

OUTCOME STATEMENT

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WOMEN MEDIATORS SEMINAR (SAWMS)

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

November 2012

Introduction

A high level seminar for practitioners, academics, policymakers, women politicians and leaders from southern African countries was convened by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), in collaboration with the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands in 2012. Held on 21 and 22 November in Pretoria, South Africa, the Southern Africa Women Mediators Seminar (SAWMS) was convened under the theme 'Mediating peace in Africa: Enhancing the role of southern African women in Mediation'. Delegates from Botswana, Madagascar, Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe participated in the seminar.

The equitable participation of African women leaders in resolving conflicts, sustaining peace and encouraging development is crucial to the promotion and implementation of processes aimed at strengthening accountability, greater transparency and civic engagement. Unfortunately, while women have the potential to be important actors, they are routinely left out of mediation teams and collaborative policymaking efforts. The absence of women means that peace processes on the African continent will remain unstable and ephemeral. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of including women, most mediation processes do not offer sufficient encouragement for women's voices and representation, nor the spaces for their active participation.

Women in southern Africa are undertaking consistent and effective work at both the formal and informal levels as mediators. Important platforms such as the SAWMS provide a forum to elevate the knowledge and experiences of women mediators to the international arena for the benefit of many.

The objectives of the seminar were to:

- examine contemporary challenges to peace and security in Africa from a gender perspective;
- identify opportunities for more sustained inclusion of women as lead mediators in peace processes;
- identify and propose mechanisms to support women mediators;
- provide a platform for southern African women mediators to share experiences and learn from each other; and
- create a network of women mediators from southern Africa who can be recruited as mediators when the need arises.

In southern Africa, efforts to build sustainable peace have also not always taken into consideration the inclusiveness of 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. However, there are already high profile role models of southern African women who are active in politics and peace negotiations from whom other potential mediators can learn. Southern Africa also has networks of women in both the private and public sector, most particularly in the entrepreneurial fields, through which women collaborate and provide support for each other. The culture of women in solidarity and women working towards advancement of their communities can be nurtured in the mediation environment to boost women's participation in peace processes.

Statement of intent

Re-affirming the value of normative frameworks, including but not limited to:

- The United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325
- The UN General Assembly Resolution on Strengthening the Role of Mediation in the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes and Conflict Prevention
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
- The Maputo Declaration on Gender Mainstreaming and the Effective Participation of Women in the African Union
- The Common Market for East and Southern Africa Gender Policy
- The Southern African Protocol on Gender and Development
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration's Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children
- The Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Gender Peer Review Framework
- African traditional values and practices which give reverence to the important role of women in socialisation, peacebuilding and peacemaking

Acknowledging the existence of these valuable tools is an encouragement of the inclusion of women in mediation at various levels, such as Track I and II diplomacy.

Further acknowledging that durable mediation processes require the full involvement of women and that this involvement extends far beyond mediation initiatives to ensuring women's inclusion in the political, economic, social and humanitarian spheres.

Concerned that although the need to include women in peace processes is widely acknowledged, most mediation initiatives, especially those within the southern Africa region, do not offer sufficient encouragement for women to participate and be represented.

Determined to inspire women in this decade to contribute to the mediation field through innovative strategies that will ensure the effective operationalisation of existing frameworks on gender and through determination of measurable goals and indicators.

Recognising that the biggest advantage that women have lies in solidarity.

Further recognising the current challenges that Africa as a continent faces as a result of the:

- fragility of African states which require stronger leadership for sustainable conflict transformation;
- lack of effective and sustainable management of natural resources which leads to increasing social inequity;
- limited representation of women in mediation, which is a hindrance for sustainable peace as it results in challenges in including a cross-section of conflict transformation, resolution or management processes;
- obsolete policies on food security which exacerbate natural and humanitarian crises; and
- the impact of the global recession on the continent's economies which resulted in decreases in financial growth and development.

As co-conveners of this esteemed gathering, ACCORD and UN Women Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands undertake to articulate and advance the importance of the role of African women mediators at all levels.

ACCORD and UN Women Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands reiterate their commitment to share information electronically and otherwise on the importance of the role of African women as mediators and active participants in peace processes.

Additionally, ACCORD and UN Women Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands will strive to create opportunities in their institutions' existing activities and programmes to share information.

ACCORD and UN Women Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands further seek to continue drawing on the wisdom, best practices and experiences of stakeholders and partners and to learn from the insights of experts.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and to accelerate the participation and involvement of African women as mediators and participants in peace processes, the seminar adopted the following recommendations:

For women within the southern Africa region:

- Southern Africa women should come together in solidarity during mediation processes as experiences from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa have shown that this is the most powerful tool which women can use to influence parties to mediate in a conflict.
- Ensure that the outcomes of a mediation process truly reflect issues that women have. Women in southern Africa should not shy away from demands that respond to their needs and aspirations. Women should advocate for their inclusion and participation in peace negotiations and engage conflicting parties as well as mediators to consider their issues. Governments should uphold virtues such as electoral quotas and progressive requirements that women make up or achieve a certain representation in key decision-making offices. Women in civil society, academic and research institutes should become more involved in research and the documentation of the work of women mediators within the region so that this inspires and sets precedence for greater women's participation.
- Raise awareness on the importance of women's inclusion in mediation and peace processes in each country in the region.

