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**Research Article**

# The Relevance of Inclusivity in Mediation and Negotiation Processes: A Reflection

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**Abstract:**

Research reveals that women are rarely included in mediation and peace negotiations (CFR: 2017). In the peace negotiations signed from 1990-2017, women represented two percent of the mediators, eight percent of the negotiators and five percent of the witnesses and signatories (ibid). In addition, of the one thousand one hundred and eighty seven peace agreements signed during the period 1990-2017, only nineteen percent of these mentioned women, while five percent made reference to gender based violence (ibid). The above figures bear testimony that the actual numbers of women involved in international mediation and peace keeping efforts are significantly very low. In addition, the figures reveal the general hesitancy by peace brokers to engage women in the mediation of violent conflict. This is not because there is lack of competent women but because the acknowledgement of the need to include women in conflict resolution, mediation and peace processes has simply not been present. United Nations Resolution 1325 calls for women inclusion and participation in conflict prevention, mediation and negotiation processes. The paper argues that the participation of women at the peace table improves the negotiation process, contributes to a more comprehensive peace agreement, and bolsters the prospect of sustainable peace. Applying discourse analysis to draw information from reports, related literature, the article found out that women's needs are different from those of men, factors which are normally overlooked or forgotten in the negotiation processes, resulting in less effective and less sustainable peace agreements because the needs and concerns of half the population are ignored or not addressed. The article concludes that the inclusion of women in peace processes creates an enabling environment where the wisdom, experiences and talents of both men and women are harnessed for the promotion of sustainable peace.

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**Keywords:** Inclusion, Conflict Prevention, Mediation, Peace- process.

## Introduction

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and War called for the inclusion and increased participation of women in peace processes and in all peace building related activities. UNSCR 1325 was implemented after the realization by the UN that very few women, about 24% were engaged as mediators and as peace builders in formal peace processes (UN Secretary-General's Report: 2012). Reality shows that despite the passing of Resolution 1325 nineteen years ago women remain under-represented in mediation processes. By 2014, the UN had appointed two female head mediators; that is, former Irish president Mary Robinson and Gabre Sellase of Ethiopia. In the peace negotiations from 1990-2017 women represented two percent of the mediations, five percent of the witnesses and signatories and eight percent of the negotiators (CFR: 2017). In addition, of the one thousand one hundred and eighty seven peace agreements signed during the same time, only nineteen percent of these mentioned/ made reference to women (UN:2009). Of the four hundred peace agreements available on the UN peacemaker websites from 2000-2016, nine percent of the peace agreement made reference to women as wives or victims of war and not as mediators or negotiators.

The above argument is further substantiated by the fact that although women have taken a leading role in their communities advocating for peace and an end to violence, they remain underrepresented at track one official level. For example, in Burundi at the Arusha peace talks to end the civil war, only two of the one hundred and twenty six delegates were women (O'Reilly:2013). Again, only two women served on the fifteen members National Council of Timorese Resistance in East Timor, despite the fact that women had played a valuable role in sparking the resistance. Only five women were in leadership positions in the UN mission to Kosovo, although women had forged the way for groups to cross ethnic barriers and rebuild fractured relationships (Kumalo:2015). In furtherance, no women were present at the peace negotiations to end the war in the former Yugoslavia, despite the fact that the war had affected women in a most devastating manner (Ibid). At the peace talks to end conflicts in Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire only a small number of women were included in the negotiations.

(Potter:2005). The above examples are representative of much deeper problem with regard to the acknowledgement and inclusion of women in peace and cease fire agreement in the post conflict phases. As such there is need for paradigm shifts with regards of how women`s roles and contribution during and in ending conflicts are perceived and acknowledged.

