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Wilton Park



Report

Women in mediation: promoting participation

Monday 4 – Wednesday 6 December 2017 | WP1570

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Executive summary

The Wilton Park conference on Women in Mediation provided an important platform for discussions on furthering the Women, Peace and Security agenda by promoting the participation of women mediators in international peacebuilding efforts. The roundtable gathering took place during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and brought together more than 60 key stakeholders from 27 countries. Participants included senior level practitioners, policy makers and civil society actors from selected Commonwealth countries; key multilateral and regional bodies; experts from some non-Commonwealth countries and key players from sister networks that support mediation, peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives.

Key themes arising from the discussion include:

- Despite normative commitments to elevating women within high-level mediation and peacebuilding processes, women continue to be significantly under-represented internationally.
- Numerous barriers impact women's participation at all levels of mediation practice, including structural, cultural, systemic and practical barriers.
- Though often overlooked, women have made important contributions to mediation globally. The climate is changing for women's participation, as shifts in society are setting the stage for women's skills to be used much more expansively within the international peace and security context.
- Changes in the nature and complexity of global conflict require changes in the way conflict is addressed. The pursuit of gender parity in international peacebuilding can allow for a transformation in approaches to mediation and conflict prevention.
- The identification of clear criteria for mediators, irrespective of gender, will allow for greater professionalisation of the sector and transparency in the appointment of high-level mediators.
- A vast repository of mediation skills currently exist with women practitioners all over the world—connecting the local and the global through supportive structures and mechanisms will allow these skills to be mainstreamed.
- The strengthening and development of networks of women mediators will provide a system of support and mainstreaming that will enable women mediators to be more active at all levels. This will also increase

recommendations to states and to the UN for high-level appointments.

- The networks can assist in developing pipelines of women mediators who can support each other with career development and progression, working to neutralise the barriers that currently prevent women from engaging more fully in high-level international mediation.

Background

In the 17 years since the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325), women have continued to be under-represented in high-level international mediation and peacebuilding initiatives. Although individual appointments at the national and international level have resulted in slight increases in the percentage of women occupying leadership positions, there has been a systemic lack of progress on advancing the aims of UNSCR1325.

Despite the lack of significant progress on the formal Women, Peace and Security agenda, a sense of momentum has been building with the aim of enabling more women to participate in the full trajectory of global peacebuilding. The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has made gender parity a key aim of his tenure, establishing a gender parity strategy for the United Nations and appointing a High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation comprised of equal numbers of female and male members. A growing number of regional women's mediation networks have also been developed in recent years, including FemWise-Africa, the Nordic Women Mediators Network and the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. With the addition of the soon to be established "Network of Networks," a strong global support structure is being developed to foster women's active engagement with mediation and peacebuilding initiatives.

The aims of the Wilton Park conference were to:

- identify current obstacles to women participating in mediation processes and how to tackle them
- explore skills for successful mediation drawing on lessons learned
- foster a new network enabling further collaboration, particularly in the context of the Commonwealth
- identify tangible steps towards future initiatives

Women's participation in global peacebuilding: obstacles and opportunities

1. In the context of such normative frameworks as UNSCR1325, the Seven-Point Action Plan on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding and the Sustainable Development Goals, it is clear that there is continued underrepresentation of women at key stages in international mediation and peacebuilding processes. Multiple barriers to women's participation were identified, including systemic, structural, cultural and practical barriers. The position of women is strengthening in many ways, however; and a variety of new opportunities for advancing women in high-level mediation were explored.

Continued underrepresentation of women

2. Research shows that women's participation at all levels of peace processes leads to stronger, longer lasting, more sustainable peace. Negotiated peace agreements are 35% more likely to be in place 15 years later if women are involved in the process.¹ In South Africa, the Philippines, Colombia, Northern Ireland and a host of other regions, women have been recognised as having a key role in the success of peace negotiations and post-conflict societal reconstruction. However, research by UN

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¹ Statistical analysis by Laurel Stone, as featured in O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking," 12-13.

“What is really preventing women from leading international mediation and peacebuilding processes?”

Women on peace processes conducted between 1998 and 2011 shows that only 2.4% of United Nations-appointed chief mediators, 9% of negotiators, 4% of the signatories and 3.7 % of witnesses of peace agreements have been women.² With clear evidence that non-gender inclusive processes are not as likely to succeed, the question remains: “What is really preventing women from leading international mediation and peacebuilding processes?”

