



**BEYOND NUMBERS:  
SUPPORTING WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND PROMOTING  
GENDER EQUALITY IN POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA**

**A REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In recent years, there has been a striking increase in the numbers of women in public decision-making roles in some countries in Africa and in African regional institutions. Some of the countries with the highest proportion of women in decision-making structures have recently emerged from armed conflict. With targeted international support during the critical post-conflict “window of opportunity,” women are overcoming political, economic, social, and psychological challenges to become decision-makers in record numbers. Experts attribute this achievement to specific mechanisms established in the transitional period—quotas, reserved seats, political party mandates, indirect elections, and other tools. More importantly, women’s experiences of conflict have equipped them with a determination to participate in public decision-making so as to prevent conflict and build more inclusive societies.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is committed to ensuring this progress continues. Worldwide, UNIFEM takes action to facilitate women’s participation in the peace process, increase the numbers of women in post-conflict decision-making, build their political influence, and make governance processes more sensitive to gender. Over the past ten years, UNIFEM has worked with other UN agencies, international organizations, and women peace-builders to support and conduct numerous short and long-term programs to promote women’s decision-making roles. This discussion paper outlines the agency’s contributions to enhance women’s political participation and integrate a gender perspective in post-conflict governance in Africa. Given the many factors involved and the efforts of countless other organizations, and given that this is a desk-based study, it does not attempt to quantify UNIFEM’s impact or evaluate the contribution of other UN programs or other international or local efforts. It is a review that documents UNIFEM’s activities, trends, and strategies in order to provide an initial analysis and a historical record to inform future programming.

### **The Context: Overcoming Challenges to Women’s Political Participation**

While widespread instability in society can lead to positive and negative shifts in gender roles, the constraints on women’s entry to politics and governance structures are often exacerbated during armed conflict. At the same time, gender equality is often not considered an urgent issue in the aftermath of war—a factor that has a lasting impact on women’s ability to engage in the transitional process and long-term reconstruction and development.

Despite political, societal, cultural, economic, and psychological barriers, women are finding ways to participate in the political life of post-conflict societies in record numbers. In-depth case examples in this study from Burundi, Liberia, and Somalia offer contextualized depictions of the enormity and complexity of post-conflict governance as well as women’s strategies to achieve gender equality within recovery processes.

In **Somalia**, UNIFEM has facilitated and supported women's role in the peace process, which continues to undergo various advances and setbacks.

- Women were recognized as a "Sixth Clan" at the negotiations in Arta in 2000 and succeeded in including a 10 percent quota for women in the Transitional National Assembly.
- Women participated as delegates and observers to the IGAD-led negotiations from 2002 to 2004 and succeeded in passing a 12 percent quota for women in the new National Assembly and a 25 percent quota in the regional assemblies—which have since, regrettably, been largely ignored by clan leaders.
- A national gender expert was appointed to the UN and World Bank-led Joint Needs Assessment team in 2005, and regional coordinators include a man and woman for each zone.

In **Liberia**, UNIFEM has supported women at the peace table and, more recently, as voters and candidates in national elections.

- Although women were observers to the peace negotiations at Accra in 2003, no quota was included in the agreement. However, it does specifically call for "gender balance" in elected and appointed posts and in reconstruction and development programs.
- After a failure of the transitional legislature to pass a law mandating a quota for women in 2004, the female Chairperson of the National Electoral Commission announced a non-binding guideline to political parties in 2005, requiring their candidacy lists for national elections to include 30 percent women's representation. The parties largely ignored the guideline, however, and only 14 percent of candidates were women.
- Following a creative voter registration campaign led by women in civil society in 2005, women made up over 50 percent of registered voters in the country. Arguably, this contributed to the successful candidacy of Africa's first female elected president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who won with 59 percent of the vote and was sworn into office in January 2006.

UNIFEM has long been active in **Burundi** and continues to support women in leadership positions.

- The All-Party Burundi Women's Conference—a meeting of civil society and official delegates to the talks at Arusha—led to the adoption of several gender-sensitive measures in the accords in 2000, but not a formal mechanism or structure for women's political participation.
- Women organized during the drafting of the constitution in 2004 successfully to demand a 30 percent quota for women in the post-transition government and a mandate that at least one in four names on political party lists must be a woman.
- Thus far, the quota has been honored. Following elections in 2005, women occupied 30.5 percent of the post-transition National Assembly, 32 percent of the Senate, and 35 percent of executive cabinet positions, including the ministries of foreign affairs and justice.

Although these three countries have unique circumstances and are at different phases in the post-conflict transition, **similarities exist across cases** with regard to the challenges facing women and UNIFEM's approaches to support them.

- The peace process in all three countries is characterized by reversals and breakdowns, to which women must adapt, work within, and overcome.
- In general, women’s participation remains an afterthought in peace negotiations and post-conflict governance, despite UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the advocacy of numerous organizations.
- Despite their differences and diversity, women are able to forge and present a unified agenda—even if the agreement is only a temporary alliance—when provided with space, time, training, and convening assistance.
- Women tend to face specific, practical challenges as a group and as individuals to participating in peace and governance processes, including a lack of physical security, time and mobility constraints, and family obligations.
- Key individuals—negotiators, facilitators, and others in leadership positions—can act as catalysts to help women secure important advancements.
- With support, women can overcome challenges to utilize the “window of opportunity” afforded by the post-conflict transition period and secure important legal gains for gender equality—the most effective of which are formal structures or mechanisms for women’s participation, such as quotas.
- Without accompanying enforcement measures, official structures and mechanisms for gender equality are often overlooked, disregarded, or not implemented by government and political party leaders. Thus women may remain underrepresented in leadership positions, even when the legal mandate exists for their inclusion.
- The fact that some women attain leadership positions is no guarantee of greater gender awareness, and ongoing support and capacity-building for gender-sensitive governance is required for men and women in elected and appointed posts.

### **The Way Forward: Programmatic Lessons and Recommendations**

Over the past ten years, UNIFEM has worked with various partners to support and conduct hundreds of short and long-term programs to make post-conflict governance in Africa more gender-equal. This report offers an initial overview assessment of UNIFEM’s interventions across Africa to promote gender equality in post-conflict governance and to bolster women’s political participation. In addition to the in-depth country examples described above, UNIFEM’s initiatives in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Sudan, as well as cross-cutting regional and sub-regional efforts, formed the basis for the following “best practices” and lessons learned relevant to international programming in this area.

- 1. It is essential to engage women in peace processes at the earliest possible stage.** UNIFEM focuses its efforts on engaging women’s organizations in the peace process, particularly during negotiations. Effective activities have included convening women to develop a common agenda, supporting their advocacy efforts to facilitators and negotiating parties, and providing relevant training. This has increased gender awareness among all parties, strengthened the voices of the women’s movement, and generally contributed to some level of formal participation for women. However, in very few cases has women’s presence and

participation resulted in the adoption by negotiating parties of specific mechanisms to increase women's role in post-conflict governance. Thus, it is critical for UNIFEM and other actors to maintain a high level of support for women throughout the transition period.

- 2. Flexible and creative efforts are required to address the specific obstacles facing women as they seek to engage in post-conflict governance processes.** The most effective interventions have manifested an understanding of the specific challenges women face to their participation at the peace table and in transitional governance. UNIFEM's efforts to provide resources, space, and training for women have made initial inroads to address the overarching challenges of building women's capacity and unifying their agenda. In addition, UNIFEM recognizes that to involve women in peace and governance processes, they need protection, transport, childcare, and financial support.
- 3. Beyond the challenge of bringing greater numbers of women to the peace table and into leadership positions, it is critical to build the capacity of post-conflict governance institutions to promote gender equality.** Historically, UNIFEM's approach focuses on supporting women in civil society through funding projects and initiatives, assisting the formation of coalitions, and conducting skills and capacity-building. The agency is also advancing women's agenda through advocacy and training on gender equality for other relevant actors in governance, including UN staff, mediators and facilitators, government officials, members of implementation committees, staff of key ministries, political parties, women parliamentarians, representatives of the media, and local leaders, among others. UNIFEM and other groups are increasingly reaching out to male decision-makers in mainstream post-conflict institutions to raise awareness of gender issues and strategies to promote gender equality.
- 4. There are several areas of post-conflict governance programming where support for women and the inclusion of a gender perspective is weak or nonexistent.** Several important governance sectors that require additional support by UNIFEM and other international organizations include promoting women's participation in local government, strengthening initiatives for transparency and anti-corruption campaigns, monitoring the elections process, supporting internal democratization within political parties, and better reporting on gender equality issues in the media.

As women's presence begins to increase in African legislatures and governmental structures, the mission of maximizing their impact becomes more pressing. For as the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) notes: "A significant presence of women in parliament does not, in itself, guarantee that women have achieved equality in the political sphere. Nor does it guarantee that greater attention will be given to gender issues or translated into policies and action on gender equality."<sup>1</sup> Current and future programming should begin to seek ways to enhance African women's capacity to go beyond numbers in public decision-making positions into an influence on policy-making. UNIFEM and other agencies have implemented various programs with this goal in mind, primarily focused on capacity-building for women leaders. In preparation for new and stronger initiatives to promote women's role as decision-makers, it is also necessary to consider how to measure their influence on post-conflict governance.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a striking increase in the numbers of women in public decision-making roles in some countries in Africa and in regional institutions in Africa. In 1960, for example, women constituted only one percent of legislatures in sub-Saharan Africa; by 2003, that number had risen to 14.3 percent.<sup>2</sup> Some of the countries with the highest proportion of women in decision-making structures have recently emerged from armed conflict. As noted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), “the last five years have seen post-conflict countries feature prominently in the top 30 of the IPU’s world ranking of women in national parliaments.”<sup>3</sup> In 2004, post-conflict states such as Mozambique, Rwanda, and South Africa were among the 17 countries in the world with more than 30 percent women parliamentarians.<sup>4</sup> Experts attribute this development to women’s mobilization for peace, and to deliberate institutional choices made during the post-conflict transition period—for instance, the use of party quotas—as a result of support and pressure by international organizations and national women’s movements.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has played an important role in this process and is committed to building women’s political influence and promoting gender equality in post-conflict governance worldwide. Through a variety of initiatives, the agency has sought to ensure women’s participation in peace negotiations and implementation and increase their numbers in official decision-making positions. UNIFEM supports mechanisms to remove obstacles to women’s access to power and to increase their opportunities to influence the direction of their country. Its programs bolster the capacity and expertise of female political candidates and strengthen women’s organizations in civil society. The agency also targets public sector actors to build gender awareness and develop gender equality allies amongst public decision-makers and service providers. UNIFEM seeks synergies among women’s machineries, women parliamentarians, and women’s civil society organizations. Through training, regional exchanges, and support for constituency-building, results can be seen in areas ranging from national development plans to numbers of women in leadership. In sum, UNIFEM works with international and regional partners, national governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to establish gender-sensitive transitional structures, electoral mechanisms, and constitutions and laws.

