**Civil Society Space Report – Input from UN Women**

**Examples of good practices and lessons learned:**

UN Women as the lead entity on gender equality and women’s empowerment within the United Nations system, works closely in partnerships with civil society organizations and women’s groups at all levels as key stakeholders to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Civil society, particularly women’s organizations, play a critical role in advancing gender equality and women’s human rights, and in holding governments accountable for implementation of and compliance with international norms and standards. At field level, UN Women is working with civil society as implementing and advocacy partners.

1. **Long-term support and access to resources and funding**

* Through two grant-making mechanisms – the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women – UN Women provides grants to implement innovative and high-impact initiatives that translate policy commitments into tangible results for women and girls around the world – especially the most excluded and marginalized, with a particular focus to end violence against women, increase women’s opportunities and strengthen women’s participation and leadership at local and national levels.
* In Bangladesh, UN Women has since 2013 worked with a civil society partner BRAC, to support 800 women’s groups in communities that are disadvantaged, often landless, and experiencing impacts of climatic change in coastal areas and flood-prone districts. Each group prioritized the poorest of their members to receive further skills training and livelihood inputs. Approximately one-half of the 3,200 women who received these inputs have generated enough profits to expand their business and increase production. This includes, among others, expanding presence (size of business) and ownership at the local market place, asset building and diversifying through purchases of livestock, engaging support from their husbands to maximise the economic benefits of the businesses such as leasing land.

1. **Strengthened dialogue mechanisms and enhancing policy space for the inclusion of enable gender equality advocates and civil society in decision-making**

UN Women has set up civil society advisory groups (CSAGs) at the global, regional and national levels to build on existing partnerships and increase our strategic dialogue with civil society partners in countries, regionally and internationally. So far, 42 CSAGs have been established and more are in the process of being set up. The goals for the groups are to foster dialogue and engagement, with a view to advance goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment; to enable UN Women to consult with civil society and draw upon the rich and diverse expertise, experience, outreach and networks, perspective and knowledge that civil society can offer; and to serve as an advocacy mechanism to accelerate the political commitment and consequent action to achieve gender equality.

In 2014, UN Women supported civil society organizations and gender equality advocates in 28 countries[[1]](#footnote-1) to participate in national dialogues on women’s participation and leadership. UN Women also provided support to gender equality advocates in 34 countries to influence constitutions and policies to increase women’s participation.

***Ebola response:***

* Since the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was declared an international public health emergency in 2014, UN Women was facilitating mobilization and information efforts targeting women, who were disproportionately affected by this disease, coordinating UN efforts to address gender within the response, and supporting the collection of sex-disaggregated data. UN Women led the development and implementation of UN gender strategies and worked with national partners to undertake gender needs assessments in Sierra Leone and Liberia, resulting in increased attention to women and girls affected by the disease.
* At the regional level, UN Women engaged with the Mano River Union and countries within (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire) to harness women’s leadership and social mobilization in containing the epidemic. Specific efforts and programmes in Liberia and Sierra Leone included: working with local radio stations and with traditional leaders to raise awareness and aid prevention; producing educational materials to train health workers; supporting orphaned children and stigmatized survivors; ensuring that women’s needs are reflected in all aspects of the UN’s humanitarian response; providing economic grants for hard-hit cross-border traders. UN Women also formed part of the Ebola recovery assessment team in order to bring the voices of women and girls to the table, ensuring their needs and interests are reflected in the planning and implementation of the recovery efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

***Syria:***

* In support of Syrian women’s leadership and engagement in peace and reconciliation processes, UN Women in close partnership with the Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, play the role of neutral convenor in bringing together diverse Syrian women’s civil society and creating the space for them to discuss ideas, strategize on a vision for peace, and implement a clear action plan for how to support peace efforts along all tracks – from top-tiered Track I negotiations to building a home-grown constituency for peace.As a result,Syrian women’s civil society were at the table in the Geneva consultations in 2015, an attempt to reignite the peace process.
* UN Women’s engagement in support of Syrian women closely follows the model of support provided to women civil society in peace and security contexts worldwide to strengthen their participation, priorities and voice in peace processes. The core components of UN Women’s strategy are to develop women’s capacity in all areas of conflict resolution and post-conflict planning and peacebuilding; advocate for women’s inclusion in all decision making forums including formal negotiations; and support the building of a common platform amongst diverse civil society*.*

