



DPKO/DFS–DPA JOINT GUIDELINES

ON ENHANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POST-CONFLICT ELECTORAL PROCESSES

October 2007

United Nations

Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field
Support in cooperation with the Electoral Assistance Division of
the Department of Political Affairs



The objective of these guidelines is to provide advice on measures that could be implemented in future electoral processes in post-conflict environments to increase the participation of women as voters, candidates, and electoral officials and to ensure that electoral processes have an equal impact on women and men. The guidelines are primarily aimed at field-based United Nations staff, including those serving with peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In addition, they seek to target agencies respon-

sible for the delivery of electoral assistance, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)—whether as advisers or implementers—in coordination with national and international counterparts.

These guidelines will be piloted in one or more countries and territories where elections are scheduled to take place and will be evaluated against each specific electoral context. The feedback received will form the basis of the final revised text.



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Cover image (front): Congolese woman queues up outside the polling centre in the Muzipele quarter in Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo, during the second round of the 2006 presidential and provincial elections. © UN Photo/Martine Perret

Cover image (back): a mural in Windhoek, Namibia, 1990. © UN Photo/John Isaac

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Gabriele Russo

New York, October 2007

PURPOSE

The main objective of these guidelines is to provide advice on measures that could be implemented in future electoral processes in post-conflict environments to increase the participation of women as voters, candidates and electoral officials and to ensure that electoral processes have an equal impact on women and men. The guidelines are informed by the findings of a number of national consultations on good practices, which were held in peacekeeping missions and attended by national and international actors who have worked with women candidates, election assistants and voters. The guidelines, therefore, are primarily aimed at field-based United Nations (UN) staff—including those serving with the peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In addition, they seek to target agencies responsible for the delivery of electoral assistance, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)—whether as advisers or implementers—in coordination with national and international counterparts. A Peer Review Group assessed the initial draft, which was revised to reflect feedback. DPKO/DFS and DPA will pilot the current version in the field and will further evaluate it before an updated version is disseminated more widely, including to all actors who work alongside UN partners. Finally, the guidelines are designed to assist UN field personnel in implementing their obligations under Security Council Resolution 1325 and the ‘DPKO/DFS Policy Directive on Gender Equality in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations’. ■

SCOPE

The guidelines are relevant to operational initiatives undertaken individually or jointly by DPKO/DFS and the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of DPA in electoral contexts, in coordination with other UN partners, such as UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and UNOPS, the host government, and national and international partners.

The guidelines assume that the UN is assisting a government in running an election. In such a case, the UN will encourage the government to take action that will have a positive impact on women’s participation in the elec-



▲ Workshop examines women’s participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s electoral process, Kinshasa, 2007. © UN Photo/Innocent Tanon

toral process. In other contexts, the UN may have an executive mandate and may be asked to run the electoral process. In this scenario, it will be the direct implementer of the action points suggested below—hence, the guidelines will be directly applicable to the mission implementing the electoral process.

Within political or peacekeeping missions, a number of actors may be involved at different stages of the electoral process, including: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG); the Deputy-SRSG/Political; the DSRSG/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator; Civil Affairs; Political Affairs; Human Rights; Rule of Law, UN Police (UNPOL); the Military; Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration (DDR); Relief Recovery Reconstruction (RRR); the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS); the Office of the Gender Adviser (OGA); and Gender Focal Points.

Electoral assistance is provided through a specific electoral component of the mission, and in many cases with the help of implementing agencies, such as UNDP and UNOPS. It is always supplied in close coordination with national and international partners. The guidelines address issues pertaining to the entire electoral process, such as electoral administration, civic and voter education, voter registration and political participation. In all of these aspects, UN offices and actors can help to guarantee that the guidelines are implemented in such a way as to enhance women's access and participation. The guidelines may also be instrumental in developing partnerships with civil society, the government and other relevant entities. ■

RATIONALE

The concept of enhancing women's participation in political life and full participation in elections has its origins in the principles of non-discrimination and of equal enjoyment of political rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in other key international human rights instruments. Promoting gender equality and empowering women is also one of the Millennium Development Goals. Increased engagement in political life will ensure that women are able to contribute to the establishment of a more peaceful and stable society, as mandated by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Security Council Resolution 1325, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Conflict affects women and men differently.¹ In post-conflict contexts, numerous political, socio-economic, ideological and psychological obstacles prevent women from participating fully in political life and in electoral processes. Those who participated in the national consultations that informed these guidelines constructed an extensive list of challenges (ranked in order of importance). They include: different levels of access to finance; time constraints; a lack of women who hold decision-making posts within political parties, electoral management bodies (EMBs) and the government; different levels of access to voter education; high levels of illiteracy; and different levels of security and freedom of movement. General discrimination also hinders women's access to the political arena.²

The participants in the national consultations prepared a list of remedies for these challenges and supplied examples of how to implement them in a post-conflict environment. Nevertheless, one must note that some of the obstacles encountered by women are heavily entrenched in society and cannot be easily removed. Furthermore, a priority is not a priority without providing access to all available resources and assets. Different situations will produce different results, therefore, depending on the willingness of practitioners to assess and mitigate the negative aspects. ■



▲ Workshop examines women's participation in the Haitian's electoral process, Port-au-Prince, 2007. © UN Photo/Veronica Espinosa

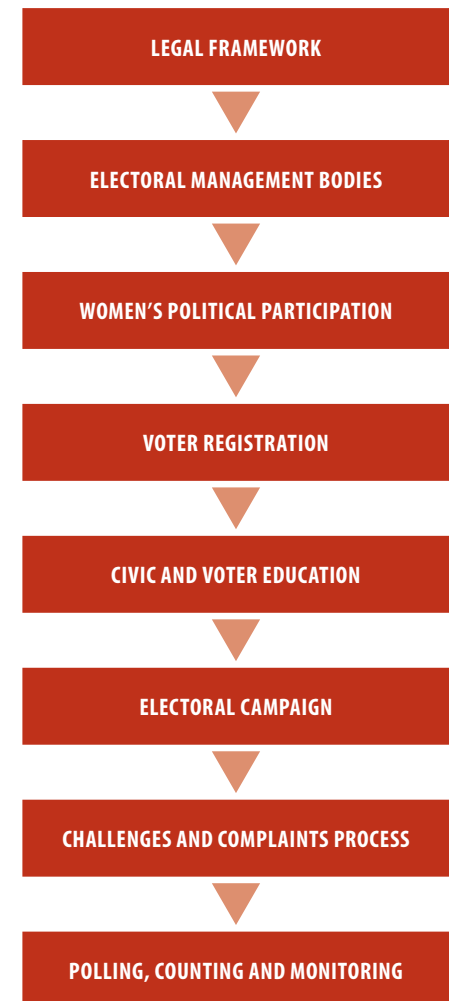
In producing these guidelines, DPKO/DFS and DPA hope to provide field practitioners with a tool to facilitate the coordination of efforts and the building of capacity among national actors to help ensure that women's participation becomes an integral part of all future electoral processes. DPKO/DFS and DPA however, cannot create opportunities for women's involvement in economic empowerment programmes or generate employment for women, nor can they provide financial support, directly or indirectly, to a political party or candidate. ■

PROCEDURES

As a means to aid the implementation of the specific mandate of each individual mission and the achievement of any nationally defined benchmarks, the following section points up some key considerations for enhancing women's participation as voters, candidates and election officials. It highlights also the suggested means of implementation in relation to:

1. The legal framework;
2. Electoral management bodies;
3. Women's political participation as candidates;
4. Voter registration;
5. Civic and voter education;
6. The electoral campaign;
7. The challenges and complaints process; and
8. Polling, counting and monitoring/observation.

Operational collaboration between various sections and units within the mission and between the mission and



other UN and external partners, as well as national and international actors involved in the electoral process, will be determined by the partners in accordance with the specific situation of each electoral process.

Both the partners and the mission's senior management are encouraged to consult and coordinate their efforts with the OGA, which can make an important contribution by conducting an initial assessment of the type and scale of the obstacles faced by women and provide advice to technical components of the mission. Also desirable is the appointment of an international gender focal point within the electoral component of the mission during the early stages of planning for the electoral process to assist with the development of the legal framework.

In largely nationalised processes, it is desirable to encourage the identification of a national gender focal point within the central office of the EMBs responsible for the organisation of all election-related activities. Such a person could contribute to the establishment and maintenance of channels of communication among stakeholders and to disseminating information relevant to the enhancement of women's participation in future elections.

Lack of security is one of the main obstacles to women's participation in the electoral process, as it affects campaigning and voting. Some government ministries, such as the departments of the interior or of women and gender affairs (where they exist), can and must play a role in ensuring that the electoral process unfolds safely and that it benefits all women who wish to take part. Coordination is key: electoral components in the mission must work closely with such ministries and international security agencies to devise a gender-sensitive national security plan that profits both candidates and voters.

In Timor-Leste, the parliamentary elections security plan was devised in coordination with the Electoral Assistance Section of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), UNPOL, the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL), and the International Security Force (ISF). The plan contained three layers of security, which were put in place throughout the country: UNPOL and PNTL teams were the first point of recourse, supported by Formed Police Units (FPU) and the ISF, which were strategically positioned across the country. An innovative feature of the plan was the formation of CE/CARE (Committee of Enquiry into Complaints and Allegations Regarding Elections) teams. UNPOL investigators were pre-positioned around the country or quickly deployed to affected areas to verify electoral violation allegations. ■

1. The legal framework

Democratic systems are based on a number of rights or principles, including the right to vote and be elected, the right to participate in government, and the right to equal access to public services. In essence, participation in a country's political process must be free and men and women must enjoy equal access to decision-making processes.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a number of other international instruments seek to uphold the principle of democratic governance. The UDHR, for example, states that 'everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country', and that 'the will of the people shall be the basis for the authority of government'.³ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁴ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁵ expand on the UDHR, as do regional conventions such as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,⁶ the African Charter on Human and People's Rights,⁷ and the American Convention on Human Rights.⁸ In particular, Article 7 of CEDAW points out that:

State Parties shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.⁹

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security¹⁰ on 31 October 2000 following a May 2000 DPKO stocktaking meeting in Namibia on 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multi-dimensional Peace Support Operations'. Subsequently, a number of UN missions have been mandated with implementing the resolution. The resolution acknowledges that women remain marginalised in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes, and demands their full involvement in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding in order to forge sustainable peace through sustainable development. In particular, Article 8 calls on:

all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia: [. . .] Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary.¹¹

In Afghanistan, thousands of women from around the country participated in meetings and workshops focused on women's issues and democracy in the run-up to the Bonn process of December 2001, the June 2002 Emergency *Loya Jirga*, and the December 2003 Constitutional *Loya Jirga*. Women, with the support of the international community, fought hard to be included in the Bonn process and to participate in the constitutional negotiations and the drafting stage. Two of the nine members of the drafting committee were women, as were seven of the 35 members of the review commission. In addition, women comprised more than 20 per cent of voting delegates in the Constitutional *Loya Jirga*. As a result, the new constitution included language on gender equality and a provision requiring the presence of at least two women from each of the 34 provinces in the lower house (27 per cent) and in the upper house (17 per cent), a fact reflected in the outcome of the 2005 election (27.3 per cent and 22.5 per cent, respectively). The inclusion of women in the electoral process was made possible thanks to the strong lead role played by the UN and other international actors and donors, which 'exerted pressure' on local entities.

