

**United Nations
Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues
And Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
Expert Group Meeting on
"Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral
Processes in Post-Conflict Countries"
19-22 January 2004
Glen Cove**

**Enhancing the role of women in electoral
processes in post-conflict countries**

**Post-election support
Paper prepared by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)**

**Presented by Kareen Jabre
Expert paper**

* The views expressed in this paper, which has been reproduced as received, are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

Enhancing the role of women in electoral processes in post-conflict countries

Post-election support

Paper prepared by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Introduction

What happens to women once they make it through the electoral process? How do they capitalise on their election gains and turn this success into concrete actions which generate change? What do newly-elected women need, in post-conflict countries, to discharge mandates and play their role in the reconstruction, reconciliation and peace-building process of their country?

This paper has been prepared for the Expert Group meeting on "Enhancing the role of women in electoral processes in post-conflict situations". It focuses on the question of post election support and aims at assessing challenges faced by newly-elected women in post-conflict countries and responses and solutions provided both nationally and through international aid.

This paper is based on the experience of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and its programme to provide support to women in parliaments of post-conflict countries. As the world organisation of parliaments, the IPU includes 138 national parliaments as members. The IPU works for the enhancement and strengthening of parliamentary democracy. In so doing, it has placed particular focus on the question of gender equality in politics and more particularly on the situation of women in parliament. Indeed, 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, which states in its article 4 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. Recently, technical assistance projects have been carried out in post-conflict countries, including Burundi, Rwanda and Timor-Leste.

This paper basis itself on the IPU's global research work on women in parliament as well as the more specific technical assistance projects carried out in some countries. The intention, however, is not to present global trends. Women in different post-conflict

countries do not all share the same experiences. Recommendations will therefore have to take into account the diversity of the various situations, cultural differences and nature of the conflict. Further, the paper focuses on the question of women in *national* parliaments and does not address questions relating to women in local governments, or regional parliaments.

The paper gives an overview of the :

- (i) situation of women in parliaments in certain post-conflict countries;
- (ii) challenges faced by women in parliament in established countries and presents some of the solutions which may also be of relevance to women in post-conflict situations;
- (iii) challenges faced by women in parliament in post-conflict countries;
- (iv) assistance provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, lessons learnt and recommendations.

A. The 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 countries¹, a number of general points can be made (see Annex I):

Some data...

- The percentage of women parliamentarians in many post-conflict countries is above the world average (currently at 15 per cent). As at 30 November 2003, the majority of 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:
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°31); Nicaragua (20.7% - rank n° 35).

The complete world ranking of women in national parliaments is at Annex II.

- In many of the African states, the percentage of women in parliament increased markedly after the conflict 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;

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

- 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 set up. These exist for instance in Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Lebanon, South Africa and Uganda.

...and some possible explanations

Gender analysts of conflict, peace and reconstruction issues point out that the extent to which women are included or excluded in post-conflict reconstruction depends heavily upon their involvement in earlier phases – during the conflict itself, as well as in peace-making initiatives/formal negotiations leading into the reconstruction phase. Specifically, women are more likely to be included in post-conflict reconstruction if they are already organised and have managed to be included in previous stages of the peace-process. For example, in cases such as Mozambique and Eritrea, the liberation of women was explicitly tied to the struggle for national independence.

It is important to note, however, that it takes more than positioning women in decision-making positions to make real progress on legitimising the role and presence of women in the public sphere. In Cambodia, for example, the Khmer Rouge actually established a women's wing of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and included a number of women in its regime. This eventually associated women with the conflict and, in the country's transition to peace, women's political participation subsequently declined.

More commonly, women have played an influential role in grassroots organisations working for peace and reconciliation. In Somalia, for example, where women were invited to participate in the formal peace process as well, women were instrumental in forming NGOs to provide peace education for women. The success of these campaigns has often been to mobilise awareness of women's positions and needs as a result of the conflict.

Conflict transforms traditionally defined roles and responsibilities, as people have to cope with the new realities that emerge from such extreme situations. Gender relations, in particular, are affected by conflict as men and women assume new responsibilities. The change is often abrupt. It takes the return to a more stable situation for people to take stock of the social changes that have occurred. These transformations, however, are not always welcome nor understood, and often, return to peace is followed with an attempt to resume previous social models and roles. In many cases, this provokes a strong reaction from women. The proliferation of women's associations and their activism in post-conflict situations is testimony to their refusal to relinquish the freedoms gained during conflict. Indeed, women's activism impacts on the nature of the post-conflict institutional structures, which more often than not, are obliged to take account of women's new role and place in society.

