

**Voice, Influence, Justice, Security**  
The keys to Inclusive And Sustainable Peace Building

## A MESSAGE FROM NOELEEN HEYZER

Women's engagement in all aspects of peace processes and systematic attention to their needs and priorities are not only basic gender equality goals. They are also crucial to the creation of lasting peace. Women know the costs of war - what it means to be displaced, to be excluded from public life, and to be regarded as less than full citizens. They know the realities on the ground and what needs to be done to address the injustices of war and prevent relapse into conflict. They can be, and must be, part of the solutions for peace.

UNIFEM has worked in over 20 conflict-affected countries to bring women to the peace table and strengthen their role in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. Guided by Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, peace and security, our work has focused on supporting women's rights and inclusion in constitutional and legal reform and institution-building processes, as well as strengthening women's leadership and participation in decision-making. From Afghanistan and Timor Leste to Burundi, Liberia and Sudan, we have seen how women can foster ties among opposing factions, across political, ethnic and religious lines, to generate genuine dialogue. They can bring a different perspective to peace negotiations, raising critical issues - from land rights to "rape babies" v that might otherwise be overlooked. They can build a foundation for reconciliation and greater social inclusion and work to sustain peace within their communities.

The transition from war to peace presents unique opportunities to address the causes of conflict and transform institutions to create a more equitable and inclusive society. Peace agreements provide the framework for the reconstruction of the political, legal, economic and social fabric of a conflict-affected society and its institutions. They thus have a direct impact on the extent of women's involvement in post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction and in achieving gender justice. The silence of peace agreements on critical issues affecting the lives of women and girls ignores the human rights of



half the population and undermines the foundations of societies emerging from conflict and aspiring to establish democracy and the rule of law. Such states then lack the legitimacy and inclusiveness to generate a sense of ownership among the population, men and women alike.

Women in conflict-affected countries have called on UNIFEM and other partners for support in opening political space for women's engagement and building the capacity and technical skills needed to participate effectively in peace and transitional processes - ranging from conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation; to political leadership, constituency building and electoral campaigning; to constitutional and legal reform. An example of such an initiative is the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace (IWC), which was established in 2005 under the auspices of UNIFEM. Composed of prominent Palestinian, Israeli and international women and committed to a negotiated, two-state solution to this long-festering conflict, the IWC has secured high-level support from governments and UN officials in calling for an international conference to jump-start final status negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians and bring new life to the agenda for a just and sustainable peace.

In its resolution 1325, the Security Council spoke with one voice in emphasizing the need to mainstream gender justice and gender equality in peace-making, peacekeeping, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and called upon all actors concerned to adopt measures to ensure the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls. Participation in peace processes enables women to demand redress for gender and sex-based crimes and lays the foundation for women's engagement in political and public life in post-conflict societies. The overriding goal for women must be social transformation, not reintegration into a system in which they are marginalized. To make real progress, they need our commitment and support, as required by resolution 1325.

Noeleen Heyzer  
Executive Director  
UNIFEM



For UNIFEM, the key challenges in making peace-building processes more inclusive of women and more responsive to their needs are:

- Amplifying women's *voice*: women's impact on peace processes is enhanced when they can build on their collective strength and share key priorities. UNIFEM supports national dialogues to enable women to come to common priorities for peace-building and reconstruction.
- Building women's *influence* to promote gender-equality policies: sustainable peace requires establishing legitimate, inclusive systems for public decision-making and policy implementation. UNIFEM works to bring more women into representative politics and to reform political systems and the public administration to improve public accountability for meeting women's needs.
- *Justice* for women: if violations of women's rights are to be prosecuted or receive adequate redress, women need to engage in post-conflict transitional justice processes, and the personnel in these systems must respond to international human rights standards.
- *Security* for women: the re-assertion of the rule of law relies upon a legitimate, effective security sector that respects human rights. Gender-sensitive security sector reform (SSR) brings changes to the internal structure and culture of the police and military (recruitment of women, zero tolerance of sexual harassment) and changes in external mandates and practices (new protocols on dealing with domestic violence, new systems to process cases of sexual violence);
- *Accountability* for implementing 1325: accountability and monitoring systems in international, regional, and national security and governance systems need to be strengthened and made gender-sensitive in order for SC resolution 1325 to see adequate implementation.

