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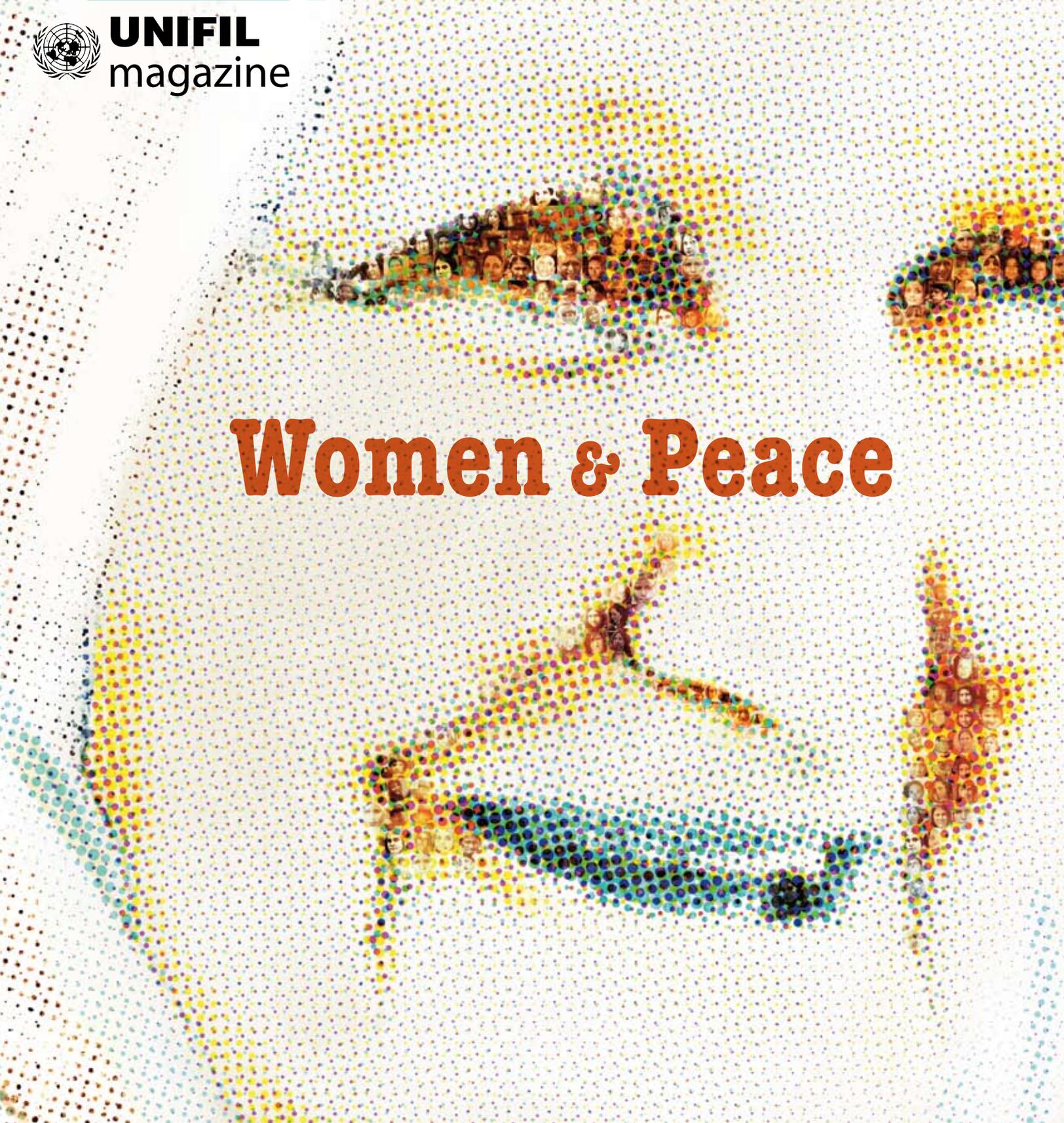
# al-janoub

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**UNIFIL**  
magazine

## Women & Peace





# Women and peacekeeping

On 29 May 2009, the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, the United Nations honoured women peacekeepers around the world. Celebrating the role of “women in peacekeeping” Al Janoub dedicates this issue to the expanded theme of “women and peacekeeping”. We look at the broader picture of how women in, and from, south Lebanon have coped with personal and social challenges, made that much more difficult by years of conflict and disruption.

We start with a tribute to UNIFIL’s women in uniform. We bring out the diversity in the roles they perform, particularly those shattering traditional stereotypes of the “man’s job”: whether driving a heavy armoured vehicle or engaged in high-risk demining operations. We present short excerpts of our conversation with them, as they talk about their experiences, hopes and aspirations.

Moving on to women officers in the Lebanese Armed Forces, an interesting contrast emerges: whereas UNIFIL’s women have to cope with being so far away from home and family, the challenge for their Lebanese Army counterparts is balancing daily domestic requirements with the demands of military life. In both cases what clearly stands out is that women are not only equal to the task, but bring distinct advantages over men in certain jobs essential to the army and to peacekeeping operations.

She inherited a vision from her brother, Imam Moussa Al-Sadr, and carried it with missionary zeal. Meet Rabab Al-Sadr, doyenne of Lebanon’s social activism. Her achievements may prompt one to see her as a champion of the women’s cause; in her method though, she is anything but. Taking a holistic approach to social development, where men and women have complementary roles to play, she works to enable women more effectively perform their part.

As an example of a successful career woman we chose Rola Nouredine, Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Lebanon. Ms. Nouredine reflects on her experiences – from childhood memories of Khirbat Silim, her ancestral village in south Lebanon, through to her career as a diplomat and future aspirations for her country. Her story brings out how clarity of ambition and determination to pursue it can

open the world to a woman no matter where she comes from.

