

Promoting Gender Equality in the OSCE



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Visit the OSCE Gender Webpage at:
www.osce.org/secretariat/13072.html

Preface

Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, OSCE Secretary General

The Charter for European Security, adopted at the OSCE's Istanbul Summit in 1999, laid the groundwork for a new and enhanced perception of women's role in society by declaring that "the full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE area. We are committed to making equality between men and women an integral part of our policies."

In adopting the OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and endorsing the policy to evaluate progress on an annual basis, we have followed suit in affirming that "gender equality contributes to comprehensive security, which is a goal of OSCE activities in all three dimensions" – the politico-military, the economic and environmental and the human dimension.

In 2006, the first evaluation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality provided proof positive that the OSCE is "committed to gender equality based on the conviction that women are equally well-qualified as men and that no job should be a preserve of either sex."

Today, if we seek truly to stop the cycles of conflict, violence and war, if we are to transform confrontation into collaboration and if we are to create a world where human rights are universally respected, then it is time to "mainstream" gender equality into such areas as conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation, community policing and peace-building.

Especially we at the OSCE, where security is an integral part of our identity, have a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between commitment and implementation as this booklet suggests. Let us do just that.

Marc Perrin de Brichambaut
*Secretary General
Organization for Security
and Co-operation in Europe*



Introduction

Beatrix Attinger Colijn, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

The first task the newly appointed gender experts of the Secretariat and the ODIHR chose to assume in 1998 was an assessment trip to the two largest field operations, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. The Focal Point on Gender Issues of the Secretariat and the Adviser on Women's Rights of the ODIHR concluded that the Organization lacked a policy to promote a working environment free of harassment and discrimination including on the basis of gender, and that among staff members in general there was a lack of gender awareness.

In 1999, a Gender Adviser was appointed to assist the Focal Point on Gender Issues in the Secretariat to develop a policy on the prevention of harassment and discrimination on the one hand and a guide for OSCE staff on gender awareness on the other hand.

Over the next seven years, the Organization tackled the complexity and cross-dimensional character of gender issues. It went from a focus on gender issues as a matter of gender balance in staffing and a workplace free of discrimination and harassment, to the integration of gender-related and family friendly elements in policies. It adopted the first Action Plan for Gender Issues, which recognized the need to raising gender awareness among staff, and consequently outlined the structural set-up of Focal Points to monitor progress. The Plan also assigned specific tasks to the different OSCE structures.

Finally in 2004, a new Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality was developed and endorsed on Ministerial level. This Plan stipulates the integration of a gender aspect in all programmes of the Organization and expresses the obligation to gender mainstream all policies, programmes and projects. It was not until the adoption of this new Action Plan that the promotion of gender equality was made so strongly a cross-cutting issue in all three dimensions, the politico-military, the economic-environmental and the human dimension.

In 2005, the Ministerial Council adopted a Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation, which, together with the 2004 Action Plan, provides a framework to bring the promotion of gender equality into the Organization's first dimension.

The OSCE is now standing at the crossroads of its three dimensions with the challenging task to introduce gender mainstreaming not only in the human dimension activities but also in the programmes of the politico-military and economic-environmental dimension. In doing so, gender mainstreaming has to be understood as a means to make full use of the Organization's human resources and as a matter of impact. As expressed by the Swedish Ambassador to the OSCE, Krister Bringeus: "In a modern Swedish field operation – civilian or military – gender mainstreaming is a crucial element in order to increase its effectiveness."

This publication provides insight into the development of the work on gender issues in the OSCE. It outlines the commitments, which constitute the framework for gender mainstreaming in programmes, policies and activities of the Organization. It also highlights some of the success stories, which illustrate the importance of the promotion of gender equality. Finally, it gives an overview of the evaluation of the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan and the specific focus taken. As stipulated in the Plan, this exercise will be conducted on an annual basis as a fundamental element to take stock of progress made and, if necessary, to re-adapt policies and strategies on gender mainstreaming.

Beatrix Attinger Colijn
*Senior Adviser on Gender Issues
Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe*



MAJOR GENDER MILESTONES

1998: OSCE appoints first two Gender Focal Points

1999: OSCE: Istanbul Summit

2000: OSCE Action Plan for Gender Issues

2001: OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Women and Conflict

2004: OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

2005: OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation

2005: OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women

2005: OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Ensuring the Highest Standards of Conduct and Accountability of Persons Serving on International Forces and Missions

2006: OSCE Evaluation of 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

Table of Contents

Preface by the Secretary General

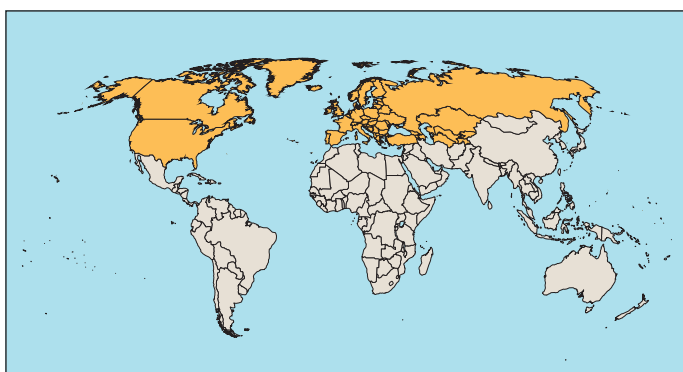
Introduction by the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues

1. Setting the Stage: <i>The OSCE and Gender Equality</i>	8
2. The New Framework: <i>The 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality</i>	18
3. Taking Stock: <i>Evaluating Progress through June 2006</i>	26
4. Moving Forward: <i>Defining the Focus</i>	32

1. SETTING THE STAGE: The OSCE and Gender Equality

Regional Security and Human Rights

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization, comprising a broad membership of 56 participating States, covering the region from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It is the only pan-European regional arrangement under the terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The Organization has a unique comprehensive and co-operative approach to security, viewing it in three main dimensions: the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human. Its decision-making process is based on consensus; each participating State enjoys equal status. Decisions are politically but not legally binding. This makes the OSCE an important forum for political dialogue on security in Europe.



Disclaimer: The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the OSCE.

Over the years, the OSCE has become a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. It addresses a wide range of security-related matters, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, election observation, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism, and economic and environmental activities.

Since its inception as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), following the adoption of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, it has pioneered a broad and practical approach to dialogue and co-operation on security, not only among its culturally and religiously heterogeneous participating States, but also with Mediterranean and, later, Asian Partner States. Its 56 participating States and 11 Partners for Co-operation comprise a total population of some 1.6 billion people - half of them women and girls.

In the human dimension, the 30-year-old mandate of the OSCE has resulted in a body of standards and commitments underpinned by the principles of the inherent dignity of the human being, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as democracy and the rule of law. These standards and commitments also include a specific focus on women and girls.

The integration of human rights principles directly into the Organization's regional security framework on the same basis as politico-military and economic issues constitutes a milestone in the history of human rights protection.

From awareness to action

The emergence of a new human rights-based Europe and a growing awareness of women's rights went hand-in-hand. In 1975, the UN observed the first International Women's Year and held its First Conference on Women in Mexico City. In the same year the Helsinki Final Act was adopted which acknowledged equality between women and men. But, in the context of the CSCE and later the OSCE, it was not until the Moscow Meeting in 1991 that a more diversified commitment was taken towards the human rights of women. And it took several more years until specific activities for the promotion of women's participation in society were developed by OSCE structures.

The Global Evolution of Gender Awareness – Perspectives to the year 2000

While the United Nations has served as a global catalyst of gender awareness in many ways, notably through its international conventions and four world conferences on women, the OSCE is promoting this cause in a regional context and, due to its unique security-related mandate, putting gender issues into a new perspective.

Over the past three decades the United Nations have developed the framework for the promotion of gender equality with the following global milestone events:

- 1979: This year marked the adoption of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which has meanwhile been ratified by 184 of the UN's 192 Member Countries (including 54 of the OSCE's 56 participating States) and is thus, after the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the second most ratified Convention in UN history. Ratifying countries must report on a regular basis to CEDAW, the Committee that monitors compliance with the Convention.
- 1993: The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, reflecting the realization that concerted action was needed to put a stop to gender violence.
- 1995: The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 – the largest conference of its kind ever held – gathered thousands of delegates from 189 countries and the European Union and adopted a Platform for Action with twelve critical areas of concern, two of which were "the effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation" and "insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women."
- 2000: Beijing +5. The UN General Assembly Special Session on "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century" monitored progress on implementation of the Beijing Plan of Action. This event also marked the first time that the OSCE was represented by its own high-level delegation. Headed by the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the delegation highlighted four of the 12 critical areas of concern it found most relevant for the OSCE's work: 4) violence against women; 5) women and armed conflict; 7) women in power and decision-making; and 9) women's human rights. The Beijing +5 Outcome Document also included specific reference to the importance of regional organizations in implementing the Beijing Plan of Action.
- 2000: The UN Security Council adopted the Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which was subsequently recognized by the OSCE and the EU, and recognized, *inter alia*, that "an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security." The Security Council also urged the UN Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in UN field operations, especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel.

Since its adoption, Resolution 1325 (2000) has served as a catalyst for women, including those in OSCE participating States, to mobilize equal participation efforts. Everywhere, women at the grassroots level have used this resolution to lobby for their voices to be heard in peace-building processes, in post-conflict elections, and in the rebuilding of their societies.

"Resolution 1325/2000 holds out a promise to women across the globe that their rights will be protected and that barriers to their equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace will be removed. We must uphold this promise."

- UN Secretary-General's 2004 Report
on Women, Peace and Security

Overview of the OSCE: Secretariat, Institutions and Representatives

Serving its 56 participating States, the OSCE has an overall staff of over 3,400 stationed in its Secretariat, institutions and 19 field operations.

The **Secretariat**, located in Vienna, numbers about 300 staff members. In addition to providing administrative support to the whole Organization, it hosts the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and the Office of the OSCE Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), as well as specialized units dealing with policing-related activities, counter-terrorism, border issues, anti-trafficking and gender issues.

In terms of OSCE **institutions**, the largest is the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) situated in Warsaw, which carries out activities relating to electoral assistance and human rights, democratization, tolerance and non-discrimination, Roma and Sinti issues and mainstreaming gender aspects in all activities.

The other institutions are the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), based in the Hague, whose mission is to prevent inter-ethnic conflict and promote good relations between minority and majority communities, and the Vienna-based Representative on Freedom of the Media.

In addition, the Chairman-in-Office may appoint **representatives** to cover specific issues or regions. As of September 2006, there were seven Special/Personal Representatives working on combating trafficking in human beings; racism, xenophobia and discrimination; anti-Semitism; intolerance and discrimination against Muslims; the Minsk Conference conflict; and the Dayton Peace Accords. Two of these seven high-level positions were held by women and virtually all of the areas of concern have gender aspects.