Liberian women's advocacy to influence the Draft Electoral Reform Law in Liberia concentrated on two institutions: the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA); and the National Elections Commission. The OGA supported the NTLA and the NEC in developing a draft set of laws and advised them on how they could be used to increase women's representation in the electoral process. The draft laws were presented to the NTLA, the NEC, and the chair of the National Transitional Government of Liberia. The latter vetoed the bill because it did not pay particular attention to the rehabilitation of vulnerable groups or war victims, including women.

In Haiti, women's movements were less successful in attaining equality and generating the momentum necessary to secure the introduction of gender quotas. In fact, while some were in favour of revising the electoral law, others thought that positive discrimination measures would be perceived negatively. The lack of consensus among women leaders on this issue resulted in a lack of support from international actors, which could have played an advocacy role. Nevertheless, other measures were adopted later that favoured political parties that volunteered to nominate women. Article 121 of the electoral law stipulates that parties that offer to place at least 30 per cent of women on their candidate lists are eligible for reimbursement of two-thirds of their application fees. ■

A post-conflict situation presents opportunities to include these rights and principles in the national legal framework and to guarantee equal access for women and men to the electoral process as candidates, voters and election officials. The participation of women in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements during the transitional post-conflict period will help to ensure the inclusion of these gender-sensitive requirements.

A country's constitution should guarantee the right of all citizens to participate in polls. States parties to CEDAW, and the nations that endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action, have committed themselves to implementing special temporary measures to increase women's chances of winning representative seats in democratic political competitions. The Beijing Platform for Action notes that, 'in some countries, affirmative action has led to 33.3 per cent or larger representation in local and national Governments'.¹² In other countries, though, such initiatives have not resulted in a higher representation of women. To address this phenomenon, constitutions or electoral laws can be amended to create the political space for women. For instance, by means of issuing temporary special measures to ensure women's participation within political party structures or provisions to guarantee the representation of women in the parliaments of countries without political parties.

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Develop a gender-sensitive national legal framework to permit the holding of elections in which women participate as candidates and voters	■ Ensure that women are involved in the early stages of a peace process (if applicable), with a view to reaching agreement on gender-sensitive provisions that facilitate women's access to all stages of the electoral process as candidates and voters. ■ Make sure that women are included on constitutional drafting committees. If a constitution is already in place and does not include language on gender parity, propose its inclusion in existing domestic legislation. ■ Ensure that gender is part of debates on electoral system design. Develop policies, protocols and codes of conduct to supplement electoral laws and to guarantee that gender considerations are taken into account in the electoral process. ■ Support the revision of electoral law to allow it to include provisions aimed at enhancing women's participation as candidates and voters. ■ Consider the introduction of special measures to enhance women's participation as candidates, such as through the adoption of political party regulations requiring that every second name on a list is that of a woman. ■ Where possible in peace agreements, the constitution and party or electoral law, include language that encourages the nomination of women to the office of the presidency or vice-presidency if a man occupies one of these posts, and that allocates them seats in parliament. ■ Following a conflict, amend the electoral law to permit the distribution of funds to support the registration of and voting by women and men affected by the conflict, including displaced women.
Review or amend electoral laws and other regulations and assist with their implementation to ensure that they reflect the main international human rights principles and internationally recognised practices	■ Assist host governments with implementing the principles enshrined in the main international human rights instruments. ■ Encourage host governments to apply internationally recognised practices aimed at enhancing women's participation and standards that are taken into consideration in assessing the elections. ■ In coordination with local authorities, review the impact that the electoral system has on the representation of women in elected bodies and the various options that could be employed to increase their participation. In addition, encourage either amendments to the electoral system or the adoption of a legal framework that will allow the application of 'positive discrimination measures'. ■ Encourage (transitional) executive and legislative bodies to conduct extensive consultations with political actors and civil society groups, including women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and take into account their concerns before drafting electoral legislation.

	■ Support women's groups in making recommendations to legislative or executive bodies to promulgate gender-sensitive election laws and in seeking to convince the EMBs to implement such regulations. ■ In the long term, support the government in devising and implementing a national action plan for women based on the basic social and political rights contained in the main international legal instruments.
Agree on achievable targets for levels of participation by women	■ In coordination with the EMBs, political parties and international organisations, if applicable, agree on a set of achievable targets for women (in line with the UN goal of at least 30 per cent of women in decision-making positions) to increase their participation as voters, candidates and election officials.
Facilitate women's access to decision-making posts in the EMBs	■ In coordination with the government, provide guidelines to the panels dedicated to appointing officials to the EMBs, to ensure the presence of women at the decision-making level.
Support women in gaining access to political parties' decision-making structures	■ Work with political parties to ensure that they have democratic procedures in place for internal elections, including open polls for the party leadership. ■ In coordination with the electoral assistance organisation and donors that are working with political parties, encourage political parties to open up their decision-making structures to women. ■ Provide technical support to the state to help it with drafting or updating its political party public financing policy, taking into consideration the numerous options available to encourage the nomination of women candidates.
Ensure that women are aware of key electoral law articles	■ Help to provide women's movements with vital information on the various electoral systems, including the advantages and disadvantages of gender quotas, to enable civil society to make informed decisions about its lobbying strategies. ■ Facilitate the dissemination of the electoral law in all local languages and throughout all areas of the country.

2. Electoral management bodies

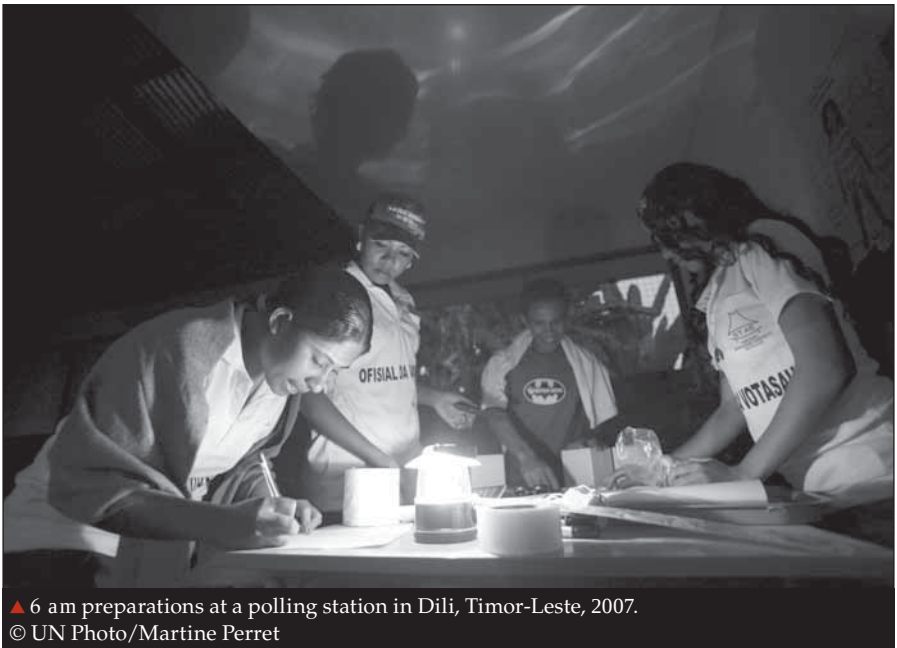
Post-conflict countries and territories may or may not have EMBs. Their establishment will present a unique opportunity to enhance women's participation and confidence in the electoral process. This is because of their varying mandates, which include reviewing elec-

In UNMIL, the OGA closely monitored and provided input to the process to restructure the NEC. It helped to design a structure that brought together stakeholders from civil society, as well as political parties, donors and other UN partners. The OGA was instrumental in underlining the importance of gender balance in the NEC. ■

toral laws, conducting effective civic and voter education programmes, and promoting transparency in the financial affairs of political parties, while protecting the interests of all communities.

EMBs can play a key role in highlighting gender issues in elections by identifying obstacles that hinder the participation of women, and by

conducting voter education programmes aimed at women and men. In addition, women should hold positions at all levels of the EMBs, from commissioners to polling station officials. At the policy level, women can ensure that



▲ 6 am preparations at a polling station in Dili, Timor-Leste, 2007.
© UN Photo/Martine Perret

regulations and procedures contain gender-sensitive provisions and at the field level, they can inspire trust and confidence in women voters.

The UN can play an important role in stressing the importance of this issue to the EMBs and, depending on the mandate, assist the newly created structures with the delicate matter of selecting and hiring staff.

