



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CHEMIN DU POMMIER 5  
1218 GENEVA (SWITZERLAND)

TELEPHONE (41 22) 919 41 50 - TELEFAX (41 22) 919 41 60 - E-MAIL [postbox@mail.ipu.org](mailto:postbox@mail.ipu.org)

## **Panel discussion on women's participation in electoral processes in post-conflict countries**

### **CSW Side event**

**Co-sponsored by OSAGI, IPU and the Permanent Mission of Norway  
3 March 2004**

#### **Introduction**

This paper will aim at sharing the experience of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in supporting women elected to Parliaments in post-conflict countries.

As the world organisation of parliaments, the IPU includes 138 national parliaments as members. It works for the enhancement and strengthening of parliamentary democracy. In so doing, it has placed particular emphasis on the question of gender equality in politics and more particularly on the situation of women in parliament. The IPU considers that a balanced participation of men and women in the management of public affairs is central to any democracy. This principle was cemented in the Universal Declaration of Democracy, adopted by IPU members in 1997, article 4 of which states that:

*The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.*

Within this framework, over the past 30 years, the IPU has developed a series of activities aimed at promoting women's participation and input in parliament. It produces surveys and research on women in parliament; it monitors and publishes a monthly status report on the percentage of women in national parliaments; it facilitates contacts between women MPs and their exchange of experience; and it develops technical assistance projects in specific countries. Recent technical assistance projects in post-conflict countries have been carried out in Burundi, Rwanda and Timor-Leste.

#### **Situation of women in parliaments in post-conflict countries**

While there are no consistent trends or patterns relating specifically to women's political participation in post-conflict countries<sup>1</sup>, a number of general points can be made:

- The percentage of women parliamentarians in many post-conflict countries is above the world average (currently at 15 per cent). As at 29 February 2004, many post-conflict countries appear within the top 30 countries of the world ranking of women in national parliaments, several averaging between 25 to 30 per cent:

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<sup>1</sup> A sample of post-conflict countries used in the ensuing analysis includes: Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Uganda and Yemen.

Rwanda (48.8% - rank n°1); Mozambique (30% - rank n°14); South Africa (29.8% - rank n°15); Namibia (26.4% - rank n°20); Timor-Leste (26.1% - rank n°22); Uganda (24.7% - rank n°26); Eritrea (22% - rank n°30); Nicaragua (20.7% -rank n° 35).

- In many of the African states, the percentage of women in parliament after the conflict increased markedly from that prior to the conflict. Such results can be linked to the existence of a constitutional drafting process and the inclusion of electoral quotas for women (as was the case in Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa).
  - Rwanda went from 17.1% in 1988, to 25.7% (during the transition period), to 48.8% in 2003;
  - Mozambique went from 16% in 1982 to 25.2% in 1994, to 30% in 1999;
  - Sierra Leone went from 1 % in 1982 to 14.5% in 2002;
  - Guatemala passed from 3.2% in 1978 to 12.5% in 1995.
- The majority of post-conflict countries have instituted quota systems, either for the parliament or at the political party level.
- In several post-conflict countries, parliamentary committees on gender issues have been established. These exist for instance in Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Lebanon, South Africa and Uganda.
- However, very few of the newly-created parliaments in post-conflict countries actually have women Presiding Officers, which evinces the difficulties faced by women once elected to parliament where a whole new set of challenges arise.

### **Challenges faced by women in parliaments in established democracies**

In established democracies, the experience of women parliamentarians has not been at all easy. The numerous obstacles to women's legitimate and full participation in the political arena are well documented, be they institutional, socio-economic or psychological. Some of these obstacles include:

- the prevalence of a "masculine model" for political life: The historical and numerical pre-eminence of men in parliaments has meant that men have shaped the rules of parliament and defined the standards of behaviour and its evaluation.
- the nature of the electoral system, with proportional representation systems appearing more conducive to women's political careers than majority systems.
- the lack of support of political parties: women tend to receive limited financial support as candidates and limited access to political networks. Political party pre-selections have been seen as gender biased, prioritising "male characteristics" such as political aggressiveness and the confidence required to demand support from party colleagues. Political parties have traditionally considered women as electoral liabilities, rather than potential winners, often placing them in 'unwinnable' positions on the ballot paper.
- the problem of women's dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligation, arising from traditional gender roles and the association of women with family responsibilities.
- the perception that politics is a 'rough and tough' arena: this tends to impede women from entering politics, as does a lack of confidence to run for elections. The way in which women are portrayed in the mass media acts as a major source of discouragement to women.

