

# Annual report 2007

## ICELAND CRISIS RESPONSE UNIT





MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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### International partners



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**Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**  
**Minister for Foreign Affairs**



## Iceland's Contribution to Peace and Security

Work to promote peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts is one of the main foreign-policy priorities set forth in the Government of Iceland's policy statement. Iceland's participation in peacekeeping missions and reconstruction work is an important contribution by a country which is one of the 24 UN member states that does not have armed forces, and the only NATO member state without a military. Icelanders want their country to be an active advocate for peace in the international community.

The Iceland Crisis Response Unit is a civilian peacekeeping organization, and that is its strength and distinguishing character. The valuable experience, specialized knowledge and training available in Iceland has repeatedly demonstrated its usefulness in war-torn areas of the world. Iceland has learned from experience and concentrates its peacekeeping efforts on areas where it achieves the best results.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 cites the necessity of involving women in processes to establish peace and security. The resolution stresses the important role played by women in the peaceful resolution of armed conflict and their subsequent

role in building lasting peace. Iceland recently published its action plan for implementing this resolution, which reflects fundamental principles of Icelandic foreign policy: respect for human rights, greater development aid cooperation, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

In recent years, the Iceland Crisis Response Unit has increasingly stressed cooperation with the United Nations and UN agencies when selecting missions. There has been a major increase in women's participation in the work of the ICRU, with almost 60 women working in the field for extended periods over the last decade. Icelandic personnel now serve with peacekeeping missions four main areas: Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Africa.

The choice of ICRU missions and the priorities set in its work will increasingly reflect Iceland's emphasis on the necessity of finding peaceful solutions to conflict. The ICRU stresses economic development and reconstruction, and the country's peacekeeping organization has been, and will remain, a source of pride to its citizens.





**Anna Jóhannsdóttir**  
Director, Iceland Crisis Response Unit

## Looking back

The Iceland Crisis Response Unit (ICRU) is a division of the Directorate of International and Security Affairs of the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The ICRU office oversees Iceland's participation in international peacekeeping/peacebuilding missions. In addition to daily operations and administrative matters, the office organizes training programs for peacekeeping personnel and maintains a roster of individuals available for peacekeeping assignments. The year 2007 was highly significant for the work of the ICRU because numerous changes were made in its working environment and organizational framework. Priorities for peacekeeping work have changed and developed in recent years. The work of Iceland's Mobile Liaison and Observation teams with ISAF in Afghanistan came to an end, as did the work of a NATO public information officer in Iraq. Greater emphasis is now placed on long-term positions and projects, particularly cooperation with UN agencies. A geographical shift in Iceland's peacekeeping efforts has taken place with greater emphasis now being placed on Africa and the Middle East. There has also been a greater emphasis on support for and cooperation with local inhabitants in promoting human rights, peacebuilding, and economic development, particularly in connection with projects that benefit women in war-torn areas.

### ICRU Projects

The ICRU has participated in a wide range of missions and supplied personnel to fill many different positions. The persons deployed abroad by the ICRU have different backgrounds and experience and its personnel roster contains almost 200

experts in various fields. In recent years, the ICRU has sent an increasing number of women to work in the field. Education and experience, or a background in humanitarian work, international relations, or development work, have been determining factors when selecting personnel for new missions, because in most cases, specialized expertise and experience are required by ICRU's international partners.

The ICRU's chief international partners are the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), UN agencies (UNICEF, UNIFEM and WFP), the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The ICRU also contributed personnel to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), a Nordic ceasefire monitoring mission which operated from 2002 until January 2008.

The ICRU maintains excellent cooperation with government agencies and private enterprises in Iceland that employ specialists and experts who are prepared to take on demanding projects abroad. These organizations include the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police and other police authorities, the Icelandic Coast Guard, the Icelandic Civil Aviation Administration, ISAVIA, and the Reykjavik Fire Department. In cooperation with other ministries and their sub-agencies, the Foreign Ministry and the ICRU are able to obtain well-trained specialists to work in in the field, thereby making their expert knowledge available to Iceland's international partners. At the end of an assignment, the employer regains an expert who has expanded his knowledge, established contacts, and acquired a wider view than he might have been able to do in his work at home.

Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek,  
but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

Martin Luther King, human rights advocate

## ICRU missions during the period 2007-2008



## Number of ICRU personnel and gender balance

In 2007, 74 individuals worked on long-term projects for the ICRU a total of 30 positions. An additional 17 persons undertook shorter assignments to serve as election monitors on behalf of the ICRU. The organization therefore oversees a considerable number of personnel and has a large personnel turnover since positions are manned for varying lengths of time, although longer assignments are more common than short-term deployments.

In examining gender distribution for the year 2007, it should be kept in mind that a larger number of men shared positions for shorter periods of time that year. Women tended to remain in a position for longer periods.

Looking at the first half of the year 2007, the distribution by gender in man months on the job is 27 percent for women compared to 73 percent for men. During the latter half of the year, the percentages were 38 percent for women, compared to 62 percent for men. Developments that year show that women filled 40-45 percent of all ICRU positions abroad at the end of the year 2007, so there is now a nearly equal gender distribution of Icelandic peacekeepers working abroad. This represents a major change over a period of just a few years, and is due, among other things, to a shift in priorities and projects, which means that they now appeal to both men and women. This policy change reflects the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution no. 1325 from 2000, which calls for greater participation by women in peacekeeping work.

## Cooperation with ICE SAR

The international rescue team of the Icelandic ICE-SAR rescue association cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The team is on the Ministry's rapid-response list and is available for service abroad in the field of urban search and rescue. The team members have undergone specialized training for this work and includes physicians, paramedics, persons trained to handle toxins, first-aid personnel, and communications specialists, making a total of 70 people. The team is able to operate independently for 10-14 days and has already participated in rescue operations in Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, and Thailand. The cooperation agreement with the Ministry has been in force since the autumn of 2006 and the ICRU provides financial assistance to the team, enabling it to keep abreast of technical innovations and maintain its ability to respond at short notice. The agreement is currently under review, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intends to provide premises for the team near the international airport in Keflavik, considerably shortening its response time. A new agreement should be ready for signing by mid-2008.



Sveinbjörn Berentsson

*Proud patriarch surrounded by children and grandchildren.*

## Afghanistan

The ICRU's most extensive peacekeeping deployment is in Afghanistan. Since 2003, Iceland has taken part in the work of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which operates with a mandate from the United Nations Security Council under NATO command. Most Western nations, including all of the Nordic countries, take part in this mission with personnel and financial contributions. In late 2007, nearly 40 nations had personnel contributed to the mission, while a much larger group of nations made financial contributions and took part in development work.

The ICRU operated in three areas of Afghanistan in 2007: ISAF headquarters in Kabul, Kabul International Airport, and the city of Chagcharan in Ghor province, where ICRU personnel served on a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The equivalent of 13-15 full-time positions were manned in Afghanistan in 2007, approximately the same number as the year before. However in 2007, greater emphasis was placed on providing financial support for development projects, including efforts to improve law enforcement and the judicial system, and campaigns against the cultivation of opium poppies. The nature of Icelandic peacekeeper's work also changed somewhat during

the year as participation in Mobile Liaison Observation Teams (MLOT) in Ghor came to an end in April 2007. Instead, the number of Icelandic personnel working at the international airport in Kabul was increased from eight to nine toward the end of the year. There was also an increase in the number of Icelanders at ISAF headquarters in Kabul, where four individuals worked in the office of NATO's Special Civilian Representative in Afghanistan and in the ISAF media office.

Support for the operation of Kabul airport is vital as the facility is the lifeline for all aid work in the country and a mainstay of national security. The international community's work in Afghanistan is focused on establishing stability and security in that country, assisting Afghans in reinstating and carrying out basic government functions, which will in turn help them rebuild their economy and social structures.

### Micro-hydropower plants

In April 2007, the ICRU signed a three-year contract with an aid organization, the International Assistance Mission (IAM), regarding the construction of micro-hydropower facilities in Ghor



province. The agreement provides for the building of up to twenty small power plants. The project is based on the model of participatory development which emphasises local initiatives and ownership.

