**International Human Rights Internship Program**

**Final Report**

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With the support of the International Human Rights Program, I spent the summer working for UNIFEM, the UN Development Fund for Women, at headquarters in New York City. During my time there, the UN General Assembly passed a landmark resolution creating a new, larger, more powerful, and better-resourced gender entity, combining the work of various offices at the UN focused on gender and women’s rights. The new entity is called UN Women. While UNIFEM officially ceased to exist when the resolution was passed, the transition period will not be complete until the end of the year, and work continued as normal for the staff at UNIFEM.

I worked in the Governance, Peace and Security team at UNIFEM, headed by Anne-Marie Goetz, Chief Advisor on Governance, Peace and Security. The team has approximately 14 members, as well as interns and consultants.

The focus of my work was the implementation of Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security. The main Resolutions are 1325, which broadly recognizes the importance of women’s perspectives in addressing peace and security issues and ensuring respect for women’s rights in conflict contexts, and 1820, which recognizes sexual violence as a security issue and commits to a comprehensive security response to the widespread use of sexual violence in conflict contexts. Resolutions 1888 and 1889 provide accountability frameworks for these first two Resolutions.

My most interesting and intensive work focused on a particular aspect of these Resolutions relating to systemic sexual violence and peace mediation. My work was a follow-on to a high level Colloquium of senior UN mediators held one year ago by UNIFEM, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) in the UN Secretariat, and the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, and others. The objective of the Colloquium was to better understand the challenges and opportunities for mediators to more reliably and effectively incorporate systemic sexual violence into various stages of peace negotiations. In practical terms, the Colloquium was designed to produce a series of 5 Operational Guidance Notes for peace mediators, drawing on the knowledge generated at the Colloquium. My job was to draft the 1st and 2nd drafts of 2 of these Operational Guidance Notes – one focused on Ceasefire Agreements and the other focused on Justice provisions in peace agreements.

I drafted the Guidance Notes using the DPA template for Operational Guidance, the detailed notes and reports from the Colloquium, the texts of specific peace agreements, and a range of other mediation-related resources. While the Guidance Notes are designed to be practical, rather than normative, the international legal norms relating to sexual violence, and to war crimes and crimes against humanity in peace negotiation more generally, make up a significant portion of each guidance note. The research and writing gave me a stronger understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by mediators, as well as broadening my appreciation of the treatment of international human rights and humanitarian norms in peace negotiations. I remain engaged in this project now that I am back home in Toronto.

In addition to my work on the Guidance Notes, I participated actively in a cross-UN working group planning a series of high-level meetings between women civil society organizations and the Special Representatives to the Secretary General in 22 conflict zones around the world. The events, called Open Days, produced a series of recommendations for the UN to improve its responsiveness to women’s rights issues in conflict and post-conflict contexts. I was involved in the coordination of the group, the drafting concept notes for various follow up events, and the drafting the global report which is due to be presented to the Secretary General at a high level event in October.

I also provided substantive edits to a lengthy module outlining best practices for combating sexual and gender-based violence in conflict contexts, as well as to an inventory of peacekeeper best practices for protecting women from sexual violence in conflict contexts, in line with Security Council Resolution 1820. I also contributed to the planning of, and attended, a high level launch of the inventory, featuring speeches by 3 major Major Generals from peacekeeping operations, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Earlier in the summer, I participated actively in a small team that designed and implemented a two-day workshop to plan the second phase of a DFID-funded global program, From Communities to Global Security: Engaging Women in Peacebuilding and Security, focused on the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1325 in conflict contexts. The program aims to reduce violent conflict and sexual and gender-based violence by strengthening women’s involvement in peacebuilding, and security sector reform, and increasing accountability in conflict contexts. It will support gender equality advocates in post conflict-countries to effectively influence peace processes, peace building and other post-conflict recovery processes, for the benefit of women. Additionally, the program will support security sector reforms in conflict-affected contexts in order to create more secure environments for women. The two-day working meeting brought together program partners from focus countries – Uganda, Liberia, Haiti and Timor Leste – to draft and refine country plans for the second phase, which will last for two to three years.  My work included conceptualizing the agenda, briefing and working with participants, and guiding the Liberian group through the planning process.

In addition, I participated in, and provided input to, the Technical Working Group on Indicators, mandated by the Security Council to develop a set of indicators to mark progress in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. I provided substantive input to a research paper on legal reform for the Secretary General’s report on Women and Peacebuilding; provided input on a recommendation on traditional justice mechanisms for this same report.

My experience at UNIFEM was extremely positive, and fruitful both professionally and personally. I learned a tremendous amount from working with the Governance, Peace and Security team, and hope to remain connected to the work as I go through my final two years of law school.