### **Purpose of this Report**

This discussion paper outlines the agency’s contributions to enhance women’s political participation and integrate a gender perspective in post-conflict governance in Africa. Given the many factors involved and the efforts of countless other organizations, this study does not attempt to measure UNIFEM’s impact or evaluate all UN programs or all international or local efforts. It is a desk-based review to document UNIFEM’s activities, trends, and strategies. Facts and figures are based on research, internal UNIFEM materials, and interviews with UNIFEM staff at headquarters and in the field.

After an introduction to the fundamental framework of this report, the next section offers a brief overview of the obstacles and challenges to women’s participation in post-conflict political

processes and decision-making in Africa. It also outlines the international framework to overcome these barriers.

The bulk of the report describes and analyzes three significant UNIFEM interventions—Burundi, Liberia, and Somalia—in distinct phases of conflict and areas of post-conflict governance. These sections provide background and context while outlining the details of UNIFEM’s interventions. Based on these examples, succinct recommendations are presented to inform future programming for UNIFEM and other international agencies. Finally, the report concludes with suggestions for exploring women’s actual influence on policy-making once in leadership positions as well as how UNIFEM and others in the international community can maximize their impact on public decision-making and governance.

### **Foundation of this Report**

It is widely recognized that women and young people experience conflict differently than men. During war, women are displaced, are subject to sexual violence and HIV/AIDS by fighting forces, and assume the care-taking role for children and the elderly. They are vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, sexual slavery, disease, and forced recruitment into armed groups.

Yet as the survivors of violent conflict, women also bear the burden of reconstruction. They return to destroyed communities and begin the process of rebuilding infrastructure, restoring and developing traditions, laws, and customs, and repairing relationships. Indeed, their leadership in the transition period can serve as a “window of opportunity” to empower women, promote gender equality, and advance women’s position in society. A growing body of research has shown that supporting women not only advances their human rights, but leads to more effective programs and, ultimately, to a more sustainable peace.

The UN system and the international community has only recently begun to recognize these issues and support the efforts of women to build peace and further development. In 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325, mandating the participation of women in peace processes. Since its adoption, awareness of the importance of including women in peace and reconstruction processes has grown enormously. Yet implementation of its mandate remains sporadic and *ad hoc*.

One of the four priorities of UNIFEM’s Multi-Year Funding Framework for 2004-2007 is achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as in recovery from war.<sup>5</sup> Through its programs and initiatives, UNIFEM seeks to maximize the post-conflict “window of opportunity” to make significant advances in women’s role and position in society, particularly with regard to leadership opportunities. Not only is it a fundamental right—enshrined and guaranteed in international law—for women to participate in the political process, but their knowledge, skills, and experiences provide them with a unique perspective on the process and priorities for post-conflict reconstruction.

## **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Before beginning a review of the obstacles to women's political participation, it is useful to recall why women are critical to peace processes. As mentioned in the introduction, it is the right of all men and women to participate in the political system of their country. Women make up approximately 50 percent of the population in most countries, and in post-conflict states, this number is often higher due to the gendered impact of war. In addition to this fundamental right, women's background and experiences provide them with a distinct perspective and abilities that can add great value to the complex process of restoring post-conflict governance. Although rigorous research is lacking in this area, there are indicators that a "critical mass" (over 30 percent) of women can influence governance and the political system in two primary ways: changing the process and changing the outcome.

Women can shape the *outcomes* of the political process by applying a gender perspective to influence policy-making and governance systems in general. In post-war Mozambique, where women compose 30 percent of the parliament, a new family law was passed in 2003 to give women equal rights with men in the household, providing them with protections and rights in marriage, employment, and inheritance—considered a major victory by women in the country.<sup>6</sup> In Uganda, where the constitution reserves 14 percent of parliamentary seats for women, the women's caucus successfully advocated on behalf of certain priorities for women, resulting in an increase in the government's budget allocations for nutrition and childhood development.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the significant value they add—and their fundamental right to participate in post-conflict reconstruction and decision-making—women encounter significant obstacles to their participation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) notes: "the continued absence of women's voices in governance is largely due to inequitable representation and participation in institutional structures, from governments and political parties to NGOs and the private sector. However...boosting women's political participation needs to go beyond raw numbers to encompass the complex relationship between power, poverty, and participation."<sup>8</sup> The following sections explore this relationship as well as strategies to overcome these challenges.

### **Barriers to Women's Participation**

While widespread instability in society can lead to positive and negative shifts in gender roles, the obstacles to women's entrance into politics and governance structures are often exacerbated during armed conflict. Women frequently take on new responsibilities during war, but in most cases, they are pushed back into traditional roles when the conflict ends and men return home. Even when women have played a leadership role during the war, they are frequently sidelined during the peace process in favor of warring parties and other male elites. Women's exclusion at

this stage has a lasting impact on women's ability to engage in the transitional process and long-term reconstruction and development.

### *Political*

Researchers and experts have concluded that removing political and institutional barriers is essential for promoting women's engagement in governance.<sup>9</sup> Political challenges facing women include unfavorable electoral systems, a lack of political party support, and a history of male-dominated leadership in politics and governmental institutions.

A major obstacle women face is the electoral system itself. The type of electoral system chosen by a post-conflict country can influence the chances that a reasonable proportion of elected representatives are women. Research clearly shows that women advance more effectively in proportional representation (PR) systems, where seats are divided among parties based on the percentage of votes won, rather than in majoritarian systems, where one official represents each district. As of 2004, of 182 countries that hold elections, women averaged 8.5 percent of members of parliament in majoritarian systems, 11.3 percent in combined systems, and 15.4 percent in PR systems.<sup>10</sup> In fact, 13 of the top 15 countries with the highest representation of women utilize PR systems, averaging 34.7 percent women in their parliaments.<sup>11</sup>

Institutions for articulating and aggregating political interests pose another major obstacle to women's political engagement. In many countries, women are marginalized within their political party or excluded from financial support for campaigns. One serious obstacle for women at this stage involves the process of constructing party lists of candidates. Within PR systems, "closed" lists, where candidate names do not appear, often lead to greater numbers of women representatives than "open" lists, provided there is a quota for women candidates. In the case of both "closed" and "open" lists, the candidate's position on the list is critical to their advancement, as those at the bottom may not receive seats. The greater the subjectivity of party leaders in selecting candidates, the less chance women have in winning a candidacy. That is, when rules and bureaucratic procedures are in place, there are clearer entry points for advocacy and pressure to include women—even without a party quota. However, in post-conflict states, a well-established structure and process is not likely given the recent instability and transitional environment. As one expert notes: "With weak internal organization and rules of recruitment that are not clear, decisions are made by a limited number of elites, typically men. Women are usually on the outside...and promoting the greater representation of women is rarely seen as a party goal."<sup>12</sup>

Once women have tackled these and other obstacles, and if they win their seat, another round of political challenges await them within male-dominated systems. The institutional structures and rules of procedure were not created with women's needs in mind, such as childcare and the burden of a household, for example. Within the legislature itself, women may not be allocated speaking time or leadership roles, or they may be relegated to committees addressing so-called "soft" issues, such as education, health, or social services, rather than defense, industry, transport, procurement, or finance.

## *Social and Psychological*

The ideology that women do not “belong” in political structures continues to permeate many societies and cultures, posing a serious obstacle for women to engage in post-conflict governance. In some cases, this discrimination is manifested in the attitudes of men and women; at other times, it is institutionalized. In most post-conflict states, women do not enjoy similar access to education or training as men, nor have they been allowed or encouraged to enter leadership roles in the public or private sector during peacetime. This lack of experience, education, and training proves a formidable obstacle to women’s political participation and decision-making—as much because male leaders use this excuse to avoid promoting women as because women themselves lack confidence and choose not to engage.

## *Economic*

Women may not have the luxury of choosing to participate in post-conflict governance due to their household burden. In countries recovering from war, in particular, many women are widowed and act as the primary breadwinners as well as caretakers to their children, the elderly, and extended family members. In this situation, “it must be recognized that it is difficult for women to participate in political life when their major concern is survival and they have no choice but to spend much of their time trying to fulfill the basic needs of families.”<sup>13</sup> This phenomenon is confirmed by research showing that educated and economically independent women are more likely to enter politics than other women.<sup>14</sup>

When women decide they are able and willing to juggle their household responsibilities and a leadership position, they face serious financial obstacles to participation, particularly with regard to campaigning. Even when affiliated with political parties, women are often responsible for their own transportation and the production and dissemination of campaign materials. In contrast with women, male candidates might have already been employed in official positions during peacetime, maintain networks of potential funders and business associates, and are accustomed to raising and spending money for their own use.

<b>TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF OBSTACLES TO WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</b>	
<b>Overarching</b>	, Gender equality and women’s participation is generally sidelined during the peace process.
<b>Political</b>	, The type of electoral system established in a post-conflict country can significantly influence the level of women’s participation in representative bodies. , Women are frequently marginalized within their own political parties, and leaders often choose not to provide financial and moral support for women candidates. , When individual leaders in the party control the candidate selection process, women are often excluded

	from party lists or relegated to unfavorable positions.
<b>Societal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>, The ideology that women do not “belong” in political structures continues to permeate many societies and cultures.</li> <li>, Discrimination against women is manifested in the attitudes of men and women.</li> <li>, Women do not enjoy similar access to education or training as men, nor have they been allowed or encouraged to enter leadership roles in the public or private sector during peacetime.</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>, Women themselves may lack confidence and choose not to engage.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>, Women may be unable to participate due to their household responsibilities, including acting as the primary caregiver for their children, the elderly, and extended family members.</li> <li>, The financial burden of candidacy, particularly with regard to campaigning, is especially detrimental for women.</li> </ul>
<b>Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>, Women face risks to their physical safety and security by participating in peace negotiations and political leadership. Already a tense situation, their risk may be exacerbated particularly because they are women.</li> </ul>

### **Strategies to Overcome Obstacles**

Despite these barriers, women are finding ways to overcome challenges and participate in the political life of post-conflict societies in record numbers. Experts attribute the increasing number of women in post-conflict governance to mechanisms established in the transitional period—interim constitutional requirements, quotas, reserved seats, political party mandates, indirect elections, and other tools. In addition, women’s representation is strongest in countries where women maintained a strong presence from the very beginning of the reconstruction process.

