

Boards of Ecuador (AMJUPRE) ensured the significant presence of rural women leaders in trainings. Over half the women who completed the trainings later decided to run for an elected office, and some have reported progress in the gender responsiveness of their work, such as by improving local ordinances on domestic violence and training for women.

Through the third project component, the Equity and Development Foundation orchestrated a push for applying existing quotas to the Constituent Assembly elections. This entailed media campaigns on women's rights, and training for women's activists on citizen inspections

of compliance with quota laws. All political parties and movements eventually upheld the quotas, resulting in women comprising 35 percent of Assembly members, the highest rate ever in Ecuador.

Challenges

- Diverse partnerships proved to be both a project strength and a challenge. As an example of the latter, Ecuador's history of debate on left vs. right, autonomy vs. cooptation, the state vs. civil society, and so on fostered strained relationships between CONAMU and women's movements. Women's activists questioned whether or not a public institution can adequately represent wom-

What's Next in Ecuador?

Women's movements need to build more capacities to analyse and advocate for laws, independently of the state. At the same time, the working relationship with CONAMU, which is making a major effort to incorporate gender in all laws in Ecuador, needs to be maintained, with diverse branches of the women's movement able to continuously participate.

- Future projects could do more to acknowledge some of the tensions in Ecuadorian society, and provide specific mechanisms to manage them and build respect for differences. This could include dialogue and communication around common agendas. It might address the duplication of efforts that sometimes arises when there is an emphasis on diverse representation at the expense of collaboration.
- Government institutions could provide support to training women leaders, as the lack of such support in this project was behind a high drop-out rate; women had to attend through their often limited personal resources.
- More local resources should be tapped and expanded for citizen oversight around quota laws and other aspects of women's political participation, given the proven effectiveness of this method in this project.
- More efforts are needed to reach women excluded from political processes for reasons in addition to gender, such as location, economic standing and cultural background.
- Women's participation needs to be accompanied by a gender equality agenda. Discrimination is deeply embedded, and participation alone is not enough if women stop short of advocating for women's rights.

en's rights, and how inclusive it can be. CONAMU, however, brought resources and leadership capacities required to undertake a process on the scale of the Constituent Assembly.

Lessons

- The three project components, while loosely connected at the start, ended up being mutually reinforcing through a major political event: the Constituent Assembly. This became a forum where a significant percentage of women could present their demands and skillfully negotiate significant advances in constitutional protections.
- The previous experience of women's groups in advocating for compliance with quota laws proved important. Skills that were already in place

could be broadly deployed nationally and locally, such as through citizen monitoring.

- Training on personal confidence and self-esteem, in addition to information on integrating gender into political activities, helped women leaders acquire capacities to debate and participate in politics from the stronger foundation of their own personal development.
- AMJUPRE made progress in making rural women more visible by bringing them into the training. An unintended result of diversity among trainees—along lines such as age, educational background and ethnicity—was that women took opportunities to examine and learn from their differences.

GREAT LAKES REGION

New Room for Gender Advances In Peace Processes

Quick Facts

Women leaders mobilized under a regional advocacy agenda to raise the visibility of gender in the adoption of the Peace and Security Pact and its Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence, and their application on the national level. Gender mainstreaming guidelines were developed and applied.

Aims and Achievements

A decade of rampant conflict and instability in the Great Lakes region led the African Union and the United Nations to hold the 2004 International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development. In 2007, member states moved toward ratifying the conference's Peace and Security Pact, which incorporates numerous provisions for gender equality, including the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children in the Great Lakes Region. This process provided an opportunity for the project to mobilize women leaders in the region to advocate for ratification, which occurred in 2008, as well as the integration of pact provisions in national laws and policies.

Under UNIFEM coordination, the project began with a baseline assessment of women leaders. This fed into the organization of a regional conference for women parliamentarians in Kigali. The conference's high visibility—it included participants such as Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf—heightened attention to women's political role and helped shape a regional advocacy agenda among women leaders.