The AIM's chief function is that of supplying spare parts and building materials, and providing instruction and project management; whereas the villagers themselves build and manage the plants. These hydropower plants fill an urgent need in Ghor, and several countries have funded the same kind of project. Iceland has placed its main emphasis on training and support services, which are essential if such projects are to be self-sustaining.

## Legal Aid

In April 2007, the ICRU and the International Legal Foundation, Afghanistan (ILF-A) signed a cooperation agreement for a term of one and a half year. The objective of this agreement is to lay the foundation for better legal assistance for the inhabitants of Ghor province. The project began in May with the opening of the ILF-A office in the district capital of Chaghcharan. Particular emphasis was placed on assisting groups that have difficulty asserting their legal rights in Afghanistan, such as women, children, and members of minority groups. The rights of prisoners were also among the concerns of the ILF lawyer, as many people have been imprisoned without due process of law.

The ILF-A lawyer has provided assistance on legal issues and the legal rights of citizens and civil servants. This work has resulted in better court procedures and greater professionalism among judges, public prosecutors, police officers, and prison wardens. The ILF-A has now obtained the necessary funding to continue providing free legal assistance in the district, making the project self-sustaining.

## Civil Defence Courses

The ICRU has provided funding for the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authorities (ANDMA) to hold courses taught by Red Crescent instructors for the Ghor Civil Defence Council and volunteers from seven of the province's 10 counties. A total of 129 people took part, including 20 women. Participants were divided into groups and assigned to four week-long courses, in which there was a major emphasis on using the right channels of communication. There are often long delays, sometimes up to 24 hours, between the time an incident takes place and the time a report is received by the District Civil Defence Council in Chaghcharan. It is essential that counties and villages are as well prepared as possible because natural disasters are frequent occurrences in Ghor province. Avalanches are common in winter, mudslides and flash floods are frequent events in spring. Last winter, the coldest in a decade in Ghor province, 45 people perished due to avalanches or exposure.



*Peacekeeper Ragnheiður Kolsöe at work in Afghanistan.*

**Ragnheiður Kolsöe worked as a development advisor for the ICRU in Ghor province in Afghanistan and is currently working in Faryab province. She reflects on her experience of life and work in the field.**

"I gained valuable experience during my year as a development advisor for the PRT in Ghor province in western Afghanistan. You can get used to anything really, and I think I adjusted quite quickly to conditions there, both inside and outside the military camps. It is a big change, of course, to live with that kind of security and limited freedom of movement, but there are good reasons for it. The working day is long in Ghor, but Fridays are quiet, because it is the Muslims' day of rest. Any description of the work there will undoubtedly sound quite alien, and it was of course. Nevertheless, most working days were not all that different than those in an office in Iceland. The day started with a morning meeting, where we reviewed the current situation. Then there were e-mails to write and answer, reports to compile, and meetings in the camps and in town.

Most of the work takes place behind a desk, except for the meetings with local representatives of ministries and provincial governors, and representatives of Afghan and international NGOs. I also tasked the Mobile Liaison Observation Teams (MLOT), asking them to gather information on local conditions in counties and villages, and then there were the messages that the teams brought back with them from their visits, requests from local magistrates, councils, and individual villages for assistance. The development representative does not direct the projects that the ICRU finances; the job consists of identifying needs and finding NGOs that can produce more detailed needs assessments and handle project implementation and direction. As a development advisor, my job was to scrutinize projects to make sure they meet certain quality standards."



*Monitor Davið Örn Guðjónsson (sitting to the left) conferring with residents in Sri Lanka*



*Jónas G. Allansson talking to a representative from the Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process*

**Jónas G. Allansson is a former Mission Manager in SLMM and he provides an account of his experiences in the field**

## Sri Lanka

With a few temporary interruptions, Sri Lanka has been torn by ethnic conflict for three decades. Tamil nationalists led by the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) have been engaged in a struggle with the Sri Lankan government for greater autonomy for the Tamils living in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), manned by the Nordic countries, was created in 2002, following a ceasefire agreement between the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka mediated by Norway. The observers were unarmed and both parties to the conflict gave the SLMM security guarantees, as well as pledging full support for ceasefire monitoring. All of the Nordic countries: Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, made financial contributions and supplied monitoring personnel.