The primary momentum for instituting these mechanisms has come from women themselves. Civil society groups and women’s movements are strong throughout Africa. As a result of their consistent voice in support of peace during times of armed conflict, women’s profile has been raised, and recognition of their contributions is growing. During the post-war transition, despite some regression toward traditional roles, many women are capitalizing on their networks and new-found leadership skills to play an important role in governance. Rwanda is the most recognized and cited example. Due to a variety of mechanisms, its lower house consists of 39 women representatives out of 80 seats or 48.8 percent.<sup>15</sup> Many other post-conflict states in Africa are also at the top of the world’s rankings with regard to women’s representation (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3: WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN THE  
LOWER (OR SINGLE) HOUSES OF  
SELECT POST-CONFLICT LEGISLATURES**

<b>COUNTRY (ELECTION YEAR)</b>	<b>NUMBER OF WOMEN</b>	<b>TOTAL MEMBERS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Rwanda (2003)	39	80	48.8%
Mozambique (2004)	87	250	34.8%
South Africa (2004)	131	400	32.8%
Burundi (2005)	36	118	30.5%
Namibia (2004)	21	78	26.9%
Uganda (2006)	73	305	23.9%
Eritrea (1994)	33	150	22.0%

The legal foundation for women’s post-conflict political participation has grown in recent years and serves as an important tool for women’s advocacy and pressure on national governments. The following key instruments form the basis for women’s participation:

- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, Article 7 calls on state parties to “eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country.”<sup>16</sup> It specifically addresses the right to vote, stand for election, and hold public office.
- **The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:** Following the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, member states issued this non-binding document, committing to fulfill its obligations and recommendations. In a chapter on power and decision-making, member states explicitly recognized that “without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved.”<sup>17</sup> The Platform for Action specifically recommends the promotion of women’s participation in post-conflict decision-making structures and recommends that governments set a target of 30 percent for women in national parliaments.
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** In 2000, all 191 UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, outlining their commitment to achieving eight core development

goals by 2015. In this document, UN member states resolved “to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.”<sup>18</sup> One indicator of progress toward Goal Three—women’s empowerment and gender equality—is the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

- **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000):** The landmark document on women, peace, and security specifically “urge[d] Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.”<sup>19</sup>

These international frameworks provide UNIFEM and other international agencies with a solid mandate to support women’s role in post-conflict governance and decision-making. The growing trend of women’s leadership in Africa is therefore partly a result of increased external support—in the form of advocacy as well as targeted programs. In recent years, the international community, in partnership with local groups, has effectively exerted influence on post-conflict governments to adopt mechanisms for women’s participation and a legal framework for women’s rights.

In addition, various bi-lateral and multi-lateral institutions, as well as NGOs, have devoted resources to directly support women’s efforts. This support takes the form of financial aid as well as technical assistance, which often includes awareness raising, capacity-building, the provision of gender expertise, and space for networking and coalition-building. UNIFEM has been active in all of these areas, as illustrated in the following section, which overviews the agency’s programming to promote gender equality in post-conflict governance in Africa.

## **MAXIMIZING THE “WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY” FOR WOMEN: UNIFEM’S INITIATIVES ON POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA**

As mentioned in the opening section, one of the four priorities of UNIFEM’s Multi-Year Funding Framework for 2004-2007 is achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace and in recovery from war.<sup>20</sup> The strategy outlines four planned actions to reach this goal:

1. Increasing technical capacity to implement and monitor CEDAW for achieving constitutional and legislative guarantees of gender equality and its implementation;
2. Building partnerships to ensure women’s equal participation in electoral processes, peace negotiations, conflict prevention, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, and other processes;
3. Establishing national and local mechanisms (governmental and non-governmental) to achieve gender equality in post-conflict reconstruction; and
4. Improving information, documentation, and guidance to attain gender justice.

In Africa, a range of minor and major initiatives fall within these four activity areas. In many cases, these projects come under the purview of the Governance, Peace, and Security program, although some initiatives are overseen and conducted by the Africa section of UNIFEM. All are implemented through the agency’s field offices and partners on the ground, while headquarters serves as a coordinating and managing body. The New York office offers technical expertise and input as required, convenes relevant conferences and forums, and advocates for women’s participation to other UN agencies, donors, and member states. The sub-regional field offices are managed by Regional Program Directors and represent Central Africa (Kigali), the East and Horn of Africa (Nairobi), English-Speaking West Africa (Abuja), Francophone and Lusophone West Africa (Dakar), and Southern Africa (Johannesburg). In some cases, UNIFEM also maintains a presence in relevant countries where the UN has established a mission, such as Burundi and Sierra Leone.

UNIFEM partners with various UN agencies to design and implement its post-conflict governance initiatives, particularly UNDP, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCHR, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the CEDAW Committee, and inter-agency thematic groups. UNIFEM receives its financial support primarily from member states. With regard to programs to promote women’s role in post-conflict governance, major donors and partners include the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. UNIFEM also coordinates with civil society at international, regional, national, and local levels, supporting a range of NGO initiatives for women’s post-conflict political participation.

In general, the agency seeks to extensively collaborate with local women's groups to promote local ownership, enhance their capacities, and address their needs at critical points in the peace process. Within the dynamic and fluctuating context of in-conflict and post-conflict states, UNIFEM often plays a catalytic role, drawing the attention and support of other players. Thus, while UNIFEM maintains a focus on the end goal of securing women's participation and implementing gender equality principles in new governance structures, the agency's activities are often dependent upon the specific actors, events, and conditions within each country and peace process.

The countries examined in this study have all emerged from armed conflict relatively recently, and the UN has been active in their reconstruction and development, maintaining a presence within the country. In this report, UNIFEM's programs are summarized in Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan, as well as cross-cutting regional and sub-regional efforts. The agency has been more active in some locations than others due to a variety of factors, such as the security situation, the availability and history of strong national and local partners, or the magnitude of UN involvement.

Examination of UNIFEM's programs over the past six years to increase women's political participation and promote gender-sensitive post-conflict governance across Africa reveals several trends and similarities relevant to current and future programming.

**UNIFEM focuses its efforts during the peace process, particularly negotiations.** Across the board, in nearly all countries where UNIFEM maintained programs related to women's political participation and governance, the bulk of the intervention was directed at the peace process. In Burundi, DRC, Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan, UNIFEM lobbied the international or regional mediators and the national government to include women in the process. Simultaneously, the agency partnered with other groups to strategically support women's presence during negotiations, providing a space to build a common women's agenda, funding travel, offering training, facilitating information-sharing with women negotiators from other countries, connecting women with donors and mediation teams, and providing ongoing technical support. In most cases, the combined efforts of UNIFEM, other organizations, and women's groups has made a critical, long-lasting impact on women's participation in the subsequent process of implementation and in transitional structures and mechanisms, including the creation of gender-sensitive laws and policies.

**UNIFEM prioritizes the development of civil society during reconstruction.** Due to the nature of many developing and post-conflict states, women leaders are inevitably found outside of official governance structures. For this reason, among others, UNIFEM has focused its efforts on building the capacity of women's organizations in civil society. Ranging from preparation to participate in peace processes to training on advocacy and organizational skills to connecting women across conflict lines, UNIFEM has devoted significant resources to the development of civil society in post-conflict states. This can serve to strengthen women's organizations and raise the profile of women and gender issues in society at large.

**Across themes and phases, UNIFEM draws on its technical expertise to offer capacity-building to a wide range of actors.** In nearly every country examined, UNIFEM has offered its technical expertise on gender issues to provide training to all relevant actors, including UN staff, mediators and facilitators, government officials, members of implementation committees, staff of key ministries, political parties, women parliamentarians, civil society members, representatives of the media, and local leaders, among others. In many cases, UNIFEM drew on its national and local partners to implement the training, connecting actors that may not otherwise convene. Topics ranged from gender and development to the gendered implications of political party candidate lists to gender justice.

**Similarly, across themes and phases, UNIFEM holds a strong convening ability to connect actors for information-sharing, awareness-raising, dialogue, and coalition-building.** Often convened under the heading of a “conference” or “workshop” or “training session,” UNIFEM holds a strong and strategic ability to gather various actors for the purpose of advancing women’s political participation. In Burundi, DRC, Sudan, and other areas, women from opposing parties were brought together by UNIFEM to form a common women’s agenda for peace—a feat that few other groups are able to achieve and an example to members of negotiating parties. UNIFEM has created standing networks across ministries in Angola, Burundi, and elsewhere to bring together gender focal points and strengthen the women’s agenda across the government. The agency also frequently connects women in civil society with members of Parliament, staff of ministries, and representatives of implementation committees, facilitating the communication of the needs, concerns, and perspectives of constituencies to their leaders. Similarly, UNIFEM connects women from government and civil society to international donors and agencies to give voice to their issues and advance their agenda.

**UNIFEM draws upon its regional and international presence to promote women’s participation in sub-regional processes and structures.** As the regional and sub-regional structures in Africa have grown and strengthened in recent years, UNIFEM has supported women’s groups to use new tools and instruments, such as the African Protocol on the Rights of Women, to lobby national governments for women’s participation. UNIFEM has simultaneously supported the development of offices, bodies, mechanisms, and policies for women’s advancement within sub-regional organizations including the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as the regional African Union (AU). This engagement at the sub-regional level has led to networks and experiences that enhance UNIFEM’s efforts in country-specific peace processes.

**There are key areas of post-conflict governance in which a gender perspective is weak or absent.** There is a particular need for support for women in local governance, transparency and anti-corruption campaigns, the elections process (especially monitoring), and political party and media outreach.

## **MAKING AN IMPACT: STRATEGIC UNIFEM INTERVENTIONS IN SOMALIA, LIBERIA, AND BURUNDI**

The three country case studies were selected because these are countries where UNIFEM has made a significant effort to enhance women's political participation. In addition, these cases are at various stages of the peace process and post-conflict transition, enabling an in-depth presentation of several governance activities at different points in reconstruction. Each case study provides a contextualized depiction of the situation, while focusing on one particular aspect of UNIFEM's programming in the country. The next chapter provides a brief analysis across cases, then offers challenges and recommendations to inform future programming.

### **Somalia: Facilitating Women's Role in the Peace Process**

In 2004, after 13 years of civil war, the lengthy and complex Somali peace talks facilitated by the Nairobi-based Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) began to make headway. In January, an agreement was reached to select members of Parliament based on the traditional clan system. In May, a Charter was adopted that created institutions and mechanisms to facilitate the transition. In August, a parliament was convened, and in October, these new members chose a president for the Transitional Federal Republic of Somalia. During all of these phases—and in fact, throughout the preceding years—UNIFEM supported women's participation in the Somali peace process.

#### ***Women's Participation as the Sixth Clan***

Following years of numerous *ad hoc* peace talks in the 1990s, Djibouti hosted a major reconciliation conference—the 13<sup>th</sup> such effort—in 2000 in the city of Arta. Unlike previous meetings, all five major clans were in attendance, numbering 2,000 to 3,000 people; among them were approximately 100 women.<sup>21</sup> The five clans were the only officially recognized participants and planned to negotiate a distribution of power based on clan identity. Women leaders recognized their “window of opportunity” to make an impact on the negotiations and the outcomes of the accord. In May 2000, they jointly agreed to break with clan leadership and began to lobby as a single bloc in support of a women's agenda.

