



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

EVERY WOMAN COUNTS

Transforming women's lives in South Asia



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A woman works in the fields in Madhusudanpur in West Bengal, India.

In India, although 79 per cent of rural women are agricultural workers, only 9.3 per cent own land¹.

Photos © UN Women / Anindit Roy-Chowdhury

INTRODUCTION

HER STORY

One half of the world's population is female. Yet in some areas of the world, there is so little that belongs to them. They have limited access to literacy, sanitation and health and to opportunities be this at the level of the individual or the nation. The need, more than ever, is to develop a lasting vision that incorporates the well-being and empowerment of women. Supporting women to reach their true potential is important. To fulfill its universal goals on gender equality and empowerment of women worldwide, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women was established by UN Member States in July 2010. With strong advocacy by women's rights activists, UN Women was created with the intention of improved support to Member States in achieving their goal of equal socio-economic participation of women.

UN Women works in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, supporting these UN Member States to achieve global standards for gender equality. By working with governments and civil society partners, UN Women helps design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement and achieve these standards.

UN Women advocates equal participation of women in all aspects of life, and focuses on five priority areas:

- Increasing women's leadership and participation;
- Ending violence against women and girls;



Photo © UN Women/ Gaganjit Singh Chandok

Voice of a nation: Women cast their vote in the Panchayat Elections in Dhenkanal district of Odisha state in India.

- Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes;
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment; and
- Making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

The creation of UN Women came about as a part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for a greater impact on the inclusion of women. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment. This included UNIFEM that was active in South Asia from 1994 to 2010. The other three organisations were:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)

- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)

For the last 20 years, UN Women has strived in collaboration with local bodies to ensure the political participation of women in their societies. Whether it is advocating women's reservation in Nepal's Constituent Assembly or in Afghanistan's Loya Jirga, UN Women supports important political changes in the region, by working on key international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

From garnering political will to changing social attitudes, it is a combination of policy intervention and social restructuring that will help make societies more gender just.

WHY WOMEN COUNT IN SOUTH ASIA

South Asia is home to around one fifth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and densely populated geographical region in the world. In South Asia as a whole, women now live longer and are better educated. Equally important is the fact that some discriminatory laws have been discarded and national policies adapted to systematically pursue gender equality.

Despite these achievements, progress in South Asia has stalled on important issues. South Asia's rankings for many gender gap indicators— health, adult literacy, economic participation—are often close to or lower than those in sub-Saharan Africa. In every country across South Asia, gender inequality remains a barrier to progress, justice and social stability, and deprives the region of a significant source of human potential. Inequality persists despite robust growth and progress, and cuts even deeper for poor or otherwise excluded groups.

WIDEST GENDER GAPS

Whether it is access to health care and literacy, or holding positions of power and policy-making, South Asian women lag in vital areas of public life. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2011², Sri Lanka ranked 31st, is the best place in South Asia for a woman. Other countries lag far behind: Bangladesh (69), India (113), Maldives (101), Nepal (126) and Pakistan (133).

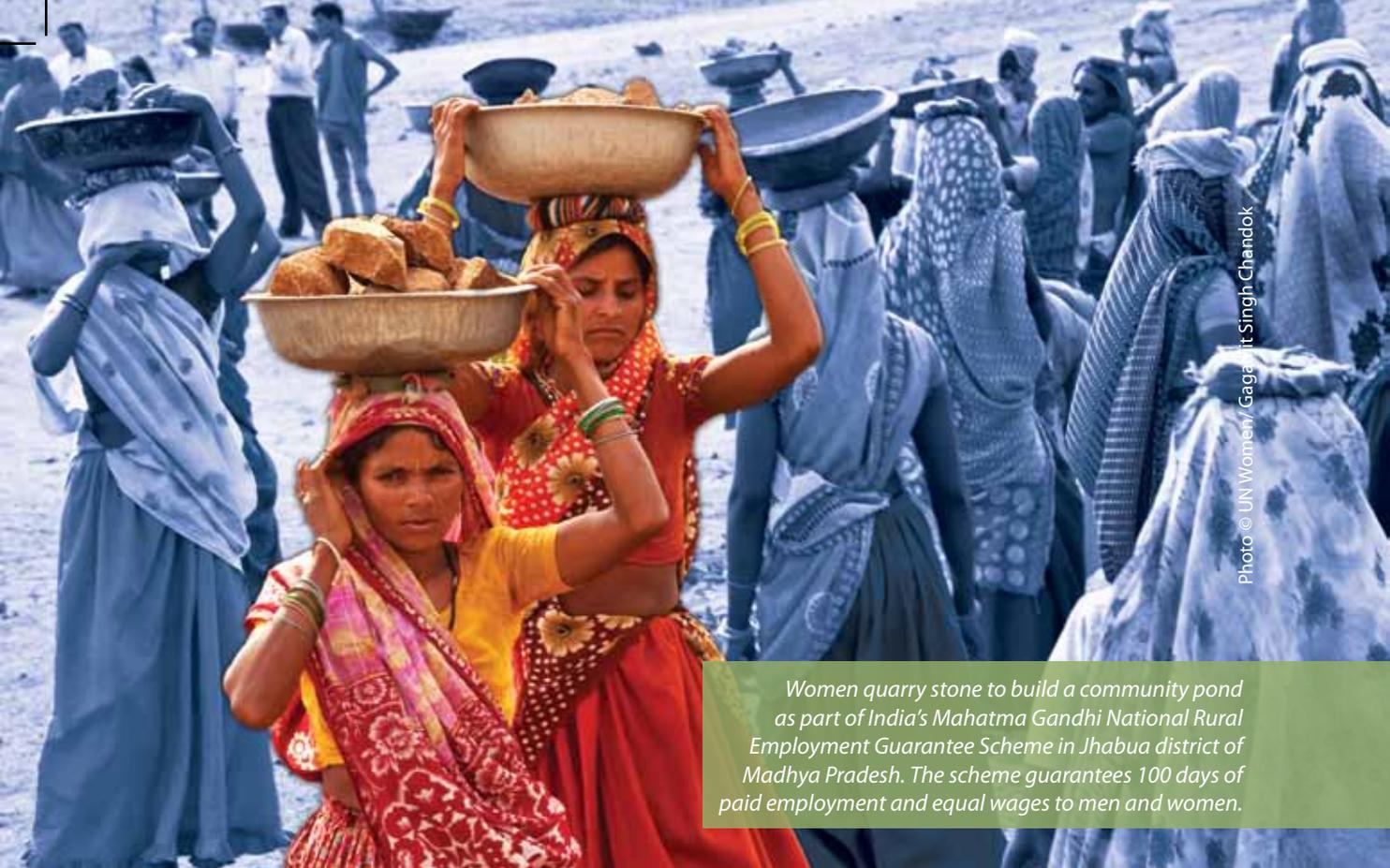


Photo © UN Women/Gaganjit Singh Chandok

Women quarry stone to build a community pond as part of India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. The scheme guarantees 100 days of paid employment and equal wages to men and women.

POOR ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE

Almost half the women in South Asia are illiterate which is more than any other region in the world.³

UNEQUAL ECONOMIC RIGHTS

85.1 per cent of women in South Asia are employed in vulnerable jobs in work that lacks 'decent work' conditions. Majority of women are farm workers, and they do more unpaid work

than men in all countries of the region. Women's work force participation is 35.7 per cent in South Asia⁴.

VIOLENCE WITHOUT RECOURSE TO JUSTICE

According to a survey conducted in three countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Maldives), 49 per cent of respondents in Bangladesh and 35 per cent of respondents in India have reported to be victims of physical violence perpetrated by their intimate partners. 18 per cent of respondents in Bangladesh and 10 per cent of respondents in India have also been victims of sexual violence committed by their intimate partners.

Only two countries (Nepal and Sri Lanka) in South Asia criminalise marital rape, leaving millions of women in the rest of the region exposed to abuse at the hands of their partners⁵.

