Policy & Practice Brief

Knowledge for durable peace

Mediating peace in Africa: Enhancing the role of southern African women in mediation

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Although the need to engage women in peace processes is widely acknowledged, most mediation teams do not include or encourage the voices and representation of women. Promoting women's capacities to participate in peace processes is crucial for their advancement and ability to contribute to peace, development and security. This Policy & Practice Brief (PPB) mainly bases its discussions and recommendations on debates which took place during the Southern African Women Mediators Seminar (SAWMS), hosted by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women): Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands[2] from 20 to 21 November 2012 in Pretoria, South Africa. This brief makes the case that women's potential in mediation remains largely untapped and that organisations engaged in peacemaking should improve their support for women's increased capacity and participation in peace processes. It examines the inhibiting factors preventing women's participation in southern Africa and offers recommendations which can contribute to the inclusion of women in mediation processes. The PPB also analyses Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe as case studies to illustrate the evolution of women's involvement in peace processes in the region over the past two decades.

Photos in numerical order: 1-ACCORD Archive, 2-UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz, 3-UN Photo/ Evan Schneider, 4–8-ACCORD Archive

The participation of women in peace processes in southern Africa has increased but challenges for their inclusion remain persistent.

Frameworks for the promotion of the inclusion of women in peace processes

The obligation to promote the participation of women in all aspects of peace processes is codified in international human rights and humanitarian law. This is a central part of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 (2000), 1889 (2010), and 1960 (2010), as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform for Action.

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Introduction

In Africa, many communities, southern Africa included, in women have demonstrated that they can be adept at mobilising diverse groups for a common purpose, working across ethnic, religious, political and cultural divides to promote peace.

While acknowledging progress made towards ensuring the participation of women in mediation, it is also important to note the persisting gap in achieving the aspirations of the provisions of UNSCR 1325. The challenge of building sustainable peace and security in Africa, particularly in southern Africa, has yet to fully embrace the skills and capacities of women to inform such processes at formal levels. UNSCR 1325 calls on governments to increase the representation of women in conflict resolution initiatives.[3] Furthermore, UN General Assembly Resolution 65/283 on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution, passed in June 2011, recognises the importance of ensuring the 'full and effective participation of women at all levels, at all stages and in all aspects of the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution'.[4] With the adoption of these resolutions, the need to promote women's representation in peacemaking increasingly became an expectation rather than an ideal. Yet, according to a study by UN Women, no woman has been appointed as a lead mediator in any UN-sponsored peace talks in Africa since 1992.[5] Women's participation has mainly been as part of a team of mediators in some talks sponsored by the African Union (AU) and other institutions. A positive case is the inclusion of influential political figure Graça Machel (see text box 1) in a team of three mediators involved in resolving the 2008 electoral crisis in Kenya.[6] The other two are President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Together with Machel, they are members of the AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities.

Women's equal participation in formal peace processes increases the inclusiveness of negotiations, therefore enhancing the probability of responding to gender concerns and perspectives in society. It can also be observed that the engagement of women in peacemaking can only aide their participation during the implementation of agreements and peacebuilding processes.[7] The sustainability of peace agreements therefore relies heavily on the participation of women to support their implementation in post-conflict reconstruction. In southern Africa, efforts to build sustainable peace have not always taken into consideration the inclusiveness of the peace processes. Organisations entrusted with ensuring the stability of the region, especially Regional Economic Communities (RECs), have not adequately supported the participation of women in mediation. In an attempt to respond to these issues, ACCORD and UN Women convened the SAWMS. The seminar, which drew participants from across southern Africa, focused on promoting a regional approach to advocate for women's inclusion in peace processes. The forum provided an opportunity for current and potential female mediators to share their experiences and increase their understanding of the mediation environment. Discussions made it clear that women remain marginalised from participating in mediation and that organisations engaged in peacemaking need to strengthen their support for women's increased capacity and participation in peacemaking.