As of December 2006, the OSCE had 19 **field operations** in four regions: South-Eastern Europe (the Presence in Albania, the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Mission to Croatia, the Mission to Montenegro, the Mission to Serbia, the Mission in Kosovo and the Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje); Eastern Europe (the Office in Minsk, the Mission to Moldova and the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine); Southern Caucasus (the Office in Baku, the Mission to Georgia, the Office in Yerevan and the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference); and Central Asia (the Centre in Almaty, the Centre in Ashgabad, the Centre in Bishkek, the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan and the Centre in Dushanbe).

Source: *Common Purpose: Towards a More Effective OSCE, 2005.*

OSCE Gender Milestones

1997: The first meeting. The year 1997 marked a breakthrough with the first Human Dimension Seminar on the Promotion of Women's Participation in Society. This seminar was organized under the Swiss Chairmanship and highlighted for the first time the role of women, and the problems they faced in participating in society on equal terms with men. Delegations discussed possible strategies to overcome the challenges and expressed the will to continue working in this area in the spirit of the seminar.

"Gender issues are not women's issues, gender issues are about democracy."

- Closing Statement of the European Union, 17 October 1997

1998: Gender Experts. In the OSCE Secretariat and in the ODIHR two staff members were appointed to cover gender issues:

- One Focal Point on Gender Issues at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna with the tasks of raising gender awareness, monitoring opportunities for women in the Secretariat, institutions and missions; and to serve as a contact point on gender issues for other international organizations and non-governmental organizations.
- One Adviser in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw to promote women's human rights and to develop and implement gender-related projects in participating States within the context of ODIHR's Democratization Programme.

1999: Istanbul Summit. Under the Chairmanship of Norway, the groundwork for the first Action Plan for Gender Issues was laid, drawing on the recommendations made in the human dimension meetings on women and democratization. The first OSCE Gender Adviser, who joined the Secretariat in April 1999, presented the outlines of the first Action Plan on Gender Issues and the strategy of gender mainstreaming to the Permanent Council. This was the first time that a staff member at that level spoke in front of the Council, which gave a special emphasis to gender issues.

This focus on equality between women and men as an important element in the work of the OSCE culminated in official commitments at the **Istanbul Summit** when Heads of participating States and Governments adopted the Istanbul Declaration and the Charter for European Security.

“The full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE area. We are committed to making equality between men and women an integral part of our policies both at the level of our States and within the Organization.”

*Paragraphs 23, Charter for European Security
1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit*

The Istanbul Declaration also called for an early adoption of an Action Plan on Gender Issues, and Delegations, under the lead of the Ambassador of Liechtenstein, continued to discuss its content. It was acknowledged that, taking a gender perspective into account, the OSCE should address internal as well as external issues. Internally, it should make efforts to achieve a better gender balance and create better opportunities for women within the Organization. Externally, it should contribute to the implementation of international commitments concerning the advancement of women, and integrate a gender aspect within human rights and democratisation issues, as well as in any other work in the field.

“Gender mainstreaming is about providing equal opportunities, about joint responsibilities and common endeavours. It is not some add-on political aspect, but an integral necessity, if we are to achieve a more peaceful, stable and democratic Europe, where men and women have equal opportunities ...”

EU Statement to the OSCE Permanent Council, December 1999

2000: The first OSCE Action Plan for Gender Issues. In June 2000, under the Chairmanship of Austria, the Permanent Council formally adopted the Action Plan. As a set of guidelines to be reviewed after two years, this Plan had grown out of bottom-up grassroots recommendations made by participants of the meeting on gender issues held in June 1999. And it mirrored the globally recognized need for concerted actions to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women,” adopted just months later by the United Nations as Goal Number 3 of the Millennium Development Goals.

In June 2000, an OSCE delegation, headed by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, attended the United Nations 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly on “Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century.” In this event, commonly referred to as Beijing + 5, the OSCE outlined its work regarding the Beijing Platform for Action and also presented the Action Plan.

„The last couple of years have seen a great debate on gender issues within the OSCE followed by concerted efforts to implement the commitments to ensure gender equality.”

*H.E. Helle Degn, President of the Parliamentary Assembly
of the OSCE, in June 2000*

The 2000 Action Plan for Gender Issues called for positive action to increase the number of qualified women in higher-level positions, the appointment of gender specialists not only in the OSCE Secretariat and the ODIHR but also in field operations, the introduction of a gender perspective into OSCE activities and structures, and the regular publication of gender-disaggregated statistics.

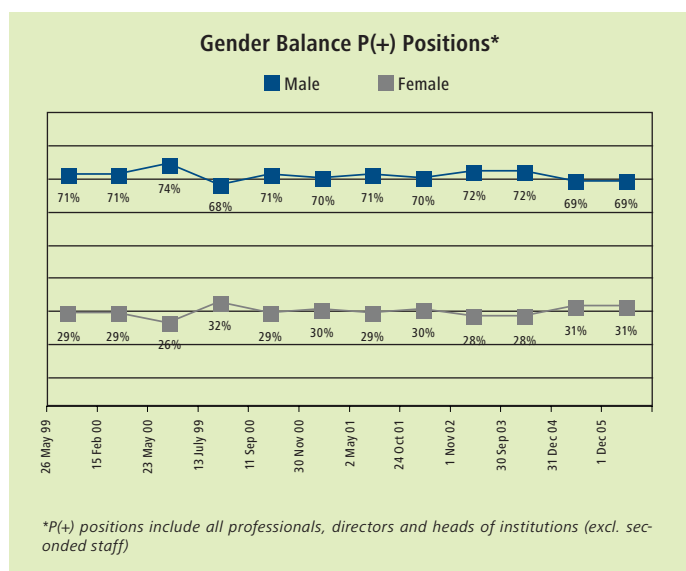
These statistics revealed a familiar phenomenon – an invisible yet pervasive “glass ceiling” – that kept women out of the upper echelons of decision-making, not only in the OSCE Secretariat and institutions but also in its field missions.

The implementation of the Action Plan was monitored throughout OSCE structures and the Secretariat’s Gender Adviser established annual reports on the activities that were developed in the framework of the Plan. In September 2001, the status of the implementation of the Plan was discussed in the Permanent Council and Delegations particularly noted that greater progress should be made by participating States to ensure a balance in the appointment of staff, particularly top-ranking officials.

2001-2004: Moving to make the OSCE a role model. Over the years, tackling the “glass ceiling” from within and making the OSCE an organizational role model for gender equality, remained an issue of concern. However, over the short- to medium-term, as the graph below illustrates, it proved challenging to increase the number of qualified women in professional positions. This slow progress was partly due to the fact that too few women were put forward for recruitment by the delegations of participating States. But other elements like the lack of flexible working hours and family friendly policies in general as well as the non-career character of the organization add to the difficulties to achieve a gender balance in staffing.

POST DISTRIBUTION IN THE OSCE SECRETARIAT AND INSTITUTIONS

Fixed Term Only: May 1999 - 1 December 2005



With regard to the effort to introduce gender aspects in OSCE activities, the Organization continued to follow the two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, the Secretariat's Gender Adviser focussed on raising awareness on gender issues, developing policy and building capacity of mission members on gender issues. One session of the two-day induction course for new staff members was devoted to gender issues including the need to build and maintain a professional working environment free of discrimination and harassment. And in order to help mission members to recognize and address gender issues in their work, a guide was developed and published in 2001, entitled "Gender Aspects in Post-Conflict Situations: A Guide for OSCE staff." (www.osce.org/secretariat/item_11_14003.html).

On the other hand, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was developing and implementing gender-specific projects and long-term programmes, such as increasing women's participation in democratic processes, and combating violence against women. Also, OSCE field missions continued to develop gender-related projects, in cooperation with ODIHR or non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions.

"As for the implementation of the Plan, it was precisely the OSCE institutions, primarily the OSCE Secretariat and the ODIHR, that have made active use of this new instrument...the OSCE has set up gender focal points, statistics have been prepared, OSCE staff have been undergoing special training the ODIHR has devised a number of gender-specific projects and work has begun on "gender mainstreaming." The gender advisors to the Secretariat and the ODIHR have made an important contribution to the development of these instruments. The next step will involve evaluating to what degree these instruments have actually led to concrete results in the area of gender issues."

*Ambassador of Liechtenstein to the OSCE,
Chairperson of the Informal Group on Equal Opportunities
for Women and Men, Permanent Council, September 2001*

However, as the next annual reports on the implementation of the 2000 Action Plan for Gender Issues revealed, the process of integrating a gender aspect into all programmes and projects was not developed with due continuity and remained inconsistent. Too many times initiatives on gender mainstreaming depended on the individual commitment and dedication of staff members and lacked general support. Also, focal points and gender advisers were not sufficiently involved in the development of new policies and programmes. In recognition of these challenges, the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking, the Norwegian Ambassador to the OSCE, initiated in autumn 2003 the development of a new, strengthened Action Plan.

*Students participating in the
European Youth Week in Novi
Sad, Serbia, 28 August 2006.
(OSCE/Milan Obradovic)*

● SUCCESS STORIES

Stopping domestic violence in Kosovo: Help in a Handbook

Black eyes, bruised bodies, broken bones. Kosovan social worker Faik Prekazi has seen it all ... but he didn't always know how best to help.

"Social workers have limited resources to provide effective services to victims of domestic violence," says OSCE Human Rights Adviser Alma Begicevic. "It's hard to keep up with a rapidly-changing legal landscape or make full use of all the applicable legislation."



Since 2006, however, social workers in Kosovo, whose job it is to ensure a safe environment for all citizens, are better prepared to handle such cases, thanks to the new OSCE-supported *Manual for Responding to Incidents of Domestic Violence*. It has been distributed in both Albanian and Serbian languages to some 250 social workers throughout Kosovo.

The Manual includes both the OSCE Mission's theoretical insights and the Kosovo Social Welfare Department's field experiences. "It's the first time all this theory and practice is available in one easy-to-use book," says Prekazi.

One chapter on building response systems explains how all involved parties can network, co-ordinate services, organize training and do public outreach. In the manual, new laws are applied to common scenarios and individual cases, with guidance on subjects ranging from risk assessment and counseling to crisis intervention and protection orders.

"I find the clarification of protection order forms especially helpful," says Prekazi. "With each new case, we have to request either a regular, emergency or interim emergency protection order form. The manual clearly explains the requirements for each one." These clarifications will speed up the court petitioning process and provide the courts with better definitions to use when assessing a victim's needs.

This manual is only one component of the OSCE Mission's activities to curb domestic violence and improve victim assistance. In recent years, the OSCE has introduced a number of activities to address the problem, including public awareness campaigns, workshops, seminars and support for victim shelters. The Mission also continues to support anti-trafficking activities and recommend legal and policy reforms to relevant family and social welfare laws.

Source: OSCE press release

● SUCCESS STORIES

Supporting political participation and judicial gender expertise:

Skopje Mission helps Women Politicians and Trains Judges on Gender Issues

Political participation: In October 2006, the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje completed a two-year project designed to help the Union of Women's Organizations (UWOM) raise the level of women's participation in politics.

