

INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
MEDIATION PROCESSES: WHAT ROLES FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND MEMBER STATES?



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BACKGROUND PAPER PREPARED FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON
STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES:
WHAT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STATES?



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security has motivated an extensive range of policy initiatives among Member States and international organizations to advance women's participation in peace processes. However, 20 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, these efforts have yet to produce a substantial increase in women's meaningful participation.

This background paper was prepared ahead of the high-level seminar, UN Women organized, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, on "Strengthening Women's Participation in Peace Processes: What Roles and Responsibilities for States?" in Rome, Italy, on 3 and 4 December 2019. The study contributed to the seminar by analyzing the policies and strategies that Member States and other international actors have adopted to foster women's meaningful participation, particularly related to mediating peace, and how these actions are translating (or not) into more specific involvement of women in peace negotiations.

The paper first presents an empirical mapping of women's involvement in peace processes, namely as mediators. The proportion of women mediators remains low despite some representation in an increasing number of peace processes. Recently, some modest gains have been more visible as the United Nations, regional organizations and Member States actively promote women's participation in peace talks by introducing institutional reforms in their design and by implementing a wide range of policy and normative mechanisms.

Second, the paper provides a systematic overview of the main instruments developed by the United Nations, regional organizations and Member States, which aim to enhance women's participation in peace processes. For Member States, National Action Plans (NAPs) on women, peace and security constitute the main tool for tracking the implementation of the WPS agenda at national level. Among the 83 NAPs launched globally in late 2019, more than 68 per cent include efforts to increase women's representation in peace negotiations, and 48 per cent have specific provisions on mediation. An important distinction must be made between countries that have a current or recent experience of armed conflict and those that do not. Funding also remains a significant factor impacting women's participation in peace processes both for State-led and civil society-led initiatives.

Third, the study identifies good practices, emerging initiatives, and underdeveloped aspects to increase women's participation in peace processes. One of such developments is the recent focus on supporting multi-track diplomacy. This is explored especially with regards to regional networks of women mediators that hold great potential to bridge divides between tracks. While these networks are 'less political', they are diplomatically strong and reputable, and they provide a community of female mediators that include individuals with conflict management expertise rather than just a record of high-level appointments. Nevertheless, it is still early to assess the impact of these networks.

Finally, the paper formulates recommendations addressing respectively women mediator networks, Member States,

and regional organizations and the United Nations.

To women mediator networks:

- Within the framework of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks, develop a clear communications strategy, which maps areas of expertise, and identifies best practices among the strategies developed by each of the networks to continue strengthening women mediators’ capacities and sharing information.
- Establish routines to systematically collect and analyze experiences from women mediators’ deployments and develop opportunities for partnerships and support.
- Strengthen advocacy with Member States, international and regional organizations leading preventive diplomacy initiatives and peace negotiations, in order to get early access to such processes.
- Strengthen and implement sustainable strategies to facilitate dialogue among women mediators and women’s organizations at the grassroots level, including intergenerational dialogues with young women mediators.

To Member States:

- Adhere to the Commitment 2025 spearheaded by Finland and Spain, and design and implement multi-year financial and technical assistance in accordance with the Commitment’s provisions.
- Make explicit commitments to nominate and appoint women as mediators, including in leadership positions; and implement and advocate for the effective implementation of existing normative and legal frameworks

to promote women’s participation in peace processes.

- Encourage negotiating parties to include women within their delegations.
- When leading mediation efforts, encourage the practice of consultations with local women’s organizations at different stages of the peace negotiation. These consultations should encompass a broad range of themes such as ceasefires, demobilization, demining, among others, and not only themes labeled as “women’s issues”.
- Incorporate staff with gender expertise within mediation teams. Ensure that the gender dimension is integrated as a key component of the conflict analysis and discussions of every theme in the agenda.
- Encourage and facilitate women’s participation in national and local infrastructures for peace, including by the adequate funding and effective implementation of women, peace and security NAPs and other strategies.
- Address the institutional barriers that prevent women’s participation in peace negotiations by ensuring transparency in the process of mediators’ recruitment and promoting a cultural shift in gender-biased narratives and mainstreamed discriminatory practices. Likewise, address logistical barriers such as travel and translation by allocating rapid response funds.
- Facilitate the increased, direct and meaningful participation of women in monitoring the implementation of peace agreements.
- Incorporate the implementation of WPS as a requirement for accessing funds in projects taking place in conflict-affected countries.

To regional organizations and the United Nations:

- Develop accountability mechanisms for mediators and special envoys to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women and gender perspectives at all stages of the negotiation process, including pre-talks.
 - Strengthen technical capacity of mediators, special envoys and mediation experts to conduct gender-sensitive conflict analysis as a key component of planning and deployment of mediation teams, and provide gender expertise.
 - Nominate and appoint women as lead mediators and as mediation experts, including by reaching out to women's mediator networks.
 - Support Member States with the implementation of their commitments
- to increase the meaningful participation of women in peace processes, including through the appointment of women mediators.
- Provide political and financial support for women's organizations and women from conflict-affected areas to engage in dialogue with track 1 and to provide insights to the negotiation.
 - Ensure wide socialization and training on the UN's "Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies" as well as other methodological tools on conflict analysis with a gender perspective.
 - Encourage the use of women mediators' expertise in thematic areas of peace negotiations in which women are often sidelined, for instance, DDR, demining, land reforms, among others.

INTRODUCTION

The adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS) has motivated an extensive range of policy initiatives among Member States and international organizations to advance women's participation in peace processes. Yet, 20 years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, these efforts have not produced a substantial increase in women's participation. Although scholars have analyzed the important role that women play in peace processes, and in achieving peace agreements that are followed by more durable peace,¹ this remains an emerging field of research with many areas still underexplored. This study seeks to add to ongoing discussion by analyzing the policies and strategies that Member States and other international actors have adopted to foster women's meaningful participation, particularly related to mediating peace², and how these actions are translating (or not) into more specific involvement by women in peace negotiations.

Mediation in conflict settings

Mediation is, in broad terms, and according to the United Nations, a "process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or

to warring parties ranges from (i) facilitating information-sharing and inter-party communication; (ii) overseeing the process of meetings and maybe some agenda setting; and (iii) developing solution-proposals and maybe even issuing ultimatums.⁵ In practice, mediation thus could consist of acting largely in the background, or taking a more active part in the settlement process. In fact, it is common that third parties act in different ways at different stages of the peace process, and that different mediators in a team might fulfill different roles.

A common preconception is that mediators should be from outside the actual conflict country – representing the UN, regional organizations, or other States. However, this is not consistent with practice.⁶ This paper discusses both external and local mediators, taking a broader approach than many existing approaches, although still consistent with the UN definition. It includes for example, local mediators defined as third parties from the conflict-affected society that "assist (...) to prevent, manage or resolve the conflict" such as local civil society actors that join a peace process to introduce proposals for a future political agreement.⁷

The United Nations Secretary-General's guidelines on mediation as well as the United Nations Department of Political and

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