## **Conceptual Underpinnings**

The study is based on the understanding that the building of sustainable peace is anchored in the inclusion of views from youths, women, warring parties, civil society organizations as well as other stake holders in the peace processes. By inclusivity the study refers to the extend and manner in which the views and needs of conflicting parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated in the mediation effort and peace processes. (Kumalo:2015, Turner:2018). Inclusive mediation rests on the assumption that building sustainable peace requires integrating diverse societal perspectives, those of conflicting parties and other stakeholders into the peace process. Inclusive processes provide multiple entry points and diverse mechanisms. Studies (Schirch:2015, UN SG Report:2012) have shown that many peace or cease fire agreements are never implemented or they collapse after a short period of time and violence starts all over again. this is mainly because these agreements lack the input of other members of the community nor do they address challenges faced by the different stakeholders. i war fall back into conflict within the first decade. Schirch (2015) opines that this could be attributed to the problem of ignoring or failing to identify and address the structural needs of the majority of the population (women) in addition to human rights issues.

Many agreements do not get implemented at all because they lack voices of women who constitute more the majority of the population. One of the main reasons for lack of sustainable success of peace agreements is the short term focus on the “hot phases” of a violent conflict. After a peace or cease fire agreement is signed, public attention and the interests of the mediator often shift to the next “hotspot” (ibid). By so doing, the structural dimension of conflict prevention is often neglected and the root causes of violence remain unaddressed. The paper argues that although the inclusion of women is not the answer to unsustainable peace agreements , including women in mediation is worthwhile as women can bring on the table a wide range of issues needed to address the real cause of the conflict, efforts which can contribute towards structural conflict prevention. In mediation processes, men usually focus on political power and peace settlement whilst women focus on sustainable livelihoods, education, truth and reconciliation (Collier, etal:2003).

## **The Relevance of Inclusivity in Conflict Prevention and Mediation Peace Processes**

For the purposes of this study, conflict prevention is perceived as an “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the later when they occur (UN Agenda for Peace: 1992) and mediation refers to the intervention in a negotiation or a conflict of an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power but who assists the involved parties in voluntarily reaching a mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute. In addition to addressing substantive issues, mediation may also establish or strengthen relationships of trust and respect between parties or terminate relationships in a manner that minimizes cost and psychological harm(Moore:2003) The study posits that mediation is an effective tool used to address tensions between conflict parties that could easily have escalated and resulted in violent conflict. The use of mediation in addressing the escalation of conflict has been labeled preventive diplomacy, which is, trying to prevent the emergence of imminent violence. (Bell and O`Rourke: 2013, Moore: 2003).

The paper does not propose or argue for a replacement of men with women in conflict prevention and mediation processes. Rather, the paper advocates for and shares the same sentiments with Schirch and Sewark (2015) who emphasize the need to neutralize the highly gendered landscape of mediation into one that accommodates inclusivity, equity and values of pluralism. Potter also opines that the attempt should be to transcend the conventional masculine-feminine binary oppositions of war and peace, power and powerlessness, public and private, reason and emotion, independence and attachment. Against this background, the perspective of both men and women will therefore contribute towards an approach that holds as central the values, co-existence and inclusivity of all stakeholders. Considering that women are excluded from public decision-making and leadership opportunities in many communities around the world, including women in formal mediation process creates and ensures equality in global mediation.

In essence, the inclusion and participation of women in negotiation and mediation processes should be seen as a question of promoting equality and equity (Swaine and O`Rourke:2015). Peace negotiations and mediation processes as well as the agreements generated from these processes set the structure and direction for post-conflict reconstruction and politics. These peace agreements affect the lives of all women and the society at large. Women constitute half the population of most communities and efforts towards peace building must be negotiated by both men and women.

As expressed by the former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expounded in a speech, including women in peacemaking is not just the right thing to do; it`s also the smart thing to do (UN Development Fund for Women:2012). The paper subscribes to Clinton`s line of thinking given the centrality of women to communal life. Women are the central caretakers of families in many communities and cultures. As such, when men and women work together, there are high chances of addressing affirmative as well as political issues without .The inclusion of women in mediation guarantees that issues at the heart of achieving durable peace and stability such as the protection of human rights, social service provision, security issues such as disarmament and reintegration are brought into the negotiation discrimination (Anderlini: 2007). The inclusions of these issues serve to promote the chances for a

lasting peace concerned as they are with strengthening the society and countering marginalization.