Text box 1: Mme Graça Machel

2012 to date: Member of the Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

2008 to date: Member of the AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities - Kenya Dialogue and Reconciliation

1998: Awarded an Inter Press Service (IPS) International Achievement Award for her work on behalf of children internationally, the Africare Distinguished Humanitarian Service Award and the North-South Prize of the Council of Europe, among others

1996: Presented a report commissioned by the UN Secretary-General which established a new and innovative agenda for the comprehensive protection of children caught up in war, changing the policy and practice of governments, UN agencies and international and national civil society organisations

1995: Awarded the Nansen Medal in recognition of her contribution to the welfare of refugee children

1994: Appointed by the UN Secretary-General as an independent expert to carry out an assessment of the impact of armed conflict on children

1992: Awardee of the Laureate of Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger from the Hunger Project

Background

As noted above, the challenge of building sustainable peace in southern Africa requires acknowledging the capacities of women and their contributions. Many of the contributions to date are evident at informal and community levels, where they remain largely undocumented. Often, these contributions do not have maximum influence to mainstream policy processes and decisions on peace and security. As such, bridging the gap between the contributions of women at informal levels on the one hand and their effective participation and influence over formal processes of peacemaking on the other, remains a challenge in the region. Leaders from the region have been afforded the opportunity to be involved in mediation on several occasions. For example, a peace agreement on the conflict in Angola was signed in Zambia (Lusaka Protocol of 1994), while agreements to end conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were made in Zambia (Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999), Angola (Luanda Accord of 2002) and South Africa (Sun City Agreement of 2002).[8]

Southern African leaders continue to mediate on peace and security issues beyond the region. For instance, South Africa has led diplomatic initiatives in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC and Libya through interventions by South African presidents Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. This trend has also promoted various continental and regional efforts for the involvement of women in peace processes in the last decade. The AU peace and security frameworks have gender provisions for mainstreaming gender in peace and security processes throughout the African continent. Through instruments such as Article 4(I) of its Constitutive Act, the Gender Policy and Roadmap for the AU Women's Decade, the AU prioritises peace, security, gender equality and women's empowerment as prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable peace and development.

The increasing need for mediation in southern Africa and beyond, backed up by associated regional and continental commitments to ensure the involvement of more women in peace processes, has resulted in the acknowledgement of the need for inclusivity in mediation teams. Efforts aimed at including women in conflict resolution and governance have been facilitated through the formulation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development (2008). Furthermore, the SADC Protocol promotes the mainstreaming of gender considerations within policymaking and outlines an implementation framework for mainstreaming gender equality and equity. The Protocol as such provides for the empowerment of women by encouraging and harmonising the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects.

Moreover, SADC member states are signatories to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol (2003), which also informs some of the provisions of the SADC Protocol. The Maputo Protocol provides both a policy and framework document and an implementation platform for gender mainstreaming. The SADC Protocol on the other hand seeks to accelerate progress in institutionalising gender equality while setting timelines for all member states to have improved women's ability to access and enjoy their rights by 2015. However, there has been limited progress towards this goal due to political, cultural and socio-economic reasons.[9] Regarding women's participation in mediation, SADC, despite the efforts described earlier, has achieved a relatively low percentage of women appointed to either lead or be a part of mediation teams in this region or other parts of the continent. On average, SADC women make up less than 10% of mediation teams. The table below highlights some of the key protocols that have been crafted to enhance the participation of women in peace process in southern Africa.

What is mediation?

Mediation is an important and sustainable way of resolving conflict. It is defined as an activity that involves a third party in order to assist conflicting parties with the objective of

Table 1: African protocols and treaties promoting women's participation in conflict resolution

Date	Document
1997	Addis Ababa Declaration on Violence Against Women
1997	SADC Declaration on Gender and Development
1999	African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women
2000	Article 4(I) of the AU Constitutive Act
2003	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol
2004	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
2008	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development
2009	AU Gender Policy
2010	Roadmap for the AU Women's Decade

reaching a compromise or settlement.[10] Premised on the idea that the conflicting parties should have ownership of the outcome, mediation is a voluntary process that takes place at the invitation of and with consent from the parties. In performing this process, a variety of mediation methods and actors are identified and engaged.

