

IFP GENDER CLUSTER

BUILDING INCLUSIVE POST- CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

How the EU Can Support Women's Political Participation
in Conflict-Affected Contexts

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January 2009

International Alert.



INITIATIVE FOR  PEACEBUILDING



THIS INITIATIVE IS FUNDED
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

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BUILDING INCLUSIVE POST- CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Katja Svensson and Regina Saffa for important background research, as well as Karen Barnes, Stephanie Broughton, Tracy Dexter and Juliet Schofield for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSOs	Civil society organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EASSI	The Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENCISS	Enhancing Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
FFRP	Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFS	Instrument for Stability
MP	Member of Parliament
NAP	National Action Plan
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SCR 1325	Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Post-conflict reform of political institutions provides an important opportunity to increase women's political participation and representation in decision-making. The roles of men and women can change considerably during armed conflict as women take up new roles to maintain livelihoods, protect their families, take part in conflict or campaign for peace. It is crucial that the opportunities that changing gender roles present are not lost in post-conflict peace processes and reforms. The EU has a clear mandate to support women's political participation in post-conflict societies through political dialogue, funding programming and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) missions. Drawing on lessons from a range of conflict-affected contexts, this paper recommends practical strategies for the EU and other donors to guide their governance interventions in post-conflict situations.

This paper identifies four fields where the EU can promote women's political participation. First, it is crucial that the EU uses all its diplomatic power to promote the inclusion of women in peace negotiations to guarantee a more inclusive and representative settlement. Second, women's access to political spaces should be increased through more gender-sensitive electoral laws and processes, implementation of specific quotas and capacity-building programmes for female candidates, as well as awareness-raising among political parties and the general public. Third, the EU can play an important role in supporting women's participation in civil society. Small civil society organisations (CSOs), in particular, have difficulties in accessing core funds. As a result, CSOs are unable to fulfil their watchdog role. Fourth, women's participation in peace processes, political institutions and CSOs can only be meaningful if it leads to more representative and inclusive policy, practice and outcomes. Meaningful policy change can be promoted through various means, such as technical assistance, political pressure as well as support for CSOs and the media to monitor government actions.

Keywords: Gender, governance, participation, peacebuilding, European Union

INTRODUCTION

During conflict, shifts in gender roles can present an opportunity to negotiate more space for women's involvement in various aspects of peacebuilding, including participation in the political sphere. Women's important contributions to post-conflict political institutions are increasingly recognised by the international community, as reflected by international legal instruments and the internal policies of a number of donors. The international institutions also provide important funding for women's organisations in conflict and post-conflict settings, promoting the participation of women in peace negotiations and the adoption of measures to improve the representation of women in a number of political spaces.

Women's increased political participation can be beneficial for peacebuilding for a number of reasons. First, women's stark under-representation in politics in so many countries can be seen to contravene principles of participation, justice and inclusion, all important for long-term peacebuilding. Second, through their different experiences, women can bring alternative approaches and points of view to policy-making, and can in some cases represent other women more easily, making the whole system more representative. Finally, some argue that women's ways of working and increased diversity in the political sphere can change the way politics is done for the better.¹ Peacebuilding processes can also play a role in enabling women's political participation through transitions to multiparty democracy, stronger civil society activity and increased dialogue at all levels of society.

However, experience in various countries has shown that an increase in the number of women involved in politics does not necessarily lead to any meaningful change in the lives of most women or their capacity to engage politically, economically or socially. Their political participation is often tokenistic and female politicians may find it difficult to (or may not be interested in) promoting a "women's agenda" that benefits a broader female constituency. Although gender roles can change in positive ways in the aftermath of conflict, there is often considerable resistance, backlash to more traditional values and socio-economic obstacles that can prevent women from capitalising on increased political space. As this paper will argue, without commitment and buy-in from local actors, overcoming these issues can be extremely difficult. Drawing on lessons from a range of conflict-affected contexts, this paper will recommend practical strategies for the EU and other donors to guide their governance interventions in post-conflict situations. The objective is to present concrete actions that will enable the EU to fulfil the various mandates it has to promote women's equal participation in the political sphere.

1 E. Pearson (2008). *Demonstrating legislative leadership, the introduction of Rwanda's gender-based violence bill*. Washington DC, US: The Initiative for Inclusive Security.

THE ROLE OF THE EU IN PROMOTING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The EU and its Member States are required by a number of international mandates, including key European agreements and instruments, to promote women's equitable participation in social and political decision-making in their societies (see Annex). These mandates provide clear objectives for the EU's work in conflict-affected countries, particularly in the context of ESDP missions and the work of the delegations, as well as funding provided through specific instruments such as the Instrument for Stability (IfS) and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). This paper will recommend concrete steps the EU can take toward reaching the objectives spelled out in its policy commitments.

It is important to bear in mind the complicated and ambiguous impact that external development assistance has on conflict, governance and gender dynamics. As external funding and programming is often an important source of support for female political and civil society actors, gender equality and women's political participation can often be seen as an external import rather than as part of the national political culture. This can at best lead important political actors to ignore the claims of gender advocates and at worst to a backlash against women who are active in politics or civil society. The way in which political space for women is generated can therefore influence the degree to which it is maintained and respected by government and civil society actors.

Similarly, overall aid structures and flows, such as the aid effectiveness architecture, can have a positive or negative impact on the extent to which governance is gender-sensitive. The modalities of the new aid effectiveness architecture (see Box 1) include a greater focus on general budget support combined with sector support, which together aim to align aid with the recipient government's budget policies and minimise transaction costs. This is also to be guided through the country's poverty reduction strategy.

Box 1: Principles of the Paris Declaration (2005)

1. *Ownership*: Donors should promote partner countries' leadership over their development policies.
2. *Alignment*: Donors should align their support with the partner countries' development strategies and institutions.
3. *Harmonisation*: Donors should collaborate to ensure effective division of labour and a harmonised approach.
4. *Managing for results*: Donors should focus on results-based management and implementation of aid.
5. *Mutual accountability*: Donors and partner countries should share accountability for development results.²

² *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, harmonisation, alignment, results and mutual accountability*. High Level Forum, Paris 28th February-2nd March 2005. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>.