War affects men and women differently. In most cases the cost of conflicts are borne disproportionately by women and children. In most cases women pay the primary price when peace is absent. Against this backdrop women are important stakeholders in peace building processes. Space must be created to encourage women to bring their unique insights to the process of peace building (Potter: 2005). The goal of gender equality needs to be embraced as a central value for mediation and negotiation. Gender equality refers to the goal of equal opportunities, resources and respect for men and women. Gender equality does not seek to make men and women the same, rather it upholds that their lives and work hold equal value and is careful to ensure equal treatment value and is careful to ensure equal treatment of people from different ethnic and religious groups (ibid). Thus the inclusion of women on the mediation table is most likely going to consider issues of how women are to be included in all peace building processes from relief aid distribution peace building programs, grass root dialogue as well as formal peace talks. Most peace agreements often leave out the significant differences between male and female experiences and roles .According to Kumalo (2015), this leads to peace agreements which are less effective and less likely to be sustainable since the humanitarian responses are limited (UN Women 2012).The vulnerability of women is often overlooked or forgotten in negotiation processes.

Inclusion of women in negotiation and mediation offers equal access to opportunities and resources and respect for both men and women. Panhurst (1999), Stulmacher and Morrisett (2008) among other scholars opines that positive peace can only be obtained when it includes social justice, gender equity, economic equality and ecological balance with an emphasis on human relationship and how people act to fulfill their human needs. Useful insights can be learnt from countries like Norway where issues relating to gender, peace, security and development are seriously taken into consideration with women holding half of the positions within the cabinet. Whilst the paper does not claim that the inclusion by women ensures an end to all the problems associated with inclusion of all stake holders, it maintains that gender equality in mediation is part of the solution as it creates social and political spaces into which issues relating to gender, peace security and development coalesce and are framed, analyzed and addressed. Thus the inclusion of women in mediation is not only a question of equality but also of fairness. The inclusion of women in formal mediation ensures that women`s voices are heard and their aspirations are taken into account. This approach makes it possible for peace building actors to reach balanced agreements that also take into account women`s needs.

Women are often the main victims of conflicts as they suffer both physical and sexual violence. These serious traumas must be recognized during peace negotiations by including women who have experienced the violence speak out. Men sometimes tend to forget these dimensions and impact of conflict on different groups of the society.

Women have already proven themselves to be successful peace-builders. Through their roles as intermediaries, women have created conditions whereby talks were made possible, women have negotiated the cessation of hostilities to allow humanitarian access or opening channels for dialogue (Rukuni, T etal: 2016). They have also emerged as sole bread-earners for their families in time of violent conflict in addition to playing the role of being cultural repositories of their society`s cultural values and norms. As such, there is need to acknowledge the efforts made by women. Male negotiations specialists agreed that women bring in different mediating styles or experiences to the talks. According to Kumalo (2015) this is necessary because fresh perspectives and approaches are badly needed. A research carried out by CRI (2017) on the effectiveness of mediation broadly shows that both the style of the mediators and his gender can matter in negotiation process. Whilst both males and female mediators are equally effective at reaching an initial settlement, female mediators are however, more effective at mediating binding settlements. Thus when both men and women make vital contributions in peace negotiations are more robust and resilient peace is most likely to be achieved as a result(O`Reilly:2013).This is because mediation strategies that systematically include both men and women and civil society more broadly are more likely to generate broad national ownership and support for a negotiated settlement and to lead to a more sustainable peace. Schirch (2015) observed that peace agreements that are more responsive to the specific needs of women and girls, men and boys contribute to sustainable peace.

Furthermore, the inclusion of women on the mediation table brings new perspectives and acknowledge to peace processes. The Northern Irish and Guatemala experiences gives insight to the different issues that women bring to the table different visions of how to share power, important gender-related issues such as gender based violence and issues on household headed by sole females which war so often leaves behind (Anderlini: 2007). Potter (2005) also observed that women may also bring issues to the table in a different way. Her study reveal that women are better listeners, showing intuition and empathy and are less assertive while men can be more dominating and less likely to pick up an indirect cue and are quick to make authoritative decisions.