In this context, there are two predominant trends of mediation: Track I and Track II mediation. Track I is defined as 'a technique of state action, [which] is essentially a process whereby communication from one government go[es] directly to the decision-making apparatus of another'.[11] Track I diplomacy has often been employed in Africa as a process carried out by distinguished diplomats, government officials and also Heads of State. Track I diplomacy is used to influence the structures of political power within conflict states.[12] Also included amongst these players are actors from RECs, the AU, European Union and UN. On the other hand, Track II is the unofficial interaction and intervention of non-state actors. It generally involves informal mediation with influential unofficial actors from civil society, business or religious communities and local leaders who are considered to be experts in the area or issue being discussed. It generally seeks to supplement Track I diplomacy by working with middle and lower levels of society and often involves non-traditional methods, such as facilitating dialogue mechanisms and meetings that include participants from both government and non-government institutions.

In practice, mediation processes on the African continent have usually consisted of formal peace negotiations (Track I) that have gathered together male leaders of the warring parties. The parties will also engage in a series of facilitated talks to end the conflict and lay the foundation for the reconstruction of political, legal and socio-economic structures.

The mediation environment and challenges for women's participation

The process of reconstructing a nation following conflict requires the equal involvement of both men and women. Despite this understanding, the majority of peace talks continue to exclude women from the negotiation table. Unfortunately, more than 50% of negotiated peace agreements reached have failed within five years of signature.[13] Arguably, in instances where women were included in peace processes, for example in the South African peace talks to end apartheid and the Arusha negotiations for Burundi (as observers in this case), these seem to have resulted in a more durable peace process. This is attributed to the more inclusive nature of the process in each case.[14] Table 2 below shows the percentages of women who have been engaged in peace processes in southern Africa. However, it should be noted that statistics on the involvement of women in peace processes are not readily available and therefore the table reflects only currently accessible information. Despite achievements in advancing women's involvement in peace processes, however, their impact in post-conflict settings is difficult to institutionalise across the region.

While some countries in southern Africa enjoy a relatively higher representation of women in parliament (South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles and Angola are the top five

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regionally),[15] the accomplishments of women in the political arena remain relatively unknown in the region. This lack of visibility, in turn, affects women's ability to be appointed to senior level positions in formal peace processes.

Towards increasing the participation of women in formal peace processes

A positive development on the African continent was the appointment of Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as the first woman chair of the AU Commission in 2012. This move could see more involvement by women in peace and security decisions on the continent. Dlamini-Zuma most notably contributed to peace initiatives in the DRC when she was Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Africa. She also played a significant role in contributing to the end of the war in that country through her direct involvement in a number of mediation efforts. An example of this engagement was her contribution towards the Sun City Agreement and the Pretoria Accord.[17] However, Dlamini-Zuma is not the only example of high calibre women to be involved in peace processes. Dr Brigalia Bam (see text box 2) from South Africa and Mme Marie-Madeleine Kalala-Ngoy (see text box 3) from the DRC were appointed to the AU Panel of the Wise,

Table 2: Women's participation in peace processes in southern Africa[16]

Country (Peace process)	Women negotiators	Women lead mediators	Women witnesses	Women in negotiating teams
DRC (2003) Sun City, 'Final Act'	5%	0%	0%	12% (40 women out of 340)
DRC (2008) Goma - North Kivu, *Acte d'Engagement*	5%	20%	0%	-
DRC (2008) Goma - South Kivu, *Acte d'Engagement*	0%	20%	0%	-
Zimbabwe 2008 Agreement between the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front and the two Movement for Democratic Change factions (MDC-T and MDC-M)	0%	0%	0%	16.67% (1 woman out of 6)

both serving as Members and Friends of the Panel. The Panel of the Wise is an advisory body with the mandate to provide guidance to the AU Peace and Security Council on issues relating to conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Regional efforts towards including women in decision-making positions

The SADC region has also taken some important steps to create strategic policies to support women mainly through prioritising education, affirmative action, gender mainstreaming and advocacy on the importance of gender equality. The 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development encouraged member states to ensure 30% women's representation in politics and decision-making by the year 2015. However, many countries are struggling to achieve the set target.