CSOs, including women's rights organisations, have voiced concern that their influence is severely curtailed in the new aid effectiveness system and note that a gender dimension is largely absent from the Paris Declaration, limited to a mention of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue alongside the environment and human rights. A gender analysis of the five principles outlined in the Paris declaration brings out the following concerns:

- **Ownership** can only be fully realised if women's as well as men's voices are heard and included throughout the development process;
- **Alignment** poses a threat to gender equality unless gender-sensitivity is fully present as a national priority for the recipient country. Donors should align with gender equality policies, systems and commitments of partner governments;
- **Harmonisation** may weaken efforts towards achieving gender equality unless this is a shared value and priority amongst the donor community, and is thus reflected in the setting of development goals. Harmonisation efforts also present an opportunity to push gender issues higher up on the agenda through joint and coordinated efforts;
- **Managing for results** requires that human rights principles and gender analysis, including gender-sensitive indicators, are included in country assessments; and
- **Mutual accountability** will only be meaningful from a gender perspective if all citizens – women, men, girls and boys – have the freedom and capacity to hold the government and donors accountable for policy goals.³

With the absence of a specific gender dimension in the Paris Declaration it is imperative that all actors make a conscious effort to address the above-mentioned concerns to ensure continued support for civil society actors, as well as those in government promoting a gender equality agenda and facilitating women's political participation. It falls upon all stakeholders, including the EU, to introduce and maintain the goal of gender equality on the development agenda, including in its governance programming and support.

3 C. Alemany, N. Craviotto and F. Hopenhaym (2008). *Implementing the Paris Declaration: Implications for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality*. Commissioned by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) and developed by AWID and WIDE. Available at <http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml#partners>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2008). *Gender equality toolbox*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Available at <http://www.danidadevforum.um.dk/en/menu/Topics/GenderEquality/>.

OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND NEW POST-CONFLICT INSTITUTIONS

What is [often] forgotten is that a peace agreement is not only the end of hostilities but also the beginning of the future. Without the experience of women, vital knowledge is bypassed when planning the post-war rebuilding process.⁴

Many post-conflict countries have been effective at using quotas and reserved seats to ensure women's participation in newly created political institutions and in recent years they have featured prominently in the top 30 in the world ranking of women in Parliament.⁵ Conflict has given rise to opportunities for women to negotiate more space for involvement in various aspects of peacebuilding. Inclusion of women in peace processes and gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements are important prerequisites for women's increased participation in post-conflict politics and civil society. Women's effective participation in peace processes can offer women political gains on a wide range of issues that affect their rights and gender equality, such as economic security, social development and political participation. For example, in Burundi, Liberia and Rwanda women in peace processes played an important role in shaping the future of their societies.

Armed conflict can often lead to women taking over traditional male roles within society due to men being injured and displaced or their taking up arms either voluntarily or through coercion. Despite these new roles, when peace negotiations begin it is nearly always exclusively men who participate, often justified with the argument that the warring factions should negotiate peace. As a result, women have struggled repeatedly around the world to have their voices heard. In Burundi, for example, after being ignored for years, six women with observer status were allowed to take part in peace talks in Arusha thanks to pressure from international organisations. At the same time, the All-Party Burundi Women's Peace Conference was arranged with representatives from all political parties to discuss gender issues in the peace agreement. 'Despite restrictions on Burundians leaving the country', Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf reflect, 'the delegates found ways to get there, because it would be one of the last chances for women to affect the peace accords, which all-male delegations had been hammering out for four years'.⁶ The conference allowed women to lobby for the inclusion of 30 provisions for women in the Arusha Accords, which included ending impunity for gender-based violence, equal access to land and inheritance, the right to education and the inclusion of a women's charter in the constitution.⁷ Regardless of these achievements, there have been very few concrete dividends for women: discriminatory legislation on inheritance, for example, is still in place.⁸

4 Kvinna till Kvinna (2004). *Rethink! A handbook for sustainable peace*. Stockholm, Sweden: Kvinna till Kvinna. Available at <http://www.iktk.se/publikationer/rapporter/pdf/Rethink.pdf>.

5 E. Powley and S.N. Anderlini (2004). 'Democracy and governance' in International Alert. *Inclusive security, sustainable peace: A toolkit for advocacy and action*. London, UK: International Alert and Women Waging Peace. Ch.4, pp.36-47.

6 E. Rehn and E.J. Sirleaf (2002). *Women, war, peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building - Progress of the World's Women 2002*, Vol. 1. New York, US: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). p.80. Available at http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=17.

7 The demand for a quota of 30 percent representation for women in the transitional and post-transition institutions which was initially rejected by the negotiating parties in Arusha, was later included in the draft constitution adopted by referendum in 2005.

8 See for example: EASSI and International Alert (2008). *Women's political participation in countries emerging from conflict in the Great Lakes Region of Africa: Report of the Consultation Workshop, 28-30 August 2007*. Kampala, Uganda and London, UK: EASSI and International Alert; International Alert (2008). *Integrating women's priorities into peacebuilding processes: Experiences of monitoring and advocacy in Burundi and Sierra Leone*. London, UK: International Alert.

Women have often played an important role in civil society-level Track II diplomacy. In the South Caucasus, for example, women have tried to influence the peace process by cooperating across conflict lines. In July 2003, International Alert brought together women civil society leaders from Georgia and Abkhazia with their political leaders involved in the official peace negotiations in a seminar on 'Official Negotiations and Civic Diplomacy: Cooperation for Peace' at Farnham Castle in the UK. This meeting was the culmination of a long process of internal and bilateral advocacy strategy development, and was the first such event where women civil society leaders from both sides presented joint recommendations on how civil society – particularly women – could effectively support the official negotiations process. Among the issues discussed at the meeting were interaction between civic diplomacy and the process of official negotiations; the situation in the Gali region; and possible security guarantees for non-resumption of military actions. While the meeting was constructive and the exchange of opinions was open and sincere, momentum gained at this meeting was lost due to the radical political changes in Georgia in the context of the Rose Revolution later the same year.