UNDER-PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS, JUSTICE AND GOVERNMENT

South Asia, however, lags far behind in terms of participation of women in governance. On an average, till mid 2008, there were only 15 per cent women parliamentarians in South Asia. The region also accounted for less than 5 per cent women police personnel and less than 10 per cent women judges⁶.



Photo © UNDP Bhutan

A participant sharing her thoughts at the presentation of the Bhutanese budget by the Department of National Budget.

4 *Power, Voices and Rights, A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific, Asia Pacific Human Development Report, UNDP, 2010*

5 *Progress of World's Women: Access to Justice, UN Women, 2011-12*

6 *Progress of World's Women: Access to Justice, UN Women, 2011-12*

AFGHANISTAN

Photo © UNAMA / Jaffar Rahim



When Enough is a War Cry: On 8 March, hundreds of women marched in Bamyán city with demands of “No more violence against women” to mark International Women’s Day.

After decades of conflict, Afghanistan needed to restructure its destabilised economy and weak governance. As in all post-conflict societies, the women have had it tougher than the men, being ancillary targets in the violence. More than ever, women need to be involved in the peace process and the political reorganisation of the country. Since 2002, UN Women has been working towards this end in Afghanistan.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

A number of Afghan women face domestic violence. A total of 2,765 cases of violence against women and girls were reported to the rights watchdogs from different parts of the country in 2011. The incidents included 144 self-immolations, 261 attempted suicides, 237 forced marriages, 538 beatings and 45 murder cases. UN Women supports the Government and civil society organisations in eliminating violence against women through prevention and response mechanisms. Interventions are implemented by 63 NGOs in 23 provinces, educating over 100,000 service providers and community leaders and providing advocacy for approximately 2 million people. Since 2008, nine provincial shelters have provided safe

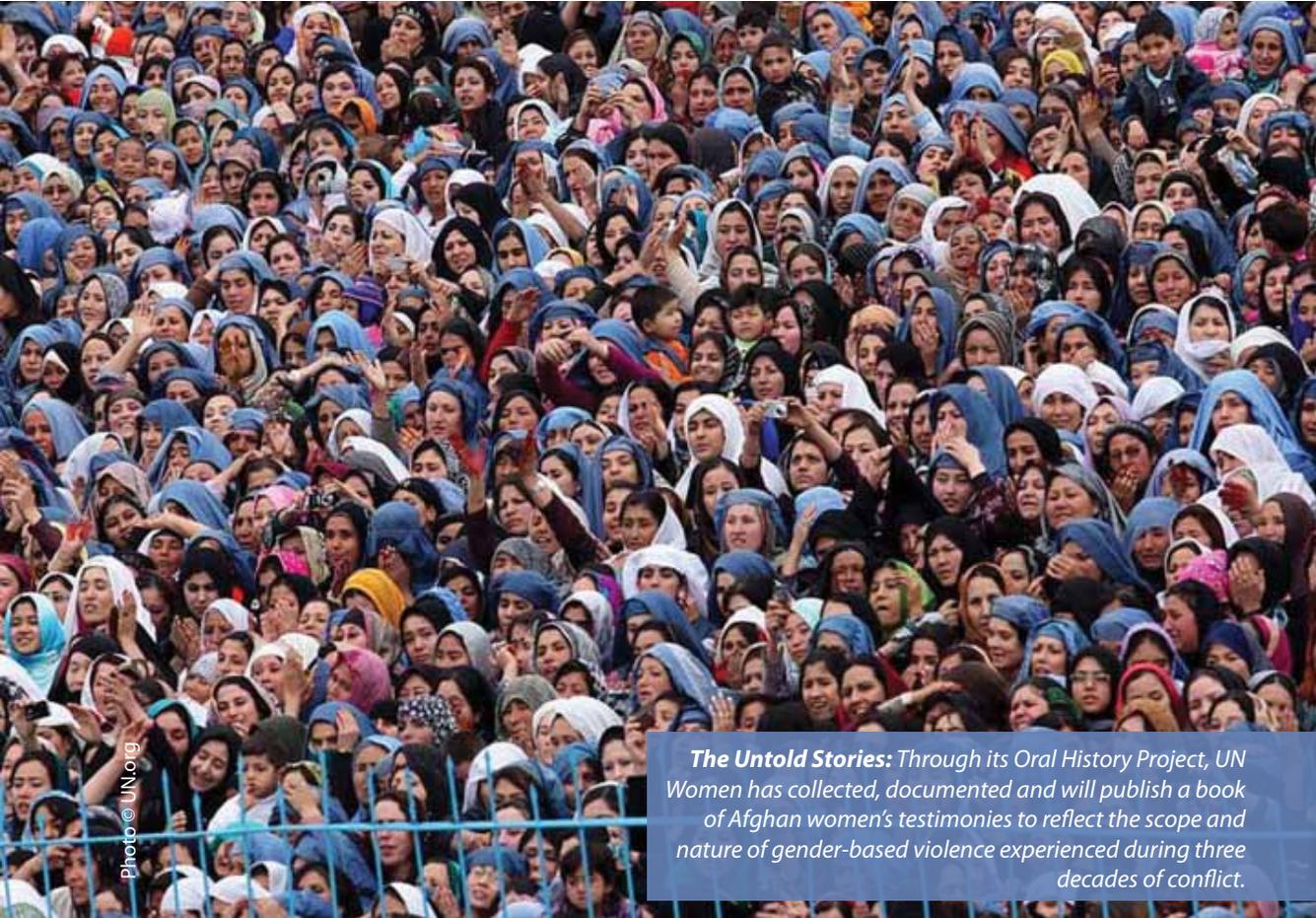


Photo © UN.org

***The Untold Stories:** Through its Oral History Project, UN Women has collected, documented and will publish a book of Afghan women's testimonies to reflect the scope and nature of gender-based violence experienced during three decades of conflict.*

refuge to over 1,000 survivors of violence and 6,579 women received counselling to help them reintegrate and access justice. UN Women, together with other partners, aims to continue support for the expansion of shelters to 22 provinces in 2012 and to 29 provinces by 2013. UN Women also strengthened institutions to create a referral system for gender based violence. The system connects health, justice and protection services in the country as well as provides referrals for treatment abroad. UN Women aims to establish early warning and rapid response system in collaboration with the public and private sectors to provide online counselling and reporting services through radio and 24-hour-hotline communication services.

Photo © UNAMA / Eric Kanalstein



The Power of an Equal: Parliamentarians sworn in to the Lower House of Parliament (Wolesi Jirga, 26 January 2011). Women made up 69 of the 249 candidates elected on 18 September 2010. This is Afghanistan's second parliamentary inauguration since 2001.

Photo © UNAMA / Ali Omid



Winds of Change: Voting for democracy.

ENGAGING WOMEN IN ALL ASPECTS OF PEACE AND SECURITY PROCESSES

The presence of female police officers enables survivors of violence to report their traumatic experiences. Advocacy by UN Women has successfully resulted in a new mandate for Afghanistan's police forces, which encourages them to increase the employment of women within their ranks. The mandate further ensures that the police receive gender training on how to deal with women and women's issues with sensitivity. UN Women is currently planning to provide paralegal training to Police Family Response Units in coordination with other UN agencies.

INCREASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

We support women political leaders as equal stakeholders of public life, upholding their participation in decision-making and peace building. UN Women's legal and technical support to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) is across a variety of legislations - the Election Law, the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, the draft Traditional Dispute Resolution Law,

the Violence and Sexual Abuse Against Children Law, the Family Law and the Shia Personal Status Law. The support of UN Women through the 2009 presidential and provincial council elections and the 2010 parliamentary elections ensured that potential candidates received crucial information through a 24-hour-hotline service, and were referred to competent authorities for answering queries. Similar support will be provided in the next round of elections.

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Since 2003, UN Women has promoted the economic empowerment of 4,000 women across Afghanistan through interventions in local policies, literacy and vocational training, with English and computer courses conducted in rural areas.