What could be common between puppet-making and human rights awareness? It is all about enabling girls to deal with the challenges of normal daily life. Find out how this UNIFIL-funded project conducted by the NGO Naba’a combines vocational training with socio-cultural workshops to benefit girls who had to drop out of school due to the adversities of war.

Sister Emily Tannous, educationist and peace activist from Marjayoun, then tells us how she nurtures ‘responsible citizenry’ not just in her school but beyond through her ‘Drums for Peace’ initiative.

The story of Daad Ismail is testament to the resolute spirit of those women of south Lebanon who have transformed personal suffering into an enterprise for the common good. This mother of a child with special need found enough motivation in the bombed-out ruins of Aita Al-Shaab village to build, and then re-build, a centre for providing care to the many similarly disadvantaged children in the neighbourhood, indeed across southern Lebanon.

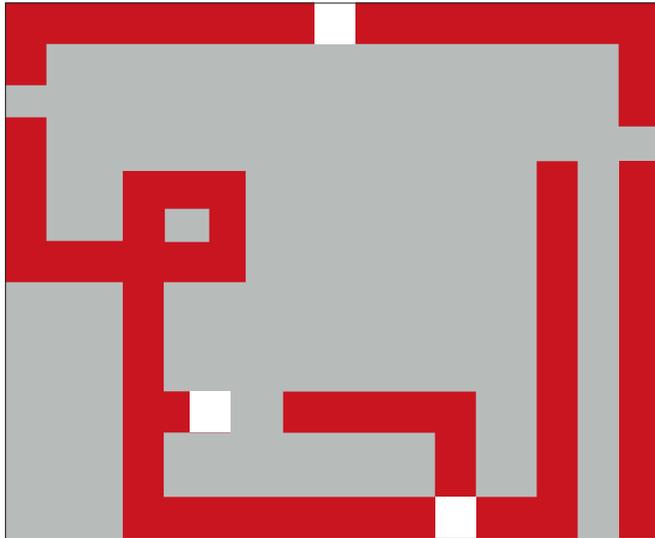
Finally, we take stock of the role of women in promotion of peace and security as envisaged by the UN Security Council resolution 1325, now into the tenth year of its implementation. There have been some notable achievements but progress is far from satisfactory, finds Susan Manuel from the Department of Public Information in the UN headquarters.

Don’t miss our regular municipal column where this time we profile Qana and have a word from the Mayor too.

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**Neeraj Singh**  
Editor-in-Chief

# Contents



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<b>Editorial:</b>	<b>3</b>
Women and peacekeeping	
<b>UNIFIL's women:</b>	<b>5 7</b>
keeping peace in the south	
<b>Shining forth:</b>	<b>8 9</b>
Women in the Lebanese Armed Forces	
<b>Rabab Al-Sadr:</b>	<b>10 11</b>
She has the power to empower	
<b>Rola Noureddine:</b>	<b>11 12</b>
From the end of the world to a world beyond borders	
<b>Enabling</b>	<b>13</b>
School drop-out girls	
<b>Sister Emily Tannous:</b>	<b>14</b>
Educating for Peace	
<b>Daad Ismail:</b>	<b>15</b>
She Transformed Personal Suffering into Social Good	
<b>Qana:</b>	<b>16</b>
The land of faith	
<b>Mayor's Word:</b>	<b>17</b>
UNIFIL has lived up to the hopes of southerners	
<b>UN perspective:</b>	<b>18</b>
Women, peace and security	

### Disclaimer

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# UNIFIL's women: keeping peace in the south

For this edition of **'Al-Janoub'**, inspired by the theme of this year's International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, we travelled across southern Lebanon to meet UNIFIL's women peacekeepers.

The broad range of different tasks they undertake - from providing medical services and interacting with the civilian population to driving armoured vehicles and operating heavy air surveillance equipment - attest to the important role they play in bringing peace and stability to southern Lebanon.

When travelling from Naqoura to Tibnin and across to Marjayoun, we asked about the women's daily tasks, their experience as peacekeepers and also their hopes for Lebanon. The following pages offer only a small but certainly vivid insight into who UNIFIL's women peacekeepers are.

**Captain Nur Izanny Btiyini, Civil-Military Cooperation Officer from Malaysia, loves learning about Lebanon and its people.**



"It is not very common for Malaysian women soldiers to be involved in United Nations peacekeeping missions. This is a great opportunity for me. As a Civil-Military Cooperation Officer, one of my most memorable experiences has been my interaction with the local population, and learning about their country. I hope that the Lebanese people will continue to improve their livelihoods and that Lebanon will stay out of war."



**Lieutenant Tingli Peng, a Dentist from China who misses her three-year old daughter, finds solace in caring for orphans instead.**

"It's my honour and pleasure to participate in this United Nations peacekeeping mission. Upon arrival, I was not so confident about being able to communicate with patients from different countries, but I soon realized it is actually not as difficult as I had thought, although still quite challenging. Over the past two months, I have taken part in many activities with the population, for example a medical exchange with local Red Cross personnel, children's day celebration in Marjayoun, and I have provided medical care for orphans and people in Naqoura. However, I also miss my family a lot, particularly my three-year old daughter. I have never before been separated from her."

**Petty Officer Natasja Lippens works in the Weapons Technical Department on board UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force Belgian flagship Leopold I. She takes discomforts of life on a ship in her stride and is proud to help with the mission.**



friends, but also little things that you only realize when you are at sea – like taking a bath, lying on your sofa – simple but beautiful things in life.”

**First Lieutenant Gonca Fidan, a Turkish Doctor, does her best to help women and children, and can also tell the fortune from the residue of your cup of coffee.**



“It’s a pleasure to be part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission and to see the impact of our work on the lives of the people. Women peacekeepers play an important role in establishing contacts with the local population. I try to do my best; every day I ask myself what I can do more to help the people, especially women and children. I don’t want them to worry about life. Having been the only female officer in our camp, I initially very much missed my family, especially my sister, but my mind is full of good memories. Now, I think of what I will miss here, knowing that I will be leaving soon.”