Text box 2: Dr Brigalia Bam

2010 to date: Member of the AU Panel of the Wise

1999 to 2011: Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa

1998: Founding member of the Women's Development Foundation

1983 to 1985: Africa Regional Secretary and Coordinator of the Women's Workers' Programme for the International Food and Allied Workers Association based in Geneva

1980 to 1982: Coordinator of the World Young Women's Christian Association's International Training Institute Programme, as well as that of its affiliate, Development for Human Rights

1967 to 1969: Executive Programme Secretary for the Women's department of the World Council of Churches

The SADC Protocol calls on member states to ensure the achievement of 50% representation of women by 2015.[18] In addition, the target set for the SADC Parliamentary Forum's Constitution is 50% women representation.[19] These examples demonstrate progress in the development of enabling policies and commitments to support the inclusion of more women in decision-making positions. Nevertheless, in the region only a few countries achieved considerable progress in having women in political and government leadership. As such, extra efforts are required to ensure the implementation of enabling policies and promote this trend at national and regional level. The role of women in democratic processes is particularly essential as it remains one of the aspects for inclusion into peace processes.

Experiencing mediation differently

An important part of conflict mediation is the capacity to build relationships with belligerent groups. The leaders of these groups are predominantly men and may come from

Text box 3: Mme Marie-Madeleine Kalala-Ngoy

2010 to date: Member of the AU Panel of the Wise

2010: Participated in a high-level mission dispatched to Guinea by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the AU Pre-Electoral Assessment Mission to Burundi

2003 to 2007: Minister of Human Rights in the DRC

2001 to 2003: Actively participated in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue

1990 to 1997: Served as legal counsel in several ministerial cabinets

1977 to 1990: Served as a legal advisor to the Congolese National Coffee Agency; National Coordinator of Cause Commune, a DRC women's association renowned for the promotion and protection of women's rights; and attorney with the Kinshasa Bar Association

backgrounds where the involvement and participation of women in mediation is not commonly accepted. However, efforts by women to engage in environments where their participation is not easily accepted usually reinforce prevailing patriarchal attitudes that contribute to their exclusion from power circles. In negotiations in the DRC for instance, men strongly opposed the participation of women in the process.[20] For them, negotiating for peace was entirely the business of men. Even though there was intense lobbying for a gender balance this did not guarantee significant female representation in the transitional government.[21] Speakers at the SAWMS also argued that the difficulties most women mediators face in obtaining recognition is due, in part, to decades of exclusion from participation in politics and low educational attainment. Delegates pointed out that economic empowerment and better access to education are fundamental to encouraging emerging strong women mediators to play an active role in all spheres of society as this will maximise their chances of being able to contribute to mediation efforts in the future.

In addition to suffering from the effects of violent conflict and economically harsh climates, women are deliberately attacked physically and sexually (experiencing forced prostitution, sexual slavery, rape and many other sexual offenses) even after the official end of the conflict.[22] For instance, although peace accords in the DRC saw the Ugandan and Rwandan forces exit the country, the eastern part, in particular North and South Kivu, remains unstable. In this region, atrocities involving sexual violence continue to be documented[23] and are made worse by the precarious nature of security in the area. In another case, Physicians for Human Rights reported chilling statistics on sexual violence in Sierra Leone, where at least one member from 94% of displaced households reported having experienced sexual assault.[24]

Despite the understanding of the impact of conflict on women, there is currently very little available information or research data about the role and impact of women as

agents of change in peace talks across the continent. During the seminar, delegates argued that this is a direct consequence of the fact that women have largely tended to stay in the shadows of prominent male figures during peace negotiations. It also reflects the lack of recognition of women's substantive work in achieving long-lasting peace, especially as Track II actors, where women usually lead. Yet, even outside formal peace negotiations, women have been actively involved in campaigns to end violence, and to bring belligerents to the negotiation table. For instance, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) led a movement pressing the international community to implement non-violent solutions to the country's political crisis in 2008.[25] In the DRC, mobilisation aimed at ensuring women's participation in formal peace negotiations was actively encouraged following the adoption of UNSCR 1325. Women's groups collaborated with the Office of Gender Affairs of the UN Organisation Mission in the DRC (MONUC) to translate UNSCR 1325 into the country's four national languages and to raise awareness about its provisions.[26]

Enhancing the effective participation of women in peace talks

'Women, who know the price of conflict so well, are also better equipped than men to prevent or resolve it. For generations, women have served as peace educators, both in their families and in their societies. They have proved instrumental in building bridges rather than walls.'