The project *"Women Can Do It : Parliamentary Elections 2006"* was UWOM's second nationwide OSCE-supported project, which united women's organizations from across the country and facilitated their co-operation with political parties, the Parliament and other state institutions in promoting gender equality.

It also established 15 Gender Equality Commissions in municipalities and helped equip commission members with the skills needed to foster gender equality by influencing party platforms and creating effective gender networks across the country. Activities focused on developing strong leadership, mediation and negotiation skills. Participants also learned about state institutions and legislation, as well as practical skills like fundraising.

"We know how to do it and we are confident that we can," said Savka Todorovska, energetic leader of the women's movement and President of UWOM. "The OSCE Mission's support gives us the boost needed to make it happen."

To increase women's representation at all levels, the Government requested the Skopje Mission's assistance to ensure that recommendations made by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) were included in the ongoing election reform process.

"The current project builds on our previous achievements," says Todorovska. "When the Law on Local Elections was amended before the last municipal vote in spring 2005, the quota for women in party lists was increased to 30 per cent. As a result, the number of female municipal councilors rose from 8 per cent to 22 per cent." Thanks to similar lobbying efforts, the current Parliamentary Elections Law also includes a 30 per cent gender quota, which has helped increase women's representation in Parliament.

Said Elena Grozdanova, Head of the Unit for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, *"the project supports the aims of the National Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. We back all civil society activities that encourage women to take a more active role in decision-making."*

"The project also falls in line with the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality," said Andrew Palmer, Programme Director for Institution Building with the Mission's Rule of Law Unit. "This project is a good example of how we encourage strong partnerships between the state and civil society, which is fundamental to healthy democracies."

"Raising awareness is essential for the success of projects like these," said Elena Gulmadova, Rule of Law Officer with the Mission. So is reaching out to women who are not yet politically active. "The aim of the campaign is to communicate the importance of having more women in higher positions in decision-making structures."

UWOM also organized a national conference, "For Equal Opportunities: Elect More Women during 2006 Parliamentary Elections," that helped representatives of political parties, government, NGOs and the media to develop joint strategies to increase the participation of women. Project organizers used the media to keep voters informed.

Nada Simovska, a mother and paediatrician from Pehcevo, has been active in politics since the age of 17. *"I've been elected several times to the municipality and have always promoted gender equality," she explains. "As a paediatrician, I talk to women every day, explaining why politics is not only for men and why it's important to be politically active."*

"Many women are well-educated and intelligent, but stay home to take care of their husbands and children. I will use my new skills to encourage them to change their lives and improve life in our beautiful country."

At the closing conference in October 2006, government officials, Commission members and mayors shared project achievements and lessons learned, as well as their plans to further strengthen gender equality at the local level.

"Any democratically functioning community needs women to participate in the decision-making process."

esses at the local level. We are pleased to see growing co-operation between the central, local government and civil society on this issue," said Ambassador Natalya Drozd, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje. "The activities of this project are consistent with the OSCE's Action Plan adopted by all 56 OSCE participating States."

The project, supported by the US Government and carried out by the NGO network Union of Women's Organizations and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, also contributed to the implementation of the country's National Action Plan for Gender Equality.

Judicial expertise on gender issues: In line with the overall campaign for gender equality, in November 2006 the OSCE, together with the Skopje Centre for the Education of Judges Association, conducted one of a series of training courses for judges and prosecutors aimed at raising their awareness of women's rights. Participants discussed the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its application that would allow women to claim their rights under local conditions and existing institutions.

"The Convention is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end it," said Victor Ullom, the Head of the OSCE Mission's Rule of Law Unit.

"The OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje supports the Government and civil society in implementing awareness-raising programmes that promote gender equality. We are proud to say that the country has made measurable progress in developing a comprehensive gender mainstreaming process."

Source: Skopje Mission newsletter "Spotlight", December 2005, updated October 2006.

● SUCCESS STORIES

Raising awareness: Gender-Sensitive Journalism in Croatia

In 2002 the Women's Network Croatia introduced an annual award for gender-sensitive journalism. The purpose was to decrease gender discrimination in the media by advocating for gender equality and equal opportunity policies. The award recognizes journalists whose work affirms and furthers gender equality, women's human rights and feminist activism; it also encourages journalists and editorial staff to accord these issues ongoing, high-quality attention.

The prize is awarded in the name of the Croatian journalist **Maja Miles**, who, together with several other female journalists in the 1980s, promoted a high level of professional ethics and calls for more responsible civic behaviour into Croatian journalism. Educated in law, Maja Miles began investigative journalism on gender issues after a trip to London during which she learned at a special Scotland Yard Unit how to investigate rape cases. She was among the first journalists using mainstream media to inform a

still apathetic general public that rape, far from being just "another form of sexuality," was a criminal act of aggression. This was instrumental in raising awareness of violence against women in Croatian society.

The 2006 Award, bestowed on International Women's Day (8 March), was given to two female journalists – Mirjana Rakic (HTV, Croatian Radio and Television) and Branka Valentic (Vjesnik daily newspaper) – both active at the national level. Present at the 2006 Award Ceremony were the head of the Croatian National Journalists' Association, the Vice-Premier and Chairperson of Co-ordination for Social Issues, a representative of the Government Office for Gender Equality, and also the Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia.

The OSCE Mission to Croatia contributed financial support for the awards ceremony and proposed possible models for gender policies to be introduced into the journalistic and editorial work.

Source: OSCE press release



● ODIHR's Gender-Focused Field Activities

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights was established in Warsaw in 1990 under the auspices of the CSCE. Part of its broad human dimension mandate was to develop "policies and actions to ensure gender mainstreaming and activities designed to improve the situation of women in the OSCE region." Early on, it developed a definition for gender equality that reflected its own mandate:

Gender Equality: A Unique Symbiosis

Gender equality is not just an end in itself but also a means of achieving security, prosperity and sustainable democracy in society. Likewise, legal, political and economic equality is not just an instrument to combat gender discrimination but also a means to ensure democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The OSCE's concept of gender equality achieving security, prosperity and sustainable democracy in society. Likewise, legal, political and economic equality is not just an instrument to combat gender discrimination but also a means to ensure democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

"The full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic OSCE area. We are committed to making equality between men and women an integral part of our policies both at the level of our States and within the Organization.

*Paragraph 23, Charter for European Security
1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit*

Below are some gender-focused field activities spearheaded by the ODIHR that enhance co-operation, capacity-building and development of expertise at the national and local levels, as well as active cultivation of women's leadership and participation in policy-making.

Programme for Increased Participation of Women in Democratic Processes:

Launched in 2000, this multi-year programme promotes gender equality reforms and increased participation of women in policy making in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Four focal areas are designed to achieve "real and long-lasting impacts": women's leadership; co-operation between government and civil society to reform the above policies and practice; combating domestic violence and developing strong national expertise on gender equality.

The overarching goal is "to advance the role of women at all levels of decision-making and to foster understanding of the importance of equal rights and opportunities for women and men at all levels of society."

NGO Expert Panel on Gender Equality:

A practical result of cross-regional networking, this panel comprises more than a dozen civil society experts in legal, political and economic participation fields, all of whom benefit from skill-building workshops organized by the ODIHR and who have gone on to share this newly acquired knowledge with women in their home countries.

Action against Domestic Violence:

Contrary to entrenched attitudes in many societies, domestic violence is not a private matter; but a punishable crime. The ODIHR runs a five-year training programme in Southern Caucasus, in which over 200 high-level police officials, prosecutors, judges and police instructors had participated by 2006. Key areas are: capacity building of law enforcement bodies and promoting co-operation with NGOs to combat this crime. For example, in Azerbaijan, the ODIHR, with the help of the OSCE's Strategic Police Matters Unit and the Austrian Federal Police, assists local law enforcement authorities through the Police Academy of Azerbaijan to develop and implement special training curricula for police officers on effective ways to combat domestic violence. It also assists Azerbaijani civil society organizations support victims through shelters, networks, medical help, legal advice and counselling.

“GenderMediaCaucasus”: To counter negative stereotypes often manifested through the media, the ODIHR supports the Association of Journalists’ “GenderMediaCaucasus” in conducting international conferences to explore “the role of mass media in the empowerment of women”. These conferences, conducted annually in Tbilisi, Georgia, bring together vocal women journalists from geographically diverse regions to discuss practical lessons gleaned from their work. In 2006 over 50 female journalists, researchers and activists from Southern Caucasus, Central Asia and Europe convened to discuss the participation of women in the national media, contributions of journalist networks to promoting gender equality, and the role of mass media in empowering women at national and international levels.

Human Rights, Women and Security Programme: Introduced in 2005, this programme supports security and stability in the OSCE region through the promotion and protection of women’s human rights. It focuses on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, on the support for cross-dimensional integration of a women’s rights perspective in security related areas and on the area of violence against women, domestic violence.

In partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), ODIHR was the first to take a regional initiative on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Central Asia. With government officials and civil society representatives from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the initiative generated a set of conclusions on further implementation and co-operation at both national and regional level. Experiences from the implementation of the resolution in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia were integrated into the initiative.

In the Western Balkans, the ODIHR has undertaken a project on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 involving training and awareness raising of the provisions of the Resolution at regional level for government officials and civil society representatives and on the development of a concrete plan for further implementation of the Resolution in the region.

An international consultative meeting on women’s rights and early warning has been held, summarized in the report “Women’s Rights and Early Warning - Development of Indicators”.

Practical Approaches to Increasing Women’s Participation: This initiative, introduced in 2000 when the first gender analysts were sent on an election observation mission to Romania, provides methodologies to monitor women’s participation in elections, thus focusing more attention on gender issues. In 2005-2006, gender analysts were deployed to parliamentary elections in Albania, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova.

Raising Awareness for Romani Women Activists: This programme targets Roma activists on trafficking activities that put Roma women and girls at particularly high risk. Cultivating contacts between activists and anti-trafficking networks and mentoring programmes are two examples of activities being undertaken with ODIHR support.



(OSCE/Muhtar Irisov)

2. THE NEW FRAMEWORK: The 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

The new Action Plan was developed on the basis of experiences gathered in the process of implementing the first Action Plan and seeks to address challenges, which were identified in the course of action during previous years. In particular, it is based on the conviction that gender mainstreaming requires a consistent, systematic attention to gender perspectives in the activities of the Organization through a **cross-dimensional approach**. It also outlines adequate monitoring and review mechanisms within a clear timeline. And maybe most important: it assigns responsibilities and requires that separate implementation plans consisting of measures for achieving the aims of the Action Plan are developed by the Secretariat and institutions.

Developed during the course of the year 2004 by the Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking, it was adopted by the Permanent Council in its Decision No. 638 on 2 December 2004 and subsequently endorsed at the Sofia Ministerial Council by its Decision No. 14/04 on 7 December 2004. It makes an unequivocal link between gender mainstreaming, gender equality and security, asserting that *“gender equality contributes to comprehensive security, which is a goal of OSCE activities in all three dimensions. Gender mainstreaming is a way of contributing to attaining this goal.”*

Citing the UN General Assembly Resolution (34/180 of 18 December 1979), it begins by re-affirming that *“the peace and welfare of the world require maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.”* It then sets out objectives and gives priority to the ones outlined here below.