## **Challenges faced by women elected to Parliament in post-conflict countries**

In the transition from instability and conflict to democracy, women elected to Parliament in post-conflict countries face additional challenges to those faced by women in established democracies.

### ***Prior experience***

The aftermath of a conflict offers new opportunities for women. Post-conflict and peace-building efforts require women's committed participation, in order to successfully build stability. In fact, post-conflict political processes and transformation bring a number of women with no political experience, or with predominantly grassroots or peace activist backgrounds, to parliament.

While this experience can prove to be an asset, insofar as these women have sound and in-depth knowledge of the needs of the people they represent, it is not necessarily a sufficient preparation for life in the political and parliamentary sphere. Women often lack the necessary knowledge of parliamentary procedures and of the complexities of handling legislation and so forth.

- There thus remains a huge need for capacity building and training, which can be funded by donor governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations. This training should specifically respond to women MP's lack of confidence and experience in the parliamentary sphere.

### ***Alliance formation***

In recently developed democracies there can be limited contact and cooperation between women politicians and women's organisations or other broad interest organisations such as trade unions. Moreover, women's movements and women's groups in these parts of the world either tend to keep their distance from women MPs, or do not invest in organised channels of communication and lobbying on issues related to promoting women to decision-making positions. This is the case either as a result of the lack of awareness of the potential benefits of this networking function, or the lack of resources to invest in such contacts.

In Timor-Leste, for example, where democracy is still in its infancy, old scores are still being settled. In some cases, the divisive nature of the occupation and conflict has limited the potential for new alliances.

- Women, however, need to establish key allies, both nationally and internationally. Nationally, women require assistance in enhancing contacts with civil society so as to better represent their constituents and defend their rights. International networks also provide valuable assistance in terms of best practice, sharing of experience and information.
- Women also clearly need to establish institutional mechanisms, which facilitate solidarity between them. To this end, parliamentary committees looking into the status of women, as well as all-women, cross-party caucuses may prove useful.

### ***Representation and agenda priorities***

As political representatives, women in post-conflict situations will wish to pursue specific agenda priorities and may identify specific sectors of society as requiring urgent assistance. There is a need for civic education programmes to inform women of their rights and to help them exercise them. Women continue to be discriminated against with regard to access to education for social and cultural reasons. Health care and social facilities tend to be inadequate, necessarily impacting on women's ability to participate in political and economic life.

Cases of post-conflict reconstruction have also underscored the need to give attention to immediate and long-term programs to combat violence against women and secure their physical safety. Women in Timor-Leste, like many women victims of conflict, suffered appalling sexual and

other violence during the Indonesian occupation, and now face rising levels of domestic violence. Ensuring sufficient attention is given to the urgent need for improved security – including protection and assistance for those at risk – becomes a fundamental agenda priority for women in post-conflict situations.

Consolidating the efforts and achievements of women in actually being elected is a considerable challenge especially when other issues (economics, unemployment, the balance of trade) take precedence and the international community begins to withdraw.

- Here, institution building projects, such as enhancing the research capacity of parliaments and parliamentary libraries on both gender and non-gender issues would be helpful. Fielding experts to newly-created parliaments and promoting an exchange of experience and procedures, including study tours is also warranted.
- The establishment of institutional mechanisms is also fundamental in effectively addressing questions relating to gender issues. The creation of a Ministry of Gender issues, a parliamentary committee on gender equality or an Observatory on Gender (such as that created in Rwanda), are examples of mechanisms that can be implemented.

***Reconciling public and private life: developing a gender sensitive parliament***

Politics takes tremendous dedication, hard work and time, often entailing the sacrifice of one's private life. While this is true for both men and women, the reconciliation of public and private life has specific, and quite different, consequences for women. For this reason, women in parliament require support from their family, including a reappraisal of the division of household chores and family responsibilities, especially vis-à-vis children and the elderly or the disabled. In a post-conflict framework, where social roles are being reconstructed, support within the family can be harder to justify and obtain.