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General (1997–2006)

The advantage of including women as participants in peace processes is that they contribute to enlarging the scope of the agreements to cater for critical societal priorities that carry the potential to guarantee lasting peace. In South Africa, for instance, more than 70 organisations came together under the Women's National Coalition and created the Women's Charter for Effective Equality[27] which outlined the fundamental rights of women. The Coalition's demands for affirmative action resulted in the integration of women into all the different committees involved in the negotiations that brought an end to apartheid.[28] By shifting the parameters within which women were able to claim their rights as equal citizens, the Charter also resulted in the development and adoption of a constitution that, in addition to protecting the rights of women, also caters to all members of society.

In another instance, in 2008, Graça Machel, as a member of the mediation team working to resolve the post-election crisis in Kenya, convened a meeting for women in the East African country. A diverse range of women representing different Kenyan political parties and affiliations participated, providing valuable insight into women's perspectives on the crisis and the initiatives they felt were important to resolve the conflict. Machel appealed to the audience as 'mothers of the nation' when emphasising the need to curb the violence. As a result, the women put aside their differences in order

to collectively address injustices and marginalisation. Eventually, the meeting and subsequent consultations led to the development of a memorandum which was presented to the mediation team by the women's groups.[29] This document outlined the roles that women could play and offered recommendations to help stop further violence in the country.

Efforts by women to engage in environments where their participation is not easily accepted usually reinforce prevailing patriarchal attitudes that contribute to their exclusion from power circles

The highlighted examples of the contributions of southern African women to peace talks and mediation efforts demonstrate the different views and concrete solutions that women bring to the table and the efforts being increasingly made to enhance this recognition. The experiences that women have in mobilising communities towards a common cause is part of the strength that they can bring to mediation efforts and this important contribution should not be left out of peace negotiations. Their unique understanding of the dynamics of conflict is essential to crafting a long-term venture which includes reconciliation and reconstruction of the social fabric in post-conflict environments. As a result, inclusive peace processes increase the likelihood of promoting national ownership of the outcomes of peace talks and improving the legitimacy of the agreements, thus raising the probability that the accords will be effectively implemented.[30]

Women's involvement in peace processes: An analysis of selected cases

This section provides an overview of southern African women's involvement as Track I and Track II stakeholders in peace processes over the past two decades. Case studies are drawn from experiences in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Madagascar respectively.

Mozambique's civil war (1977–1992)

The civil war in Mozambique claimed one million lives and was fought mainly between the government forces, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Mozambican Liberation Front, FRELIMO) and the opposition *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambican National Resistance, RENAMO). The conflict officially ended in 1992 with the signing of the General Peace Accord. The armed conflict, which was caused by regional politics, was characterised by widespread sexual violence against women. Extreme brutalities were perpetrated and scores of people became displaced by the war.[31] The mediation efforts focused on bringing together

representatives from the two warring parties and building mutual trust. At the beginning of the 1990s, both parties agreed to an all-male mediation team composed of Mário Raffaelli from the Italian government, Andrea Ricardi and Matteo Zuppi from the Santo Egídio Community, Mozambique's Archbishop of Beira, Jaime Gonçalves and members of the Catholic hierarchy.

The Accord provided for the demobilisation of armed forces, the resettlement of returning refugees and set the ground for a transition from a one-party to a multi-party system. However, there were no provisions in the Accord that clearly outlined how the issues and questions of women's rights would be addressed. During the negotiations, women were completely sidelined from the peace process.[32] Nevertheless, women did play a significant role in fostering the environment for peace, both prior to and after the signing of the Accord. Through their involvement in church programmes and singing circles, women set themselves up as the main conveyors of peace messages throughout their communities. Women, it was said 'contributed to the socialisation with a discourse that emphasised solidarity and the care of the other'.[33]

Zimbabwe's power-sharing agreement (2008)

Zimbabwe entered into a serious state of political crisis that led to violence following the 2008 elections in which the two major parties could not agree on the outcome. A negotiating team led by the then South African President, Thabo Mbeki, engaged in a mediation process that led the political adversaries to sign the Global Political Agreement (GPA).[34] President Robert Mugabe, of the Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations, one led by Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the other by Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M), signed Zimbabwe's GPA. The objective of the South Africa-mediated agreement was to 'create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally acceptable solution to the Zimbabwe situation'.[35]