With the support of the NGO Save Somali Women and Children, UNIFEM, and other organizations, the 100 women tirelessly lobbied clan leaders, international representatives, and other Somali women to be recognized as a “sixth clan,” a group of women united as women and not by tribal affiliation. At Arta, the six clans determined the modalities and institutions for a Transitional National Government (TNG) with a three-year mandate. The Sixth Clan campaigned for 10 percent representation (25 seats) in the Transitional National Assembly (TNA). Seventy percent of the women at Arta voted as a bloc during the conference, leading to a national Charter that incorporated the women's quota.<sup>22</sup>

As a strategy to avoid potential clan imbalances, five women were selected from each of the five clans within the women's bloc to compose the 25 seats in the TNA. In this way, women were allowed to select their own representatives, but avoided controversy as the overall clan representation remained balanced. As summarized by a female TNA member, "The five seats given to each clan were allocated by the women of that clan, not by the men of the clan."<sup>23</sup>

Their participation at Arta not only benefited Somali women, but the entire process and its outcomes. For example, the negotiated Charter included guarantees of the recognition of the human rights of women, children, and minority groups. Furthermore, the Charter itself may not have been possible without women's efforts. The gains at Arta can also be attributed, in part, to the fact that it was one of the most inclusive processes to date in the Somali talks. In the words of a female participant, for the first time in the peace negotiations, "there were people from the civil society, there were women, there was a real cross-section of society and actually represented what the people really wanted."<sup>24</sup>

Complimenting the efforts of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), UNIFEM's involvement in the Arta process consisted primarily of advocacy efforts, training and workshops, and financial support. In October and November 2000, UNIFEM supported training on conflict resolution and mediation for women's groups aimed at building trust between conflicting clans and ethnic groups, eventually reaching over 800 women's organizations, traditional and religious leaders, local administrators, and community members.<sup>25</sup> UNIFEM also supported the NGO Save Somali Women and Children, which served as a primary mobilizer to women's coalition-building at Arta and the formation of the Sixth Clan. Save Somali Women and Children followed on the gains at Arta with a UNIFEM-supported program, keeping women's participation in the Somali peace process alive. From November 2000 to November 2001, they offered capacity-building workshops for women's groups in Mogadishu, conducted public debates and dialogue in cooperation with media groups, and harnessed various commitments from conflicting parties. Through this program, 120 women and civil society members were trained, and six peace education sessions were held for 60 activists.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Formal Structures to Guarantee Women's Role***

Despite this forward movement, violence between clan-based factional leaders continued following the Arta agreement. Although women had made important gains during the Arta conference, implementation of commitments to women lagged amidst the ongoing instability. Issues became clan-based and territorial, and clan leaders reverted to traditional elder structures, which marginalized and excluded women.

In this environment, UNIFEM and other organizations continued to mobilize and convene women in order to keep women's participation on the agenda. In July 2002, UNIFEM partnered with IGAD and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) for a three-day training session on advanced negotiations and mediation. Fifty men and women participated from all seven IGAD countries, including ministers, members of parliament, government officials, IGAD desk officers, UN agencies, the African Union, and international

and local civil society leaders.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, UNIFEM was convening and preparing women delegates and civil society leaders to maintain the momentum for peace.

In October 2002, IGAD member states intensified their efforts to broker peace, convening the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference in Eldoret, Kenya. At that point, leaders signed a Declaration on Cessation of Hostilities: Structures and Principles of the Somalia National Reconciliation Process, setting the stage for two years of IGAD-led negotiations in Kenya.

As delegates convened in Eldoret, UNIFEM partnered with a Somali women's NGO, Iida Women's Development, to hold a workshop gathering 70 representatives from five south-central regions of Somalia to identify women's priorities for peace.<sup>28</sup> The group crossed clans, social and economic classes, and political identities and included community elders, local administrators, religious leaders, youth associations, women's organizations, local media, UN agencies, and international and local NGOs. Topics ranged from strategic planning methodology to the conceptual framework of peace-building to Islamic views of women's role in decision-making. From this experience, participants developed a strategic plan for peace in Somalia and an agenda of women's priorities, which was distributed to all relevant parties, regional bodies, international organizations, and the media. In addition, local-level peace committees were birthed from this process, and the South-Central committee eventually sent women as delegates and observers to Eldoret.

During the 2002 Conference, UNIFEM partnered with the IGAD Women's Desk, Femmes Afrique Solidarité (FAS), ABANTU for Development, and the Perry Centre to organize a seminar for the 35 Somali official women delegates to the talks.<sup>29</sup> The workshop brought women from all sides together to define a common agenda for peace as well as strategies to address the gender dimensions of the peace process and its implementation. The organizers brought in experts to assist Somali women in articulating their agenda and developing strategies to ensure its inclusion in the Conference. The experts included Her Excellency Mrs. Ruth Perry, former interim president of Liberia, and the Hon. Phoebe Asiyo, the first female parliamentarian of Kenya, Constitutional Commissioner, and UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador in Africa. The women's agenda and recommendations were presented to the executive secretary of IGAD, and the delegates selected five women to represent their agenda to the main Conference. Finally, UNIFEM ensured that the delegates received copies of Security Council Resolution 1325 to be used during negotiations.

As early as November 1999—not long after the IGAD Secretariat was established—UNIFEM had offered an initial grant of \$150,000 to establish a Women's Desk within the Secretariat.<sup>30</sup> These funds established the Women's Desk and supported its activities for the first 14 months, subsequently extended on an annual basis. The mandate of the Women's Desk is to mainstream gender and promote women's participation in IGAD's focus areas, including conflict prevention and resolution. In addition, in October 2001, UNIFEM co-sponsored a policy sensitization seminar for IGAD ministers, government representatives from the ministries of foreign affairs, members of parliament, and women's groups from all seven member states. As a result of this seminar and through UNIFEM's technical support to the IGAD gender advisor, the organization began to conduct a variety of projects in support of women's role in peace-building in the region and eventually developed a formal Gender Policy, endorsed by the ministries of gender and

presented to the heads of state for adoption in 2005. In addition, in recognition of these contributions, the Women's Desk became a formal structure at IGAD headquarters, known as Gender Affairs, and part of its mandate and budget.

UNIFEM provided a computer, Internet access, a photocopier, and filing cabinets for the Women's Desk. In addition, a gender expert was assigned to the Somalia mediation team, and capacity-building was provided to women leaders participating in the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference. The gender expert was recruited and attached to the peace process with the task of training women delegates to lobby and advocate for gender-specific provisions within the Charter. The advisor also facilitated a gender audit of the Conference documents and shared the findings and recommendations with the working committees of the Conference, the Technical Committee (the mediation team), and the observers.

According to UNIFEM documentation, the women's resource center was "instrumental in providing women delegates and observers with the essential knowledge and skills needed to influence the peace process."<sup>31</sup> Approximately 10-15 women utilized the center daily, as did other clan members and visiting officials due to the shortage of conference rooms and equipment.<sup>32</sup> Women were thus able to lobby leaders directly from a space that they controlled. The center stored information for use in advocacy, such as materials on quota systems, political processes, and governance institutions. Throughout the Conference program, women could quickly go to the resource center, photocopy their advocacy materials, and immediately disseminate them to clan leaders. When a disagreement or key issue arose, women were ready with written recommendations.

These combined efforts—UNIFEM's relationship with IGAD through the Women's Desk, the provision of a gender advisor, the establishment of a women's resource center, training and coalition-building for Somali women, and the efforts and motivation of the women themselves—resulted in a sustained presence of 35 Somali women delegates and observers to the Conference.<sup>33</sup> But their participation was not without obstacles. UNIFEM and other agencies continued to facilitate women's participation over the subsequent two years of talks at Eldoret, supporting their efforts to attain a quota for women's representation, connecting them with international leaders, and providing capacity-building.

In 2003, UNIFEM supported the IGAD Women's Desk to conduct a workshop for the 35 women delegates on negotiations training and to assist their review of draft reports from the six technical committees of the Conference.<sup>34</sup> Their advocacy efforts focused on raising the federalism committee's recommendation of only a 10 percent quota for women's representation in transitional institutions to a 25 percent quota. UNIFEM also facilitated exchange visits by technical advisors and gender advocates, including Uganda's minister of gender and labor and South Africa's deputy speaker of the parliament. In June 2003, UNIFEM participated in an IGAD high-level plenary session, which focused on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 in the Somali peace process.

In July 2003, delegates agreed to reserve 12 percent of seats for women in the National Assembly and 25 percent in regional assemblies—this remained in the final version of the Charter.<sup>35</sup> A summary of women's reaction at the time notes: "Although a 12 percent quota was

not what the women delegates had hoped for, the women at the peace talks saw it as an important outcome of their participation in the talks since there could have been no reference at all to women's participation in the documents. These gains are a starting point for longer-term advocacy efforts."<sup>36</sup>

### *Support for Women in the Transition*

In August 2004, several months after the adoption of the Transitional National Charter, the clans nominated 275 members of Parliament. Despite the 12 percent quota reserving 33 seats for women, only 23 were allowed to take seats; the remainder of the quota was filled by male clan members.<sup>37</sup> Experts have noted this discrepancy as part of a trend by members of parliament and the transitional government leaders manifesting a "disturbing disregard for the Charter from which they derive their authority."<sup>38</sup>

UNIFEM continued its advocacy and support of women's efforts to meet the quota as specified in the Charter. For example, UNIFEM regularly engages with the Somalia Aid Coordination Body's Working Groups, including the Gender and Human Rights working group of the Governance Committee. As chair of the sub-committee, UNIFEM used the position to highlight gender gaps and recommend solutions to other UN governance efforts, specifically in the reports of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Expert in Somalia and in UNDP's Somalia Civil Protection Program.

UNIFEM also provided technical leadership to the post-conflict needs assessment for Somalia, which was initiated in October 2005 by the UN and the World Bank. As a result of UNIFEM's advocacy, a Somali woman was selected as a national gender expert for the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA), and in each regional zone, coordinators consist of both a man and a woman. UNIFEM continues to emphasize the need to finance the implementation of commitments to women.

UNIFEM is working with transitional institutions within Somalia, supporting all three ministries of gender in the country. In the northeast (Puntland), the agency has provided a computer, training for staff, and technical expertise to develop a gender action plan. In the northwest (Somaliland), UNIFEM connected the ministry to UNDP, which funded an office space, five staff, and the development of a gender action plan. And for the transitional federal government, UNIFEM supported a meeting in Nairobi with donors and civil society members and provided technical expertise to develop a gender strategy, although the ministry's work has been stalled due to the ongoing political instability.