Maxwell`s work applied to this subject suggest that increased sensitivity in terms of both gender and culture is extremely valuable to a mediators work. Mediation involves the use of communication to try to control or transform a complex situation and to influence others to be listened to .Studies by Payne (2005), Kumalo (2015) further suggest that there is basis to the suggestion that women are often more process-oriented whilst men are more outcome-oriented. As such a mixture of the two would have of value to peace processes .Women are regarded as bringing significant skills to mediation before, during and after mediation processes, in some cases enabling the process to take (UN Women:2012). Studies by the UN Women suggest that female mediators can seem less threatening to conflict parties and thus promote a less aggressive atmosphere. Potter (2008) posits that formal archetypes can bypass the tango of males` egos helping to brings down the tempo without anyone face. She further argues that charm and the ability to woo people are crucial components of the mediation toolkit. Thus women, included at various levels in negotiation processes are able to make people comfortable thereby promoting good relationships and an atmosphere of warmth,

humor and trust. In furtherance, the inclusion of women in peace initiatives can facilitate multi-track interactions transcending the boundaries of nationality, religion, class, socio-economic backgrounds. Women's inclusion and participation in formal mediation can produce turnarounds in conflict negotiations by conceptualizing agreements that are more inclusive, community based producing peace building outcomes that are sustainable.

### **Promoting the Inclusion of Women in Mediation and Peace Processes**

The ongoing discussion has shown the importance of including women in mediation and peace processes. Drawing from research findings, the paper discusses efforts that can be made by different stakeholders to promote the inclusion of women in peace processes. From the interviews conducted, findings revealed that engaging women at the very beginning of a peace process promotes their participation in sustainable peace. According to Mr. Madongonda, women should be included in pre-negotiation stages of any peace processes. Madongonda argues that if women can influence pre-negotiation agreements then they can begin to shape the agenda for substantive talks and future government structures. (interview, Gweru). Pre-negotiation agreements begin to set the agenda for talks as the parties begin to bargain and sound out each other's positions on substantive issues. These agreements can include mechanisms such as the protection of human rights, temporary ceasefire agreements and amnesties for negotiators. It is this stage which the above respondent views as the starting point where space for women mobilization and activism should be created if they are going to effectively influence the delivery of justice, socio-economic goods as well as physical integrity. Madongonda's line of thinking is in line with the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security which recommends that women, peace and security should be mainstreamed into national strategies at the very beginning of peace processes (African Union Commission:2009).

For Eveline Moyo, a female activist in Zimbabwe, women should be included and represented from the period of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Moyo argues that the inclusion of women at this period is important in the crafting and shaping of DDR programmes which are gender sensitive, taking into account the different roles and vulnerabilities of women and men (Interview with Moyo). Moyo further argues that once the DDR addresses new forms of non-violence and non-aggressive masculinity, supporting women to have their rights to land, housing and education the process would provide key opportunities for transforming gender relations. Resultantly, this will see many women joining mediation and negotiation processes. (ibid).

For Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), the inclusion of female peace practitioners can be promoted by building up a pool of standby women mediators in any country. This has to be followed up by special programs to train women in mediation. The paper is in support with WOZA's sentiments given that, policies should be accompanied by action. It is not enough to say women should be included in mediation without identifying women with potential to work as mediators. In addition to identifying these women, space must be created for these women to convene, exchange ideas, knowledge and experience in peace building issues. Research findings revealed that women's participation in peace processes can be promoted by translating national action plans to local vernaculars. According to Mr. Nyoni, the use of English at workshops has hindered many potential female mediators from becoming active. Nyoni opines that workshops should be conducted in vernacular languages to cater for many women at the grassroots. Nyoni's argument is seconded by sentiments from GIZ which stress the need to translate UNSCR 1325 into local languages and vernacular in accordance to the needs and culture of a given country. In local languages, the contents of UNSCR 1325 as well as its local and national implications should be known to the general public. This can encourage women to participate in mediation and peace processes. In furtherance, these strategies are quite relevant for promoting long-term strategies for promoting women's participation in mediation and peace processes.