**Sergeant Sandra Boissier, French Anti-Aircraft Team Leader, finds the people here very friendly and appreciates the cooperation with the Lebanese Army.**



“Here in Lebanon, I work as part of a team responsible for air and land surveillance, night and day, 24 hours a day. Our work contributes to overall security and we work closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Lebanese people have been very open. Once I was on a reconnaissance mission and, on arriving at our position, we met some Lebanese who invited us to eat with them. I hope that one day the Lebanese people can live without fear, simply in peace.”

**Flight Lieutenant Francisca Aholo, Press Officer from Ghana, sees a bond with the Lebanese people and army for the common goal of peace.**



“Being part of a peacekeeping mission means I can contribute to bringing peace to my brothers and sisters in southern Lebanon. In the course of my duties here, I have had the opportunity to interact with peacekeepers from many other countries, different cultures and customs; this is my most memorable experience. We work as one body, striving towards one common goal - that is to maintain peace in southern Lebanon. Lebanon has come

a long way when it comes to peace and security, especially in the south. And it is my hope that the Lebanese people will continue to support UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces to achieve sustainable peace in their country.”

**Corporal Stephanie Gerards, an Explosive Detection Dog Leader from Belgium, has a special partner - her dog Api.**



“This is the first time that I am taking part in a United Nations peacekeeping mission. I have a very special partner. Her name is Api and she is an explosive detection dog. I find the Lebanese people extremely hospitable and friendly. It is my hope that the people here will finally enjoy lasting peace, and that they will be able to reconstruct and further develop their country.”

**Corporal Jolanda Lara from Spain drives an Armoured Personnel Carrier and likes to help sick children or attend to injured sheep.**



“This is my second peacekeeping mission, and it is an honour for me to be part of UNIFIL. I work as an Armoured Personnel Carrier Driver and feel lucky that I have had the chance to be out on patrol to meet the local population. Once I helped a sick child and on several occasions I have also been able to assist shepherds to take care of injured sheep. However, I also miss my parents a lot; I call them each day, just hearing their voices is enough. Each day that I talk to them means one day less until we see each other again.”

**2nd Lieutenant Viviana Conte from Italy, Country Adviser to UNIFIL’s Sector West Commander, believes women can help enhance public awareness about UNIFIL’s role.**



“I am honoured to be part of this ‘big United Nations project’ to bring peace and stability to Lebanon. I have met a lot of women who described to me their experience during the war; everyone deserves a normal life; this is what I hope for. Here in Lebanon, due to cultural reasons, we as women peacekeepers can easily interface with local women. If we can explain UNIFIL’s mandate to the women, they will explain it to their families and friends, and this will help us create a better understanding of UNIFIL’s role. I also teach Italian to children at the local orphanage and to Tibnin citizens. Our interaction helps me better understand Lebanon, day-by-day.”

**Nepalese Nursing Officer Captain Bimala Kumari Moktan and Medical Officer Captain Dr. Renu Shrestha enjoy cultural exchanges with local communities.**



“We feel great and very proud to be part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Last time we organized an inauguration programme, we had the chance to work together with the local population. We had a great time. We performed some Nepalese cultural dance and the people enjoyed it a lot. In order to overcome communication difficulties, we use our hands for sign language or take our interpreters. We hope that peace and stability will be established forever. Although we miss our country and our families and friends, we have a good team here; it is like our second home.”

# Shining forth: Women in the Lebanese Armed Forces



**Getting tough:** Women recruits in the Lebanese Army go through rigorous training.

With the changing notion of “a man’s world”, the armed forces too are no longer a male preserve and the Lebanese Army is no exception to this global trend: as ‘Al-Janoub’ found out from Major Rim Yammin, Major Claude Tabshouri and First Lieutenant Mary Saab, three women officers serving in the Lebanese Armed Forces headquarters.

“Women are proving day after day that they stand out in the fields most exclusive to men, such as the army,” said Major Tabshouri. “In administrative tasks they by far surpass men, especially in the fields of Information Technology, management, accounting,

nursing, pharmacy and dentistry.”

Although women have not yet been assigned to combat tasks, all those recruited, whether soldiers or officers, undergo a six-month military training followed by annual drills of shooting,



**“Women are proving day after day that they stand out in the fields most exclusive to men, such as the army.”**

**-Major Tabshouri-**



**“I don’t like carrying a weapon, but I am not afraid of it.” -First Lieutenant Saab-**

dismantling and assembling weapons, as well as other exercises.

“I don’t like carrying a weapon,” says First Lieutenant Saab, “But I am not afraid of it. Having been trained in the handling of weapons, I have also learnt to make friends with weapons.” Similar confidence is evident in her colleagues Major Tabshouri and Major Yammin who express readiness for action on the ground if duty calls.

At present, females serving in the Lebanese Army are assigned to purely administrative jobs. “This is because our recruitment is based on the needs of the military in different specialties,” explains Major Tabshouri. “Added to this is the fact that not all barracks are equipped to accommodate women. Mixing in certain places is not accepted by society and this has nothing to do with the capability of women to perform their duties.”

Women’s enthusiasm for military service far exceeds expectations even of the Lebanese Army, Major Yammin explains: “The last recruitment drive for women had to be closed 15 days before the deadline due to the flood of applications.”

The glamour of the uniform overwhelms First Lieutenant Saab every time she steps out in public, whether shopping with the family or visiting her children’s school. She describes how people young and old are eager to talk to her. “I see nothing but respect and admiration in their eyes,” she says, “A particular pride in the national uniform.”