The European Union listed the Tamil Tigers as a terrorist group in the autumn of 2006, after which, the Tamil Tigers announced that they could no longer guarantee the safety of observers from EU member countries (Finland, Sweden, and Denmark). All of the Nordic countries continued to make financial contributions to the mission, and Iceland and Norway increased the number of their observers. Iceland manned ten positions, one third of the observer contingent, including some of the key management positions in SLMM.

On 2 January 2008 the Government of Sri Lanka decided to abrogate the 2002 ceasefire agreement and consequently SLMM closed down its operations.

"I was the Mission Manager of the SLMM, which monitored the ceasefire agreement in Sri Lanka. The headquarters for the SLMM were in Colombo on the West coast of the island. The job consisted primarily of administrative and operational work, and a good deal of time was also spent on communication and contacts with representatives of governments and international institutions. During the final phase, approximately 30 Norwegian and Icelandic observers worked for the SLMM, in addition to national staff. Both Sri Lankans and the international community were interested in the work of this small mission which entailed great responsibility.

At headquarters, most of our time was used attending meetings and writing up reports. SLMM produced a weekly report describing the development of the conflict, particularly its impact on the lives of ordinary people. The observers in SLMM regional offices sent regular reports on local conditions, which were collated weekly into a comprehensive official report. Many international organizations told us that these reports were the one of the few reliable sources of information on conditions for the local people and the ongoing conflict, and they did impose some restraint on the factions involved.

SLMM's operations changed considerably during the last two years of the mission, as it was necessary to adapt the mission, which had originally been intended for ceasefire monitoring, to the worsening conflict and the diminishing will for peace.

It was a very demanding job, trying to work with people on opposite sides of the conflict. You tried to see things from their perspective and understand their reasons for taking part in the conflict. But what you remember most is all the ordinary people who suffered, and continue to suffer due to the civil war in Sri Lanka.

## Iraq

The ICRU took part in the NATO training mission in Iraq until August 2007 contributing a public information officer from 2005. His duties consisted of training Iraqi officers to provide information to the media, as well as writing press reports and supplying information on the training program.

**Steinar Þór Sveinsson worked as public information officer for the NATO training mission in Iraq (NTM-I). He writes here about his experiences in the field.**

“What surprised me, once I was in this international military environment, was that so much of the work was just like a normal civilian job. When you are at home in Iceland, trying to imagine what the situation in Iraq must be like, you think everyone must be on the front lines, but the reality is completely different. The biggest part of the job is civilian in nature: running communications and computer systems, managing housing, organizing transport for goods and people, personnel management, etc. Unfortunately, people often forget that most of the work done by NATO and the coalition force takes place far from the front lines, and in most cases is very similar to ordinary civilian work.

When I look back and think about my nearly one year in Iraq, I always think how well it went, even though it was difficult at times. It was really interesting, and you learned a lot from working under difficult circumstances as part of a closely-knit, international group. The situation left no room for minor problems; people had to concentrate on the big issues. Under circumstances like these, people form strong bonds, and you accept individuals for who they are.

At the same time, what we considered major problems were minor matters compared to what the Iraqis had to cope with every day. You always felt a bit strange when the Iraqis thanked us for being there. They were grateful to us for leaving our families for long periods of time and doing our utmost in our jobs in that country, which they knew would always remain foreign to us. Any sacrifices I might have made seemed minor compared to theirs. Iraqis thought we were sacrificing a lot, living so far away from our families and friends for such a long time. They asked a lot of questions about our families, always greeted us by shaking hands in the conventional way and then placing their right hand over their heart and bowing their head slightly – a very warm greeting.”