Findings from a focus group discussion held with Masters students at the Midlands State University revealed that in addition to identifying and building a pool of stand by mediators there is need to support local women's organizations on mediation, negotiation and individual female peace activists. In their opinion, support should be given to institutions that mirror women's multiple perspectives and interests in mediation and where these do not exist; help should be provided to set them up. On the same note support should be given to women peace activists and organizations that have strong backing at the grassroots level. It also emerged in the discussions which followed that support for these women can be through tailor made capacity building in effective communication skills, conflict analysis, leadership and negotiation in addition to providing financial and logistical support.

International, regional and local networks of female mediators can be used to promote the inclusion of women in mediation and peace processes. Female networks on mediation such as the FemWise Africa (2017), Network of Nordic Women Mediation (2017) and Mediterranean Women Mediators Network among others aim to provide a structural solution for promoting women at all levels of mediation processes through direct support to female mediators as well as through amplifying female voices and mainstreaming the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

### **Strengthening Women's Participation in Peace Processes and Mediation**

From the discussions held with Masters Students, it emerged that again, member states have a role to play in strengthening the role of female mediators by coming up with national action plans. National Action Plans (NAPs) can be tailored in such a way that they strengthen the inclusion of women in peace processes. NAPs are the primary means by which states articulate their policy commitments pursuant to UNSCR 1325. Commitments made in the NAPs are a key means of connecting local practice and expertise with national- or state-level structures for early warning and conflict resolution. These commitments can help to bridge

the divide between the local and national, which in turn creates a roster of women who are available for nomination by the state for international positions. Through their action plans, states could also provide resources for better coordination, cooperation, training and capacity-building (interview).

Mentoring and master classes is another route through which women's participation in peace processes and formal mediation can be strengthened. The paper maintains that there are learnable skills to conflict mediation, and these can be taught to women, preferably on the job, or through observation or work-shadowing. The United Nations and member states can identify some younger men and women to coach as formal mediators. Although such mentoring is no guarantee of a future job, but the recognition that these are positions which can be aimed at, with skills which can be learned, must surely be to the good of the profession as a whole. Taking such an approach is consistent with the Sustaining Peace Agenda and speaks directly to the need for greater synergy between the relevant agencies responsible for sustaining peace and promoting gender parity.

According to Turner and McWilliams (2015), the role and relevance of women in mediation and peace processes can be further strengthened by encouraging research and university education in the field of gender and peace-building. There is need to increase support for universities already carrying out this kind of research and education and promote the inclusion of the gender perspective in university education in the areas of development cooperation, international relations and peace-building that have not already done so. Through research, universities can strengthen and support intensive and comprehensive research on situations where women have used unique methodologies, approaches and thinking to contribute to peace building. Much of the current knowledge on women's contributions is anecdotal and lacks the conceptual clarity to inform track one negotiations and policy formulation. The challenge lies in framing 'success stories' at the grassroots and middle-level in ways that they impact policy analysis and reform.

In furtherance, the paper argues that there is need to build a strong partnership among women working in training, research and peace building practice in a diverse range of areas such as multi-track diplomacy, peace education, mediation, transformative development, coexistence and peace advocacy. This will facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas, best practices and lessons learned from different regions of conflict. It will also enhance psychosocial support networks, increase knowledge about different approaches to conflict resolution, and most significantly, such a network could provide a context for the generation of financial and human resources that women's groups need to prevent and transform violent conflict.

In conclusion, the paper argues that including women in conflict prevention and mediation at the very beginning promotes the incorporation of the interests and needs of women in the peace agreement. Inclusivity increases the potential to address the root causes of conflict and to ensure that the needs of those affected by the conflict are addressed. An inclusive process here does not imply that all stake holders can participate directly in the formal negotiations; rather, the study argues for the facilitation of structured interactions between the conflict parties and other stakeholders to include multiple perspectives in the mediation process. In essence, the call for inclusion in mediation processes is not limited to women alone but applies to social, demographic, religious and regional minority identities as well as to youth, civil society and professional organizations. The inclusion of women in peace processes creates an enabling environment where the wisdom, experiences and talents of both men and women are harnessed for the promotion of sustainable peace.

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