B. Challenges faced by women in parliament

How have women experienced the political arena in post-conflict countries, and how do their experiences differ from those of women in more established democracies? What are some of the challenges and opportunities faced by women in post-conflict situations and what lessons learned in stable countries can be applied to post-conflict situations?

As we will see, there is some similarity between the obstacles faced by women in parliament in post-conflict situations and those generally faced by women in parliaments of established democracies. Differences, however, lie in the subtle and culturally-specific ways these obstacles manifest themselves. Cultural contexts, international factors, geography, politics, regional factors and recent events, all make their mark. It is also clear that the issues of reconstruction, reconciliation and representation hold particular importance for women's experience of the political sphere in post-conflict countries.

The experience of women parliamentarians in established democracies 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 (see IPU 2000; Shvedova 2002: 1-12).

Institutional obstacles

A fundamental obstacle has been 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 is another factor, with proportional representation systems appearing more conducive to women's political careers than majority systems.

In addition, women have commonly lacked the support of political parties, receiving 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 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.

Other institutional obstacles involve women's exclusion from many areas and levels of the employment market, including specific training, which can eventually lead to positions of political leadership.

Socio-economic obstacles

Research indicates a strong correlation between women's election to parliament and their socio-economic status. Educated and economically independent women, for example, are more likely to enter politics than those who work at home.

There is also 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.

Psychological obstacles

The perception that politics is a 'rough and tough' arena 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.

These obstacles notwithstanding, women have increasingly sought and won elected political positions. The most recent statistics show that over 15 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are women, with increases being gained in all of the world's regions. This percentage constitutes the highest proportion of women in national parliaments. What, then, has contributed to this gradual change?

An environment conducive to change

The equal and legitimate participation of women in politics has often been predicated on a change in perception and perspective. In many stable countries, the concept of democracy is no longer perceived as the private and exclusive domain of men. Thus, the identification of women's exclusion from the political process as a 'democratic deficit', alongside a steady documentation of the progress made in women's political participation (such as that provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union), has been particularly beneficial.

Both men and women have also had to resolve to change the status quo: men, by accepting that a more diverse and rich parliament leads to a more representative and effective democracy; women, by accepting that they need to be involved in the political process and organise themselves to achieve this end.

In many countries, society itself has seen a change in cultural values and norms, now accepting the role of women in the public sphere. This has come hand in hand with the creation and adoption of international legal instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, changes in electoral laws which prohibited or discriminated against the equal participation of women, and to school curricula which explicitly or implicitly allude to the superiority of men over women.

More specific mechanisms

In its surveys and publications, the IPU has identified a number of more specific mechanisms to assist women and men in promoting and facilitating women's involvement in parliament in established democracies.

1. Getting acquainted with the political environment and its rules	<p>To be effective in parliament, it is necessary to learn parliamentary rules and procedures. Learning unwritten parliamentary rules and informal agreements will be almost as important.</p> <p>Newly-elected women MPs tend to lack skills in dealing with legislation, including the national budget. They will have to count on political friends and seasoned parliamentarians, either male or female, and also on experienced parliamentary assistants and staff who can provide orientation and support.</p>
2. Widening the scope of action beyond the fields usually associated with women	<p>Women tend to be present in committees dealing with social issues more than on any other committees. When a reasonable number of women become involved in committees dealing with foreign affairs, or the budget, or security, or justice, they can bring about changes in the approach to the subject and the legislation prepared, so as to cover, whenever relevant, the specific vision and concerns of women.</p>
3. Promoting legislation on issues of direct concern to women	<p>Women can influence issues which are particularly relevant to them and try to promote relevant legislation. These issues need not solely concern their own rights and children's rights, but may also cover other issues which traditionally are associated as belonging to men's domain (defence, foreign affairs, budget, trade, security...).</p>
4. Networking and forming all-women, cross-party caucuses and committees	<p>Experience proves that, the fewer they are, the more important it is for women to network beyond party lines. Women also need to have male allies.</p> <p>Networks lead to greater insight into the behind-the-scenes workings of parliament and can also lead to nominations for positions of seniority within the parliament.</p> <p>An all-party women's caucus can turn into an effective tool in parliament if it obtains official recognition and technical support.</p>
5. Participating in parliamentary bodies, such	<p>Positions of power make a difference both symbolically and culturally, exerting influence on the</p>