Beyond domestic arrangements, parliament should also take into account the need to reconcile public and private life. The institution itself should provide for a supportive framework in this field. This involves instituting family-friendly sitting hours and providing free or inexpensive facilities such as kindergartens for small children or day-care centres.

- It is important that the internal functioning of parliaments takes into account the question of women and men's political responsibilities and their family obligations and provides them with the necessary facilities and support to reconcile both roles.

***Sensitising men and promoting the image of women in politics***

In post-conflict situations, it is not uncommon for women to account for an increased proportion of the population. The consequences for women of a newly-gained economic independence and freedom, long years of exposure to new social environments and attitudes, perceptions of the role of the family and its members, and forced migration in search of employment, all contribute to the dismantling of existing social institutions and the establishment of new ones.

Importantly, any shift perceived in traditional gender roles and practices during the period of conflict may translate itself into strong opposition once the conflict is ended and may require renegotiation. Cultural, social and religious factors have considerable influence in the aftermath of conflict when men begin to push for a return to the status quo ante. Women therefore need to engage with cultural and religious authorities in order to build support for lasting change.

- Building sustainable peace, based on mutual respect, cultural diversity and gender equality requires long-term efforts and commitment to complex social transformation. Men therefore need to be sensitised to the benefits of women's full participation in all spheres of life, both public and private.

- In the context of reconciliation and peace-building, it is important to recognise the historical role played by women in society and more particularly their input to the political field needs to be promoted. Public information campaigns should be organised. To respect the principle of equality, governments should also ensure that the image of women presented in textbooks is factually correct and presents all their potential and achievements. The media could also do much in this respect.

### **Elements of international post-election support: the experience of the IPU**

Over the past three years, the IPU has provided technical assistance to a number of parliaments. More often than not, it has been post-conflict countries such as Burundi, Rwanda or Timor-Leste, which have requested such assistance for women parliamentarians (see Annex II for a more complete presentation of IPU projects). This section will describe the experience and results of these activities, as well as other activities aimed at supporting women in Parliaments and sensitising men to gender issues.

Some of the challenges faced by newly-elected women, and more particularly those in post-conflict countries have been briefly presented in the previous sections. In response to the variety of needs expressed by women and the parliamentary institution itself, the IPU has carried out and executed, together with partner organisations and agencies, a series of activities which can be regrouped in the following way:

#### ***a. Capacity building activities for women parliamentarians***

These activities aim at building women's confidence and strengthening their capacity to fulfil their mandates appropriately.

In all of the countries where technical assistance was provided, newly-elected women expressed a wish to develop their leadership skills. This included training in public speaking, preparation and delivery of campaign speeches, communication strategies, and the development of communication techniques.

Training on parliamentary procedure was also provided. In Djibouti, training seminars on the role and mandate of parliamentarians were organised to introduce parliamentarians to their new tasks. Both women and men parliamentarians attended these seminars. In Timor-Leste, a seminar on the *role of parliament in the budgetary process, including from a gender perspective* was organised, prior to the opening of the budgetary session in parliament, to help MPs prepare for the second budget review in the history of Timor-Leste's parliament.

#### ***b. Developing access to information on gender issues***

Access to adequate background information on specific gender issues is key to a parliamentarian's legislative and oversight functions. In all parliaments benefiting from IPU assistance, documentation centres on gender issues have been established. This has involved the purchase of books, articles, journals and magazines on gender issues, the creation of the documentation centre itself, often within the premises of the parliamentary library, and the training of a librarian, capable of conducting research on gender issues.

While this particular type of activity benefits women parliamentarians first and foremost, it also contributes to the strengthening of the parliament's research capacity as a whole. Experience has also showed, particularly in the case of Rwanda, that where the parliamentary library is also open to the public, the documentation centres also serve civil society organisations working on gender issues.

#### ***c. Assisting women to address specific national gender concerns***

The sharing of expertise on gender issues of particular concern to newly-elected women is often necessary to assist women MPs in addressing specific national gender priorities. To respond to this need, experts were fielded to assist women MPs in dealing with these concerns. Training

seminars on specific gender issues, bringing together MPs and experts from other countries were also organised. Pooling experiences between MPs of different origins has proven very constructive and useful. Most recently, an information seminar for MPs on the implementation of the CEDAW was organised, in cooperation with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, for some 15 countries, several of which were post-conflict (Ethiopia, El Salvador, Angola).