Skill Support:
Training at the Afghan Women's Educational Centre (AWEC) in Kabul.

Since 2002, more than 250,000 women have directly benefited from this centre's projects in various parts of Afghanistan.

BANGLADESH

Photo ©UN Women/ Anindit Roy-Chowdhury



Najma Begum, 25, was a victim of forced sex work, sexual exploitation and brutal assault for a whole year after migrating to Abu Dhabi as a domestic help. Employed with a garment factory now, Najma has mapped the journey of change from victim to survivor and has a renewed confidence in life.

Situated in the eastern corner of the sub-continental peninsula, Bangladesh is a country where women work actively in the formal and the informal sectors. An innumerable number of them, who migrate for work, send home huge sums of money as remittances. This outward migration has reached a formidable number – approximately 30,579 women workers (5.4 per cent of the labour force) leave the country to find employment abroad each year.

Even as significant contributors to the economy, women have not found a neutral ground from which to operate. They have to battle issues of irregular migration, vulnerable employment and lack of proper integration programmes. These, coupled with widespread poverty and lack of representation in politics, have been identified by UN Women as focus areas to empower the women of Bangladesh.

ENHANCING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

UN Women understands the importance of the safety of women labour when they migrate. By arming them with information, resources and skills training, we ensure that these women



Photo ©UN Women/ Anindit Roy-Chowdhury

Life dealt Abeeda Begum, 37, of Jatra Bari in Dhaka a double blow after she migrated to Abu Dhabi. When she returned to Dhaka, she had no money left and no family to fall back on as her husband had remarried. She was left with nothing, having sold all her belongings to pay for a fake visa. On her return, Abeeda worked as a street labourer to support her family. She took control of her situation and is now employed as a cleaner at an office. She also works with an NGO to help women who, like her, were cheated by agents into getting fake visas. She helps women who are migrating to verify their visas, tickets and work permits, and regularly holds courtyard meetings to raise awareness on safe migration amongst women looking to move abroad. By spreading information, Abeeda is ensuring that knowledge becomes a weapon for women migrants at risk.

Photo © BMET



Vocalising Change: *A 26-episode programme in local dialects – on the safest ways to migrate abroad for work – was produced and broadcast by UN Women on the national radio in Bangladesh. It received an overwhelming response from the audience with many aspiring women migrants calling in. Owing to its popularity, it was replicated and broadcast on seven other channels across the nation.*

have an adequate safety net. On the other hand, UN Women also works to sensitise Embassies and Government officials towards the needs of these workers. A **Manual for the Labour Attachés** that emphasizes their roles in protecting the rights of women migrant workers is currently being used by all Bangladesh missions abroad. It was developed by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) in partnership with UN Women.

UN Women has worked closely with the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare since 2005. We helped the Government to establish its first resource centre where women

migrants could be easily informed about the correct procedure of migration. The Resource Centre at the BMET now has the scope to train aspirant women migrant workers and provides:

- Comprehensive information on overseas employment for women.
- Resources for safe employment by providing information about correct documentation.

The efforts of UN Women, in collaboration with several NGOs and its civil society partners have brought about an empowering change in the lives of women who were formerly victims of exploitation.



Women learn how to use a food processor during their house-keeping training by the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training to women migrating abroad for work. Technical Training Centres at Keraniganj, Faridpur and Dhaka have integrated the toolkit on violence and HIV in their 21-day-long training curriculum on house-keeping. This toolkit was prepared by UN Women and OKUP and is being used regularly during training in six sub-districts. Till date, 1,890 aspirant migrant workers and their spouses have benefitted from this training.

Photo © BMET

Photo © UN Women/ Ashutosh Negi



SAFETY NET: One of the three UN agencies that work in the Tangail brothel in Bangladesh, UN Women in association with UNAIDS and UNFPA, is actively researching the social stigma of commercial sex work.

The Changelings

To change and rehabilitate oneself is no small feat. Stories like that of Najma, a garment factory worker, who has re-started her life with vigour and confidence and Paki, who now works as a tailor's assistant and also for the protection of exploited women migrants are an inspiration. These examples illustrate how by providing women with the right knowledge and skills, one can turn victims into survivors, and better yet, contributing members of society.

INCREASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

South Asian societies still do not have widespread recognition of women as public leaders. A mere 19 per cent of the members of Bangladesh's National Parliament are women. To increase this number, UN Women in Bangladesh builds skills and knowledge of elected women representatives, including newly appointed Vice-Chairs of the sub-district councils and Members of Parliament. Specially designed orientation programmes increase their knowledge on women's issues and help them carry out their duties as elected representatives. To further strengthen this knowledge base, an information database for women Members of



Photo © UN Women / Mahtabul Hakim

Marching for safer migration: Returnee women migrants, local NGO workers and government officials march together in Faridpur district as a part of ‘16 days of activism against gender violence.’ They raised slogans to increase awareness about the perils of illegal migration.

Parliament on gender equality has been planned. This will help mobilize them into an all-party women Parliamentarians’ network to advocate for gender equality.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN Women is part of a joint UN Programme to address violence against women in Bangladesh. The interventions are built around a three-pronged strategy: (1) improve the policy and legal framework in Bangladesh; (2) change behaviours related to violence against women/girls; and (3) protect and help victims of violence.

Photo ©UN Women/ Anindit-Roy Chowdhury



Awaken the Youth: Engaging the youth is a key area to end violence against women.

A nationwide debate competition on violence against women was organized in 2011. Hundreds of competitors participated from 56 educational institutions in seven divisions of Bangladesh. Several discussions on topics such as the legal framework, state commitments and response of the youth followed the debate. A nationwide essay competition to discuss the role of men in reducing violence against women was organized among young men in 2012.

UN Women is currently working with young artists to develop posters on the subject. Partner agencies are also training young people to prevent violence using popular theatre in eight southern districts.

As part of this Joint Programme, UN Women has been supporting the Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJPA) to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) to protect the rights of women migrant workers.

In 2011, UN Women supported the Ministry to train judicial officers and compile a CEDAW bench book for them. The training will continue with different batches across the country till June 2013.

Similarly, BMET was supported to form a network of women migrant workers and undertake media advocacy. Support was also extended to BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh, to make school and college students aware about the Convention.

MAKING GENDER EQUALITY CENTRAL TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND BUDGETING

The biggest difference, after social sensitisation, is made through policy intervention. The two feed into each

BHUTAN

Photo © UN Women/ Gurpreet Singh



A few years ago, the Himalayan kingdom ended more than a century of royal rule and moved towards a democratic system of governance – a peaceful transition that is almost unprecedented in global history.

The Constitution of the Royal Government of Bhutan fully supports equality and non-discrimination. To support Bhutan's endeavours to promote gender equality, UN Women supports the creation of an environment that encourages greater political participation of women in governance. This is a necessary precondition for genuine democracy.

INCREASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

With the support of UN Women and UNDP, a project on *Inspiring Bhutanese Girls: Creating A New Generation of Leaders* was implemented by KCD Productions. Under this project, a series of nationwide regional

leadership youth workshops were held to encourage young women to join politics. The inaugural workshop was held in the capital Thimphu on 30 July 2011 with Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Dechan Wangchuck as the chief guest. In her keynote address, Her Royal Highness underscored the importance of women's equal and active role in governance and decision-making, which is imperative to Bhutan's democratic process.

With the emerging democracy in the region, Bhutanese women are joining politics. Currently, Bhutanese women have fourteen per cent representation in Parliament and seven per cent at the local government level – a slow yet a significant progress. This data is corroborated by a research supported by UN Women indicating that a majority of women (57 per cent) are

Photo © UN Women/ Gurpreet Singh

Standing Tall: Namgay Peldon was the first woman to be elected as a Gup in Bhutan. She is the head of Tashiding block in Dagana district.