as committees, and being nominated as Chair	organisation of the parliamentary schedule and its work.
6. Mentoring and supporting the work of other women in positions of power	Solidarity between women is useful. The sharing and passing on of political experience by women is highly valued, as is mutual support and respect.

Source: IPU, 1998: 11-12.

C. Contextual differences of post-conflict countries

In the transition from instability and conflict to democracy, it can only be expected that the obstacles faced by women in stable countries will also be faced by women in post-conflict countries. However, various important questions which differentiate the two situations have been documented. These include:

- How does women's pre-conflict experience impact on their ability to work in the newly-created parliament?
- What alliances can women forge in post-conflict situations?
- Which issues will women in post-conflict situations be more likely to pursue and what sectors of society will women represent?
- How can women contribute to social integration in a post-conflict society?

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 certain number of women, with no political experience, or with predominantly grassroots or peace activist backgrounds, to parliament. In one sense, 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.

This notwithstanding, such experience is not necessarily a good 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 levels. 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 have limited the potential for new alliances.

- Women, however, need to establish key allies, both national and international. 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 programs 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 the one 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. While it is now accepted that there is a need for women to be appointed to positions of authority in Iraq, for instance, there is also the view that women should not necessarily replace men in such positions. 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 and is presented with all their potential and achievements. The media could also do much in that respect.

D. 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 III for a more complete presentation of IPU projects). This section will describe the experience and results of these activities. It will also refer to the technical assistance activities carried out to support the work of other, more stable, national parliaments and women parliamentarians (for example, the case of Djibouti, where women were elected for the first time in 2002), as well as regional activities in Africa and Asia on gender issues aimed at strengthening women's capacities 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:

1. Examples of post-election support activities carried out by the IPU

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. These seminars were attended by women parliamentarians as well as their male counterparts. 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 Timor-Leste's history.

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 which benefited 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 organisation 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 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.

2. Lessons learnt and recommendations

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 may 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.

These projects are but a few possible initiatives that may be developed for newly-elected women in post-conflict countries. While every organisation, UN agency or other institution has its own policies and functioning, the following lessons learnt may be taken into account when devising post-electoral support.

- Support activities need to be nationally driven, that is, activities must respond to an internally-identified need and be managed from within. Ownership of the project contributes to its overall success.
- Support to women should not be considered separate to support for institution building. Enhancing the capacities of newly-elected women parliamentarians should be coupled with developing the parliament's capacity to address gender issues.
- Activities should be conceptualised as part of a medium or long-term plan: activities scheduled as one-time events limit the early identification of additional activities, funding or technical advisory support to further the goals or outcomes of interventions. It is important that donor partners and actors capitalise on the momentum generated by certain activities and have the flexibility to ensure follow-up.
- Activities should ensure the participation of men and avoid their exclusion, as this may ultimately backfire.
- In the complex post-conflict setting, there is a need for political monitoring and risk analysis to guide the development of technical cooperation strategies. It is important that national context and particular settings be taken into account and well documented.
- Donor agencies should reach out to women who need to be informed of the conditions and modalities of access to international donor support.
- There is a need to enhance communication, cooperation and coordination of projects between donors, supporting agencies and international organisations. In several cases, projects which have been carried out with the support of certain organisations may be ignored or overlooked by other supporting donor agencies, due to lack of information and coordination.