The Army takes special care of their families and works to protect family bonds: “If there are problems at home, soldiers cannot perform their work properly,” she says. Married to an army officer, she feels her husband is able to



**“Besides providing an opportunity to develop specialised skills, the army also imparts values like organisation, precision, respect for others and non-discrimination.”**

**-Major Yammin-**

better understand her and the demands of her job. On the other hand, Major Tabshouri, who is also married to a military officer, thinks both spouses being in the army could make it hard for the family, particularly in times of muster for heightened security operations in the country. “Military service calls for a lot of sacrifice, regarding working hours for example where you may have to work Sundays or nights.”

They deny any gender-discrimination in the army. Major Tabshouri explains how her subordinates address her as “Sir” just the way they do the male officers, thus respecting her rank and personality irrespective of gender. “But this is without jeopardizing our feminine qualities,” she is quick to add. “Conserving your femininity does not imply that you seek privileges or special treatment, just as it doesn’t require women officers to be unduly soft in their demeanour.” She generally believes that superiors should adopt a humane but firm treatment of their subordinates.

While attesting to the tough side of military life, all officers agreed that the army helped them grow a stronger personality, better confidence and a greater feeling of safety. Besides providing an opportunity to develop specialised skills, the army also imparts values like organisation, precision, respect for others and non-discrimination. This



helps us cope better in the army, says Major Yammin. This is confirmed by First Lieutenant Saab who feels that thanks to her experience in the army she is now able to make the right decision most of the times.

When asked whether they apply the proverbial “military rule” on their children, Major Tabshouri stresses that respect for time, order and exactness are the positives of military life, “and there is always time for fun”. First Lieutenant Saab, however, admits that she follows the military example at home, clarifying that her prescription for her children is based on consideration of what is right for them and not as a bid to ‘control’, and she also applies the reward system like the institution she works for.

While Major Yammin encourages women to join the army, First Lieutenant Saab and Major Tabshouri advise careful consideration to ensure they are prepared for the rigours of military life before they make the decision. They consider women a great asset to the Lebanese Army: a sign of advancement, but also because of the attributes of “organisation and meticulousness” women bring to the institution.

Major Tabshouri sums up: “women give it a special brilliance!”



**Nurturing generations:** Ms. Al-Sadr with children at her centre in Tyre

“ Imam Al-Sadr’s work was directed towards Muslims and Christians alike. He worked for all the people of Lebanon without distinction, but of course he gave special attention to the South as it was suffering from huge deprivation ”

# She has the power to empower

On a visit to Ms. Rabab Al-Sadr’s office in Tyre, you cannot but be struck by the serenity of the place. Once inside, however, it suddenly transforms into a beehive and the buzz of activity around makes you realize the true significance of the work of a woman who has long advocated, indeed strived, for women’s rights.

Born in the city of Qom in Iran, Rabab Sadreddine Al-Sadr began her social activities in Lebanon in 1963 on the instructions of Imam Musa Al-Sadr. Having contributed to the founding of the Women’s section of the ‘Imam Sadr Foundation’, she later became the director of the ‘House of the Girl’, which undertakes to rehabilitate girls into the public domain.

She sees men and women as having complementary roles in society: “Some roles in life men are required to fulfil, others are women’s concern,” she says, “It is by cooperation between both genders that difficulties are best overcome.”

Ms. Al-Sadr believes that the difference between men and women is merely physiological. Women therefore are as

likely to be successful in life, if only they have confidence in their own ability. “It is only after she is fully aware in this respect that a woman can undertake her mission to the fullest extent.”

Indeed, her philosophy of life is that to be successful one must undertake one’s duties to the fullest extent. “And sometimes, neither men nor women can overcome difficulties alone without help from the other,” she says, “To this end, one can be assisted by advisers and consultants to serve the community better.”

The Imam Sadr Foundation plays an important role in the rehabilitation and training of women in various fields. “The Foundation has 340 staff in different disciplines - administrative, technical, scientific and educational – all of whom

work collectively to ensure the success of our goal.”

“Since the sixties, Imam Al-Sadr worked in the service of the Lebanese society,” she explains, “The Imam studied Lebanon’s conditions and needs well. Based on the findings, he developed a plan and then started launching his institutions. These include kindergartens, schools, training centres, a training school for nurses, hospitals, mosques as well as a variety of services aimed at supporting orphans and the needy.”

“Imam Al-Sadr’s work was directed towards Muslims and Christians alike. He worked for all the people of Lebanon without distinction, but of course he gave special attention to the South as it was suffering from huge deprivation,” she adds.

“The main objective of the Imam Sadr Foundation is to strengthen the human attributes required for a healthy society, especially in southern Lebanon, which was exposed to repeated Israeli attacks, not to mention the economic difficulties experienced by the residents here.”

As regards her own involvement in social work, she says: “I started social work at an early age, giving particular attention to activities related to women. In my nature, I am inclined to renewal and modernization. Our team members, despite being highly qualified, constantly update their knowledge through conferences, workshops and training courses. Some of the graduates from our own institutions contribute to our work as volunteers.”



Rabab Al-Sadr

Regarding the Foundation's work on women's affairs, Ms. Al-Sadr said: "The Foundation is a member in the Lebanese Women's Society, a semi-official organization through which women collaborate to collectively carry out certain activities that benefit our community. On a personal level, I do not like to bring up the issue of women's rights in a confrontational way with men. Both have their respective roles to play in life that are not mutually contradictory. After all, we are all human beings regardless of gender."

She expresses satisfaction at the progress of women in Lebanon: "Women in Lebanon are highly efficient. Currently we have female Director Generals, judges, officers in the Directorate of General Security, members of Parliament and a minister. It is true that they are few in number, but it is a good start. I would like to say to women that they must be aware of their importance in society, and practice their role in life fully without putting the onus on men alone."

"Men and women are equal in responsibility, and each has its own role in serving community. In UNIFIL, for example, we find exceptional women in military life; they are successful in their work despite its difficulty."