Inspiring Bhutanese Women: Creating a New Generation of Leaders: At a first ever event of its kind in Paro 73 women including tshogpas (village representatives), mangmis (deputy block leaders) and 3 women Members of Parliament came together to create a Women's Leadership Network.

interested to join politics. The findings show that women are held back by constraining factors such as lack of education and training, lack of functional literacy skills, limited involvement and skills in decision-making. They also suffer from low self-esteem and poor-self image, and have to carry the burden of being a housewife, mother and provider.

While there are no ready solutions to fix the gender disparity in the Bhutanese society, the United Nations has, through its advocacy, encouraged more women to participate in public decision-making. A documentary film, regional workshops aimed at high school girls, and a website

forum to activate discussions form the crux of this effort.

Since its launch, more than 600 participants, including 420 high school girls and faculty from 22 schools in 16 districts have participated in four workshops held in August 2011 in Thimphu, Bumthang, Trashigang, and Tsirang.

The film, "Nangi Aums to Go-thrips" details how, in an empowered nation such as Bhutan, where the female population is nearly 50 per cent, women are still under-represented in the public space.

In Her Shoes : Leadership Diaries

In 2008, Namgay Peldon, 28, made history when she was elected as the Gup of Tashiding Gewog in Bhutan's Dagana district. She was the first and only woman Gup or block leader in Bhutan after the nation first went to polls in 2008. Gewogs are official administrative units in Bhutan, each headed by a Gup.

The Royal Government of Bhutan, with support from UN Women, strengthens the skills of leaders like Namgay Peldon by organizing much needed training programmes. Gup Peldon participated in a training of trainers and is now amongst the group that will train district level officials and elected leaders at the community level in Bhutan.

Building The Network

Under Bhutan's approach of delivering as one United Nations, three agencies – UN Women, UNDP and UNCDF – work closely with the Royal Government of Bhutan to empower elected representatives with knowledge and fiscal transfers so that they can be effective leaders in their constituencies. They also provide technical advice to the National Commission for Women and Children and the Department of Local Governance.

Budgeting for Bhutan's women: In tracking where the money goes, budgets and plans determine how women can benefit from public funds. Drawing from this, Bhutan's upcoming 11th Five Year Plan focuses on priority areas of education with focus on tertiary and vocational levels, employment, political representation, and violence against women. In July 2012, a 3-day meeting in Thimphu drew high-level commitments for gender budgeting. The meeting was led by the Department of National Budgets and National Commission for Women and Children and supported by the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP and UN Women. It helped officials from government ministries to better understand gender responsive budgeting and to increase their knowledge about this approach. They acknowledged that it can help increase accountability – that will in turn help to generate a positive impact on policy advocacy and programming in the long term.

“ With the funds allocated by UN Women, we would like to send government officials for training on gender equality. We would also like to work with the National Commission for Women and Children to encourage women's leadership at the local level. ”

Karma Galay, Chief Programme Officer, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan.

So far Bhutan has submitted seven periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). UN Women helps the Government to report on this Convention, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Dhaka Resolution.

INDIA

Photo © UN Women/ Gaganjit Singh Chandok



The world's largest democracy and the fourth largest economy is also home to high levels of poverty - approximately 32 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line⁷. Women are most affected due to patriarchal values that restrict their mobility and choices. 26.1 per cent of Indian women are employed⁸ and 65.46 per cent are literate⁹. Most women work in agriculture and the informal sector

and have limited employment opportunities. In addition, girls and women in India face gender discrimination at every stage of their life, at times, starting even before they are born. Despite the success of women's movements that have effectively advocated for legislative changes; laws, policies and programmes are not adequately gender-sensitive.

UN Women has geared its efforts to ensure that almost half of India's population – its women – are able to lead a life free of violence and participate meaningfully in politics and the economy. Given a country as vast and diverse as India, UN Women effects change by working with the Government and strong women's rights bodies at the level of policy-making.

UN Women's Office based in New Delhi also provides technical expertise to Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

7 *India – New Global Poverty Estimates, World Bank, 2011*

8 *Employment and Unemployment situation in India, National Sample Survey, 66th Round, 2009-10*

9 *Indian Census 2011*



Photo © UN Women / Ashutosh Negi

Change Makers: Women attending a Mahila Jagruk Manch or awareness network meeting in Tonk district, Rajasthan, India. Mahila Jagruk Manches (women's awareness platforms) have involved elected women representatives from 675 gram panchayats in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Odisha so far. With almost 13,000 elected women representatives and over 47,000 women citizens, these Manches are proving to be a formidable resource.



Fighting the odds: The victory of Bharati Behera from Dhenkanal district of Odisha represents a triumph for all tribal women in the area. She was elected as a woman Sarpanch (village head) in February 2012. Despite stark opposition from the community and its men, she stood her ground with a 500 vote margin in the elections, due to the unanimous support of women from all castes and tribes.

INCREASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Remarkably in India, there are now more than a million women who have been elected to office at the grassroots level. They occupy more than 42 per cent of seats in local bodies, exceeding the 33 per cent reservation mark. While the numbers are encouraging, challenges persist because many are held back from performing their duties as several communities are yet to accept women in authoritative positions.

Research by UN Women and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) in *panchayats* or village councils in Alwar (Rajasthan) and Mysore (Karnataka) indicates that while women have the desire to participate, they are handicapped by constraints like illiteracy and lack of support from family members. In Alwar, 35 per cent women said that they were interested in working for development while 50 per cent said that their family wanted them to contest. About 55 per cent women and 32 per cent men admitted that family members helped in *panchayat* work.

Despite the handicaps, women representatives have raised issues like domestic violence, alcoholism and school attendance to a greater extent in the *panchayats*.



Women sign on the attendance sheet for the special Gram Sabha or public meeting organised by UN Women and the district administration in Bagor village of Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. The gram sabha was attended by women who were outspoken in their demands for better water facilities, health services, bridges, as well as high schools in the village. During the two-hour meeting, most women demanded that hand pumps and ponds be constructed due to extreme water shortage in the area.

Photo © UN Women/Gaganjit Singh Chandok



Vandana dreams for her village: Vandana Bahadur Maida is a 32-year-old Sarpanch from Khankhandvi Gram Panchayat in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. Before she became a sarpanch, she had never come to a Gram Sabha. "In the beginning, I was very reluctant to speak but slowly after training, I started to learn," she says. "Earlier, in the Gram Sabha meetings, only men came and questioned women's role. Now women attend and ask for roads to be built in grazing areas."

What did she learn at a training organized by UN Women and the district administration? "I learnt that women have equal status and power as men," she says.

Any dreams for her village? "I want a big pond and hand-pumps to be built so people can benefit. I want a school that teaches till 12th standard – right now it is only till the 10th," quips Vandana.

UN Women's flagship programme with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Royal Norwegian Embassy increases the participation of women in local governance. It is being implemented by State governments in 16 districts of five states: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan. Besides India, the other focus countries are Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan.

Step-by-step: Three key strategies

1. Train 67,000 elected women representatives about their roles and duties and demand public services. At the same time, UN Women helps to improve the quality of training provided to them by government officials.
2. Conduct research to better understand the needs and challenges faced by elected women representatives, and

3. Develop a Centre for Excellence to ensure that trainers, officials and representatives have high quality resources at their disposal, and help build a peer network for elected women representatives in South Asia.

Gram Sabhas (public village meetings) are meant for ordinary citizens to raise concerns and shape development work. They can help women participate in local planning and thereby make decisions that affect their lives. 1600 *Gram Sabha* meetings are being held with the participation of relevant government departments to discuss critical local issues related to health, education, sanitation and water supply. 420 *Mahila Sabhas* have been held since 2011 specially for women where they spoke freely about water shortages, employment opportunities for women, alcoholism and lack of health services. In the same period, 247 *gram sabhas* and more than 1200 *ward sabhas* helped people to raise critical issues. 800 women motivators were trained to support the government to hold these special *sabhas*.

During *Mahila Jagruk Manches* or meetings of women networks, they are free to interact and discuss issues of importance with their elected women representatives.