Subsequent project activities built on this momentum, encouraging women to push for women's rights through the pact process. At a regional workshop on gender mainstreaming in Burundi, for example, participants from 10 countries reviewed the structures established under the Peace and Security Pact and identified entry points for gender mainstreaming. Guidelines for mainstreaming in projects and regional mechanisms under the pact were issued. These were latter applied to a series of workshops organized by the pact's secretariat to define initiatives related to gender and governance, economic development and regional integration.

What's the Difference?

Gender mainstreaming applied to activities under the Peace and Security Pact.

National mechanisms to implement gender provisions assessed; gender mainstreaming guidelines developed.

National actions to domesticate the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence.

To rally support specifically for the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence, advocacy materials in five languages were prepared for the summit for heads of state on the first anniversary of the signing of the pact, and distributed to the media. They underscored obligations under the protocol and promoted existing initiatives to stop violence. The project's main gender expert visited all 11 member states to assess national mechanisms to implement the pact's gender provisions, particularly the protocol.

The combination of these different measures created an environment conducive to gender mainstreaming as member states began to domesticate the protocol. Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda have all instituted departments for gender and adopted gender-sensitive budgeting mechanisms. Burundi has used the protocol to elaborate its own national strategy to stop sexual and gender-based violence. A gender focal point at the secretariat worked with national focal points in six countries—Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Zambia—on mainstreaming gender in all programmes executed under the pact.

Challenges

- The Peace and Security Pact was expected to be ratified by the time the project commenced, but this did not happen. As a result, the project had to reorient around advocating for ratification. Issues related to resurgent conflict and political instability also posed delays. Adaptive capacity was crucial to moving forward.
- The project did not directly address women's poverty, an issue of paramount importance to women generally in the region, which reduced possibilities for broad interest and buy-in. Limited resources proved a hindrance to project implementation as women lacked funds to attend meetings to develop their capacities or carry out advocacy. The project team found that many dynamic initiatives were proposed during the meetings, but very little money is available to fund them, either at the regional level or within individual countries.
- The region's general lack of data on sexual and gender-based violence impeded measurement of project achievements, as did the absence of a monitoring and evaluation plan and assessment indicators.



Women at a shelter for survivors of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo are among the many who will benefit from stronger prevention and protection mechanisms (UN Photo/Marie Frechon).

- The project depended heavily on its sponsors, UNIFEM and UNDEF. Considerable momentum was built through it, with keen interest expressed by several heads of state in the region, but there was no strategy for sustainability in place to capitalize on this.

Lessons

- An element favouring the timing of the project was the decision of the conference secretariat to mainstream gender in all its programmes.

- Based on feedback from women's organizations, the project evaluation noted that little impact from the project was felt in rural areas, where most women in the region live. Grass-roots activism was not planned, because advocacy on the regional level was seen as a starting point.
- There is a general need to move from international meetings to concrete actions, such as prosecution of the perpetrators of gender-based violence, or at least to combine work on both to demonstrate the value of the project to a broad cross-section of people.

What's Next in the Great Lakes Region?

Stronger connections to grass-roots women could be made through rural workshops or the dissemination of key project messages in local languages.

- More should be done to disseminate information about the protocol, and create data systems to monitor implementation.
- UNIFEM could play a coordinating role in managing the multiple and at times duplicated efforts to address sexual violence in the region.

HAITI

Quotas and Training Stoke Democratic Renewal

Note: This project took place before the January 2010 earthquake struck Haiti. It is presented here for information, with full recognition that the parameters in Haiti have significantly changed.

Quick Facts

Through training and coaching, the project fostered the skills of women politicians and political candidates, aiming to add to the momentum of a small but growing number of Haitian women seeking a political voice. It generated support among political parties, Parliament and the electoral council, leading to new quota provisions in electoral law.

Aims and Achievements

Despite Haiti's ongoing political and economic instability, and longstanding gender norms that have kept women away from politics, more and more Haitian women are running for office or seeking other forms of political expression. In 2007 and 2008, during a period between elections, the project combined training, coaching, networking and advocacy strategies to encourage women's political engagement and strengthen their effectiveness. It operated on the theory that a significant increase in women's participation is integral to democratic renewal.

