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Years of Challenge  
Years of Change

In unleashing women's dynamism, UNIFEM's targeted interventions have catalysed far-reaching change. In the early 1980s, the fund provided seed grants to Flora Tristan, a women's centre in Peru. One project helped map problems faced by women in industrial jobs. A second initiative trained women for union leadership, and several women quickly emerged as powerful national voices. They lobbied Congress to pass laws protecting women's occupational health and making employers liable for sexual harassment. Flora Tristan later formed a national network of 80 NGOs working with rural women. Current programmes include supporting women of three indigenous groups in the Amazonian region to address gender-based violence through both their traditional judicial system and state legislation.

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# Latin America



## Offering Help to Survivors of Rape

**G**en Espwa, there is hope, says the sign on the front door of the Komisyon Fanm Viktim pou Viktim (Commission of Women Victims for Victims) in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. Hope is indeed what many women regain when they enter the modest office. It is here that they receive counselling and treatment when they are in desperate need of help after having been raped.

The Commission was founded in 2005 by Eramithe Delva and Malya Villard, who were themselves victims of brutal sexual assaults. The decision to set up the organization was

motivated not only by their own experience but also by the alarming increase in rape that has come along with the current political instability in the country.

Besides the services offered in the capital, the Commission also works with community workers who reach out to women in remote areas and encourage them to seek medical care and psychological assistance to overcome their trauma. In the first year of the organization's existence, more than 350 women have received treatment. A grant through the UNIFEM-managed Trust Fund to End Violence

# & Caribbean



**LEFT: No more violence:** Political instability in Haiti has led to an alarming increase in rape.

UNIFEM worked on a number of initiatives to combat the related pandemics of violence and HIV/AIDS:

- During the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women, UNIFEM spearheaded coordination among UN partners, such as PAHO, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, and women's rights groups to develop a resource kit that points out the links between women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and violence against women. The kit was widely disseminated to inform the activities of groups commemorating the 16 Days campaign.
- In the Caribbean, UNIFEM took the lead in establishing the Regional Coalition on Women and AIDS, an advocacy group focusing on the prevention of HIV/AIDS among women and girls. In the age group 15-24, women in the region are up to six times more likely to contract HIV than men - often as a result of sexual violence.

Learn more: [www.unifemcar.org](http://www.unifemcar.org)  
[www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women)



**ABOVE: Women in Costa Rica protest against domestic violence. UNIFEM was a key player during the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women in the region.**

Against Women enables the staff to include education on HIV/AIDS and its link to violence when working with support groups and in communities.

A gathering of women leaders from all over the country, organized by UNIFEM, made it possible for the Commission's two founders to expand their network. The conference provided an important opportunity for dialogue in Haiti, where political divisions have often prevented women's organizations from working together on issues of common concern. Violence against women was pointed to by all participants as the biggest problem facing their communities, and partnerships were deepened.

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Early UNIFEM support laid the foundations for institutions that galvanized women's movements. During the 1980s, the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies in Barbados used UNIFEM assistance for a unique partnership between academics, NGOs and international donors. WAND linked women across the Caribbean to organize communities, provide training and conduct ground-breaking research - including some of the first studies tracking the impact of global economic patterns on women. In the 1990s, the Unit housed the secretariat of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). Today, DAWN connects women from across the global South around analysis and activism that shapes international debates on development.

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*Years of Challenge*  
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# Latin America

Across Latin America, UNIFEM has rallied support to stop the pervasive problem of domestic violence. Early actions broke taboos that had shrouded the issue in silence and became examples picked up by anti-violence campaigns worldwide. In 1994, UNIFEM helped conduct the first regional meeting of high-level police officials on domestic violence; several countries subsequently passed their first laws against domestic violence. UNIFEM assistance in Brazil during the mid-1990s produced the first research on how police stations deal with violence against women and supplied training for police staff in special women's police stations. By 2000, Mexico was developing statistical systems to capture the impact of violence - and to shape policies to respond.

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# & Caribbean

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Years of Challenge  
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**LEFT:** A mother and her child at a health clinic in Ecuador, where UNIFEM provides training on issues related to health, violence and HIV/AIDS for indigenous women.

slaves living in remote parts of the country. Quilombolas have preserved their own culture, but isolation has come at a price. Most of them lack birth certificates and identity cards, which are necessary for

them to be recognized as citizens, and accessing government services has been difficult.

Since little was known about the situation of quilombola women, UNIFEM supported the Ministry of Agriculture to engage with women in 21 villages to determine their priority needs. As a result, the women can now receive civil documents at no cost, which enables them in turn to have access to credit and to step up production of their handicrafts and agricultural products. At two national fairs, quilombola women had the opportunity to exhibit their products and exchange experiences on how to successfully market them. Efforts are now under way to establish producers' networks to increase commercial distribution.

In 2005, UNIFEM also continued its work in support of indigenous women in Latin America:

- Since policies need to be informed by data, a working group on gender statistics for the indigenous population was established at the 6th Annual Meeting on Gender Statistics in Mexico. Representatives of 14 countries attended the conference, which was co-organized by UNIFEM.
- In Ecuador, UNIFEM has been assisting indigenous women to address issues of sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS at the community level through a series of trainings.

Learn more: [www.unifem.org/worldwide/americas\\_caribbean.php](http://www.unifem.org/worldwide/americas_caribbean.php)

## Supporting Ethnic Minorities

**B**razil's hierarchy of income is clearly cast in black and white: Afro-Brazilians earn less than their white compatriots, and Afro-Brazilian women face double discrimination for both their race and gender - receiving, on average, only 30 per cent of what white men get paid. These facts were presented in the study *Portrait of Inequality*, which UNIFEM released as part of its efforts to assist Brazil's public sector in integrating a focus on gender and race into policies and programmes.

The survey further revealed that significant inequalities based on race and gender exist in the areas of education and health care. Putting the findings into practice, UNIFEM supported the establishment of a Health Care Committee for the Black Population in the Ministry of Health. Increasing access of black Brazilians to medical services is a goal that is now spelled out in the national health-care plan.

Particularly affected by race and gender bias are Brazil's quilombola women, members of tightly knit communities of former runaway

**LEFT:** A market vendor in Brazil. Afro-Brazilian women face double discrimination for both their race and gender.

UNIFEM's commitment to women's human rights includes ensuring that attention goes first to the most marginalized groups - such as indigenous communities. In 1997 in Ecuador, UNIFEM helped establish the Leadership School for Indigenous Women. Initially it held courses for small groups of women on gender equality and human rights, but women soon began replicating the workshops in their communities. One woman became the first indigenous woman on her city council. Since then, the school has become part of an inter-provincial federation for indigenous people. The Government, listening to a growing chorus of indigenous voices, has set up a special national council for indigenous people. All programmes include a gender perspective.

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