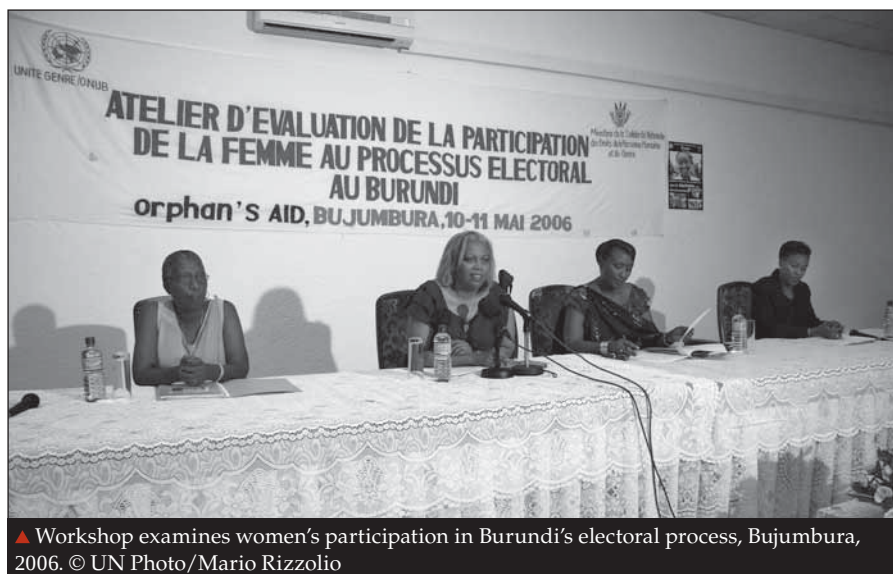
ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Encourage and provide the means for women to access the EMBs at all levels, including at the decision-making level	■ Make the EMBs aware of the importance of achieving gender balance at all levels, including a commitment to hire a minimum percentage of women at the decision-making level in their structures. ■ Reinforce partnerships between the EMBs and civil society to guarantee transparency in the recruitment of electoral staff and a gender balance. ■ Ensure that all vacancies are widely advertised, including in places accessible by women. ■ Ensure that the applications of women and men are processed separately. ■ Help to eradicate the obstacles that prevent the recruitment of women as election officials. For example, adjust the requirements for academic qualifications or remove male-oriented regulations that are difficult to reconcile with family responsibilities. ■ Where possible, provide assurances of long-term employment.
Support the EMBs in creating a gender-balanced database of national electoral staff in each district	■ A personnel database should be created and maintained, and should include critical appraisals of electoral staff. There should be an appropriate level of preference towards women in order to encourage gender balance.
Make sure that electoral service commissioners and electoral staff are made aware of gender-sensitive issues immediately after their appointment	■ Provide gender-mainstreaming training to commissioners. ■ Give new staff appropriate gender-sensitive training early in their assignment, to maximise their effectiveness.¹³ Longer-term training programmes should support this initiative. ■ Carry out simulation exercises with the EMBs to educate them on the problems frequently faced by women.
Ensure that the electoral timetable is widely advertised well ahead of a deadline	■ Electoral calendars and deadlines for candidate registration, challenges and complaints, voter registration and voting have to be disseminated across the country at the district level and posted in public places that are accessible by women and men.

3. Women's political participation as candidates

Candidate nomination: women can benefit from or be disadvantaged by the way in which candidates are nominated within parties. In many emerging democracies, patronage and other undemocratic characteristics pervade most political parties and prevent women from naturally acquiring positions of leadership within the party structure. Long-term capacity-building projects, however, can transform internal party structures into more democratic ones that favour the advancement of women within the party and their nomination as a candidate. To this end, synergy among agencies such as the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), UNDP, UNIFEM and other UN country team partners can play an important part in introducing affirmative-action measures and in supporting debate within political parties on mentoring women as leaders.¹⁴

In some instances, though, post-conflict environments that lack entrenched party structures are characterised by a prevalence of independent candidates. This can be advantageous for women, as they can avoid the patriarchal and ethnic holders of power in traditional societies—where tribal support is a necessary criterion for candidate nomination within a party. Nevertheless, running as an independent candidate can also be problematic, owing to a lack of party support, especially funds for campaigning.



▲ Workshop examines women's participation in Burundi's electoral process, Bujumbura, 2006. © UN Photo/Mario Rizzolio

In Haiti, the OGA designed and implemented, in coordination with the Centre de Formation pour l'Engagement, la Responsabilité et le Renforcement des Capacités (CERAC), a set of long-term training initiatives aimed at developing the leadership skills of women from throughout the country who wished to nominate themselves as candidates. The project was conducted in partnership with the French and US Embassies, Norway, UNIFEM, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)'s Gender Unit, and the Integrated Mission Training Centre (IMTC), with CERAC assisting as an implementing partner. A network of women seeking office was created following the training, allowing members to meet regularly and to review their strategy for the electoral campaign. Building on CERAC's awareness-raising efforts with political parties, guidance materials were published to support political parties in promoting women's participation and representation in political life. The project was part of MINUSTAH's mandate to accompany the transitional government through to the elections and to support the participation of women as candidates and voters. ■

Capacity building: women candidates cannot emerge from a vacuum. Long-term leadership training efforts are needed to allow a new class of women to surface, equipped with the self-confidence necessary to stand for election and to compete with an established class of men politicians. Training opportunities should be created, including in the preparation and delivery of campaign speeches and in communication strategies and techniques. Political parties should not remain passive witnesses of such endeavours. If they volunteer (or are obliged by law) to put forward women candidates, they have a stake in their professional development and they should fulfil their mentoring roles and groom leadership.

Another important activity to ensure the presence of a gender perspective in the electoral process is training and sensitisation of the transitional or constitutional assemblies responsible for drafting constitutional or electoral

The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC)'s OGA informed a training exercise—organised by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)—that was offered to 600 parliamentarians in 2005. Men, comprising the majority of participants, advised women leaders on how to enhance their involvement in political life, including the advantages and disadvantages of running as independent candidates. The training also seems to have indirectly influenced the wording of the new constitution, favouring women. ■

In Burundi, Solidarité des Femmes Parlementaires, a coalition of women parliamentarians, organised a workshop for Burundian women and for women from other countries to allow them to share experiences and strategies to enhance the participation of women in the electoral process. During the three days of the workshop, participants from Belgium, Burundi and Rwanda shared information on mobilising women in their respective electoral contexts. ■

law. Ideally, women and men belonging to these bodies should attend gender seminars to furnish them with adequate background information on gender-sensitive matters related to their legislative and oversight functions. Such seminars should also cover, among other things, implementation of CEDAW, to assist transitional assembly members in addressing specific national gender priorities.

Training and sensitisation should take account of good practices and lessons learned by women in similar contexts, including by convening workshops to exchange information among regional and international participants. In this regard, it would be a good idea to consult ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network's Regional Electoral Resource Centres, whose tasks include connecting peer groups and forging networks.¹⁵

Finally, training should be extended to members of parliament in post-conflict situations, where democracy is still developing.

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Provide a realistic time frame	■ Make women aware early on of opportunities to become more involved in political life. Prospective women candidates have to fight for inclusion (or political parties have to be taught the importance of their inclusion) before they can engage in campaign preparations. ■ Electoral assistance organisations and the mission should support the EMBs in preparing an electoral timetable that allows sufficient time for women to react to the call for inclusion and to consider their candidacy. ■ Political parties should be made aware of the importance of nominating women in keeping with the electoral timetable.
Build the capacity of political parties with a view to transforming party structures into more democratic ones	■ Consider the adoption of legislation that will compel political parties to adopt voluntary party quotas for internal party polls and elections to public legislatures. ■ Make men politicians aware of the importance of involving women as equal partners in party structures. ■ Encourage political parties to volunteer to increase the number of women candidates on their lists.
Promote women's participation by working directly with key stakeholders	■ Liaise with the Ministry of Gender/Women's Affairs (where applicable) and any women legislators in transitional structures. ■ Create working groups within the mission that involve the electoral component and the OGA, the police, the Human Rights, Political Affairs, DDR, and the Public Information sections. Ensure that such working groups coordinate and share information with external international partners that are focusing on elections. ■ Ensure that communication mechanisms exist between the working groups and members of the EMBs.
In contexts that lack political parties, encourage the nomination of independent women candidates, for example by conducting long-term leadership training programmes to create a class of women politicians equipped with a clear vision and a manifesto	■ Build self-confidence in women wishing to nominate themselves but do not because of cultural and traditional practices and values. ■ Carry out extensive leadership training and mentoring activities among women across the country. The aim is to build confidence and to allow women to see themselves as leaders able to challenge men even in places where it is unacceptable for women to assume leadership roles. ■ Encourage and provide the means for political parties to carry out educational activities for women members, in coordination with NGOs. ■ Create opportunities for women and men candidates to equip themselves with adequate background information on specific gender-sensitive issues related to their future legislative and oversight functions.

Identify and make available good practices and lessons acquired from women in similar contexts	■ Help create sponsoring opportunities for women leaders in political parties, EMBs, and electoral monitoring and media groups for visitors' programmes or observer groups to elections in other countries. ■ Encourage and support the organisation and implementation of regional conferences on democracy that women are due to attend. ■ Encourage women to take part in work exchanges within the EMBs or to help with the campaign of a party or a candidate in another country.
Educate women and men to help break down religious barriers that prevent women from enjoying social and political rights, including leadership roles in society	■ Teach men and women not to use traditional customs to undermine women's position in political life. ■ Encourage and assist governments in implementing an education policy to help eradicate traditional practices that prevent women from enjoying their social and political rights.
Devise innovative strategies for women's political participation, in coordination with civic society	■ If deemed necessary, support the creation of a national women's NGO secretariat that will act as an interface between NGOs and international organisations. In addition, coordinate all aspects of peacekeeping activities (such as transitional justice, disarmament, demobilisation, human rights) with a view to discerning critical issues of concern to women seeking election, such as social services, employment, shelter, communication and education. ■ In consultation with civil society, identify advocacy strategies for highlighting issues pertaining to women and facilitate their involvement in the electoral process. ■ Pinpoint work and non-work life issues that stop women from entering the political arena and devise measures that mitigate any adverse effects of the parliamentary schedule on family responsibilities so that women candidates will run.
Provide women with positive role models	■ With the assistance of the Public Information Section and academic associations, identify great women leaders from the past who can serve as positive role models. This concept can be employed by those developing civic and voter education materials, as illustrated below.

4. Voter registration

Voter registration represents an opportunity for women to be reinstated in a process from which they may have been excluded. In some post-conflict environments women have never been officially registered as citizens due to the lack of census updates or because censuses may have been carried out prior to major population movements or the naturalisation of minority communities or foreign citizens. Often, difficult circumstances and time constraints prevent the conduct of a new census. In other cases, civil registries have been destroyed or they are no longer accurate because of displacement. Here, a registration exercise may present a fresh opportunity for women to be incorporated into a national database, to obtain documents, and, more importantly, to gain a sense of citizenship.