She underscores the good cooperation her organisation has with UNIFIL: "Our relations with all UNIFIL's battalions are good. Sometimes they visit us in our institutions; at other times we communicate through clinics located in villages."

Ms. Rabab Al-Sadr concludes with a message of peace to the world: "I wish that peace would prevail in the world, and human beings would love each other regardless of race, gender or religion. Wars and violence have clearly not achieved the desired results; dialogue and understanding are the solution. When the peoples of the world deal with each other in a friendly manner, we will certainly achieve peace. And peace is the only way through which we can improve the circumstances of our life and ensure a better future for our younger generations."

Hassan Siklawi

# From the end of the world to a world beyond borders

As a little girl visiting her paternal home in the village of Khirbat Silim in south Lebanon, she used to think it was the end of the world. "As if beyond it there was empty space!" Now, a diplomat for 13 years, the last four as the Diplomatic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Lebanon, she works a world where her country would have "a chance to realize the full potential of its people".

Rola Nouredine "knew what she wanted from life", and got it young. Having graduated in Economics, she joined the United Nations Development Programme in Beirut working on sustainable human development, even as she was still pursuing her Masters in Business Administration. "It was at this time that my inclination for public and diplomatic work was firmed up," she says. Moving on to the Lebanese Foreign Service in June 1996, she served in Buenos Aires, Geneva and Washington, before taking up her current assignment since 2005 among the inner circle of advisors for Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

Politics has always been her forte, she claims: "When I was young I would sneak up to listen to my father and uncles talking politics, sometimes even chip in with my own views. Actually I have always been fascinated by the idea of men sitting around in serious conversation."

Her early memories of UNIFIL date back to the 1980s when she would visit her grandparents in Khirbat Silim. "We – my



Rola Nouredine

brother, sister and I – used to eagerly await the UNIFIL checkpoint. The soldiers from Ghana were such fun and we liked the way they would wave and talk to the kids," she says.

These early impressions of "the blue helmets with smiling faces, something you don't generally associate with armed soldiers" seem etched in her memory even today. "In all the work that I do here in the Prime Minister's Office, what has most intrigued me is the field of UNIFIL and peacekeeping because it combines military and politics," she says, "It is rarely that you can see your work in politics or diplomacy translate on the ground in such a tangible way. In UNIFIL's work you can see that daily: the implementation of the resolution [1701], relations with the population, dealing with violations, etcetera."

She dismisses any talk of gender discrimination, but admits having confronted certain cultural stereotypes of the woman's role in the course of her career. "Sometimes in our society, women are taught to fear



Rola Nouredine explaining the cartoon pin-ups on her wall

success because it would scare-off men.” She recalls how on her selection for the foreign affairs job, some of her male friends told her “in good faith”: you proved that you can do it, so why do you need to join?

“To be successful does not mean that you cease to be a woman; you need to stay true to who you are and not surrender your feminine attributes,” she says, “It is natural to be a mother, or a wife; you just need to achieve the right balance.”

That is easier said than done in the profession that she is in, she concedes. “It is an unstable job, particularly for a woman. It is the sort of life that is very exciting and rewarding when you are young, but does not support the traditional impulses of wanting to settle, have children and so on.”

Ms. Nouredine believes in an inclusive approach to addressing women’s issues: “It becomes more real when you place it in the social context where there are men and women together. At the end of the day, it is not about women coming together to get stronger, it is about women and men together in society complementing each other.”

The most important attribute for success is knowing what you want and being true to who you are, she says:

“Sometimes women are too driven by circumstances. For example, due to some unforeseen event in the family, such as a death or illness, the woman finds herself in a certain role and takes it up unquestioningly.”

Rola Nouredine considers herself lucky to have achieved her ambition to be a diplomat. “For a time I felt I had fulfilled my dream, but that is not good because it makes you complacent. It is important to reinvent yourself every time you feel you have reached a plateau. That is why I like the Foreign Service, because every time you go to a new country you start all over again.”

“I like to laugh at what I do,” she explains the pin-ups on her office wall of political cartoons that she likes to collect, “It helps demystify politics, makes it more real, more human.”

“There is this strange feeling among Lebanese that you are condemned to problems; the wars, the invasions, they have affected our way of being,” she continues, “We live as if we are dying the next day. So we are always doing things excessively: going out excessively, laughing excessively, eating excessively, traveling excessively, spending excessively.”

South Lebanon, she points out, has particularly suffered a lot from the conflicts.

To be successful does not mean that you cease to be a woman; you need to stay true to who you are and not surrender your feminine attributes... you just need to achieve the right balance

“at the end of the day, it is not about women coming together to get stronger, it is about women and men together in society complementing each other”

And yet the people there are “so joyful, warm hearted and welcoming”. She has a rather romantic attraction to the south - “not just because I belong to the south, but there is something about the place that attracts you” - pointing to the fact that all those from the south who may be living elsewhere for work or other compelling reasons, do regularly visit the south.

“I hope that south Lebanon will have a break finally from occupation and wars and there will be calm there as well as in the country as a whole.”

Neeraj Singh

# Enabling school drop-out girls



**Drop-outs no more:** They graduated to a new level of confidence

The NGO 'Developmental Action Without Borders - Naba'a' has completed in April 2009 a project funded by UNIFIL for enabling school drop-out girls and rehabilitating them vocationally.

The project targeted 150 girls aged between 14 and 25 years from five southern villages: Bedias, Yanouh, Jibal Al-Butum, Al-Sha'aytiah and Al-Sma'iyah. 50 girls received training in the fields of hairdressing and computer skills, while 100 others were imparted a variety of skills.

The project's objectives were promoting opportunities in the economic field by providing the young women with vocational training in fields of their choice and enabling girls and young women to develop themselves through social, cultural and educational workshops. The target group was a number of young women who were drop-outs from school and living in difficult social and economic conditions.