Although post-conflict situations can provide new opportunities for women, security concerns in post-conflict societies can also be a hindrance for women's participation, although this is an area that has not been sufficiently researched. Wide circulation of weapons and civilian possession of small arms and light weapons have a direct effect on the security of women and is sometimes linked to increased levels of domestic violence. It emerged from Alert's research on women's political participation in the Great Lakes region that the war and continuous violence have affected women's mobility and their participation in politics. Women have often acted at great personal risk to create dialogue between warring factions at their own national levels and others engaged in politics have also been subjected to violence from male family members.⁹

WHAT THE EU CAN DO TO CONSOLIDATE OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND NEW POST-CONFLICT INSTITUTIONS

The EU should use **political and diplomatic opportunities** with warring parties to make sure that civilian organisations and politically active women participate in negotiations. It should provide technical support and political pressure for teams involved in peace negotiations and constituent assemblies to include provisions that support women's political participation in peace accords and in developing new constitutions. The goal of peace negotiations should be to negotiate new political and institutional structures that will foster gender equality and women's equal participation in political spaces.

The EU should provide **support and resources for CSOs**, including women's organisations and particularly those involved in mediation and Track II diplomacy. It is important for women in civil society to be informed of their rights and be empowered to demand them. Resources should also be targeted at both women and men for gender awareness training.

The EU should also make sure its own approach is gender-sensitive and **appoint a gender-aware representative** of the international community with the mandate to guarantee that a gender perspective permeates the entire peace process. It should promote awareness-raising among representatives of the international community about the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (SCR 1325) and other relevant international mandates.¹⁰ The EU should ensure that wherever it appoints a Special Representative or Envoy or where EU Member States lead the peace negotiations in a third country (non-EU), that all efforts are made to recruit qualified women for these positions.

⁹ EASSI and International Alert (2008). *Op. cit.* p.39.

¹⁰ Kvinna till Kvinna (2004). *Op cit.*

Box 2: Suggested gender-sensitive indicators that reflect opportunities for women in peace processes

- Number and proportion of women present at peace negotiations as official negotiators. (Data source: administrative data and newspaper reports.)
- Number and proportion of women present at peace negotiations as observers. (Data source: administrative data and newspaper reports.)
- Number and proportion of women present at peace negotiations as representatives of the warring parties. (Data source: administrative data and newspaper reports.)
- Provisions in peace agreement or draft constitution that promote women's equal participation in post-conflict political institutions. (Data source: analysis of peace agreement or draft constitution.)
- Proportion of staff on international missions that have been trained in gender-sensitivity and gender analysis. (Data source: administrative data, interviews with gender advisors.)
- Resources provided for women's organisations and CSOs engaged in Track II diplomacy. (Data source: administrative data.)

PROMOTING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POLITICAL SPACES

Tradition and cultural practices can present formidable obstacles to the inclusion of women in peace processes or post-war governance unless a formal mechanism is in place to support this.¹¹

In most societies, spaces for political decision-making are traditionally dominated by men. A number of challenges inhibit women's participation in political spaces, including economic dependence and low levels of literacy. As in the case of rural Liberia (see Box 3), gender-based violence, norms that legitimise unequal power relations and forms of structural discrimination can also contribute to low levels of engagement or participation by women in formal and informal political spheres. Negative attitudes towards women's political participation are often deeply entrenched in culture and tradition. Barriers to political participation are often considerably higher for women in rural areas, from poor urban backgrounds or from excluded ethnic groups. These barriers are compounded by insufficient political party and media support for female candidates, lack of sufficient funds to conduct campaigns, electoral systems that are not conducive to women's political participation and a lack of expertise and capacity among women's organisations and female politicians.¹²

Box 3: Barriers to women's political participation in rural Liberia

Liberia was brought into the international spotlight in 2005 when it elected Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as Africa's first female president. Liberia's politics and society have since seen impressive advancements, for instance many of Johnson Sirleaf's key ministers are women. These are important signs of progress, but male-dominated traditions and norms remain strong and women face a number of barriers to political participation in Liberia's rural areas. To understand obstacles that rural Liberian women face, Alert conducted a series of dialogues throughout May and June 2008 across southeast Liberia in collaboration with its local partner organisations. The dialogues reached 20 rural communities across five counties and allowed the organisations to raise and discuss barriers to women's full participation in decision-making. Alert has taken the findings from these consultations and used them in advocacy with the government as it prepares to develop a National Action Plan for the implementation of SCR 1325.

Based on the discussions, several barriers to women's political participation can be identified. *Traditional and religious practices* underline a lot of the obstacles to equal participation. Arranged marriages and dowries make marriage an economic institution where women often see themselves as slaves with few rights. Participants also referred to the Bible as a justification for men's superior status in family and society. An elderly woman speaking on the effect tradition and culture has on female participation remarked, 'women like me have been denied education because of culture and tradition. Now that society is changing for the better, we cannot fit in'. *Socio-economic conditions*, particularly poverty and lack of educational opportunities, make women's participation difficult and make them vulnerable to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. In one of the meetings, a 75-year-old woman said 'woman like me who na know book [sic] is embarrassed to go among others because our parents refused to send us to school. They said it was better to pay more attention to boys because women are strangers'.

¹¹ E. Rehn and E.J. Sirleaf (2002). Op. cit.

¹² EASSI and International Alert (2008). Op. cit.; International Alert (2008). Op. cit.; OECD-DAC (2004). *Gender Tipsheets: Electoral Support*. Paris, France: OECD. Available at http://www.oecd.org/document/34/0,3343,en_2649_34541_1896290_1_1_1_1,00.html.

Perceptions and norms legitimise unequal power relations in the home and in society. Violence in different forms, whether between husband and wife or parents and children, is seen as inevitable and often justifiable by both the perpetrators and victims. Stigma associated with, and fear of, sexual violence prevent women from moving freely outside the home and participating in community decision-making. Finally, participants have *little access to public services*. Solutions to the problems identified were generally found in families and individuals, and only on occasion were issues such as problems with the judicial system mentioned by the participants.