***Nigeria***

* To prevent and mitigate gender-based electoral violence, UN Women has supported the implementation of a pilot Women’s Situation Room (WSR) during the Osun State Election (August 2014) in partnership with the Nigerian Women’s Platform for Peaceful Elections. The programme was later rolled out nationally during the Presidential Election (March 2015), in partnership with the Angie Brooks International Centre, the Economic Community of West African States, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Nigerian Police Force.
* A total of 300 female monitors were deployed to 10 states across Nigeria. The situation room provided a platform for women’s groups to strategize, plan and respond rapidly to election related issues in a coordinated manner.

***Columbia***

* UN Women in Colombia has significantly contributed to women participation in the peace process, and to position the women´s agenda in the peace talks, through a sustained and innovative strategy. Two women plenipotentiary appointed to participate in the government delegation in La Havana received UNW support. In addition, a Gender Sub-commission was set up in September 2014, between government and FARC-EP delegations, to ensure that women’s issues are properly discussed in La Havana and women´s requests are taken into considerations in the final peace agreements.
* Additionally, five victims’ delegations travelled to the Havana peace talks table, a total of 60, of which 37 were women (62%). Women victims’ voices were heard and contributed to the dialogue around the 4th point of negotiations, “victims”, which deals with Transitional Justice measures. UN Women supported the composition of the delegations, ensured women´s representation and the selection of different forms of violation of their rights to be heard by the negotiators.

1. **Governments, civil society and other relevant partners convened, and evidence-based dialogue facilitated, in intergovernmental processes.**

In 2014, UN Women worked with civil society in 16 countries[[2]](#footnote-2) to convene national/regional consultations to facilitate the integration of civil society perspectives in intergovernmental processes.

* At the regional level, during the High Level Meeting on “Implementing the MDGs for Women and Girls, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Arab Region: The Post 2015 development agenda”, civil society discussed gender equality and empowerment in the League of Arab States for the first time. Civil society consultations leading up to CSW 58 had called for a comprehensive post-2015 development agenda including a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women´s empowerment. This consultation informed a government meeting, attended by Arab governments and permanent representatives to the Arab League, where the ‘Cairo Declaration’ was endorsed. This declaration calls for a transformative gender equality and women’s empowerment agenda in the region, including on topics which have previously been difficult to breach, such as reproductive health rights and calling for the referral of violence against women cases to a formal justice system rather than traditional mechanisms. The declaration is the first of its kind in the region.

1. **Supportive regulatory frameworks at national level**

* The Tunisian constitution, adopted on 26 January 2014 is considered among the most compliant with International standards regarding women’s human rights in the Arab region. UN Women strongly advocated for the inclusion of gender equality in the new Tunisian Constitution. To this effect, UN Women focused on strengthening capacities of various NGOs in order to provide them with strong arguments about the constitution and women’s rights that enabled them to carry out evidence-based outreach and advocacy within their respective communities. UN Women, in partnership with the Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF), has led discussions and debates among parliamentarians and governmental decision-makers on gender equality issues during key moments of the constitution drafting process. UN Women also organized a sub-regional expert roundtable on constitutional drafting and integration of gender equality.
* In Uganda, following UN Women’s support to CSOs in Northern Uganda and to Parliamentarians in crafting the resolution, Parliament unanimously passed a resolution calling for the establishment of special programmes for people affected by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) war in northern Uganda. The resolution, adopted on 9th April 2014, urges the Government of Uganda to establish a gender-sensitive Transitional Justice Policy and enact the Transitional Justice Act that will pave way for, among other things, a reparations fund to compensate women and men who were affected by the twenty year insurgency led by the Lord’s Resistance Army.

1. Afghanistan, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, State of Palestine, Tanzania, Thailand, and Tonga. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Australia, Barbados, Cameroon, Canada, Fiji, Guatemala, India, Kiribati, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sweden, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States, and Vanuatu [↑](#footnote-ref-2)