To enhance the young women's capabilities, the project combined the vocational training with socio-cultural workshops for raising awareness on human rights, reproductive and adolescent health, communication and conflict resolution, besides a number of entertaining and artistic activities. Such measures to ensure the progress and development of women in the social, cultural and economic fields are consistent with the terms of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

It is not the lack of sufficient awareness

among parents on children's and women's rights, but the adverse economic and social conditions created by war, destruction and displacement, that has led some girls in the southern villages to drop out of school. Most of the girls covered in the project, for example, are from families dependent on tobacco cultivation, a seasonal crop.

Besides receiving certificates in the fields of computer and hairdressing, the 50 young women were also imparted communication and networking skills, problem solving techniques and knowledge on a number of reproductive health issues.

The second aspect of the project involved enabling 100 other young women and school drop-outs from the five villages in a variety of skills such as communication, problem resolution and adolescent health. While learning to make puppets, they also engaged in awareness dialogues about their rights and its violations. In one of the villages targeted, UNIFIL female peacekeepers participated in a conflict resolution workshop.

The results have been encouraging: 14 girls were trained in Windows and Excel software and 36 others in hairdressing and makeup, two of whom are since hired by a hairdressing salon. 90% of the girls confirmed that they will continue

**... giving the girls professional and life skills that help them communicate with others, resolve their problems, know their rights and correct many of the habits and misconceptions in vogue, especially on reproductive health issues.**

the professions they have been trained in, seeking to further improve their skills, whereas 30% want to start joint businesses within their villages. Overall, more than 80% of the participants felt they had gained self-confidence through participation in activities and workshops.

Of the 100 girls who took part in the workshop on puppet making, 16 expressed willingness to produce and sell toys to help themselves or their families financially.

In general, the project has left a good impact within the target group and their parents and municipalities. The feedback received from the young women participants is that they did not only acquire new friends but also professional and life skills. The success of the project has prompted mayors from neighbouring municipalities to request similar projects for girls in the villages of Deir Qanun, Ras Al Ain, Hinniyah, Mansuri, Burj Rahhal and Maarakeh.

**Alia El-Turky** Project Manager

# Educating for Peace



Sister Emily addressing the 'Drums for Peace' ceremony

Public enthusiasm for Peace was drummed up last March at the town square of Marjayoun (south Lebanon) in a unique assertion by children of their right to peaceful life. The event termed “Drums for Peace” brought together more than a thousand students from eleven public and private schools from Kafer Kela, Khiam, Kleyaa, Ebel es Saqi and adjoining villages.

Ferried to the location in UNIFIL buses, the children carrying peace flags and banners conveyed the message through drums, dances, poems and sketches. UNIFIL's Chinese peacekeepers joined in the dance as Brigadier-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas, Commander of UNIFIL's Eastern Sector, looked on.

The woman behind the “Drums for Peace” initiative was Sister Emily Tannous, director of the Saint Coeur school of Marjayoun. Convinced of the unassailable link between education and peace, Sister Emily believes that peace building is a long term process that starts at school by inculcating values such as tolerance in the early education.

Saint Coeur's is indeed a model school where children of all religious confessions from 28 villages study in perfect harmony, sharing traditions and experiences, exploring what Sister Emily has always strived for: “learning to face life with education”. Openness is also in her creed: “accept yourself, make for yourself a space, but also respect the place of others - for men can only live in diversity”.

Opposed to traditional didactic methods

of teaching, aspects of which she finds unduly violent, Sister Emily promotes the humanistic approach to teaching in her school: “Vocational trainings for teachers are my tool to change a mistaken belief that has long existed in our society,” she says.

In the end it is about raising a “responsible citizen”: cultivating a citizenry that can honour inner peace and peace with others. “We do not simply teach our students Science and Geography, we are here to teach them values as well,” she says. Sister Emily seeks every opportunity to productively employ her rich experience and scholarship in peace related activities.

Ever since her appointment as Director in 2002, Sister Emily has shared excellent relations with UNIFIL's battalions deployed in and around Marjayoun. Her school hosts the Cervantes Spanish language classes conducted by UNIFIL peacekeepers and she has always stood by the Indian, Spanish and French troops, who in turn never hesitated to assist her in any possible way. The medical dispensary run by the Order's nuns regularly has doctors from the UNIFIL Chinese hospital

**Convinced of the unassailable link between education and peace, Sister Emily believes that peace building is a long term process that starts at school by inculcating values such as tolerance in the early education.**

attending, while UNIFIL's Spanish battalion offers constant medical check up for the students as well as help in maintenance of the school.

The order of Saint Coeur, of which she is a member, has as its core objective the promotion of literacy among mothers who are the backbone of society. Sister Emily firmly believes that an educated mother can maintain her family and give proper tutoring and guidance to her children.

**Sarah Al Khoury** - UNIFIL Civil Affairs



# She Transformed Personal Suffering into Social Good

The nursery at Aita Al-Shaab



Daad Ismail

Rather than surrender to suffering, Daad Ismail of Aita Al-Shaab took it as a challenge. A housewife for many years, her life transformed with the birth of a child with special need. To secure necessary care for her child, for lack to locally available facility, she had to travel weekly from the then [Israeli] occupied Aita Al-Shaab to Beirut.

**Herself an example for women in south Lebanon, Mrs. Ismail sees in them “growing awareness and self-confidence”.**

again, “with more number of children now in need of special care due to the effects of cluster bombs”. The centre currently has 107 children.

Mrs. Ismail says that a German association, the Japanese and Canadian embassies helped reconstruct the centre. Qatar built a new building which belongs to the association next to the school and UNIFIL equipped part of it as a nursery. Its staff includes three persons with special needs who graduated from the same centre.