Promoting Gender Equality in the OSCE: Gender mainstreaming the structures and working environment, and gender mainstreaming in recruitment.

- **Training:** The Organization is required to provide specific training programmes for OSCE staff on gender awareness and sensitize staff to gender equality in their daily work. It should also develop training programmes addressing gender mainstreaming of projects and activities related to technical co-operation, in order to ensure a consistent integration of a gender perspective in these activities. In addition, specific training modules on combating domestic violence should be designed.

Heads of institutions and missions as well as Directors of the Secretariat are asked to exercise leadership in facilitating staff training in this area and ensure that both women and men participate.

- **Organizational Culture:** The Plan stipulates the development and maintenance of an inclusive, gender-sensitive management culture and working environment, which includes strengthened policies against sexual and other types of harassment. Regular staff meetings to review the integration of gender aspects should be held by Directors and the exchange of information on gender equality initiatives with other international organizations and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly should be increased. Also, organizational regulations, rules, directives and instructions should be reviewed to assess the need for the integration of a gender aspect.
- **Recruitment:** The Action Plan calls for proactive strategies to promote equal opportunities, recruit qualified women and increase the number of women in senior-level positions. Participating States are encouraged to nominate more women, especially at higher levels, and to develop rosters of potential women candidates with a special emphasis on fields of expertise in which women are under-represented. The Secretariat is tasked with the enhancement of human resource planning, and the Department of Human Resources is given a number of concrete measures in order to ensure gender awareness throughout the recruitment procedure. Also, the Secretariat should continue to prepare annual gender-disaggregated statistics showing the distribution of women and men by category and posts at each level.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into OSCE activities, policies, programmes and projects.

The Action Plan stipulates that participating States, the Secretariat, institutions and missions should ensure the integration of a gender perspective into activities, programmes and projects in order to promote gender equality in the OSCE area. In doing so, they should focus on *“women’s empowerment and the participation of women as well as men in public, political and economic life in the context of democratic and economic processes in participating States.”* The gender mainstreaming process should also *“aim at overcoming negative stereotypes and at changing perceptions, as well as developing attitudes conducive to bringing about equality between women and men.”*

Again, a number of concrete measures are outlined and assigned to specific OSCE structures.

- The Project Co-ordinating Cell should ensure that gender-equity analyses are made of new projects developed by missions, institutions, and units in the Secretariat, and of existing projects when they are being evaluated.
- The participating States, assisted by the Chairmanship, the Secretary General and heads of institutions, shall ensure that the planning of OSCE conferences and seminars across all three dimensions will take the gender aspect into account.
- Heads of mission are responsible to position gender focal points at a sufficiently high level and to make sure that they enjoy full access to senior management.
- Programmes in the politico-military dimension shall take into account obligations embodied in the Security Council Resolution 1325 by engaging more women in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.
- OSCE structures should develop concrete follow-up mechanisms, encourage gender-balanced reporting and highlight special events, reports and developments related to the implementation of OSCE commitments on gender equality.

Promoting Gender Equality in Participating States.

The Action Plan stresses that participating States *“bear the primary responsibility and are accountable to their citizens for the implementation of their commitments on equality of rights and equal opportunities for women and men.”* Nevertheless, the Plan lists some specific recommendations.

- Participating States should *“ensure that the Organization develops policies which effectively promote gender equality and that new proposals and initiatives take a gender perspective into account.”*
- They should establish or strengthen mechanisms for ensuring gender equality by providing services of an Ombudsman or Human Rights Commissioner.
- They should comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), if they are party, consider ratifying or acceding to this Convention, consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, and fully implement the international standards and commitments they have undertaken concerning equality.
- They should regularly report to the respective bodies of the Conventions they are parties to.

- They should take further actions by increasing activities aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women.
- International efforts to bring to justice those who have perpetrated crimes against women which are recognized as war crimes should be supported and national legislation on violence against women should be enforced.
- Gender-related persecution should be recognized in dealing with claimants of the refugee status.
- Participating States should also *“draw on the experience of the OSCE to develop cross-dimensional gender equality policies and strategies.”*

Supporting OSCE Participating States in Implementing Relevant Commitments to Promoting Equality Between Women and Men.

The Action Plan stipulates that OSCE structures should assist participating States upon their request in implementing relevant commitments. *“All OSCE structures should endeavour to respect these priorities, as appropriate within their mandates.”*

- (a) Developing projects in OSCE States not hosting missions
- (b) Ensuring non-discriminatory legal and policy frameworks
- (c) Preventing violence against women
- (d) Ensuring equal opportunity for the participation of women in political and public life
- (e) Encouraging women’s participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post conflict reconstruction
- (f) Promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere
- (g) Building national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

OSCE structures are given precise tasks in these priority areas, such as reviewing legislation to ensure appropriate legal guarantees for the promotion of gender equality, assisting in the implementation and assessment of national strategies and action plans in this area, and developing projects to build local capacities and expertise on gender issues as well as networks with community leaders and politicians. A core element is always the co-operation among OSCE structures and participating States as well as the exchange of information with other organizations.

● SUCCESS STORIES

Political participation in Armenia

Women Carve a Niche

By *Blanka Hancilova and Tatevik Melikyan*

Improving a woman's lot in Armenia, as in many other countries, is an uphill struggle. People in authority – mostly male – tend to regard equal rights in a patronizing manner. According to popular thinking in this still-fragile democracy, other more pressing problems deserve to take centre stage. Not only men, but also women, often consider "gender" a non-issue.



(Eric Gourlan)

"Most people think that denying that gender-based discrimination exists, whether at the level of family or of society, will make the problem go away", says Nora Hakobyan, leader of the Women's Republican Council, a highly respected Armenian NGO. Blatant disregard for gender issues by the public at large may be an even bigger factor in keeping women largely invisible in the political process than lack of a gender-sensitive governing structure.

Ms. Hakobyan is convinced that open discussions, followed by active remedial measures, will pull this problem into the public domain. "Right now, however, there are simply not enough initiatives directed towards reaching out to women themselves," she says.

Some women's rights advocates look back with nostalgia at the perceived merits of the old Soviet system, under which the "women's question" was declared "solved" by integrating them into the political structure through established quotas. Others disagree, arguing that, in fact, discriminatory practices and attitudes continued to lurk in the background in those days.

Both sides do tend to agree on one thing: Fifteen years after independence, Armenia has yet to install an effective mechanism that would once and for all ensure that women – who represent more than 50 per cent of the country's three million inhabitants – are not left out of the policy- and decision-making process.

In 2005, in a widely hailed collaboration among international organizations and their local partners to counteract a lack of political participation that has been called "alarming", the OSCE Office in Yerevan and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) joined forces with the UNDP and the Armenian Peace Coalition to encourage women to start taking an active interest in political affairs, starting with that year's municipal elections.

Some 250 women attended seminars in Yerevan and ten other regions. Eleven Armenian trainers were hand-picked to teach skills in leadership, team-building and mobilization of communities, with a special focus on local electoral processes and legislation. The quality of the discussions was high, as was the interest, especially among women aged 45 and above.

As a result, 21 women went on to run in the local elections, and of these, nine were voted into office. Several training participants joined campaign teams and election committees. More importantly, later NGO surveys suggest that the idea of women seeking a greater voice in public life is now looked upon more favourably than before.

(Urður Gunnarsdóttir)

With two significant political events in sight – parliamentary elections in May 2007 and presidential elections in 2008 – Armenia is striving to pave the way for a fair, transparent and democratic mechanism with a more gender-balanced slate of candidates.

As part of their contribution, the OSCE Office in Yerevan and its international partners are drawing up fact sheets setting out Armenia’s gender-related commitments and good practices in gender mainstreaming, which will be used as an awareness-raising tool.

The OSCE Office is also planning seminars on budget preparation from a gender perspective for deputies of the National Assembly and key ministry staff. The Office will continue working with the UNDP on its project to enhance women’s roles in elections, both as voters and as candidates.

A lot is at stake. The Armenian gender agenda encompasses a whole range of worrying socio-economic trends, from high unemployment and unequal pay, through trafficking in women and domestic violence, to gender-biased media reporting and rural women’s neglected needs.

“The international community is doing what it can to enable government officials, politicians and the public to understand the issues better and to improve our ability to tackle them”, says Ms. Hakobyan. “The spark is being lit by our international partners but we – the men and women of Armenia – should be the ones getting all fired up and taking action.”

Blanka Hancilova was Democratization Programme Manager at the OSCE Office in Yerevan and is now with the OSCE Mission to Serbia as a Political Reporting Officer. Tatevik Melikyan worked on democratization issues at the OSCE Office in Yerevan and is now Civil Society Programme Co-ordinator at the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation in Armenia.

Source: Adapted from an article in the OSCE Magazine, October 2006.



General Follow-up.

Finally, the Action Plan provides a framework to ensure that gender issues are regularly reviewed, through annual evaluations. The Secretary General is tasked to report on the implementation of the Action Plan to the Permanent Council and this is to be followed by a discussion in this same forum.

Unlike the first Action Plan, which emanated from the bottom up, this time the vision was broader and the impetus came from the top. It also endorsed a more dynamic view of women and their roles, changing the focus from women as passive victims of discrimination to women as positive and active agents of change within the family, the community and the society.

The 2004 Action Plan catalyzed the process of gender mainstreaming by requiring OSCE institutions to analyze their policies, activities and programmes to identify ways to integrate a gender aspect and to teach its individual staff members to evaluate their activities through a gender lens.

The Strategy at an Institutional Level: Implementing the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

At the institutional level, accountability and responsibility for gender mainstreaming are vested with senior management. Experience has shown that the commitment of management is of utmost importance in the successful operationalization of gender mainstreaming strategies. Managers should act as role models and staff will respond to signals both implicit and explicit given by the organization's leadership. All OSCE officials, and, in particular, those in a supervisory role, are responsible to intensify efforts to build a gender-sensitive working environment and organizational culture and to integrate a gender perspective into policies, activities, programmes and projects.

To this end, all Directors were requested to define the specific focus for the implementation of the provisions of the Action Plan. This should include the description of concrete operational tasks based on the requirements of the Action Plan, expected results, and the timeframe in which the activities will be developed.

In October 2005, the Secretary General distributed the general outline of actions to be taken by the Secretariat in the process of gender mainstreaming. This was followed in February 2006 by the more detailed description of all activities planned by the different Departments and Units of the Secretariat to fully implement the 2004 Action Plan. These plans are tailored to the mandate, structure and capacity of each structure but reflect the general and specific obligations of the Action Plan.