## WOMEN AND PEACE-BUILDING: THE ISSUES

The ways in which wars are conducted today make everyone a participant – not just soldiers or militants, but also civilians. Yet conflict resolution and peace-building is often an exclusive, closed business. Very often only the leaders of the belligerent parties and select international facilitators face each other across a peace negotiating table. The other affected people – including those who might have opposed the conflict or engaged in non-violent means of resolving it – have few opportunities to participate in the official peace-making process. Women face nearly systematic exclusion from these processes. Women are rarely leaders of fighting parties (although they are increasingly engaged as combatants), their peace-building work at the community level is rarely recognized or supported and their experiences of violent conflict, notably the increasing incidence of sexual violence in conflict, are not met with prosecution, redress, and preventive measures.

The exclusion of women from the peace-negotiating table has an effect on the way that post-conflict reconstruction processes are carried out. Security sectors can be re-stocked, constitutions re-drafted and legislatures re-built—all without the participation of a significant segment of the population. This can at times lead to the re-fueling of the very social discontent that produced conflict in the first place.

### 1. Amplifying Women's Voice: Peace Agreements

#### *UNIFEM Activities:*

- Organization of national women's forums to develop a common platform for peacebuilding and reconstruction;
- Facilitating women's access to peace negotiations.



In many conflict situations, women are the first to identify opportunities for reconciliation and to lead processes at the community level that facilitate coming to terms with the wounds of war – both the physical and the psychological. However, for women to support national reconciliation and contribute to the rebuilding of their countries, they need resources, skills and authority. UNIFEM has supported dialogue and national reconciliation processes in the Southern Caucasus, Afghanistan, and parts of Africa. It has brought together ethnically diverse groups and factions to find common ground in conflicts in Sudan, Burundi and Somalia.

In Burundi, UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation supported dialogue through the All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference. This conference marked the first opportunity since the beginning of the Regional Initiative for Peace and the Arusha Peace Negotiations in 1996 for Burundi women to make specific recommendations regarding the peace accord and its implementation. Women delegates came together to formulate an agenda for peace and reconstruction that would guarantee women's rights to rebuild and govern, alongside men, in a new Burundi society.

*“UNIFEM is a long-standing and trusted friend. The organization stood with Liberia's women in the lead-up to the election, supporting, contributing, encouraging. The help it gave to Liberia testifies to the importance of a strong women's fund at the United Nations. I occupy my current position because women successfully mobilized to support my candidacy, and I thank UNIFEM for being a partner in this effort.”*  
- H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, Accepting the UNIFEM Global Leadership Award 2006

## 2. Building Women's Influence: Women's Participation in Decision-making and Gender-Sensitive Institutional Change

### *UNIFEM activities:*

- Mobilizing women's groups to ensure women's participation in electoral processes;
- Conducting awareness raising campaigns;
- Gender-sensitive civic education;
- Training of women candidates, election observers and voters in democratic processes;
- Supporting women's national machineries to conduct training for women to stand as candidates in elections;
- Encouraging political parties to express their agenda regarding women's rights issues.

Support for women's engagement in electoral processes and representative politics requires efforts to accommodate or compensate for the constraints women experience because of their livelihood and gender-related duties. In Liberia, for instance, when it became clear in mid-2005 that many fewer women than men were registering to vote, UNIFEM with WIPNET supported a women's voter registration activity in which women who could not afford to leave their market stalls were helped to register by volunteers who physically carried their market stalls to the registration office.