Zimbabwe's power-sharing deal was criticised for being neither inclusive nor consultative and for ignoring important aspects and issues of national interest.[36] While the process marked a major change in the political landscape of the country, signing of the agreement did not. The stakeholders assumed that problems in the country lay within the political parties and there was an assumption that, if ZANU-PF and the MDC could agree to share power, the problems would be solved automatically.[37] These parties and the negotiations were, for the most part, represented by men.

Despite these conditions, efforts to strengthen the position of women in Zimbabwean society have been repeatedly made ever since the country attained independence in 1980. The period between 1999 (when the political crisis started) and the signing of the GPA in 2008 witnessed significant momentum in women's involvement in opposition politics in Zimbabwe and an increase in the number of women contesting in parliamentary elections.[38] However, the involvement of women in the country's political processes was not adequately reflected in the GPA process. In the negotiations only one woman, Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga from the MDC-M, was officially on the negotiation team representing the needs of 52% of the country's population.[39] It is clear from these statistics that the process did not consider, or make efforts to ensure the full engagement of some important groups of society, particularly women. Although Misihairabwi-Mushonga endeavoured to remain in constant communication with women's organisations and activists, their influence was perceived as being merely advisory and outside of the formal negotiation arena.

Madagascar's transition process

The SADC Roadmap to end the Crisis in Madagascar of September 2011

The SADC Roadmap to end the Crisis in Madagascar (SADC Roadmap) was signed by 10 of the 11 major Malagasy political movements and nine additional smaller groups. The goal of the Roadmap was to facilitate the transitional process to result in the establishment of a democratically elected government and an end to the political crisis. It is the fourth agreement; three prior agreements were only partially implemented.

The political crisis in Madagascar, which began in 2009 and was still unresolved at the beginning of 2013, was a product of poor governance. The conflict was characterised by an extended stand-off over power and the control of resources.[40] Unhappy at the state of governance by former President Marc Ravalomanana's regime and the generally poor socio-economic situation, citizens invaded the streets of Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, resulting in the *coup d'état* of 2009 which was led by current President Andry Rajoelina. The dilemma that was facing the international community was how to engage and assist Madagascar without legitimising the 2009 coup, while at the same time ensuring that the situation is contained. The inclusiveness of the SADC Roadmap, which was signed by ten of the main Malagasy political parties, led to hopes of a fair transition that could be translated into action with genuine national reconciliation and free and fair elections.[41]

Malagasy women played a key role in reconciliation at all levels. At community level, women's movements such as the *Vondrona Miralenta ho an'ny Fampandrosoana* (Platform for Gender Equality and Development, VMLF) and *Ainga 30-50* (which aimed to ensure the achievement of 30% women's representation in decision-making positions by 2012 and 50% by 2015) have been promoting the inclusion of gender in the transition process. The VMLF represents women from different political parties and is comprised of experienced and emerging women politicians. It is possible that the crisis has strengthened the motivation for cooperation between women representing different political groups. The VMLF's membership increased from 400 in 2009 to 3,000 in 2011.[42]

In spite of these developments, however, women involved in mediation as Track I actors remained very few in the country. Currently, only three women are members of the Transitional Senate out of the 33 available seats.[43]

The way forward: Recommendations

The complete absence of women in the negotiations in the Mozambican case in the 1990s, the campaign for peace by Zimbabwean women in 2008 and the improved evolution of Malagasy women in politics and mediation in 2011 illustrate that over the years women have managed to successfully breach social, cultural and legal obstacles to reach tremendous heights. Despite their dearth in numbers in official negotiations, women in southern Africa continue to play a key role in promoting peace and reconciliation that cannot be denied.

The experiences that women have in mobilising communities towards a common cause is part of the strength that they can bring to mediation efforts and this important contribution should not be left out of peace negotiations

While the Mozambique, Madagascar and Zimbabwe cases demonstrate the potential of women's active engagement in peace processes, there is need for continued efforts to ensure that mediation initiatives are inclusive. This brief urges that in order to effectively address the inclusion of women in peace processes in southern Africa, the recommendations below should be taken into consideration.