## FROM THE FIELD



**Bjarney Friðriksdóttir worked in Sri Lanka from September 2007 until the Sri Lankan Government abrogated the agreement and SLMM was forced to leave the country. She had previously worked for UNIFEM in Kosovo.**

**Peacekeeper: Bjarney Friðriksdóttir**

**Place and date of birth: Hafnarfjörður, 23 August 1967**

**Education: LLM in International Law, MA in International Affairs**

“I arrived in the town of Trincomalee in North-Eastern Sri Lanka in September, a few months after government forces had expelled the Tamil Tigers from the town. There was no actual armed conflict in the area during the time I spent there, but there were frequent human-rights violations. The Tamils are in the majority in the East, but they live under poor conditions.

My work consisted primarily of monitoring the human-rights situation in the eastern part of the country, writing reports and talking to the authorities including representatives of the police and national army about individual cases in the hope that SLMM’s knowledge of the matters in question would have a positive effect on their resolution.

The issues I dealt with in particular were the arrests, detention, and imprisonment without due process of law, which were authorized by the emergency legislation in force in the country. The police were largely helpless against the armed Tamil groups that everyone knew were responsible for disappearances, kidnappings, and killings of other Tamils. I also worked on matters relating to the living conditions and rights of people who had fled their homes due to the tsunami in 2004, or because of the hostilities. People were sometimes not allowed to return to their homes because the army had seized their land and classified it as a security zone.

The inhabitants of the eastern part of Sri Lanka lived in constant fear; they never felt safe. There were 15-20 disappearances, kidnappings, and murders every week in the district, and the victims were usually young men suspected of being members or supporters of the Tamil Tigers. Most members of the rebel group were themselves ‘victims of circumstance’ due to their age and ethnic group. The Tamil Tigers had forced them to fight when they were only children, and after the Tigers left the area, the army and other armed Tamil groups targeted them in an attempt to obtain information on the activities of the Tigers and eradicate support for the rebel group.”





*Peacekeeper Steinunn Guðrún Björgvinsdóttir at work in Palestine.*

## Occupied Palestinian Territories

The ICRU has cooperated with UNICEF in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) since March 2007. Steinunn Guðrún Björgvinsdóttir works for UNICEF in Jerusalem as an ICRU representative. Her job involves promoting children's welfare, among other things through cooperation with local NGOs and the authorities in the oPt, by making visits to the West Bank, and through cooperation with the UNICEF office in the Gaza Strip. She describes her work below:

"I started working for UNICEF in March 2007 and before I arrived, I naturally wondered what the work would be like -- what exactly it would consist of. It took me a while to acclimatize, but I immediately felt welcome.

The objective for those of us who work for UNICEF in the oPt is to create a secure environment for children. This effort takes place at three levels: laws and regulations, the public administration and services, and civilian society. As a social worker, my job consists mainly of influencing the development of the social welfare system and services. This involves cooperation

with the Ministry of Social Affairs, where we try to build up a professional network of people working with children's welfare which includes different specialists that will be able to analyze, refer, and monitor the cases of children who have been the victims of violence. This furthermore involves working with NGOs that provide various services for children who have been abused and subjected to violence. My work with these organizations consists primarily of technical assistance, providing advice and assistance and ensuring that projects produce the intended results.

Palestinian children are incredibly vulnerable, and that is why the work done by UNICEF and the NGOs that promote children's welfare is so important.

Working in the turbulent situation that this 60-year-old conflict has created can take its toll. It is difficult to know where to begin when children live under such difficult conditions, but in my opinion the work of UNICEF and other organizations in this area is necessary if we really want to protect the rights of children."





Kristján Sigfússon

Peacekeeper Kristján Sigfússon trains Lebanese medics during an exercise.

Peace has to be created, in order to be maintained.  
It will never be achieved by passivity and quietism.

Dorothy Thompson, human rights advocate

## Lebanon

The mission in Lebanon was launched in January 2007 when a team of Icelandic specialists were sent to southern Lebanon to locate and destroy unexploded ordnance. A team was put together that consisted of two explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) specialists from the Icelandic Coast Guard and a paramedic from the Reykjavik Fire Department. They worked with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA) and the United Nations mine action centre. The project lasted for four months, and a considerable quantity of unexploded ordnance was destroyed during that period. When the project finished in May 2007, there was a request that the ICRU fill the position of the SRSA medical coordinator in Lebanon. This job consisted of organizing an emergency response system to deal with incidents as well as training the Lebanese medics who work with the EOD teams.

