



**SWITZERLAND
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PANEL DISCUSSIONS SERIES BY
THE EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND

INVITATION TO A PANEL DISCUSSION
**WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN
CONFLICT MEDIATION?**



26 August 2022



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

About the CMA

The goal of the CMA is to help make mediation efforts throughout Africa more effective. We do so by offering academic and practical courses in mediation, researching new and current best practices, and offering support to organisations and governments involved in mediation processes.

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Panel Discussion - Where Are the Women in Conflict Mediation?

26 August 2022, 10:30 - 12:30 (Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria)

Moderator:

Professor Cori Wielenga, Director of Centre for Mediation in Africa

Panelist:

Nthabiseng Malefane, Director of Vulnerable Groups, DIRCO

Emeritus Professor Maxi Schoeman, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria

Annah Moyo, Executive Director of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Summary of presentations

Veronique Haller, Charge d' Affaires of the Embassy of Switzerland in South Africa introduced the topic of discussion, *Where are the women in conflict mediation?* Haller shared from her personal experience. In Bosnia she noticed that not a single woman participated in signing the agreement to end the war despite having the strength to contribute to the agreement. It is now seventeen years later. Important conscious shifts and efforts to include women have been made through the UN Resolution 1325 and other initiatives, but women often still only participate to represent women's issues and male leadership remains the norm. Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is one of the most established issues at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Switzerland has been selected for the co-chairship, together with South Africa, of the Focal Point Network of WPS at the UNSC. The priorities of the co-chairship include initiatives and resolutions on women's inclusion as well as fostering North-South relationships. Haller ended by commenting on the beauty and significance of meeting at Future Africa Campus as an important follow-up to the Focal Point Conference in Geneva which focused on addressing the gap between institutional frameworks and its implementation, especially as it relates to outcomes of peace negotiations.

UN Women Representative Moline Marume spoke next and focused on the statistics and reasons for why women are not found at the table during peace processes. In the last 27 years (from 1992 to 2019), 13% of mediators and 6% of high-level peace participants were women. Only 10% of military action negotiators are women. The perception is that it is too dangerous for women to participate. During the Afghanistan takeover, women were not part of negotiations. At the UN level, there were many resolutions about women in Peace and Security (for example Resolution 2467 and Resolution 2493), however women indicate that their roles are mostly a formality, women are considered best suited in supporting roles, and other parties involved in conflict and peace processes exclude women. However, inspiration can be drawn from women's actions in peace processes such as the Women of Liberia Mass action of Peace Campaign. Women showed power and agency to produce change, which has also resulted in the first female president in Africa.

Panel Discussion

Professor Wielenga opened the panel discussion with a question to the panel which was followed by several questions and answers:

Question - What are some of the reasons that women are excluded?

Nthabiseng Malefane explained that women are not represented at all levels as they should be, and the reasons include traditional norms intersecting with other norms which serves as barriers to women; the actors involved can also be a barrier; and excuses such as women's lack of experience and effectiveness. Women's mostly play symbolic roles and there is a lack of capacity building for women.

Professor Maxi Schoeman started with an anecdote where male students said that women can participate in leadership roles as long as they make a contribution. It speaks to the narrow definition of mediation only focused on a senior statesman, which means women are not appointed. Women are mostly found in mediation track 3 where they turn towards the community, but women are not found in high-level track 1 and track 2 mediation. This is an area that needs to be explored.

Annah Moyo added that the issues are structural and occurs in a retrenched culture, religious beliefs and traditional spaces. We don't have many women at a high level and the role falls on former statemen in Africa. Men are predominantly around the table and women's issues are expressed through men. As progressive as South Africa is, we will send former statemen to peace negotiations even if there are women.

Question - How can we make these spaces more inclusive and how can civil society be included?

Annah Moyo explained that civil society has the expertise to train women and have played an important role in the past. It includes as watchdogs of political processes, part of petitions and providing recommendations, pressurising and holding governments accountable, and as experts that can provide support in the negotiation processes. Civil society takes voices from society into those spaces and hold leaders accountable to recommendations and outcomes made in peace processes.

Nthabiseng Malefane added that she is optimistic about the growing involvement of civil society. She used examples of times when the priorities and inputs of civils society were considered such as the significance of the Commission for the Status Women, FewWise Africa, the role played during apartheid and especially the 1956 women's march which was organised by civil society and largely women.

Professor Maxi Schoeman highlighted the unique role that universities play in providing a more neutral space for engagement, the importance of research and writing up case studies, and developing technical thematic areas on designing effective processes towards women inclusion in mediation and peace.

Question - The Focal Point Network aims to bring actors from the Global North and Global South together as partners, but what are the challenges of doing so?

The panellists shared similar views that the partnership is important to bridge the gaps between the Global North and Global South, to collaborate and cooperate, sharing

resources and shared learning that emanate from both to better harmonise and address matters. We are in an era where we as Africans are more aware of and speaking on our issues and not simply others telling us what to do, which allows for more efficiency in African agency in our regional structure.

Question - Where are we seeing successes in terms of women's' agency?

Nthabiseng Malefane explained that there is progress, and the figures of including women in peace processes are looking better, but the numbers are still not what they should be. For example, the Secretary General's report on women in peace and security indicates that women represent 33% of delegates in UN peace processes. Women's inclusion has risen to 28.6% in documents, but the target was 37%. Ceasefire agreements did not have gender provisions. South Africa has trained 189 women and 36 women have been deployed from South Africa to the AU. The AU has also trained women and sent them as envoys, but women are still only included as envoys to speak on women in peace and security and not on broader issues.

Annah Moyo added that women are at the forefront of initiating peace processes but are relegated to the periphery during transitional government negotiations. For example, in Liberia women used several strategies to ensure that they vote for change in the country, and it was women in South Sudan who defied patriarchy for regime change that also led to a transitional government. However, none of these women were included in the high-level peace processes that followed.

Key Issues raised

Although some progress has been made to include women in peace and negotiation processes, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. The Focal Point Network provides an opportunity to raise concerns and recommend actions on women in peace and mediation that will be taken to the UN Security Council.

Recommended actions

- Training women in mediation remains a critical aspect of including women in higher levels of peace and negotiation processes with sufficient expertise and competency.
- Training women should continue and expand to Tracks 1, 2 and 3. Partnership are critical to increase training of women.
- The lists and rosters of competent women mediators on the African continent require nuance and updating, but then these lists must be used to deploy women. Collaboration and partnership are important to ensure that there is implementation from countries to use these lists. We have to ask what can be done to enforce governments to stick to their commitments to nominate women to be deployed to negotiations. We need to identify champions who can influence states to have and use these lists. The UN's success is dependent on its state members.
- Civil society must be part of and included in peace processes on all levels and must be actively involved in engaging with governments to build bridges. We also have to

remember intersectionality and marginality – it is critical to enhance the inclusion of groups in the diaspora.

- Youth also need to be included in these discussions. How can we make the process of Youth in Peace and Security easier for youth and what can we learn from the Women in Peace and Security to make the process easier and quicker for the younger generation? The youth is also important in breaking barriers and building bridges, but we need to support the youth to build experience and provide them with exposure.
- Are there ways to make mentoring for women and youth more intentional and formal?
- Abuse and harassment of women on all levels remain a major concern and require more attention and action. More transparent and protective processes, procedures and practices are needed to avoid covering up the realities of what is happening to women.