According to these outlines, the Secretariat's management takes responsibility for building sustainable gender awareness in the Organization and for integrating a gender perspective into their regular staff meetings and planning events. They make efforts to establish appropriate terms of reference for their gender focal points and develop effective gender mainstreaming in policies, projects and programmes as well as in proposals for budgeting in this regard.

These efforts are to be made visible in statements, documents and in events organized by the Secretariat. The **Press and Public Information Section (PPIS)** will encourage their focal points in missions and institutions to ensure gender-balanced and gender sensitive reporting and to include a gender perspective on programmes, projects and activities which are covered in press releases, feature stories and other publications. The Section will also make efforts to ensure that a gender perspective is taken into account, whenever possible, in the OSCE Magazine and the public website.



(Marko Georgiev)

The **External Co-operation Section** will ensure that appropriate considerations of gender mainstreaming are taken during the planning and organization of events and include, if possible, gender perspective regarding themes, agendas and speakers.

In its implementation plan, the **Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU)** identifies a range of activities in order to address gender-related aspects in policing. Among the actions that are envisaged are public advocacy campaigns for effective measures to combat sexual violence, and the planning of follow-up events at regional or country level to international meetings on investigating sex crimes. It also plans to increase efforts to increase women's participation in policing, through promoting recruitment and equal participation of women in the police force in police assistance programmes. It furthermore recognizes the need to achieve a gender balance in SPMU's trainings, seminars and conferences.

The **Action Against Terrorism Unit (ATU)** is consulting with the Gender Section regarding the incorporation of a gender perspective in the organization of events and conducting a gender analysis in programme development as stipulated in the Action Plan. In particular, the ATU is looking at the issue of exploitation of women by terrorists to integrate a gender dimension into relevant activities.

The **Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA)** committed itself to ensure that its staff participates in training on gender mainstreaming and will also develop a specific reference guide on this issue for Economic and Environmental Officers in the field. It will develop projects considering the tasking set out in the Action Plan, evaluate the integration of gender sensitive policies in the work of project partners and promote the gender dimension in the different areas of work, including those carried out by Aarhus Centers. The OCEEA will include women as a specific target group in projects, aim towards gender balance when targeting youth groups, promote a gender aspect in the programme on environmental security, and attempt to diversify fields of work for women related to sustainable development and environmental service projects. It will continue to focus on sexual exploitation in its anti-trafficking activities and address opportunities for women in its projects on entrepreneurship development, economic empowerment and migration.

The **Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)** supports the work of the ODIHR and field activities in developing guidelines on gender-sensitive early warning indicators. It works on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and interacts with partner organizations on gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention activities. It also co-operates with the OSCE's Gender Section to address gender mainstreaming in programme planning and has developed guidelines to help Mission Programme Officers include a gender perspective in the analysis of the situation in the field. The CPC will conduct a study on the gender dimension of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and assess how this topic could be addressed by the OSCE. The Project Co-ordination Cell has developed guidance and reference tools for gender analysis and mainstreaming in the project development and evaluation cycle.

The institutional process of gender mainstreaming is guided by the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, who will also regularly monitor and evaluate the activities. The Gender Sections provides expertise to all staff members and assists them in the development of gender specific activities. It acts as a catalyst for change, where policies or programmes are adapted in order to incorporate a gender perspective. It provides information of relevant international standards if the OSCE regulatory framework is being revised or reviewed. It also works with the Security Co-ordinator, on issues regarding the safety of women and men in the working environment.

*A young woman in the
Khujand region of Tajikistan.
(OSCE/Surat Toimastov)*



● SUCCESS STORIES

Women in decision-making Central Asia and the South Caucasus

By *Tiina Ilse*

Since 2004, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has been nurturing home-grown talent for an NGO Expert Panel on Gender Equality through a regional network covering the Caucasus and Central Asia. The aim is to assist women to use their in-depth knowledge of their own socio-political environment to develop tailor-made responses that will further gender equality.



(Eric Gourlan)

Between them, the 15 Panel members – all prominent civil society leaders from Central Asia and the South Caucasus – represent hundreds of national organizational networks that are long-standing ODIHR partners in a broader programme to enhance women's participation in democratic processes at all levels of decision-making that has expanded its geographical scope in 2006 to include the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

Panel members represent a cross-section of professions and fields of interest, including university professors, lawyers, political scientists, economists, sociologists, medical professionals and journalists. Individually and collectively, over the course of their involvement with the Expert Panel, they have all become women's rights activists with the potential to wield a substantial amount of influence.

Mira Karybaeva, a political scientist and prominent civil society activist from Kyrgyzstan, says the Panel is driven by a sense of common purpose. "We're all committed to making policymakers in our countries realize that gender matters should not be considered as separate from political, economic and human-rights issues," she says.

With the help of ODIHR-sponsored seminars and workshops focusing on leadership, best practices and strategy development, panel members are fine-tuning the skills and expertise needed to realize that goal in such crucial areas as drafting gender-related policies, developing national gender action plans and creating new gender-equality mechanisms.

Galina Petriashvili, from the Georgian journalists' association, GenderMediaCaucasus, says the Panel's composition makes perfect sense. "Our countries have similar histories, similar problems and similar laws, but in the gender area, we're all experiencing varying degrees of success. Through the Panel's activities, we are able to educate each other. Everyone benefits."

Panel members from Azerbaijan, for example, have begun developing entrepreneurial initiatives, adapting lessons from the work of Georgian economics professor Charita Jashi, who has been tapping local women's entrepreneurial spirit through business-oriented projects, self-help publications and a country-wide network set up with the help of the ODIHR in 2000.

"Just a few years ago, the voices of NGOs were not heard by the Government," says Ms. Jashi. "Thankfully, we are beyond this phase in Georgia. Today, our recommendations are taken into account within the political process."

Panel member Zulfiya Kochorbaeva from Kyrgyzstan says, "Our first contact with the ODIHR was back in 1999 when we identified women to participate in some of its seminars on women's leadership." At that time, participants had little or no gender issues experience. With ODIHR's support, they set up a national network of women's organizations called Women Can Do It. The network now has over 50 member organizations and has been gaining in strength over the past five years.

The Panel's extensive region-wide focus has been made possible by the ODIHR's ongoing long-term investment in building robust national NGO networks and coalitions dedicated to gender issues.

In 2005, a ground-breaking development affirmed the network's sense of empowerment. "After the parliamentary elections, when not a single woman was elected," says Sulfiya Kochorbaeva, who represents the Association of non-governmental Women's Organizations. "we succeeding in lobbying for the creation of a new post: that of special presidential representative to parliament on gender issues. For the first time in Kyrgyzstan's history, a representative from a women's NGO was appointed to fill a senior governmental position."

In Uzbekistan also, coalition-building efforts among women are yielding results. "We are able to speak loudly, with one voice," says Zulfiya Tukhtakhodjaeva, who represents the Association of non-governmental Women's Organizations. "Before the 2004 elections, we managed to have our proposal for a 30 per cent quota for women on political parties' lists of candidates accepted. This increased the proportion of women in parliament from 8 to 18 per cent." Now, buoyed by this achievement, Uzbek women are preparing for the next elections in 2009.

Members of the NGO Expert Panel know from individual experience that changing ingrained attitudes is a gradual process, but the ODIHR's network-building from the grassroots up has given rise to a high-level regional network that is beginning to make its influence felt on governments and society at large. The ultimate aim of such initiatives is to use the OSCE's political capital and influence to bring about lasting change for the good of the region's women and girls.

Tiina Ilsen is Head of the Gender Unit of the Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Source: Adapted from an article in the OSCE Magazine, October 2006.

The OSCE's ultimate goal is to achieve both gender equality and sustainable peace and security. (OSCE/Samir Alic)



3. TAKING STOCK: Evaluating Progress through June 2006

In June 2006, the OSCE Secretary General introduced the report evaluating the implementation of the *2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality to the Permanent Council*. This report summarized the results of gender mainstreaming efforts throughout the Organization.

It was noted that the requirements of the Action Plan have given a *strong impetus to the process of gender mainstreaming* in the OSCE. For the first time since the OSCE has taken a focus on gender issues, OSCE structures were required to analyze their policies, activities and programmes in order to identify possible ways of integrating a gender aspect. This exercise has resulted in an unprecedented awareness of OSCE commitments to gender equality as units, sections, departments and field operations were tasked to take stock of their programmes and projects in the framework of the Action Plan and identify their relevance to the promotion of gender equality.

In addition to the increased knowledge on the requirements of the Action Plan and other related commitments, there has also been an increase of staff dealing with the issue of gender mainstreaming. Focal Points for Gender Issues had to consult with their colleagues in order to collect relevant information and the involvement of managers was necessary to draw up the implementation plans as required in the Action Plan, describing details and methods of implementation, setting benchmarks and committing programme managers to an expected outcome.

Thus, the specific provision in the Action Plan, tasking each department with the development of an implementation strategy, has resulted in sincere, consistent efforts, whereas staff members looked at their activities through a gender lens and tried to project possible activities into their programmes in order to fulfill the requirements of gender mainstreaming. Undoubtedly, this is the highest number of staff ever to have carried out an analysis of their activities with true dedication to learn about the essence of gender mainstreaming and the meaning of the promotion of gender equality through OSCE activities.

Having acknowledged this very positive effect of the Action Plan requirements in the process of implementation, many challenges have also been noted.

The most pressing issue is the *limited time frame* in which activities were to be analyzed, adapted and outputs measured in order to record achievements of gender mainstreaming. A meaningful process of gender mainstreaming includes a thorough understanding of the meaning of gender mainstreaming, the capacity and skills to engage in this process, a comprehensive analysis of policies, programmes and projects, and finally the resources and time to integrate gender aspects and thus put gender mainstreaming into practice.

Another concern proved to be the *question of accountability*, the division of tasks and the role of Gender Focal Points in missions and institutions. The *question of their professional level, the ability and the skills to influence policy-making and the resources and time to be allocated* has yet to be resolved. At the same time, areas should be identified where the Organization could benefit from the involvement of external analysts to establish an independent assessment in order to increase understanding of the relevance of international standards to the work carried out in OSCE structures. The compatibility of OSCE Staff Regulations and Rules with national or international labour law was identified as a potential area where an independent assessment could be beneficial to highlight barriers to the promotion of gender equality.

When new projects and programmes are developed, the ODIHR's Gender Unit, the Secretariat's Gender Section and, if needed, external analysts, should more systematically be involved in order to support Gender Focal Points and other programmatic staff who often struggle with an *increased workload due to the gender mainstreaming requirements*. Such expert advice from the Gender Section or external analysts is vital to increase understanding for gender aspects in certain areas and to *generate a clearer perception of staff on what gender mainstreaming might entail* in specific fields of work. Also, the involvement of gender experts at all levels of analysis is a means to guarantee a transfer of knowledge. In many areas of work, the integration of a gender aspect does not require a development of new indicators but rather a thorough research on existing materials in a different field of work, which can then be adapted to the needs of the organization and linked to internal strategies and monitoring and evaluation systems. This adaptation process is inherent to the characteristics of a gender mainstreaming process which cannot be seen as an end in itself but rather as part of the overall activities of the Organization in delivering relevant substantive outputs.

