

# UNIFEM

ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008



United Nations Development Fund for Women



## Mission & Mandate

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas:

- Strengthening women's economic security and rights;
- Ending violence against women;
- Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls;
- Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

UNIFEM was created by a UN General Assembly resolution in 1976, following a call from women's organizations attending the 1975 UN First World Conference on Women in Mexico City.

UNIFEM's mandate is to:

- Support innovative and experimental activities benefiting women in line with national and regional priorities;
- Serve as a catalyst, with the goal of ensuring the appropriate involvement of women in mainstream development activities, as often as possible at the pre-investment stage;
- Play an innovative and catalytic role in relation to the United Nations' overall system of development cooperation.  
(GA resolution 39/125)

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# Financing for Gender Equality



**Message by Inés Alberdi,  
Executive Director, UNIFEM**

## Message

Over the past year, UNIFEM support has again demonstrated how innovative

and catalytic efforts can trigger visible progress towards women's empowerment. In Mauritania, for example, women for the first time opened the door wide to political participation. In the occupied Palestinian territories, women started to run their own businesses, earning incomes in a fragile economy while changing social attitudes towards women's employment. In Latin America, women got involved in urban planning to secure commitments to make cities more secure.

I am delighted to be joining UNIFEM as its fourth Executive Director since it was founded in 1976 and to follow on the great achievements of its previous Executive Directors: Noeleen Heyzer,

Sharon Capeling-Alakija and Margaret Snyder. This is a watershed moment for work on gender equality and women's empowerment. We are at the halfway point to the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). World leaders will be holding critical consultations in 2008 – from the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra to the High-Level Event on the MDGs in New York to the Financing for Development Conference in Doha. These will take place as skyrocketing food and fuel costs, environmental disasters and entrenched conflicts are producing development emergencies in many communities. Women pay a particularly heavy price in the context of these emergencies and also have a unique contribution to make to solving them. UNIFEM is working with partners worldwide to advocate tirelessly at these key gatherings of world leaders for more visibility, voice and resources dedicated to advancing gender equality and women's rights.

Financing for development, peace and security takes on new urgency in light of the food crisis and especially for women, given sharp inequities in access to resources, from land to decent wages. As the global community affirms principles for aid effectiveness and priorities for development effectiveness – and also how to pay for these – it is critical that we scale up investments in strategies for women's empowerment and gender equality, particularly in those already proven effective. Putting in place temporary special measures can be effective in ensuring that more women will have a voice in governance; building capacity of ministries of finance and other governmental and non-governmental

actors to analyse budgets from a gender perspective can contribute to increasing resources for needed action; and allocating resources to ensure implementation of hard-won legislation and national plans to end violence against women is a prerequisite for reducing the impact of violence on families and communities. Women will be watching the outcomes of the deliberations to see what commitments for these and other gender equality priorities are agreed on by world leaders.

UNIFEM will remain an active proponent of opening new opportunities for women and promoting their rights, including in 2008 through its flagship publication, *Progress of the World's Women*, which will pose thought-provoking and provocative questions on accountability to the global commitment to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

I look forward to working with the extraordinarily broad base of partners and supporters in government, civil society, the multilateral and bilateral communities and the private sector that UNIFEM has fostered in the past 32 years. This base continues to expand, and UNIFEM could not have succeeded without it. I also want to publicly thank the entire staff of UNIFEM and my colleagues in the United Nations who have extended me such a warm welcome and whose dedication and commitment make me understand what a unique privilege I have been given.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Inés Alberdi'.

Inés Alberdi

# Achieving the Millennium Development Goals



## Message by Kemal Derviş, Administrator, UNDP

**G**ender equality is not only a goal in itself, but a prerequisite for reaching all the other international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Just past the halfway mark to the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs, it is clear that we must do more to achieve gender equality and promote women's rights.

Across the world, too many women continue to be under-protected and underpaid members of their societies. In many developing countries today, women are denied access to property, credit and other building blocks of development. In many cases they still walk for miles each day hauling water and firewood to use in their homes, and have little or no time to go to school or to earn enough money to cover their basic needs.

With appropriate support, however, women can transform their lives. The right investments can help

change discriminatory systems and attitudes that curtail women's full economic and social participation. Such investments can create affordable, quality childcare and provide access to clean energy sources and water in the home so that women can reconcile paid work and family life. They can empower women to participate in public decision-making structures where they have the opportunity to shape social and economic policies.