A first activity, run by the local organization Fanm Yo La, involved training for 80 women candidates from all Haitian political parties as well as independents. It covered technical skills such as fund-raising and political campaigning, and introduced the notion of transformative leadership.

Under a second component, 30 women, drawn from among those who ran in the 2006 national and local elections, took part in coaching sessions organized by the Gender Unit of the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) and the Centre for Commitment, Responsibility and Capacity Building (CERAC). The coaching involved the active application of learning to the work women were doing as politicians and community leaders, including through small community projects designed to cultivate management and leadership skills.

What's the Difference?

Three-quarters of women trainees exhibit improved political skills.

More than half of women senatorial candidates in 2009 participated in the project.

Increased support for women candidates by two political parties.

A gender advocate was appointed to the Electoral Council.

Temporary affirmative action measures were included in the 2008 electoral law.

Three-quarters of the women who completed the training demonstrated an improved grasp of electoral processes and political skills. Those in the coaching component reported greater confidence in their abilities. More than half of the women senatorial candidates in the April 2009 elections participated in either the project's training or coaching exercises.

Other forms of training were offered to locally elected authorities on gender-responsive governance. More gender-responsive policy-making resulted in some cases, such as through increased monitoring of the performance of judicial authorities on rape cases. General public advocacy efforts raised awareness of women's political role, and included radio spots, a concert and the distribution of booklets on women's leadership. Specific outreach to political parties involved monitoring candidate lists and reviewing party mechanisms to support women; two parties subsequently

geared up support for women candidates in the 2009 elections.

Women's organizations banded together to develop recommendations on a new draft electoral law. After these were presented to Parliament and the electoral council, a gender advocate was appointed to the council, and temporary affirmative action measures were included when the electoral law was passed in 2008, a step later recognized by the Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Challenges

- An unstable political context meant opportunities were lost and gained. Voter mobilization plans had to be postponed due to the lack of clarity around the election schedule, for example. But the creation of a new electoral council offered the

What's Next in Haiti?

Beyond increasing the numbers of women in politics, future efforts need to continue striving to empower women to change the nature of politics.

- There should be a focus not just on individual elections, but also on ongoing training and outreach work to remove underlying barriers, such as gender stereotypes, and spark strong momentum. Overall, the project helped clarify challenges and demonstrate effective responses, but substantial advances can only be made through longer-term investments that target the individual, institutional and policy levels. Institutional mechanisms should be in place to make capacity development routine and easily available, for example.
- Since coaching is a relatively new concept in Haiti, an information campaign might be useful to spread awareness and reduce the high dropout rate experienced in this project. More homogenous discussion groups might be useful, given problems that arose due to language and educational differences.
- The case for gender-responsive governance needs to be made as an issue of women's rights and in terms of political gains for societies as a whole. Incorporating women's voices in the building of democracy takes on special urgency in fragile states, where political arenas need to be transformed through new perspectives. The implications of women's preference to run for local office need to be better understood.

chance to propose the appointment of a gender advocate. A deliberate decision was made to adapt to the uncertainty by developing training and communication materials that can be used during and between election periods.

- The limited capacity of national trainers to integrate gender into training for local officials initially resulted in an inadequate training module. A workshop for the trainers strengthened capacities and the quality of the module.

Lessons

- The coaching component of the project was new to Haiti. Since it depended for the most part on international experts, and the materials used were not provided after the completion of the project, the prospects for sustainability are limited, despite its innovative and important contributions to women's leadership skills. Over a third of the women in the coaching component dropped out for different reasons.

- A barrier to women's participation that was discovered during the project but not necessarily well addressed by it was women's skepticism about the prospects for electoral politics in Haiti. Many had adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude about potential candidacies. They noted concerns with the integrity of the voter registration process and the risk of violence and discord. Some said they see local elections as a better option for political participation, given the lower cost, lower risk of violence and the closer relationships with constituents.

- Local elected officials and women's groups in particular stressed that they need to be able to show people results; a minimum of funding must be available for concrete actions to increase the visibility of their efforts and make the case to the general public, including voters, for the value of women's participation.