When a state cannot rely on a pre-existing list of voters, it generally performs a fresh registration exercise that requires eligible citizens to visit registration sites before the election. Registration, however, may easily become a source of inequality. In addition, women are negatively affected by the lack of adequate information campaigns, the location of registration sites, the need to possess valid identity documents, and literacy requirements.



▲ Women showing their cards during the 2007 presidential election run off in Timor-Leste.
© UN Photo/Martine Perret

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a law on identification and the registration of voters was passed in December 2004. The law takes into consideration the special needs of pregnant women and those who have been affected by the conflict. MONUC's OGA played an important role in disseminating information on the law and in sensitising media practitioners, civil society, political parties, government actors, students and the Independent Electoral Commission. Nevertheless, the dearth of registration centres resulted in long queues that prevented many women from registering, especially those who had to travel long distances and those from more traditional communities. ■

Despite the focus on new registration exercises, most of the action points below are also relevant to any repeat registration initiatives that may follow each round of elections.

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Encourage women to register throughout the country, for example by providing support to government authorities (such as the Ministry of Gender/Women's Affairs, where applicable), as well as to political parties and civil society organisations that support such endeavours	■ Offer technical and financial support to government authorities (the Ministry of Gender/Women's Affairs, where applicable), including at the department and district level, to allow them to organise the registration of women as voters across the country. ■ Supply technical and financial support to civil society to assist its efforts to reach out to women, especially to rural women. ■ In coordination with the EMBs, enhance the skills and knowledge of ministerial gender coordinators in relation to mobilising more women to register as voters. ■ In coordination with national implementing partners, facilitate the transportation of registrants from rural or inaccessible areas to registration centres by providing, as necessary, vehicles, fuel or drivers.
Remove obstacles that may prevent women from accessing registration centres, taking into account that there are those who look after the elderly and children and do not have access to transport	■ Locate registration centres close to markets to allow women engaging in menial work and those working for small-scale enterprises to gain access without loss of income. ■ Ensure that registration centres have flexible working hours to permit women to visit them before or after work. ■ Employ mobile centres in remote areas to reach rural women who do not have access to transportation. ■ In cases where women are likely to have limited means of identification, eliminate unrealistic registration requirements, such as the possession of certain types of documentation, and levels of literacy.

Make sure that the registration exercise does not coincide with activities that prevent women from registering	■ Identify the best time to conduct the registration exercise, that is, when women are not busy with seasonal activities such as harvesting of crops.
Monitor the percentage of women registrants by obtaining registration statistics disaggregated by sex	■ Ensure that registration centres provide regular statistics disaggregated by sex. ■ If figures show lower than expected levels of women registrants, take remedial action to boost civic education initiatives targeted at women, including in coordination with EMBs.
Ensure that the spouses of military and police personnel are not penalised by the rotation that occurs between registration and polling	■ Encourage national bodies to provide mechanisms that allow the spouses of uniformed personnel who are redeployed between registration and voting to vote in the new place of residence. ■ Explore alternative registration mechanisms for uniformed personnel and their families residing in military camps, if registration teams do not reach them.

5. Civic and voter education

Civic and voter education campaigns aimed at women and men are necessary for successful elections. In the most traditional areas, it is common for women to be segregated from men and to have different levels of freedom of movement. Furthermore, girls' access to education in post-conflict countries is more limited than that of boys. Many girls leave school because of increasing responsibilities towards elderly and sick members of their families, early marriage and pregnancy, or the pressing need to engage in menial tasks or to work for small-scale enterprises to make ends meet. As a result, levels of illiteracy are extremely high among women. This affects the ability of public information materials and outreach campaigns, for example, to address the needs of women in an effective way. It is important therefore that voter education teams: include women (if necessary comprising only women); present a message that women of all levels of education and the illiterate can understand; and deliver the message at appropriate, accessible venues. While men can travel freely to a distant location to attend an electoral workshop, women may not enjoy the same access to transportation, they may not have the freedom to travel at night, they may fear becoming the object of gender-based violence, or traditional practices may prevent them from leaving their homes.



▲ Educating the women electorate of Mongwalu before the 2006 election in the Democratic Republic of Congo. © UN Photo/Martine Perret

The synergy between the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB)'s radio station and the national media was instrumental in mobilising women during Burundi's 2005 elections. The country's low literacy rate made radio an ideal tool for public outreach. Songs—especially the hymn to women written by the group Higa—radio and television spots contributed to making women aware of their political rights. Media events, named 'Cafés de presse', provided political parties with the opportunity to debate issues such as gender quotas and blocked lists. Discussions about the role of men in promoting women's political participation aired on radio and television also proved very popular. ■

In addition, specific education programmes need to be designed and targeted at men. Men require training in electoral systems and voting procedures, but also they need to be made aware of the important role that they play as husbands and fathers in protecting the voting choices made by all members of their family. In many societies, it is common for the head of the household to select the candidate that the entire family will vote for, denying women the chance to express their own preferences (proxy or family voting).

The effectiveness of civic education campaigns cannot be underestimated. Noting the low turnout in the second round of Liberia's 2005 elections, UNMIL electoral staff and the Gender Coordinator designed an outreach campaign targeted at women in River Cess County, ahead of the 2006 by-election. The strategy paid off, with turnout in River Cess reaching 37 per cent. What is more, a woman won the River Cess seat, bringing to nine the number of women in the House of Representatives. ■

Overall, partners in electoral assistance missions can play a pivotal part in encouraging and enabling women to participate in the political process. In addition, they can decrease the odds of women's votes being declared invalid by designing training initiatives, exchanging good practices and ensuring that any capacity-building activity is sufficiently decentralised and encompasses the regions and rural areas.

In the second round of the 2007 presidential election in Timor-Leste, voter turnout remained high and the percentage of invalid votes was lower (2.19 per cent) than in the first round (3.8 per cent). This can be attributed in part to voter education materials, particularly mock ballots, and to the reinforced voter education strategy, which included face-to-face meetings with women and men voters and the use of mobile cinema. The low level of invalid votes was also due to the high level of integration between UNMIT and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), comprising, most notably, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and UNIFEM, in the area of civic and voter education. ■

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Ensure that women and men carry out civic and voter education campaigns	■ Train women NGOs (and the EMBs when they have the mandate) to be more effective actors in delivering civic and voter education. ■ Conduct Training of Trainers programmes and facilitate the movement of trainers and other women's organisation personnel working on civic and voter education around the country. ■ If necessary, boost the number of women on civic and voter education teams by drawing from the ranks of unemployed women teachers.
Develop civic and voter education materials that clearly target women and men and can reach all levels of society	■ Help create partnerships between international agencies and national NGOs, government ministries, religious councils, EMBs and women's groups, and assist them in designing and delivering a standard nationwide culturally sensitive civic and voter education programme. ■ Develop guidelines for civic and voter education programmes, including the incorporation of a gender perspective into training materials. ■ Ensure that part of the election budget is used to help women's NGOs conduct civic and voter education. ■ In consultation with stakeholders and electoral assistance organisations, design, produce and disseminate a variety of educational materials that portray women as equal partners in decision-making, that support women's participation in the electoral process, and that utilise language and formats that are accessible by and appeal to all. ■ Target special education programmes at men to inform them of the benefits of enhancing women's participation in the electoral process.
Deliver education messages using various means in order to reach rural and illiterate women, including those in conservative areas	■ Encourage the use of a variety of civic and voter education methods, including door-to-door visits, flipchart demonstrations, town-hall meetings, briefings on market days, and consultations with different groups, including youth and professional and religious entities. ■ In culturally sensitive contexts, ensure that women can access the venues used for civic and voter education purposes. ■ Conduct education campaigns among women to mitigate the negative effects of high levels of illiteracy and an excessively complex ballot design. ■ Ensure that local women are included on civic and voter education teams, if prevailing cultural circumstances permit.
Use the radio and other mechanisms to reach rural and housebound women in more conservative areas	■ In coordination with the mission's Public Information Section, organise radio debates on women's participation with the Ministry of Gender/ Women's Affairs, the staff of various mission components, civil society members, religious leaders and academics. ■ Assist with devising and designing other means of civic and voter education that best suit the local culture and take account of levels of literacy, such as traditional theatre, storytelling or mobile television.
Include civic education in school curricula for women and men	■ Support the Ministry of Education in providing adequate civic education as part of the national curricula.

6. The electoral campaign

Women candidates experience greater difficulties in campaigning than do men. As illustrated in more detail below, the financing of a campaign is perhaps the single most significant obstacle to women candidates. Poor security also affects women in a different way to men, most notably where there is a high, credible threat of sexual violence—as is often the case in post-conflict settings. In addition, traditional social relations and expectations may impose extra restrictions on women, such as the inability to travel at night, the need to hire drivers, and the requirement to travel with other family members.

In traditional societies, voting is largely based on tribal/family affiliation or membership of an ethnic group, which dictates that support for candidates be expressed along tribal, patriarchal lines. Nevertheless, these male networks can help women candidates to win the backing of an entire tribe and therefore acquire more votes. Furthermore, family members, including men, can supply funds, vehicles and protection, and assist with campaigning.

Establishing networks: women candidates should be encouraged to identify key allies both at the local, central and international level. They should do so

A platform that has allowed women to network at the international level despite local constraints is the iKNOW Politics Network (the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics), created by UNDP, UNIFEM, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the NDI. The iKNOW Politics Network is an online resource that offers access to relevant training materials, literature, discussion forums, other women leaders, and expert advice.¹⁶ ■

In the DRC, women's networks, such as the Women's Network for the Promotion of Rights and Peace, created partnerships with other national organisations and international NGOs to enhance information sharing among the women living in the cities who volunteered to support rural women. Similarly, in Rwanda, the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development established a Women's Council shortly after the country's 1994 genocide. The Women's Council includes representatives from the fields of legal affairs, civic education, health and finance. It fulfils an advocacy role and is involved in providing skills and training and in raising awareness among local authorities of issues affecting women. The head of the Women's Council holds a reserved seat on the generally elected local council, thereby linking the two systems.¹⁷ ■

Access to campaign venues can also be skewed in favour of men. In Afghanistan, for example, men candidates routinely use mosques for campaigning. Such activity in places of worship is uncommon in secular states, but in Afghanistan, where the state and religion are connected, it is prevalent. It offers a very effective way of reaching men voters and has the advantage of building the perception among the public that the candidate is a devout Muslim, strengthening his standing. Women, however, are not allowed to campaign in mosques in most of the country (with the exception of a few provinces) and reportedly are deterred from campaigning in public spaces, such as schools, so as not to politicise them, eliminating an opportunity to reach out to constituents, including men. ■

at the local level because they require assistance to enhance their contacts with civil society and to generate support. They should do so at the central level because networks share information and the experiences of those who were successful in previous elections. And they should do so at the international level because women's networks of major parties can provide a means of exchanging information, good campaign practices and lessons learned.