Bibliography

- Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1997. *Democracy Still in the making: A World Comparative Study*. Geneva.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2000. *Politics: Women's Insight*. Geneva.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. 1994. *Plan of action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life*.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, Pintat, Christine. 1998. "A global analysis: What has worked for women in politics and what has not, 1975-1998".
- Office of Women in Development, USAID. 2000. "Intrastate conflict and gender". Information Bulletin N°9.
- USAID. 2000. "Aftermath: Women and Women's Organisations in Post-Conflict Cambodia." Evaluation Highlights N° 67.
- Scott, Catherine, 2003. "Are Women Included or Excluded in Post-Conflict Reconstruction? A Case Study from East Timor". CIIR.
- Shvedova, N. 2002. "Obstacles to women's political participation." International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- Sørensen, Birgitte. 1998. *Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources*. www.wsp-international.org/op3/toc.htm

Situation of women in Parliament of some post-conflict countries

Country	Percentage of women MPs	Quotas (Source: Global Database of Quotas for Women - International IDEA/ Stockholm University)	Post - Conflict Constitutional changes	Parliamentary Committee on Gender Issues	Other information
Angola	1986 - 14.5% 1992 - 9.5% 2003 - 15.5%	Information not available	Amendments in 1991, 1992, 1996	Commissoe 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	New Constitution, replacing the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Rep. of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995)	Information not available	
Burundi	1982 - 9.2% 1993 - 12.3% (number has reached 18.4% by 2003)	Transitional period NA	Transitional period NA	Information not available	Existence of a cross party Association of Women Parliamentarians from Burundi (SOFEPA)
Cambodia	1972 - 3.2% 1993 - 5.8% 1998 - 8.2%	Information not available	New Constitution Promulgated in 1993, amended in 1999	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	The Constitution, which came into effect in 1983, has not been amended	Comision de la Familia, la Mujer y la Ninez	
Eritrea	Independence 1993 1994 - 21 %	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	Eritrea's first Constitution was adopted in 1997	Information not available	
Ethiopia	1973 - 1.6% 1994 - 2.3% 1995 - 5.0% 2000 - 7.7%	Information not available	New Constitution in 1994	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	New Constitution Entered into force in 1986, amended in 1994	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	The Constitution was adopted in 1926 and amended in 1927, 1929, 1943, 1947 and 1990	Permanent Commission on Women and children	
Mozambique	1982 - 16% 1994 - 25.2% 1999 - 30.0%	Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates	New Constitution adopted in 1990.	Information not available	
Namibia	Independence in 1990 1989 - 6.9% 1994 - 22.2% 1999 - 25.0%	Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level	Constitution adopted in 1990	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	New Constitution adopted in 2003	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	Following the transfer of power to a democratically elected administration in 1996, the Constitution of 1991 was reinstated	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	New Constitution adopted in 1997	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	Timor-Leste's first Constitution was adopted in 2002	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	New Constitution promulgated in 1995	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	Following reunification of Yemen, a new Constitution was approved in 1991 and amended in 1994	None	

WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2003

World classification

181 countries in descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House

Statistics established by the IPU on the basis of data officially provided by National Parliaments

World ranking	Country (A total of 181 countries)	Lower or single House							
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	09 2003	80	39	48.8	09 2003	20	6	30.0
2	Sweden	09 2002	349	158	45.3	---	---	---	---
3	Denmark	11 2001	179	68	38.0	---	---	---	---
4	Finland	03 2003	200	75	37.5	---	---	---	---
5	Netherlands	01 2003	150	55	36.7	06 2003	75	24	32.0
6	Norway	09 2001	165	60	36.4	---	---	---	---
7	Cuba	01 2003	609	219	36.0	---	---	---	---
8	Belgium	05 2003	150	53	35.3	05 2003	71	23	32.4
9	Costa Rica	02 2002	57	20	35.1	---	---	---	---
10	Austria	11 2002	183	62	33.9	N.A.	62	13	21.0
11	Germany	09 2002	603	194	32.2	N.A.	69	17	24.6
12	Argentina	10 2001	257	79	30.7	10 2001	72	24	33.3
13	Iceland	05 2003	63	19	30.2	---	---	---	---
14	Mozambique	12 1999	250	75	30.0	---	---	---	---
15	South Africa**	06 1999	399	119	29.8	06 1999	54	17	31.5
16	Seychelles	12 2002	34	10	29.4	---	---	---	---
17	New Zealand	07 2002	120	34	28.3	---	---	---	---
17	Spain	03 2000	350	99	28.3	03 2000	259	63	24.3
18	Viet Nam	05 2002	498	136	27.3	---	---	---	---
19	Grenada	01 1999	15	4	26.7	01 1999	13	1	7.7
20	Namibia	11 1999	72	19	26.4	11 1998	26	2	7.7
21	Bulgaria	06 2001	240	63	26.3	---	---	---	---
22	Timor -Leste***	08 2001	88	23	26.1	---	---	---	---
23	Turkmenistan	12 1999	50	13	26.0	---	---	---	---
24	Australia	11 2001	150	38	25.3	10 1998	76	22	28.9
25	Switzerland	10 2003	200	50	25.0	10 2003	38	9	23.7
26	Uganda	06 2001	304	75	24.7	---	---	---	---
27	Lao People's Democratic Rep.	02 2002	109	25	22.9	---	---	---	---
28	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	03 2001	22	5	22.7	---	---	---	---
29	Mexico	07 2003	500	113	22.6	07 2000	128	20	15.6
30	United Rep. of Tanzania	10 2000	274	61	22.3	---	---	---	---
31	Eritrea	02 1994	150	33	22.0	---	---	---	---
32	Pakistan	10 2002	342	74	21.6	03 2003	100	18	18.0
33	Latvia	10 2002	100	21	21.0	---	---	---	---
34	Monaco	02 2003	24	5	20.8	---	---	---	---
35	Nicaragua	11 2001	92	19	20.7	---	---	---	---
36	Canada	11 2000	301	62	20.6	N.A.	105	34	32.4
37	Croatia	01 2000	151	31	20.5	---	---	---	---
38	China	03 2003	2985	604	20.2	---	---	---	---