3. Since the adoption of UNSCR1325 in 2000, there has been a host of related resolutions, reports, conferences and Security Council debates without significant levels of corresponding change. Anecdotal evidence shows that, despite the submission of names of qualified women to various national and international processes, a lack of women mediators is often cited as the reason for a failure to pursue gender parity. Training and capacity building are the most frequently used interventions for empowering women to participate in mediation and negotiation. However, women from conflict-affected regions throughout the world report that it is difficult to find opportunities for putting this training into practice. Qualified women are not being used to engage in mediation work.

Barriers to participation

“Despite the increase in the number of women politicians, a deep-seated culture of male dominance in political, institutional and peacebuilding circles remains”

4. At the most basic level, a lack of resources has prevented greater inclusion of women within international mediation and peacebuilding processes. Only 2% of funding provided to support global peacebuilding is earmarked to facilitate gender equality and the participation of women.³ In the absence of funding committed to systematise gender equality in structures and staffing, gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding will continue to lag behind institutional commitments.
5. Despite the increase in the number of women politicians, a deep-seated culture of male dominance in political, institutional and peacebuilding circles remains. It can be very difficult for women to be appointed as high-level mediators due to the cultural perception of men as embodying key characteristics of successful mediators such as gravitas, prestige, knowledge and experience. From gender stereotyping, to the maintenance of the status quo, and the perception of being unqualified, women face a host of cultural norms that make it difficult to move into leadership roles.
6. Family responsibilities and care-giving pressures also create a block for many women at various levels in mediation. Young women with families experience disproportionate effects on their career development, as some feel unable to take long-term assignments that allow for field experience. Factors such as maternity leave, family leave and pay gaps can make it difficult for women to have equal access to mediation roles. Furthermore, issues of safety, both economic and physical, affect many women mediators and peacebuilders. Travel associated with mediation can be risky for women in some regions, and solo travel may also create stigma in some cultures.
7. Despite institutional commitments to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, it can be very difficult to change embedded institutional systems and structures that have emerged over decades. There is a lack of political will and leadership to advance women mediators and peacebuilders within some governments and institutions. Systems of accountability for gender inclusivity are either non-existent or unenforced in many institutions. At the point of structural design, many mediation and peacebuilding processes omit women from the mediation table and the implementation phase. Without clear commitments to reform structures, institutions and systems, it will be difficult to promote women’s participation in a meaningful way.

“Family responsibilities and care-giving pressures also create a block for many women at various levels in mediation”

² UN Women, “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence,” October 2012, 3.

³ OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality, “Financing UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Aid in support of gender equality and women’s rights in fragile contexts,” March 2015.

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“Women are increasingly perceived as being able to offer a “civic voice” that is seen as neutral and non-aligned to traditional political agendas”

“women are concerned that women’s contribution will be restricted to “gender issues” rather than integrated across the full continuum of mediation and peacebuilding activities”

8. An under-recognised cultural barrier to women’s participation in mediation and peacebuilding processes is the lack of recognition for women’s active role in combat. Not only do women serve as combatants in state and non-state forces, they provide practical support to armed groups by cooking, transporting arms, supplying information, serving in the political wing of armed groups, etc. It is important to recognise women’s role in conflict—both as active players and as nurturers of identity within families and communities—so that woman can have equal responsibility in peacebuilding processes. Similarly, as global peacekeeping becomes increasingly militarised, there is a corresponding negative impact on women’s participation in peace and security initiatives.
9. There is a deficit of senior and peer-based mentoring for many women in the mediation and peacebuilding field. While men often have support systems that allow for patronage and mentoring, women can feel as if they are breaking new ground as they progress through the mediation career path. Women would benefit from organised mentoring that could assist in navigating the complex territory of barriers to participation.