A great deal of clearance work has been done in Lebanon, but there is still much unfinished work. Clearing an area that contains cluster bombs is a very time-consuming task. Tens of thousands of unexploded cluster bombs are still found in large areas of Lebanon and pose a serious hazard. The UN clearance project in Lebanon is scheduled to finish at the end of 2008, and Icelandic paramedics will fill the SRSA position until then.



*Photos of some of the people still missing after the conflict in Kosovo 1998-1999.*



*Liberian women campaigning for Women's Rights.*

Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir

## Cooperation with UNIFEM

Iceland has provided significant assistance to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and is now one of the main contributors to the organization.

The Icelandic Government has enjoyed successful cooperation with UNIFEM in the Balkans since 1999. The ICRU has supplied specialists on gender equality and human rights, and the Icelandic Government has provided considerable funding for the UNIFEM project in the region. Initially, the ICRU filled one full-time position, but since 2007, two specialists have worked on the project, now called the Balkan mission, which has seen major expansion and reinforcement over the last few years.

The first expert was sent to Kosovo in 2000. Her main responsibility was to strengthen women's participation in politics in the region. Follow-up was provided in the form of workshops for women active in politics and the work of NGOs. After the workshops were finished, a gender equality office was established in Kosovo, and the work of writing equal-rights law began. Icelandic UNIFEM project managers worked in coo-

operation with the Kosovar authorities on developing and publishing an action plan for gender equality. There were two ICRU specialists working in the Balkans in 2007: one managed the establishment of the UNIFEM office in Serbia and another, deployed in FYROM, provided advice on women's participation in peacebuilding in the Balkans.

The ICRU also began cooperating with the UNIFEM office in Liberia in 2007, where an ICRU specialist works on improvements in the justice system that will benefit women, particularly as regards gender-based violence.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of Icelandic specialists working with UNIFEM. A total of five specialists now work on projects or are filling positions. In addition to the three who work for the ICRU, the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs seconded an Icelandic expert at UNIFEM headquarters in New York and another working at the UNIFEM regional office for the Caribbean.





*Albanian children in Kosovo performing folk dances*

**It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it.  
And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.**

**Eleanor Roosevelt, human rights advocate**

**Nanna Magnadóttir recently took the position of Head of Office of the Council of Europe Secretariat Office in Kosovo. She had previously worked as gender-equality representative for UNIFEM's regional action plan for southwest Europe. She writes here about her experience of working for UNIFEM.**

"I worked as gender-equality representative for the UNIFEM regional action plan in southeast Europe from 1 May 2006 to 15 January 2008, filling the position of head of the UNIFEM office in Belgrade in Serbia. I was responsible for projects associated with the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), equal rights legislation, European coordination, and participation by young women, as well as serving as UNIFEM's liaison with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Initially, there was no UNIFEM office in Belgrade. Several small projects were directed from the UNIFEM regional office in Bratislava. I therefore went through something of a rite of passage, because I had to open an office, hire personnel, find cooperation partners among government authorities, NGOs, and other international organizations, as well as launch projects.

There was plenty of work to be done, and two weeks after I arrived in Belgrade, a consultation meeting was held with women from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro. The participants included civil servants, academ-

ics, and NGO workers, and for two days, we discussed the status of women in the region and the difficulties confronting them. This turned into a project funded by the Canadian Development Agency, which promotes women's participation in constitutional review processes and better economic rights for women.

My background as a lawyer specializing in human-rights issues was very useful for this project, which I directed until my term with UNIFEM finished. The constitutional review work was particularly interesting and demanding. The political environment in south-eastern Europe is unstable, and because the Balkan wars of the 1990's divided people into factions according to ethnic origin, there is always a risk of placing too much stress on minorities to the detriment of other groups, including women. Linking constitutional review work with the CEDAW convention proved particularly useful, because you could argue that the rights specified in the convention also belonged in national constitutions. The work proved very useful in bolstering women's participation in politics because constitutional review is generally the responsibility of political parties. Few women are active in politics in the Balkans, and their participation in these important processes earned them a degree of respect from other politicians, as well as attracting considerable public attention. The results of UNIFEM's work can be seen in a new constitution ratified in Montenegro in 2007, particularly in its provisions on gender-equality plans and temporary measures to promote equal rights for women."