Furthermore, the involvement of men in these training sessions has proved particularly successful. Consolidating a sense of partnership between men and women on these issues contributes to an appreciation that they are not, and should not be, the exclusive domain of women.

***d. Strengthening cross party support and solidarity among newly-elected women MPs***

The strength of newly-elected women MPs can lie in their solidarity and capacity to unite, beyond party structures, to defend specific gender issues. Recently, Pakistani women MPs from all parties, united to adopt a law on domestic violence, despite the strong opposition from some conservative and religious parties.

Generating such unity amongst women from all parties is not, however, an easy task. In Rwanda and Burundi, structures already exist: the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) and the Association of Women Parliamentarians from Burundi (SOFEPA) serve to mobilise women around specific gender issues. IPU support (financial as well as technical) has strengthened the legitimacy of these associations and their capacity to generate change.

In Timor-Leste, cross-party unity is more challenging. Strong party lines and discipline can impede women's ability to stand together on certain issues. The IPU is currently providing assistance to women parliamentarians in Timor-Leste by fielding an expert to assist them in working towards cross-party unity. Discussions are taking place on whether to set up a caucus of women parliamentarians or to push for the creation of a parliamentary committee on gender issues.

***e. Developing national partnerships***

For newly-elected MPs, the priority is often to learn the basics of the parliamentary environment. This can take precedence over establishing links with other national partners, with whom cooperation is also essential. IPU activities have therefore focussed on ensuring that contact is made between different national partners all working on gender issues. In the case of Rwanda, a seminar organised during the constitutional process brought together members of the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, members of the Legal and Constitutional Committee, members of the Ministry on Gender Issues as well as representatives of civil society organisations. One of the positive outcomes of the activity was to consolidate cooperation between these different national actors.

Another seminar for Rwandan women candidates served to bring women MPs and future candidates in contact with the media as well as political party leaders. Though it may seem obvious that national actors can easily have access to one another, experience has shown that it is more often on the occasion of meetings organised with donor assistance that they do actually meet and exchange information.

Focussing on the need to become familiar with parliamentary procedures, newly-elected parliamentarians, men and women alike, can lose touch with their primary constituencies. Activities carried out in Burundi and Rwanda aimed at ensuring that contact with the electorate, and more particularly women, was not weakened. Not only do such activities strengthen MPs' representative capacity, they are also important in ensuring that the reconstruction process is understood by the electorate and responds closely to its needs. Dissociation between the people and national institutions can endanger a country's stability and the reconciliation process. In several post-conflict countries, women MPs benefited from donor support to organise field trips in their constituencies and popular debates. In many instances, this served to explain the political

processes under way: in Burundi, for example, women MPs explained the Arusha Peace agreements to women, while in Rwanda, women MPs organised popular consultations on the constitutional process. In this way, the support of the electorate is secured, and major political decisions and instruments are more clearly understood, this being fundamental to the reconciliation process.

***f. Enhancing capacity by benefiting from the experience of other countries***

Newly-elected women MPs can benefit from the experience of women in other countries. In some cases, where the task of building a new system from scratch has proven quite daunting, requests were received for information on mechanisms established in other countries. The IPU has responded by organising study trips to neighbouring countries to learn from other women MPs' experience and to study existing parliamentary mechanisms in the field of gender equality. Further assistance has been provided by setting up documentation centres.

The IPU has also established a network of focal points on gender issues, regrouping women parliamentarians from over 70 countries, including those emerging from conflicts. These focal points will soon be developed into an electronic network so as to facilitate cross-border solidarity and support among women parliamentarians.

***g. Sensitising men to gender issues***

Post-election support should also be approached from an institutional and global perspective. Activities aimed at supporting women MPs should include segments designed to sensitise men to gender issues and establishing alliances between men and women in favour of gender equality. All of the IPU training activities on specific gender issues have involved men. In fact, men's contribution was particularly relevant in the training seminar entitled, *Engendering the new Rwandan Constitution*, organised in Rwanda in August 2001. This seminar provided for the establishment of a comprehensive movement, and avoided the marginalisation of gender issues.