Developing a programme: not all candidates have clear political ideas, particularly if they are new to the political arena. And while independent candidates are responsible for putting together their own manifesto, in strong party-centred systems, the party does so. Where possible, such as in majority systems where candidates are permitted to construct their own manifesto, women candidates should be encouraged to develop a clear political vision and to draft a manifesto based on democratic principles and values. To this end, candidates should be encouraged to seek advice from a variety of sources, starting with family members, or approach educated individuals such as doctors, lawyers or teachers. The coordinating and advisory role of specialised agencies like UNIFEM, as well as political party foundations, (including Party

In Timor-Leste, UNDP and UNIFEM supported a women's national organisation in monitoring political party programmes in order to assess commitments to women's rights and gender equality. In addition, they offered support to women in political parties, resulting in the signing of a women's political platform by 12 parties. One of the eight presidential candidates was a woman, and a woman led one of the 16 parties that competed in the parliamentary election—that party won three seats. Eighteen of the 65 elected members of parliament are women.¹⁸ ■

Internationals, FES, FNS, IRI, KAS, NDI, to mention only a few) can prove pivotal in developing a winning programme.

Selecting campaign staff: all candidates should be made aware of the importance of gender balance among campaign support staff, given the need to reach out to both men and women. Candidates in more conservative environments, however, may find it more difficult or even counterproductive to hire women, and therefore may need to be strategic in selecting campaign personnel.

Campaign financing: the majority of women candidates consulted by the missions said that a lack of financial resources to support their campaigns was a critical obstacle to their success. Campaigns are expensive, involving costs associated with, for example, starting a petition, establishing headquarters, obtaining the party nomination, buying advertising space, organising and conducting voter outreach campaigns, and paying registration and other dues.

Fundraising can prove a considerable test for first-time women candidates, especially when competing against well-established men politicians. Some women do not have access to gainful employment because of their responsibilities to care for children, the sick, the elderly or other family members who need additional or special care. In some societies, moreover, women may not be allowed to work outside of the home.

The media: in any electoral process, the media plays an important role because of its responsibility to convey electoral messages and to promulgate campaign materials, and its ability to influence society's perception of women. Women are often depicted as objects or victims, reinforcing the stereotypical view that they cannot be successful leaders and discouraging them from entering the electoral process. It would be beneficial if the media portrayed women in decision-making roles in contexts that lack such role models.

Government-controlled media has a particularly crucial part to play, as do independent monitors, who have to ensure that parties and candidates enjoy equal access to public media services, including those candidates—often women—who do not have the means to pay for advertisements in privately owned media.¹⁹ Women's unequal access to the media can be mitigated by resorting to grassroots networks and constituencies, such as by asking mem-

bers of these associations to contribute their own funds and resources and by developing campaign materials at home or at private business premises.

While media monitoring may occur routinely, the link between coverage of women candidates and women's participation in the electoral process is not always considered. National and international independent observers and organisations can play a significant role in highlighting this connection and in building awareness among those responsible for producing relevant legislation and regulations governing access to the media during an electoral campaign. In this regard, it is desirable to incorporate a gender dimension into existing media monitoring protocols, taking into account political participation and coverage of women candidates and women's issues.

In Afghanistan, during the run-up to the 2005 Parliamentary and Provincial Councils election, an attempt was made to establish a trust fund for women candidates to mainstream monies and to support less advantaged candidates. This proved difficult to implement, however, because of an electoral law provision stipulating that donors cannot fund candidates directly. ■

States and political parties legislate and manage the electoral campaign process in a variety of ways. Some, for example, limit campaign time, while others limit campaign budgets—in other instances, the law limits the level of media exposure and advertising. Hence, missions can inform authorities of different options related to campaign spending and the impact that each can have on women candidates. A mission should also provide the government with the technical capacity required to ensure that all candidates enjoy equal amounts of public airtime. Any measures, though, should take into consideration ongoing efforts to develop women candidates' fundraising skills.

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Ensure that women candidates are prepared to conduct an effective electoral campaign, for example by making candidates aware of the importance of selecting the right campaign support staff	■ In coordination with electoral assistance organisations, the NEC, UNIFEM and other partners, design and conduct training workshops aimed at developing the skills of women candidates with no prior experience of politics and provide a forum for information exchange. ■ Make candidates aware of the importance of selecting a gender balanced campaign support team. This may include family members, volunteers, professionals and other salaried staff.
Support the creation of women's networks and help to establish a culture of unity and solidarity among women candidates and prevent polarisation among women candidates	■ Encourage and facilitate networking among women's groups by setting up and disseminating an up-to date directory of women's organisations. ■ Encourage the use of the online iKNOW Politics Network to create and exchange knowledge, consult resources and seek expert advice. ■ Make available to women in every district and province community spaces where they can meet. ■ Facilitate the sharing of information on good practices and lessons learned with women politicians from other countries. ■ Help to establish a culture of unity among women by calling on them to become a peacebuilding role model for men.
Identify obstacles to women candidates conducting an effective electoral campaign and implement corrective measures	■ Support women candidates, through implementing partners, in obtaining vehicles, drivers and fuel. ■ Ensure that women enjoy the same access as men to campaign venues, such as places of worship, by educating the clergy, or help identify alternative venues. ■ Make men aware of the importance of women's political participation, for instance by encouraging husbands to support their wives' candidatures and by inviting the clergy to emphasise gender equality and democratic values in their public addresses. ■ Support women candidates in attracting family/tribal support for their participation.
Ensure that women candidates are protected from harassment and intimidation throughout the electoral process	■ Include provisions in the electoral law aimed at preventing harassment and all forms of intimidation of women candidates throughout the electoral process and take action following any such instances. ■ Include protection in election security planning and liaise with all relevant security agencies. ■ Make men aware of the importance of campaigning freely on issues of concern to women without fear of harassment and intimidation.

Facilitate timely access to existing campaign funds and help candidates devise innovative ways of financing electoral campaigns and make best use of resources	■ Advise governmental and non-governmental actors on how to create opportunities for women to become involved in economic empowerment, microcredit and grant programmes. ■ Advise the local government on how to create employment opportunities for women in the community. ■ Disseminate information on funding available to support women candidates, including the UNDEF, and on how to access it. ■ Provide training to candidates in the most efficient ways to invest funds for the delivery of high-impact messages. ■ Help to devise inventive methods of gaining finance for campaigns, such as by organising football matches, concerts and fairs. ■ Encourage the EMBs to issue regulations aimed at limiting campaign spending in order to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates.
Ensure that men and women candidates have equal access to media outlets during the campaign, for example by conducting gender-sensitive media monitoring	■ Include provisions in the electoral law and other regulations that seek to make certain that all political parties and candidates have equal access to the media. ■ Support the establishment of an independent team within public media structures to create broadcasting opportunities for women candidates throughout the campaign. This should be done in coordination with political parties, the Ministry of Gender/Women's Affairs, specialised NGOs and the mission's Public Information Section. ■ Train the media in gender-sensitive reporting and in providing positive role models for women, such as by portraying women in decision-making roles in countries totally dominated by men. ■ Train individuals to carry out gender-sensitive media monitoring and follow up with corrective measures as and when necessary.

7. The challenges and complaints process

The electoral process is subject to scrutiny and both the public (voters, candidates and political parties) and the EMBs have the right to lodge complaints or to challenge the eligibility of voters or candidates.

The processing of challenges and complaints often involves an independent administrative body, such as a judicial court or an ad hoc tribunal. Since the court system may be unequipped to deal with such challenges and complaints, electoral processes in post-conflict environments frequently entail the establishment of an Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). The appointment of such entities and the procedures for lodging challenges and complaints rarely take account of gender. Electoral components, together with observers and civil society, should therefore closely monitor the selection process.

Due to the embryonic nature of the judicial system in many post-conflict environments hosting electoral contests, women may not be equipped with sufficient knowledge of their rights or be aware of the means of legal recourse open to them. Electoral components should thus assess and, if necessary, improve the level of access for women to legal assistance, information and effective remedies. This is all the more important during the challenges and complaints process, whose time frame is often limited. Furthermore, electoral challenges and complaints should be of key interest to election observers. They should assess whether women and men voters and candidates enjoy access to such processes.

One other consideration is how women are treated within the legal system, particularly with regard to electoral issues. In many contexts, women may not enjoy the same level of access to courts as men, and women plaintiffs may not be treated as equal to men. If women candidates or political party officials are involved in a complaint proceeding or in another kind of court case related to the election, independent observers should carefully follow the matter and determine whether the case is handled differently to similar ones involving men. Other factors requiring appraisal are accessibility to the sites of ECCs, the gender balance among ECC officials, the level of confidentiality at all stages of the procedure (aimed at safeguarding the security of complainants), and provisions for illiterate complainants.

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Encourage the appointment of women as members of independent administrative bodies such as ECCs, which are tasked with hearing grievances and issuing decisions	■ Include provisions in legislation regarding the selection of women as members of independent administrative bodies. Ensure that a panel that includes women decides on appointments to the ECC.
Ensure that men and women enjoy equal access to the site of an ECC	■ Consider measures to ensure decentralised access to electoral challenges and complaints processes across the territory. ■ In more traditional areas, ensure that ECCs are situated in buildings that both women and men can access.
Assess the level of access for women to legal assistance, information and effective remedies	■ In cooperation with Legal System Monitoring Units, the Human Rights Unit and other mission components, evaluate the level of access for women to legal assistance, information on the electoral law and other regulations, and to effective remedies within the timeline of the electoral process.
Provide pro-bono legal assistance to women and men candidates and political parties	■ Support the Ministry of Gender/Women's Affairs, women's NGOs and independent lawyers in providing legal assistance with electoral-related matters.
Allow sufficient time to lodge challenges and complaints	■ Publish the provisional voters' list and candidates' list in good time and disaggregate by sex to allow for challenges and complaints.