UNIFEM has shown how these investments pay off, as this annual report chronicles. Through its programmes around the world, UNIFEM is helping to break down barriers to women's political participation, revise discriminatory labour laws and address women's vulnerability to HIV, including from gender-based violence.

There is a need for significantly enhanced investments in women and girls. The increase in resources to UNIFEM in 2007 is a welcome

indicator of the growing commitment of governments to support women's empowerment. Given the central importance of gender equality and the rising demand for its services, UNIFEM requires further new resources to continue achieving results and expanding the scope of its work. Its knowledge, advocacy and practical experience not only help it advance women's rights through its own programmes, but also make it an important partner and source of expertise for other agencies within the UN family.

As we look towards 2015, we should all redouble our efforts towards creating more equitable, prosperous societies that – by upholding gender equality – achieve the full promise of the MDGs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kemal Derviş'.

Kemal Derviş,



# Expanding the Scope of National Security

## Africa

Sexual and gender-based violence threatens the safety of

millions of women, and destabilizes families and communities, yet it is often shrouded in shame and silence. In 2007, the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) broke new ground by placing the scale and severity of this kind of violence among the major threats to national security. “There is no way we can talk about security when our mothers, sisters and wives are suffering from serious crimes,” says Captain Aimable Mushabe.

“Freeing this important part of the population from violence is the basis of sustainable development and human security.”

Brutal and widespread sexual violence was part of Rwanda’s 1994 genocide; its devastating legacy is still very much felt in the country. Partnering with UNIFEM, and drawing on successful initiatives with the National Police, the RDF has embarked on a campaign to train several thousand military officers and cadets to understand, help prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Since the campaign started, the Rwandan army has increasingly acted in

cases of violence, taking advantage of its presence in communities throughout the country. Knowing that fast help is available has in turn encouraged more reports of violent incidents. A gender-based violence desk at military headquarters coordinates closely with a similar desk for the police.

Since prevention and protection are key, outreach to communities has been central to the RDF’s campaign. Clubs to help raise awareness have been established across the country and a community-based watch-dog system now provides early alerts on violent behaviour.

◀ Reaching out: raising awareness in communities is a key part of a UNIFEM-supported campaign by the Rwandan Defence Forces on sexual and gender-based violence.

Outside Rwanda, in troubled countries assisted by international peacekeeping missions, other communities are also benefiting from the RDF's efforts to protect women. All Rwandan battalions are trained on gender-based violence before deployment, leading to actions such as providing firewood patrols to safeguard women collecting cooking fuel. In Sudan, RDF soldiers helped build efficient stoves that minimize women's need to move beyond camp perimeters for fuel.

Other initiatives to respond to the security threat of sexual and gender-based violence took place in Africa's Great Lakes region. UNIFEM built on its support for a landmark achievement: the adoption of a protocol to prevent sexual and gender-based violence under the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development. Continued assistance in 2007 helped the Rwanda Women's Parliamentary Forum convene women politicians



from the region and the world, including Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In Kigali, they adopted a declaration urging increased numbers of women parliamentarians, the integration of gender in trade policies and the establishment of strong laws against gender-based violence.

▲ Keeping safe: fuel efficient stoves, built by Rwandan soldiers on peace-keeping missions, minimize women's need to leave camps in search of fire wood.

A new Regional Women's Forum emerged to press for the ongoing implementation of gender equality commitments made by national leaders.

## MAKING POLITICS WORK WITH WOMEN

### Burundi: A Blueprint for Peace and Equality

In 2006, the UN Peacebuilding Commission invited the Government of Burundi to develop an integrated peacebuilding strategy, a blueprint for actions and resources to help the country recover from its brutal civil war. UNIFEM was involved from the start in assisting women's groups to participate in negotiating the strategy and ensure it would become a tool for advancing gender equality.

Two women became members of the Steering Committee that in 2007 produced the Burundi Strategic Framework. Its comprehensive provisions for women include pledges to involve them in all aspects of peacebuilding, expedite their economic recovery, end discriminatory legal practices and reduce violence against women. It calls on women's organizations to engage with government decision makers

so that gender perspectives become part of all public programmes and policies.