UNIFEM is also reaching out to men and women at the community level in an effort to raise the profile of women in leadership positions. Because literacy levels are low, UNIFEM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with local radio stations to broadcast gender discussion forums in 2004 and 2005. Thirteen programs have been conducted, all between 12 and 15 minutes long. They aired on 12 Somali radio stations in the local language and were posted on UNIFEM's regional website. Of these programs, three were specifically related to women's role in post-conflict governance. "Empowering Women" discussed barriers to women's inclusion and ways

forward. “Women Members of Parliament” profiled two new female representatives faced with the demands of politics as well as home and family. “Women in Parliament” asked women in the Somali peace process if they were satisfied with their representation in the new government and discussed the 12 percent quota.

UNIFEM’s 2004-2007 program in Somalia advances partnerships with UN agencies, the Somalia Aid Coordination Body, women’s associations, human rights networks, and community mobilizers. With regard to governance, UNIFEM plans to build the capacity of women’s organizations to lobby regional governing entities and local authorities; develop policy and legislation that will protect women’s human rights and promote gender equality; and track the outcomes of the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference.

### **Liberia: Increasing Women’s Participation in Elections**

The people of Liberia elected the first female president on the African continent in the October 2005 national elections —Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Liberian women represented 50 percent of registered voters, and in 7 of 15 counties, they actually made up the majority of registered voters.<sup>39</sup> A woman chaired the National Electoral Commission (NEC), and two of the five appointed commissioners were women.<sup>40</sup> Fourteen percent of candidates for parliament were women—a bit disappointing given an NEC guideline to political parties that women compose 30 percent of their candidacy lists—but still a step forward.<sup>41</sup> Five out of 30 women were elected in the Senate (representing 16.7 percent of Senate); and 8 out of 64 women were elected in the House (representing 12.5 percent of House).<sup>42</sup>

The increase in women’s political participation in Liberia can be attributed to several phenomena, but primarily, to a vibrant and active civil society. Throughout West Africa, women are strong advocates for nonviolence and played an important role in building support for an end to armed conflict in the region. Among many others, organizations such as the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET), the Women in Peace-Building Network (WIPNET), and the Liberian Women’s Initiative (LWI) were prominent in the official and informal peace process in Liberia, and recognized internationally for their efforts.

UNIFEM, DPA, DPKO, and other agencies have contributed to the development of this strong women’s movement as key supporters and advocates for women in Liberia and throughout the region. Of particular note is the agency’s support at a critical juncture in the peace negotiations. Amidst renewed violence between rebel groups and the government of accused war criminal Charles Taylor, ECOWAS initiated peace talks in Accra, Ghana, in the summer of 2003. Under heavy international pressure, the parties signed a ceasefire agreement in June and while Nigerian troops deployed to Monrovia, Taylor was forced into exile.

After intense advocacy and as a result their critical involvement in spurring negotiations for peace, representatives of the Liberian women’s movement participated in the Accra talks as observers. Days before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in August 2003, UNIFEM partnered with MARWOPNET and other women’s groups to convene at Accra in order to analyze the talks from a gender perspective and design strategies for the inclusion of women in the transitional government. The organizers invited Ruth Sando Perry, the ECOWAS-

appointed head of the transitional council for Liberia from 1996-1997, to lead the event. Representatives from 45 groups attended the meeting and jointly issued the Golden Tulip Declaration.<sup>43</sup> The document called for a change in women's status at the talks from observers to delegates—representatives of women's groups—with full voting rights. It also advocated 50 percent representation of women in transitional leadership structures and encouraged women to support female candidates. The Declaration was subsequently disseminated to the mediation team, UN and international leaders, and all representatives of warring factions, political parties, and civil society in Accra.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, UNIFEM—also an observer to the talks—lobbied the Secretary-General's Special Representative (SRSG) for Liberia, heads of state in the region, the mediation team, and ECOWAS to mainstream gender and guarantee women's participation in the process and in the transitional government. Although representatives of MARWOPNET participated as observers to the talks, women remained marginalized in the negotiations. As a result, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement does not contain a quota for women's participation. It does note, however, in Article 28: "The Parties shall reflect national and gender balance in all elective and non-elective appointments within the NTGL [National Transitional Government of Liberia]."<sup>45</sup> It also calls for "gender balance" with regard to program implementation during national reconstruction and development.<sup>46</sup> The Secretary-General noted women's "inadequate representation in the delegations" at Accra, but recognized the importance of the Golden Tulip Declaration as Liberia moved into the transition phase.<sup>47</sup>

UNIFEM and women's organizations continued their efforts to promote women's participation as the UN established a peace-keeping mission in the country and as the transitional government began to form. UNIFEM hosted a seminar for participants in the International Reconstruction Conference on Liberia in February 2004, at which the Liberian Minister for Gender and Development again called for women's full participation in reconstruction. However, as noted by experts, "Few Liberians had any illusions about the transitional government assembled in Accra...the three warring factions got to carve up the national cake, each taking its piece in the form of ministerial positions and legislative seats..."<sup>48</sup> At the end of the day, only three female cabinet ministers were appointed out of 21 positions, and only four members of the 76-seat legislature were women (5.3 percent).<sup>49</sup>

In this atmosphere and looking ahead to the establishment of a new government in 2005, UNIFEM partnered with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and UNDP to support the Ministry of Gender and Development in organizing a national women's consultation in May 2004. From across the country, 250 women gathered for the National Women's Conference on Peace and Socio-Economic Recovery in Liberia, including political leaders, businesswomen, traditional leaders, and representatives of civil society, youth associations, the elderly, and the displaced.<sup>50</sup> At the close of the conference, the group adopted the Unification Day Declaration, calling for 30 percent minimum representation of women in elected and appointed positions, among other recommendations.<sup>51</sup> The Declaration was distributed to the Chairman of the NTGL and to the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA), which took the rare step of debating the document and adopting a resolution of support. However, despite the efforts of women's groups, UNIFEM, and other agencies, there was little response from donors to the outcomes of the national women's conference or its two-year action plan. The subsequent Joint Needs

Assessment for Liberia, which informed the Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) which outlines the needs and tasks for Liberian reconstruction in 2004 and 2005, unfortunately likewise had no gender-specific targets or indicators.

This neglect of gender issues runs counter to Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003), which established UNMIL and explicitly recalled Resolution 1325. Member states “reaffirm[ed] the importance of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peace-building...and encourag[ed] UNMIL as well as the Liberian parties to actively address these issues.”<sup>52</sup> To fulfill this mandate, the mission established the Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA), and the UN agencies in Liberia instituted a coordinating mechanism for their gender-specific activities, the UN Gender Theme Group. UNIFEM has also worked with UNDP and other agencies to support a major campaign to increase women’s participation in the 2005 national elections—the focus of the following section.

### *Women as Candidates*

During the peace negotiations and in the transition, UNIFEM supported Liberian women’s, full participation in reconstruction. Despite women’s activism, international efforts, and women’s presence at the peace talks, obstacles consistently arose to hinder their advancement. Following the low levels of women’s representation in the transitional administration, women’s organizations were more determined than ever to see women in leadership positions in the new government.

A positive development arose through the woman-headed National Elections Commission (NEC). In the original draft electoral reform law, prepared by the NEC and submitted to the transitional legislature, a requirement of 30 percent women’s representation was stipulated for all political parties applying to participate in the 2005 national elections.<sup>53</sup> Chairperson Frances Johnson Morris rationalized this through the principles of the Liberian constitution and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. She also noted: “This country cannot develop if we continue to keep women in the backseat.”<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, this aspect of the electoral reform law encountered opposition in the legislature and was eliminated. In response, in September 2004, women met with the transitional parliamentary Speaker George Dweh to advocate for revisions to the draft electoral law. After numerous delays, the transitional legislature adopted the electoral reform bill in December 2004, but without specific mention of women or gender. This met with disappointment by the UN as follows: “UNMIL regrets, however, that the proposed reference, in the preamble of the law, to adopt appropriate measures to increase the participation of women in elections, was rejected by the NTLA. Nevertheless, UNMIL will support the National Elections Commission to ensure that attention is paid to the participation of women.”<sup>55</sup> As summarized by Minister Vabah Gayflor, “The difficulties of engendering the entire transitional process, as envisioned in the Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) can be further demonstrated by the recent passage of the Electoral Reform Bill in exclusion of an affirmative action for women, which could be in consonance with Resolution 1325.”<sup>56</sup> Disappointed but determined, women’s

organizations and other groups continued to pressure leaders to ensure that women appeared on political party candidate lists to stand for election.

In March 2005, UNIFEM convened a forum for all relevant actors to strategize on women's participation in the upcoming elections. The meeting included women in civil society, the ministry of gender, NEC, international organizations, and UNMIL's Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA). The agency utilized existing women's networks as well as no-cost UN radio forums. UNIFEM encouraged women candidates to register with the agency and with OGA in order to receive leadership training at national and county levels in topics including advocacy, public speaking, and resource mobilization as well as party manifestos and election guidelines. OGA was also providing training for political parties on electoral regulations from a gender perspective.

Meanwhile, joint advocacy efforts by OGA, UNIFEM, and women's organizations continued on all fronts to encourage and influence the political parties as they formulated candidate lists. Their efforts met with some success. In June 2005, six months after the passage of the electoral reform law, the NEC Chairperson announced the body would use its statutory powers to issue a non-binding guideline requiring political parties to submit candidate lists with 30 percent women's representation.<sup>57</sup> The Political Party and Independent Candidates Registration Guideline 15.2 encouraged a 30 percent women's quota on the electoral lists, equally affecting individual political parties and coalition groups.<sup>58</sup>

The combination of these efforts led to 110 women candidates on the final lists in August 2005.<sup>59</sup> Of a total of 762 contenders for president and vice president, Senate, and House of Representatives, these 110 women represented only 14 percent of political party and independent candidates.<sup>60</sup> Although several political parties took considerable pains to follow the NEC guideline, most did not. In fact, none of the parties achieved the 30 percent goal.<sup>61</sup> International observers of the Liberian elections summarized several reasons for the failure to meet the quota as follows:

Most candidates were selected through an internal election process that demanded hard lobbying of party leaders and members, skills which many Liberian women have not had the opportunity to hone. Of the few women who did win their parties' nomination, many were unable to access party resources or other funding to pay the NEC candidate application fee. While the NEC guidelines are not legally binding, the shortage of women underscores the fact that quotas alone, especially without enforcement mechanisms, cannot ensure effective women's political participation.<sup>62</sup>

Lessons can certainly be learned regarding the need for enforcement measures to back up minimum requirements for women's participation. While it can be argued that Liberian women have a long history of advocacy and lobbying, it is quite true that a lack of resources and issue-specific capacity-building can prove a hindrance to their effective participation. To address this need, UNIFEM and OGA jointly conducted an intensive training for all female candidates, covering issues such as public speaking, political campaigns, the design of community-specific manifestos, fundraising, and gender equality.