MOROCCO

Making Gender Integral to Transitional Justice

“The traditional conservatism that dominates in the region and influences governance can never change itself. Women must be involved directly in public life and politics to defend their interests, especially those in the countryside who are the most isolated and marginalized.”
— Testimony by a project participant in Zagora

Quick Facts

The project has brought gender into Morocco’s process of transitional justice. It has raised the visibility of the impacts of political violence on women, while putting in place new mechanisms to ensure that women participate in and benefit from reconciliation.

Aims and Achievements

Morocco’s democratic transition has entailed coming to terms with a painful legacy of political oppression. Towards that end, the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH) was established in 1990. Since 2003, it has been charged with implementing recommendations from the national Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER). In 2007, the CCDH embarked on a project to bring women and gender perspectives into community reparation processes related to the commission’s work. The impact of political violence on women had been little discussed, even though women suffered oppression themselves or through the experiences of spouses and relatives.

The CCDH became aware of women victims through a series of nearly 10,000 cases of violence reviewed by the IER, about 10 percent of which involved women. The council accordingly conducted a study that produced the first baseline data on women and political violence; it provided a basis for the UNDEF/UNIFEM-supported project that began in 2007. Project activities took place nationally and in the towns of Zagora, Figuig and Imilchil. They revolved around raising awareness, and strengthening the capacities of local and national authorities and civil society organizations to advocate for women’s rights.

Through a variety of communication tools, the project highlighted women’s experiences during de-

What’s the Difference?

National institutions and local authorities more aware of the importance of gender in the reconciliation process.

Women winning municipal elections and participating in restoration work.

Creation of the National Commission on Gender to integrate gender in CCDH activities and advise the Royal Cabinet on laws.

Greater visibility locally and internationally of the impact of political violence on women and on women’s contributions to democratization.

ades of political turmoil stretching from 1956 to 1999. Personal testimonies were recorded on CD ROMS and distributed across Morocco. A collaboration with the BBC produced the documentary “Women in the Frontline.” Broadcast by the BBC, it garnered the Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development’s TV World Prize 2009 for the best documentary contributing to conflict resolution.

In Moroccan localities particularly affected by violence, the project conducted seven sensitization sessions for 500 people. These allowed testimonies to be heard and broached community dialogues on women’s rights. As women shared their stories, one important result was the breaking of taboos preventing women from speaking out about their experiences. Parallel to the sessions, a reconciliation caravan traveled across the countryside to call attention to the memory of Fatma Ouharfou, a former political prisoner who died in detention. The media widely covered the caravan, and the Ministry of Education later paid an important tribute by naming a group of primary schools in honour of Fatma Ouharfou.

To develop gender capacities, the project held trainings on integrating gender into programmes and management for about 40 officials from the CCDH. At a national seminar, 100 members of local committees supervising reparation programmes learned about the importance of gender in reconciliation and transitional justice. They looked at gender under existing IER recommendations and developed strategies for deepening gender responsiveness in implementing them. Authorities in one region later set up a gender theme group to focus specifically on gender mainstreaming in community reparation.

Training for women’s associations also equipped them to bring gender into community reparation activities. Pilot projects were established, including a network for women’s non-governmental organizations and a centre to pursue economic opportunities for women. Local organizations were

assisted in preparing proposals for European Union funding, six of which were approved.

The project also produced an advocacy guide on gender and transitional justice, and concluded with a diagnostic study that pinpointed the strengths and weaknesses of the Moroccan experience. It presented recommendations to improve the insertion of gender in transitional justice and suggested indicators to measure the degree of integration. Gender advocates in countries undergoing similar reconciliation processes, including Liberia and Nepal, have requested the study as a resource.

After the project ended in 2008, the CCDH went on to create the National Commission on Gender. It is responsible for inserting gender provisions into all council activities and advising the Royal Cabinet on legislation affecting gender equality. Several of the women who participated in the project won seats in the June 2009 municipal elections.