Staff members noted that *some areas of work lend themselves more easily to the integration of a gender aspect*, such as programmes and projects in the human dimension, where gender specific activities have been developed in the past and a knowledge base of relevant aspects has been accumulated. In other areas, such as administration or communication technology, aspects of relevance to gender equality are less obvious. The Gender Section makes great efforts to help staff members of different fields of work carry out a gender analysis. While some aspects and potential areas for gender mainstreaming have already been identified, this is not yet matched with the development of relevant activities.

The main concern with regard to a timely, continuous and efficient process of gender mainstreaming is the lack of *capacity of staff* to engage in this process. Gender mainstreaming is sometimes interpreted and restricted to issues such as the participation of women in different projects or the use of gender-sensitive language. Thus, there is a great need for specific courses where staff learns to make use of a gender analysis and to apply the necessary techniques to integrate a gender perspective into their programmes.

Until the appointment of a Training Officer with a focus on gender, the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues carried out gender training in nine field operations. However, a more system-

atic and continuous training plan needs to be developed. The OSCE Gender Training Needs Assessment issued, by the Training Officer in March 2006, gives important information for the development of such a plan. Also, increased training will strengthen gender sensitivity of staff and further the understanding that the organization is committed to gender equality based on the conviction that women are equally well-qualified as men and that no job should be a preserve of either sex.

In summary, progress in gender mainstreaming over the two-year period 2004-2006 was measured in the context of the OSCE's infrastructure, organizational culture, management and recruitment procedures, as well as in its activities, policies, programmes and projects, and found positive. The evaluation report also describes specific projects, especially in the Organization's human dimension, in particular those developed by field operations, aimed at the implementation of gender equality commitments in participating States. It thus adds to raising awareness on gender related activities and illustrates the importance of the promotion of gender equality in the regional context.



(OSCE/Astrid Evrensel)

▶ STATISTICS TELL THE STORY

As early as the year 2000, the OSCE began compiling gender-disaggregated statistics to monitor and evaluate progress toward gender equality. The statistical graphics highlight key problem areas, such as the need to improve recruitment strategies in order to reach qualified women and calling participating States' attention to the need to nominate more women for higher-level posts.

Overall, as of November 2006, women in the OSCE made up:

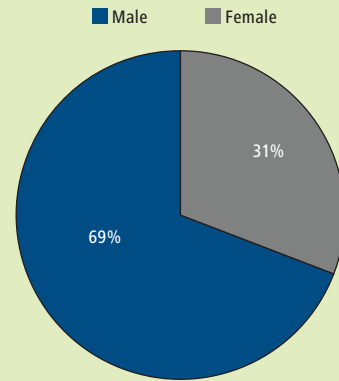
- 43 per cent of the total 3,400 staff
- 39 per cent of professional staff
- 19 per cent of managers

Serving at the top of field operations there are:

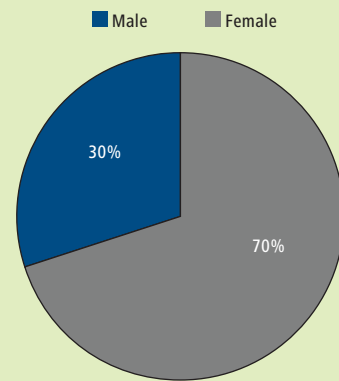
- One woman as head of mission out of 17
- Two women and eleven men as deputy head of mission

OSCE Gender Profile

Gender Balance in P(+) positions
Average percentage of examined period



Gender Balance in G positions
Average percentage of examined period



*P(+) positions include all professionals, directors and heads of institutions

*G positions include administrative support staff

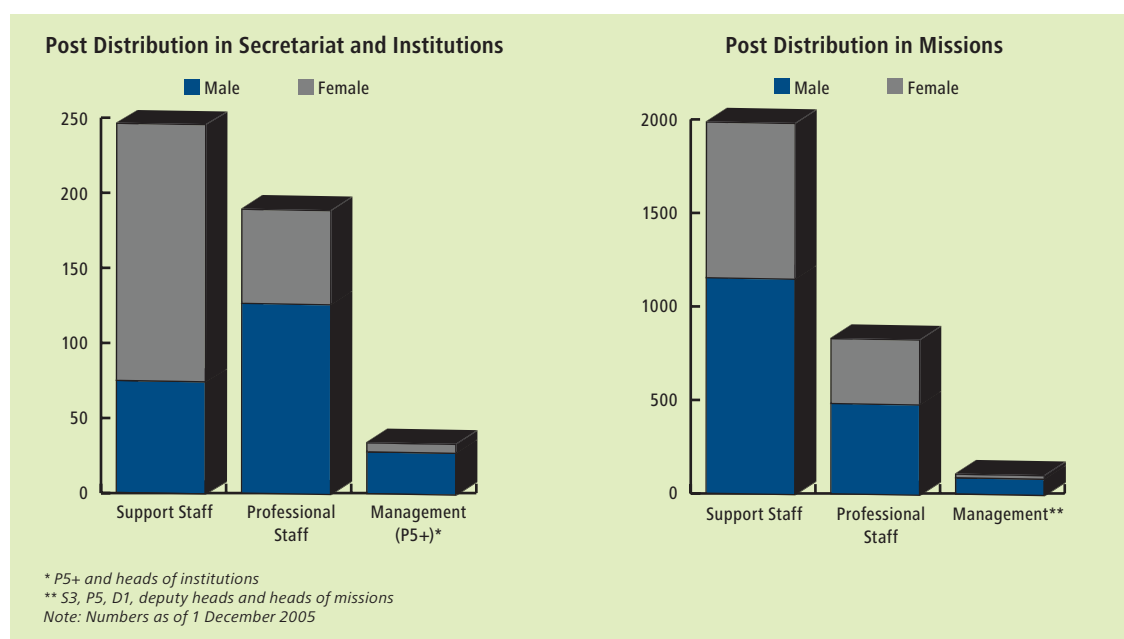
As of December 2005 in the OSCE's 19 field operations, the proportion of women varied widely, from 13 per cent in Georgia to 43 per cent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As for the rest women comprised:

- 34 per cent of a total of 629 seconded staff members;
- 12 per cent of staff in managerial positions (P-5 and above; heads and deputy heads of mission; heads of institution). While this percentage compared favourably with NATO (5 per cent), it was less than half that of the 28 per cent of women in managerial positions at the International Organization for Migration and the 25 per cent in the European Parliament.

Source: *The Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, Annex 1, pp. 38-59.*

POST DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAFF IN THE OSCE SECRETARIAT, INSTITUTIONS AND MISSIONS

Contracted and Seconded Positions



Source: *Gender Disaggregated Statistics, The Secretary General's Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*, p. 38.

At the end of 2005, women were still disproportionately clustered in mid-level of the General Service category where, for example, 78 per cent of staff at the G5 level was female. Conversely, of all professionals, only 31 per cent were women and there were none serving as heads of OSCE institutions.

Turning to OSCE field operation staffing as of December 2005, a similar picture emerges: of the total 639 mission members, 205 (32 per cent) were women. But there was a wide variety of representation: while there were no women at all in small missions like the Centre in Ashgabad, in the largest ones – OSCE Mission in Kosovo, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje – women accounted for 37 per cent, 43 per cent and 30 per cent of mission members, respectively.

GENDER BALANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECONDED AND CONTRACTED MISSION MEMBERS

Mission	percentage		number		total
	male	female	male	female	
OSCE Presence in Albania	59%	41%	13	9	22
OSCE Centre in Almaty	75%	25%	3	1	4
OSCE Centre in Ashgabat	100%	0%	6	0	6
OSCE Centre in Baku	60%	40%	3	2	5
OSCE Centre in Bishkek	75%	25%	6	2	8
OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina	57%	43%	57	43	100
OSCE Mission to Croatia	64%	36%	27	15	42
OSCE Centre in Dushanbe	81%	19%	13	3	16
OSCE Representative to the Estonian Commission on Military Pensioners	100%	0%	1	0	1
OSCE Mission to Georgia	86%	14%	56	9	65
OSCE Mission to Kosovo	63%	37%	124	74	198
OSCE Office in Minsk	100%	0%	5	0	5
OSCE Mission to Moldova	80%	20%	8	2	10
OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro	72%	28%	43	17	60
OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje	70%	30%	56	24	80
OSCE Centre in Tashkent	67%	33%	2	1	3
OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine	67%	33%	2	1	3
OSCE Office in Yerevan	60%	40%	3	2	5
Pers. Representative of the CiO on the Conflict dealt with by the Minsk Conference	100%	0%	6	0	6
Grand Total	68%	32%	434	205	639

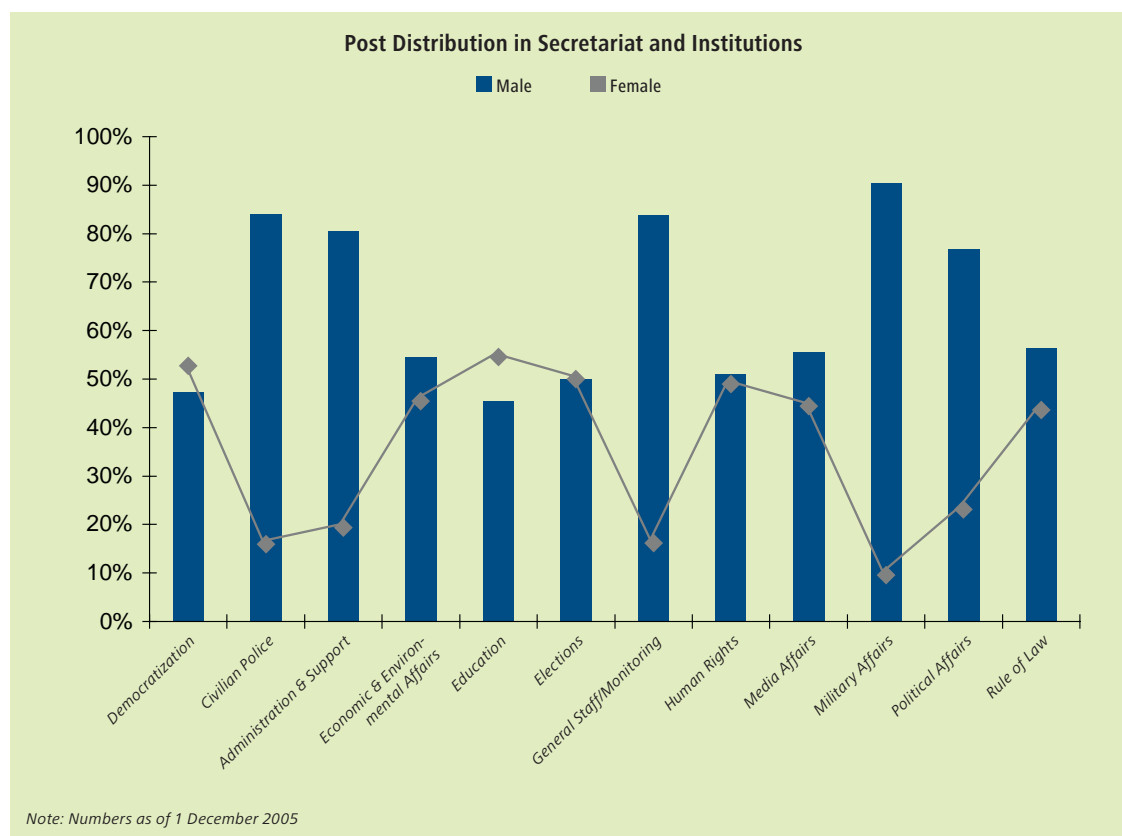
Note: Numbers as of 1 December 2005

But a look at the top management echelons of OSCE missions illustrates most dramatically the formidable challenge to achieving gender equality at the very top and in the field. For example, in 2005, there were no women serving as heads of mission, only three deputy heads and only 16 out of 60 senior managers were women.

