

Box 3.2 Women, Peace, and Security

In February 2011, following the tenth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions that constitute the UN's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) released a ten-year impact study on the implementation of Resolution 1325.¹

The impact study assessed the effects of DPKO's work on several WPS components, including participation in peace negotiations, political participation, sexual- and gender-based violence, and judicial reform. The findings reveal mixed success in advancing the WPS agenda. While disparities persist, peacekeeping support for women's political participation resulted in tangible and significant impacts over the past decade. Lessons learned were tested this year by national elections held in Haiti, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

DPKO and DFS, with the assistance of a gender advisory team and mission-specific gender advisers, have successfully promoted women's engagement in political processes both as voters and as candidates. UN-led voter education campaigns, gender-sensitive voter information, improved election security, and women-only voting booths have yielded greater female turnout during elections and increased involvement of women in the formation of government and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Peacekeeping operations like the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) also support the mobilization of female electoral candidates through enhanced security (such as specialized communication lines), production of campaign posters, and the airing of candidates' profiles on mission radio stations in the lead-up to elections.

Through active lobbying for gender equality in government, peacekeeping missions helped enact legislative quotas in countries including Sudan and Timor-Leste, and in the latter women now occupy more than a quarter of the legislative seats. The rise in women's governmental participation is smaller without quotas, but can still lead to more representative state institutions, as seen in Liberia, Darfur, and Afghanistan over the past decade. Problems remain, however, as women who transcend cultural barriers to governmental participation face the additional challenge of developing their leadership skills while concurrently fulfilling their duties in office. DPKO and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (also known as UN Women) work to build upon their capacity through multiday training and coaching programs aimed at improving awareness of gender-sensitive policies and providing technical support.

There are more women involved in government than ever before, although they are far from achieving gender equality. By increasing the participation of

women as voters, candidates, and government officials, UN peace operations have created more inclusive and therefore more sustainable postconflict governments and civil societies. Looking to build upon the successes in women's political participation and to continue moving toward gender parity, DPKO and DFS are now working with the Department of Political Affairs to revise joint field guidelines on women's roles in postconflict electoral processes, with a slated release in early 2012. Elections scheduled for spring 2012 in Timor-Leste may be the first beneficiaries of the improved guidelines.

Gaps in implementing other aspects of the WPS framework still remain, including women's roles in peace processes, women's security sector involvement, and prevention and prosecution of sexual- and gender-based violence. In addition, while gender-mainstreaming efforts are now core components of UN peacekeeping mandates, the 2011 impact report recommends that additional resources, improved commitment by senior leadership, and clearer guidelines for crosscutting issues are needed to improve mission-level execution. More consistency between missions and thematic areas will also be necessary to build sustainable peace and propel Resolution 1325 and the WPS framework into the next decade of peacekeeping.

Note: 1. The report is available at http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/10year_impact_study_1325.pdf.