8. Polling, counting and monitoring/observation

Access to polling can be a potential source of discrimination of women, particularly in the absence of transport (or when there is unequal access to it), and when there is a lack of security and time constraints. Voting hours can prove difficult for working women or those with childcare responsibilities. Hence, provisions should be made for women with babies, pregnant women, women who are not permitted to travel long distances or do not have the means to do so, and for women who cannot afford to be away from the elderly, their children or livestock for too long.

Article 31.2 of the Rules and Procedures governing polling and counting in Timor-Leste's 2007 presidential election stipulates that priority should be given to pregnant women and women with babies, as well as to sick, challenged and elderly persons in polling lines. The move, stemming from practices adopted during previous UN-administered elections, was formalised in the Rules and Procedures for the parliamentary elections on the recommendation of the Legal Adviser to UNMIT's Electoral Affairs Section, and was widely upheld during the 2007 electoral cycle. Reference to the stipulation was made in the training manual for polling staff. In a country where the fertility rate is among the highest in the world (with women having on average 7.7 children), the priority accorded to pregnant women and women with babies facilitated voting by a large portion of Timorese women. ■



▲ A woman from Macamba Province, Burundi, voting in the 2005 national referendum.
© UN Photo/Martine Perret

Gender-sensitive recruitment is an important factor in election administration. Gender balance among polling station officials can inspire trust and confidence in women voters. In Afghanistan, the decision was taken to offer women segregated polling stations, staffed by women officials. This step, necessary due to religious beliefs and traditional customs, gave many women the chance to vote. Another option is to deploy mobile voting stations that target specific voters, such as women, minority communities, or elderly persons who are housebound. ■

One should also note that, in some cultures, women cannot access polling stations located in private houses. In addition, polling stations for women situated further afield than those for men make it less likely that women will vote.

A police presence near a polling site helps to guarantee that polling takes place in a safe environment, free from intimidation. In some countries, however, where security sector reform is ongoing, predominantly men police officers often accompanied by former militia can intimidate women. Consequently, priority should be given in security sector reform processes to the recruitment, training and deployment of more women law-enforcement officers and women should play a visible role in security during elections.

Polling station officials and national and international observers should be made aware of the fact that ‘family voting’ is a clear violation of women’s right to vote. In some countries, women are led into polling booths by their husbands, who effectively vote for them.

It is during the counting stage that important decisions are taken about the voiding of ballots and the counting of blank ballots, potentially opening up the process to discrimination and fraud. Gender balance among counting staff is one way of addressing discrimination of women candidates. It is essential that observers working on behalf of women candidates also supervise the process.

Legal changes to counting regulations were made in June 2007 to reduce the possibility of intimidation at the village level in Timor-Leste. Following the approval of the new regulations, IRI and UNDP initiated and conducted a third round of training in closing procedures, transporting ballot boxes and counting. In addition, a new party agent manual and complaint forms to assist agents in conducting their monitoring functions were designed and distributed. Party agents were observed using the manual and the additional materials on election day. ■



▲ Vote counting in Dili, Timor-Leste, 2007. © UN Photo/Martine Perret

While international observation guidelines²⁰ recognise the importance of gender diversity in election observation missions, not all organisations are required to respect such a balance. Frequently, claims are made that the number of trained women is insufficient, or that, in some contexts, the security situation precludes the participation of women.

In the DRC, MONUC’s OGA developed a gender checklist for use by national and international observers, journalists and political party observers tasked with monitoring the polls. This is just one example of the many mechanisms available to create experienced, qualified, gender-balanced teams. ■

It is important that women serve as domestic observers in order to build confidence in the voting and counting stages of the electoral process. The presence of women observers at the polling site can provide additional assurance to women voters. Political parties, civil society and ministries of foreign affairs should be encouraged, therefore, to include women among their accredited poll monitors. ■

ACTION POINTS

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION
Identify polling sites that are accessible by women, particularly in the absence of transportation, and when there is a lack of security and time is limited	■ Ensure that women with babies or pregnant women are not discouraged from voting. Introduce special measures to give priority to pregnant women and women with babies, allowing them to vote immediately. ■ Where possible, and if meteorological circumstances permit, ensure that mobile polling stations are able to reach remote areas.
Identify polling sites that are culturally acceptable	■ Where there is a need, establish separate polling stations for women and avoid setting up polling stations in private houses.
Ensure a gender balance among polling station staff	■ Establish guidelines for the recruitment of a gender-balanced polling staff and monitor recruitment accordingly. Where applicable, make certain that women staff polling stations for women. ■ Ensure that a gender component is part of staff training and that it is integrated into manuals.
Identify and eradicate the main factors restricting women's freedom of movement and implement measures to mitigate their adverse effects	■ Make sure that the distribution of polling centres reflects the population density and geographical coverage so that women situated in less inhabited areas are not discouraged from voting by the need to walk long distances. ■ Where possible, provide transport to polling centres, in coordination with local authorities, political parties and independent candidates. ■ Obtain the support of the clergy for women's participation in the electoral process, with a view to removing any religious or cultural barriers. ■ Where possible, provide mobile polling stations for housebound women and men.
Ensure that women are not intimidated by security officials	■ Assist in the training of security agency personnel in order to create a secure environment, including by improving the gender balance. ■ Ensure that the presence of national and international security agencies near the polling site does not intimidate women and, where possible, make sure that women police officers are among those deployed to protect polling sites.
Combat discrimination of women candidates during counting	■ Ensure a gender balance among counting staff and the presence of observers working on behalf of women candidates.
Implement measures to combat fraud and corruption—to which women are more vulnerable	■ Prevent all instances of proxy and family voting. ■ Implement measures to prevent double voting. ■ Publicise counting methods.

Facilitate voting by illiterate women by ensuring that the voting process adopted is the easiest one possible

- Provide assistance for illiterate persons and make sure witnesses and observers are aware of them.
- Avoid large and complicated ballot designs and make certain that specimens used for voter education are identical to the real thing.

Train, accredit and deploy women national and international observers, journalists and political party observers and make sure that they have access to polling and counting procedures

- In coordination with the electoral assistance organisation, political parties, candidates and the EMBs, design and conduct training courses for all observers and journalists and ensure respect for electoral law provisions regulating the presence of these groups at the polling stations and counting centres.

Annex I Glossary of terms²¹

Best loser system

Unsuccessful candidates in a certain group (such as women) will be elected to the legislature even if they have fewer votes than do other candidates, until the set quota is reached.

Electoral district

A geographic area into which a country, local authority or supranational institution may be divided for electoral purposes. An electoral district may elect one or more representatives to an elected body.

Electoral management body

The organisation tasked under electoral law with conducting polls. In most countries, an electoral management body consists either of an independent commission appointed for the specific purpose of an election or a specified government department.

Electoral quota

The number of votes that guarantees that a party or candidate will win one seat in a particular electoral district under a Proportional Representation system. Three variants are in common use: Hare; Droop (or Hagenbach-Bischoff); and Imperiali quotas.

Electoral system

That part of the electoral law and other regulations that determines how parties and candidates are elected to a body as representatives.

First Past the Post

The simplest form of a plurality/majority electoral system. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than anyone else, even if this is not an absolute majority. The system uses single-member districts and voters select candidates rather than political parties.

Gender

This refers to the socially constructed roles and opportunities associated with being male or female. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation. They are context-/time-specific and changeable. Gender defines power relations in society and determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.

Gender equality

This refers to equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but rather, that their gender does not govern or limit their rights and life chances.

Gender mainstreaming

This is a globally recognised strategy for achieving gender equality. The Economic and Social Council of the UN defines gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

Gender-based violence

This is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is committed against a person's will and is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between women and men. The nature and extent of specific types of gender-based violence vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, such as sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution, domes-

tic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, honour killings, and the inheritance of widows.

Gender balance

This is a human resource issue and concerns the degree to which men and women hold the full range of positions in a society or organisation. The UN is aiming for a 50–50 division of all professional posts. Achieving a balance in staffing patterns and creating a working environment that is conducive to a diverse workforce improves the effectiveness of policies and programmes, and enhances agencies' capacity to serve better the entire population.

List Proportional Representation (List PR)

Proportional Representation requires the use of electoral districts with more than one member. Under a List PR system, each party or grouping first presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district, voters make their selection, and then parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. In some (closed list) systems, the winning candidates are taken from the parties' lists in order. If lists are 'open' or 'free', voters can influence the order of candidates by highlighting their individual preferences.

Proportional Representation

This is based on the principle of conscious translation of the overall share of the vote obtained by a party or grouping into a corresponding share of the seats in an elected body. For example, a party that wins 30 per cent of the vote will receive approximately 30 per cent of the seats. All Proportional Representation systems require the use of multi-member districts.

Protection

This encompasses all activities aimed at securing full respect for the rights of individuals—women, girls, boys and men—in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. Protection activities aim to create an environment in which human dignity is respected, specific patterns of abuse are prevented or their immediate effects alleviated, and a dignified way of life is restored through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation.

Quota

This refers to a number of seats in an elected body that have to be filled by representatives of a particular kind or by a proportion of candidates nominated by a party or grouping. Quotas are used to ensure the nomination and election of a minimum number of women.

Annex II

Increasing women's representation through electoral systems

The electoral system and other rules pertaining to candidates, electoral districts, electoral formulae and the structure of the ballot significantly influence the outcome of polls. There is no neutral (gender or otherwise) electoral system, so if under-representation of women is or is likely to be a problem, one should consider how this might be remedied by the electoral system and additional regulations.

Research shows that List Proportional Representation (List PR) systems have a propensity to do better on women's representation than many other systems. The reasons are that: more candidates are elected from the same district, hence parties are more likely to nominate men and women; such systems tend to lead to the inclusion of many parties in the legislature, resulting in parties taking strides to appear 'fair' and balanced from a gender standpoint; and the parties, rather than the voters, usually decide who will be elected, thus any rules on the number of nominated women are likely to be more predictable and effective if the nominations end up on unalterable lists (as in List PR systems).