Women tend to be disadvantaged as candidates and politicians, but can also be discouraged from voting for a number of reasons.¹³ Registering to vote, for instance, can be difficult for women who do not have documentation in their own name or who are displaced during conflict. Polling stations may be far away and many women lack access to transport. Voting hours can be difficult for working women or those with childcare responsibilities. Another concern is when women vote according to their husband's preferences. Men also tend to have disproportionately higher access to voter education resources.

Box 4: Five practical steps to increase women's voting

- Women should be recruited as election administrators and all electoral bodies should adopt non-discriminatory policies.
- Election day should be made a holiday or polling stations should remain open for extended hours and be close to or in central locations.
- Ballots should include photos or party symbols to help illiterate voters.
- Voter and civic education schemes should use female trainers and offer sex-segregated trainings in local languages.
- Separate lines or polling booths should be available for women, depending on local cultural norms.

Different **electoral systems** have the potential to produce very different results for women. According to most studies, proportional representation systems are more “women-friendly”, compared to majoritarian systems, because multi-member districts provide more opportunities for women to be elected. In proportional representation systems, closed lists (where voters choose based on party affiliation only) are more conducive to the election of women candidates than open lists, provided that parties place women high enough up on the party lists or alternate them with men in a zebra style (where every other “stripe” is a woman).¹⁴

The adoption of **quotas** for women parliamentarians has been ‘one of the most decisive, but controversial, ways to ensure that women are represented among elected officials’.¹⁵ Quotas are an important mechanism that can give women the opportunity to enter political decision-making, but it will only work if they are considered as temporary measures rather than long-term solutions to women's marginalisation and are linked to substantive capacity-building support for female candidates. To have impact, quota policies must be specific and stipulate details of implementation, with political parties facing sanctions for non-compliance. Rwanda instituted a “triple ballot” system in 2001 that required citizens to each cast one general vote, one for a youth and one mandatory vote for a female candidate. This resulted in 27 percent of seats for women in local councils and made the election of women more socially acceptable. The constitution of the the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), on the other hand, provides for 50 percent representation of women, but as the provision has not been integrated into electoral laws, women's representation remains considerably lower.¹⁶

¹³ E. Powley and S.N. Anderlini (2004). *Op. cit.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.41.

¹⁶ EASSI and International Alert (2008). *Op. cit.*

One major concern with quotas is that there may not be sufficient numbers of qualified female candidates, if the numbers of female politicians are expected to rise dramatically during a short period of time. **Training and capacity-building for female** political leaders, representatives and candidates is thus an important aspect of promoting women's political participation. Well designed capacity-building programmes can provide women with the leadership, advocacy and technical skills required for effective political participation. As substantive funds are often required for conducting a campaign, capacity-building support should also include support for fundraising and financial resources. CSOs have played an important role across conflict-affected regions in building the capacity of prospective female candidates. Cultural Humanitarian Fund Sukhumi, a women's organisation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia, for example, conducts training programmes for women, local councils and political parties, and runs public awareness-raising campaigns through radio and television with the aim of getting more women into local councils.

Men's support is equally important for programmes that aim to mobilise women to participate politically, particularly given that men are usually the dominant actors in political institutions. Any capacity-building or advocacy strategy should thus target both men and women, instead of focusing awareness-raising efforts solely among women who are excluded from decision-making. In the DRC, for example, there were only 60 women out of the 500 parliamentarians in the transitional parliament which in 2004 voted for the adoption of the principle of parity in the constitution. 'The strategy adopted by women parliamentarians in these circumstances', the report of a consultation workshop in the Great Lakes by Alert and the Eastern Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) observed, 'was to build alliances with selected male colleagues who were well positioned within parliament and their own political parties to push the issue of parity forward'.¹⁷

WHAT THE EU CAN DO TO INCREASE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POLITICAL SPACES

The EU is in a good position to strengthen partner government capacity on gender and democratic governance. **Technical assistance** can be provided to partner governments directly related to reform of electoral systems and management of elections, for example in the following fields:

- *Design of electoral systems*: Analysing the implications for women's representation of different types of electoral systems;
- *Voter registration*: Supporting approaches to registration and training of officials to ensure that women are added to voter lists on an equal basis with men;
- *Voter education*: Ensuring that education reaches women as well as men, and promotes respect in the community for women's equal right to participate; and
- *Access to the polls*: Promoting approaches that reduce risks to voting that could reduce women's participation.¹⁸

It is also important that all EU staff working on electoral support or in elections monitoring have received gender-awareness training and are mandated to support gender equality in political participation.

The EU can also support initiatives by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and research institutes that focus on women's political participation, such as analyses of electoral processes and regulations for their gender equality implications, skills and leadership training for women in preparation for standing as candidates, or advocacy and outreach for women's equal participation in politics.¹⁹ As already noted, men's support is an important pre-requisite for increasing women's political participation. Donors can increase men's support in the course of political dialogue with political parties and institutions, as well as through support for mainstream CSOs that promote a gender equality agenda. It is important that there is a long-term strategy for this and that capacity-building and awareness-raising

¹⁷ Ibid. p.14.

¹⁸ OECD-DAC 2004

¹⁹ Ibid.

activities are continuous, or at least that they start a substantial time before elections. In Burundi, for example, women's organisations have expressed concern that none of the international donors have a plan for preparing for the 2010 elections and many do not see supporting women's participation as a priority. Women's organisations have noted the urgency of starting work in the rural areas as soon as possible. In the case of Burundi, as in many others, the work should be directed towards building local ownership of the electoral process as well as training of possible political candidates.