38	Poland	09 2001	460	93	20.2	09 2001	100	23	23.0
39	Dem. People's Rep. of Korea	07 1998	687	138	20.1	---	---	---	---
40	Bahamas	05 2002	40	8	20.0	05 2002	16	?	?
40	Guyana	03 2001	65	13	20.0	---	---	---	---
41	Trinidad and Tobago	10 2002	36	7	19.4	12 2001	31	10	32.3
42	Guinea	06 2002	114	22	19.3	---	---	---	---
42	Slovakia	09 2002	150	29	19.3	---	---	---	---
43	Senegal	04 2001	120	23	19.2	---	---	---	---
44	Portugal	03 2002	230	44	19.1	---	---	---	---
45	Dominica	01 2000	32	6	18.8	---	---	---	---
45	Estonia	03 2003	101	19	18.8	---	---	---	---
46	Bolivia	06 2002	130	24	18.5	06 2002	27	4	14.8
47	Burundi	06 1993	179	33	18.4	01 2002	53	10	18.9
48	Peru	04 2001	120	22	18.3	---	---	---	---
48	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	09 2002	120	22	18.3	---	---	---	---
49	United Kingdom	06 2001	659	118	17.9	N.A.	713	117	16.4
50	Philippines	05 2001	214	38	17.8	05 2001	24	3	12.5
51	Suriname	05 2000	51	9	17.6	---	---	---	---
52	Dominican Republic	05 2002	150	26	17.3	05 2002	32	2	6.3
53	Botswana	10 1999	47	8	17.0	---	---	---	---
53	Czech Republic	06 2002	200	34	17.0	10 2002	81	10	12.3
54	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10 2002	42	7	16.7	10.2002	15	0	0.0
54	Luxembourg	06 1999	60	10	16.7	---	---	---	---
54	San Marino	06 2001	60	10	16.7	---	---	---	---
55	Ecuador	10 2002	100	16	16.0	---	---	---	---
55	Singapore	11 2001	94	15	16.0	---	---	---	---
56	Angola	09 1992	220	34	15.5	---	---	---	---
57	Israel	01 2003	120	18	15.0	---	---	---	---
58	Sierra Leone	05 2002	124	18	14.5	---	---	---	---
59	Andorra	03 2001	28	4	14.3	---	---	---	---
59	United States of America	11 2002	435	62	14.3	11 2002	100	13	13.0
60	Barbados	05 2003	30	4	13.3	05 2003	21	5	23.8
60	Ireland	05 2002	166	22	13.3	07 2002	60	10	16.7
60	Saint Kitts and Nevis	03 2000	15	2	13.3	---	---	---	---
61	Gambia	01 2002	53	7	13.2	---	---	---	---
62	Republic of Moldova	02 2001	101	13	12.9	---	---	---	---
63	Tajikistan	02 2000	63	8	12.7	03 2000	34	4	11.8
64	Chile	12 2001	120	15	12.5	12 2001	48	2	4.2
65	France	06 2002	574	70	12.2	09 2001	321	35	10.9
65	Slovenia	10 2000	90	11	12.2	---	---	---	---
66	Uruguay	10 1999	99	12	12.1	10 1999	31	3	9.7
67	Colombia	03 2002	166	20	12.0	03 2002	102	9	8.8
67	Liechtenstein	02 2001	25	3	12.0	---	---	---	---
67	Syrian Arab Republic	03 2003	250	30	12.0	---	---	---	---
67	Zambia	12 2001	158	19	12.0	---	---	---	---
68	Burkina Faso	05 2002	111	13	11.7	---	---	---	---
68	Jamaica	10 2002	60	7	11.7	10 2002	21	4	19.0
68	Lesotho	05 2002	120	14	11.7	N.A.	33	12	36.4
69	Italy	05 2001	618	71	11.5	05 2001	321	26	8.1

69	Tunisia	10 1999	182	21	11.5	---	---	---	---
70	Cape Verde	01 2001	72	8	11.1	---	---	---	---
70	Saint Lucia	12 2001	18	2	11.1	12.2001	11	4	36.4
71	Djibouti	01 2003	65	7	10.8	---	---	---	---
71	Morocco	09 2002	325	35	10.8	09 2001	270	1	0.4
71	Swaziland	10 2003	65	7	10.8	10 2003	30	9	30.0
72	Cyprus	05 2001	56	6	10.7	---	---	---	---
72	El Salvador	03 2003	84	9	10.7	---	---	---	---
72	Romania	11 2000	345	37	10.7	11 2000	140	11	7.9
73	Lithuania	10 2000	141	15	10.6	---	---	---	---
74	Azerbaijan	11 2000	124	13	10.5	---	---	---	---
74	Mongolia	07 2000	76	8	10.5	---	---	---	---
75	Kazakhstan	10 1999	77	8	10.4	10 2002	39	2	5.1
75	Malaysia	11 1999	193	20	10.4	---	54	15	27.8
76	Belarus	10 2000	97	10	10.3	12 2000	61	19	31.1
77	Mali	07 2002	147	15	10.2	---	---	---	---
78	Kyrgyzstan	02 2000	60	6	10.0	02 2000	45	1	2.2
78	Zimbabwe	06 2000	150	15	10.0	---	---	---	---
79	Panama	05 1999	71	7	9.9	---	---	---	---
80	Cambodia	07 2003	123	12	9.8	03 1999	61	8	13.1
80	Hungary	04 2002	386	38	9.8	---	---	---	---
81	Sudan	12 2000	360	35	9.7	---	---	---	---
81	Venezuela	07 2000	165	16	9.7	---	---	---	---
82	Bhutan	N.A.	150	14	9.3	---	---	---	---
82	Malawi	06 1999	193	18	9.3	---	---	---	---
83	Gabon	12 2001	119	11	9.2	02 2003	91	12	13.2
83	Thailand	01 2001	500	46	9.2	03 2000	200	21	10.5
84	Sao Tome and Principe	03 2002	55	5	9.1	---	---	---	---
85	Ghana	12 2000	200	18	9.0	---	---	---	---
86	Cameroon	06 2002	180	16	8.9	---	---	---	---
87	India	09 1999	543	48	8.8	11 2002	242	25	10.3
87	Paraguay	04 2003	80	7	8.8	04 2003	45	4	8.9
88	Greece	04 2000	300	26	8.7	---	---	---	---
89	Brazil	10 2002	513	44	8.6	10 2002	81	10	12.3
90	Congo	05 2002	129	11	8.5	07 2002	60	9	15.0
90	Cote d'Ivoire	12 2000	223	19	8.5	---	---	---	---
91	Guatemala	11 2003	158	13	8.2	---	---	---	---
92	Indonesia	06 1999	500	40	8.0	---	---	---	---
93	Serbia and Montenegro****	02 2003	126	10	7.9	---	---	---	---
94	Liberia	07 1997	64	5	7.8	07 1997	26	5	19.2
95	Ethiopia	05 2000	547	42	7.7	05 2000	120	10	8.3
95	Malta	04 2003	65	5	7.7	---	---	---	---
96	Russian Federation	12 1999	449	34	7.6	N.A.	178	6	3.4
97	Togo	10 2002	81	6	7.4	---	---	---	---
98	Georgia	10 1999	235	17	7.2	---	---	---	---
98	Uzbekistan	12 1999	250	18	7.2	---	---	---	---
99	Japan	11 2003	480	34	7.1	07 2001	247	38	15.4
99	Kenya	12 2002	224	16	7.1	---	---	---	---
100	Belize	03 2003	30	2	6.7	03 2003	13	3	23.1