UNIFEM has supported a wide range of efforts to bring more women into representative politics. However, the sheer physical presence of more women in public office does not necessarily add up to stronger influence or more concerted public action to promote gender equality. Not all women see themselves as gender equality advocates. Most women in politics, like most men, are constrained by their parties in the legislation they can advance. UNIFEM supports the consolidation of gender equality concerns and legislative agendas among gender-sensitive public decision-makers by:

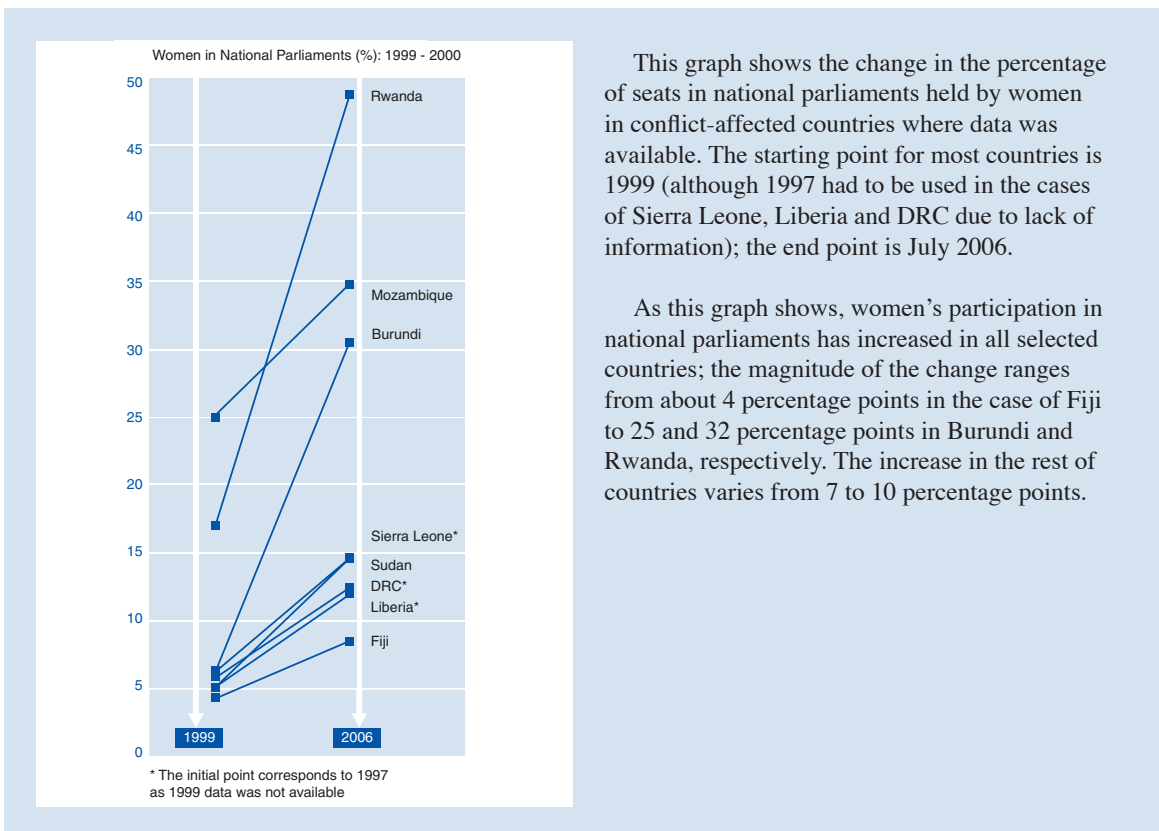


- supporting Women’s Caucuses in parliament;
- improving connections between women in public office and in civil society (building a constituency to demand gender equality);
- training and information exchange on model legislation in key areas such as property rights, gender-based violence, gender-sensitive public expenditure management and use of gender responsive budgeting tools.

Even when gender-equality measures are integrated in legislation and public policy, the ‘front-line’ staff of the public sector – the police, the health officials, the social workers - can greatly resist implementation of these measures. UNIFEM seeks to build the capacity of public sector institutions to implement gender equality policies by:

- working with governments to clarify the institutional structure for advancing women’s rights and reporting on CEDAW;
- supporting national women’s machineries to mainstream gender equality norms, policy directives and guidelines across all levels of government, including through the allocation of resources and identification of responsibilities;
- Building the monitoring capacity of national women’s machineries to keep a ‘watching brief’ on compliance with CEDAW or to ensure that women’s views are integrated into national planning processes such as Poverty Reduction Strategies.