Three women – Three stories

Whether it is Rajkala Devi from the Hingwahera *Gram Panchayat* in Alwar, Rajasthan, who became the first woman *sarpanch* of her village in 60 years, or the young and energetic Sunita Rajawat, *ward panch* from Vanasthali *Gram Panchayat* in Rajasthan's Tonk District,



On the move: In 2011, campaigning in Bihar by UN Women & The Hunger Project helped women candidates file nominations and manage electoral campaigns. This led to a rise in women's share in panchayat leadership from 42 to 50 per cent.

Photo © UN Women /Gaganjit Singh Chandok

*Social Network:
Over a period of
one year, the Must
BoI Social Media
campaign, led by
Community – The
Youth Collective
and supported
by UN Women,
reached 1.3
million web users
encouraging
them to examine
violence in their
lives and re-think
social norms.*

who went from being confined to the household to becoming a prolific public speaker, or Bharati Behera, the newly elected *sarpanch* from Odisha's Dhenkanal district, these women, who are a part of UN Women's programme, stand not merely for change but for development.

Rajkala Devi values her *Mahila Jagruk Manch*. During meetings, she is regularly updated about the needs of women in the community. Together they look for solutions to counter problems like alcoholism. With the support of her ward members, she addresses issues like women's pension and education for the girl child.

Sunita Rajawat's leadership is manifest in the bold steps she took to save women from domestic violence. Bina Kumari works with a community-based organisation Nirdesh and has acquired the confidence and expertise to manage as many as 22 self help groups, including helping them manage their finances. Manjulata Sahoo, the first woman *sarpanch* of Nadhara *Gram Panchayat* in Dhenkanal district of Odisha, stays committed to her work despite several hardships. She has endured brutal physical assault and blackmail but has courageously stood her ground, advocating and representing change in leadership. Manjulata has ensured pensions for the old and disabled in her village and free housing for the poor and widows.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

According to the latest data, crime against women is increasing. UN Women works to advocate for better policies for women and implements innovative projects to reduce violence against women. At the policy level, five Staying Alive reports, supported by UN Women and the UN Trust Fund on Ending Violence Against Women, provide information on the implementation of The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) in India. Used by advocates across the country, these reports have helped to lobby for an

increase in budgetary allocations for the law. This is the only monitoring of an Act to end violence against women in India.

Another initiative is UN Women's work with widows. An estimated 15,000 widows live on the streets of Vrindavan in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. A survey by the Guild of Service and UN Women revealed that widows are extremely poor. Although 70 per cent of them had heard of the destitute widow's pension scheme, only a quarter of all widows had received pension. A three-year initiative aims at reducing stigma against widows in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and support them to claim their rights and entitlements and be accounted for in the national data and research systems.

UN Women's Safe Cities Global Programme aims to develop, test and disseminate models to prevent and reduce sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces. Launched in 2009, the New Delhi strategy is based on a survey which found that 66 per cent of women experienced sexual harassment between 2 to 5 times in the past year. In the absence of a support structure, women find it difficult to confront those who harass them. Poor infrastructure, unusable pavements, lack of public toilets, open usage of drugs and alcohol were major reasons for lack of safety. The key partners include Government of Delhi, Jagori and ICRW.

“ I am not alone, I am not an object of pity either. I am an inspiration to many others who have been through rough weather. ”



Photo © UN Women/ Ashutosh Negi

Not alone: Mannkunwar from Gulab Ji ka Guda in Rajasthan's Chittorgarh district was widowed at ten years of age. Today she has a sense of purpose working with the Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan, a UN Women partner, to help single women find strength and identity.

Taking cognizance of a similar survey conducted by Sakhi, Anweshi, Jagori and UN Women in Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode in 2011, a new provision punishing sexual crimes in public places has been incorporated in the Kerala Police Act, 2011.

UN Women's collaboration with the Positive Women's Network (PWN+) from 2006 to 2011 was instrumental in helping women living with HIV to meet and support each other. This project also enabled PWN+ to provide outreach, counselling, health and income generating services to its members.

Decade long work on anti-trafficking since 2000 has helped to implement the national action plan on the elimination of trafficking in India. UN Women's efforts also focused on prevention, protection and reintegration of trafficked victims.

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women represent 48.3 per cent of India's population¹⁰ but only 26.1 per cent of employed persons¹¹. 79 per cent of rural women work in agriculture but only 9 per cent own land¹². They also do not earn equal wages as men.

Research helps to advocate for women's rights to land and property. UN Women studies show that land ownership provides stability to women, enhances their decision-making and protects them from violence. Despite a fairly progressive Hindu Succession Act, women are forced to relinquish their share in inheritance of property to maintain family ties, and in fear of violence and abandonment.

UN Women organizes rural women farmers so that they can have better livelihoods and improved access to markets. By training NGOs, UN Women ensures that the implementation of the *Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana* (MKSP), a government programme, addresses the rights of women farmers.

MAKING GENDER EQUALITY CENTRAL TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Plans and budgets must become more amenable to women. This is especially true for India, where

10 *Indian Census 2011*

11 *Employment and Unemployment situation in India, National Sample Survey, 66th Round, 2009-10*

12 *Employment and Unemployment situation in India, National Sample Survey, 66th Round, 2009-10*



Equal pay for equal work: *The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the world's biggest employment programme that guarantees 100 days of paid employment per year to rural households. Due to lack of awareness, Dalit women are unaware of the Act. To remedy this, UN Women, with support from the Fund for Gender Equality, increased women's right to employment under the Act in eight districts of Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh between 2009 and 2011. A recent evaluation showed a five-fold increase in the number of Dalit women who had access to work under MGNREGA in 102 villages. Innovative strategies like all women worksites and trained women supervisors have enhanced the participation and leadership of 14,000 women under this scheme. The programme has also increased women's control over earnings and decision-making – 3,500 bank accounts have been created in the names of Dalit women.*

Photo © UN Women/Gaganjit Singh Chandok

WOMEN



Women as energy conservators: *Sabinaben Sabirbhai Mansuri, a 42-year-old widow, explains the benefits of energy conservation. She was one of the 20 women energy conservators trained by SEWA and UN Women. These women visited over 1,700 households in Ahemdabad and Gandhinagar and convinced 200 families to replace their old electrical equipment with new energy-efficient Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs). This helped poor families save energy and Rs. 200 per month.*

The conservators now have the technical skill to use watt meters, calculators and mobile phones. This, and greater mobility, have enhanced their confidence levels.

as per the Gender Budget Statement, produced by the Government of India (GoI), only 5.9 per cent (2012-12 BE) of the total union budget is specifically targeted at women.

UN Women has built partnerships with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Planning Commission and women's rights advocates to work on national planning and budgeting. Since the 9th Five Year Plan, UN Women has supported efforts of the Planning Commission to ensure that the Five Year Plans reflect women's needs and priorities.

UN Women supported the Working Group of Feminist Economists (WGFE) to critique the approach paper to the 12th Five Year Plan. The WGFE questioned the current macroeconomic policy which advocates for an increase in GDP rate and the liberalisation of domestic markets to encourage private players, with the belief that benefits will trickle down. Leading economists argued that "inclusion" was an add-on to "growth" rather than an intrinsic part of the growth process. UN Women also supported some members of the WGFE to review flagship programmes and schemes of the Government of India from a gender lens. This body of work will be extremely critical in drawing attention to the fact that no sector or scheme is gender neutral and that all sectors and schemes stand to benefit from a gender scrutiny.

Making Budgets Count For Women

UN Women prioritizes initiatives that seek to create enabling policy frameworks, build skills and strengthen monitoring resulting in an increased attention to women.

An independent evaluation shows that UN Women's support to the MWCD has resulted in better skills within various line ministries as well as state governments.

UN Women's support has also helped to increase the participation of civil society organisations and women's rights advocates in the national and state planning processes. Research and advocacy with relevant stakeholders has significantly improved the understanding of how budgets can be used to enhance the situation of women. Recently, UN Women collaborated with the College of Agricultural Banking of the Reserve Bank of India to train around 100 bankers on how credit could be made more gender responsive.