Box 5: Suggested gender-sensitive indicators that reflect women's access to political spaces²⁰

- Percentage of seats held by women in national parliament. (Data source: administrative data; international databases.)
- Percentage of parliamentary committees chaired by women. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Percentage of parliamentary sessions held outside normal working hours. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Proportion of seats in national parliament reserved for women. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Expenditure targeted at increasing female voter registration in poor electoral districts. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Percentage of eligible women registered as voters in poor electoral districts. (Data source: analysis of electoral roll in poorer geographic areas.)
- Voter turnout (percentage) among registered women in poor electoral districts. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Expenditure on special programmes in civic and voter education targeted at women. (Data source: administrative data and analysis of donor programmes.)
- Ratio of female-to-male voters in elections. (Data source: analysis of voting data.)
- Ratio of female-to-male candidates in elections. (Data source: administrative data.)
- The degree to which electoral laws facilitate or hinder the participation of women as candidates for elections or as voters. (Data source: analysis of laws and regulations.)
- Percentage of seats held by women in local assemblies/councils. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Percentage of seats held by women from underprivileged backgrounds in local assemblies/councils. (Data source: administrative and survey data.)
- Percentage of committees of local assemblies/councils chaired by women. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Percentage of mayors who are women. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Prevalence of women indicating that it was common for women to vote as instructed by male family members. (Data source: reports by CSOs based on surveys and focus groups.)
- Percentage of women who have not registered or who are not voting because of a belief that their vote is meaningless. (Data source: perceptions-based survey.)

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006). *Measuring democratic governance: A framework for selecting pro-poor and gender sensitive indicators*. New York, US: UNDP. Available at http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/governance_indicators_project.html.

PROMOTING WOMEN'S VOICES IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Promoting CSOs in a variety of fields is often a key component of donor support to democratic governance reforms. Civil society is also an important arena where women's voices can be heard and their efforts can have considerable impact. During and after conflict, women organise themselves for a variety of reasons. They meet to discuss issues that are of common concern to them in society as a way to empower themselves and others. Becoming involved in an organisation can also be a useful stepping-stone into politics.²¹ There is often a proliferation of CSOs in post-conflict contexts, as new space for civic engagement is created and donor funds to support these activities become available. The variety of women's organisations in conflict-affected countries can range from small grass-roots organisations to more established organisations and networks at the national and regional levels.²² They can be sources of information on different types of insecurity men and women face, service providers for the poor and the excluded, or provide a platform to bring together women from contending groups during and after conflict. Through programmes focusing on political education, assistance to female candidates and voter registration, some women's organisations facilitate the participation of women in more formal political spaces.

CSOs in conflict-affected countries tend to rely on funding from international institutions, foundations and NGOs, largely due to the absence of alternate sources. This is an important source of support, but the prevalence of project-based funding can create difficulties for small CSOs and women's organisations, in particular insecurity around the sustainability of their activities. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Cooperation Directorate (DAC) Network on Gender Equality observes: 'Small organisations are often not eligible for the large funds that could be used for core activities because of lack of absorptive capacity or the lack of capacity to comply with the conditions related to planning and financial reporting procedures'.²³ The resulting lack of capacity and flexibility is a concern that has been raised on several occasions by Alert's partner organisations in all regions.²⁴

At the same time, it is important that the development and consolidation of women's organisations and movements is not led solely by international actors. As a result of such a top-down approach, local actors often 'learn to comply with the demands of [the] international donor organization instead of finding the resources and strength to first look around and identify their own context specific priorities', Tamar Sabedashvili found in her research conducted on women's political participation in Georgia.²⁵ As the result of top-down activities led by international actors, laws and policies may be passed but resources at the level of implementation rarely correspond to rhetoric. As Sabedashvili argues, in the case of Georgia, women's organisations failed to consolidate and build their lobbying potential when the process was led by outsiders. As external support ends, civil society networks are not necessarily able to maintain momentum and purpose. In addition, international support may reduce the legitimacy of certain organisations in their own contexts if gender-sensitive approaches are seen as external imports.

21 See for example: Kvinna till Kvinna (2004). Op. cit.

22 K. Kumar (2000). *Women and women's organizations in post conflict societies: The role of International Assistance*. Washington DC, US: USAID Centre for Development Information and Evaluation.

23 DAC Network on Gender Equality (July 2008). 'Innovative funding for women's organisations', *Gender equality, women's empowerment and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Issues Brief 3*, p.5. Paris, France: OECD DAC. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/12/40954592.pdf>.

24 See for example, International Alert (2008). Op. cit.

25 T. Sabedashvili (2007). *Gender and democratization: The case of Georgia 1991-2006*. Berlin, Germany and Tbilisi, Georgia: Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

Box 6: Civil society supporting women in politics in Sierra Leone

To ensure that women have access to political spaces and that their participation in public life results in policy change, Sierra Leonean organisations have developed innovative strategies. For example, the 50/50 Group (founded in 2000) works to promote greater participation of women in politics and has grown from a handful of women meeting in borrowed space in Freetown to a nationally recognised organisation actively engaged in building a Sierra Leone in which women can share equally with men in the political decisions that affect their lives. Its efforts in advance of the country's 2002 elections contributed to a dramatic increase in opportunities for women to run as candidates and play more meaningful roles in their political parties. The group's activities include training and mentoring for prospective female candidates in public speaking, advocacy and campaigning, training female members of local ward committees in social accountability, and lobbying. The group also works to hold political parties accountable for 30 percent allocation of places on party lists to women candidates, to negotiate safe seats for women and to lobby traditional authorities to support women's candidature. The group also played a key role in mobilising women in the August 2007 national elections.

Another good example is the work of Enhancing Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives (ENCISS), which has supported women's CSOs in Sierra Leone in putting together a "women's manifesto" to encourage political parties to take up women's issues and include women in their electoral lists. As a result of widespread female mobilisation by women's networks that had been sustained for several years, the government fast-tracked three pieces of legislation right before the 2007 elections, collectively known in Sierra Leone as the "gender bills". The three laws that were adopted were as follows:

- *The law on domestic violence* gives family support units in the police the necessary tools to either mediate disputes or to support women who decide to take criminal or civil action when their rights are violated. The law also requires that the government provide temporary safe houses to victims of domestic violence.
- *The law on the registration of customary marriages* requires the registering of customary marriages and divorces and sets the minimum age for marriage at 18. The law provides women with legal rights in customary marriage, making this a great step forward for rural women in particular, who are less likely to be able to get married or divorced within the formal system.
- *The law on inheritance rights* ensures that women have access to the property they are rightfully entitled to when their husband dies, without interference from extended family members.