Opportunities for engagement

10. Although many barriers exist to women’s participation, changes are taking place globally that enhance women’s opportunities for engagement within the wider peace and security sector. Women are increasingly being elected as heads of state and are serving in other positions of global leadership. The presence of women in the upper echelons of political service allows both for a change in the cultural perception of the role of women and the achievement of one of the practical criteria for high-level mediation roles.
11. In many regions of the world, there are shifting perspectives on family roles and expectations. Men are more prepared to make adjustments in their working rhythms to allow for care-giving responsibilities, while women are increasingly taking on the role of the key breadwinner for family units. Culturally, women and men are now being viewed as both care-givers and earners within families, allowing women the practical flexibility to take on mediation and peacebuilding roles that require a significant commitment of time and energy.
12. There is increasing recognition and support from the international community for women’s contributions to the peace and security agenda. Through the enacting of resolutions such as UNSCR1325 and 2282 and the establishment of normative frameworks that recognise the need for women’s contribution to peacebuilding, the climate for women is gradually improving. From prevention to negotiation to implementation, women provide continuity and engagement in peacebuilding in most regions of the world. Women are increasingly perceived as being able to offer a “civic voice” that is seen as neutral and non-aligned to traditional political agendas. In formal mediation processes in various conflict-affected regions, bringing women to the table to discuss the impact of conflict on communities has allowed for a greater diversity of voices within the mediation process— even when women are not members of the negotiating parties— as well as providing the parties with a perspective shift and greater clarity regarding the issues surrounding conflict.
13. Many women are concerned that women’s contribution will be restricted to “gender issues” rather than integrated across the full continuum of mediation and peacebuilding activities. While women can provide a strong voice on gender issues, it is important to resist the conflation of women and gender. There is also danger in the exclusion of men from the process of gender mainstreaming within the wider mediation and peacebuilding field. Men can be allies in the process of reframing cultural perceptions and challenging systems to allow for greater levels of women’s participation. It is essential that women’s contributions to peace processes be recognised for the value they add and that men become advocates for women’s participation.

Transformation of peacebuilding: a new approach for a new century

14. Global conflict is becoming more complex and multifaceted, and this complexity calls for a change in the way that conflicts are prevented and mediated. Viewing peacebuilding through a gendered lens provides a template for ways in which peacebuilding can potentially be transformed into a more effective and comprehensive process. Mediation can play a significant role in the potential transformation of global peacebuilding. As such, it is important that mediation criteria be established allowing for the continued professionalisation of the field in a gender-inclusive manner.

Changes in the nature of global conflict

15. Conflict-affected regions all over the world are experiencing more complex, volatile and long-lasting conflict. Fragmentation is a key characteristic of many current conflicts, with multiple actors operating within increasingly fractured terrain. One practitioner from the global south reported carrying out a mediation between 56 ethnic communities, using a football stadium for some mediated sessions. Conflicts are increasingly internationalised, involving both international parties to the conflict and international mediators. Correspondingly, polarisation in world politics has made it more difficult to reach agreement in these multi-layered, multi-party conflicts. The civilianisation of conflict is another distinct trend emerging in modern conflicts—as civilian populations are attacked, all civilians can be perceived as aligned to one warring group or another. The complexity of modern conflict also means that mediation and peace building processes require extended and lengthy investment, in part because parties are often not “hurting” enough to negotiate or compromise.

16. A clear trend in the changing nature of global conflict is the criminalisation of armed groups within the context of mediation and conflict resolution. Pressure to keep groups on terrorist lists away from the negotiation table is creating difficulties for successful and sustainable conflict resolution processes. Without warring parties at the table, long-term solutions to conflict remain elusive. Further, the criminalisation of humanitarian actors based on communication with non-state armed groups is an increasing problem for those involved in broader peace building processes. Sustainable peace and security processes require open and ongoing communication and, most essentially, trust to be built with all parties.

Women in mediation as a tool for transforming peacebuilding

17. Whilst the increasing complexity of global conflict poses distinct challenges, it also offers opportunities to integrate women more fully into all levels of mediation. The diversification of mediation teams—through gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc.—brings a wealth of skills and perspectives to the table that greatly increase the likelihood of successful, long-lasting mediation outcomes. Encouraging broader participation will allow mediation teams to think imaginatively about how to balance diverse needs posed by multiple parties and complex cultural positions and priorities. The diversification of mediation teams at the highest level of international mediation should certainly prioritise the placement of women in key mediation roles. However, broadening participation will also allow women to be involved through the connection of mediation tracks, from the local to the national to the international. The inclusion of women in observer seats, involvement in technical working groups, Track I and II groups working alongside Track III processes to encourage civil society engagement with critical themes, will lead to increased mainstreaming with substantive impacts on broader peace and security processes.