Herself an example for women in south Lebanon, Mrs. Ismail sees in them “growing awareness and self-confidence”. “A priority for the southern woman is to educate her children, so they would not suffer as she has suffered. Every day I see women working in agriculture and crafts and I always encourage them,” she says.

At the same time, the man has a fundamental role in the woman’s life. “I could not continue without the great support I received from my husband, as well as the help of my family.”

Ultimate respite is in peace, she says: “It is natural that with security we can develop our work and rise with our achievements.”

**Rola Bzeih** - UNIFIL Civil Affairs

In this course, she chanced upon late Father Endwikh, a Dutch priest who founded the Father Endwikh Association for the Deaf in Lebanon, and Dr. Moussa Sharaf Al-Din, head of the Friends of the Disabled Association. On their encouragement, in 1996 Mrs. Ismail opened a centre for children with special needs, converting the first floor of her house in Aita Al-Shaab for the purpose.

In that year, she received 24 children. “In the first year the children came from Aita Al-Shaab and Rmeish. Then we received children from all of the area that constituted the occupied zone at the time,” she says.

In 1998, Mrs. Ismail founded the ‘Association for the Protection of Children with Special Needs’. Challenges have since grown. Despite the space and financial limitations, the number of children continued to increase, necessitating an increase in the number of staff.

“Over a period of seven months, I could not pay the wages of staff, and started to think that I should close the centre. But what kept me going is my faith in the capabilities of these children who, if provided with proper rehabilitation, have the ability to benefit themselves and their

community,” Mrs. Ismail recounts.

“Initially I received contributions from my sisters, Father Endwikh’s family and some other well wishers. Subsequently, we started receiving support from the Ministry of Social Affairs,” she says. Assistance was also forthcoming from local, Arab and international organizations, as well as several embassies.

UNIFIL too provided support in various forms. “They have always been around supporting me morally, and sometimes with assistance such as cleaning materials, medicines, a bus, water, in addition to the gifts the soldiers brought to the children during festivals.”

After the July 2006 war, when Mrs. Ismail returned to Aita Al-Shaab, she found her centre destroyed. With a resolve not uncommon in Jabal Amel, she started



## Qana: The land of faith

When Said Akl, the renowned poet from Zahle, recited: “Christianity is” born “at home in Lebanon”, he had in mind the town of Qana in south Lebanon. It is here that Jesus is said to have performed his first miracle of turning water into wine at a wedding he was attending in ‘Qana of Galilee’ (Qana Al Jalil in Arabic).

Remnants of ancient stone jars found in Qana are believed to have been used by Jesus for making the wine. Lending further credence to the belief are early stone sculptures in the Qana grotto, located north of the town, that are said to depict Jesus and his 12 disciples.

This has made Qana a popular pilgrimage site and also given rise to multiple local legends and popular traditions.

The St Joseph’s church, with the statue of ‘Our Lady of Qana’, is known for the annual Christmas mass. Another unique place of worship is the ‘Sayida Saleha Mosque’, named after a saintly woman with healing powers who lived in the area many years ago. People still believe in her supernatural powers and many testify to miraculous recovery from illnesses merely by praying at the mosque.

The recent history of Qana is marked by two tragic events: when scores of people were killed by Israeli bombings first on 18 April 1996, and again on 29 July 2006. Annual commemorations are held on

those days and a cemetery built for the victims stands as a grim reminder of the tragic loss.

A must see for the visitor is the Moussa Tiba Museum, housing the works of the famous contemporary painter from Qana who now lives in France.

The people of Qana like to joke: “Even if you open a can of sardines, you will find a guy from Qana inside!” – referring to the high percentage of emigrants, with almost 60% of the estimated total population of 20,000 now living abroad. Their remittances home are a major source of sustenance for the local economy. For the residents, agriculture is the most prevalent occupation. The area is well known for its olive oil, whereas tobacco, oil soaps, honey and vinegar are also produced.

Qana has a vibrant social and economic life. There are five schools, a day nursery, a public park, an agricultural cooperative, three olive presses and factories for milk and plastic products. Several clubs and



The cave of Qana (top); Ancient stone sculptures (above) found at the Qana grotto

**The town of Qana (also Cana, Kana) is located about 10 kilometers southeast of the city of Tyre and 100 kilometers from Beirut, at an altitude of about 300 meters above sea level. The population is primarily Shi’a Muslim, although there is also a substantial Christian community in the town.**

associations address cultural, sports and other civic requirements. The Sunday souk gathering hawkers and shoppers from the neighbourhood is something to look forward to on the weekend.

### Iman Ismail

The writer hails from Qana and presently works for UNIFIL’s Military Community Outreach Unit.



## UNIFIL has lived up to the hopes of southerners

We, as citizens of south Lebanon, grew up with UNIFIL. In their turn, the peacekeepers developed close ties with the local communities in the South. In the town of Qana, we treat our relations with UNIFIL similar to family ties.

UNIFIL has suffered with us from the successive Israeli hostilities; they were with us during the Qana massacre of 1996 which took place inside the UNIFIL Fijian battalion's headquarters. After peacekeepers opened their doors to the hapless people, more than 800 Lebanese citizens entered the UNIFIL base for shelter thinking that the flag of the United Nations would protect them from the Israeli aggressions. However, this did not happen. The Israeli forces bombed the headquarters killing 106 people, mostly women, children and disabled persons. A number of peacekeepers were also injured.

The peacekeepers had sheltered the people, shared with them food, bedding and medicines, and now after the massacre they attended to the casualties. The people of Qana can never forget these actions of UNIFIL.

The good relations continued after the adoption of resolution 1701, in the wake of the July 2006 hostilities that saw a second massacre in Qana of Galilee. Israeli warplanes launched an air raid on an apartment building in a densely populated neighbourhood where families, unable to escape with roads cut off by Israeli

bombardment, were taking shelter. Tens of children, disabled and elderly persons were killed and injured.