Since the elections in 2007, ENCISS have set up a "Women's Election Watch" programme to monitor whether the recommendations of the manifesto are implemented by the new government. The organisation has continued this work by setting up the "Honoring Women's Initiatives" programme in early 2008, which serves as a platform for women's electoral campaigns for the forthcoming local elections.

It is also important to consider the impact of civil society more generally on gender relations and on women's political participation in particular. Experience in several countries has shown that the media and religious institutions, for example, can inflame negative attitudes towards women's economic, social and political participation. In the Great Lakes region, for example, the Catholic Church has proved to be a notable threat to women's access to political spaces, as the joint research of Alert and EASSI has revealed:

In Bukavu [in the DRC], there were vicious smear campaigns against certain women candidates, with their morality being called into question. The smear campaigns were orchestrated by rival male candidates, with the full backing and participation of the Catholic Church. Likewise in Rwanda, the Catholic Church strongly opposed women's participation in politics and sent an open letter to the government requesting the removal of the provision of 30 percent representation for women from the post-transition constitution.²⁶

26 EASSI and International Alert (2008). *Op. cit.* p.37.

It is thus important that support to women's CSOs is linked with broader awareness-raising and a changing public discourse around gender issues, so that women in civil society are not marginalised or excluded.

WHAT THE EU CAN DO TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S VOICES IN CIVIL SOCIETY

The EU can support initiatives that aim at increasing women's political participation or work to build capacity of civil society to monitor policy implementation and act as an oversight mechanism for various peacebuilding processes.

The EU can develop strategies to fund small CSOs, including women's groups. One option is to channel money through women's funds,²⁷ which can provide small, flexible, multi-year grants, including core funding. Women's funds have strong links with grass-roots civil society and are often in touch with non-mainstream groups that may be focused on issues considered controversial, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights or abortion rights. Another strategy is to channel funds through international NGOs with a focus on gender equality, which in many cases share the features of women's funds.²⁸ A number of donors have adopted simplified funding processes to encourage smaller CSOs to apply, for example by allowing applications to be written in any language, keeping forms simple and straightforward and ensuring reporting processes are flexible and not time-intensive. Ideally, to be meaningful and able to capture long-term change, evaluations should be participatory. Finally, multi-donor funds and harmonised approaches can be used so that organisations are asked to submit only one yearly institutional report that could also be used when reporting to other donors.²⁹

Box 7: Suggested gender-sensitive indicators that reflect women's participation in civil society³⁰

- Number of organisations supporting women at local levels in cases of gender-based violence. (Data source: administrative data on registered CSOs.)
- Number of organisations supporting women to participate in political spaces at local level. (Data source: administrative data on registered CSOs.)
- Number of women in leadership positions in CSOs or holding office in associations and unions. (Data source: administrative data on registered CSOs.)
- Number of CSOs that address gender equality or women's rights within their programmes and activities. (Data source: administrative data on registered CSOs.)

27 See for example: The Global Fund for Women, at <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org>; Mama Cash, at <http://www.mamacash.org>; or The Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights, at <http://www.urgentactionfund.org>.

28 DAC Network on Gender Equality (July 2008). Op. cit.

29 Ibid.

30 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006). Op. cit.

TURNING NUMBERS INTO POLICY TRANSFORMATION

Just because I am a woman, I will not fight for women's rights.³¹

For many women activists, getting women elected with the use of quotas is only half the battle. Quotas can guarantee that women are elected in greater numbers but they cannot guarantee that those women will be gender-sensitive or responsive to women's issues.³²

A key question around women's political participation is how to translate legal advancements and increases in women's representation into substantive change in the status of women and all aspects of public policy in post-conflict societies. A major concern that is often raised is the extent to which female politicians are able to promote gender issues and represent women in general. Female politicians often have limited capacity and space to advance the policy agendas of their choice. Their roles tend to be in the lower echelons of party hierarchies and only a minority of women are in a position to influence key decisions. Women who make it to positions of power within political institutions, for example as members of parliament, often lack the technical and political support required to undertake their tasks effectively, are sidelined into less powerful ministries or may be faced with a situation in which they cannot speak out about sensitive issues and have to follow the party line.

Furthermore, female politicians are often rather disconnected from the majority of women (and men) in their country. The relationship between women in politics and women in civil society can be problematic, but there is an even wider disconnect between elite women – both in civil society and political institutions – and the rest of the female population, particularly in rural areas. As a result, women in power are not necessarily able to address gender issues in their work or represent a broader constituency of women.

Despite these obstacles, there are several examples where female politicians have been able to affect positive change. In Rwanda, for example, the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians initiated and led the development of the Gender-Based Violence Bill of 2006, which was the only substantive piece of legislation introduced since the 2003 elections by members of parliament, rather than by the executive. Rwandan female parliamentarians have also conducted wide-ranging consultations with women and men at the grass-roots in the development of the Gender-Based Violence Bill, as well as to discuss district development plans.³³

Women's CSOs can play an important role in trying to bridge the differences between groups of women and improve the chance of substantive political participation by women by advocating for more gender-sensitive policies, providing expertise to government ministries and international organisations, and monitoring the implementation of policy commitments. It is also important that government structures have the required capacity and will to develop gender-sensitive policies whether or not women are involved in every aspect of this work. Engaging men at different levels is thus an important prerequisite for ensuring that policy in all sectors becomes more gender-sensitive. In the case of Rwanda's Gender-Based Violence Bill, female MPs were able to strategically engage male colleagues, for example by inviting them to join public consultations or to co-sponsor the bill, and thus demonstrated that gender-based violence is not solely a women's issue. 'By engaging men so

³¹ Bosnian Minister of Foreign Trade as cited in E. Rehn and E.J. Sirleaf (2002). *Op. cit.* p.83.