18. The changing nature of global conflict also creates opportunities for mediators to become more prominent within international peace building processes. Mediation processes are now extended due to the complexity of conflicts and it is essential that tangible outcomes are achieved throughout the process as well as in final agreement frameworks. For example, the increased protraction of conflicts means that key issues, such as the sexual assault of women during conflict, cannot wait until the fighting stops. Mediators play a vital role in creatively and authentically prompting parties to deal with

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the issues that most affect civilian populations during conflict. Women mediators can bring perceived neutrality and the ability to establish trust to the essential task of understanding the parties' aspirations, desires and needs and to reaching creative agreements.

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"A new approach to mediation and peacebuilding requires an emphasis on the criteria and skills essential for effective mediation, irrespective of gender"

"A skilled mediator should be able to disarm wary individuals and connect to all parties in a mediation process through authentic and humanising communication"

19. The UN Secretary-General's emphasis on mediation and the importance of women's leadership in conflict prevention processes, underlines the need for a new approach to conflict prevention and resolution to address the challenges posed by modern conflicts. Using a gender lens to examine mediation and peacebuilding can allow for processes to move beyond the current context of political negotiation to wider transformation. Rather than allowing peace processes to replicate the culture of conflict, they could become forward-looking processes that include transformed relationships and inclusive societies, as well as a cessation of violence. An emphasis on human security as extending beyond simple military security and the inclusion of the well-being of civilian populations, give a different shape and meaning to processes focused on peace and security.
20. A political economy analysis of mediation and peacebuilding processes would suggest that there are gains to be made by addressing inequalities as a component of peace and security initiatives. An emphasis on social and economic rights, and the promotion of practical steps to address structural equality in civil society, will create a more sustainable peace.
21. Work towards gender parity in mediation and peacebuilding should be undertaken jointly by women and men. Ideally, men will serve as strong advocates because they value what women's participation will bring to mediation processes and teams. It is essential that the UN and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) recognise the benefits of involving women in peacebuilding. Although data shows the positive impact of gender diverse mediation and negotiation teams, it is important that research, advocacy and information sharing continue to forge a common cause between women and men in working for gender parity.

Key criteria for high-level mediation and peacebuilding

22. If mediation is to continue to grow as an essential tool for international peacebuilding, it will need further professionalisation and development. In the past, high-level mediators and envoys have been selected based on characteristics such as political clout, power and authority. The over-emphasis on perceived male characteristics for top mediators has created a disadvantage for women who, until recently, have rarely occupied such positions as former heads of state. Similarly, former heads of state may bring prestige and gravitas, but may not always be effective mediators or experts in the regions in which they are called to oversee mediation processes. A new approach to mediation and peacebuilding requires an emphasis on the criteria and skills essential for effective mediation, irrespective of gender. While the identification of key criteria is a wider conversation that should be had between the UN, member states and global women's mediation networks, conference participants highlighted a number of important criteria, skills and methodological approaches for effective mediators.
23. Neutrality, impartiality, or omni-partiality were identified as essential criteria for effective mediation. The ability for each party to feel that the mediator is working for their best interests in the context of a balanced process should be cultivated by the mediator. The ability to build trust, quickly and effectively, with all parties is also a key criterion. A skilled mediator should be able to disarm wary individuals and connect to all parties in a mediation process through authentic and humanising communication. The mediator has a responsibility to create a feeling of equality at the negotiating table and to work with the power dynamics at play to establish a level playing field. Creating the right environment for mediation, one that is informal, but structured, is a skill that can create a strong base for an effective process.
24. Experience and knowledge cannot be underestimated within a mediation context. Traditional mediation skills for managing a complex process include process design,

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“additional research could explore the work of women mediators and how they relate to their practice and their understanding of feminist advocacy within their role”

crafting the storytelling process for humanising potential, use of effective language for summarising and re-framing, employing imaginative thinking to create new possibilities, ability to listen and absorb information, ask the right questions, helping parties to hear and recognise concessions, judicious management of messaging and the development of the meditative conversation, assertiveness in providing effective guidance to the parties and the ability to draft an effective agreement. A deep knowledge of the cultural contexts of the parties at the table is important for reaching agreements that satisfy the basic needs and interests of the different actors. Personal qualities such as emotional intelligence, self-assurance, assertiveness, daring, leadership, warmth, focus, patience, optimism and lack of ego are also aids to a good mediator.