Sex disaggregated data allows for better planning to address gaps. UN Women, along with other UN agencies and the Registrar General of India, helps capture women's work and other statistics in a more efficient manner. With UN Women's technical support, 2.5 million enumerators of the 2011 Indian Census were trained to keep gender perspectives in mind during data collection.

ENGAGING WOMEN IN ALL ASPECTS OF PEACE PROCESSES

UN Women recognizes the role that women play in building peace, and sustaining the community. They need to be equal participants in establishing peace in society. UN Women trains UN peacekeepers to be gender sensitive. For South Asia, UN Women has formed an Expert Group to strengthen women's leadership and create a global roster of women peace mediators.



Photo © UN Women

Since 1996, UN Women has organized seven South Asia Regional Ministerial Conferences with governments to track progress made on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). In 2010, ministers, government officials and civil society representatives from eight countries adopted the Dhaka resolution on gender-based violence, economic security and women's rights. Each country agreed to identify one national government programme to integrate gender issues.



Members of Pourakhi, an organisation of women migrant workers, participating in the rally organized on the occasion of the International Migrant's day.

The story of Nepalese women is similar to those living in post-conflict situations the world over. Vulnerable to assault and without any political or economic leverage, they become instruments to inflict harm on a social group. The efforts of UN Women in Nepal have been to ensure that gender violence and discrimination against women is curbed, and that they are able to exist as equal citizens of a peaceful and democratic state.

ENGAGING WOMEN IN ALL ASPECTS OF PEACE AND SECURITY PROCESSES

The decade-long conflict in Nepal has caused gross human rights violations such as mass killings, disappearances, torture, massive displacement of civilians and rapes. Of the estimated 13,256 deaths, more than 1,013 were women and girls. 9,000 women were widowed and almost 89,171 were displaced¹³.

The first step towards a peaceful future is to give everyone, including women, the right to be secure. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in November 2006 to bring an end to the conflict, followed by the formation of an Interim Parliament, the promulgation



Photo © UN Photo/Nayan Tata

The Right Move: She walked for an hour and a half to cast her vote. The 80-year-old Ratna Maya Thapa from the Central Region of Nepal shows her voter registration card to vote in the Constituent Assembly elections.



of Interim Constitution in 2007 and the Constituent Assembly (CA) election in 2008. A historic breakthrough came about when the elections led to 33 per cent of representation for women in the Constituent Assembly.

Stories of Strength

Peace brings strength. Strength brings stories. Stories bring courage.

In 2002, Sabitri Khadka of Baglung found her house surrounded by Maoist forces. It was torn down mercilessly and her father was brutally murdered. But she didn't let the violence stop her, and chartered the course from victim to a powerful survivor. She now conducts her own training programme for survivors, representatives of local administration bodies, civil society and journalists.

Now a role model, Sabitri, asserts that it was the Training of Trainers by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and UN Women that aided her fight for justice. With help of the



Photo © UN Women Nepal office

Sita Adhikari, returnee women migrant worker, who established her shop after the enterprise development training conducted by UN Women and IFAD in Kaski District.

training she was able to follow up on her long pending application and receive relief packages from the Government. Sabitri's life took another positive turn when she participated in a five-day programme as a trainer for victims like herself. Her new-found role, she claims, has helped her to, "discover self-confidence and interact freely with victims, sharing knowledge about transitional justice."

Gita Rasaili of Kavre village also shares Sabitri's violent past. She saw her family being torn apart during the conflict. Her brother was killed in an encounter. Two years later, the fighting claimed her



Photo © UN Women

sister's life, when a party member stormed into her house and killed her. But Gita too healed and learnt to fight against the violence. The training programme helped her rise above party politics and see victims as just victims, regardless of which side they belonged to. Gita currently runs her own organisation called *Rina Arpan Dalit Uthan Manch* that is staffed by conflict survivors and works for their cause.

Gita and Sabtri were 2 of 30 participants that were trained by ICTJ and UN Women to ensure transitional justice for both men and women.

Win Factor: On 1 February 2011, Nepal became the first country in South Asia and the second in Asia-Pacific to adopt the National Action Plan (NAP) on the UN Security Council Resolutions

1325 and 1820. UN Women and other members of the Peace Support Working Group (PSWG) supported the Government of Nepal in making a case for women's participation in the peace process, strengthen government capacity and provide crucial information to women survivors. Backed by strong political will, the NAP was a result of nationwide discussions between the Government of Nepal, the civil society and the women survivors.

The creation of the Plan ensured greater participation for women in the peace building process.

Building A Resource

UN Women understands the importance of creating a knowledge infrastructure. In a conflict zone, it works to reinstate the population of survivors. Since 2003, UN Women and other partners have helped to train and increase awareness about the UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820, at policy and grass roots levels. Since 2007, UN Women has worked closely with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) to develop the National Action Plan (NAP) as an effective tool by working with High Level Steering Committee (HLSC), which oversees NAP's implementation.

In partnership with the Ministry of Defence, UN Women provides training to Nepalese army personnel in line with international gender norms and standards.

Women are the most vulnerable targets in a violent conflict. They need access to a just mechanism. In partnership with Women for Human Rights, trainings were organized on transitional justice for 121 participants from women's rights organisations across ten districts. These participants then formed a network to advocate that women survivors receive justice and contribute to the functioning of the transitional justice system at the district levels. UN Women has helped create a structure under which these national and regional networks can now lobby for the protection of the rights of women, and encourage their participation in the peace process.

INCREASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Nepalese women are striving to be seen and heard in the public arena and UN Women is furthering this mission. Our programme on women's political participation has resulted in

stronger leadership skills for parliamentarians and Constituent Assembly members. Leaders of political parties now have a better understanding of issues related to gender equality. Through consistent advocacy with parliamentarians and Constituent assembly members, political parties and civil society, UN Women ensures the inclusion of gender concerns on issues addressed by the thematic committees of the Assembly.

UN Women, in consultation with NGOs and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, has prepared recommendations on issues relating to the rights of women to be included in the new constitution.

UN Women supports the National Women's Commission to develop position papers on the blueprint of a new electoral system that ensures gender equality.

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In Nepal, women lack access to productive assets, capital and skills. Like in other countries of South Asia, their work is often invisible. Improving their chances of earning well leads to many other changes, as the tale of Parbati Thapa Magar shows. "I feel I have graduated from a worker to an owner of a business. I look forward to employing others as well," says Parbati, who runs her own poultry farming business and even has land in her name.

Things were not this easy to begin with. After seven



Photo © Agnieszka Mikulska/UN

In Equal Measure: Members of the Madheshi community of Biratnagar attend a political rally in 2008. As a result of collaborative awareness building and advocacy efforts in the past few years, 33 per cent of seats in the Constituent Assembly and local peace committees are now reserved for women.

years of working in inhuman conditions in Oman as a migrant worker, Parbati felt homesick and returned to Nepal. She however lost her savings after a failed investment in a furniture business and had to go back to work as a migrant worker. The second time around she realised that just capital wouldn't be enough and she needed knowledge to start her business. Parbati learned the tricks of the trade thanks to a training about enterprise development that was organised by Pourakhi, a UN Women partner NGO in Nepal.

The training given to Parbati was part of a programme by UN Women and the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management.

As a result of UN Women's advocacy, skills training and support, Pourakhi, an organisation of women migrant workers, now works in 15 districts providing safe migration information, and paralegal support to victims of fraud and shelter to abused returnees. UN Women and the European Commission have helped to establish and expand such organisations in 15 districts.



Photo ©UN Women/John Isaac

Women working in the rice fields in Palung, Nepal.