Nevertheless, other systems, especially those with large districts and party-centred voting, could be just as effective in promoting the election of women under the right circumstances. The electoral system and quotas should always be considered together as they have a significant impact on one another. Some combinations are likely to favour greatly the election of women while others may not be particularly encouraging—in the worst case, it may not even be possible.

Quotas can be used to increase the number of women *nominated* as candidates (by stating, for example, that 30 per cent of the candidates have to be women), or to boost the number of women *elected* directly (by stating, for instance, that 30 per cent of the seats have to be reserved for women). There are various ways in which these quotas can be designed and entrenched in legislation.

Quotas to enhance the number of women *nominated* as candidates will likely work well in party-centred systems (such as closed List PR systems) as

the order of candidates is determined beforehand. So long as the party gets a reasonable number of votes, a woman will be elected. If applied in a First-Past-the-Post system, there is no telling if the nominated women will be elected, since they might be placed in districts where the party is likely to lose. These quotas can be voluntary party quotas or ingrained in the constitution or in electoral or party law. They might be less controversial than the other type of quota (see below) as they are 'soft' and ultimately leave it up to the voter to decide whom s/he wants to elect.

Quotas to augment the number of elected women are likely to be more effective overall, as they guarantee that a certain number of women will be elected, so long as there are a sufficient number of women candidates. Furthermore, they might be deemed necessary in cases where the electoral system and voter attitudes are not conducive to the election of women, or where no political parties are present. These can be in the form of 'women-only' districts or tiers, or 'best loser systems' where the best placed unsuccessful women would get seats if not enough women were elected after the first count. These have to be entrenched in the constitution or electoral or party law, and are perhaps more controversial than quotas that target only the number of nominated women.²²

Since quotas have achieved mixed long-term results in post-conflict and non-post-conflict environments, they have been the subject of much debate.²³ While gender quotas can produce swift gains in the number of elected women, longer-term capacity building for women leaders can contribute to the creation of a new class of women politicians. A careful analysis of the specific electoral context will suggest the best approach to adopt vis-à-vis the wide range of measures available to enhance the participation and representation of women.²⁴ Any initiatives to advance women's participation and representation cannot be effective if applied in a vacuum. The influence of women's movements is crucial when lobbying for the implementation of special mechanisms. These movements should receive support for their work in negotiations processes and should be informed about electoral systems that can have a positive or negative effect on the participation and representation of women, including the use of gender quotas.

Annex III

Case studies²⁵

1. Legal framework

The role of women in Liberia's 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

During the war of 1999–2003, Liberian women played a significant part in attempts to resolve the conflict. Women came together, overcoming class and ethnic divisions, to advocate for peace across Africa and in Europe and the United States. Their efforts bore fruit on 18 August 2003, when the government of Liberia, the Liberian Union for Liberation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia and various political parties signed the Accra Peace Agreement.

The CPA was witnessed by the Liberia branch of the Mano River Union Women's Network, which was instrumental in bringing together the leaders of the Mano River Union states (Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone) to try to resolve the conflict situation in the sub-region. The CPA contained key pledges by the parties to promote the participation of women in transitional structures and in the electoral process. In particular, it established provisions for gender balance in elective and non-elective posts and among members of the Transitional Legislature Assembly.

Liberian Electoral Law (the Constitution and the Elections Law of 1986)

The Liberian Constitution and the Elections Law of 1986 govern the holding of national elections in the country. Because of displacement and major population shifts, among other consequences of the conflict, the parties to the CPA agreed to reform the electoral system by suspending Articles 30 (d)52 and (c)78, 80(d) and 83(b) of the Constitution. In addition, they agreed to amend aspects of the Elections Law to provide for, inter alia, the registration of and voting by internally displaced persons, a cap on electoral expenses, observers at polling stations, absentee voting, the registration of political parties, a coalition of political parties, and greater penalties for election irregularities. These changes sought to support the post-conflict environment and to reaffirm the prominence of the CPA. The CPA reinforced the view that elections should meet international standards.

Affirmative action policy in Timor-Leste: a double-edged sword

In Timor-Leste, prior to the legislative and presidential elections of 2007, UNIFEM, together with the Office for the Promotion of Equality (now the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality), Rede Feto Timor-Leste (Timor-Leste Women's Network), the Timor-Leste National University, and local women's NGOs Caucus and Fokupers held various consultations with stakeholders, including the leaders of political parties and women's wings and women members of political parties to ascertain ways to support women's participation in the polls. In light of the introduction of special reserved seats for women in electoral law before village elections, the majority of the participants, including the leaders of the political parties, agreed that some form of affirmative action was needed for the legislative elections to encourage and ensure women's participation. Some political party leaders were not convinced, though, arguing that women's participation should be based solely on merit. Nonetheless, when reminded that there were almost as many women as men, and that it was the intention of women's organisations to target women voters, these leaders took notice and became much more amenable to women's participation.

The Law on the Election of the National Parliament (Law No. 6/2006) includes two affirmative action clauses. Article 12 states that there must be at least one woman in every group of four candidates on a political party list, and that the list will be rejected if this is not adhered to. Article 13 states that any elected woman official who is substituted after a poll has to be replaced by the next woman on the party list. This provision was to counter a negative experience in the Constituent Assembly elections: a political party placed a woman at the top of its list, but when only one of its members was elected it promptly recalled the woman official and inserted the president of the party (the next person on the list).

Eighteen women (out of 65 members) were elected to the National Parliament in 2007. Following the formation of the government and the substitution of members, though, the number of women representatives rose to 20. An evaluation of women's participation in the elections confirmed that the affirmative action clauses assured women's inclusion on party lists, and that women's wings of political parties still do not have the strength to influence party decision-making processes. This is true of most parties, with the exception of one party whose president is a woman. Interestingly, she said that

she found the affirmative action clauses limiting. Instead, she would prefer to place women candidates at the top of the party list. However, as her party was new and has only a small number of women members, she had to make sure that there was at least one woman in each group of four candidates, meeting the requirement of Article 12. Another party that had more than 30 per cent of women candidates but did not satisfy the 'group of four' criterion had its list rejected. It was reinstated only after it changed the order of its women candidates.

2. Women's political participation as candidates

Developing a Code of Conduct for political parties and candidates in Liberia

During the consultations in Liberia, women voters and political aspirants highlighted that, historically, women have been prevented from participating as candidates and voters by violence, intimidation and fraud. The development of a Code of Conduct was important therefore in guiding the political parties and candidates during the campaign and in averting the marginalisation of women through violence, intimidation and fraud. The Code of Conduct was developed voluntarily by registered political parties, with the technical support of the International Republican Institute, the encouragement of the NEC, and with the facilitation of development consultants in Liberia. Civil society groups, including women NGOs, participated in consultative meetings to draft the Code of Conduct. The draft was submitted to the OGA for review and for the incorporation of a gender perspective relating to media reporting, the promulgation of propaganda documents, upholding sanctions for breaches of the Code, and the protection of women. The political parties agreed to the principle of non-discrimination, not to use abusive language, not to agitate on the basis of sex and gender, and to enforce the Code.

Support for civil society organisations in Liberia

To convince women political and civic leaders to compete for elective positions, the OGA organised a forum for Liberia Women in 2005, entitled '200 days countdown to the October 2005 Election'. During the forum, the Liberian Women's Manifesto was designed to guide women engaged in the political process. The slogan 'More Women, Better Politics'—the motto of the 50/50

Group of Sierra Leone—was adopted as the rallying call for women seeking election in the 2005 polls.

During the forum, Liberian women noted that little had been done to secure the presence of at least 30 per cent of women at all levels of government and decision-making, the gender balance set out in the Beijing Platform for Action and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of the UN. They pointed out that even though efforts to meet this goal through the Election Law had failed, the original 30 per cent goal had resulted in 30 per cent of women candidates. But this did not guarantee success. The women recognised that such a gender balance could also be achieved through monitoring, advocating, training, and an extensive drive to raise awareness of the need to remove the barriers, constraints and prejudices that affect gender issues and women's right to rule. The removal of barriers and the enactment of laws prohibiting harmful practices, as well as the introduction of gender-sensitive legislation and policies, are critical to women's empowerment. Government and partners, including women and NGOs, were called on to make a positive contribution to the process.

The Liberian Women's Manifesto set out an agenda for women's active participation in the political process. It also reflected their expectations for the advancement of women and for development in post-war Liberia. The process leading up to the development of the Liberian Women's Manifesto was very informative, helping Liberian women to think about their past while designing strategies to increase their participation in the future.

Women's groups and NGOs became effective actors in advocating for changes to electoral laws, the registration process, civic and voter education, and monitoring of the national elections. As a result of their advocacy and activities, the NEC, in collaboration with the OGA and the Ministry of Gender and Development, improved its strategies for targeting more women and convincing them to participate in the electoral process.

Supporting civil society organisations in Burundi

In February 2005, women's organisations in Burundi decided to come together under a single umbrella organisation: the Synergie des Partenaires pour la Promotion des Droits de la Femme (SPPDF). This decision had the dual advantage of reinforcing the base and enhancing the credibility of women politicians.

In December 2005, the SPPDF, with the support of UNIFEM and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, proposed to promulgate a Global Action Plan to mobilise women during the electoral process. The main partners in the adoption and implementation of the Global Action Plan were the SPPDF, a coalition of women parliamentarians, and the South Africa Committee. Its objectives included heightening public awareness of the roles and responsibilities of women in political life, strengthening women's capacity, and advocating for women's participation in elections.

A technical team comprising civil society organisations, the government of Liberia and UN agencies coordinated the Global Action Plan. For the most part, it was financed by the government of the Netherlands, UNDP and the Electoral component in coordination with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, ONUB, the SPPDF, the South Africa Committee and UNIFEM, managed the funds, amounting to USD 280,000.