25. The criteria and skills identified are applicable to both genders; however, it is also important to recognise skills that are often associated with women. Women have a unique connection to communities and to family units that can be particularly helpful in localised peacebuilding. From intervention with family members who may be fighting with armed groups, to advocacy for referenda associated with peace agreements, to serving as a part of early warning systems for conflict prevention, women can provide a grassroots underpinning to peacebuilding processes. When mediating Track II and III processes, women effectively use soft power and humanising communication to create more open and flexible processes. Women are often credited with the ability to “change the conversation” providing a compassionate and non-threatening presence at the table. Women’s bridging capabilities and future orientation can help parties find common cause in reaching agreement for the civic good.

Connecting the global and the local: networks and pipelines

26. As women’s participation in global mediation process is promoted, it is important to undertake initiatives that connect the local and the global. Several key definitional questions arise when considering how best to promote women’s participation in mediation and peacebuilding. Structural support mechanisms, by way of networks and pipelines, can provide women with opportunities to advance in mediation at local, national and international levels.

Key questions

27. There is a lack of clarity about the definition of both “mediator” and “mediation” as applied to international practice. Are women mediators- mediation practitioners, negotiators or advocates? Does mediation refer to a specific professionalised field and methodology, or the broad spectrum of international peacebuilding? Is there a shared understanding of the interventions sought when mediation is recommended? When women participate in mediation process as mediators or members of mediating parties, are they responsible for advocating for women’s issues? Should women mediators advocate for a generalised rights-based approach or focus on women’s rights within the context of mediation?
28. Existing research highlights women’s participation within mediation processes, ⁴however, additional research could explore the work of women mediators and how they relate to their practice and their understanding of feminist advocacy within their role. ⁵The conference discussion raised a number of significant questions indicating the need for a deeper understanding of mediation and women mediators.

Connecting the global and the local

29. Women are making significant contributions as mediators and peacebuilders in communities all over the world. Their work progresses conflict stabilisation in localised

⁴ T. Paffenholz et al., Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on Peace Agreements, Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, 2016, <http://www.inclusivepeace.org/sites/default/files/IPTI-UN-Women-Report-Making-Women-Count-60-Pages.pdf>

⁵ C. Turner, Women in Mediation: Connecting the Local and Global, Strategic Security Analysis, No. 5, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, August 2017, 6.

“women are often excluded from the table; reinforcing the cultural notion that community-based, or “soft,” peacebuilding is the domain of women while men drive “hard” peacebuilding on the international level”

“formal local and national linkages have also created opportunities for mobilising women, creating a policy environment that responds to the needs of communities”

“the establishment of several global networks of women mediators has made a significant, and growing, contribution to the Women, Peace and Security agenda”

areas and underpins efforts to establish formal mediation and peacebuilding processes. However, by the time formal processes begin, women are often excluded from the table; reinforcing the cultural notion that community-based, or “soft,” peacebuilding is the domain of women while men drive “hard” peacebuilding on the international level.⁶ In order to tap into the existing global repository of women mediators, it is essential that pathways are created for recognising talent, providing support and capacity building, and linking women to international institutions and processes.

30. In addition to networks and pipelines, several practical steps to link the various mediation tracks have been identified. Investment in grassroots mediation and peacebuilding through national peace architecture is important. States can then establish formal connections with grassroots communities, identifying and cultivating key mediation practitioners as well as creating formal roles for communities in managing conflict analysis and prevention projects. In some regions, the use of sub-commissions and negotiation, planning and implementation teams as part of the national peace architecture has allowed for a structured connection between Track I and Track II processes. These formal local and national linkages have also created opportunities for mobilising women, creating a policy environment that responds to the needs of communities and allows for national and international decision making that is reflective of the reality of grassroots communities.