With the enhanced deployment of UNIFIL in 2006, the peacekeepers were received by the Southerners with open hearts and a great hope for their role in deterring the Israeli aggression on their lives and properties. In the nearly three years since, it has been evident that UNIFIL soldiers and commanders are well aware of the importance of their role in the region.

We in Qana of Galilee are full of goodwill and respect for the peacekeeping forces and their role as witnesses on behalf of the international community: the peacekeepers that see nothing but the truth, and convey nothing but the reality.

We have extended our hands to all possible cooperation between the Municipal Council and the people on the one hand, and the peacekeeping forces and NGO's on the other, which would strengthen relations between us. Indeed, there is cooperation in various fields: educational courses, medical services and several joint activities and events that are organized between the Municipal Council

“ The peacekeepers had sheltered the people, shared with them food, bedding and medicines ”

and UNIFIL's Italian troops who have made many donations in kind.

I must emphasize that the UNIFIL peacekeeping force has added a humanitarian aspect to its core mission, which has helped consolidate the mission's relations with the local community.

In recognition of their role the Municipal Council of Qana, in collaboration with the Tyr Festival Committee chaired by Mrs. Randa Berri, decided to dedicate the annual celebration of Christmas in the Cave of Qana in honour of the peacekeepers. We will endeavour to make this a regular practice in times to come.

We hope that UNIFIL will remain as a beacon of the legitimate role of the United Nations in achieving a peaceful world, free from violence, where all nations are equal and where there is no discrimination or prejudice towards one nation or the other.

**Mohammad Jamil Atieh** - Mayor of Qana

# Women, peace and security: UN perspective

Next year, in 2010, the United Nations and its partners will observe the 10th anniversary of its landmark resolution 1325, which mandated the involvement of women in peace processes including UN peace operations.

Resolution 1325 has been called a “revolutionary” statement of the Security Council as it called for women’s equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

But has it worked?

“Although slower than desired, a culture of gender equality and women’s empowerment in peace and security areas is generally taking hold,” wrote UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a report last year on progress in implementing resolution 1325.

The Security Council itself has included stipulations on gender in many of its resolutions since the year 2000. More than a dozen Member States developed action plans to implement the resolution, as did the entire UN system.

The resolution also stressed the important role of women in conflict prevention, and Secretary-General Ban made note of Lebanon’s “Women’s Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Stability and Security” launched in 2006, which focuses on the root causes of conflict and the economic empowerment of women.

However, next year commentators will be looking for signs of progress by the usual measurements, i.e. numbers. Numbers of women in parliaments and national assemblies, particularly in post-conflict countries and numbers of women in peacekeeping operations, for example.

In several post-conflict countries which the UN has recently assisted towards stability, new constitutions specified quotas of women to be included in governing bodies:

The number of women in the current Iraqi

parliament, 74 or 25 percent, is higher than in many Western countries. One-third of the new, post-conflict Nepal Constituent Assembly are women.

In Afghanistan, voters elected more women than the required 25 percent of parliament, where 91 of the 361 seats are held by women. However Afghanistan is currently engulfed in a controversy sparked by passage of a seemingly brutal law regarding women’s position in the family, indicating a long struggle ahead for women’s rights.

Resolution 1325 also called for an expansion of the role of women in UN peacekeeping operations, and on 29 May, the UN was to celebrate the role of women in its annual observance of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. But the observance will be more a call for action, than any claim of success.

After the adoption of Resolution 1325, the UN and its Member States have been working to meet the goals, but progress is far from satisfactory.

The percentage of women civilian staff on peacekeeping operations has reached about 40 percent. But progress has been much slower on the uniformed components of UN peacekeeping operations, to which Member States contribute: Women make up less than 3 percent of uniformed peacekeepers (women are 8 percent of the 10,000 police officers and 2 percent of the 80,000 military personnel.)

As UN peacekeeping has evolved from its traditional role of monitoring ceasefire agreements and borders between sovereign States to carrying out large



Susan Manuel

**Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon made note of Lebanon’s “Women’s Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Stability and Security” launched in 2006, which focuses on the root causes of conflict and the economic empowerment of women.**

scale multi-dimensional operations often addressing civil wars, so has the need for women peacekeepers grown. These newer missions are mandated to facilitate political processes through the promotion of national dialogue and reconciliation; protect civilians; assist in the disarmament and reintegration of combatants; support the organization of elections; protect human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law.

In all of these fields, women peacekeepers have proven that they can perform the same roles, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions, as their male counterparts. In many cases, women are better-placed to carry out peacekeeping tasks, including interviewing victims of sexual violence, working in women’s prisons, assisting female ex-combatants during demobilization and reintegration into civilian life and mentoring police cadets. Women peacekeepers also act as role models, inspiring women and girls in the often male-dominated societies where they serve.

**Susan Manuel** - (Ms. Susan Manuel heads the Peace and Security Section in the United Nations Department of Public Information in New York)

# A poem for women

By Asmahan Taameh

For her, poets composed verses  
And novelists' pens danced  
As a body they gave her right  
But forgot she is also a wise-one  
Forgetting that to scientists she gave life  
With her resolve she defeated enemies  
Teaching generations the virtue of giving  
She worked diligently, and endured suffering  
Like clouds in the sky her eyes became  
Over the evening pillow it gathered and rained...  
Then one morning ... she stood up...  
Like a raging storm  
Uprooted barriers of fear, wiped away her tears  
In her hand she raised the weapon of knowledge  
In the face of those who stole women's rights



This is the English translation of the poem originally written in Arabic. Asmahan Taameh was one of the participants in the UNIFIL-Naba'a project for enabling school drop-out girls of south Lebanon (see page 13) Her poem was motivated by her participation in the project.



# WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING: THE POWER TO EMPOWER

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers - 29 May 2009

