UN Women, with Finland’s support, has set up three Women’s Oases in the Za’atari refugee camp. Here, women and girls can feel comfortable to come and access services such as psycho-social support, awareness-raising on gender-based violence, literacy and computer classes, and cash-for-work programmes. Hadeel Al-Zoubi, UN Women’s Senior Camp Assistant, feels tied to the people across the camp. She is half Syrian herself, and joined UN Women because she felt compelled to help people caught in the Syrian refugee crisis.

“I feel tied to these people. I understand their problems; I know what they feel.”

– Hadeel Al-Zoubi

UN Women, with the support of Finland, launched the Wanawake Wanaweza (Women Can) programme on women’s leadership and political participation. Aspirants for upcoming elections received training in public speaking, leadership and campaigning skills. Mickness Mahera participated in the training, and went on to win a seat in her District Council. The UN Women training helped her tell people about human rights and women rights in ways that people understood.

“[I] will make sure that, as women, we get the opportunity to go into leadership positions.”

– Mickness Mahera
UN Women, with funding from Finland, is supporting the programme “Citizenship, Leadership and Participation: New Pathways for Arab Women” with the goal of increasing women’s leadership and participation in the Arab States Region. In Morocco, five regional conferences were organized, which significantly strengthened the capacities of 3,248 elected women and future candidates in women’s leadership and decision-making. An increase in the number of female lawmakers in the country has led to significant legislative reforms related to anti-discrimination, domestic violence, family codes, inheritance, and child support and protection.

Kenya

Captain Grace Ajierh, from Kenya, is among 41 female military officers from 31 countries who completed the 2016 Female Military Officers Course co-organized by UN Women and the International Peace Support Training Center, with generous support from Finland. Kenya is one of the highest-ranked countries in the world for the deployment of female military officers to UN peacekeeping missions, and several of Kenya’s female peacekeepers have participated in trainings offered by UN Women. “The course is very effective. I am coming from a mission in South Sudan and everything that I was charged to do there is relevant to what I am learning now,” said Captain Ajierh about the training. She is confident that, after the course, she is better equipped to train female peacekeepers on gender-related issues.

Morocco

“Advocating women’s right to equal representation in the decision making process is not only our duty towards women, it is our duty to our countries.”

— Rula Alhroob

“The reality remains that women and girls continue to pay a high toll [in conflict] [...] The policy frameworks and response efforts should include gender equality as one of their guiding principles.”

— Grace Ajierh

Photos: above left: UN Women/Kennedy Okoth; above right: Kimja Vanderheyden