Challenges

- Initial project funding was inadequate, given the objective of working both nationally and sub-nationally. But project organizers successfully mobilized additional grants from other sources.
- Initial delays stemmed from the time required to set up administrative mechanisms, and the limited availability of expertise in gender and transitional justice. Among project participants, an often long lead time was required to build a basic understanding of gender in transitional justice.
- Demands to participate in the project exceeded capacity, producing social tensions, although in some instances this had a positive effect in mobilizing women to organize themselves.
- In the pilot projects, local conflicts over land and entrenched attitudes towards gender hindered progress. The latter included restrictions on women’s mobility. Feelings of marginalization, illiteracy

and difficult physical access to project sites were other challenges. At times, project organizers resorted to local practices to manage conflicts, although this carried the risk of perpetuating a balance of power that favours men over women.

- Restructuring within the CCDH has slowed its rollout of the gender commission.

Lessons

- Training, which took a relatively technocratic approach, could have taken more account of values related to gender and how these are transmitted. The definition of gender proved problematic

at some points, with a lack of clarity about what it should mean, and concerns that incorrect or overly broad interpretations could maintain existing inequalities. Among women participants in the project, there was some division between those who see the starting point as women's economic rights, and those who see it as political rights.

- The national seminar gave project organizers an understanding of needs in various regions, which helped in crafting actions for different areas. At the same time, the overall management of the project was highly centralized, an approach that had benefits, but that could have been complemented by greater involvement of local partners in the design

What's Next in Morocco?

Women who participated in the project called for developing the capacities of women activists to act as leaders and advocate for gender-responsive development as well as women's role in public life.

- Beyond increasing the numbers of women in politics, future efforts need to continue striving to empower women to change the nature of politics.
- The project had a number of actions with high symbolic value, but these would require substantial long-term investments to produce greater impacts. As a starting point, the tools created by the project need to be widely disseminated, especially in schools, and among women's groups and officials charged with carrying out community service programmes. Targeted training programmes should build on project achievements, such as by developing capacities for legislative analysis in the National Gender Commission and fostering abilities to carry forward the pilot projects. The CCDH should establish a monitoring committee to oversee the integration of gender in all programmes, and a strategic training plan geared towards the long term.
- Local actors need greater capacities and resources to champion gender as integral to transitional justice, including through the creation of gender units attached to local reparations programmes and closer coordination with CCDH regional offices.
- The gender commission as a whole needs to be strengthened with appropriate institutional mechanisms and expertise that empower it to become a national body that effectively advances women's rights.
- Dialogue should be fostered with people who have had similar experiences with gender and transitional justice in other countries.

DEMOCRACY WITH WOMEN, FOR WOMEN

and assessment of the project. In one area, Figuig, local partners were extensively involved in the pilot project there, leading to high levels of satisfaction among them. This also extracted a cost from central project managers, however, who ended up spending more time on management. In general, local capacities to work on gender and manage administrative tasks were limited.

- The project underscored some of the difficulties faced by women's activists in Morocco, who have taken little past interest in the gender aspects of political violence. This may be due to competing priorities, and to the perception that political violence has mainly been an issue for men.

- More clarity was needed about how the project should respond to women's socioeconomic needs, as a critical part of reconciliation. According to the project evaluation, steps to offer women new means of generating an income through carpet weaving were relatively ad hoc and not clearly tied to a longer-term vision of improved quality of life. Women's demands for socioeconomic support repeatedly overwhelmed project capacities, and needed to be carefully managed to prevent distrust and discouragement.

NEPAL

Historic Steps in Representation and Law

“Are we only capable of running the House of Representatives as a speaker from the street but not in the actual House?”

—Comment by a Nepali woman on how women have access to some political forums, but not others.

Quick Facts

The project made historic strides in integrating gender equality in Nepal’s peace negotiations. After preparations for Nepal’s constitutional revision began in 2007, the project contributed to sharp increases in the number of women in political offices, the development of a gender-responsive model Constitution, and the adoption of new laws and policies. Although gender equality has been part of development discourse in Nepal for a long period, the project advocated for its formal institutionalization in political and legal mechanisms.

Aims and Achievements

With Nepal moving to consolidate peace through a new Constitution in 2007 and 2008, the project sought to strengthen women’s role in the process of democratization. It had two specific aims: to include gender and women’s rights in the Constitution and other laws, and to increase women’s participation in political and peace processes. Earlier successful advocacy by women’s activists mobilized by UNIFEM had secured a quota for women in Nepal’s Constituent Assembly Election Bill. That effort set the stage, resulting in women comprising 33 percent of assembly members after the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, a historic high for Nepal and the South Asia region.

The project began by hiring legal experts to conduct a gender review of 12 foreign constitutions and Nepal’s 6 previous constitutions. Constitutional principles and good practices from diverse sources, including Rwanda, South Africa and Timor Leste, fed into a draft gender-sensitive model Constitution for Nepal. It emphasized women’s rights, meaningful participation at all levels of government and substantive equality. To review, improve and finally endorse the model Constitution, the project convened national and regional workshops that brought to-

What’s the Difference?

A record number of women—33 percent—in the Constituent Assembly.

New gender rights guaranteed in constitutional drafts.

Legislation to advance gender equality adopted or drafted.

Women’s participation central to political party manifestos and campaigns.

Reserved seats for women on local peace committees.

Unprecedented representation of traditionally excluded groups.

gether political leaders, members of Parliament and the National Human Rights Commission, women in the Constituent Assembly, civil servants, judicial branch personnel, women's activists and other civil society members, journalists and representatives of UN agencies.

Once finalized, the model Constitution was launched by the Prime Minister and distributed to all 601 members of the Constituent Assembly. Advocacy to support it took place through the media and training for journalists. Constituent Assembly members representing the six major political party members took a study tour to South Africa, learning about its experience in drafting a gender-sensitive Constitution. Consultations with women assembly members took place to develop their knowledge of gender and improve their advocacy skills.

To date, a number of the model Constitution's provisions have been included in ongoing negotiations, such as the right to participate in all state mechanisms on the basis of proportional representation. The newly elected Government has pledged to make the National Women's Commission more effective by transforming it into a constitutional body, one of the recommendations in the model Constitution. Pro-gender legislation has also been adopted or drafted, including to control human trafficking, stop domestic violence, and uphold citizenship, property, employment and other rights.

To increase the number of women in political offices, the project identified and compiled a list of over 2,000 women active in political parties or on development and rights issues. This was widely circulated among parties in the run-up to the Constituent Assembly election, providing irrefutable evidence of the availability of qualified women



As a sign of her commitment to Nepal's fledgling democracy, 80-year-old Ratna Maya Thapa walked for one-and-a-half hours to cast her ballot in the Constituent Assembly elections. She proudly shows her voter registration card (UN Photo/Nayan Tara).

candidates. A review of political party manifestos chronicled the poor record of most on gender. Gender experts made 36 recommendations for what should be included. These proposals were widely shared with women's organizations, political leaders and the media. By the time the assembly elections took place, party manifestos had been revised, offering strong backing of women's political rights, and commitments to incorporating gender equality in constitutional and legal reform. The engagement with parties was instrumental in fulfilling the promise of the election bill quota for the Constituent Assembly, as parties put forward an historic number of women candidates to run. A woman was later elected as vice-chair of the assembly.

Training sessions on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on increasing women's role in peace and security, took place throughout the project. They created a pool of over 500 knowledgeable women politicians; government staff, including from the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction; and women's groups. Entry points were developed for implementing the resolution in policies and peacebuilding. The ministry, for example,

subsequently issued a policy reserving a third of the seats on local peace committees for women and has taken steps towards preparing a national plan of action for implementing Resolution 1325.

Voter education initiatives targeted six traditionally marginalized groups: women with disabilities, Muslim women, indigenous women, young women, women migrant workers and Madhesi women. Some of these groups are better represented in the Constituent Assembly than in any elected body in Nepal's history.

Challenges

- Political developments and security considerations affected project implementation but were

mostly managed. The postponement of the Constituent Assembly elections initially complicated voter education and consultations on the model Constitution, but these could proceed on track once the elections were scheduled.

Lessons

- The mobilization of a broad cross-section of stakeholders created enough pressure to generate substantial changes. The project's "issue focus" was important to pushing a broad, long-term agenda. Both UNIFEM and project partners have embarked on activities to maintain momentum. On the other hand, strong dependency on external support and the lack of a culture of resource sharing are hindrances to sustainability.

What's Next in Nepal?

Follow up will be critical to continue building on the achievements of the project. Continuous advocacy for the new party manifestos is needed, for example, to ensure they are fully upheld; some backsliding is already evident.

- Mobilizing a variety of people will continue to be important in exerting sufficient pressure for political action.
- Training for Constituent Assembly members should continue with an emphasis on interactive measures. Participants will know they are there to share something, not just as passive learners.
- Plans of action need to remain flexible, given constant shifts in the transition phase. A unified plan of action could strengthen coordination and reduce duplicated efforts to support gender equality in peacebuilding.
- Relations should be built with local governments to address gender differences in service provision and peace and security issues. Local populations also need to bolster capacities to demand services and ensure government accountability.
- Continued support is needed for the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to carry forward the Resolution 1325 action plan.
- New gender resources could include a gender resource centre. A fellowship for in-depth reporting on the issues of marginalized women from remote areas would increase awareness and back further political advocacy.

DEMOCRACY WITH WOMEN, FOR WOMEN

- Thirteen women members from different political parties were highly effective in advocating for women's participation in their own parties. But women are also compelled to follow party positions even on gender-related issues, making advocacy with parties as a whole an important entry point.
- The percentage of women contesting for directly elected seats in the Constituent Assembly was markedly lower than the percentage contesting for proportionally elected seats, at 9.4 percent and 51.1 percent, respectively. Of the two women originally contesting to be vice-president, one withdrew due to party pressure, and the other secured little support from women voters in other parties and lost the election. Negligible improvement was seen in women's participation in party central committees, except for the Communist Party, where participation doubled between 2006 and 2008, surpassing 18 percent.
- The project made two alterations along the way: to replace some training sessions with voter education and to hold consultations with Constituent Assembly members rather than a national hearing. The first decision was made to reach more people—3,380 participated versus 120. The second decision responded to a recommendation of the steering committee that it would be premature to have a national hearing before the start of the constitutional drafting process.
- The use of group discussions during district orientation sessions on Resolution 1325 provided a model for the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, which in a subsequent demonstration of transparent lawmaking solicited civil society input in legislation on transitional justice and the plan for implementing 1325.
- Reaching out to excluded groups has led them in turn to advocate for gender issues in their own communities.
- UNIFEM's approach to the project was to initiate and guide it, and then to select partners with established reputations to lead work on sub-components. This was appropriate to the project's size and the capacity of different groups, according to the project evaluation.
- The involvement of UNIFEM facilitated access to politicians and government authorities. At the start of the project, UNIFEM convened a diverse group of stakeholders as part of a steering committee to provide guidance; they included representatives from the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction; the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare; civil society partner Saathi and the UN Population Fund.

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Youth Claim Their Rights

Quick Facts

Implemented by the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA), the project sought to increase the capacities and awareness of young people aged 14 to 25 years old so that they can effectively advocate for youth rights. It was premised on a notion of empowering young people with new attitudes about the possibilities for social change. This makes them effective role models for other youth who will be motivated to adopt similar attitudes.

Aims and Achievements

In 2007, 109 young Palestinians, with roughly equal numbers of young women and men, were selected for training. They were divided into three committees of youth workers charged with three tasks: conducting grass-roots workshops to disseminate new knowledge to other young people, promoting youth issues in the media and advocating for youth concerns with the Palestinian Legislative Council. Political events that led to the suspension of the council meant the third committee had to assume a new role by reporting on and monitoring laws relevant to youth.

Interactive training sessions were held in the West Bank and Gaza to equip youth workers with advocacy, dialogue and media skills. They also delved into issues related to gender, child rights, national youth policies, psycho-social interventions and monitoring techniques. Members of the grass-roots committee subsequently conducted 130 workshops at community centres in the West Bank and Gaza, reaching over 600 other young people. They shared knowledge on gender, child rights, and democracy and citizenship principles, often using practical and hands-on exercises.

The media committee published eight supplements to the “The Youth Time” newspaper that reported on issues of concern to youth and were widely distributed each month. Special features included interviews with policy makers. In addition, 30 television shows were produced and broadcast on Palestinian satellite and national television, reaching 350,000 viewers. These included profiles of young people’s achievements. The subjects garnered widespread recognition and respect, while demonstrating examples of positive life paths for other young Palestinians.