³² E. Powley and S.N. Anderlini (2004). *Op. cit.* p.41.

³³ E. Pearson (2008). *Demonstrating legislative leadership: The introduction of Rwanda's gender-based violence bill.* Washington DC, US: The Initiative for Inclusive Security; EASSI and International Alert (2008). *Op. cit.*

effectively', Elizabeth Pearson reflects, 'members of the FFRP [the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians] sensitized their colleagues to gender-based violence and cultivated broader support for the bill'.³⁴

Decentralisation has been noted as another entry point for increasing the quality of women's representation. In Sierra Leone, for example, as the government's functions are decentralised, increased space has been created for women to access decision-making at the local and district level. In addition to openings in the formal political sphere, new women's CSOs have also emerged at the district level, which can be more representative of rural women than CSOs and politicians based in Freetown.³⁵ It is important to note, however, that local governance is often even more responsive to informal institutions, systems and relations of power than national-level politics, and these remain patriarchal and unfriendly to women.³⁶

WHAT THE EU CAN DO TO PROMOTE GENDER-SENSITIVE POLICIES

There are a number of ways to promote meaningful participation by women and more gender-sensitive policies through EU policy dialogue with third countries. European Commission delegations and ESDP missions should **raise gender equality issues in high-level consultations, negotiation of agreements with governments, formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and sector-wide approach coordination groups**.³⁷ The EU can also promote and support the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators and gender expertise in national and sectoral monitoring frameworks.

Donors can support **capacity-building of agencies with a mandate for the advancement of women**. The DAC Network on Gender Equality reflects: 'Drawing on the expertise of national and local gender equality specialists is fundamental to the development of relevant, sustainable policies and processes that will have real impacts'.³⁸ Such agencies include gender ministries and national women's agencies, as well as non-governmental or semi-governmental organisations that conduct research and advocacy on gender issues and support women's participation in political spaces.

The integration of **sex-disaggregated statistics** in national statistical systems is one of the most important and basic elements for gender-sensitive policy and should be a goal of considerable capacity-building efforts.³⁹ Information is also required on the extent to which resources are allocated in a gender-sensitive manner, to ensure policy commitments are matched with adequate human and financial resources both at the EU and among national governments. In this respect, the EU can learn a lot from existing initiatives, such as UN Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) **gender-responsive budgeting** work.⁴⁰

Donors should also provide technical assistance and resources for the **development of national action plans** for the implementation of international mandates, such as SCR 1325. Although most efforts to create National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of SCR 1325 have thus far been concentrated in European countries, clear action plans are even more important in conflict-affected contexts to ensure that SCR 1325 is fully implemented. Donors are in a good position to support partner governments in the development of NAPs. A holistic approach to gender, peace and security issues allows governments to tackle the variety of obstacles that inhibit women's political participation in post-conflict countries.⁴¹

34 E. Pearson (2008). Op. cit. p.6.

35 International Alert (2008). Op. cit.

36 J. Beall (2004). 'Decentralisation and engendering democracy: Lessons from local government reform in South Africa', *Crisis States Programme Working Paper*, No. 54. London, UK: Crisis States Development Research Centre, Development Studies Institute and London School of Economics.

37 See for example: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2008). Op. cit.

38 DAC Network on Gender Equality (2008). Op. cit.

39 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2008). Op. cit.

40 'Gender Responsive Budgeting - UNIFEM GRB Initiatives', United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), at <http://www.gender-budgets.org/content/view/15/187/>.

41 For more details, see: A. Sheriff with K. Barnes (2008). *Enhancing the EU response to women and armed conflict, with particular reference to development policy, Study for the Slovenian Presidency*. Maastricht, the Netherlands: European Centre for Development Policy Management. pp.62-66.

The European Commission should endorse the creation of NAPs and provide funds for consultative processes and implementation of agreed action plans. EU Member States and CSOs based in Europe can play an important role in ensuring that expertise and lessons learned from developing NAPs in Europe is shared with key stakeholders in conflict-affected countries. In Liberia, for example, Alert is collaborating with the Ministry for Gender and Development, the UN Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) Gender Unit and partner organisations to make the process of developing a NAP for the implementation of SCR 1325 as participatory as possible and based on the experiences of rural men and women.

Box 8: Suggested gender-sensitive indicators that reflect policy transformation⁴²

- Views of women/men on the problems that they consider to be most important compared with those issues that are given priority in the national agenda. (Data source: perceptions-based survey.)
- Percentage of new laws which as bills were accompanied by a written technical analysis, opinion papers and/or legislative study on the impact of such laws on women/men. (Data source: observation and analysis of public meetings and hearings and legislative debates; interviews with relevant CSOs.)
- Number of parliamentarians benefiting from gender-sensitivity training, including gender budgeting. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Legislation against domestic violence. (Data source: analysis of legislation.)
- Employment legislation on issues such as maternity leave. (Data source: analysis of legislation.)
- Level of confidence among women on whether the parliament is adequately addressing issues that affect women. (Data source: perceptions-based survey of women.)
- Percentage of local authorities whose staff undertook gender-sensitivity training within a given time period. (Data source: administrative data.)
- Perceptions of women and men on whether there has been an improvement in the provision of public services. (Data source: survey data.)

42 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006). Op. cit.

CONCLUSION

This paper has recommended a number of concrete steps that the EU can take to fulfil its obligations to promote meaningful political participation for women in its peacebuilding and governance work. However, there are three important prerequisites for these strategies to have their intended effect.

First, in addition to specific steps to support women in politics and civil society, it is important that all EU interventions in the field of governance and democratisation are gender-sensitive and informed by an in-depth understanding of each particular context. To contribute to this process, any of the indicators suggested in this paper can be used for governance policy and programming to help ensure that a gender perspective is included.