Global networks

31. In recent years, the establishment of several global networks of women mediators has made a significant, and growing, contribution to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Networks currently cover the Southern African, Nordic and Mediterranean regions, with the hope to work across the Commonwealth nations in 2018. The existing networks provide a structural solution for increasing women’s participation in all levels of mediation. Through strategic networking, support for career progression and maintaining rosters of skilled mediators, amongst other functions, the networks have created platforms for advancing women’s participation in high-level mediation.⁷ Increasingly, the global networks are also connecting to each other to provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, joint missions and shared advocacy. Whilst the networks have different profiles and remain independent, their growing interdependence enhances the potential to strengthen the global profile of women mediators.
32. The Commonwealth Network of Women Mediators is beginning to be developed. The UK Government is working on the basis it would have three key objectives to support women’s meaningful participation in conflict resolution and countering violent extremism: building the capacity of members, supporting grassroots organisations and empowering women and girls to influence policy and practice. In pursuing those aims, the UK Government plans for the Network to offer training, shadowing, mentoring, one-to-one support, networking, information sharing, highlighting of best practice and engagement with other global networks. Through an annual meeting, regional activities and support for the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans, the Network would seek to link the work of member states, creating a stronger voice for women mediators within Commonwealth nations. Membership of the Network would be diverse and will include members of civil society, governments and other actors. The Network would view its role as an agent for connection—serving in a bridging capacity between Commonwealth members states, to the Network of Networks of women mediators and to the United Nations and other global NGOs.
33. Conference delegates welcomed the proposal of the Commonwealth Network, as well as that of the global Network of Networks to be coordinated and launched in 2018 by

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ C. Turner, *Advancing Women in High-Level Mediation: Recommendations for States, Networks and the UN*, Durham University, October 2017, 2.

the Nordic Women Mediators Network. The broad reach of the full spectrum of networks has the potential to deliver new opportunities for women mediators globally. Working together, the networks can coordinate a strategic conversation about the needed changes in the global mediation and peacebuilding paradigm, with an eye towards creatively addressing the new complexity of conflicts and the need for the amplification of women's voices. The joint work of the networks could also create high-level, international linkages such as the promotion of the work of women mediators at the UN Security Council and encouraging continued gender mainstreaming within the development sector. The networks could use their collective influence to advocate for the integration of normative standards for women's inclusion— such as the Sustainable Development Goals related to women's participation or the Sustaining Peace Agenda— into the global practice of mediation and peacebuilding. Networks also have the unprecedented opportunity to create a system of linkages—linking tracks, linking actors, linking public and private sectors and sharing information throughout the system. Indeed, the linked networks can provide research, examples of best practice, early warning analysis and other information to the UN and regional governments that will assist in international peace and security efforts as well as in the promotion of women mediators, internationally.

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“Women mediators are hungering for opportunities to practice and stretch their skills”

34. The networks could also design inclusive selection processes for mediators, so that women from non-traditional careers and those without existing power or connections could be included. Women mediators are hungering for opportunities to practice and stretch their skills—the networks can provide opportunities for multi-track mediation experience, as well as joint international opportunities. Networks have an invaluable opportunity to encourage the progression of individual women mediators through identifying qualified mediators, building capacity, promoting different expertise, providing mentoring and peer-to-peer support. Networks can also map expertise across the peacebuilding continuum and identify women who can support broader mediation processes, such as mediators, negotiators, technical advisors, researchers, knowledge specialists, conflict prevention experts and those with post-conflict reconstruction expertise. By using a design-thinking approach and putting the needs of members at the fore of decision-making, networks can ensure that they maintain a clear mandate, as well as remaining rooted in the needs of conflict-affected communities.
35. Gaps in the current coverage of the global networks were identified, and the potential to increase the number of women's mediation networks may create new opportunities for regions such as Asia, the Pacific Islands and Eastern Europe in the coming years. The networks can also coordinate and support the creation of sub-networks at the national and regional levels, which may create genuine partnerships with, and the amplification of the voices of, smaller nations and states. Trust-building with members and transparency about the work of the networks will be important in ensuring that networks avoid becoming non-democratic and dominated by a few voices as they develop. It is also important for networks to continue to examine their purpose and methods to ensure that they remain relevant and sustainable.
36. Participants were broadly supportive of both the existing and developing networks and personally committed to supporting them through such actions as: providing mentoring and shadowing opportunities, mapping, research, publications, training, capacity building, providing space for collaborative work, knowledge advancement, promotion of women mediators in the UN Security Council, representation of networks in the media, introducing women into the networks, and hosting events, meetings and conferences.

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Pipelines

37. Women have skills and experience in all levels of mediation and peacebuilding, however there is a confidence gap. Without a system of patronage or support enjoyed by many men, women often feel isolated as they try to tackle the barriers that can keep them from advancing in mediation careers. With a commitment to advancement and confidence-building, pipelines can provide a structural support mechanism as women at all stages in their careers support each other with opportunities for growth and

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development. Although pipelines can and do exist within the networks of women mediators, they can also stand alone as more informal or localised initiatives.