In 2006, one woman – Ambassador Paraschiva Badescu of Romania – was named to head the OSCE Mission in Montenegro. She is only the second woman in the Organization's history to be nominated as head of mission and previously headed the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. Since heads of missions and institutions are nominated by participating States and appointed by the Chairmanship, this means that participating States themselves must provide a larger roster of qualified women ... and that they must then be actually selected.

When categorizing mission members according to their fields of expertise, women accounted for close to, or even more than half in certain areas in 2005, as shown in the line on the bar graph below: democratization (53 per cent); education (55 per cent); elections (50 per cent); human rights (49 per cent); media affairs (44 per cent); and rule of law (44 per cent).

GENDER BALANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECONDED AND CONTRACTED MISSION MEMBERS
Categorized by Field of Expertise



In terms of locally hired mission staff, where role modelling gender mainstreaming could make a markedly positive impact for women, it is interesting to note those locations in 2005 with a high percentage of women, especially in the ranks of the National Professional Officers (NPOs) and the upper General Service levels: the Centre in Almaty (79 per cent); the Office in Yerevan (79 per cent); the Office in Minsk (75 per cent); the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine (75 per cent); and the Mission to Croatia (64 per cent).

In concluding, it is clear that some progress has been made within the OSCE as an Organization - but the proverbial "much" remains to be done, if the Organization is to move towards a gender balance in staffing on all levels.

4. MOVING FORWARD: Defining the Focus

Strengthening priorities: Linking Women's Participation in Society with Conflict Resolution

Parallel to the implementation process of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2005 adopted three pioneering decisions that strengthened commitments to the Action Plan and mainstreamed gender issues, enhancing the links between gender equality and security on the one hand and responding to urgent needs in some participating States on the other:

- **Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation:** Ministerial Council Decision 14 (2005) calls upon participating States to *"nominate more women as heads of institutions and missions, and to other senior positions in the OSCE, and actively encouraged the recruitment of women to OSCE field presences, in particular to management positions."* It also tasks the Secretary General to include regularly in his annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan specific reference to those clauses of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) that are relevant to OSCE activities.
- **Preventing and Combating Violence against Women:** Ministerial Council Decision 15 (2005) was adopted against the backdrop of persistent violence against women and girls in the OSCE region. The human and political costs had made it clear that such violence constituted a threat to human security. Re-affirming that *"States have an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and to provide protection to the victims, and that failure to do so violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms,"* the decision urges them, with the OSCE's support and assistance, to ensure that all female victims of violence have full, equal and timely access to justice, medical, social and emergency assistance, confidential counselling and shelter. It urges participating States to *"take all necessary legislative, policy and programmatic monitoring and evaluation measures to promote and protect the full enjoyment of the human rights of women and to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls."*

- **Ensuring the Highest Standards of Conduct and Accountability of Persons Serving on International Forces and Missions:** Ministerial Decision No. 16 (2005) links the Code of Conduct for OSCE Officials with the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, striving to ensure that mission personnel adhered to and enforced "zero-tolerance" policies to prevent trafficking in human beings and/or sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as cases of forced labour, by military and civilian personnel serving in missions and involving the local populace. This decision stresses the importance of linking the commitments of an organization to the perceived behaviour of its staff. Standards and values, which are put at the core of the OSCE also have to be reflected in the conduct of OSCE staff and personnel seconded by its participating States in general.

These decisions reflect some of the major elements of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in October 2000, the adoption of which created a high wave of enthusiasm among probably everybody devoted to promote gender equality within international organizations. Gender issues, often belittled and reduced to just an issue of gender balance in staffing or used as a synonym for discrimination of women or sexual harassment at the workplace, had made it into the Security Council. The Beijing process, the impact of war on women, the protection of women's rights, gender mainstreaming in field operations and the need to increase representation of women at all decision-making levels had been debated and highlighted in this powerful forum and become a security concern.

In the OSCE it took another four years to anchor women's participation in conflict prevention and conflict resolution with security issues. The 2004 OSCE Action Plan refers to the Resolution, however already in the Bucharest Meeting in 2001, the Ministerial Council showed itself "convinced of women's potential to contribute to conflict prevention, reconciliation and peace-building processes." Also, many elements of the Resolution were well integrated into OSCE programmes. As early as 1999, the induction course for new mission members contained a module on gender issues. A Code of Conduct for mission members was developed to stress that compliance with human rights standards has to be reflected in the behaviour of OSCE staff and not only in the programmes implemented by the organization. The OSCE also recognized the need to increase women's representation at higher levels of decision-making in the Organization and developed activities in support of women's initiatives at national levels.

With the adoption of the new Ministerial Decisions, the focus in this area was made more visible and explicitly linked to the global movement on women, peace and security.

Globally: Linking Women, Peace and Security

In the global arena, October 2006 marked the sixth anniversary of the passage of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. Since its adoption, the Resolution has been translated into some 80 languages, including Russian, Croatian, Polish and Ukrainian. In the field, 10 out of 18 UN peacekeeping and political missions, including UNMIK in Kosovo, now have a dedicated full-time gender advisor. Over 3,000 women were serving in UN peacekeeping missions – 25 per cent of the total – while about 4.4 per cent of civilian police in these missions were women. Kosovo also distinguished itself by being one of the first to establish a Gender Office in 1999, prior to the Resolution and, in terms of post-conflict political participation, by 2005 Kosovo's Parliamentary and Municipal Assemblies registered 28 per cent representation by women, approaching its targeted 33 per cent quota.

The Action Plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) represents the first attempt to develop an integrated and coherent approach to promote the issues of women, peace and security, and mainstream a gender perspective into United Nations programmes and policies dealing with peace and security."

- UN Secretary-General's 2006 Report on Women, Peace and Security

The latest report of the UN Secretary General on Women, Peace and Security reviewed achievements in eight key areas, the majority of them integral aspects also for the work of the OSCE: conflict prevention and early warning; peace-making and peace-building; peace-keeping operations; humanitarian response; post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; preventing and responding to gender-based violence in armed conflict; and preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN staff, related personnel and partners.

It concluded by reiterating that "the ultimate responsibility for implementation lies with Member States" – 54 of whom are also OSCE participating States – and that priority should be given to the situation of women in *each conflict and post-conflict country* in order to achieve concrete results.

Regionally: Mainstreaming Gender into the OSCE's Security Agenda

Whereas, traditionally, the entry point for gender issues into the OSCE Agenda was its human dimension, the 2004 Action Plan and the 2005 Ministerial Decision have strengthened the link to the politico-military dimension with the focus on women's contributions in conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation being increasingly acknowledged.

Equality of opportunities for women and men, the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the role of women in conflict prevention and crisis management and the prevention of violence against women were the main themes of the relevant session in the 2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The session was introduced by the Senior Adviser on Gender Issues and a representative on the Institute of Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The statements of the over thirty delegations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, which took the floor, illustrated the fresh and creative approach to gender issues in the framework of the security agenda.

Switzerland proposed the creation of a forum of dialogue on the implementation of the Resolution 1325 in form of a loose alliance – as practised in the area of combating trafficking in human beings. Sweden called for the implementation of the Resolution and noted: "*All of us need to switch to a higher gear to speed up its implementation.*" Norway noted that it was among the first countries to draw up an Action Plan for the implementation of the Resolution. It furthermore stated, that "*the strong link between gender equality and security was the main component of the OSCE Gender Action Plan. It also reflects all the principles laid down in Security Council Resolution 1325 – and highlights the need to increase women's role in decision-making conflict prevention and resolution.*"

Many delegations also highlighted the need to combat violence against women. Lithuania reported that its "*work for combating violence covers organization of training for police officers, social workers, public information campaigns, surveys of the origin of violence, survey of the role of women and men and gender studies,*" and that a National Strategy on Combating Violence against women is being prepared. Canada noted that "*there remains a need for the implementation of concrete actions and effective strategies to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.*" And the United States of America recalled that "*no state is immune from the problem; in many OSCE States more than 30 per cent of women report being victims of domestic violence. Effectively addressing domestic violence requires a legal framework that provides accountability for abusers and fosters the ability of authorities or civil society to respond to a victim's pleas for help.*"

Within the OSCE, carrying out the Gender Section's mandate will mean "working to assist OSCE officials in implementing all provisions of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, as well as other gender-related commitments dealing with women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation (MC.DEC/14/05), and combating violence against women (MC.DEC/15/05)." The focus on these issues and its relevance to the overall work of the Organization has been well established by the political commitments taken as well as the interest voices by participating States in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of 2006.

● SUCCESS STORIES

Creating jobs for women in rural villages of southern Kyrgyzstan

In rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, women, especially young women, have limited opportunities. Not surprisingly, it is almost impossible for women living in remote mountain villages to find enough work to make an adequate living. Less than 50 per cent of the women are employed, which is almost 20 per cent lower than the employment rate for men. In those areas, men and women alike often see their only chance in finding work abroad, and for women this means running the risk of sexual exploitation. The OSCE Centre in Kyrgyzstan therefore encouraged their local partner to create jobs for women in tourism when they were expanding to remote areas in southern Kyrgyzstan.

“Community Based Tourism” (CBT) tries to create tourism for and with locals: Instead of staying in a big hotel complex, tourists spend the night in the house of a local family where they will often have breakfast and dinner as well. They might then employ a local guide to organize an extended hike in the mountains, buy a locally produced souvenir, or attend displays of traditional games or crafts.

The goal of CBT is a “softer” form of tourism, environmentally friendly and mindful of local customs and traditions, but also a form of tourism that the local people manage themselves and where most of the profit remains in the village and not with tour operators in the big cities. The CBT concept therefore fits well with the goals of the OSCE to stabilize the region by creating jobs for vulnerable groups in rural areas to prevent migration to the cities and abroad.