For the African Union:

- The African Union (AU) Chairperson, the AU Commission Chairperson, together with the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) should specify criteria and guidelines for the appointment of mediators. This is to ensure that the process is merit-based and transparent and that wide consultations are held. Special efforts should be made to identify and appoint qualified African women as mediators.
- The AU should work with the RECs to ensure the harmonisation of the normative frameworks on mediation and that member states ratify, domesticate and effectively implement these agreed shared values on women's inclusion in all spheres, including political, social and economic.
- The AU Chairperson, the AU Commission Chairperson, together with the AU PSC should appoint more qualified women as Special Representatives and Special Envoys. Also, AU liaison offices should be comprised of mediation teams in which women are equally represented. This is in accordance with the gender parity principle of the AU.
- The AU Chairperson should ensure that all peace processes include a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) component. M&E should commence during the initial planning stages and be carried through to completion. An M&E Committee should track the inclusion of women in mediation teams, as well as within the thematic experts support teams.
- The AU Chairperson should adopt a policy of ensuring gender parity when appointing mediation support teams. Attention must be paid to the distinction between women mediators and gender experts in peace mediation.

For member states and governments:

- Acknowledge the value and worth of traditional values in mediation, encouraging their incorporation into mediation frameworks and mechanisms. States should ensure that relevant traditional values are not used to sideline women, but rather should be referenced as a strategy to underline the centrality of women's role in these processes.
- Given the central position that member states hold in terms of governance, they should enhance the capacities required for women mediators' effective involvement in peace processes. This can be achieved by promoting the representation of women in political leadership positions and exploring opportunities to create collaborative platforms with potential women mediators at local level. Governments must develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation of programmes aimed at achieving the inclusion of women in the mediation field. In this regard, governments should consistently commission analyses of community and national level conflicts that examine the different needs, roles and interests of women and men and incorporate the results into local, national and international mediation efforts.
- African governments should ratify gender protocols and instruments that protect women's rights and promote their participation in peace processes. Furthermore, their domestic legislation should pursue the same goal and should be accompanied by robust implementation mechanisms that reflect functioning justice systems and gender parity in state institutions.
- Promote the political will to include women in mediation processes through ensuring that women are represented in conflict resolution initiatives.
- Political parties should adopt the gender parity principle to facilitate women's increased representation in politics. They should also seek to ensure that this standard is carried through to the level of representation in government.
- Governments should implement strategies aimed at encouraging and supporting women's active participation in politics, which includes establishing and implementing constitutional quotas for governance.
- Governments should implement policy and programmatic strategies that seek to improve the political operational environment through instituting zero tolerance on political violence.

For civil society:

- Civil society must play a more proactive role in enhancing institutional capacity for women to participate in mediation through the creation of women's networks in mediation and supporting the development of a critical mass of women who have the knowledge and skills to efficiently participate in peace initiatives.
- Civil society organisations should continue to provide the necessary forums and platforms to achieve the regular facilitation of dialogue and information exchange among women stakeholders on the topic of mediation.
- Academic, research and training institutes should support mediation efforts through the

documentation of relevant initiatives and by engaging in capacity-building activities. These institutions should also be encouraged and adequately resourced to conduct research which will assist mediators. In addition, they should monitor and evaluate the implementation of peace agreements.

- Through advocacy, evidence-based research and the sharing of policy recommendations, civil society should urge governments to nominate women on the UN, AU and RECs' rosters for deployment in mediation efforts. Civil society should collaborate with the AU, RECs and member states to develop the mediation capacity of southern African women. This should be done through skills transfer, mentoring, sharing of experiences, identification of lessons learned and mediation training.

For regional organisations, specifically SADC and COMESA:

- The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and SADC should promote inter-regional exchange of knowledge by supporting the creation of regional networks which include the participation of women with substantive knowledge and skills in mediation.
- COMESA and SADC should promote the utilisation of a regional approach to peace processes by facilitating collaborative and inclusive methods for strategy and policy formulation with women mediators in the region.
- COMESA and SADC should encourage the participation of women in peace processes by systematically including eminent women as part of mediation teams or as lead mediators.
- COMESA and SADC should respond to conflict by implementing regional solutions that ensure the utilisation of participatory and inclusive processes.

For the UN and its agencies:

- The UN and its agencies should continue to support initiatives intended to enhance women's capacity in crisis response processes through supporting regional women mediators' networks and ensuring that women are represented at all international, regional and national forums convened to resolve conflicts.
- The UN should enhance research efforts into the roles and successes of women mediators by conducting evidence-based analyses.
- The UN should support efforts aimed at increasing recruitment and capacity strengthening of women mediators by systematically including them in UN-led mediation initiatives.

As SAWMS participants, with support from ACCORD and UN Women Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands, we commit to the following:

- Utilisation and strengthening of the network of women mediators that has been created through the SAWMS to advance the agenda of women's participation in peace processes. To this end, we will continue to engage with each other and to participate in this network as a way of drawing strength from each of our comparative advantages.

- Creation of a taskforce which will represent the group and coordinate the follow-up processes emerging from the SAWMS. Continue to engage with our respective organisations, governments and communities on women's participation in peace processes. We will do this through research, advocacy and efforts to influence policy. Furthermore, as women who are now trained on mediation, we will continue to strive to strengthen our capacity in this area and shall present ourselves to relevant institutions as potential resource persons in mediation processes.
- Act in solidarity with other women in southern Africa and on the continent, when their rights are threatened by conflict, through solidarity missions as well as through raising attention about issues affecting women in conflict and peace processes.

ACCORD The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) is a civil society organisation working throughout Africa to bring creative African solutions to the challenges posed by conflict on the continent. ACCORD's primary aim is to influence political developments by bringing conflict resolution, dialogue and institutional development to the forefront as an alternative to armed violence and protracted conflict. ACCORD specialises in conflict management, conflict analysis and conflict prevention. We intervene in conflicts through mediation, negotiation, training, research and conflict analysis.

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