

UN Political Missions' Support to Women and Children

Political missions play an important role in helping to ensure the protection of women and children, and in advocating for their participation in peacebuilding efforts in post conflict countries. These activities are informed by the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, in conjunction with additional resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict,¹ including children.² Resolution 1325 emphasizes the importance of women's inclusion in peace processes as a right, and by helping to reflect the security and interests of all relevant parties, as a pillar of sustainable peace and security.

Political missions have launched initiatives to support the participation and representation of women in post conflict settings. The UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), for example, helped to sponsor the creation of the All Political Parties Women Wings Association with the aim to achieve a 30 percent quota for women in all elected positions.

Missions also work to ensure the prevention of a relapse of conflict and all forms of violence, including sexual violence. The Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) initiated a study on sexual and gender-based violence which resulted in the formation of a thematic gender-based violence and protection group tasked to review and update government bodies. BINUCA also addresses the protection of children through the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and disarmament, demobilization and re-integration process.³

Yet, progress in securing the rights of women and children has been a challenge for political missions. Only four of the UN's 18 current political missions covered in this Review are specifically mandated to address women's issues, namely the UN Office in Burundi (BNUB), the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and UNIPSIL, while BINUCA is the only mission with a mandate to protect children.⁴ Meanwhile, gender representation amongst political mission staff fails to reach the 50/50 goal laid out in the gender equality and strategic goals of DPA's gender mainstreaming framework.⁵ In 2010, women represented only around seventeen percent of all field mission staff.⁶

In an effort to further mainstream gender equality in political missions DPA has appointed gender advisors and gender focal points at UN headquarters and in the field to advocate for the inclusion of women issues in the mission planning and implementation stages. Similarly, child protection advisors are appointed to political missions to advance efforts on children's issues.

1 Most notably resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

2 Most notably resolutions 1261 (1999), 1612 (2005), and 1882 (2009).

3 See UN Security Council Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2009/5), 7 April 2009.

4 BNUB S/RES/1719, UNOWA S/2007/753, UNAMA S/RES/1917 and UNIPSIL S/RES/1829.

5 Department of Political Affairs Policy Statement on Gender Equality and Strategic Goals of Gender Mainstreaming, 2006.

6 Center on International Cooperation, *Review of Political Missions* 2010 (with the exception of the: Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Special Adviser for Myanmar, Special Envoy for LRA affected areas, and UNIIC).