# FROM THE FIELD



**Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir** works as an advisor for UNIFEM in FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) on behalf of the ICRU. She previously worked as a peacekeeper in Sri Lanka. She describes her experience of working in the field.

**Peacekeeper:** Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir

**Place and date of birth:** Akureyri, 22 August 1970

**Education:** MA in International Relations

"I have worked as an advisor for UNIFEM in FYROM since August 2007. This is my second assignment for the ICRU, because in 2006, I spent seven months in Sri Lanka with the SLMM. These two assignments, which are completely different in nature, give a good picture of the breadth of the missions performed by the ICRU. There is nevertheless a clear connection between them, as in both cases, the objective is to prevent violence and encourage the peaceful resolution of disputes.

In FYROM, I work for the UN agency UNIFEM on projects involving cooperation with the authorities and NGOs in an effort to ensure that the principle of gender equality is upheld during national reconstruction after the recent conflict in the Balkans. This involves working with the authorities on legislation and policy-making, and with NGOs in order to exert political pressure on the authorities to comply with laws and regulations. UNIFEM is a kind of intermediary between the nations that provide the funding for these projects and the governments and NGOs that implement them. As a UNIFEM officer I help bring cooperation partners together, and provide professional advice in order to ensure that funding is used in the best possible way in efforts to meet set objectives.

Even though the period of armed conflict in the Balkans has come to an end, there are still tensions between different ethnic groups. These conflicts have not been forgotten by those who lived through them, and many people are still suffering from psychological wounds. It is very important to carefully plan social reconstruction after such conflicts, in order to ensure that they do not break out again. Women in the Balkans have a great deal to contribute in this respect, and all of the work done by UNIFEM aims at ensuring that their voices are heard in one way or another."



*Police officer Guðmundur Fylkisson with EUPM personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

## EU police mission

Iceland resumed participation in the EU police mission (EUPM) in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of 2007, after a two-year pause. Last year, two police officers worked with the mission in Bosnia. The EUPM supports the work of local police forces by helping them to implement reforms, establish research facilities for large-scale investigations, and eradicate corruption and organized crime.

### **Police Officer Jónas Helgason describes his experience of EU police work in the Balkans on behalf of the ICRU.**

"The EUPM has worked in Bosnia since 2003. Before that, the United Nations had been responsible for peacekeeping, first with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and then the International Police Task Force (IPTF).

During the twelve months I spent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I lived mainly in Pale, the former Bosnian-Serb stronghold about 15 kilometres from Sarajevo. I began working for the office of the EUPM in mid-May of last year. Pale is the centre of organized crime in Republika Srpska (RS), so there is plenty of work for the EUPM there. It is also quite a large district with a total of 17 police stations subordinate to Pale. My job involved training, consultancy and advisory services, and I had almost daily meetings with local officers to discuss various issues, such as police investigations and investigative methods, always with a view to assist the police force in adapting European standards and work procedures."





Urður Gunnarsdóttir

OSCE election monitoring.



Ingólfur Pálsson

WFP food distribution in process in Sudan.

Democracy is an objective. Democratization is a process. Democratization serves the cause of peace because it offers the possibility of justice and of progressive change without force.

**Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations**

## Short-term missions

### Election observation

Election observation missions by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is intended to ensure free and democratic elections in OSCE member states.

In 2007, seventeen Icelanders served as OSCE election observers on behalf of the ICRU. Most election observers have had careers in the media, politics, academics, or related professions. A total of nine men and eight women worked as observers.

Two women took part in so-called long-term election monitoring, working for several weeks in succession during both the run-up to the elections and their aftermath. The work of long-term observers consists of monitoring media discussion, visiting

election committees, talking to government officials, and preparing for the work of short-term election observers.

Icelanders have also served as short-term election observers, participating in missions that last about one week. This involves overseeing polling stations on Election Day, and monitoring the counting of votes and handling of protocols.