Through brainstorming in the committees and at the workshops, youth identified four laws for monitoring: the Youth Law, Student Fund Law, Marital Status Law and Fact Finding Law. The laws were discussed in meetings between the members of the monitoring committee and Palestinian officials. In one case, a meeting with the Minister of Transportation led to the almost immediate provision of bus services for one

What’s the Difference?

A core group of young people more aware of their rights and better equipped to be politically active.

National campaigns initiated on health insurance and the Student Fund Law.

30 television shows reached 350,000 viewers.

community, a provision that the village council had been unable to achieve. Some issues fed into the media work. A television profile of the plight of one young woman with no health insurance became part of a campaign to extend health insurance to every Palestinian pupil. Advocacy around



Adolescent girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are part of a generation learning to claim its rights, including by engaging with policy makers and the media (UN Photo/John Isaac)

the Student Fund Law led to the formation of a 75-member national coalition.

The project has equipped young people with new capacities, while raising the visibility of youth issues among young people, policy makers and the general public. A survey of participants after the project found that 98 percent reported development of their skills through the acquisition and application of new knowledge. Youth workers gained political awareness, and knowledge of gender and child rights improved. Young women who participated in the project reported a higher level of self-confidence and more were contributing to family incomes by the end of the project, although the precise reasons for this have not been analysed.

Challenges

- The political context affected many aspects of the project, from the ability of participants to travel and meet, to changes in the work with the legisla-

tive council, to the unwillingness of some authorities to engage with the project due to unwarranted fears that it masked a political agenda.

- While most of the youth workers were enthusiastic, and only about 20 dropped out of the project, some were not active or committed, raising questions about selection and management processes. Communication links between different groups of youth operating in Gaza and the north and south of the West Bank proved to be inconsistent, particularly with participants in the north West Bank. This led to feelings of alienation and some complaints about a lack of transparency. Participants in the south West Bank and Gaza were in general more actively engaged. Those from the south West Bank benefited from more trainings and involvement in PYALARA's advocacy campaigns.

- Young people who took part in the workshops conducted by the trained youth reported some variations in quality, especially in the north West Bank, where some groups were too large and communication with group leaders was limited.

Lessons

- In the media component, television episodes appeared to be particularly effective in reaching and influencing policy makers.

- Support for notions of equality increased significantly during the project, although more women than men supported gender equality by the end. The opposite was true of all other types of equality: more men than women supported equality based on religion, place of residence, political affiliation and social class. While the majority of participants highly valued the training on gender,

a minority questioned its relevance and, from their perspective, lack of clear definitions. In terms of project operations, male-female workshop leadership teams helped reduce concerns in some communities about mixed-sex workshops.

- A monitoring system proved useful in guiding the project, but data were inadequately disaggregated by gender.

What's Next in the Occupied Palestinian Territories?

Major gaps exist in support for gender equality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Filling these requires support for a Higher National Council for Women with a comprehensive mandate; networks for women working on engendering democracy to exchange information and break isolation brought on by conflict; and greater knowledge among grass-roots women of the uses of international instruments such as CEDAW and UN Security Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

- Better systems, such as for transparent performance evaluation, should be in place to select and manage youth workers.
- Interactions among youth workers, even those working on different tasks, should be improved through meetings and designated liaisons for communications.
- Varying quality in the youth-conducted workshops underline the need for more consistent standards, such as more rigorous initial assessments of community centres hosting the workshops. Workshop participants suggested increasing interactive learning activities. Few knew about the project's media work and the rich materials it produced; it would be valuable to integrate this as well.
- Advocacy and media activities, relatively centralized in this project, should be expanded to encourage youth to carry them out in their own communities.
- Capacity development is needed to improve gender analysis as a practical tool for project design and management. Presenting new ideas for gender-sensitive approaches to everyday activities could be one approach.
- A monitoring and evaluation capacity development component should be integrated in future projects, and tailored to develop tools and methods that can be used across PY-ALARA's programmes.