Overcoming stereotypes and obstacles dictated by traditional practices

In most of the contexts examined, it is commonly believed that women's place is in the home rather than in the public sphere. It was reported, for instance, that pastors in the DRC used the Bible to support this argument, and that in the most conservative areas of Afghanistan mullahs underscored that it was non-Islamic for women to be active in public life. Malalai Joya, one of the most outspoken elected women candidates in Afghanistan, was repeatedly called a prostitute by the most conservative of her peers. It is noteworthy that this phenomenon exists in other cultures and traditions across the globe, providing men with a tool to intimidate their women counterparts, regardless of religious beliefs. The following is the testimony of a woman candidate, Marie Denise Bernadeau, in Haiti:

I recall that one day, when visiting an area that was a stronghold of a male candidate, someone addressed me in the street and asked me whether I was a candidate. When I replied that I was indeed a candidate, he told me that 'women who are in politics are all prostitutes . . . they only want to have this space to entertain in prostitution'. This is to say that a woman who wants to enter politics has to have additional skills than men. She has to be able to remain calm and tolerant in the face of the worst intimidation and aggression. It is necessary to have good training, good education and to sensitise the public to question those stereotypes that infringe women's freedoms.

3. Electoral campaign

Reconciling the demands of an intense electoral campaign with domestic duties

The social roles imposed on women in the DRC mean that they have to juggle two different priorities: daily family responsibilities and electoral campaign deadlines. This limits the opportunities of women candidates, necessitating enhanced strategic planning. In fact, owing to limited time, women candidates in the DRC were forced to reduce the number and frequency of visits to their constituencies, or they had to be represented by an agent if they had the means to hire one.

To counter such obstacles and to maximise available time, a group of women candidates recommended the following action points:

- obtain the different documents issued by the EMB as soon as possible;
- review them carefully and acquaint oneself with the electoral system;
- familiarise oneself with the demarcation lines of one's own constituency;
- examine the number of registered voters and their distribution in the various city areas or villages;
- set up electoral teams comprising one or two people for each area (possibly one man and one woman) and group areas/neighbourhoods/villages with fewer voters to maximise teams' time;
- allocate another team of three or four coordinators to a borough (made up of several areas/neighbourhoods/villages) to evaluate the work of the various teams. The coordinators are to work closely with the candidates;
- using the fieldwork done by the teams, attempt to research the real issues and problems confronting each of the areas/neighbourhoods/villages in the constituency, local initiatives and the presence of associations, including religious groups; and
- adjust the scope of the fieldwork according to information and feedback gathered and prepare public meetings accordingly.

The importance of developing a clear vision: the testimony of a Congolese candidate

According to a candidate in the 2006 Congolese polls, Ellysé Dimandja, the Coordinator of Women as Partners for Peace in Africa (WOPPA), political

vision is about women's ability to perceive and manage the needs of the community, differently to men, on the basis of democratic principles and values. The challenge is to translate words into action. Below is what she said during the national consultations in the DRC:

Many women candidates in DRC failed to transmit a clear vision of how to manage the community. Similarly, they did not present clearly their political lines and their objectives in relation to the problems of the community. And failing to do so, meant failing to win the confidence of the electorate. For instance, they did not say in their speeches if they believed in democratic principles or what are their objectives. Some did not even discuss the importance of good governance in this period of economic hardship and generalised crisis.

Changing mainstream behaviours and accepted mentalities, reflecting on the initiatives that need to be taken to develop the community, the fight against corruption, respect for human rights, are the themes and values on which women have to draw in their speeches, when, on the other hand, men only offer to distribute beer and cash to the electorate. It is a shame that many women candidates did not have the confidence and the spirit to go beyond men's campaign tools and empty promises and come up with new messages. ('... as the president of my party says ... if we win we will build roads ...'). The important question is: what do they think themselves? What is their vision?

The impact of a lack of financial support on women candidates in Haiti

A woman candidate in the 2005–06 elections, Marie Denise Bernadeau, told workshop participants how the lack of financial means had a negative impact on her electoral campaign:

As a housewife I had no other means to finance my campaign than asking for the support of my family and my friends. Their means were limited and we run out of funds halfway through my campaign. I found myself in a difficult position when I found out that I had a margin of several hundred votes over other candidates and needed to press on with my campaign. I had to make extraordinary efforts as I was not in the position to continue my fieldwork and I did not receive any financial support. Financial hurdles go beyond the electoral campaign period: in fact, efforts must also be made on Election Day to facilitate the transport of voters and to feed them if they have walked a long distance by foot—as it is expected in our culture.

If we really want to enhance women's participation in political life we have to enable them to find financial means, provide the resources they need and support their fund-raising activities at home, in the country and abroad. All actors should coordinate these efforts: women and men, women's NGOs, religious groups, schools, academia and professional groups with the support of the international community. It is crucial to start from the bottom up: building from the community level and decentralise the electoral process if we want to ensure that the community feels involved.

Women's Political Platform in Timor-Leste

In Timor-Leste, workshops with women's organisations, potential and actual candidates in the legislative elections and women's wings of political parties—organised by UNIFEM, the Office for the Promotion of Equality and women's organisations such as the Alola Foundation, Caucus, Fokupers and Rede Feto proved invaluable in raising awareness of women's rights. They also ensured agreement between women candidates on a Women's Political Platform. Following presentations by Rede Feto of the Women's Platform for Action adopted at the 2nd Women's National Congress, women political party representatives decided on a Women's Political Platform, which they campaigned on during the elections and undertook to implement once elected. The Women's Political Platform covers an assortment of issues, ranging from health, education and economic development to justice, security, culture and political participation.

The Women's Political Platform, which was signed by 12 of the 14 parties contesting the elections on 28 May 2006, crosses party lines and constitutes a significant commitment by women to work together on women's empowerment and gender equality.

4. Voter and civic education

One of the candidates in the DRC National Assembly elections, Gabrielle Bope, shared her thoughts on the importance of building popularity and trust among the electorate:

I arrived in the field two months before the beginning of the official campaign period, when the majority of other candidates were not yet around. Upon my arrival, I started to make contact with the electorate in the city and immediately noticed, amongst both women and men, the poor knowledge of the electoral process.

Based on my findings, I asked a local NGO to organise a series of civic education activities on the elections in the markets, the churches and youth groups in the various areas of the city and the surrounding areas. These activities had a large resonance across the city and attracted the attention of various leaders and civil society groups who in turn invited me to organise voter education activities in their organisations.

I am convinced that this voter education campaign increased my visibility and my popularity with many women and men because I contributed to ensuring that they received essential electoral information. ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 For more on how the needs of men and women differ in crisis and recovery situations, see Ilja A. Luciak (2006) 'Conflict and a Gendered Parliamentary Response', www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/56.
- 2 For more details on the obstacles that prevent women's full participation in political life and electoral processes, see Gabriele Russo (2007) 'Enhancing the Role of Women in Post-conflict Electoral Processes', <http://intranet.dpkp.un.org/dpkp/pages/DocumentDetails.aspx?DocId=2575>.
- 3 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217A, 3GAOR, Resolutions (A/810), Articles 21 and 21(3).
- 4 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 19 December 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171.
- 5 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 180 (XXXIV 1979), 19 I.L.M.33 (1980).
- 6 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 4 November 1950, 213 U.N.T.S. 221, E.T.S. 5.
- 7 African Charter on Human and People's Rights, 27 June 1981, Organization of African Unity (OAU) Document CAB/LEG/67/3/Rev. 5.
- 8 American Convention on Human Rights, 7 January 1970, Organization of American States (OAS) Document 65.
- 9 CEDAW, 18 December 1979, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 180 (XXXIV 1979), 19 I.L.M.33 (1980).
- 10 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, 31 October 2000, S/Res/1325, www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.
- 11 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, 31 October 2000, S/Res/1325, www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.
- 12 See also Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Reports on Recent IPU Specialised Conferences and Meetings: One-Day Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion of the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women: Beijing +10 (New York, 3 March 2005)', www.ipu.org/splz-e/csw49/report.pdf.
- 13 BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) is a comprehensive capacity development course covering all aspects of the electoral cycle, including a module on gender and elections—gender is integrated into other modules. BRIDGE can be

used to train women and men managers and election officials as well as those providing civic and voter education. See www.bridge-project.org.

- 14 The Electoral Assistance Division of DPA and UNDP are partners in both ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network (www.aceproject.org/) and BRIDGE (www.bridge-project.org). These tools, among others, could be useful in enhancing the role of women in post-conflict electoral processes.
- 15 See <http://aceproject.org/regions-en>.
- 16 See www.iknowpolitics.org.
- 17 Elizabeth Powley (2004) *Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition. A Summary*, EGM/ELEC/2004/EP.5, p. 10.
- 18 'Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste', 28 August 2007, UN document S/2007/513.
- 19 In Afghanistan, women took great advantage of the 'Sponsored Ad Campaign', a mechanism through which candidates received free minutes to campaign on electronic media.
- 20 See, for example, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2004) *Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections*, www.osce.org/odihr/item_11_13585.html. The iKNOW Politics Network also offers a list of resources on the topic. See www.iknowpolitics.org/en/taxonomy_menu/2/1/3.
- 21 For a more complete glossary, see International IDEA (2007) *Designing for Equality: Best-fit, medium-fit and non-favourable combinations of electoral systems and gender quotas*, www.idea.int/publications/designing_for_equality/.
- 22 More information can be found in: International IDEA (2007) *Designing for Equality: Best-fit, medium-fit and non-favourable combinations of electoral systems and gender quotas*, www.idea.int/publications/designing_for_equality/; Richard E. Matland (2005) 'Enhancing Women's Political Participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems', International IDEA, Stockholm, www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/beijing12/Chapter3_Matland.pdf; International IDEA (2005) *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*, p. 121, www.idea.int/publications/esd/; International IDEA (2006) *Democracy, Conflict and Human Security: Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century*, pp. 104–107, www.idea.int/publications/dchs/dchs_vol1.cfm.
- 23 For more on gender quotas, see International IDEA (2002) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, www.idea.int/publications/wip/index.cfm.
- 24 For an overview of electoral systems and how they best fit with different kinds of temporary measures, see International IDEA (2007) *Designing for Equality: Best-fit, medium-fit and non-favourable combinations of electoral systems and gender quotas*, www.idea.int/publications/designing_for_equality/.
- 25 Materials in this annex are drawn from the reports of the workshops on enhancing women's participation in elections held in 2007, as well as from UNMIL (2005) *Women and the Electoral Process in Liberia—2005 Elections* and ONUB (2006) *Evaluation de la participation des femmes au processus electoral au Burundi*. The Best Practices Section of UNMIT, together with its electoral component, the OGA and UNIFEM, provided information on Timor-Leste's elections.