The UN should:

- Provide technical and financial assistance in the review, update and execution of national action plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

- Facilitate and support programmes that encourage the participation of women mediators in peace processes.

- Provide technical and financial assistance towards building a pool of experienced women in mediation through training and other capacity building efforts.

- Create and implement capacity building projects that enhance efforts to recruit and provide continued capacity strengthening support to potential women mediators.

The AU should:

- Promote the AU Gender Policy by advocating for equal representation and participation of women in all institutions of society, public, civil and private as per the Declaration of the AU Commission Consultative Conference on Women Stakeholders on Pan Africanism, Renaissance

and Agenda 2063. These efforts should be aimed at investing in peace and security structures that promote the representation of women in key decision-making positions in conflict resolution.

- Support the implementation of the Roadmap for the AU Women's Decade by advocating for full gender parity by 2020.

- Promote women's role in leadership and governance through policies such as affirmative action and quotas, electoral law on women's participation in political parties, mentoring and advocacy, as well as the inclusion of the gender parity principle in national constitutions.

SADC member states should:

- Support the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development by accelerating pace of women's participation in decision-making. Such initiative could be aimed at developing rosters of women thematic experts around mediation or tap into existing rosters developed by civil society actors such as ACCORD and regional training centres.

- Encourage female delegates through outreach programmes so as to share experiences and identify ways of engaging more women to foster greater public ownership in peace processes.

- Encourage the engagement of women in political issues through consultative engagements for strategic entry points for women's participation early in the peace process so as to significantly increase their access to the negotiating table and their impact on the peace process.

Civil society should:

- Build a greater body of evidence of the work that is done by women mediators through conducting evidence-based research on the roles women have played in mediation.

- Create women mediator networks in order to disseminate knowledge acquired.

- Convene high-level women experts support teams to advise all actors in peace processes.

- Promote women's solidarity as a key driver for achieving the inclusion of women mediators in the negotiation arena. Such initiatives aim at strengthening existing linkages among women mediators while creating new avenues for collaboration. They also encourage peer exchanges between women in conflict-affected areas and experienced women mediators.

- Support initiatives that have a specific focus on women's political participation at local and national levels to ensure that adequate numbers of women are included in established pools of mediators.

- Support research efforts and documentation of women's involvement in peace processes aimed at drawing lessons and highlighting the evidence and impact of women's participation.

- Engage in follow up on training and capacity building processes for evaluation purposes and sustainability.

- Create a network of current and potential women mediators in southern Africa.

- Create a repository of information on current and prospective mediators through supporting the development of a database and roster of women mediators.

The recommendations in this section are based on presentations and discussions that emerged from the SAWMS. They provide both opportunities and challenges for taking forward women's participation in peace processes. By focusing on building the capacity of current and rising women mediators, while raising awareness on the important roles that women play in the field of mediation, it is possible to ultimately ensure inclusive peace processes which will yield true and lasting peace.

Conclusion

Analyses of the experiences of women involved in mediation in southern Africa demonstrate that efforts have been made to include and support the involvement of women in peace negotiations. They reveal that the different strategies that women have adopted to achieve peace have reshaped the mediation landscape as they increasingly lead to the inclusion of women's views and opinions and open the doors for women's participation in negotiation. Even though women are still seldom represented in official peace negotiations, their work as peacemakers in their homes, communities and at times wider societies, remains significant. As the case studies illustrate, there has been an evolution in women's participation over the past two decades which sheds light on the pivotal role which both women's organisations and women political figures have played in peace processes in southern Africa. In light of all this, it is clear that the inclusion and participation of women mediators will ensure that a wider range of experiences, perspectives and capacity is brought to the mediation table. The positive implications of such an inclusive process cannot be overemphasised. Initiatives such as the SAWMS highlight the need to elevate existing knowledge and the experiences of women mediators for access at global level. Also, there is an obvious demand to translate information from research into practical application in order to enhance the roles and successes of women mediators, whose unique perspectives that could meaningfully increase the sustainability of peace agreements.

Endnotes

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