During the negotiations, the women representatives maintained close ties with a coalition of experienced women's groups. With UNIFEM assistance, this mobilized 3,000 women across Burundi to define top development priorities. Collectively, they identified these as pervasive poverty, violence against women

and insecurity, all of which the Steering Committee ensured were eventually reflected in the Strategic Framework. They also agreed on indicators to monitor implementation of the Framework, such as new laws and support centres to protect victims of violence. Their continued engagement will ensure that this national agreement translates into real change in women's lives.



# Empowering Women in Politics

## Africa

When in 2007 Mauritania held its first free elections since independence,

women celebrated a double victory. Not only had the long years of authoritarian governments peacefully come to a close, but a record number of women had become members of Parliament and been appointed as prominent ministers, ambassadors and regional governors. Women now comprise 22 per cent of parliamentarians, up from 3 per cent previously, and nearly 30 per cent of local administrators.

This success stemmed from a year of careful political strategizing, supported by

UNIFEM in collaboration with UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It was launched when 80 women's associations from across the country, female politicians, journalists, trade unionists and lawyers convened to issue a charter calling for quotas to advance women's political participation as among the top priorities for activism. Advocates divided into small groups and began meeting with politicians, including the 20 candidates running for president. Endorsement of quotas by all 20 led to sweeping new regulations stipulating high positions for women on party candidate lists

and in the executive branch and local government.

Since the elections, women's expanded influence has been felt in draft legislation to stop female genital mutilation, the introduction of quotas for public sector company boards and initiatives to address the overlooked problems of rural women, including dismally high maternal mortality rates. A new women's ministry has emerged, with triple the budget of the small women's unit that preceded it.

In other countries, UNIFEM assisted in setting up institutional infrastructures to support women's political aspirations. Work in Nigeria aided the Independent National Election Commission

◀ **Record numbers: women in Mauritania gained 22 per cent of parliamentary seats in 2007. Their expanded influence can be seen on issues ranging from female genital mutilation to the overlooked problems of rural women.**

in establishing a gender unit and training 300 staff members before the 2007 elections. At a national conference, commission members met with over 200 women candidates and gender advocates to discuss the issues that women face, and they agreed to take steps to protect women candidates from election-related violence. UNIFEM also supported the creation of an electronic database of women candidates to track their performance, a voter education manual and guidelines on gender and political parties.

UNIFEM has focused in other parts of Africa on the low visibility of women politicians in the media, a constraint to their campaigns and constituency outreach. A regional initiative aims to improve coverage by building bridges between women politicians and journalists. A 2007 pilot workshop in South Africa brought

politicians from four countries – Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and Lesotho – together with InterPress Service journalists. The politicians picked up tips to engage the media and interview skills, practicing what they learned in a final press conference and on South African national television. Since the workshop, the journalists have increased their reporting on women in politics and gender issues, while the politicians are encouraging other women to use media outreach to compete in upcoming elections.



▲ **Ensuring participation: In Nigeria, UNIFEM assisted the Independent Electoral Commission in setting up a gender unit.**

## MAKING POLITICS WORK WITH WOMEN

### Kenya: A Coalition Helps Stem a Crisis

The longstanding support by UNIFEM for women's political participation in Kenya positioned it to join with others to offer assistance after the disruptions of the 2007 national elections. As conflict spread, an international mediation team was put together led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and supported by the African Union. Diverse women's groups also formed the Women's Coalition for Sustainable Peace. Consultations facilitated by UNIFEM and partners such as Action-

Aid International, Vital Voices, Nairobi Peace Initiative and Urgent Action Fund-Africa produced an urgent appeal for action that drew national and international attention to women and children as the majority of those displaced by the conflict and the primary victims of increased sexual crimes and gang rapes.

Mr. Annan quickly affirmed that peace would depend on women's full participation at the peace table and beyond. The mediation team welcomed women's involve-

ment in the national talks that produced agreement on the principles for a new government. In a formal declaration, the Coalition called for women to play a role in all public institutions and across all phases of implementing the 2008 National Accord and Reconciliation Act. It pushed for recognition that gender disparities have been part of the long legacy of inequality that sparked the crisis – including that Kenya's Constitution still does not grant women full citizenship.