Still, more work must be done with regard to assisting women in their campaigns to enhance their prospects for taking office. Of the 110 women running for elections in Liberia, presidential candidate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf qualified for a run-off in the initial election in October with 19.8 percent of the vote;<sup>63</sup> she won the run-off with 59.4 percent of the vote.<sup>64</sup> The other woman presidential candidate, Margaret Tor-Thompson won only .9 percent in the initial election.<sup>65</sup> Of the 30-member Senate, only five women won seats, or 16.7 percent.<sup>66</sup> Of the 64-member House of Representatives, only eight women won seats, or 12.5 percent.<sup>67</sup> Thus, of a total 110 female candidates, only 14 were successful.

Although the highest position in Liberia's new government is now occupied by a woman, gender equity is not a feature of the new national legislature. These 14 new Liberian women leaders face enormous obstacles to advancing a women's agenda in addition to the monumental tasks of moving forward on the path to peace and reconciliation. On a positive note, President Sirleaf pledged to appoint a cabinet of at least 30 percent women.<sup>68</sup> UNIFEM, UNDP, and OGA are offering training to new parliamentary leaders. UNIFEM is also supporting a women's parliamentary caucus.

### ***Women as Voters***

While UNIFEM, OGA, and other groups actively promoted female candidates, these agencies were simultaneously working on a variety of other fronts to enhance women's engagement in the voting process. UNIFEM partnered with UNDP to support a grassroots civic education program that included targeted activities for women, implemented by the Liberian Women's Initiative and the Women in Peace-Building Network (WIPNET), among other groups. UNIFEM also reviewed the NEC's civic and voter education material to incorporate a gender perspective into the training manual. UNIFEM supported outreach directly to political parties to encourage them to articulate their electoral platforms in terms of implications for women, which led to increased mention of gender issues in party broadcasts and campaigns.

Arguably the most important intervention was made with regard to voter registration. Between April 25 and May 21, 2005, eligible Liberians were urged to register to vote in the October elections. According to international observers, approximately 1.35 million people registered to vote out of an estimated 1.5 million eligible citizens, or 90 percent.<sup>69</sup> Yet in the initial days of the registration period, the NEC expressed concern over the relatively low number of registered voters, particularly women. The NEC Chairperson and the minister of gender notified the Chairman of the NTGL and the UN mission that of the registered voters at that point, only 24 percent were women.<sup>70</sup> In response, UNDP and UNIFEM partnered with the NEC and the Ministry of Gender and Development to enlist women's organizations to mobilize women's vote.

Within that very brief "window of opportunity," WIPNET enlisted 200 volunteers from its network to take to the streets to encourage men and women to register and participate in the upcoming elections.<sup>71</sup> The volunteers were divided into ten teams of 20 women to cover diverse locations across Montserrado County, where the capital is located.<sup>72</sup> The women embarked on a creative campaign to encourage voter registration, utilizing visual aids, T-shirts, and posters. The energy of WIPNET's campaign was recognized by a local newspaper, which noted: "[WIPNET] is reportedly on an adventure in communities in and around Monrovia, informing and pursuing

Liberians on the significance of the ongoing process and to register them to vote for their choice.”<sup>73</sup>

Leymah Gbowee, head of WIPNET, recalls a break-through moment in their strategy: “[Female market traders] did not have anyone to leave their stalls with, or their children...But it was important that they participated, so in some cases, we hand-carried them to the centers.”<sup>74</sup>

UNIFEM’s Regional Programme Director Florence Butegwa recalled the creativity and effectiveness of this initiative, as women volunteers would guard the market stalls, so that the women traders could register to vote. She credits their efforts with a significant increase in the percentage of female voter registration. Over only a two-week period, the NEC recorded a jump in women’s registration from 24 percent to over 50 percent.<sup>75</sup>

This vibrant initiative was followed by a “Wake Up Early to Vote” campaign in September 2005, launched by the Ministry of Gender and Development, UNIFEM, and other partners to ensure that registered voters actually participated at the polls. Minister Gayflor urged: “Women and youth voters must recognize that the future of Liberia now rests on their shoulders.”<sup>76</sup> While gendered statistics on voter turnout are not yet available, anecdotal accounts note that women, despite obstacles and other responsibilities and burdens, found their way to the polls. In the words of a local newspaper, “Liberian women turned out in their numbers and in every imaginable condition to vote: pregnant, nursing, handicapped, baby-on-the-back, hungry, and tired.”<sup>77</sup> The article noted that the major market in Monrovia, generally packed with women traders, was “absolutely empty.”<sup>78</sup>

Building on this work, UNIFEM plans various activities to promote women’s role in governance in Liberia. The agency will continue its leadership among UN agencies on the Gender Theme Group and advance its cooperation with UNDP to make governance programming more gender-sensitive. UNIFEM also plans to continue its support for the Ministry of Gender and Development, funding a gender program officer, supporting the establishment of a women’s rights resource center, and offering technical support. As previously mentioned, the agency is planning training sessions for newly elected women legislators and women in appointed governmental positions as well as regular exchange forums for these leaders to engage with civil society. UNIFEM is also working to support a women’s parliamentary caucus—a strategy that has been effective at raising women leaders’ profiles in countries such as Rwanda and Uganda. UNIFEM will also continue its partnership with women’s NGOs in Liberia, replicating trainings such as the 10-day workshop on basic organizational development skills for 15 women’s groups in 2005. Finally, UNIFEM is seeking funding for its Liberia Gender Justice program, which includes a review and reform of laws relating to gender-based violence, family, and inheritance as well as capacity-building to strengthen governmental mechanisms for greater accountability to women.

### **Burundi: Securing Leadership Positions for Women**

UNIFEM began conducting socio-economic development programs in Burundi as early as 1994 in the midst of instability and outbreaks of violence. In this initial intervention, the agency formed partnerships with women’s civil society groups, sponsored their participation at the

Beijing World Conference on Women, and organized peace and solidarity missions among women in the region. These initiatives set the stage for sustained support throughout the war, the peace process, and in the transition. Some documentation exists with regard to women's participation at the Arusha peace talks between the government of Burundi and rebel groups, which will be re-capped briefly here.<sup>79</sup> But less has been recorded about the ongoing, follow-up activities to secure women's participation in the transition and to enhance their effectiveness in new leadership positions—the subject of this section.

By the time warring parties convened in Arusha in 1998 to begin the long process of negotiating a ceasefire, the women's movement in Burundi had been mobilizing for peace for a number of years. Women had convened regional peace conferences and formed an umbrella organization—the *Collectifs des Associations et ONGs Feminines Du Burundi* (CAFOB)—to bring together diverse women's groups. Various international NGOs had been actively supporting their efforts, including Femmes Afrique Solidarité (FAS), International Alert, and Search for Common Ground, among others.

Women were determined to participate in the negotiations and voice their priorities and needs as women. With support from UNIFEM, the Conference of Mukono in Tanzania convened 75 Burundi women to meet with the president of the regional initiative for Burundi, who pledged his support for their engagement with the peace process.<sup>80</sup> Yet at the outset of the talks, the parties refused to grant women status as observers or as an official delegation. At the invitation of the facilitator, Nelson Mandela, and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation—the non-governmental organization through which the facilitation team operated<sup>81</sup>—seven Burundi women gained “permanent observer” status to attend the talks in Arusha. With funding for travel to Arusha from FAS, UNIFEM, and other international donors, women were able to follow the negotiations and share news of the process with the wider women's movement, thereby informing their planning and advocacy strategies. Still, they were frequently “barred from entering the negotiating room.”<sup>82</sup> In response, women lobbied political party leaders, international observers, and the facilitation team to include a gender perspective in the negotiations and in the accords.

Again, women's voices were heard by the international community. In June 2000, Nelson Mandela and the facilitation team invited UNIFEM to convene a high-level briefing for the heads of delegations and the facilitation team on how women's rights could be incorporated into the formal Burundi peace accord. UNIFEM gathered experts from Eritrea, Guatemala, South Africa and Uganda—all of whom had negotiated peace accords in their own countries—to brief delegates on how they had elevated women's voices during negotiations and addressed their concerns in the drafting and implementation of the accords. The briefing convinced delegates to officially recognize women's contributions and guarantee that women would be directly involved in implementing the accord. It also influenced the outputs of the committees discussing the five substantive issues on the negotiations agenda. For the short-term, all 19 delegations agreed to send two female representatives to an All-Party Burundi Women's Conference that would allow women to make specific recommendations vis-à-vis the accords and their implementation.<sup>83</sup>

Under the auspices of UNIFEM and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, the All-Party Burundi Women's Conference brought together the seven women observers as well as two women

delegates from each of the 19 parties to the negotiations. In addition, women from the diaspora, refugee groups, business, and civil society participated. Numerous international resource persons—including the facilitation team, which briefed the women on each step of the negotiations—offered their support as women drafted gender-sensitive recommendations that they hoped would influence the peace accords. The nearly 80 participants created a written proposal to make the agreement gender-sensitive and issued a Final Declaration of their position.<sup>84</sup> Among other requests, the women proposed mechanisms to guarantee 30 percent women’s participation in decision-making positions during and following the transition period. Many of the recommendations, but not the 30 percent quota, were subsequently incorporated into the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, signed in August 2000. With regard to the electoral system for the transitional National Assembly, the accord did note that “for each five names, at least one shall be a woman” on political party lists.<sup>85</sup> This number would subsequently be expanded in the constitution as a result of women’s continuous advocacy efforts.

### *Women in the Transition Period*

While the Arusha agreement specifically mentioned “gender balance” in public administration, education, the defense forces, and other sectors,<sup>86</sup> the rejection of the 30 percent quota was immediately obvious in the transitional government and institutions. In November 2000, for example, the parties to the Arusha accord re-convened to establish the Arusha Agreement Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC). Of its 29 members, only three were women.<sup>87</sup> The three-year transitional government was established in November 2001; of the 26 cabinet seats, only three (at times, four) were filled by women.<sup>88</sup> In the 186-seat transitional National Assembly, women held only 16 (at times, 17) seats—even these few were a result of extensive advocacy by UNIFEM, other agencies, and women’s groups.<sup>89</sup> In the Senate, women held only nine (at times, ten) of the 54 seats.<sup>90</sup>

At this point, UNIFEM changed tactics in its approach to increasing women’s role and promoting a gender perspective in the implementation of the Arusha accords. In 2001, in collaboration with the IMC, UNIFEM organized a one-day review of the body’s commitments to women, resulting in several recommendations to mainstream gender in the implementation process as well as in the work of the IMC itself. On a larger scale, UNIFEM embarked on a program with UNDP, UNHCR, CAFOB, and other women’s organizations to support the Ministry of Social Action and Women’s Promotion in the development of national gender policy and activities to sensitize other government leaders of these priorities. In 2002 and 2003, this project supported the training of 381 people (men and women) on gender and development, among them 60 senior government officials, 26 Members of Parliament, 29 senators and 148 officers of the provincial administration.<sup>91</sup> Training was subsequently offered for civil servants in all ministries, and a database of gender experts was established to facilitate women’s equal involvement in all policies and programs.<sup>92</sup> Another key aspect of the joint project involved the establishment of a network of gender focal points in transitional ministries; two were appointed in each of the 25 ministries.<sup>93</sup> In addition, the Council of Ministers adopted Burundi’s National Gender Policy.