Drawing Them In

UN Women teamed up with the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) to launch a pilot programme for the re-integration of women migrant workers. Implemented for the first time in Nepal, the programme has helped 608 women in three districts—Sunsari, Kathmandu and Kaski, to invest their remittances and upgrade their businesses. By doing so, UN Women is contributing to a long lasting change in the economic landscape of the country. Women in these districts now report increased incomes and improved living

conditions. The security of earning a livelihood in the country is a huge impetus for women to stay back and work in Nepal. 94 per cent of women impacted by this programme chose to do exactly that.

This pilot, that was originally led by UN Women, has been replicated in three more districts of Nepal by the Foreign Employment Promotion Board of the Ministry of Labour. The media has proved to be a strategic ally in generating public awareness on the situation of women migrant workers.



Women march to claim their rights to migrate safely abroad for work

Photo © UNWomen

Years of advocacy by UN Women for the revision of discriminatory legal provisions and a new law on foreign employment resulted in the Foreign Employment Act (2007). Not only does the Act prohibit discrimination based on sex, it also adopts special measures to ensure decent employment opportunities for women who migrate abroad for work. The new law also contains provisions to regulate recruitment agencies and programmes for the families of migrant workers. UN Women has provided technical expertise to ensure that the Foreign Employment Policy is geared towards protecting the rights of women migrant workers.

Currently, UN Women is supporting the development of the National Plan of Action to ensure that a time-bound and coordinated approach to implement the Act is put in place.

The law enables more women like Parbati to secure foreign employment opportunities and a better future when they return to their homeland.

To address the lack of data on women's economic contribution, UN Women has supported the National Census data collection exercises and generated data on women's economic participation.



Helping Hand: *Dayaram Thakur is a finalist of UN Women's Most Understanding Husband Campaign. He believes that women's empowerment is key to the prosperity of the family. "In my society, the belief that men should not help women is prevalent. But I help my wife in cleaning the kitchen and washing clothes. I buy vegetables on my own and prepare them for cooking. I also do all the household work," he says. His wife Dularidevi has benefitted greatly from this change in attitude. She says: "He helps me cook and manage all the household work when I work outside the house. He has also supported my education."*

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN Women works to reduce incidents of violence against women and girls and supports legislative measures to ensure access to justice for the survivors of violence.

The Samajhdari Campaign by Equal Access, with a grant from the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, sparked public discussions on the issue and HIV prevention. Weekly radio shows featuring stories about women's experiences with violence and HIV have reached out to more than a million listeners every week from 2006 to 2008.

A community outreach programme on the radio, the Most Understanding Husband Campaign, invited men to share how they put 'mutual understanding' between spouses into practice. In response, men from across the country sent candid messages about their thoughts. Ten husbands were then selected as finalists and their stories were featured on the radio series. In the project areas, the number of women seeking legal help doubled whilst the number of men supporting interventions to end violence against women increased five-fold.



Photo © Madhu Acharya

Voices against violence: Recording women's experiences about violence and HIV for the Samajhdari radio show.

Sahamati, another collaborative effort by UN Women and Equal Access Nepal, on gender-based violence targeted both women and men. The multi-lingual programme analyzed the root cause of such violence and was aired every week for five months, reaching out to four districts of Nepal.

UN Women has supported various legislative changes in Nepal including the adoption of the Gender Equality Act, 2006; the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 and Regulation, 2008; and the Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act, 2009 and Regulation 2010 etc.

With the National Judicial Academy, UN Women pressed the law enforcement agencies and civil society actors to discharge their duties efficiently in cases of violence and protect the rights of survivors to confidential legal recourse.

Not only does the office support the Government's reporting to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but also monitoring of the CEDAW by the civil society.

MAKING GENDER EQUALITY CENTRAL TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Policy interventions supported by UN Women have translated into the inclusion of gender concerns in official budgets and plans. The revision of essential financial software such as Budget Management Information Systems (BMIS) and budget forms and manuals are some examples. UN Women also provided technical support to ensure that the 8th, 9th and 10th Five Year Development Plans, Interim Plans and the current Three Year Plan (2010-11 to 2012-13) reflect gender concerns.

UN Women was a key partner to develop the Strategy and National Plan of Action on Safe Migration, and capture disaggregated data in the National Population and Housing Census for 2001 and 2011.

MALDIVES

In the Maldivian Parliament of 77 seats, only five are held by women. The severe lack of political participation and reduced visibility of Maldivian women in public office robs them of reference points or role models. Without policy intervention and advocacy at the highest levels of governance, legislations to empower women will remain lacking.



Photo © Photomaldives

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

A national survey on “Women’s Health and Life Experiences” showed that 1 in 3 Maldivian women aged between 15-49 reported experiencing some form of physical or sexual violence at least once during their lifetime. The last Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Report on the Maldives underlined the urgent need to address violence against women in the country, to put in place appropriate legislative frameworks for prevention and protection, and to build stronger protective services for women and children.

The Fight Back

To address the issue, UN Women and the UN team in Maldives have conducted a number of interventions to improve the situation for survivors of domestic violence. UN Women

recognised the need to build a resource to fight back, and supported the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services to strengthen rehabilitation services for survivors of domestic violence. This is being done by building the skills of officials in the Department and helping with the formulation of guidelines.

Domestic Violence Act: Recently passed, the Domestic Violence Act is a testament to the dedication of the political parties, ministries, non-governmental organisations and grassroots activists who have worked towards the achievement of this goal. In collaboration with other UN agencies, UN Women contributed detailed inputs to the draft bill.

UN Women is supporting the national government in compiling a report about the major milestones achieved under the Convention.

Along with other UN agencies, UN Women was also involved in the implementation of the CEDAW recommendations and other similar national and international instruments to improve the status of women in the country.

UN Women supports the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2011 -2015, specifically addressing outcome 15 which focuses on gender equality.

Photo © Nishan/UNFPA Maldives

A Maldivian Woman working on a farm

MALDIVES

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PAKISTAN

Photo © UNO/Pierre Virost



Women in Pakistan have faced numerous challenges in their efforts to have an equal say and address violence against them. In particular, problems posed by customary norms and practices represent a great hurdle.

Pakistan is ranked 115 of 146 countries on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index indicating there is a long way to go. Only 21 per cent of parliamentary seats are held by women and 23.5 per cent of adult women have reached a secondary/higher level of education compared to 46.8 per cent of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 260 women die from pregnancy related causes. Female participation in the labour market is 21.7 per cent as compared to 84.9 per cent for men¹⁴.

Pro-women Laws: A Signal of Change

In the past few years, Pakistan has passed a significant number of pro-women legislations on crucial women's rights issues highlighting the continuous effort of both the Government and the advocacy of groups such as UN Women.

Recent legislations passed include:

- Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (March 2010)
- Amendment to the Pakistan Penal Code on the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill (December 2011)

- Prevention of Anti Women Practices [Criminal Law Amendment] Act (December 2011)
- Women in Distress and Detention Fund [Amendment] Bill (December 2011)

Through technical assistance, UN Women has helped in the development of protective laws such as the draft Domestic Violence Bill, the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, the Acid Crime and Prevention Bill and revision of the Human Trafficking Ordinance 2002.

The benefits of passing such legislation cannot be realized in the absence of implementation plans. UN Women, in conjunction with civil society players and women activist networks, has advocated for the setting up of a centralized body to monitor the success of legislative reforms. The National Commission on the Status of Women Bill, passed in March 2012, has given full autonomy to the Commission to assess the implementation of laws and make suitable recommendations to ensure their impact. In collaboration with local and national bodies, UN Women has established a formidable footprint in Pakistan working across many other areas.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN Women is advancing legislative reform in partnership with national women's organisations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Provincial Committees, Ministry of Human Rights, gender advocates and local NGOs.

The Ending Violence against Women and Girls Alliance is a collective of women's organisations at the national and provincial



UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet meets with Fiza Batool Gillani, Goodwill Ambassador on Women's Empowerment and Head of the Pakistan Delegation during the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Photo © UN Women



'Socha Kabhi Naa', the music video aired to mark the launch of the "One Million Signature Campaign" was sung by popular Pakistani singers Khawar Jawad and Nouman Javaid and sponsored by the United Nations.

level. The Alliance is an important partner to end gender violence. UN Women's role in the partnership is to research issues around violence against women, organize consultations amongst experts and civil society, and provide legal and policy advice in the drafting and revisions of pro-women bills. UN Women has also helped its partners to compile data and monitor incidents of gender-based violence.