In those parliaments where women's entry in high numbers has changed the initial or traditional gender balance, seminars for men and women have provided an opportunity for all parliamentarians to work through their new environment together. In Djibouti, for example, women were elected in significant numbers to parliament for the first time in 2002. Together, the IPU and UNIFEM organised a seminar for both men and women, to familiarise the new MPs with the idea of working together.

**Conclusion**

Supporting activities have generally contributed to strengthening women parliamentarians' capacities and building their confidence, the lack of which remains one of the most important elements limiting their input to parliament. Ultimately, the combination of capacity-building activities and specific training on gender issues and research support, should enhance women's input to the parliament's work.

It is important to note that all activities have sought to include, whenever possible, men parliamentarians. This has not always been easy though, as men can be reluctant to debate gender issues.

Activities have also aimed at enhancing the country's institutional capacities, and more precisely those of the parliament, to properly address gender issues. This contributes to developing a more open and conducive environment in favour of gender equality.

Finally, in addition to providing technical and financial support, international assistance can legitimise the activities of national institutions they support. In the case of Rwanda, the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians was the main partner in assistance projects. This strengthened the Forum's credibility at the national level.

**Situation of women in Parliament of some post-conflict countries**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Percentage of women MPs</b>	<b>Quotas</b> (Source: Global Database of Quotas for Women - International IDEA/ Stockholm University)	<b>Parliamentary Committee on Gender Issues</b>	<b>Other information</b>
Angola	1986 -14.5%  1992 - 9.5% 2003 - 15.5%	Information not available	Comissoe Familia, Juventude, Infancia e Promoção da Mulher	Existence of a cross party group of women parliamentarians composed of all the women MPs
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1990 - 4.5%  1996 - ? 1998 - 28.6% 2000 - 7.1% 2002 - 16.7%	- Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament - Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	Information not available	
Burundi	1982 - 9.2%  1993 - 12.3% (number has reached 18.4% by 2003)	Transitional period NA	Information not available	Existence of a cross party Association of Women Parliamentarians from Burundi (SOFEPAs)
Cambodia	1972 - 3.2%  1993 - 5.8% 1998 - 8.2%	Information not available	Senate: Parliamentary Committee on Public Health, Social and Women's Affairs	
El Salvador	1978 - 7.4%  1994 - 10.7% 1997 - 15.5 2000 - 9.5 2003 - 10.7	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	Comision de la Familia, la Mujer y la Ninez	
Eritrea	Independence 1993  1994 - 21 %	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	Information not available	
Ethiopia	1973 -.1.6% 1994 - 2.3% 1995 - 5.0% 2000 - 7.7%	Information not available	House of Representatives: Women's Affairs Standing Com  House of Federation: no committee on gender issues	
Guatemala	1978 - 3.2% 1995 - 12.5% 1999 - 7.1% 2003 - 8.2%	Quotas existed previously or quota legislation has been proposed	Comision permanente de la Mujer, del Menor y de la Familia	
Lebanon	1965 - 0%  1992 - 2.3% 1996 - 2.3% 2000 - 2.3%	Quotas existed previously or quota legislation has been proposed	Permanent Commission on Women and children	

Mozambique	1982 - 16% 1994 - 25.2% 1999 - 30.0%	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	Information not available	
Namibia	Independence in 1990 1989 - 6.9% 1994 - 22.2% 1999 - 25.0%	Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	None	
Rwanda	1988 - 17.1% 1994 - 25.7% 2003 - 48.8%	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments ; Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament ; Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	None	Existence of the cross party Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians which is composed of all women MPs
Sierra Leone	1982 - 1% 2002 - 14.5%	Quotas existed previously or quota legislation has been proposed	Information not available	
South Africa	1989 - 2.8% 1994 - 25% 1999 - 29.8%	- Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament - Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Women	
Timor-Leste	Independence in 2002  2001 - 26.1%	Quotas existed previously or quota legislation has been proposed	None	
Uganda	1989 - 12.2%  1994 - 17.4% 1996 - 18.1% 2001 - 24.7%	Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments; Election Law Quota Regulation, National Parliament	Committee on Equal Opportunities	
Yemen	1970 (Democratic popular republic of Yemen): 8.9%  Yemen (united). 1990 - 3.3% 1993 - 0.7% 1997 - 0.7% 2003 0.3%	No	None	