Second, meaningful participation for women requires that principles of democratic governance be in place, which can be a challenge in post-conflict countries. Although promoting women's participation in political spaces is an important goal in itself, we should not lose focus of the wider context or assume that political institutions with more women will necessarily be more democratic. However, as donors support the development of more democratic, transparent and accountable institutions, it is important that a gender-sensitive approach enables women to benefit from and take part in these new institutions. Empowering women and giving them access to opportunities in the political sphere will make an important contribution to the broader peacebuilding process.

Finally, it should be underlined that peacebuilding interventions in different sectors provide an important opportunity to build on and consolidate the space opened up during conflict for transforming gender roles and supporting the more active and equal involvement of women in politics. Real progress for women in politics relies on a combination of political will and capacity at all levels in governmental and international institutions, as well as a strong and active civil society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in this report, the EU can do a number of practical things to support the participation of women in post-conflict political institutions. In particular, the EU should:

- **Promote political participation for women and gender-sensitive policy in its political dialogue** with partner governments, as well as other international and regional institutions, in order to make sure women are better represented in peace negotiations and to get gender more consistently onto policy agendas.
- **Provide technical assistance and resources to partner governments** for gender-sensitive design of electoral systems and development of policies and plans.
- **Support local CSOs**, particularly women's groups and those with a gender equality agenda, through accessible funding and capacity-building.
- **Support initiatives that build the capacity of female candidates** in elections early and consistently.
- **Mobilise the support of men** at all levels of society and make the case that increased access to opportunities and decision-making for women results in a better society for all.
- **Support research and data collection** through technical assistance for national statistical systems, integration of gender indicators into monitoring and evaluation systems, and gender-responsive budget analysis. More applied research is also needed on the impact of quotas and other policies aimed at supporting women's political participation.
- **Ensure that a commitment to women's participation is reflected in all EU policy, programming and practice.** The EU cannot advocate for women's political participation in partner government institutions if its own institutions have very few women, particularly in senior positions.

ANNEX

INTERNATIONAL MANDATES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S EQUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The EU and its Member States are required, by a number of international mandates, including key European agreements and instruments, to promote women's equitable participation in social and political decision-making in their societies.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) is a binding human rights treaty that requires all parties to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; [and]
- To participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country'.⁴³

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) calls for women's participation in decision-making, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Specifically, it reaffirms 'the importance of [women's] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'.⁴⁴

The **Treaty establishing the European Community** states that all European Commission activities shall aim to promote equality between men and women.⁴⁵ It is further stated in the **Cotonou Agreement (2000)** that gender is to be mainstreamed into every level of development cooperation. **The European Consensus on Development** has similar commitments to gender equality, stating it should be a 'core part of all policy strategies'. In particular:

Equality between men and women and the active involvement of both genders in all aspects of social progress are key prerequisites for poverty reduction. The gender aspect must be addressed in close conjunction with poverty reduction, social and political development and economic growth, and mainstreamed in all aspects of development cooperation. Gender equality will be promoted through support to equal rights, access and control over resources and political and economic voice.⁴⁶

43 As cited in International Alert and Women Waging Peace (2004). *Inclusive security, sustainable peace: A toolkit for advocacy and action*. London, UK and Washington DC, US: International Alert and Women Waging Peace. Appendix, p.12.

44 Ibid. Chapter 4, p.44.

45 European Union (December 2002). *Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and of the Treaty Establishing the European Community*. Official Journal of the European Union C325. Available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2002:325:SOM:EN:HTML>.

46 European Parliament Council Commission (2006). *Joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: "The European Consensus"*. Official Journal of the European Union C046/1. Available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2006:046:SOM:EN:HTML>.

European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) states that European Commission assistance shall address:

[...] promoting the equal participation of men and women in social, economic and political life, and supporting equality of opportunity, and the participation and political representation of women; [...]

The promotion and protection of gender equality, the rights of the child, rights of indigenous peoples, rights of persons with disabilities, and principles such as empowerment, participation, non-discrimination of vulnerable groups and accountability shall be taken into account whenever relevant by all assistance measures referred to in this Regulation.⁴⁷

Similarly, the **Instrument for Stability (IfS)** has the following references to women's political participation:

[...] support for the development of democratic, pluralistic state institutions, including measures to enhance the role of women in such institutions [...]

[S]upport for measures to support the development and organisation of civil society and its participation in the political process, including measures to enhance the role of women in such processes and measures to promote independent, pluralist and professional media.⁴⁸

The EU has made commitments to implement UNSCR 1325 in ESDP operations and has developed a framework for gender mainstreaming. **The Council Conclusions on Promoting Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming in Crisis Management** calls for a gender perspective to be fully integrated in peacebuilding. Moreover:

All reconstruction efforts should draw on the knowledge and expertise of women's groups, and networks within the community. The Council encourages the development of targeted EU activities to promote gender equality and the role of women in post-conflict situations. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of actively supporting women's participation in civic education and political processes, including [the] right to vote and stand as candidates in elections.⁴⁹

The recent **Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security** (2008) outlines a common EU approach to implementing the two United Nations Security Council Resolutions. In the field of Governance and Civil Society interventions, the Comprehensive approach includes the priorities of:

- Promoting women in political decision-making and government bodies: encourage an increased participation of women as voters and candidates at all levels; and
- Supporting community-based women's groups and organisations and other non-state actors in the protection of women's rights. These groups provide women with a space to be informed and trained, and to exercise their civil and political rights. They also have a role in the monitoring of public policies, including national and local budgets.⁵⁰

47 The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2006a). *Regulation (EC) No. 1889/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20th December 2006 on establishing a financing instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide*. Official Journal of the European Union L386/1. Available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:386:SOM:EN:HTML>.

48 The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2006b). *Regulation (EC) No. 1717/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15th November 2006 establishing an Instrument for Stability*. Official Journal of the European Union L327. Available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:327:SOM:EN:HTML>.

49 Cited in Consilium (2008). *Mainstreaming human rights and gender into European Security and Defence Policy: Compilation of Relevant Documents*. Brussels, Belgium: European Communities. p.20.

50 Council of the European Union (2008). *Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security*, 15671/1/08 REV1. Available at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st15/st15671-re01.en08.pdf>.

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