As Kenya moves towards peace, the Women's Coalition will continue its campaign, building on earlier progress. Women gained a record 21 parliamentary seats in the elections, while advocates succeeded in lobbying for a Presidential Directive that established a 30 per cent quota for women when recruiting for government positions. This helps make a future case for applying similar measures to the larger arena of parliamentary and local government representation.



Girls advancing: in Indonesia, boys and girls now enjoy nearly equal access to education. UNIFEM supports countries throughout the region in implementing CEDAW to promote women's rights.

# Legislating Women's Rights

## Asia Pacific & Arab States

UNIFEM has assisted governments around the world in implementing the provisions of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Convention is often referred to as the women's bill of rights, and 185 countries have ratified it. In 2007, UNIFEM support in Indonesia backed the passage of an amendment to the Law on Political Parties to require new parties to have at least 30 per cent female membership. Women must also comprise 30 per cent of managerial and political appointments. An additional amendment to the Law on General Elections in 2008 makes it a requirement that every third candidate on party lists is a woman.

At four-year intervals, CEDAW States parties comprehensively report on their women's rights-related policies and laws to the CEDAW Committee. Committee members, all respected international experts, ask probing questions about shortfalls and recommend improvements. To assist the Indonesian Government in preparing for the presentation of their report in August 2007, UNIFEM replicated a practice that it had developed to help countries in the Pacific get ready for their CEDAW reporting. It sponsored mock sessions with stand-in "experts" posing questions, while a former CEDAW chair offered tips. The sessions focused on questions such as how to compile detailed data to define gaps and achievements – for example, the fact that Indonesian women and girls now enjoy nearly equal

access to education. The CEDAW Committee Chair later applauded these preparations, requesting that UNIFEM provide similar training to all interested governments.

UNIFEM has also been instrumental in backing legal and policy changes in individual countries. Advocacy in India, for instance, focused on enshrining gender and equality across the National AIDS Policy. Discrimination makes women vulnerable to HIV and reduces their treatment and testing options. The policy calls for taking systematic actions to empower women to protect themselves – for example, through greater participation and involvement of women living with HIV and AIDS – and pays special attention to particularly vulnerable groups such as widows and survivors of trafficking or violence. All activities carried out by the National

► **Protecting the vulnerable:** In India, the National AIDS Policy calls for systematic protection of women and pays special attention to vulnerable groups, such as widows and survivors of violence.

AIDS Control Organization will take their potential gender implications into account. The policy will also help key ministries in adopting gender and HIV strategies.

In Nepal, despite political turmoil, UNIFEM has steadfastly stood by efforts to revise discriminatory provisions and pass a new law on foreign employment. Advocacy began in 2002, with a view to remove restrictions on women working abroad. A previous cabinet decision had prohibited women from seeking employment in Gulf countries. The 2007 Foreign Employment Act not only bans discrimination based on gender but also adopts special measures to guarantee women's security and rights when seeking jobs abroad. Nepali women migrants now receive information about the contractual obligations of the employer and about migrant assistance centres in destination countries. The new law also contains provisions to regulate recruiting agencies and includes programmes for the families of migrant workers.



## MAKING POLITICS WORK WITH WOMEN

### Timor-Leste: “I Can” Make a Difference in Politics

All women have a role to play in democratic politics, whether as voters, candidates or office holders. In Timor-Leste, UNIFEM has helped broaden the space for women's political participation through a novel programme that combines policy advocacy, engagement with political parties and a dynamic public outreach campaign.

Timor-Leste's 2006 National Electoral Law stipulated that one

in four candidates on party lists for parliamentary elections must be female. In the run-up to the 2007 elections, UNIFEM mobilized women's groups and national election officials to sponsor workshops for political parties. Women from 12 competing parties met to debate the challenges they faced and received expert advice. They also agreed to continue coming together in a women's parliamentary caucus that had

been established during the previous legislative period.

UNIFEM also launched the “Hau Bele” (“I Can”) campaign in collaboration with the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), the Office for the Promotion of Equality and the Women's Network, Rede Feto. It featured striking posters of women leaders, radio spots with a popular theme song and public service television broadcasts profiling

the dynamic, diverse roles women play in public life. It spread the message that women can overcome discrimination. “Women require greater confidence,” said the Chair of KOMEQ, a national election-monitoring group assisted by UNIFEM. “They need to remember that, quite simply, they can.”

In the elections, women won almost 30 per cent of the seats in the legislature.