Women gathered at one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to share experiences in fostering peace in their communities.
IT’S A LONG-STANDING GLOBAL AGREEMENT: WOMEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE AND LEAD IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

Recognizing that right, more countries than ever before have moved towards gender parity in parliaments, local governments and political parties, as has the United Nations in its upper echelons. Yet to fully realize this right in our lifetime, much remains to be done. UN Women collaborates with legislatures, electoral management bodies, women’s networks and other United Nations entities to end stereotypes that keep women out of leadership roles, increase the number of women leaders, and build their skills and capacities. We help countries plan and budget based on gender equality principles, measure progress through better gender data and guarantee equality under the law.

CLAIMING WOMEN’S RIGHTFUL ROLE IN POLITICS

TUNISIA is passing through its second revolution in recent years – a women’s revolution. When polls for local elections closed in 2018, women had taken 47 per cent of the seats, the highest share by far in the Arab States and one of the highest in the world. Leading up to the poll, UN Women was a tireless supporter for women realizing their rights to participate in politics. After collaboration with women’s advocates and others to push through a 2016 electoral law requiring gender parity on electoral lists, training helped women candidates develop aptitudes to run and win. UN Women-sponsored research on women voters provided candidates with the insights needed to craft appealing campaigns, while gender-sensitive monitoring of elections entailed deploying 75 election observers who were alert to the barriers deterring women’s participation.

UN Women convened all of the actors in the 2018 general elections in ZIMBABWE (government ministries, academia, civil society groups, gender advocates, security officers, Parliament and independent commissions on gender and human rights, among others) through a “Gender Observatory”. The first institution of its kind in the country, the Observatory drew on UN Women’s global experience of integrating gender issues in the electoral cycle. Each observer was charged with encouraging women’s participation, better understanding women’s equal rights and roles in elections and monitoring obstacles that might stand in the way.

IN TUNISIA’S 2018 LOCAL ELECTIONS, WOMEN TOOK 47% OF THE SEATS, THE HIGHEST SHARE BY FAR IN THE ARAB STATES AND ONE OF THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD.
Around the world, over 2.5 billion women and girls suffer the consequences of discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protections. In 2019, UN Women joined other leading international and regional organizations to roll out a road map for eliminating discriminatory laws. It calls for fast-tracking repeals in 100 countries by 2023, removing some of the most egregious legal barriers. Over 50 million women and girls will no longer live with legal provisions allowing them to be paid less, for example, or denied full citizenship, among other priority issues. The initiative will build on UN Women’s significant global track record in working with countries to ‘level the law’. In 2018, assistance helped UKRAINE repeal discriminatory provisions against women in the armed forces. Women lawyers in AFGHANISTAN gained skills in gender-responsive legislative analysis and advocacy.

Across the ARAB STATES, legislative reforms are unfolding to protect women’s rights, yet the law still frequently fails to deliver for women and girls. In 2018, UN Women convened close to 200 gender experts, activists, legislators, jurists and government officials to debate what more must be done to end discrimination in laws and policies. The event followed the release of a UN Women-sponsored study of laws and policies in 18 Arab countries. The study was conducted with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia. One of the most comprehensive assessments ever of these issues, it shed much-needed light on gender in constitutions and a variety of laws. The findings provide sound evidence for future action. None of the 18 countries, for instance, grant women equal rights in marriage, divorce, guardianship and custody of children.

After UN Women shared a demonstrated practice from Mexico, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO became the first of four Caribbean nations to establish a Gender Equality Protocol for Judicial Officers. It provides detailed guidance to make sure that women can access justice not just in theory, but in practice. In applying it, judicial officers can better respond to the difficulties some women face in getting to court, such as missed appearances related to a lack of childcare. Officers have reported being more informed on how to protect women’s rights in cases determining child support and responding to gender-based violence.

In INDONESIA, UN Women supported the development of a training module that helps judges avoid gender discriminatory attitudes and stereotyped behaviours when adjudicating cases involving women in conflict with the law. The module has been adopted and piloted by Indonesia’s Supreme Court, which has committed to institutionalizing it in the training of in-service judges.
Across the **UNITED NATIONS**, UN Women coordinates actions to advance gender equality, accelerating momentum on many levels. In 2018, for the first time, gender parity was attained in both the UN Senior Management Group and among the Resident Coordinators who oversee country operations. Based on extensive consultations, UN Women issued the *Enabling Environment Guidelines and Supplementary Guidance*. The guidance provides comprehensive recommendations to achieve a working environment that prizes inclusivity, diversity and equality. A network of over 200 gender focal points continuously advocates for the advancement of women within individual organizations.

Updated accountability frameworks have mainstreamed gender into United Nations entities and country teams using the second generation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. The updates more closely aligned the frameworks to UN reform priorities, including new guidance on the 2030 Agenda. Sixty-six United Nations entities reported on performance indicators under the updated UN-SWAP; 24 UN country teams used the updated scorecard. Thirty-two teams piloted UN INFO, which includes a mandatory gender marker to keep spending in line with commitments to gender equality.

UN Women works on institutional changes within national governments as well. A partnership with the Legislative Assembly, the Ministry of Justice and the Women Mayors and Councillors’ Association in **BOLIVIA** hosted regional and national gatherings attended by over 20,000 women. The meetings shared information on international norms and standards, which women used to design a national agenda for dismantling patriarchy. The President of Bolivia created a Cabinet dedicated to implementing the agenda, which spells out measures to realize women’s rights under seven pillars. Early priorities include better integration of gender equality in regional and local development plans, fully accounting for women’s economic contributions in the national budget, and enacting a law upholding sexual and reproductive rights.

As the ** REPUBLIC OF SERBIA** prepared its fourth report on national efforts to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), UN Women worked with women’s non-governmental organizations on parallel “shadow” reports that actively encouraged the participation of women frequently left out of such discussions: rural women, older women, women with disabilities and Roma women. After considering the reports, the UN committee that oversees CEDAW urged the Government of Serbia to take measures to achieve the equal representation of all women in all areas of public and political life, to provide free legal aid for all cases of gender-based discrimination, and to strengthen the prevention of and responses to gender-based violence.

Towards opening more space for women to express their voices in media outlets in the **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**, where most journalists are men and gender stereotyping is common, UN Women has provided training on gender-balanced reporting. It has also stood behind the creation of a network of journalists committed to content free of sexism.
The Fund for Gender Equality

The Fund for Gender Equality is UN Women’s global grantmaking mechanism and multidonor fund dedicated to supporting civil society in its key role in realizing the SDGs. The Fund seeks to accelerate women’s economic and political empowerment.

In ALBANIA, years of advocacy led by the Association for Women’s Security and Peace (AWSP) contributed to the Government’s adoption of the first National Action Plan on UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The numbers of women in leadership positions in the State Police and the Ministry of Defense have already increased as a result. AWSP galvanized previously fragmented civil society groups around the first national coalition on resolution 1325. It is now testing new approaches to strengthen the coalition’s capacities to monitor implementation of the national plan and generate further public awareness.

In SAMOA, through the support of the Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG), historically marginalized Nofotane women – women married to men from a different village and living with their in-laws and often exploited as domestic servants – have improved their access to sustainable employment. SVSG provided livelihood trainings to nearly 5,200 Nofotane women living in 182 villages, linked them to job markets and raised awareness among 630 employers about the legal responsibilities when employing them. Nofotane women now have an increased presence in jobs that are productive, secure and deliver a fair income.

Supported by the Fund, women-led organizations from a handful of countries have learned to apply human-centred design tools that boost engagement among project participants. In PARAGUAY, for example, the Centro de Documentación y Estudios helped establish a radio programme produced and led by domestic workers. The number of women planning to join domestic workers organizations rose by 40 per cent after only five weeks.

Photo: The launch of Albania’s first National Action Plan on UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security has already led to more women leaders in the police.

IN 2018, THE FUND MANAGED 25 PROJECTS WITH A VALUE OF USD 7.6 MILLION REACHING 82,000 DIRECT BENEFICIARIES.
NUMBERS TELL A STORY. OR DON'T, IF THEY ARE MISSING, as is the case with sex-disaggregated statistics in much of the world. Too often, statistics fail to measure the specific issues and obstacles women, men, boys and girls face, such as why women are in or out of the labour market, and how pervasive the problem of domestic violence really is.

UN Women leads a global initiative, “Making Every Woman and Girl Count”, that marshals considerable technical expertise and a number of influential partners. The programme is committed to developing data that tells women’s and girls’ stories on all issues, and informs policy and budget choices that accelerate gender equality.

Collaboration with the World Bank, for example, produced the first ever global estimates of poverty by sex. Partnership with the International Labour Organization has resulted in new figures for 88 countries breaking down labour force participation rates by sex and marital status. The exercise has provided some of the first compelling evidence of how marriage, often linked to high burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, keeps women out of labour markets.

In 2018, UN Women joined the Government of MEXICO to launch the Center of Excellence on Gender Statistics, which will push forward the frontiers of gender statistics around the world by sharing research and innovation. Mexico also hosted the first Global Conference on Gender Equality and the Measurement of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work, a dynamic exchange on gender, data and the global goals among representatives of national statistical agencies, international experts and leading academics. COLOMBIA is among the countries already moving forward with a new national agreement on innovative gender measurements capturing women’s status according to their level of income.

Six pathfinder countries under Making Every Woman and Girl Count – BANGLADESH, KENYA, MOROCCO, NEPAL, TANZANIA and UGANDA – conducted national assessments of gender statistics in 2018. KENYA, for example, has committed to integrating gender dimensions in all data-collection activities, including at the county level, where governments have a central role in making choices related to public services.