**Assistance provided to women parliamentarians in post-conflict situations:  
the case of Rwanda, Burundi and Timor-Leste**

Over the past three years, the IPU has executed technical assistance and support programmes for women parliamentarians in several post-conflict countries, with support from UNDP and the European Community. Activities included:

**Rwanda**

***Institutional support:*** The project began in 2000 with the provision of technical support to the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP). A documentation centre on gender issues was set up and a librarian was trained and sensitised to conduct research on gender issues.

***Engendering the constitutional process:*** A three day seminar on "Engendering the new Rwandan Constitution" was organised by the IPU and UNDP in August 2001, at the National Transitional Assembly. The seminar brought together all women and men parliamentarians, members of the Legal and Constitutional Committee tasked with drafting the new constitution and civil society organisations. International experts also attended the session. The seminar provided a unique opportunity for Rwandans to consider practical ways and means of ensuring that Rwanda's Constitution take into account gender issues. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a series of recommendations aimed at taking gender into account in the Constitution. At the close of the seminar, participants agreed to work together to gather women's views on the constitutional process through a popular consultation process and produce a document on women's rights to be submitted to the Legal and Constitutional Committee. The result of this process was very positive: today Rwanda has a very gender-sensitive Constitution. A record of the seminar was published in an IPU publication which can be found on the IPU website: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/studies.htm>

***Support to women candidates to elections:*** The IPU and the UNDP together with the Transitional National Assembly of Rwanda and the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, organised a seminar on "Rwandan Women and the Electoral Campaign", in Kigali (Rwanda), from 30 to 31 July 2003. Held on the eve of the launch of both presidential and legislative electoral campaigns, the seminar came at a timely moment in the Rwandan electoral process. Eighty women leaders with different backgrounds discussed a variety of subjects, including gender and the Constitution, the funding of electoral campaigns, and relations with the media and the electorate. They benefited from the input of national and international experts from France, Kenya and South Africa. The seminar proved that women in Rwanda have what it takes to be leaders, to ensure a balanced representation in the parliament, and to articulate the views of the distinct groups they represent. The results of the seminar were published in an IPU publication which can be found on the IPU website: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/studies.htm>

***Enhancing women parliamentarian's link with the population:*** Ensuring that the people are aware of their rights is crucial. The IPU and UNDP supported the Forum of Women Parliamentarians in producing and disseminating material explaining existing matrimonial and inheritance legislation, the objective being to make women more fully aware of their economic and social rights. Women, including those in key decision-making positions at the local level, were not very conversant with this legislation. The project resulted in the production of a play that was broadcast on radio and television in order to reach the widest possible audience.

**Burundi**

***Institutional support:*** Support to the SOFEPA (Association of Women Parliamentarians from Burundi): The project provided financial and technical support to the Association. It enabled the association to open an office and have access to material with which to work (including computers and a photocopying machine).

***Participation in peace negotiations:*** The project funded the participation of a woman parliamentarian in the peace negotiations.

***Enhancing women parliamentarians' links with the population:*** The project enabled women to organise field trips to explain the Arusha peace agreements to the population, and more particularly women.

***Participation in regional meetings:*** The project funded the participation of a delegation of women parliamentarians to the seminar organised in Rwanda on Gender and the Constitution. As Burundi is undergoing a similar process, exchange of experience in this field was more than timely.

### **Timor-Leste**

***Participation in regional meetings:*** The project funded the participation of a delegation of parliamentarians, including women, to a regional seminar on *Parliament and the budgetary process including from a gender perspective*, organised in Manila, Philippines.

***Institutional support:*** A documentation centre on gender issues is to be set up in parliament in order to enhance its research capacity and women's access to comparative data.

***Assisting women MPs to organise themselves:*** An international expert will be fielded for a month to assist women MPs to organise themselves. This expert will also organise four one-day training sessions to build women parliamentarians' capacities and skills. The expert will provide advice and assistance to women in their parliamentary activities, and assist them in strengthening their interaction and cooperation with their constituencies, civil society and women's organisations.