38. Research has shown that women respond more positively to leadership opportunities when inspired by other female leaders.⁸ Pipelines create the space for women to provide each other with the confidence and capacity to take on advanced leadership roles and upper-level positions. Mentoring, advice provision and access to new opportunities for practice-based experience can help women increase their competitiveness and work against the dynamic of women getting stuck in middle or lower levels of organisations involved in peacebuilding. Pipelines can provide tailored support from mid-career through to senior level, particularly for young women. The pipelines mainly focus on the individual development of women, however, as with the networks, they can also mobilise women and create a platform for seeking wider change.
39. Pipelines can be instrumental in helping to counterbalance some of the practical challenges women face to career advancement within mediation. For women with young families, for example, mentoring relationships will assist the mapping of goals and milestones needed to advance into high-level mediation, particularly for the time when caring responsibilities do not impact their ability to travel or accept risky assignments. Pipelines may also address resourcing issues that can prevent marginalised women from participation and advancement. It is important that pipelines instigate specific outreach initiatives to engage other women, particularly those from vulnerable communities and non-traditional sectors. As with all efforts to push against existing barriers, men should be valuable allies, particularly in mentoring roles.
40. Networks can play a unique role in supporting pipelines because of their strategic placement. Through permanent missions and joint missions, networks can offer opportunities for shadowing and practice-based experience. Networks can also provide an interface with civic society, allowing for the development of intersectionality between sectors and the identification of key opportunities for women mediators. Capacity building and knowledge sharing are key elements of both the networks and the pipelines—networks can assist in both of these areas locally and globally.

Recommendations and conclusion

The time is ripe for promoting women’s participation in all levels of international mediation. A number of conclusions and recommendations were identified that, along with insights in the body of this report, can be used to advance women in mediation and peacebuilding.

Recommendations

- Mediation teams, operating at all tracks, should become inclusive and diversified by design. As standard practice, teams should include gender, religious, ethnic and generational diversity. The UN should lead the way with a commitment to diversification within mediation teams.
- Co-mediation, with gender parity, should be employed in the case of UN special envoys as standardised protocol.
- As required by the UN’s Global Call for Nomination⁹, member states should commit to gender parity in all nominations for high-level mediation roles. This commitment should be outlined in member states’ Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans.
- Terms of Reference, or selection criteria, for special envoys should be

⁸ I. Latu, M. Mast, J. Lammers, D. Bombari, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 49, Issue 3, May 2013, 444-448

⁹ Global Call for Nominations: Generic Pool of SRSG and DSRSG Candidates, <https://leadershipcall.unmissions.org/information-global-call-nominations>

established by the UN. Networks and member states can assist in developing the Terms of Reference, which would apply to all candidates, irrespective of gender.

- With the establishment of formal selection criteria, the UN should commit to transparency in the appointment process for special envoys responsible for mediation.
- The UN Security Council should continue to advocate for the inclusion of women with Council members and UN departments, as well as continuing to highlight women mediators and peacebuilders in Security Council debates. Member states should support the Council in this advocacy.
- The UN should strengthen and enforce a monitoring system to assess the participation of member states in Women, Peace and Security commitments, including through National Action Plans, as well as to assess its internal commitments to gender parity and inclusivity in staffing and peacebuilding processes.
- States and the UN should commit to the effective resourcing of existing and future networks to ensure sustainability and broad scope. Resource commitments should include finances, capacity building within existing networks and opportunities for significant, in-field collaboration between existing networks.
- Political endorsement from states should include: specific provisions to advance women mediators within National Action Plans, support for the growth and development of networks and public support for women nominated to high-level mediation roles.
- Networks should lead on the identification of qualified candidates for international high-level mediation roles, the multi-track linking of mediators from the local to the global and the facilitation of collaborative international mediation practice and standards.
- Pipelines to support the advancement of individual women mediators should be developed, initially through, or with the assistance of, the networks.
- A “baton system” of working should be developed that will allow people working on mediation teams to return home periodically. This system should apply to both men and women so that all mediators can experience balance between their work and family responsibilities. This protocol should be developed and operationalised by the networks, states and the UN.

Conclusion

Without focused and coordinated efforts, women’s underrepresentation in high-level international mediation is likely to continue. It is essential that states, networks and the UN work together to support institutional and structural change at a strategic level. Networks and pipelines of women mediators are key; women’s participation in mediation processes should be mainstreamed with the potential to transform broader peacebuilding efforts.

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