“CBT’s main focus, offering bed and breakfast accommodation, already creates jobs for women living in remote areas”, explains Amanda Wooden, OSCE’s Economic and Environmental Officer in Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan, “because it is mostly the women who take care of the guests and cook for them.” In order to give even more opportunities to women, the OSCE encouraged the Kyrgyz Community Based Tourism Association (KCBTA) to support and develop handicrafts co-operatives at their new destinations Gulcho, Sary-Mogul, Kerben and Batken.

The women of Kyrgyzstan are famous for their carpets, hats, handbags, boots and other items. Most

products feature complicated patterns in bright colours and, of course, are all handmade. Some handicrafts cooperatives already operate quite successfully like “Altyn Kol” (“Golden Hand”) in the small town of Naryn in Central Kyrgyzstan. It even ships the famous felt carpets abroad. The new tourist destinations will try to copy this example while preserving their unique patterns and styles in handicraft. Especially Batken is renowned for a particular type of carpets.

The focus on gender seems to have worked. “More than eighty percent of the people in our group are women,” says Minovar Karimova, assistant coordinator of Batken CBT. Most of them make handicrafts or provide bed and breakfast but others, like Minovar, work in management as well.

The women have met with women of already well-established CBT groups in workshops and seminars on carpet making and providing bed and breakfast to foreigners. “Obviously, they did not need to learn how to cook or how to make a carpet”, says Amanda Wooden. “But Kyrgyz and foreign tastes differ, and because of that we suggested, for instance, that they use natural dyes or less bright colours which they already do in Batken. Sometimes they use low quality material for the back side of the carpets, which might not appeal to foreigners.”

Minovar Karimova enjoyed those meetings very much: “This was the first time somebody really provided us with information about CBT and how to attract tourists to our town.” She is convinced that now that Batken CBT has become a full member of the KCBTA, things will improve: “I can already see the change in the attitude of the people, especially the women. They now have the hope that tourists will come and that their lives will be better”.

Source: OSCE Centre in Bishkek



(OSCE/Bishkek)

● Putting gender issues on the OSCE's security agenda

By *Veronika Scherk*

The topic of women and conflict prevention was addressed for the first time as an official point of debate of the OSCE participating States at the Organization's Annual Security Review Conference in June 2006.

Since the themes discussed at this conference usually relate to so-called "hard security challenges", such as terrorism, crisis management and arms control, the inclusion of a topic connecting women and conflict prevention brought therefore a new and refreshing perspective to the debate. It also gave a clear signal that gender issues are not to be treated solely as a human dimension issue.

This topic, however, was not completely new to the Organization. In June 2005, the Swedish government sponsored a seminar on "Women in Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management", which was held as a side event to that year's Annual Security Review Conference.

Later that year, the foreign ministers of the 55 OSCE participating States adopted a ground-breaking decision on this issue at their Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana. The decision on "Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation" recalled a number of commitments of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which addresses the recruitment of women for decision-making positions, education and training of women, and the involvement of women involvement in conflict prevention and resolution processes. The decision also tasked all OSCE field operations and Institutions to adjust or develop projects, strategies and initiatives to fulfil these commitments. Finally, the decision invited the OSCE's participating States to report at the Annual Security Review Conference on the progress achieved in implementing these provisions.

At the Security Review Conference in 2006, Dr. Helga Hernes, former State Secretary of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and Senior Advisor at the International Peace Research Institute Oslo, delivered a thought-provoking keynote address on security sector reform in the context of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Several participating States responded to this address and made concrete recommendations on how the OSCE could better involve women in the conflict resolution cycle. A key recommendation was to integrate the security perspectives of Security Council Resolution 1325 into the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century, since this was the OSCE's central policy document outlining the Organization's response to global threats and challenges.

The OSCE recognizes that sustained and systematic efforts are required to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 at the national level. A National Action Plan, setting clear action for government personnel, is a key instrument to achieve this end. Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom have already adopted their own implementation plans, an important component of which is the inclusion of female officers in all forms of peace missions and operations, be they military, police or civilian.

Experience in international peace-keeping missions shows indeed that success is far more likely in situations where women are involved as mission members and where the concerns of local women are actively sought out and factored into the decision-making processes. Special attention should therefore be given to OSCE field operations since they can play an important role in engaging women in post-conflict rehabilitation processes.

The 2006 Annual Security Review Conference was a concrete step forward in ensuring that gender equality becomes part of the Organization's politico-military activities and is engrained in the culture of all military forces within the OSCE region.

Veronika Scherk is Planning and Coordination Officer in the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center

The Secretariat's Gender Section

Our vision

We envisage an OSCE region in which gender discrimination has been eliminated so that women and men enjoy full equality in the home, the workplace and society, as well as within our Organization, its institutions and field missions.

Our mission

Our mission is to promote gender equality, using advocacy, gender analysis, technical advice and assistance to mainstream gender perspectives throughout the OSCE so that every programme becomes a means to end discrimination and ensure equal opportunities and rights between women and men.

Consolidating progress requires ongoing efforts to raise gender awareness; build gender competence and integrate a gender perspective into organizational structures and processes; and mainstream gender into all activities, policies, programmes and projects. It demands constant monitoring and evaluation of Action Plan implementation. Externally, progress will mean cultivating partnerships with relevant organizations and institutions to share information and best practices, develop synergies and maximize the impact of its activities.

The OSCE Gender Section's Strategic Workplan illustrates the wide range of activities that will be essential if gender equality is to be transformed from an ideal into a reality. A set of six parallel processes include:

- integrating a gender aspect into all programmes and policies;
- developing networks to strengthen gender mainstreaming capacities;
- assessing progress, setting priorities and identifying cross-cutting issues;
- implementing the Action Plan in OSCE institutions and field missions;
- building capacity for gender mainstreaming in all programmes and projects; and
- evaluating and adapting the implementation process on an annual basis.

The OSCE has a unique status and role. As the Organization and its participating States reaffirm their commitments to gender equality, there is perhaps no more fitting way to conclude this publication than with the words of a woman and women's right champion – Norwegian Ambassador Mette Kongslem – who has been so instrumental in introducing the concepts and realities of gender equality into the OSCE.



"We have come a long way in the last seven years." said Dr. Monika Wohlfeld, Deputy Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre and Head of Mission Programme Section. "In 1998, as the first Focal Point for Gender Issues at the OSCE Secretariat, I was tasked to monitor opportunities for women within the Organization. Now we have taken this to a higher level and we strongly advocate for the participation of women in peacebuilding efforts in society and government." (OSCE/Michael Evstafiev)

● Narrowing the gender gap: The Power of Ideals and the OSCE

By Ambassador Mette Kongshem

Despite the dramatic advances in women's rights over the past three decades, why do we still have to explain over and over again that it doesn't make sense to leave half the population out of the mainstream of society? Why is it often such a long stretch from declarations of intent to actual implementation? The OSCE Secretary General's first report rating the Organization's performance in fulfilling its gender-related commitments is a reminder that the biggest hurdle it faces is in generating greater awareness and support for the significant role gender equality plays in bringing about truly comprehensive security.

As a young diplomat with the Norwegian Delegation to the United Nations in New York in the late 1970s, I was responsible for the General Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural matters. Since the first UN Women's Conference had just taken place in Mexico City in 1975, gender issues figured prominently on the agenda. Coming from a country that has always brought gender issues to the forefront, I felt fortunate to have arrived with the right "baggage" at the right place at the right moment.

Since then, considerable progress on the gender front has taken place in international organizations, as well as in many countries around the world. I, too, have come to identify closely with the concept of gender equality. Quite simply, I boil it down to a matter of fundamental fairness, justice and basic human rights.

But beyond that, it makes good economic sense. Empowering women to play a more dynamic role in all facets of everyday life gives a society "competitive advantage" in bringing about sustainable stability and security, as in the case of Norway and other countries.

These were my thoughts in autumn 2003 when I initiated development of the OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality while serving as Chairperson of the Informal Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking.

Less than two years after it was adopted by the Ministerial Council in Sofia in December 2004, another milestone was reached when the Secretary General devoted a first-ever report to the Permanent Council in June 2006 on how the Organization was living up to its gender commitments. This was a direct follow-up of the implementation measures in the Action Plan, and will be an annual event.

What ideals are we striving for?

- A gender-balanced organization performs better across the board. In our efforts to rebuild post-conflict societies, strengthen human rights, fight intolerance, resolve frozen conflicts, forestall tensions and confront a complex array of security challenges, we need to draw on the creativity, experience and talent of both men and women.
- To be true to its comprehensive and cross-dimensional approach to security, the OSCE needs women as policy-makers, negotiators and peacemakers. Gender equality is not an isolated issue to be tackled only within the confines of human-dimension activities.

Gender mainstreaming is crucial here. Every official decision, every OSCE programme and project and every workshop or conference should address the specific needs and priorities of both men and women.

Mette Kongshem, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway to the OSCE since September 2002, was Chairperson of the OSCE Informal Working Group on Gender Equality and Anti-Trafficking in 2003-2004

“We need to focus on women’s unique strengths. We need to see them as more than just victims of circumstances. There needs to come a time when project documents no longer carry the stock phrase, “women and other disadvantaged groups”.

One of the points of reference in the Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality is UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which reaffirms women’s central role in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction processes – an area where the OSCE holds a definite advantage. We have been setting priorities, developing a strategic vision and improving the way we work in a changing security environment. Tapping into the fullest potential of both men and women is part and parcel of this process.

Reform-related gender actions need the vigorous backing of gender-sensitive leadership at the highest levels: the Secretary General, chairpersons, managers, heads of mission and institutions – all must send clear, positive signals that they intend to make a difference. Gender mainstreaming progress made by the OSCE’s Conflict Prevention Centre, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and High Commissioner on National Minorities has shown the way through a number of valuable activities and ideas.

Participating States can help to propel the issue forward and let it gather steam. They can allocate the resources and the tools necessary to make the Action Plan a living document. They can ensure that a gender perspective is included in the economic and environmental, as well as in the politico-military, dimensions. This gender factor should also be taken into account in drawing up conflict-related strategies and concrete projects and programmes.

The step-by-step implementation of the Action Plan has triggered the development of a comprehensive gender mainstreaming process across OSCE structures, supported by a strengthened training programme. The common consensus is that gender issues have finally been placed in the spotlight. Let’s keep them there.

The fact that women’s concerns are now squarely on the OSCE’s agenda can only bode well for the future. I am reminded of the words of the physician and humanist Albert Schweitzer, who said: “The power of ideals is incalculable. We see no power in a drop of water. But let it get into a crack in the rock and be turned into ice... and it splits the rock.” The beginning of the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality is one such “crack in the rock”.

Source: Adapted from an article in the OSCE Magazine, October 2006.

(OSCE/Alexander Nitzsche)



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"If we are to truly stop the cycles of conflict, violence and war; if we are to transform confrontation into collaboration; if we are to create a world where human rights are universally respected, then it is time to "mainstream" gender equality into such areas as conflict prevention, post-conflict rehabilitation, community policing and peace-building."

*Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Secretary General
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*