In 2011, UN Women and the Alliance commemorated 16 days of activism by launching the mega campaign *"One Million Signature Campaign" - Million Names Million Voices*. An unprecedented effort, it created awareness and broke the silence. Harnessing the power of mass media, a unique music video titled *Socha Kabhi Naa* was aired on 17 channels across Pakistan.

The message was spread to thousands of Pakistanis, encouraging them to end the cycle of violence. Through coordinated efforts, the campaign reached out to government officials, media persons, medico-legal officers, service providers and university youth. In response, they signed TAKE ACTION cards, pledged support for legislative reform, raised awareness

through social media and changed their own attitudes.

Best Foot Forward

Charters of demands were gathered from 57 districts of Pakistan mainly focusing on political rights for women, policy reforms/ legislations, improved service delivery and women's protection. Women also campaigned to improve the response of the criminal justice system to violence. A joint declaration was presented to the parliamentarians, national women's machineries, the judiciary, the media and the police.

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

As in every traditional society, Pakistani women too work within the confines of their homes and their labour often goes unrecognized. UN Women grants greater visibility to these women workers and their issues by supporting policy reforms for them at the national and provincial levels. To register home-based workers brings them dignity of labour, and they become a recognisable part of the workforce. This also ensures that they have access to decent



Photo © © Government of Pakistan

During the closing ceremony of the One Million Signatures Campaign, the President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari became the one millionth signatory to the campaign. In his address he stated that “exploitation and discrimination of this nature undermine women’s dignity and self-esteem,” and highlighted the need to address traditional mindsets.

wages and social security benefits. Through continued advocacy and efforts, the Home Base Worker Resolutions assert that they be recognized as workers and their minimum wages be standardized. The Resolutions, with support from UN Women, have been passed in three provincial assemblies: Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh.

Win Factor: To provide integrated support to rural home-based workers, UN Women and the International Labour Organisation have developed five pilot projects in three districts of Punjab (Sialkot, Faisalabad and Kasur) and two districts of Sindh (Hyderabad and Umer-Kot).

These projects help improve the skills of these workers to earn better wages, and on the other enhance their access to markets and social security schemes. It is thus a holistic approach to the problem where both immediate (increased wages) concerns as well as long-term empowerment objectives (access) are addressed.

Situated in Sialkot, Baidarie, a UN Women partner, runs a pilot project that helps home-based workers stitch soccer balls.



Photo © UN Women

Women stitch soccer balls in Sialkot district of Pakistan.

And there is strength in numbers. With support from UN Women and Baidarie, these women have organized themselves into small groups which has improved their access to microfinance initiatives and other opportunities. As a result, some moved from informal work at home to formal factory work, which provides a higher level of economic and social security.

Three times stronger in Faisalabad

Imrana is a 40-year-old quilt-maker from Faisalabad district. Widowed, she lives with her brother and his family of eleven members.

Imrana started making quilts at home to ease the financial burden, earning about Rs. 1800 per month. She had no training and would stitch the quilts by joining pieces of cloth together.

After attending a meeting organized by UN Women, she now dreams of becoming a fashion designer. "I opted for training in stitching and fashion designing to enhance my income. I now earn around Rs. 6,000 per month. I plan to start my own fashion designing school and teach other women," says Imrana.



Women quilt-makers from Faisalabad district in Pakistan

Photo © UN Women

ENGAGING WOMEN IN ALL ASPECTS OF PEACE AND SECURITY PROCESSES

A humanitarian effort cannot be a uni-dimensional plan. The security and rehabilitation of women and children is of top-most priority as they form the basis of future societies. In recognition of this fact, UN agencies are now developing new ways of harmonising their operations to effect maximum efficiency. Pakistan is one of the eight UN countries piloting this 'Delivering as One' model. When much of the country was devastated by floods in 2010, UN Women and UNFPA joined hands to lead the UN Gender Task Force (GTF) in a massive humanitarian operation.

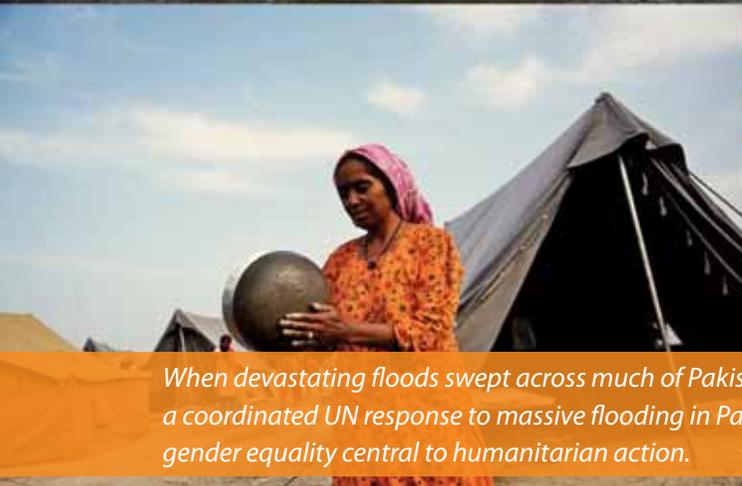
Photo © Asad Zaidi

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***In search of a future:** A flood victim carries water filled from a hand pump, while taking refuge from flood waters in Punjab province. Pakistan is one of the eight UN countries piloting the 'Delivering as One' model, under which UN agencies are developing new ways of coordinating work.*

UN Women has been supporting the Dar-ul-Aman, an improved shelter service for vulnerable women in Quetta, Balochistan, under the Disaster Risk Management Programme of the One UN initiative. The support centers around the development of procedures and training of its staff on psycho-social counselling.



When devastating floods swept across much of Pakistan in 2010, a coordinated UN response to massive flooding in Pakistan made gender equality central to humanitarian action.

The mission was to make gender equality central to all aspects of the humanitarian action. Accordingly, a rapid gender needs assessment was conducted through 253 in-depth interviews to determine the immediate impact of the floods on women and girls.

The Policy Impact: The Office of the President of Pakistan conducted a round table on Women and Flood Relief and Rehabilitation on 29 September 2010. In this high level meeting attended by the Speaker of the House, key women ministers from the leading party as well as opposition members, references were made to the Rapid Gender Needs Assessment.

Gender experts who were sent to humanitarian hubs in flooded areas worked closely with humanitarian teams to distribute hygiene kits to women. Food distribution stations were made more accessible for women and emergency response units were established for survivors of gender-based violence.

Casting the Net: UN Women and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) established the Gender and Child Cell (GCC) in 2010 to increase gender awareness among both national and provincial authorities.

Policy intervention must co-exist with a humanitarian approach to solving women's problems. This is why UN Women provides help with research, technical and policy level inputs to the Gender and Child Cell (GCC) of the NDMA and to federal level authorities. UN Women's technical assistance enables the Disaster Management Authorities in provincial, district and federally administered tribal areas to pay adequate attention to the impact that disasters have on women and children.

For example, UN Women's technical support to the Provincial Government of Balochistan and the Secretariat of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas has resulted in adoption of a number of model protection structures. Durdana Bibi, a 28-year-old widow living in the tribal flood affected district of Tank has benefited from such a structure – a women friendly space. Illiterate, poor and abandoned by her in-laws, Durdana and her two-year-old son were dependent on her poor father. Their situation became worse after the 2010 floods.

She learned to cope with the trauma of the floods and improved her stitching skills. "My stitching skills will help me contribute to the family income and secure a better future for my son. I am thankful for the support and opportunity I have received through this space," she says.

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RELEVANT WEBSITES AND EMAIL

www.unwomensouthasia.org

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