These interventions seek to institutionalize good governance for women and to make public actors accountable for promoting gender equality.



This graph shows the change in the percentage of seats in national parliaments held by women in conflict-affected countries where data was available. The starting point for most countries is 1999 (although 1997 had to be used in the cases of Sierra Leone, Liberia and DRC due to lack of information); the end point is July 2006.

As this graph shows, women’s participation in national parliaments has increased in all selected countries; the magnitude of the change ranges from about 4 percentage points in the case of Fiji to 25 and 32 percentage points in Burundi and Rwanda, respectively. The increase in the rest of countries varies from 7 to 10 percentage points.

### 3. Justice for Women: Promotion of Gender Equality in Transitional Justice Processes

#### *UNIFEM Activities:*

- Advocacy for just response to war crimes against women;
- Training of officials on Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and preparation of women to testify;
- Ensuring participation of women and integration of gender equality in Constitutional and legislative reform processes;
- Capacity-building training on integrating CEDAW and other international standards into national constitutional reviews;
- Training for the legal and constitutional Commission on CEDAW

In times of war and societal breakdown, crimes against women reach new levels of brutality and frequency. Ensuring gender justice is an essential element of sustainable peacebuilding. Transitions to peace provide an opportunity to put in place a gender responsive framework for a country's reconstruction. Non-judicial methods, such as truth and reconciliation commissions and traditional mechanisms, can play an important role in establishing accountability for crimes against women in war. Given the limited number of cases that national and international courts can handle, traditional and community-based approaches, such as the *gacaca* tribunals in Rwanda, are being viewed in some cases as a complementary, if not alternative, system of justice and reconciliation. However, it is essential that traditional justice mechanisms are consistent with international human rights norms and protect the rights of witnesses, victims and defendants.

UNIFEM works with its partners to promote gender equality and gender justice by supporting efforts to develop and reform institutional structures during the transition to peace. In Afghanistan, East Timor, Kosovo, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, UNIFEM has advocated for women's equality to be enshrined



in constitutions, for legislation to be responsive to gender difference and for women's full and equal participation in legislative and judicial reforms.

UNIFEM has provided support to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru, through a Violence Against Women Trust Fund grant to COMISEDH, a human rights NGO. It provided training on women's human rights to TRC officials in Sierra Leone, and supported the national reconciliation process in Rwanda.

UNIFEM's largest peace and security programme in Afghanistan has supported the Ministry of Justice to review the practice of family law in the country and assess its deviation from international human rights standards. UNIFEM has sponsored an investigation on the existence and prevalence of harmful practices towards women and girls that are legitimated by the customary law systems that are used by at least 80% of Afghans.

### 4. Security for Women: Gender-sensitive Security Sector Reform

#### *UNIFEM Activities:*

- Supporting women's groups and national security institutions in promoting a human security-based approach to SSR and DDR;
- Ensuring that DDR processes meet the needs of women associated with fighting forces and their dependents, as well as women in receiving communities.

*“For Fiji and some of our neighbors the implementation of the Action Plan will be with the assistance of UNIFEM who over the years has been supportive of the launching of national policies and strategies in pursuit of resolution 1325(2000).” - Fiji 2005*



Reordering state security structures and clarifying their legitimate functions is a high priority in post-conflict reconstruction, yet it has almost everywhere lacked attention to gender issues – whether it is demobilizing women associated with fighting forces, or reforming security forces to make them more effective protectors of women.

A wide range of institutional reforms are needed to make security forces more responsive to the public safety needs of women and to make them more accountable for promoting women’s rights. DDR processes must include female combatants and others associated with fighting forces. Reconstituted police and armed forces should seek gender balance in personnel and should be reformed to introduce gender-equality to their mandates, incentive systems, performance measure and organizational cultures. Oversight mechanisms monitoring performance can include women’s community organizations, and women on parliamentary defense committees.