### Cooperation with WFP

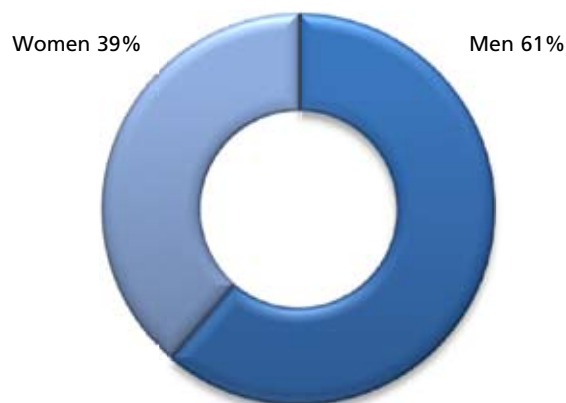
The ICRU has had a cooperation agreement with the World Food Programme (WFP) for several years now and has seconded specialists for WFP logistic operations, particularly in Africa.

# Gender distribution of personnel 2007

In 2007, 74 individuals worked in the field on behalf of the ICRU. They included 53 men, or 72% of the total number of personnel, and 21 women, or 28% of the total. Men were therefore the majority when it came to peacekeeping personnel deployed abroad in 2007. Looking at the length of contracts, however, it can be seen that women generally spend longer periods in the field than men do. Here, women make a relatively larger contribution, 39%, compared to 61% for men.

The image also changes during the latter half of the year. The percentage of women deployed abroad by the ICRU increases by 11%, for a total of 38%; and the percentage of men declines correspondingly to 62%. During the latter half of 2007, and at the beginning of 2008, there was an increase in the percentage of women that were deployed abroad on behalf of the ICRU, the total at that time being 40-45%, which is one of the highest percentage of women peacekeepers in the world.

**Gender distribution measured as total time in the field**



**Gender distribution in peacekeeping**

Women 28% Men 72%



**Gender distribution, first half of 2007**

Women 27% Men 73%



**Gender distribution, latter half of 2007**

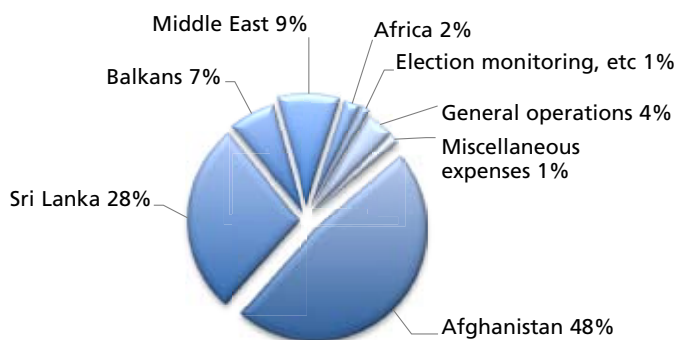
Women 38% Men 62%



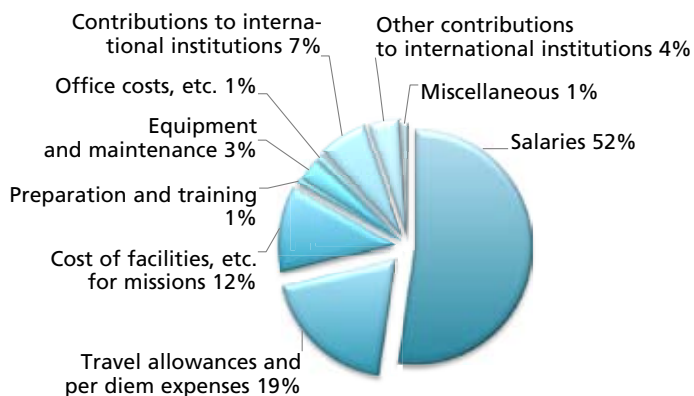
# Operating expenses

The ICRU was allocated ISK 600,6 million in the 2007 government budget, and a surplus from operations in 2006 was carried over to that year. Operating expenses did not exceed the budget allocation.

**Cost distribution according to mission location**



**Costs by category**







MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS