

30

Years of Challenge
Years of Change

Women's rights groups from around the world, led by the US-based Center for Women's Global Leadership, engaged in concerted lobbying during the international political negotiations leading up to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. UNIFEM became the primary UN champion of these efforts. The results dramatically changed the international consensus on human rights. Governments for the first time recognized that women's rights are human rights, on a par with more traditional rights defined by international law. The conference also marked the first international acknowledgment of violence against women as an abuse of women's human rights.

Milestone

16

Europe &



Demystifying the European Union

Countries in Central and Eastern Europe have embarked on social and economic reforms to meet the requirements for entry into the European Union (EU), including the adoption of laws and policies that ensure equality between women and men. Women's groups welcome the accession process as an opportunity not only for greater stability and

prosperity but also for advancing the gender equality agenda. At the same time, the structures, policies and funding mechanisms of the EU remain a mystery to most.

UNIFEM is helping to bridge this disconnect. Against the background of upcoming changes in EU financial instruments for the years 2007-2013 that will guide aid to countries striving for acces-



the European Commission and parliamentarians provided an opportunity to initiate contacts and build confidence in advocating at the EU level.

"It was an eye-opening experience to realize the possibilities for us as gender equality advocates and to influence such a process," said Malgorzata Tarasiewicz, Director of the Network of East-West Women - Polska. Putting the newly acquired insight immediately into practice, she developed an EU Gender Watch project that has been awarded a grant from the EU Presidency Fund. The project will support monitoring and lobbying to ensure that gender equality commitments are reflected in EU assistance to countries of the region.

- In its publication *The Story Behind the Numbers: Women and Employment in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Commonwealth of Independent States*, UNIFEM analyses trends in women's and men's labour force participation during the transition to a market-oriented economy in 18 countries in Eastern Europe. The publication illustrates the various ways in which women's



economic security has declined and points to the data needed to fully measure the changing labour market position of women and men. Three policy measures are recommended: increasing women's

access to decent paid work; allowing women and men to better balance work and family life through the use of various tax-benefit schemes; and adopting transparent job evaluation and wage setting mechanisms.

Learn more: www.unifem.sk/index.cfm
www.unifem.org/worldwide/europe_cis.php

As poverty rose in post-transition CIS states, UNIFEM crafted some of the earliest programmes to reach women. Among the most vulnerable to economic decline are rural women without land. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, UNIFEM has initiated strategies guaranteeing that land reforms protect women's rights and that women know their entitlements. Legal clinics in Kyrgyzstan have briefed local authorities, provided advice to thousands of people and fed information into proposed amendments of the Land Code, including protection of women's rights during divorce. Recent changes to Tajikistan's Land Code require listing all family members on land use certificates. The number of farms headed by women reached 14 per cent by 2005.

Milestone

17

ABOVE Making the European Union accessible for women: UNIFEM helped shed light on the EU's structures, policies and funding mechanisms.

sion and to developing countries, UNIFEM invited women's rights advocates to Brussels to engage in a process of reviewing these new financial mechanisms and to ensure explicit reference to gender equality. The women studied the draft documents and formulated comments that were incorporated into the parliamentary reports recommending changes. Meetings with officials of

30

Years of Challenge
Years of Change

As the lead UN agency on women's rights, UNIFEM can create high-profile partnerships and draw worldwide attention. In 1999, a global video conference, held as part of the 'A World Free of Violence against Women Campaign', linked the UN General Assembly, the European Parliament and sites in New Delhi, Mexico City and Nairobi, as well as observers in countries from Fiji to Turkey. Under the eye of the international media, personal testimonials provided a dramatic backdrop for the sharing of strategies to stop violence. In parallel, a series of regional campaigns led to an outpouring of public debate.

Europe &



Partnering with the Media to Spread a Message of Peace

In the Southern Caucasus, UNIFEM supports women to build peace from the ground up - and went on the air. Nowadays, when it's time for Crossroads, a popular TV show produced by the non-governmental Internews Network, it's also time to learn about women leaders working for conflict

prevention and reconciliation in a region that is neither at war nor at peace. Once a month, the programme features women like Manana Mebuke, a founding member and key representative of the UNIFEM-supported Union of Women for Peace in the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on

Milestone

18



ABOVE: Manana Mebuke (first from left) is a peace activist and founding member of the UNIFEM-supported Union of Women for Peace in Georgia. To inform a wide audience about women's efforts working for reconciliation in the Southern Caucasus, UNIFEM partnered with a popular TV show.

Conflict Resolution. Manana knows about the high toll that war exacts: She lost her husband as a result of the conflict over Abkhazia. Her loss turned her into a tireless advocate for peace and the inclusion of women's voices in the resolution of conflicts.

In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, UNIFEM has for years rendered assistance to women's

peace efforts. Groups advocating for an end to conflict have been established in all three countries and come together as the regional coalition Women for Peace. Women from all sides of the conflicts have worked across ethnic and national boundaries on gender equality and human rights issues that affect all of them, thereby fostering trust and understanding. Schools and universities have included courses on peacebuilding in their curricula. And women journalists are providing information about gender equality, women's leadership, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in a regional journal, Women's Appeal for Peace.

The collaboration on Crossroads is yet another successful partnership forged with the media - the show is one of the few region-wide programmes and reaches a potential audience of 12 million. Besides the monthly feature on peacebuilding, Crossroads now also includes a weekly segment on gender issues ranging from legislation on gender equality and domestic violence to reproductive health and education for young women. Through the partnership, UNIFEM is also reaching out to the next generation: The weekly Crossroads Kids, produced by aspiring journalists aged 14-17, is to devote four shows in 2006 to topics related to gender and conflict resolution - from the young people's perspective.

- In 2005, UNIFEM also commissioned well-known photographers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to document the lives of women in



all three countries. The images illustrate the common hopes and challenges of women in the Southern Caucasus and will be shown in exhibitions throughout the region to foster greater understanding.

Learn more: www.unifemcis.org
www.unifem.org/worldwide/europe_cis.php

Transition has brought many changes to the CIS countries, but domestic violence is still frequently ignored by public opinion and overlooked by the law. UNIFEM has drawn on its global experiences to support landmark legislation and advocacy in the region. In 2001, UNIFEM backed an NGO initiative in Ukraine that successfully lobbied for the CIS' first law against domestic violence. In 2002, a UNIFEM study on nine CIS countries provided the region's first comparative data on the phenomenon, and an advocacy campaign reached millions of people. In Kyrgyzstan, NGOs and the National Commission on Women's Affairs collected 34,000 signatures requesting a new law, passed by Parliament in 2003.

Milestone