The results of this targeted campaign could be seen almost immediately. In the spring of 2004, as former rebel groups joined the transitional government, the parliament was expanded to 220 seats, of which women occupied 43, a significant increase.<sup>94</sup> Another positive sign arose in 2004, as two of the five members of the newly appointed Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) were women.<sup>95</sup> And the number of women on the 29-member IMC rose from three to six.<sup>96</sup> In sum, UNIFEM concluded: “There has been considerable success in gender mainstreaming in high profile national decision-making institutions.”<sup>97</sup>

UNIFEM also convened diverse groups of women to construct joint agendas for peace and reconstruction and conducted workshops to bring women in civil society in contact with women in the transitional parliament. In June 2003, UNIFEM held a workshop for 90 participants to connect women leaders to women in the transitional National Assembly, Senate, government ministries, and the IMC.<sup>98</sup> In October 2003, the agency supported a visit by women leaders to the refugee camp in Ngara, Tanzania, to raise awareness of the needs and concerns of displaced women.<sup>99</sup> In 2004, UNIFEM partnered with the European Parliamentarians for Africa and the Network of Central African Women Parliamentarians to support the efforts of their Burundi counterparts to make the constitutional and electoral process more gender-sensitive. This capacity-building workshop brought in Belgian women parliamentarians to jointly conduct advocacy efforts on these issues, resulting in a renewed momentum for Burundi women leaders.

Another component of UNIFEM’s strategy to support women during the transition period was to engage women at the grassroots in public decision-making. With this in mind, UNIFEM supported the establishment and strengthening of a network of women at the local level, *Dushirehamwe*. The network conducts activities to assist women in coping with the daily problems of reconstruction, accepting returning refugees and displaced persons, working toward reconciliation, as well as mobilizing for political participation. These connections served a particularly useful purpose with regard to the drafting and dissemination of the post-transition national constitution.

The under-represented women in the transitional National Assembly took it upon themselves to mobilize input from Burundi women to the draft constitution. To assist them, UNIFEM established and supported a working group through the Association of Women Lawyers to review the document line by line and raise gender equality concerns. After this was completed, women from diverse sectors of society convened to provide their feedback into the process. Upon achieving agreement on women’s propositions and amendments to the draft, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians adopted the edits as their own. They then embarked on a campaign to disseminate the draft to their constituencies in the provinces. As noted by a UNIFEM field officer: “The president and the constitutional commission were surprised that everywhere they went, someone raised gender issues.”<sup>100</sup> The outcome of these efforts—combined with ongoing intense advocacy and awareness raising—was the inclusion of women’s demand in the draft constitution for a 30 percent quota in all decision-making structures in the post-transition government (Article 129) and a mandate that at least one in four names on political party candidate lists must be a woman (Article 168).<sup>101</sup>

### *Preparations for the Post-Transition Phase*

The results of Burundi women's sustained activities were brought to fruition in 2005—the year that nationwide elections were held on a rolling basis to approve the draft constitution and elect national and local leaders for the post-transition government. In February 2005, 91.2 percent of Burundi's three million registered voters polled “yes” for the new constitution, which provides for a 30 percent quota for women in public sector institutions.<sup>102</sup> The constitutional mandate applies to the ministerial cabinet, the National Assembly, and the Senate, but does not specifically address the grassroots level (the communes and *collines*).<sup>103</sup>

The constitutional referendum was an important first step toward holding national elections for the post-transition government. In preparation, UNIFEM partnered with the Gender Unit of the UN Mission in Burundi (ONUB), other agencies, and women's organizations to provide training for women candidates and voters in all of Burundi's provinces for national and local elections. Among these efforts, UNIFEM supported training for mid-level women within political party structures to offer strategies to enhance their position. They were sensitized, for example, to the need to lobby for higher positions on their candidate lists and also received communications training to improve their campaigns through and within the political parties. With support from UNIFEM and others, *Dushirehamwe* conducted an aggressive campaign to mobilize women to participate in the elections, particularly at the local level. ONUB's Gender Unit also focused on women at the *colline* level, training over 400 women candidates in the lead-up to local elections.<sup>104</sup>

The impact of years of activism could be seen first in the local government elections and then the national. In June 2005, 80 percent of registered voters elected new communal councilors.<sup>105</sup> Exact figures on women's participation and election were not available at the time of publication, but anecdotal evidence suggests that women were elected as chiefs of communes and/or *collines* at levels unforeseen in Burundi history.<sup>106</sup> UNIFEM staff attributed this, in part, to *Dushirehamwe's* pre-elections strategy.

In July 2005, 77 percent of registered voters elected the members of the post-transition National Assembly.<sup>107</sup> The recently adopted constitution mandated 30 percent women in the legislature, yet the electoral code limited itself to at least one woman among every five names on the party list, or 20 percent. To make up the difference and ensure the 30 percent quota would be fulfilled, the electoral code permitted party leaders to “co-opt” from among their list once elections results were published. That is, women on party lists who did not win a seat would be appointed to that position by the party—until the 30 percent quota was met. Twenty-four women won their seats outright, while another 12 women were co-opted following the election.<sup>108</sup> Thus, in total, women occupied 36 seats of a total of 118 in the post-transition National Assembly, or 30.5 percent.

A few weeks later, the 3,225 newly elected commune councilors indirectly elected members of the parliamentary upper house, the Senate.<sup>109</sup> Eight women were elected outright, and in order to respect the 30 percent mandate, an additional nine women were co-opted from party lists.<sup>110</sup> Of a total of 53 Senators, the 17 women represented 32 percent. In August 2005, the legislature

elected a new president, Pierre Nkurunziza, who proceeded to fulfill the constitutional mandate for women's representation in his new administration. He appointed seven women cabinet ministers (of a total of 20)<sup>111</sup> and nominated four women as provincial governors (of a total of 17).<sup>112</sup>

### *Beyond Numbers*

The fact that Burundi women have increased their numbers in governmental positions is cause for celebration. It is also a moment for appreciation for the years of work by women throughout Burundi, who are beginning to fulfill their fundamental right of political participation and decision-making. Yet this report is striving to go beyond numbers and examine women's position and role once they have entered leadership. Although this new Parliament has only recently been established, several indicators of women's advancement and effectiveness are already emerging.

Women occupy positions of considerable prominence, holding the cabinet posts of the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of justice. A woman vice-president of the country, Alice Nzomukunda, is in office, one of two in this appointed position. Two women also serve as both the first and second vice president in the new Senate, and the National Assembly members voted to elect Immaculée Nahayo as the country's first female speaker of parliament. In one of her first interviews in this new role, Ms. Nahayo stressed the need to move from a preoccupation with numbers, to ensuring that women are effective: "It is not the number [of women in parliament] that counts." She went on to note the need for women to be "efficient," "responsible," and produce "tangible results" once in these positions.<sup>113</sup>

UNIFEM and other groups are continuing to work with women leaders to ensure that they are as effective in their positions as possible. UNIFEM has already begun a series of forums for women in decision-making, entitled, for example, "what parliamentarians can do for women refugees." Because many women have been appointed by political parties and may not have a background on gender issues, the agency plans to continue capacity-building efforts at national and local levels. In particular, UNIFEM will strive to continue connecting women parliamentarians to their constituencies, funding travel to the provinces to facilitate an open flow of communication.

Since the late 1990s, UNIFEM and other organizations have worked to build women's capacity and their confidence to hold leadership positions, while also advocating for those posts to be available to women. A recently elected parliamentarian, Catherine Mabobori, is one living example of the impact of these activities. "I started out in civil society and now I am in politics. I am using the same tools that UNIFEM empowered me with when I was working for women's organizations now that I am in politics!"<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the new female governor of Rutana province recognized international support in her acceptance speech.<sup>115</sup> These leaders draw distinct connections between support for women in preparation for the Arusha peace talks in the late 1990s to the final result of political inclusion and the realization of democratic governance in Burundi's recent elections.

## ADVANCING “BEST PRACTICES”: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

Somalia, Liberia, and Burundi are at different stages of the peace process and post-conflict transition, with Somalia in mid-2006 reverting to a conflict phase. Women’s position in society and the strength of the women’s movement is likewise highly divergent in each case example. Still, similarities exist across cases, particularly with regard to the challenges facing women and international approaches to support them. These commonalities can be summarized as follows:

- The peace process in all three countries is characterized by reversals and breakdowns, to which women must adapt, work within, and overcome.
- In general, women remain an afterthought in peace negotiations and post-conflict governance, despite UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the advocacy of numerous organizations.
- Despite their differences and diversity, women are able to forge and present a unified agenda—even if the agreement is only a temporary alliance—when provided with space, time, training, and convening assistance.
- Women tend to face specific, practical challenges as a group and as individuals to participating in peace and governance processes, including a lack of physical security, time and mobility constraints, and family obligations.
- Key individuals—negotiators, facilitators, and others in leadership positions—can act as the “tipping point” to help women secure important advancements.
- With support, women can overcome challenges to utilize the “window of opportunity” afforded by the post-conflict transition period and secure important legal gains for gender equality—the most effective of which are formal structures or mechanisms for women’s participation, such as quotas.
- Without accompanying enforcement measures, official structures and mechanisms for gender equality are often overlooked, disregarded, or not implemented by government and political party leaders. Thus women may remain underrepresented in leadership positions, even when the legal mandate exists.
- The fact that some women attain leadership positions is no guarantee of greater gender awareness in public policy, and ongoing support and capacity-building for gender-sensitive governance is required for men and women in elected and appointed posts.

An analysis of UNIFEM programs in post-conflict contexts in Africa, in addition to the three case studies, yield several “best practices” and lessons learned relevant to UNIFEM and other international programming.

### **1. Early interventions to enhance women’s role in the peace process have proved important and effective, but must be sustained through strategic, targeted engagement in order to secure long-term gains.**

As noted in an earlier section of this report, UNIFEM has tried to focus its engagement with post-conflict states at the very earliest stages of the peace process. Effective activities have included convening women to develop a common agenda, mediating and communicating their agendas to facilitators and negotiating parties, and providing relevant training. This has increased

gender awareness among all parties, strengthened the voices of the women's movement, and generally resulted in higher levels of formal participation for women. In several cases, women have been able to influence both the process and the outcomes of the peace process as a result of their presence and advocacy.