101	Algeria	05 2002	389	24	6.2	12 1997	144	8	5.6
102	Samoa	03 2001	49	3	6.1	---	---	---	---
103	Benin	03 2003	83	5	6.0	---	---	---	---
103	Maldives	11 1999	50	3	6.0	---	---	---	---
104	Nepal	05 1999	205	12	5.9	06 2001	60	?	?
104	Republic of Korea	04 2000	273	16	5.9	---	---	---	---
105	Chad	04 2002	155	9	5.8	---	---	---	---
106	Albania	06 2001	140	8	5.7	---	---	---	---
106	Fiji	08 2001	70	4	5.7	08 2001	32	?	?
106	Mauritius	09 2000	70	4	5.7	---	---	---	---
107	Honduras	11 2001	128	7	5.5	---	---	---	---
107	Jordan	06 2003	110	6	5.5	11 2003	55	7	12.7
108	Antigua and Barbuda	03 1999	19	1	5.3	03 1999	17	2	11.8
108	Ukraine	03 2002	450	24	5.3	---	---	---	---
109	Equatorial Guinea	03 1999	80	4	5.0	---	---	---	---
110	Nigeria	04 2003	346	17	4.9	04 2003	107	3	2.8
111	Armenia	05 2003	131	6	4.6	---	---	---	---
112	Sri Lanka	12 2001	225	10	4.4	---	---	---	---
112	Turkey	11 2002	550	24	4.4	---	---	---	---
113	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	02 2000	290	12	4.1	---	---	---	---
114	Madagascar	12 2002	160	6	3.8	03 2001	90	10	11.1
115	Mauritania	10 2001	81	3	3.7	04 2002	56	3	5.4
116	Haiti	05 2000	83	3	3.6	05 2000	27	7	25.9
117	Marshall Islands	11 2003	33	1	3.0	---	---	---	---
118	Egypt	11 2000	454	11	2.4	05 2001	264	15	5.7
119	Lebanon	08 2000	128	3	2.3	---	---	---	---
120	Bangladesh	10 2001	300	6	2.0	---	---	---	---
121	Vanuatu	05 2002	52	1	1.9	---	---	---	---
122	Niger	11 1999	83	1	1.2	---	---	---	---
123	Papua New Guinea	06 2002	109	1	0.9	---	---	---	---
124	Yemen	04 2003	301	1	0.3	---	---	---	---
125	Bahrain	10 2002	40	0	0.0	11 2002	40	6	15.0
125	Kuwait	07 2003	65	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
125	Micronesia (Fed. States of)	03 1999	14	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
125	Palau	11 2000	16	0	0.0	11 2000	9	0	0.0
125	Saudi Arabia	05 2001	120	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
125	Solomon Islands	12 2001	50	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
125	Tuvalu	07 2002	15	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
125	United Arab Emirates	12 1997	40	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
	Dem. Republic of the Congo	08 2000	300	?	?	---	---	---	---
	Kiribati	05 2003	42	?	?	---	---	---	---
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	03 1997	760	?	?	---	---	---	---
	Nauru	05 2003	18	?	?	---	---	---	---
	Tonga	03 2002	30	?	?	---	---	---	---

* Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament.

** South Africa: The figures on the distribution of seats do not include the 36 special rotating delegates appointed on an ad hoc basis, and all percentages given are therefore calculated on the basis of the 54 permanent seats.

*** Timor-Leste: The purpose of the elections held on 30 August 2001 was to elect the members of the Constituent Assembly of Timor-Leste. This body became the National Parliament on 20 May 2002, the date on which the country became independent, without any new elections.

**** For the first time since the creation of the new State, Serbia and Montenegro, indirect elections were held in the two assemblies of the two member states.

**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.