The process of disarming, demobilizing and rehabilitating former combatants has implications for women, whether they participated in combat, have family members who did, or are members of a community trying to integrate ex-fighters. While some women join armed groups of their own free will, large numbers are abducted into combat and/or forced to become sexual and domestic slaves. But no matter how they came to military groups, women are routinely neglected during the DDR process, and information on the gender dimensions of DDR has been largely absent.

*“We request that our rights to property, land and inheritance be explicitly included in the final agreement. It pains us very much that we and our daughters have suffered war crimes such as rape, sexual violence, prostitution and domestic violence that have gone unrecognized and unpunished.” - Arusha Peace Process Participant*

In Rwanda a GBV desk has been established at the police HQ within the criminal investigation department (CID) to respond to child and family protection issues, human rights violations and community policing. The Gender Desk is also responsible for gathering data on gender-based crimes which is then used to analyze patterns of criminality and inform decisions on training, deployment and prevention measures. Issues of gender violence are then raised with the President and the Ministers. The awareness of this problem that was built among policy-makers contributed to the passing of a state-of-the-art Domestic Violence Act in July 2006. UNIFEM supported the police with 12 Motorcycles for rapid response in cases of GBV and has also supported two toll free hot-lines that are widely known in the country and used by victims of GBV or their families. UNIFEM has also trained police officers - especially those in charge of the gender desk - on psychosocial issues for victims of GBV. A multi-sectoral approach has been developed between the police, the justice, the health sector and the community as well as the defense ministry to address GBV issues.

## 5. Accountability for Implementing 1325: Advocacy and Institutional Change

- UNIFEM Activities:**
- on-going advocacy work with the Security Council and Member States;
  - advocacy with the newly created Peacebuilding Commission,
  - inter-agency work on a range of post-conflict needs assessments missions;
  - contribution to the UN system-wide action plan on SCR 1325 implementation

Security Council resolution 1325 makes it clear which actors are responsible for its implementation, but provides few means for monitoring performance,





nor is it clear what the consequences are for failure to implement the resolution adequately. As a result of these weak accountability measures, the resolution has seen highly uneven implementation since its passage in October 2000.

These accountability failures in the implementation of SCR 1325 stem from two important problems: women's lack of an effective voice in peace processes and in post-conflict governance (often because of the significant gender-based discrimination they face); and an absence of incentives, performance measures, or accessible redress procedures in the security systems that ought to respond to women's needs at the national and international levels (often because of unacknowledged gender biases).

UNIFEM has supported the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 through awareness-raising, advocacy, capacity-building of women's peace networks, and by building on women's agency as peace-builders. This process has yielded the critical insight that awareness-building, advocacy and women's participation are strategies that have built demand for better implementation of 1325, but that have a limited impact unless accompanied by gender-sensitive institutional change in the national, regional and global institutions that seek to prevent conflict and promote recovery.

*“The real test of the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 will take place on the ground. We are therefore pleased to see that many parts of the UN system, including DPKO, funds and programmes and specialised agencies are participating in the implementation of Resolution 1325. Their ability to find practical solutions and co-operate among themselves and with others is critical to achieving results. UNIFEM is making concerted efforts in this field, and we must ensure that it plays its mandated role as a catalyst in the UN system” - Norway 2004*

## Summary

Despite some advances made in recent years, continuous monitoring, advocacy, and programming is still indispensable to ensure that adequate responses to women's needs and full participation in decision-making during and after conflict are made. Looking forward, UNIFEM proposes to build on lessons distilled from our past programming, to capitalize on the fact that there is now a wider range of actors supporting 1325 in the peace and security field, and to build upon its own comparative advantage in bridging grassroots women's activism and global policy debate, to strengthen gender-sensitive accountability systems in peace and security work.

### Photographs:

- 1 Cover Image | City: Kinshasa | Photo Date: 30/07/2006  
Credit: Un Photo/myriam Asmani | Country: Democratic Republic Of The Congo
- 2 | City: New York | Photo Date: 29/08/2005 | Credit: Un Photo/mark Garten | Country: United Nations
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