However, in very few cases has women's presence resulted in the adoption by negotiating parties of specific mechanisms to increase women's participation in post-conflict governance. In Somalia, the negotiated Charter recognized a 12 percent quota for women, yet this was not implemented. In Burundi, the accord recognized the need for "gender balance," but did not outline specific tools or mechanisms to accomplish or enforce that principle. Thus, it is critical for UNIFEM and other agencies to maintain a high level of support for women in the transition period.

This applies to follow-up efforts, such as in Liberia, where after assisting women to register to vote, UNIFEM, the women's ministry, and women's organizations supported a program to ensure they actually made it to the polls. In Burundi, despite numerous setbacks throughout the peace process and transition period, UNIFEM, FAS, and other groups continued to support women, advocate on their behalf, and sensitize government leaders. This eventually resulted in major successes in the level of women's participation.

## **2. Flexible and creative efforts are required to address the gender-related obstacles facing women as they seek to engage in post-conflict governance processes.**

The most effective interventions were based on an understanding of the gender-related challenges women face to their participation at the peace table and in transitional governance. UNIFEM and other organization's efforts to provide resources, space, and training for women have made significant inroads to address the overarching challenges of building women's capacity and unifying their agenda. Still, concerns for women's physical safety and constraints on their time and mobility act as barriers that must be overcome to guarantee women's engagement with political processes. To involve women in peace and governance processes, they need transport, childcare, and even substitute income. UNIFEM and other agencies have supported various creative initiatives to address these issues.

UN agencies' support for women in Liberia to enter the markets, guard the stalls of other women, and provide them with time and space to register to vote is a practical example of on-the-ground responsiveness for which advance programming is impossible. A considerable amount of flexibility is required to enable this kind of locally adapted interpretation of people's needs. Funding travel for two days by taxi for Burundi women to access the negotiations in Arusha, while men traveled on officially sponsored planes for less than one hour, is another example of a response to the exigencies of a situation in which women lacked the resources to travel. It is ironic, of course, that women—with greater time and mobility constraints due to their family responsibilities—were obliged to travel by the far slower and more dangerous form of transport than the planes carrying the male delegates. UNIFEM's sponsorship of innovative radio programs to connect Somali women leaders with local men and women is an example of a creative response to the communication and literacy constraints that inhibit effective public information and debate—particularly between women and men—in a war-torn society.

At times, thinking “outside of the box” has produced unconventional interventions that made a critical impact on women’s participation. This is particularly relevant in the post-conflict context. For as numerous field staff note, although these states are labeled as “*post-conflict*,” instability and outbreaks of violence are possible and even probable in times of transition.<sup>116</sup> The issue of security dictates attention to innovative methods for public education and consultation that can provide for anonymity and low-key, low-visibility forms of engagement. In addition, emergency funding should be made available so that field staff can take action at short notice when the need is often greatest. Partnerships, particularly with DPKO, are necessary to address this need, as UNIFEM does not have the resources or expertise to provide security itself.

**3. Beyond the challenge of bringing greater numbers of women to the peace table and into leadership positions, it is critical to build the capacity of post-conflict governance institutions to promote gender equality.**

Given the focus on emergency relief and recovery as well as the weak structures of governance in many post-conflict societies, women are often excluded from official roles and are more active within civil society. The approach of UNIFEM and other organizations has focused on strengthening their role within civil society, supporting women’s recovery initiatives, assisting the formation of coalitions, and conducting skills and capacity-building. In the short-term, this enhances the voices of women leaders and their activities within the community. In the long-term, women are acquiring skills that they may eventually use in decision-making positions. This support is also strengthening local commitment to peace, enhancing the prospects for sustainability of women-led programs and initiatives.

Meanwhile, UNIFEM is also building the capacity of public sector institutions to better govern in women’s interests. To date, the majority of this work has taken the form of support to women’s ministries and women in parliament. In Sierra Leone, UNIFEM has provided technical support to strengthen the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children’s Affairs, and in Mozambique, the agency facilitated the creation of a Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians.

UNIFEM, other agencies, and women’s groups are also beginning to engage with officials that do not necessarily have a direct mandate for gender equality in their work. Drawing on its technical expertise, the agency is providing capacity-building and raising awareness among male leaders and others in the mainstream offices of post-conflict governmental institutions. In Angola, UNIFEM supported the creation of an official coordination system for gender equality through a network of focal points from all national ministries. In Burundi, the agency trained officials in all ministries on gender and development as part of a strategy to promote the adoption of a national policy on gender. In other contexts, UNIFEM has supported the production of national gender policies or action plans to advance women’s rights. UNIFEM and other groups should continue these efforts to build relationships beyond the women and gender equality community in post-conflict situations. Developing champions for gender equality and women’s participation contributes to awareness raising on a larger scale, improving government sensitivity to women’s needs, and potentially affecting policies, laws, and structures in the transition.

Throughout the process of promoting gender equality in governance, international organizations should seek to support provincial and local levels. This applies to both women in civil society—the traditional recipient of international support in this area—and also male and female officials in local decision-making positions. In Burundi, UNIFEM drew on a national women’s network to train women candidates and galvanize women voters for local elections. Reconstruction and reconciliation in provinces and communities is critical to sustaining a peace agreement negotiated at the national level, and international organizations can play a more active role in enhancing that process.

The effectiveness of a multi-level approach working at local, national, regional and international institutions has been demonstrated through UNIFEM’s partnership with sub-regional institutions across the continent. In particular, UNIFEM has effectively engaged with the UN and African Union-led process for the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), established in 2004 as a coordinated effort to bring peace to the region. UNIFEM provided a gender advisor to the SRSG for the Great Lakes Region in order to mainstream gender in the daily work of the office and act as coordinator for relevant activities. At the state level, the agency provided technical support and input into national consultations in preparation for the Conference and worked closely with national focal points and coordination committees.

Several of their recommendations and principles were incorporated in the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration issued at the First Summit of Heads of State and Governments for the IC/GLR in November 2004. In particular, the leaders pledged to “adopt deliberate policies and mechanisms for promoting gender equality at all levels and in all sectors, at the national and regional levels...”<sup>117</sup> UNIFEM credits this important advocacy tool to the coordinated, multi-level, and sustained efforts of its staff in Kigali, Harare, Dakar, and Nairobi, who are committed to monitoring the implementation of these commitments. Partnership among UN offices and sub-regional institutions provides an important entry point to raise regional awareness of women’s role in governance. These forums can also serve as a tool to hold states accountable to their commitments, providing another leverage point for country-specific goals and activities.

#### **4. There are several areas of post-conflict governance programming where support for women and the inclusion of a gender perspective is weak or nonexistent.**

One goal of this review is to identify gaps in UNIFEM programming. There are several governance areas where interventions to support women and the inclusion of a gender perspective are weak or nonexistent—neglected not only by UNIFEM, but by other international or regional groups as well. This can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the urgency of post-conflict situations, the expertise and background of staff, the relative “good fit” or ease of certain interventions over others, as well as a perpetual struggle for financial and human resources. Important areas that require additional support include promoting women’s participation in local government, strengthening initiatives for transparency and anti-corruption campaigns, supporting internal democratization within political parties, and better reporting on gender equality issues by the media.

Although most evidence is only anecdotal, reports are numerous that suggest that women are at the forefront of campaigns for “good governance,” which includes institutional change to

promote accountability, governmental effectiveness, and control of corruption.<sup>118</sup> In the UN Millennium Declaration, member states recognized the critical importance of good governance to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the alleviation of poverty. Yet many post-conflict states in Africa are currently facing a crisis of governance, and corruption and lack of transparency are major problems. If women are truly leading efforts to combat this phenomenon, then their work must be strategically supported as a key component of promoting gender equality in governance and facilitating sustainable peace.

## **MOVING BEYOND NUMBERS: WOMEN'S IMPACT ON POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE**

This report concludes with a brief discussion on the next phase of promoting gender equality in post-conflict governance. As women's presence begins to increase in African legislatures and governmental structures, the mission of maximizing their impact becomes more pressing. Current and future programming should seek to enhance African women's capacity to go beyond numbers in public decision-making positions into an influence on policy-making. As detailed in previous sections, UNIFEM and other agencies have implemented various programs with this goal in mind, primarily focused on capacity-building for women leaders. Existing research and experience points to a few potential strategies to build women's leadership capacity and promote gender-sensitive good governance.

### **To support and enhance the capacity of women in leadership positions:**

- Offer training and capacity-building for women leaders on a variety of substantive issues related to political leadership and good governance.
- Advocate for women's appointment to leadership positions within political parties, parliamentary committees, and other relevant structures.
- Encourage women's activism and leadership on "hard" issues, such as defense or finance, as well as "soft" issues such as healthcare or education. It is necessary to introduce measures such as gender budgets, include women in structures for civilian oversight of the military, and ensure women's presence in previously male-dominated government ministries and activities.
- Provide technical expertise and support to women's efforts to enact gender-sensitive legislation, particularly laws to promote women's rights and gender equality.
- Assist in the establishment of cross-party caucuses to promote networking, strengthen women's voices, and raise the profile of women's agendas and priorities.
- Convene forums for parliamentarians and decision-makers from other countries—both men and women—to facilitate information sharing and "best practices."
- Provide forums for women to connect with gender-equality lobbies, especially the women's movement.

### **To promote gender-sensitive governance policy and practice:**

- Support advocacy efforts to promote gender-sensitive institutional transformation in the parliament and national ministries, particularly the justice system.

- Advocate for the adoption of international conventions that guarantee women’s political and civil rights.
- Broaden the established definitions and understanding of governance issues, such as corruption and decentralization, to encompass the perspectives, needs, and experiences of women.
- Ensure that all staff—men and women—in governmental institutions receive gender sensitization training.
- Change the accepted institutional rules and procedures to become more aware of the needs of a woman balancing a political life with a family and household.
- Establish resource centers accessible to men and women with documentation and gender-sensitive materials on key issues, including women’s priorities.
- Utilize the media to conduct awareness-raising programs, informing the public of women’s role in the peace process and contributions to decision-making.

In preparation for new and stronger initiatives to promote women’s role as decision-makers, it is also necessary to consider how to measure their influence on post-conflict governance. In order to measure how women affect the process, one must examine post-conflict administrations for changing attitudes of male leaders and staff, for gender sensitivity in the conduct of elections and other processes, and the quality of democracy and governance overall. In order to measure how women influence the policies and laws of post-conflict states, one must analyze the party political agendas, legislation on women’s rights and gender equality, and other policies on inclusion and representation. Women themselves must be consulted to determine the factors that facilitated their advancement and impact.

The UNIFEM Regional Programme Director for Eastern Africa noted the value of holding all leaders of post-conflict societies responsible for advancements in gender equality and democratic representation—not only women. In her words, “Accountability to gender equality in spaces of decision-making should be reinforced by women in leadership, but they should not be solely accountable to ensuring these institutions are gender-sensitive.”<sup>119</sup> This is an important aspect to consider in measuring gains for women in the transition from war to peace: momentum might, and should, come from men as well as women.

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